

History of the Scottish Nation

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VOL. II.

THE CELTIC CHRISTIANISATION:  
EMBRACING THE EPOCHS OF NINIAN,  
PATRICK, COLUMBA,  
COLUMBANUS, AND THE CULDEE  
CHURCH.

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## CHAPTER I.

## A NEW AGE FROM THE NORTH.

THE opening of the fifth century brought with it changes of transcendent magnitude and importance in Europe. For ages the arms of the South had overflowed the countries of the North, but now the tide of conquest turned, the North was bearing down on the South, and that haughty Power which had subjected to her sceptre so many tribes and realms, was about to suffer in her turn the miseries of foreign invasion, and taste the bitterness of a barbarian yoke. These changes were preparatory to the erection of a kingdom which was destined to flourish when the victories of Rome had crumbled into dust.

We must here pause in order specially to note the deadlock into which the affairs of the world had come at this great turning-point of its history. Its three leading nations are seen to be unable to advance beyond the point at which they had now arrived. Hence the necessity of bringing new races upon the stage if the human march was to go forward. This extraordinary position of matters must be taken into account and distinctly apprehended if we would intelligently follow the course of succeeding events; and especially we would understand the place of the Scots in general history, and the part they were selected to fulfill in the cause of Christian civilization and constitutional liberty. It is here that we find the key of modern history.

Till this epoch the business of the world had been left in the hands of the Jew, the Greek, and the Roman. These were its three leading nations. The march of all three was towards the same goal, but they approached it on separate lines. The world's work was too onerous to be undertaken by any one of them singly, and accordingly we see it partitioned among the three, in fit correspondence with the age in which each flourished, and the peculiar idiosyncrasy with which each had been endowed.

Each rendered a distinct, and, in truth, brilliant contribution to the world's one work. The Jew came first; for his share of the mighty labour had respect to the foundations. He presented us, although in figure and symbol, with a system of spiritual truth, to which we have been able to make no

material addition, and which we accept as by far the mightiest instrumentality for regenerating the race, and building up society. The Greeks followed, furnishing us, by means of their great thinkers, with the laws of thought, and moulding for us, by their great orators, the most melodious of the tongues of earth. Last of all came the Roman. After the spiritual and the intellectual had been supplied by his two predecessors, the Roman added the political. He gathered the scattered races into one empire, and taught them to be obedient to one law. So far the work was done, but done only up to a certain point. At this point the workers found themselves arrested, and farther progress impossible to them; but though they left their great task incomplete, the world never can forget what it owes to those who sowed the first seeds of that rich inheritance of truth and knowledge and liberty which awaits it in the future.

These three workers—the Jew, the Greek, the Roman—had brought the human family to the confine of a new age, but they were unable to conduct them across the boundary. At the portals of this new era they must demit their functions as the pioneers in the human march, and from the van, which they had occupied till now, they must fall into the rear, and leave to others a work which they were no longer able to carry forward. In truth the very fitness of these three nations to do the world's work in the times that preceded the advent of Christianity, made them unfit for doing it in the times that followed that great revolution. All three had been engrossed with the forms of knowledge, rather than with knowledge itself. They had seen and handled only the images or pictures of truth. This in process of time produced an intellectual and moral incapacity to apprehend the verities which lay hid beneath the forms and symbols with which they were versant. The Jew would have given us a religion of the letter, but he never would have given us a religion of the spirit. The Greek would have given us a philosophy of syllogism, but never would he have given us a philosophy of fact. And the Roman would have given us a polity shaped by a power outside society, but not a polity springing from forces acting from within—a polity in accordance with the will of Caesar, but not in harmony with the rights and wishes of humanity. In a word, the Jew never would have evolved Christianity, nor the Greek the Baconian philosophy, nor the Roman constitutional government.

Under this incapacity did all three labour, hence the arrest of the world;

nor was it possible for it to resume its march till fresh races had come forward to break through the trammels in which long custom had enchained the old nations. The Jew had lived two thousand years amid ceremonial ordinances and ritualistic observances. These had become to him a second nature: they were to him what the senses of seeing, hearing, and handling are to the soul; and should he be cut off from the means by which he held intercourse with the spiritual world, truth would be placed beyond his reach, and he would account himself condemned to dwell in a world of utter isolation. He would have resisted the change as he would have resisted the destruction of truth itself,—for to the Jew the change was equivalent to the destruction of truth. Had it depended on the Jew, the Temple would have been still standing, the sacrifices of bullocks and rams still burning on its altar, and the sublime doctrines of Christianity still shining dimly through the veils of ceremony and type.

His syllogistic philosophy had as completely enslaved the Greek as his ceremonial religion had fettered the Jew; and the former equally with the latter needed emancipation. The Greek was familiar with but the form of wisdom. His philosophy was a philosophy of ingenious speculations and syllogistic reasonings. It assumed as its basis not the ascertained facts of the natural and moral worlds, but the conceptions or dreams which had their birth in the minds of the great thinkers who stood at the head of their respective schools. Lyrics of melting sweetness, epics of thrilling and tragic grandeur, statues of dazzling beauty, philosophies theoretically perfect, only lacking foundation in nature, the loves, revels, and battles of gods and goddesses that did not exist, celebrated in an empyrean, which was as unreal and imaginary as the divinities with which the Greek imagination had peopled it: all this and much more the Greek could and did give us; but a science with enough of truth and substance in it to form a solid basis for the arts of life, such as those which the modern world has at its service, the Greek could not give us, because he turned away from the quarter where alone the materials for such a science are to be found. He refused to look at nature. Shirking the patient induction of facts, and the careful registration of laws, he set his imagination to work, and that enchantress found for him the materials on which his wondrous intellect worked, and out of which it wove these brilliant but baseless philosophies, which dazzled the world before the advent of Christianity.

And so was it as regards the Roman. He excelled all the nations that had been before him in the order and organization of his empire, but that very organization at last fettered his mind, stereotyped all his ideas in that special department of the world's work which had been committed to him; and henceforward the farther progress of the race under the Roman became impossible. His empire was but a vast political machine for carrying out the will of one man. His scheme of government took no cognizance of individual rights; it did not train the citizen in independence and self-government; it made no provision for gathering up and combining the myriad wishes of the people into one supreme sentiment or will, and making that the governing power. The day of constitutional and representative government was yet afar off. The despotism of Rome was perhaps the most lenient, the most equitable, and the most moral despotism which has ever, either before or since, flourished upon the earth. It was a despotism, nevertheless, and the more its organization was perfected, the more complete and irresistible that despotism became, being but the vehicle for carrying into effect that one will which the empire made supreme over all rights, over all liberties, and over all consciences. The government of Rome, although unrivaled in point of organization among the governments of the ancient world, could, by the very necessity of its constitution, only work downwards,—it never would have elevated the masses into self-government; it never could have given liberty.

Thus all three nations, at the period we speak of, had come into a deadlock. The Jew could not get beyond Moses; the Greek could not advance beyond Plato; and the Roman could not rise above Caesar. The Jew, while the spell of ritualism was upon him, would never have worked his way to the doctrine of Justification by faith. The Greek, bound in the fetters of syllogism, and not daring to stray beyond the narrow confine of his own ratiocination—that unfathomed and inexhaustible well of wisdom in his eyes—never would have given the world the mariner's compass, the printing press, the steam-engine, and the mechanical and chemical arts, which so abundantly minister to the comforts and elegancies of modern life. And the Roman, with the yoke of imperialism on his thoughts, would never have introduced the era of free parliaments and constitutional government. Here, then, the world had halted, and over this same spot we should have found it anchored today had not a new objective revelation

been made to all three—to the Jew the Cross; to the Greek, Nature; and to the Roman, Society.

But the old nations were not able to enter the new road now opened to them. The Jew disdained to accept the religion of the Cross. The Greek showed equal contempt for the teaching of Nature. And the Roman refused to make his government conformable to the laws and rights of Society. The enchaining power of habit, the blinding prestige of past achievement, and the pride of high attainment, incapacitated all three for compliance with the great intellectual and spiritual revolution, which was needed if the world was to advance. The Greek and the Roman were no more able than the Jew to become as a little child, that they might enter this new kingdom. The Great Ruler, therefore, made choice of a new race, and into their hands was the world's farther progress committed—a race, which having no past to forget, and no acquisitions to unlearn, might sit down, docile and obedient, at the feet of new and better instructors, and in process of time resume the work at the point where their predecessors had left it.

Such a race was at that hour growing up amid the forests of northern Europe. That race was strong in those very points in which the Greek and Roman peoples were weak. Self-reliance and the passion of individual freedom were powerfully developed in them; and when, as afterwards happened, the Divine graft of Christianity, and the human product of Greek and Roman culture, came to be incorporated with that hardy stock, the result in due course was a race of more varied faculty, and capable of a wider and higher civilization than any nation that had yet flourished on the earth. Hence that great revolution, which divided the ancient from the modern times: a revolution in which the heavens and the earth that had been of old—to use the sublime metaphor in which the Hebrew Seers had foretold that grand transition—were taken down, and the ecclesiastical, the literary and the political firmaments shaken and removed. We behold the world of the Jew, the Greek, and the Roman dissolving in ruins, that the new heavens and the new earth of spiritual Christianity and constitutional liberty may be set up.

## CHAPTER II.

THE SERVICES OF THE SCOTS TO CHRISTIANITY IN THE  
MIDDLE AGES.

THE Scots are missing from the roll of barbarous nations that descended from the North in the fifth century upon the Roman empire and overturned it. Historians have been careful to enumerate the other races that left their homes in the deserts of Scythia at this eventful epoch, and journeyed southward on a mission of transcendent consequence to the world, though unknown to themselves. The Huns, the Vandals, the Lombards, and other nationalities whose existence was unknown till the gates of the North opened and revealed them to the world, all figure in that terrible drama. But the Scots have been passed over in silence. Yet the truth is that the *Scoti* ought to have stood at the head of this roll, inasmuch as they formed the van of the procession, and had an important part to play in the great revolution that followed the advent of these races.

This omission on the part of historians is not surprising. The Scots came early, in fact, pioneered the movement. We are accustomed to connect this uprising of the fresh, unbroken, vigorous barbarism of the North upon the effeminate and corrupt civilization of the South with the fifth century. As a general date this may be accepted as accurate, for in that century this great ethnical movement was in full flood, but in truth this upheaval of the nations neither began nor ended in the fifth century. It had begun before the Christian era. Rome was yet in her zenith: along the vast sweep of her frontier no enemy dared show himself; and, far as her eye could gaze into the wildernesses beyond, sign of danger there was none. Yet even then the first contingent of what was to grow in the future into a myriad host, was on the move, but their march was with steps so noiseless that Rome neither heard nor heeded their advance; and when at last she came to have some knowledge of their peregrinations, the matter had no interest for her. Looking with eyes of pride, she deemed their movements not deserving her notice. The Scots were to her but a tribe of herdsmen and fighters, wandering hither and thither in quest of richer pastures, or it might be of more exciting combats. It was not likely that they would court battle with her legions. With the warrior tribes of Scythia, their neighbours, they might engage, but surely they would never incite



destruction by thrusting themselves upon the bosses of her empire—so did Rome reason. In what a different light would she have viewed the matter had Fate lifted the curtain, and shown her behind this little vanguard the terrible and almost endless procession of barbarous nations that was to follow—the Frank, the Goth, the Suevi, the Ostro-Goth, the Hun, the Vandal, the Lombard, and others from the same mysterious and inexhaustible region. In the southward march of this little company of *Scoti* the mistress of the world would have heard the first knell of her empire.

The descent of the Scots from the North was divided by a considerable interval from that of the other nations. This is another circumstance that has prevented historians viewing the Scottish race as an integral part of the great irruption of the Scythian nations. The Scots left their original settlements probably about the times of the first Caesar; but it is not till the last emperors had filled up the cup of Rome's oppression, and of the nations' endurance, that the full stream of northern invasion began to flow. The four or five centuries that intervene between the appearance of the Scots on the scene, and that of the hordes which were the last to issue from the gates of the North, do not affect the character of the movement, or invalidate the claim of the first, any more than it does that of the last, to be ranked as actors in this great providential drama. The Scots opened it in truth. They were sprung of the same stock as those who succeeded them; their dwellings had been placed under the same iron sky; they had been buffeted with the same northern blasts; they had tasted privation, and learned endurance on the same sterile earth; the same mysterious impulse acted on them that moved the others; and we are shut up to speak of them as part of that great torrent of emigrants which may be variously described as warriors or as missionaries, according as we view the work—destruction or restoration—that they were sent forth to execute.

Another circumstance which tended to mislead historians, and to hide from their view the connection of the early Scottish immigration with the great movement which required centuries for its accomplishment, and which was so prolific in ethnical and political changes, was the comparative smallness of the numbers of the Scots. They were a mere handful compared with the swarms—countless as the sands of the sea—that followed them. This hid the importance of the movement from the

age in which it took place and has helped to conceal its peculiar character and preeminent significance from succeeding times. A contemporary historian, Ammianus Marcellinus, speaks disdainfully of the *Scoti* as “wanderers,” whose migratory steps and shifting encampments it were bootless attempting to follow. Today on this stream, tomorrow on the banks of that, as the necessities of water and pasturage demand, but ever holding on their course, by slow stages, to the South, and summer by summer drawing nearer the line guarded by the victorious standards of Rome. Even should they cross that line, why should Rome take alarm, or tremble for her empire? Her realms are wide enough surely to afford water and pasturage to the flocks of those roaming herdsmen without greatly taxing her own resources. Or should they drop their peaceful pursuits, and transform themselves into warriors, were they likely to cause undue dismay to the legions, or put their valour to any severe test? A capable statesman would have read this apparently trivial incident differently. He would have seen more in it than met the eye; and instead of counting the number of those he saw, he would have essayed to compute the millions or myriads he did not see, and which lay concealed in the dark recesses of the north. The appearance of these roving bands gave sure intimation that there were forces at work in the heart of the Scythian nations that might yet breed danger to Rome. They warned her to set her house in order, for she should die and not live. Who could guess how many swarms, far larger than the present, the same vast, populous, but unknown region might send forth; and having once tasted the corn and wine, the milk and honey of the south, it would not be easy to compel these hungry immigrants to go back to the niggard soils and scanty harvests which they had left behind them.

But able statesmen was just what the Rome of that age signally lacked. It is always so with empires fated to fall. Decay is seen at the council table before it has become manifest in the field. Corruption creeps in among the senators of a State, then discipline and valour forsake its armies. But even had Rome been as plentifully as she was sparingly supplied with sagacious statesmen, it is hard to say whether any forecast could then have been formed of the danger that impended. That danger was new; it was wholly unknown to former ages. Till now the ethnic stream had flowed in the opposite direction. The South had sent her prolific swarms northward to people the empty spaces around the pole. That the tide

should turn: that the North should pour down upon the South, overwhelming the labours of a thousand years in a flood of barbarism, and quenching the lights of science and art in the darkness of a northern night, was what no one could then have presaged. The Roman sentinel who first descried on the northern horizon the roving tents of the Scottish herdsmen, and marked that morning by morning they were pitched nearer the frontier he guarded, had the coming hailstorm prognosticated to him, but he could not read the portent. He failed to see in these wanderers the pioneer corps of a mighty army, which lay bound on the frozen steppes of the North, but which was about to be loosed, and roll down horde on horde on the fair cities of Italy, and the fruitful fields of the Romans.

In the march of these nations we see the advent of a new age. The world, as we have already said, had stopped, and had a second time to be put in motion. Now we see it started on lines that admitted of a truer knowledge and a more stable liberty than it had heretofore enjoyed, or ever could have reached on the old track. But first must come dissolution. Much of what the wisdom and labour of former ages had accumulated had now become mere obstruction, and had to be cleared away. This was a work to which the nations of the classic countries would never have put their hands. So far from destroying, they would have done their utmost to preserve the splendid inheritance of law, of empire, of religion, and of art, which the wisdom, the arms, and the genius of their fathers had bequeathed to them. But no veneration for these things restrained the children of the savage North. The world of Greek art and Roman power, into the midst of which they had been so suddenly projected, fell beneath their sturdy blows.

Like a great rock falling from a lofty mountain, so fell the Gothic tribes upon the ancient world. Codes and philosophies, schools and priesthoods, thrones, altars, and armies, there all prostrated before this rolling mass of northern barbarism, broken like a potsherd, ground to dust; and thus a political and mythological order of things, which might otherwise have lingered on the earth for long centuries, and kept the nations rotting in vice and sunk in slavery, was swept away.

It has been customary to raise a wail over the destruction of letters and arts by the breaking in of this sudden tempest. But, in truth, letters and

arts had already perished. It was not the Goth that wrought this literary havoc, it was the effeminate and dissolute Roman, it was the sensuous and enslaved Greek. The human intellect was no longer capable of producing, hardly even was it capable of appreciating, what former ages had produced; and never, to all appearances, would the world have recovered its healthy tone but for the new blood which the northern races poured into it.

Nor had the world lost only its literary and artistic power, it had lost still more signally its moral vigour. The records of the times disclose a hideous and appalling picture. They show us a world broken loose from every moral restraint, greedily giving itself to every form of abominable wickedness, and rushing headlong to perdition. Greek and Roman society was too rotten to sustain the graft of Christianity. It was on that old trunk that it was set at first, and there its earliest blossoms were put forth; but the stock to which it was united lacked moral robustness to nourish the plant into a great tree which might cover the nations with its boughs. That plant was already beginning to sicken and die; the living had been united to the dead, and if both were not to perish the union must be broken, and Christianity set free from its companion which was hastening to the tomb. It was at this juncture that the Goths came down and saved the world by destroying it.

The work of bringing in the new age consisted of two parts. The Old had to be broken up and removed, and over the field thus cleared had to be scattered the seeds from which the New was to spring. This work was partitioned among the newly arrived nations. To certain of them was assigned the work of demolition. To others the nobler part of reconstruction. The fiercer of these tribes were to slay and burn. But when the Hun, the Vandal, and the Goth had done their work, the Scots were to come forward, and to lay, not by the force of arms, but by the mightier power of principles, the foundation of a new and better order of things. But they must, first, themselves be enlightened, before they could be light-bearers to a world now plunged into the darkness of a twofold night. They had to stand apart, outside the immediate theatre on which the tempests of barbarian war were overturning thrones and scourging nations, till the sword had done its work, and then their mission of reconstruction would begin. It may startle the reader to be told that it is

to this little pioneer band of northmen, the Scots to wit, that the modern world owes its evangelical Christianity. This may appear a too bold assertion, and one for which it is impossible to find authority or countenance in history. Let the reader, however, withhold his surprise till he has examined the trains of proof we have to lay before him, and we venture to anticipate that before he has closed the volume he will find himself shut up to the same conclusion, or at least he will find himself much nearer agreement with us than he now deems possible. The honour of preserving Christianity, and transmitting it to modern times, is commonly awarded to Rome. She herself claims to have performed this great office to the nations of Europe. The claim has been so often advanced, and so generally concurred in, that now it passes as true, and is held a fact that admits neither of challenge nor of denial. It is nevertheless a vulgar fallacy. The history of all the ages since the era of the Gothic invasion refuses to endorse this claim, and assigns the honour to another and far humbler society. An error of so long standing, and which has come to be so generally entertained, can be met only by the clear, full, and continuous testimony of history; and this we shall produce as, stage by stage, and century by century, we unfold the transactions of churches and nations. But it may not be amiss to glance generally at the subject here.

What do we see taking place as soon as the Gothic tempests have come to an end, and something like settled order has again been established in Europe? From the sixth century onward pilgrim-bands of pious and earnest preachers are seen traversing the various countries. In the midst of perils, of poverty, and of toil, these scholars and divines—for they have been taught letters and studied Scripture at the feet of renowned teachers—have come forth to enlighten races which have been baptized but not instructed, which have bowed before the chair of the Pontiff, but have not bowed before the cross of the Saviour. We behold them prosecuting their mission on the plains of France, among the woods of Germany, and in the cities of Italy. Scarce is there tribe or locality in the vast space extending between the Apennines and the shores of Iceland which these indefatigable missionaries do not visit, and where they do not succeed in gaining disciples for the Christian faith. As one generation of these preachers dies off, another rises to take its place, and carry on its work; and thus the evangelical light is kept burning throughout these ages, which

were not so dark as we sometimes believe them to have been, and as they certainly would have been but for the exertions of these pious men. The monkish chroniclers have done their best to bury the memory of these simple evangelists, by disguising, or perverting, or wholly expunging their record; but we trace their footsteps by the very attempts of their enemies to obliterate them, as also by the edicts of Popes to suppress their missions; and especially do we see their traces in the literary and theological writings they left behind them in the various countries they visited, and which modern research has drawn forth from the darkness of the museums and convents to which they had been consigned, and where for ages they had slumbered. We have a farther monument of the labours of this great missionary host in the training institutions which they planted in France and Germany and the north of Italy, and which existed for centuries as nurseries of missionaries and schools of evangelical light, but which eventually fell as evangelical posts, and were seized and made the foundation of Romish institutions.

Who sent forth these missionaries? From what school or church did they come from? Was it Rome which commissioned those evangelists to teach the ignorant and savage tribes she had received within her fold, and on whose persona she had sprinkled her baptismal water, but whose hearts she had not purified by communicating to them a knowledge of the truth? No! these preachers never visited the “threshold of the Apostles.” Rome disowned them. They had come from the missionary schools of Iona and of Ireland. They were Scotsmen from Ireland and Scotland—the two countries which were at that time the common seat of the Scottish nation.

These northern evangelists soon find coadjutors. As they pass on through the countries of Europe they kindle in the hearts of others the same missionary fire that burns so strongly in their own. Little parties of natives, whose souls their words have stirred, gather round them, and take part with them in their work. We see them opening schools on the Rhine, in the forests of France, and south as far as the Alps; gathering the native youth into them, and having instructed them in divine things they send them forth to instruct their countrymen. It was thus that the well of living water from Iona, as it flowed onward, widened into a river, and at last expanded into a flood which refreshed the thirsty lands over which it diffused its waters. These missionaries from the Scottish shores had not

a little to do, we cannot doubt, with that remarkable awakening which the eleventh and twelfth centuries witnessed in the south of France, and which drew whole populations to the Evangelical faith. Along the foot of the Alps sounded forth the same Gospel which had been preached on the shores of the lake of Galilee in the first century; and the provinces of Languedoc and Dauphin became vocal with the melody of the Troubadours, who published in their rich and melodious language, the evangelical tenets. Next came the sermons of the Barbes; and lastly there appeared in the field a yet more potential instrumentality, which at once quickened and consolidated the movement. This was the translation of the New Testament into the Romance language; believed to be the earliest vernacular version of modern times. The printing press was not then in existence; and copies of the Romance New Testament could be produced not otherwise than by the skill of slow and laborious scribes: but a speedier and wider diffusion was given the truths of the inspired volume by the traveling Troubadours, who recited them in song in the towns and villages of southern France. Barons, provinces and cities joined the movement, and it seemed, as if in obedience to the summons sent forth from Iona, the Reformation was to break out, and the world to be spared three centuries of spiritual oppression and darkness.

But the morning which it was believed had already opened, was suddenly turned into the "shadow of death." The most astute of all the mitred chiefs who have ruled the world from the Vatican now stood up. With Innocent III. came the crusades. Armies of soldiers and inquisitors poured down from the Alps to extinguish a movement which menaced the kingdom of Rome with ruin. The smiling provinces of Languedoc and Dauphine were converted into deserts. The crusaders, armed with sword and torch, reddened the earth with blood, and darkened the sky with the smoke of burning towns. But this terrible blow did not extirpate this evangelical movement. In countries more remote from the seat of the Papal power, the missionary still dared to go forth sowing the good seed; and here and there, in convents, or in forests, or in the shady lanes and nooks of city, individual souls, or little companies, enlightened from above, fed in secret on the heavenly bread, and quenched their thirst with living water. So did matters continue till the days of Wycliffe. Wycliffe and his Lollards took up the work of the Elders of Iona. After Wycliffe came John Huss and after Huss came Luther, and with the rising

of Luther the darkness had fulfilled its period. Before expiring at the stake, Huss had foretold that a "hundred years must revolve," and then a great voice would be heard, and to that voice the nations would give ear. The words of the martyr did not fall to the ground. The century passed on amid the thunders of the Hussite victories. And now the number of its years are complete, and the skies of Europe are seen to brighten, not this time with an evanescent and transitory gleam which after awakening the hopes of men is to fade away into the night, but with a light that is to wax and grow till it shall have attained the splendour of the perfect day. Such are the historic links that connect the first missionary band that is seen to issue from Iona in the seventh century, with the great army of evangelists and teachers, with Luther at their head, which makes its appearance in the sixteenth century.

What share has Rome in this work? Her claim is that she is the successor of the apostles, and that to her the nations were committed, that she might feed and rule them. Where is the seal and signature of this? If she is the Light of the world, and its one Light as she claims to be, it must lie just as easy to trace her passage along the ages as it is to trace the path of the sun in the firmament. The one can no more be hidden in history than the other can be hidden in the sky—their beams must reveal both. Where is the splendour Rome sheds on the world? We do not mean the splendour of power, of wealth, of authority; of that sort of magnificence there is more than enough: but where is the splendour of knowledge, of piety, of truth, of holiness? We see her exalting her chief bishop to the throne of Cæsar, and, to maintain his state as a temporal monarch, enriching him with the territories, and adorning him with the crowns of three kings whom she had conquered by the arms of the Franks. Entered on the road of worldly ambition the Roman church makes for herself a great position among the princes and nations of Europe. She has armies at her service; her riches are immense, her resources are boundless; but what use does she make of her brilliant opportunities and vast influence? We see her building superb cathedrals, setting up episcopal thrones, loading her clergy with wealth and titles; but what efforts does she make to instruct and Christianise the ignorant and superstitious nations of the North who had now come to occupy southern Europe, and whom she had received within her pale? Where are the mission-schools she founds? where are the preachers she sends forth? and where are the copies of the Scriptures



which she translates and circulates? The new races, though under the crook of the Christian shepherd, are still substantially the same in heart and life as when they lived in their native forests. They have been led to the baptismal font, and entered on the church rolls, but other Christianisation they have not received from Rome.

From the fifth century onward any assistance which Christianity received from the Church of Rome was incidental. The order established at the beginning was Christianity first, and the church second. But after the fifth century, to take the latest date, that order was completely inverted. Henceforward it was the church first, and Christianity second. The main and immediate object was lost sight of. Instead of a spiritual empire which should embrace all nations, and be ruled by the sceptre of the Heavenly King, Rome aspired to build up a monarchy which should excel that of Cæsar, with a loftier throne for her earthly head, and wider realms for her sway, and she recognized Christianity only in so far as it might be helpful to her in the execution of her vast project. She soon came to see that an adulterated Christianity would serve her purpose better than the pure and simple Gospel, and she now began to work her way steadily back to paganism. It was the speediest way of procuring reverence in the eyes of barbarous nations, and of reconciling them to her yoke. These were the *conversions* which illustrated the power of the “church” in the sixth and seventh centuries.

This was the Christianity which the Church of Rome propagated east and west, and which she transmitted to modern times. This was the Christianity which she sent Boniface to preach to the Germans; and this, too, was the Christianity which she missioned Augustine and his monks to proclaim to the Saxons. This is the only Christianity which we find in the Church of Leo X., at the close of the dark ages, when the new times were about to open in the Christianity which Luther found partly in the Old Bible of the Erfurt Library, and partly in the proscribed doctrines of Wycliffe and Huss. The Christianity of the age of Leo X. was Paganism. The demoniac worship and hideous vices of the age of the Cæars would have been rampant in Europe at this day, but for the great missionary enterprise of the seventh and following centuries which had its first inception in the school and church of Icolmkill. An utter arid desert would the middle ages have been but for the hidden waters, which, issuing from

their fountain-head in the Rock of Iona—smitten like the ancient rock that the nations might drink—flowed in a thousand secret channels throughout Europe.

True, there were individual souls who knew the truth and fed upon it in secret, and who lived holy lives. But they were the exceptions, and their light is all the sweeter and lovelier from the dark sky in which they are seen. We speak of the general drift and current of the Roman Church. The set of that current, as attested by the policy of her Popes, and the edicts and teaching of her councils, was away from Apostolic Christianity, and steadily and with ever increasing velocity and force towards the paganism of old Rome. The laudations which the monkish chroniclers have pronounced on the Roman Church can avail but little in the face of the public monuments of the times which are overwhelmingly condemnatory of that church. These chroniclers naturally wished to glorify their own organisation, and their knowledge of Christianity being on a par with that of their church, they wrote as they believed. But we cannot make the same excuse for later historians, who have been content to repeat, one after the other, the fables of the monkish writers. They ought to have looked with their own eyes, instead of using the eyes of the “holy fathers,” and they ought to have interpreted more truthfully the monuments of history, which are neither few nor difficult to read; and if they had done so they would have been compelled to acknowledge, that if Christianity has been preserved and transmitted to us, it has been preserved and transmitted in spite of the efforts of Rome, continued through successive centuries, and perseveringly put forth to disguise, to corrupt, and to destroy the Christian faith.

There is another service which the laudators of the Roman Church have credited her with, but which we must take leave to challenge. She preserved and transmitted, say they, letters and arts. They are loud in praise of her fine genius and the patronage she lavished on men of letters, and they are pleased to compare her taste and enlightenment with the Vandalic barbarism, as they style it, of the Reformation. History tells another tale, however. The unvarnished fact is, that under the reign of Papal Rome letters and arts were lost, and what the “church” suffered to be lost to the world she never would have been able to recover for it. The vulgar imagination pictures medieval Europe astir from side to side,

with busy hives of industrious monks who devote their days and nights to original studies, or to the transcription of the writings of the ancients. The picture is wholly imaginary. We see the monks busy in their cells; but about what are they busy? With what occupations do they fill up the vacant spaces in the weary routine of their daily functions? Who are their favourite authors? What books lie open before them. Of this learned and studious race, as the imagination has painted them, few have Latin enough to understand the Vulgate. Not one of them can read a page of the Greek or Hebrew Bible. The sacred tongues have been lost in Christendom. The great writers of Pagan antiquity have no charms for the ecclesiastics of that age. They take the parchments to which the grand thoughts of the ancients had been committed, and to what use do they put them? They “palimpsest” then, and over the page from which they have effaced the glorious lines traced by a Homer or a Virgil they gravely write their own stupid legends. It is thus they preserve letters! What fruit has come of the toils of the laborious race of schoolmen, who flourished from the twelfth to the fourteenth century? The modern world has long since pronounced its verdict on that mass of ingenious speculation which they have transmitted to us, fondly believing that they were leaving a heritage which posterity never would let die. That verdict is—“rubbish, simply rubbish.” It is utterly worthless, and is now wholly disused, unless, it may be, to back up a papal brief, or to furnish materials for the compilation of a textbook for some popish seminary. A few names belonging to those ages have survived; but the great multitude have gone into utter oblivion. Bede, and Anselm, and Lafranc, and Bernard, and Aquinas, and Abelard, and a few more have escaped extinction. But what are these few when distributed over so many ages! What are six or a dozen stars in a night of a thousand years!

The truth is that we owe the revival of letters to the Turk; but the sense of obligation need not oppress us, seeing the service was done unwittingly. It was no part of the Turks’ plan to make it day in the West, when his arms plunged the East into night: yet this was what happened. When Constantinople fell in the fifteenth century the scholars of the Greek empire sought refuge in Europe, carrying with them the treasures of antiquity. These they scattered over the West. A new world was unfolded to the eyes of men in Europe. The original tongues of the Scriptures, Hebrew and Greek, were recovered. The immortal works of ancient Greece and

Rome were again accessible. These were eagerly read and studied: thought was stimulated, minds strengthened, the age was illuminated by a new splendour, and modern genius, kindling its torch at the lamp of ancient learning, aspired to rival the great masters of former days. The Reformation arriving in the following century the movement was deepened, and its current directed towards a higher goal than it otherwise would ever have attained. But it must be noted that the Renaissance broke on no Europe bathed, as the result of the genial patronage of Popes, in the splendour of letters and arts; it rose on a Europe shrouded in intellectual and spiritual darkness. We must except Celtic literature and art, of which many monuments still remain scattered up and down in the museums and libraries of Europe,—the attesting proofs of the refinement that accompanied the great missionary enterprise of which we have spoken. This Celtic art was indigenous to Scotland, and in simple beauty was excelled by no art of any country or age.

But the new learning which the Renaissance brought with it found only a limited number of patrons and disciples among the hierarchy of Rome. We must go to the camp of the Reformation to find the scholars of the age. At Wittenberg, not at Rome, was the true seat of the Renaissance. The Grecians and Hebraists, the jurists, historians, and poets of the time are found among the reformers. The court of Leo X. was rich in dancers, musicians, players, jugglers, painters, courtesans, but it had little besides to boast of. When the Pope sought among his theologians for some one to proceed to Germany and extinguish the rising flame of the Reformation, he could find only Dr. Eck and Cardinal Cajetan, and the armour of these champions was shivered at the first onset of Luther, and they fain to shelter themselves from the piercing shafts of his logic behind the ægis of the papal authority. The Pope can hardly claim Raphael and Michael Angelo. True, they worked for him, and took his wages—as they were entitled to do—but they declined submission to his creed. The same may be said of the two earlier and mightier names, Dante and Petrarch: they were Protestants at the core. Rome meted out persecution to them when alive, and appropriated their glory when dead. To do the Popes justice, however, they have enriched the world with one work of prodigious magnitude, the Bullarium, to wit. It is a monument of their labour; we wish we could add, of their charity.

It is with sincere regret that we find ourselves unable to write better things of a "Church" which has stood so long before history, which has occupied so unrivalled a position, and which has enjoyed unequalled opportunities of benefiting the world. But we dare not credit her with services which she never performed, nor award her praise which is the due of others. The hour draws nigh when she must descend from the place she has so long occupied. Her descent into the grave is determined by a law as fixed and unalterable as that which brings the midday sun in due course to the horizon. Seen in the light of that terrible hour, even she must regret that the record of her past should contain so little to awaken in her the hope that the nations will mourn her departure and that the ages to come will mention her name with respect and reverence.

## CHAPTER III.

## A SECOND MORNING IN SCOTLAND.

WE have seen the Goths summoned from their native forests to shake into ruin the heavens and the earth of the ancient world. These structures had served their end, and must now be removed to make room for a political and social constitution better fitted for the development of the race, and the wider and more varied career on which they were about to enter. So vast a change could not be accomplished without the destruction of much that was intrinsically valuable, as well as of much that was no better than superannuated lumber. It was a world that was to be destroyed. The authority of ancient schools, the sanctity of ancient religions, and the prestige of ancient empires, round which had gathered the glory of arms and of arts—on all had doom been pronounced, and all must go down together into destruction, and lie overwhelmed in a common ruin. Like the house of the leper, the old world of Paganism and paganised Christianity must be razed to its very foundations, its stones and timber removed, and the ground on which it stood purified by fire, before the new structure can safely be set up.

For two whole centuries the sky of Europe was darkened by storm after storm. The northern hail did its work with impartial and un pitying thoroughness. It fell alike on Pagan shrine and Christian sanctuary, on Arian and orthodox, on the man of equestrian rank and the tiller of the soil, on the proud trophies of war and the beautiful creations of genius. What the Hun had spared the Vandal destroyed, and what escaped the rage of the Vandal perished by the fury of succeeding hordes. The calamity was tremendous, and seemed irreparable. Yet no shock less terrible could have lifted the world out of the groove in which it had been working three thousand years, in the course of which it had so stereotyped its methods, both of thought and of action, that progress had become impossible to it. If affairs had been left to their ordinary course, instead of pushing boldly on into the future, the human race would have dwelt with morbid tenacity upon its past, ever attempting to come up to the tidemark of former achievement, but ever falling short of it, yet working on under a growing languor, till, wearied out by its abortive efforts, it would have sunk at last into the slumber of senility and dotage.

We have seen races first stagnate, then rot, and finally pass out of sight. "Turkey is dying for want of Turks." The exhaustion, physical, intellectual, and moral, which is rapidly converting into a desert a region once so populous in men and cities, and still so highly favoured by nature, would have been the fate of both the Eastern and Western worlds. The work of Rome in years to come would have been to bury the nations she had conquered; and this task performed, there would have remained to her but one other, even that of digging her own grave and celebrating her own obsequies. This catastrophe, which so surely impended over the world, was averted by the terrific blasts which rushed down upon the dying nations, bringing life upon their wings, by mingling or replacing the corpse-like men with new races, whose bodies were hardy, whose minds wore no fetters, who courted danger, loved freedom, and who saw before them the inspiring vision of a grand future.

A comprehensive survey of the whole terrible drama, from the first bursting of the northern barrier to the final settlement of the ten Gothic kingdoms, warrants the conclusion that the latter and nobler half of the work, that even of building up and restoring, was allotted to the Scots. The other races, it is true, were permitted to share so far in the good work of restoration, though the burden of their mission was mainly to destroy. The Franks, the Lombards, and the Ostro-Goths set up in their several provinces the landmarks of political order after the deluge had subsided. The new Italian race resumed the work of the ancient Greeks, following them *longo intervallo* in the arts of music, of sculpture, and of painting. The Franks, too, though not till after the renaissance, aspired to imitate the old masters in the drama, in history, and in philosophy. The schoolmen of the twelfth and the succeeding century strove to awaken the mind of Europe from its deep sleep, by speculations and discussions which were as ingenious and subtle as they were unquestionably barren of fruit. But in truth the glory of these ages was outside the Gothic world. It was then while the modern European intellect lay folded up, or rather had not yet opened, that the Saracenic genius blossomed. The renown of this people in arms was succeeded by a yet higher fame won in the fields of the severer sciences. To their knowledge of algebra and chemistry they added an enviable acquaintance with ancient letters and learning, and no country did they conquer on which they have not left the marks of

their original intellect and their exquisite taste. All these labourers contributed to the setting up of the modern world. And yet into how small a compass have all these labours now come. The Saracenic noon, which shed a short but brilliant day on the south of Europe and the north of Africa, has set in the night of Islam. The political institutions of the Goths, found to be incompatible with the modern liberties, are now in course of removal. Even their architecture, the earliest and the loveliest product of the northern mind, is unsuited for a worship in spirit: and its imposing majesty and grandeur can never again be united with utility unless adoration should be replaced with pomp, and a worship of soul by a ceremonial performed solely by the body. But there is one notable exception to the stamp of futility and transitoriness borne by all the labours of the world from the fifth to the fifteenth century. And these were ages during which man never rested. He toiled and warred: for, in truth, there was a seed of unrest at the heart of the nations, a principle of agitation at the centre of Europe, which made it impossible that its kingdoms should know repose. This incessant conflict and friction would have worn out the world a second time but for one remarkable fact, which merits our attention; for it is here that we discern the first signs that the storm is to abate, and that out of the night of dark ruin is to emerge the fair morning of a new creation

Among the new races now occupying Europe, there was one race of marked and peculiar idiosyncrasy. This race had been the first to leave their original country—the spacious region which stretched northward from the Rhine and the Danube, and which was then the dwelling-place of numerous but as yet nameless nations. There the earth, held in the chains of winter, save for a brief month or two in the year, brings few of its products to maturity; but the same rigours that stunt the creations of the vegetable world, nourish into strength the body of man. From this land of shrubless plains and icy skies came the Scots, with frames of iron, and souls of singular intensity and ardour. To care for their flocks, or do battle with their enemies, was alike easy and welcome to them. Today, it was the more peaceful part of the shepherd or husbandman which they were called to enact; tomorrow, it was that of the invader and warrior. Thus did they journey onward: feeling the attraction which every new day brought with it of richer pastures, and fearing no enemy who might dispute their advance. Their wandering steps brought them to the



Rhine. Its banks were not yet clothed with the vine, nor its waters reddened with the slaughter which Cæsar was to carry into this region of physical beauty, but tragic memories, at a future day. An extemporised fleet of canoes and rafts transports their families, their camp equipage, and their numerous herds across the “milk-white” river: and now the tops of the Vosges attract their eyes and draw them onward. From the summit of these hills the grassy plains of Gaul are seen spreading out at their feet. Their flocks now depasture the plains which the Soane and Rhone water, and on which the Burgundians are afterwards to find a seat. The Pyrenees are the limits of their farthest wanderings to the south, and from the shores of Spain they pass across the sea to Ireland. In that thinly-peopled country they find room for themselves, and abundant pasturage for their flocks,—and here their long journey terminates.

By-and-by this people began to addict themselves to other pursuits. In the parts into which they have come the first disciples of the Gospel, fleeing from the sword of the Roman emperors, have found refuge. From these early Christians they learn a purer faith than any they have brought with them from their northern home. It is now that it begins to be seen that to them a higher mission has been assigned than to the other tribes, which by this time have begun to pour down upon the Roman empire. To the latter it had been said, “Go scatter the fires of judgment over the earth” to the Scots was the command given, “Go forth and sow the seeds of new and better institutions.” For a work of this importance a special preparation was needed. The seed with which the fields, plowed by the sword, was to be sown, had to be made ready. A remote and solitary retreat, from which the sound of battle and the wrangle of the schools were shut out, must be found for the future “sowers” of Europe. With a view to this the Scots were not permitted to settle within the limits of the empire. They were passed on from country to country, and at last were compelled to fix their permanent home at what was styled “the extremities of the earth.” There they could pursue without distraction their work of preparing the seed for their future sowing. The rising glory of the Roman church could not dazzle them; the Greek and Oriental philosophies, which had begun again to fascinate so many minds, could not withdraw them from the study of that one Book with which they were here shut in. Their thoughts were left free; their conclusions were unfettered; and their theology, drawn from its original source, was the same with that which

the twelve fishermen had brought from the shores of Galilee in the first century. Christianity had lost its power in the schools of Alexandria and Jerusalem; but it recovered its first purity and vigour in the silence of Iona; and, when all was ready, its disciples came forth from their school amid the western seas to preach throughout Europe a purified and reinvigorated Gospel.

It is the men whom we see in the seventh and following centuries traversing Europe in the simple attire of sandals, of pilgrim staff, and long woollen garments, who turned the tide a second time in the great conflict betwixt Christianity and Paganism. Victory had forsaken the standards of Christianity in the seats of her first triumphs. The theories of Origen had covered the East with anchorites; Rome was planting the West with colonies of monks. From the school of Iona came forth missionaries and teachers who laid anew the foundations of law and order. These were the first builders, after the Gothic deluge, of the “new heavens and the new earth,” wherein were to dwell the inductive sciences, the constitutional liberties, and a purified Christianity; and, wherever in after ages these blessings shall extend, it will be acknowledged that the march of the new civilization was led by the missionaries of Iona.

Other causes, too, operated in the way of perfecting the isolation of the Scots during this eventful and formative period of European history. At nearly the same time when the Romans were taking their final departure from Britain, the Scots were crossing the Irish Channel to take possession of that country which was to be the permanent seat of their nation. Immediately consequent on these movements, came another great change which tended still farther to limit, if not extinguish for the time, the intercourse betwixt Scotland and the Continent, and especially between Scotland and that city which was now to reign by her arts as her predecessor had reigned by her arms. The Frank rushed down and occupied Gaul. Next came the Goth, who pushed his bands across the Pyrenees into Spain. Thus, suddenly a wall of barbarism arose between the Scots and the nations of the Continent. That wall kept them separate for well nigh two centuries. The cessation of intercourse between them and their continental neighbours is strikingly marked by the mystery, and even awe with which the writers of the period refer to Britain when it happens to them to mention its name. They speak of it as a land which

men trembled to visit, which was overhung by a cloud like that of night, and in which walked the doleful shapes which haunt the darkness. But, in truth, nothing better could have happened for British Christianity. Barbarous tribes were rushing to and fro upon the continent of Europe, giving its cities to sack, its fields to devastation, and extinguishing the lights of human learning and divine revelation. In Rome, the ancient saying was being fulfilled, "the day goeth away." The churches, now beginning to gather beneath her sceptre, sat in deep eclipse. She had wandered from the evangelical path, and could not show the true road to others. Nevertheless, in proportion as she became unfit to lead, the more ambitiously did she aspire to that high office. It was at this moment, when the prestige of her great name, and the arts she had begun to employ, might have wielded a seductive influence upon the Christians of Britain, that this partition wall of heathen barbarism suddenly rose between them and Rome. For two whole centuries they were shut in with the Bible—the book which Augustine boasted had in his day been translated into all the languages of the world. They drew their system of Christian doctrine from the Scriptures, and they framed their simple ecclesiastical polity on rules borrowed from the same divine source. They asked Rome to tell them neither what they should believe, nor how they should govern themselves. They had found a better instructor, even the Spirit speaking in the Scriptures; and they neither owed nor owned subjection to any authority on earth.

These two centuries of isolation were a singularly fruitful period in Britain, and in particular in the northern half of the island. They were a springtime thrice welcome after the long dark winter of heathenism which had gone before. Christianity, indeed, had been planted in the country some centuries previously, but its organization was feeble, the times were unsettled, the spirit of ancient Paganism was still in the air; and, as the result of these hostile influences there had set in a period of decay. But now there came a second morning to Scottish Christianity. That morning broke on our country not from the Seven Hills; it descended upon it from the skies. Vigorous evangelistic agencies sprang up, one after the other, on our soil, by which the Christianisation of our land was carried to its northernmost shore.

The tempests of Gothic invasion were overturning the Roman empire in

continental Europe; and although it could not be said to be peace in Britain, yet, compared with the furious storms that were raging abroad, the convulsions that agitated the atmosphere of our country might almost be termed a calm. We had no Attila or Alaric, but the Picts from the north, and Scots from Ireland, were making periodic raids into the British kingdom of Strathclyde; and the pagan Jutes, Angles, and Saxons, were ravaging the eastern border of England. Nevertheless, in the midst of these convulsions and alarms, the good work of evangelization went on in our land, and the foundations of the Christian Church were laid deeper than before.

Great Christian individualities now appear on the historic stage. Of some the names still survive; and we can form to ourselves a tolerably well-defined picture both of the men and the work which they did. At the earlier epoch, that is, the first Christianisation of Scotland, although we were conscious that the light was growing, we could not discern the agencies by which it was being spread. But it is different now. Great personalities stand out before us in connection with the evangelization of our country. Simple in life and courageous in spirit, they are seen prosecuting their work with devoted zeal in the midst of manifold confusions and perils. We see them establishing centres, from which they attack and subjugate the heathenism of the surrounding district. We see them kindle with strategic tact a line of lights at certain intervals from end to end of our country; and the evangelic day steadily grows in brightness from the appearance of the first beacon on the shores of the Solway, to that greater lamp which burned at Iona, and in such splendour, that its light, shining beyond the shores of Britain, penetrated the darkness of Gaul, of Germany, and of regions lying still farther north.

No authority outside our island, no foreign church or bishop, originated or directed this movement. It arose on our own soil, and was carried out by our own sons. Its authors sought no permission to preach, to baptize, to plant churches, and to rule them, even from Rome. Their anointing was from a higher source. One of the earliest evangelists, as we shall afterwards see, is reputed to have visited Rome, with what benefit to himself or to his work is not apparent; but with this exception, the early Scottish preachers of the gospel learned it from the Bible, sitting at the feet of native doctors, who sent them forth to teach others so soon as they

judged them qualified and to whom they returned to tell how they had sped in the discharge of their commission.

Thus the Church of Scotland, placed in isolation, and growing up under native tutorship, was independent from the first. She was free born. It never occurred to her to ask right to exist from any foreign church whatever. She found that right in her Heaven-bestowed charter; and the confirmation of a hundred pontiffs, or a hundred councils, would not have added one particle of weight to it. She honoured the Church of Gaul, and she honoured the Church of Rome, though her esteem of the latter might have been less, had she stood nearer to it and known it better; and she adopted what she believed to be good wherever she found it; but she called no church “mistress” in the way of framing herself on its model, much less of submitting to its government.

While affirming the historic fact of the independence of the British churches of the period, we must add that it does not concern us to establish that the early Church of Scotland was not prelatial; nor does it even concern us to establish that it was Presbyterian. The men of that day are not our rule; their opinions and their acting do not bind us. We go higher—higher in time, and higher in authority—for examples to follow, and models on which to frame ourselves. It is the pattern shown to us on the page of the New Testament, and it alone, with which we have to do. There is our exemplar. The early Scottish evangelists may have done right or they may have done wrong; that determines nothing as regards the divinely appointed method of conducting the affairs of what Holy Scripture calls the “kingdom of heaven.” We have here to do with the question only as a historic one. And all history attests that the plan of evangelisation adopted by the earliest founders of the Scottish Church was simple, that it was the plan which they judged best adapted to the circumstances of their country, and that in following it out they acted with conscious and perfect independence of all exterior authority. Details will come before us afterwards. Meanwhile it deserves our notice, that by the opening of the seventh century the Church of Scotland was so consolidated in both her doctrine and her autonomy, that she was able to resist the wiles of Rome, which now, the wall of separation thrown down, approached her more closely than ever, and in vastly enhanced power. The stamp of independence impressed thus early on the Scottish

Church she long continued to retain. Like the disciple, when she was “young she girded herself and walked whither she would;” like him too, when she was old, she stretched out her hands and another bound her, and carried her whither she would not. But the memory of her youth returned: the spirit of old days descended upon her; and under the influence of that spirit the fetters on her arms became but as “green withs,” and rising up she came forth from captivity to challenge more boldly than ever her birthright, which was Freedom.

## CHAPTER IV.

NINIAN—SCENE OF HIS YOUTH—CONVERSION—FIRST  
EVANGELISTIC LABOURS—MODE OF EVANGELISING.

THE breath of a new life was moving over the land. This new life created new men. The new men constituted a new society. Till this time hardly had there been social life in Scotland. There had been chiefs, clans, nationalities, and these nationalities had formed combinations and alliances for war; but the elements which conspire for the creation of social and civil life were lacking. Each man in his innermost being dwelt apart. Christianity, by imparting a common hope, brought men together, and summoned into being a new and powerful brotherhood. Around this new society all interests and classes, all modes of thought and of action began to group themselves. On this root grew up the Scotland of the following ages. Three great personalities—great they must have been since they are seen across the many ages that have since elapsed—lead us onward into the wide field of Scottish history.

The first Scottish individuality that stands out distinct and bold before us is NINIAN.<sup>1</sup> He was born in Galloway towards the middle of the fourth century; the exact year of his birth, no biographer has ventured to fix. A Briton by blood, he was a subject of the emperor by birth, seeing his native district was comprehended in the Roman province of Valentia, of which the boundaries were the Clyde on the north, and the Solway or Roman wall on the south. On the west it extended to the Irish Sea, and on the east it was co-terminous with the Roman province of Bernicia. Ninian's father was a British king. So has it been affirmed. But we have not been told where the dominions of this king lay, and in the absence of any information on the point it is not easy to conjecture. The limits of the Roman empire extended at that time to the shores of the Clyde; and it seems vain to look for the kingdom of Ninian's royal father on the south of that river. And it would seem equally vain to look for it on the north of it; for beyond the Clyde was the region of the Picts. There seems, therefore, no room for such a potentate as some have conjured up to grace the descent of the earliest of Scottish evangelists. "When you hear of Ninian being a king's son," says Alford, naively, "consider that it is the language of legendaries who are very liberal in bestowing that title. By it they

understood the princes and petty chiefs of the provinces of whom Britain in every century had plenty.” The statement of Camerarius, that he was the son of a small chieftain, best accords with the facts of his life as well as with what is known regarding the state of society at the time. It was evidently no common home in which Ninian grew up. His education had more than the usual care bestowed upon it. He enjoyed advantages of home training and foreign travel which would never have fallen to his lot had he been peasant-born.

The landscape on which the youthful eyes of the future evangelist rested was thinly inhabited and poorly cultivated, and apt, when the scud came up the Solway from the Irish Sea, to look a little gloomy. It was a rolling country of knolls and woodlands and grazing grounds, traversed by silvery rivulets which flowed into the Solway, beyond whose broad placid stream rose the dark hills of Westmoreland. It was dotted, moreover, by the mud huts, or dry-stone houses of the inhabitants. In the midst of these poor abodes there rose, but at wide intervals, edifices of a somewhat more pretentious character. These more imposing structures were churches; and they owed their attractiveness rather to the contrast they offered to the humble dwellings around them, than to any grace of architecture, for their construction was of the simplest and rudest kind. Their wall of wattles, plastered with clay, was surmounted by a roof of thatch. So humble were the sanctuaries of the early Britons.

The district had already been Christianised. It had now for some centuries been under the civilizing influences of the Romans, but its religious life had ebbed of late, and the sway of Rome was now becoming dubious and intermittent. As a consequence, the inhabitants passed their lives amid frequent alarms and wars. The Picts and Scots hovered on their northern border, ever on the watch for a favourable opportunity for a raid into the debatable land between the two walls. Such opportunities were of but too frequent occurrence, as the wretched inhabitants knew to their cost. The midland Britons had leaned for defence on the sword of Rome; the Roman Power was now about to withdraw; and left without protection in the presence of fierce and warlike enemies, the Britons greatly needed the invigorating power of a revived Christianity to inspire them to withstand their invaders. It should still farther tend to the security and quiet of the Britons if they should carry the olive branch of a religious



revival into the wild country on the north of them. The Christianisation of the region would moderate if it did not bridle those furious blasts that ever and anon were bursting in from Pictland, and which left traces so frightful on the unhappy country lying between the Clyde and the Solway. Such, possibly, were the views with which Ninian began his evangelization.

We behold Ninian at the opening of his career. What were the stages of his inner life previous to his coming forth as a public teacher? This is precisely what his biographers have not told us. We would have been well content to have been without the account of the miracles with which they have credited him, if only they had given us some of his experiences and wrestlings of soul. No one comes forth on such an errand as Ninian's, and at such a time, without having undergone a previous, and, it may be, prolonged and severe mental discipline. So was it, as we shall see in the sequel, in the case of one of the greatest of his successors, and doubtless it was also so in the case of Ninian himself. But the length and severity of his inward training we have been left to conjecture. "Our saint," says one of his biographers, <sup>2</sup> "was in infancy regenerated in the waters of baptism; the white garment which he then put on he preserved unsullied." The business of his conversion is here dispatched in two sentences; but the process described is too summery, and, we must take leave to say, too mechanical to satisfy us of its reality. It is light, not water, that renews the soul. We should like to know how the light entered, and by what stages Ninian passed to the full apprehension of those great truths which alone can impart to the soul a new life, and open to it a new destiny. His parents, professedly Christian, had told him, doubtless, that Christ was a Saviour. This was a fact which it was pleasant for Ninian to know, even as it is pleasant for one in health to know that there is a physician within reach, although he feels no present need to avail himself of his skill. But one day Ninian felt sick—sick at heart, sick in soul; and he saw that his sickness was unto death—eternal death. Already he felt its sting within him, and a horror of great darkness fell upon him. The morning came, brightening the waters of the Solway, and scenting the flowers that grew along its banks, but now its coming brought no joy to his spirit. What availed these delights to one who felt himself encompassed by a night on which no morning would ever rise? He hid himself from the face of companion and friend. He communed with his own heart, and wept in the

silent glen or by the solitary seashore. It was now that the fact, heard before, returned to his memory, with new and infinite significance, even that there was a physician who could heal the soul. He threw himself at the feet of this Physician, and was healed. A new life had entered into Ninian. He had been born again into a new world.

Ninian now looked with new eyes upon the world of men and women around him. He saw that they too were sick unto death, even as he himself had been, though they knew it not. How could he forbear pointing these unhappy multitudes to that same physician who had wrought the "miracle of healing" upon himself? The multiform misery under which his native province groaned confirmed and intensified his resolution to make known the good news to its inhabitants.

The Christianity of the second and third centuries, which had created not a few beautiful lives, and fostered the order and prosperity of the province, was rapidly declining. There were still pastors in the church, doubtless, but they exercised a shorn influence, and they ministered to dwindling flocks. Of the population not a few had forsaken the sanctuary for the grove, and were now worshipping at the altars under the oaks. The counsels of Scripture and the maxims of experience had been alike disregarded, and the Druidic shrines which the fathers spared to cast down, had become a snare to the sons. On every side was heard the loud laugh of the scoffer and the ribald jest or profane oath of the open profligate. Meanwhile disaster was gathering round the province. The Romans were retiring beyond the southern wall; and with their retreating steps was heard the advancing tread of the Picts and Scots. No longer held in check by the legions, these fierce marauders were breaking over the northern boundary, and inflicting untold calamities on the men of Valentia. The unhappy Britons were in an evil case. The night was often made terrible by the flames of burning raths, and the morning ghastly by the hideous spectacles it disclosed, of the inhabitants slaughtered, or carried captive. Fordun says: "O vengeance of Heaven, exclaims Geoffrey, for past wickedness! O madness in the tyrant Maximus, to have brought about the absence of so many warlike soldiers! . . . The enemy plied them (the Britons of Galloway) unceasingly with hooked weapons, wherewith the wretched populace were dragged off the walls, and cruelly dashed to the ground.... Then they speedily summoned the peasantry, with

whose hoes and mattocks, pickaxes, forks, and spades, they all, without distinction, set to work to dig broad clefts and frequent breaches through the wall, whereby they might everywhere readily pass backwards and forwards.”<sup>3</sup>

It was amid scenes like these that the daily life of Ninian was passed. What could he do to lessen the weight of a misery so intolerable? Such, doubtless, was the question he asked himself as he listened to the oft-recurring tale of rapine and slaughter. He could not recall the legions, nor could he chase from the northern frontier the hordes that were crowding to it and swarming over it. But might he not do something toward restoring the manhood of the Britons, who, instead of facing courageously their foes, were sending their “groans” to Rome for help. He knew enough to understand that Christianity is by far the mightiest creative power in the world. Rome had withdrawn her ægis; might he not replace it with the Gospel, that nurse of bravery as of virtue? Such were the aims with which Ninian entered on his work.<sup>3</sup>

The transition involved a great sacrifice of ease. His youth had been passed in the tranquil pursuit of knowledge, surrounded by the comforts, if not the elegancies of home. The quiet of the study, and the delights of the family, must now be forsaken, and he must brace himself for thankless labour among a rude and semi-barbarous population. The Romans were retiring, and the thin lacquering of civilization which they were leaving behind them had been purchased at the cost of the enervation of spirit which their long dominancy had engendered, and the love for Italian vices with which they had inoculated the simple natives. Moreover, Ninian’s missionary labours must be performed on a field liable to the sudden incursions of war, exposing him to daily peril, and compelling him to be the frequent witness of the agonising sights which war brings in its train. Nor could he flatter himself that his mission would be welcomed by his countrymen, or that either his person or his message would receive much consideration or reverence at their hands. They were returning to the altars of the Druid, and were in no mood to receive meekly the reproofs he might find it necessary to tender to them for their apostacy. They were more likely to deride and scoff than to listen and obey. It was an evil time. The early glory of the British church had faded. When the altar of the Druid smoked in the land, the Britons were saying,

it was better with us than now. There was then no ravaging Pict, no slaughtering Scot. But since the old shrines had been cast down, we have never ploughed our fields, or reaped our harvests in peace. We will return to the service of our fathers' deities. With returning superstition had come dark minds, reprobate consciences, inhuman dispositions, and violent deeds. Such were the men among whom Ninian went forth to begin his missionary labours.

At the hands of the presbyters or bishops—for these two names were then employed to designate the same men and the same office, that, to wit, of the pastor of a congregation—at the hands of the presbyters and bishops that remained in these degenerate times to the British church of Valentia, did Ninian receive ordination. A late writer, speaking of the British church of that period, tells us that “a regular hierarchy with churches, altars, the Bible, discipline, and the creeds existed,” in it, “and that we know this from many sources.”<sup>4</sup> We are not told what these sources are, and we are unable to conjecture. But until we do know we must take the liberty to believe that this “hierarchy” in the early British church is a work of pure imagination. We possess a contemporary, or nearly contemporary description of the British church of Valentia in Ninian's day. We refer to the “Confession of Patrick,” written a few years later. There we can see only two offices, those of presbyter and deacon, in this church. If this is the “hierarchy” which this writer has in his eye, we grant that it did exist; but let it be noted that this is the simple hierarchy or order of the New Testament church: not the pompous gradation of offices and dignities which the Church of Rome instituted in the fourth century. That this was the order of the church of Valentia in Patrick's day, appears from the fact that his father was a deacon, and his grandfather a presbyter; and of higher offices he says not a word; and such, doubtless, was the order of that same church in Ninian's day.<sup>5</sup> The existing state of things, as revealed in the records of the time, make it undoubted that Ninian went forth to begin his evangelization among his countrymen, holding no ecclesiastical rank save that of plain presbyter, or, to use the alternative designation, bishop.

Had Ninian been a monk of the twelfth century he would have gone to Rome to seek consecration, and on his return would have perambulated his native province in miter and crosier, followed by a suitable train of

ecclesiastical subordinates. Ailred of Rievaulx, who wrote his life in the twelfth century, when Gratian of Bologna was embodying the forgeries of Isidore in his “Decretum” as historic facts, does indeed send Ninian all the way to Rome for authority to teach the ignorant people of his native province the Gospel. And Alford detains him not less than twenty-four years in Rome, and occupies him all that while in the study of the doctrine and discipline of the Western Church. Such are the astounding statements of his twelfth century biographers. That Ninian should deem a period of twenty-four years requisite to qualify him to preach to his simple countrymen, or that he should wait till a generation had passed away before returning with the evangelical message to Britain, is what is capable of belief only in the century in which it was first advanced—the century that accepted the Isidorean forgeries, and made them the foundations of Canon Law. We offer no refutation of these statements. Their huge improbability, indeed absurdity, place them beyond the need, we had almost said beyond the possibility of refutation.<sup>6</sup>

What plan did Ninian follow in his missionary labours? None of his biographers have introduced him to us as he appeared while engaged in his ordinary everyday work. Ailred invests him with a halo of miracle; and seen through this luminous haze, his figure appears of more than mortal stature. A preternatural glory, according to Ailred, now broke on the wilds of Galloway. These moorlands became the scene of the same mighty works, which were wrought in Galilee when the Messiah opened his ministry. Ninian healed the sick, opened the eyes of the blind, cleansed the leper, and raised the dead. These stupendous acts conquered the incredulity and disarmed the hatred of his countrymen to the Gospel. So says his biographer, with an air so simple and confiding, as to leave no doubt that he firmly believed the truth of what he wrote, and could hardly deem it possible that any one should question the miracles of the saint. There will be only one opinion, we should think, among our readers, regarding these astounding statements; and yet some of Ninian’s modern biographers seem half inclined to believe that the saint did, indeed, possess miraculous powers, and that the extraordinary acts attributed to him by Ailred are not altogether fabulous.

The real Ninian, however, was simply a home missionary. In the circumstances of his time and country, he could be nothing else. Had we

met him in his daily round of labour, we should, most probably, have seen nothing at all remarkable about him; nothing materially different from the same functionary whom we see, in our own day, prosecuting his labours in our city lanes and amid our rural hamlets. Had we understood his ancient tongue, we should have found Ninian telling to his countrymen the same message which the colporteur and the missionary carry to the outcasts of our own age. Truth acts upon the mind in essentially the same manner in every age—the same in the fourth as in the nineteenth century; and the teacher who would combat vice and ignorance must adopt radically the same methods, whatever his era; or if there be aught of difference, it must be on the side of greater simplicity and directness in early ages than in later times. The men of Ninian's day were rude, the times were calamitous, and, if the missionary really aimed at grappling to purpose with the gross ignorance and daring wickedness that surrounded him, the more simple his methods, and the less he burdened and fettered his message with forms and conventionalities, the greater would his success be. We credit Ninian simply with earnest piety and ordinary sense when we say that he resembled much more the home missionary of our own day than the stoled, tonsured, and girdled functionary of the twelfth century. Ninian went forth among his countrymen not to enlighten them touching the prerogatives of him who assumes to keep the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, but to tell them that the "Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins." That such a message, delivered in a loving, earnest spirit, was followed by conversions, we cannot doubt. The fruits and monuments of his ministry remain even to this day.

### Endnotes

1. His name is variously written. In the Roman martyrology his name is Ninian. In Bede it is Nynias. In William of Malmesbury, Ninas. In Scotland he is popularly called Ringan. The authorities consulted for the life of Ninian are Bede and Ailred, abbot of Rievaulx. These are the two primary authorities. The secondary and minor ones are the author of the *Lives of the English Saints*, a work attributed to the Rev. John Barrow, D.D., late Principal of St. Edmund Hall, Oxford; Dr. Forbes, bishop of Brechin; Dr. Skene, Historiographer Royal for Scotland; and others. Ailred's *Life of Ninian* was first printed by John Pinkerton (London, 1789), from a

fine manuscript in the Bodleian library at Oxford. Pinkerton's *Life* has been inserted in the *Historians of Scotland*, after having been carefully collated with the Bodleian MS., and amended in some places, by Bishop Forbes. Ailred tells us that he derived his materials for the biography of Ninian from an earlier *Life of the Saint*, *Barbario Scriptus*. But neither the abbot of Rievaulx, nor the barbarous writer who preceded him, tell us much more about Ninian than had been previously communicated by Bede. Both are indebted for their facts to the monk of Jarrow. *The Life* by Ailred, is meagre in its facts, but rich in miracles and prodigies. In this respect it is a picture of the twelfth century in which it was written, not of the Apostle of Galloway in the fourth. We have not followed slavishly any of Ninian's biographers. We have taken the liberty to form our own judgment as to what manner of man he was. Discarding legend we have looked at Ninian in the light of his age, the work he did, and the records that remain of it; and from this complex view we have arrived at our own conclusion, touching his character and his aims.

2. *Lives of the English Saints*, St. Ninian, chap. ii. 21. London, 1845.

3. John of Fordlun's *Chronicle of the Scottish Nation*, lib. iii. cap. 10.

4. Bishop Forbes, *Life of St. Ninian*, p. 28; *Hist. of Scotland*, vol v.

5. Even two centuries later there was but one ecclesiastic, and he a Roman pervert (see vol. i. 329) who was reckoned a bishop in all the region of the Picts, Scots, and Britons. Prior Richard, writing of the year 689, says, "At that time he (S. Wilfrid) was the sole bishop in all the territories of King Oswi, that is, in all the nations of the Bernecians, the Britons, the Scots of Lindisfarne, the Picts, for Candida Casa had not yet had a proper bishop."—*Hist. Ch. of Hexham*, p. 22, Surtees ed.

6. His biographer, Ailred, says, "He ordained priests, consecrated bishops, arranged the ecclesiastical orders, and divided the whole country into parishes." This is probably the chief authority on which the Bishop of Brechin rests the statement given above. Ailred's statement refutes itself. To facilitate the working of this imaginary hierarchy, Ailred makes Ninian divide the whole country into parishes. But it is agreed on all hands that parishes were unknown in Scotland for about 600 years after Ninian.

## CHAPTER V.

## NINIAN VISITS ROME—HIS JOURNEY THITHER—ROME IN NINIAN'S DAY.

BY-AND-BYE there comes a change over Ninian. The simple missionary of Galloway sets out on a visit to Rome. So do all his biographers relate, though none of them on what seems perfectly reliable authority. As we see him depart, we fear lest Ninian may not return the same man he went. The Church of Rome was just then beginning to forsake the simple path of the Gospel for the road that leads to riches and worldly grandeur. As yet, however, her glory was in good degree around her, although the prestige of the old city on the Tiber, and the rank to which her pastor had by this time climbed, was filling the air of western Christendom with a subtle, intoxicating element, which was drawing to Rome visitors from many lands who felt and yielded to the fascination. Of the number we have said was Ninian. Damasus, in whom the papal ambition was putting forth its early blossoms, then filled the Roman See. The pontiff welcomed, we cannot doubt, this pilgrim from the distant Britain. He saw in his visit an omen that the spiritual sway of the second Rome would be not less extensive than the political dominion which the first Rome had wielded. This journey painfully convinces us that even in Britain, Ninian had begun to breathe Roman air. This is seen in the motives attributed to him for undertaking this journey to "the threshold of the Apostles." He began to suspect that the Christian pastors of Britain did not know the true sense of Scripture, and that he himself was but imperfectly grounded in it, and that should he go to Rome and seat himself at the feet of its bishop, he would be more thoroughly instructed, and the Bible would reveal to his eye many things which it refused to disclose to him in the remote realm of Britain.

We know of nothing in the Bible itself which warrants the belief that it is a book which can be rightly understood in but one particular spot of earth, or truly interpreted by only one class of men. It bears to be a revelation to mankind at large.

"There is nothing more certain in history," says Bingham, "than that the service of the ancient church was always performed in the vulgar or



common language of every country.”<sup>1</sup> From her first foundation it was the pious care of the church, when a nation was converted, to have the Scriptures translated into the tongue of that nation. Eusebius says, “they were translated into all languages, both of Greeks and barbarians, throughout the world, and studied by all nations as the oracles of God.”<sup>2</sup> Chrysostom assures us that “the Syrians, the Egyptians, the Indians, the Persians, the Ethiopians, and multitude of other nations, translated them into their own tongues, whereby barbarians learned to be philosophers, and women and children, with the greatest ease, imbibed the doctrine of the Gospel.”<sup>3</sup> Theodoret asserts the same fact, “that every nation under heaven had the Scripture in their own tongue; in a word, into all tongues used by all nations in his time.”<sup>4</sup> The long residence of the Romans in the country had familiarized the provincial Britons with their tongue, and they had access to the Word of God in Latin, and, doubtless also in Belgic or Armoric, if not British Celtic. The Bible till now had been regarded as a book for the world, to be translated, read, and interpreted by all.

But towards the opening of the fifth century it began to be whispered that this was an erroneous and dangerous opinion. Only episcopal insight, and especially Roman episcopal insight, could see all that is contained in this book. Ordinary Christians were warned, therefore, not to trust their own interpretations of it, but to seek to have it expounded to them by that sure and unerring authority which had been appointed for their guidance, and which was seated at Rome. It is easy to see with what a halo this would invest that old city on the banks of the Tiber, and with what authority it would clothe its pastor. It was the first step towards the withdrawal of the Book, and the installing of the Roman bishop in its room as the sole dictator of the faith and the sole lord and ruler of the consciences of men.

These arrogant assumptions would seem to have gained so far an ascendancy over the missionary of Galloway, that he forsook for a while his labours among his countrymen who so greatly needed his instructions and guidance, and set out towards the eternal city. He crossed the Alps, it is said, by the Mons Cenis pass—in those days a rugged path that wound perilously by the edge of black abysses, and under horrid rocks and gathering avalanches. His biographer, Ailred, in enlarging on the

motives which led him to undertake this journey, speaks of him as assailed by the temptation “to throw himself on the resources of his own mind, to trust to the deductions of his own intellect, either from the text of Holy Scriptures, or the doctrines he had already been taught. For this he was too humble.”

Shielded by his humility from the snare to which he was exposed, that even of exercising the “right of private judgment,” Ailred makes Ninian break out into the following soliloquy, expressive of ideas and sentiments altogether foreign to the fourth century, but which had come to be fully developed in the twelfth, when Ailred puts them into Ninian’s mouth. “I have in my own country,” Ninian is made to say, “sought him whom my soul loveth, and have not found him. I will arise: I will compass sea and land to seek the truth which my soul longs for. But is there need of so much toil? Was it not said to Peter, thou art Peter, and upon this rock will I build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it? In the faith of Peter then, there is nothing defective, obscure, imperfect: nothing against which evil doctrine or perverted sentiment, the gates as it were of hell, could prevail. And where is the faith of Peter, but in the See of Peter? Thither, certainly, I must go, that leaving my country, and my relations, and my father’s house, I may be thought worthy to behold with inward eye the fair beauty of the Lord, and to be guarded by his temple.”<sup>5</sup>

There was now at Rome a galaxy of talent, which, doubtless, helped to draw Ninian thither. Jerome, and others, whose renown in learning and piety filled Christendom, and has crossed the ages to our own days, were then residing in that city. These men had no sympathy with the rising tide of superstition, or the growing ambition of the Popes; on the contrary, they strove to repress both, foreseeing to what a disastrous height both would grow if allowed to develop. But their presence dignified the old city, and the simple grandeur of their character, and the fame of their erudition, shed upon Rome a glory not greatly inferior to that of its first Augustan age. It was natural that Ninian should wish to see, and to converse with these men.

The Itineraries and the Roman roads, portions of which are still traceable on the face of England, enable us to track the route by which Ninian would travel. Starting from Annandale, he crosses the Solway and

traverses the great military way to Carlisle. Thence he would continue his journey along the vale of the Eden and over the dark hills of Stanemoor. We see him halt on their summit and take his parting look of the mountains amid which he had passed his youth. As he pursued his way, many tokens would meet his eye of the once dominant, but now vanished, power of the Druids. Here and there by the side of his path would be seen oak groves felled by the axe, dolmens overturned, and stone circles wholly or in part demolished. Even in our day these monuments of a fallen worship are still to be beheld in the north of England: they were doubtless more numerous in Ninian's time.

Resuming his journey, Ninian would next cross the moorlands that lie on the other side of the Stanemoor chain. The Roman road that runs by Catterick would determine his path. Traversing this great highway, not quite obliterated even yet, and then doubtless in excellent condition, seeing it led to the main seat of the Roman government in Britain, Ninian in due course arrived at York.

This city was then one of the main centres of Christianity in Britain. It had its schools of sacred and secular learning; nevertheless its predominant air was still Roman. It had its courts of Roman judicature, its theatres, baths, mosaic pavements, and tutelary shrines within the walls; and suburbs in the Italian style. It was honoured at times with the presence of the Emperor. It was, in fact, a little Rome on English soil. From York our pilgrim would proceed by the well-frequented line of Watling Street to London, and thence to Sandwich, where he would embark for Boulogne.

Ninian's steps are now on Gallic earth. He beholds around him the monuments of an older civilization than that of his native Britain. Pursuing his way he arrives at Rheims, a city which, in little more than a century afterwards, was to witness the baptism of Clovis an event which gave to the "church" her "eldest son," and to France the first of its Christian kings. Lyons is the next great city on his route. Here Ninian's heart would be more deeply stirred than at any previous stage of his journey. The streets on which he now walked had been trodden by the feet of Irenæus: for Lyons was the scene of the ministry and martyrdom of that great Christian Father. Every object on which Ninian's eye lighted—the

majestic Rhone, the palatial edifices, the crescent-like hills that walled in the city on the north—all were associated with the memory of Irenæus, and not with his memory only, but with that of hundreds besides, whose love for the Gospel had enabled them to brave the terrors of the “red-hot iron chair” the form of death that here awaited the early disciples of Christianity. As Ninian ruminated on these tragedies, for they were of recent occurrence and must have been fresh in his knowledge, he accepted these morning tempests, now past, as the pledges of a long and cloudless day to Christian France. Alas, Ninian did not know, and could not forecast, those far more dreadful storms that were to roll up in the sky of that same land in a future age and drench its soil with the blood of hundreds of thousands of martyrs.

Not long does Ninian linger on this scene of sad but sublime memories. Again he sets forth. His steps are now directed towards those white summits, which, seen across the plains of Dauphine, tower up before him in the southern sky, and admonish him that the toils and perils of his journey are in a measure only yet beginning. The Alps were already passable, but with extreme difficulty and hazard. The legions, marching to battle, and the merchants of the Mediterranean coast, seeking the markets of Gaul, had established routes across them; but to the solitary traveller the attempt to climb their summits was an arduous and almost desperate one. He was in danger of stepping unawares into the hidden chasm, or of being overtaken by the blinding tourmette, or surprised and crushed by the falling avalanche. Nor were their precipices and whirlwinds the only perils that attended the traveller in these mountains. He ran the farther risk of being waylaid by robbers or devoured by wolves. These hazards were not unknown to Ninian. His journey must be done nevertheless. Classic story, and now the tale of Christian martyrdom, had made the soil of Italy enchanted ground to him. But a yet greater fascination did its capital wield. That city had cast out its Cæsar, but it had placed in his seat one who aspired to a higher lordship than emperor ever yielded. These gates Ninian must enter, and at these feet must he sit. Accordingly, joining himself, most probably, to a few companions, for such journeys were now beginning to be common, we see him climbing the lofty rampart of rocks and snows that rose between him and the goal of his pilgrimage, and their summits gained, he descends by an equally perilous path into the Italian plains. The Goth had not yet entered that fair land, and Ninian

saw it as it appeared to the eye of the old Roman. The bloom of its ancient fertility was still upon its fields, nor had its cities lost the chaste glory of classic times. But the flower of Italy was Rome, the fountain of law, the head of the world, and now the centre of the Christian church; and Ninian hastens his steps thither.

We behold the missionary of Galloway at the “threshold of the Apostles,” as the church of the first parish in Rome now began to be magnificently styled. Here the greatest of the Apostles had suffered martyrdom, and here thousands of humble confessors had borne testimony to the faith by pouring out their blood in the gladiatorial combats of the Coliseum, or at the burning stakes in the gardens of Nero. But now the faith for which they had died was triumphing over the paganism of the empire, and the churches of the west were crowding to Rome and laying their causes at the feet of her bishop, as if in acknowledgment that their homage was justly due to her who had fought so terrible a battle, and had won so glorious a victory. Such, doubtless, were the thoughts of Ninian as he drew nigh to the eternal city. We know the overpowering emotions with which a greater than Ninian, eleven centuries later, approached the gates of Rome. Ninian entered these gates, not, indeed, unmoved, but with pulse more calm, and mind less perturbed, than the monk of Wittenberg. In Ninian’s day the Papacy was only laying the foundations of its power, and laying them in a well-simulated humility; in Luther’s age it had brought forth the top-stone, and its vaulting pride and towering dominion made it the wonder and the terror of the nations.

How did Ninian occupy himself in Rome? How long did he sojourn in it? What increase did he make in knowledge and in piety from all that he saw and heard in the capital of Christendom? To these questions we are not able to return any answer, or an answer that is satisfactory. The mythical haze with which his medieval biographers invest him is still around him. In their hands he is not the missionary of the fourth century but the monk of the twelfth; and if we shall relate, it is not necessary that we shall believe all that they have told us of his doings in Rome. He was shown, doubtless, the prison in which Paul had languished, and perhaps the bar at which he had pleaded. He was taken to the dark chambers in the tufa rock beneath the city, which had given asylum to the Church during the terrible persecutions of her infancy. He saw the basilicas being

converted into churches; and in the transformation of the ancient shrines into Christian sanctuaries, he beheld the token that the great battle had gone against paganism, despite it was upheld by all the authority of Cæsar and by all the power of the legions. The descendants of those who had lived in the catacombs were in Ninian's day filling the curial chairs of the capital, and the tribunals of the provinces, or leading the armies of Rome on the frontiers. The orations of Chrysostom, the "golden-mouthed," and the writings of Augustine, were supplanting the orators and poets of pagan literature. These auspicious prodigies—the monuments of the irresistible might with which Christianity was silently obliterating the ancient pagan world, and emancipating men from the bondage in which its beliefs, philosophies, and gods had held them—Ninian did not fail to mark. These victories he could contemplate with an unmixed delight, for in their train no nation mourned its liberties lost, nor mother her sons slaughtered. They enriched the vanquished even more than the victor; and they gave assurance that the power which had subdued Rome would yet subdue the world.

But there were other things to be seen at Rome fitted to awaken a dread that a new paganism was springing up, which might prove in time as formidable a rival and as bitter a persecutor of the Gospel as that whose decay and fall was to be read in the deserted altars and desolate fanes of the metropolis. Crowds were flocking to the catacombs, not fleeing from persecution like their fathers, but seeking to enkindle their devotion, and add merit to their services, performed in the gloom of these sanctified caverns. The supper was celebrated at the graves of the martyrs: the dead were beginning to be invoked: art, which is first the handmaid, and next the mistress, was returning with her fatal gifts: the churches were aglow with costly mosaics and splendid paintings. But the "holy of holies" in Rome was the tomb in which slept the Apostles Peter and Paul. Their bodies, exempt from the law of corruption, exhaled a celestial odour, able to regale not the senses only, but to refresh and invigorate the spirit. Thither, doubtless, was Ninian conducted, that he might return to his own country fully replenished with such holiness as the bones of martyrs and the mystic virtue of sanctified places can confer.

But what of the new truths and deeper meanings with which Ninian hoped his understanding was to be enlightened, when, lifting his eyes from the

page of Scripture, he fixed them on the holy city of Rome, and set forth on his journey to it? Some things met his gaze in Rome that were indeed new, and which, if they did not minister to his edification, we may well believe, excited not a little his surprise. The temples which the followers of the humble Nazarene had reared for their worship, presented by their magnificence a striking contrast to the wattle-built churches of Galloway! And then came the pomp of the church's services: the rich and costly vestments of the clergy! the splendid equipages with which they rode out! the luxurious tables at which they sat—all these things were new to him. Compared with the golden splendour in which Ninian found the Roman Church basking, it was but the iron age with the Church in Scotland.

Ninian saw something in Rome more magnificent still. There he beheld, with wonder, doubtless, the blossoming power of her chief bishop; fed by riches, by adulation, by political power, and the growing subservience of the western churches, the Roman prelate was already putting forth claims, and displaying an arrogance which gave promise in due time of eclipsing the glory of the Cæsars. And not unlike their shepherds, were the flocks of the Eternal City. The members of the church, not slow to follow the example set then, were delighting in pomps and vanities. The days were long past when the profession of Christianity exposed one to the sword of the headsman, or the lions of the amphitheatre. The bulk of the professors of that age had succeeded in converting religion into a round of outward observances, which cost them far less pain than self-denial and sanctification of heart.

The bishop and clergy of Rome at the time of Ninian's visit have been pictured to the life by historians of unimpeachable veracity, eyewitnesses of the men and the scenes which they describe. Let us enter the gates which those writers throw open to us, and observe what is passing within them. It is the year 366. We find Rome full of violence, war is raging on its streets; the very churches are filled with armed combatants, who spill one another's blood in the house where prayer is wont to be made. What has given rise to these sanguinary tumults? The Papal See has become vacant, and Rome is electing a new bishop to fill the empty chair. Two aspirants offer themselves for the episcopal dignity—Damasus and Ursinus. Both are emulous of the honour of feeding the flock; but which

of the two shall become shepherd and wield the crook, is a question to be determined by the sword. Damasus is backed by the more powerful faction of the citizens; and when the struggle comes to an end, victory remains with him. He has not been elected to the chair in which we now see him seating himself—he has fought his way to it and conquered it, as warrior conquers an earthly throne, and he mounts it on steps slippery with blood. He has fought a stout if not a good fight, and his mitre and crook are the rewards of victory. The choice of the Holy Ghost, say the scoffers in Rome, has fallen on him who had the biggest faction. So do contemporary historians tell us. “About the choice,” says Ruffinus, speaking of the election of Damasus, and describing what was passing before his eyes, “arose a great tumult, or rather an open war, so that the houses of prayer, that is, the churches, floated with man’s blood.”<sup>6</sup> The historian Ammianus Marcellinus has drawn a similar picture of Rome at that time. The ambition that inflamed Damasus and Ursinus to possess the episcopal chair was so inordinate and the contest between them so fierce, that the Basilica of Sicinius, instead of psalms and prayers, resounded with the clash of arms and the groans of the dying. “It is certain,” says Marcellinus, “that in the church of Sicinius, where the Christians were wont to assemble, there were left in one day an hundred and thirty-seven dead bodies.”<sup>7</sup> The historian goes on to say that when he reflected on the power, the wealth, and the worship which the episcopal chair brought to its occupant, he ceased to wonder at the ardour shown to possess it. He pictures the Roman prelate in sumptuous apparel proceeding through the streets of Rome in his gilded chariot, the crowd falling back before the prancing of his steeds; and after his ride through the city, he enters his palace and sits down at a table more delicately and luxuriously furnished than a king’s.<sup>8</sup> Baronius admits the truth of this picture, when he replies that Marcellinus, being a pagan, could not but feel a little heathen envy at the sight of the Christian Pontiff eclipsing in glory the Pontifex Maximus of old Rome. And as regards the “good table” of the bishop, Baronius rejoices in it “as one who delighted,” says Lennard, “to hold his nose over the pot.”<sup>9</sup> Again we find the pagan historian counseling the Christian bishop thus: “You would consult your happiness more if, instead of pleading the greatness of the City as an excuse for the swollen pride in which you strut about, you were to frame your life on the model of some provincial bishops, who approve themselves to the true worshippers of the Deity by purity of life, by modesty of behaviour,



by temperance in meat and drink, by plain apparel and lowly eyes;”<sup>10</sup> a piece of excellent advice doubtless, which, we fear, was not appreciated by him of the “western eyebrow,” as Basil styled Pope Damasus.

When these sordid humours, to speak leniently of them, infected the Head, what was to be looked for in the clergy? With such an example of pomp and luxury daily before their eyes, they were not likely to cultivate very assiduously the virtues of humility, abstinence, and self-denial. The Roman clergy of the day, it should seem, were devoured by a passion for riches, and that passion was fed by the wealthier members of their flocks, whose profuse liberality ought to have more than satisfied their avariciousness. A stream of oblations and gifts flowed without intermission into the episcopal exchequer. Not on the dignitaries of the church only did this shower of riches descend; it fell in almost equal munificence on many of the lower clergy. It was the practice of the time for the matrons and widows of Rome to choose a cleric to act as their spiritual director. The office gave occasion to numerous scandals and gross abuses. The pagan Prostratus, the consul of the city, could afford to be jocular over the subject of clerical magnificence. “Make me bishop of Rome and I shall quickly make myself a Christian,” said he to Damasus, putting his satire into the pleasant form of a jest. Jerome, who was then in Rome in the midst of all this, was too much in earnest to give way to pleasantry. It was indignation, not mirth, with which the sight filled him. He denounces the salutations, the cozenings, the kissings, with which these reverend guides flavoured their spiritual counsels.<sup>11</sup> He describes, in terms so plain that we cannot here reproduce them, the devices to which the clergy had recourse to win the hearts and open the purses of their female devotees. He addresses his brother ecclesiastics now in earnest admonition, now in vehement invective, and now in keen sarcasm. The world aforesaid honoured them as poor, now the Church blushed to see them rich. “There are monks,” says Jerome, “richer now than when they lived in the world, and clerks which possess more under poor Christ than they did when they served under rich Beelzebub.” But grave admonition and cutting sarcasm were alike powerless. The rebukes of Jerome, instead of moderating the greed of the clergy, only drew down their hatred upon their reprover; and soon he found it prudent to withdraw from the metropolis, which he styles “Babylon,” and to seek again his cave at Bethlehem, where, no longer pained by the sight of the pride, ambition,

and sensuality of Rome, he might pursue his studies in the quiet of the hills of Judah.

Even the Emperor Valentinian found it necessary, by public edict (A.D. 370), to restrain the wealth and avariciousness of the ecclesiastics. More striking proof there could not be of the extent to which this contagion had grown in the Church. The edict was addressed to Damasus, and was read in all the churches of Rome. The emperor prohibited, under certain penalties, all ecclesiastics from entering the houses of widows and orphans. And, farther, it was made illegal for one of the ecclesiastical order to receive testamentary gift, legacy, or inheritance from those to whom he acted as spiritual director, or to whom he stood in religious relations only. The money or property bequeathed by such illegal deeds was confiscated to the public treasury. This edict had respect to the clergy alone; and it is worthy of notice that it proceeded not from a pagan persecuting ruler, but from a Christian emperor. Its significance was emphasized by Jerome, when he pointed out that of all classes, not excepting the most sunken, this edict singled out and struck at the ecclesiastical order. "I am ashamed," said he, "to speak it: but the priests of idols, stage-players, charioteers, and courtesans, are capable of legacies and inheritances; only clergymen and monks are disabled from inheriting. Neither do I complain of the law, but grieve to see that we should deserve it." Approving the wisdom of the law, Jerome yet bewails its utter inefficiency. The avarice of the clergy baffled the vigilance of the emperor. The law stood, but methods were devised for circumventing and evading its enactment. Donations and deathbed bequests to ecclesiastics continued, only they reached them in a more circuitous way. They were made over to others, to be held by them in trust for clerical uses. This law was renewed by succeeding emperors in even stricter terms. Theodosius and Arcadius attempted to grapple by statute with this great evil, but the churchmen of the day were fertile in expedients, and the patriotic intentions of these legislators were completely frustrated. Legal enactment's cannot reach the roots of moral maladies. The thirst for gold on the part of the clergy continued unabated; and with the increase of superstition, the disposition to load priests and monks with the good things which they professed to have renounced, grew stronger, baffling not only legal restraints but the sanctity of personal and family obligations. Eight centuries later the evil had come to such a head in England that the

sovereigns of that country found it necessary to revive the spirit of the laws of Valentinian and Theodosius. These statutes came just in time to prevent the absorption of the whole landed property of England into the "Church" and by consequence, just in time to save the people from inevitable serfdom, and the public order and liberties from utter destruction.

To return to Rome, where Ninian was still sojourning, the growth of ecclesiasticism and the decay of piety went on by equal stages. The citizens of the metropolis and of Italy generally were leading careless and luxurious lives. They had invented a devotion which could be slipped on or of at pleasure. A few moments were all that was needed to put them into a mood fit for the church or for the theatre. They passed with ease from the secular games to the religious festivals, for both ministered an equal excitement and an equal pleasure. They thought not of what was passing on the distant frontier. There the Scythian bands were mustering, prepared to take vengeance on the mistress of the world for centuries of wrong endured at her hands. The Romans deemed themselves far removed from danger under the ægis of an empire the prestige and power of which were a sufficient guarantee, they believed, against attack or overthrow. Rome was entering on a new and grander career: There awaited her in the future, victories which would throw into the shade those her generals had won in the past. She had linked her destinies with Christianity; and that would never perish. She had become the seat of a pure faith, and this, it was presumed, had imparted to her a new life and a higher intellectual vigour. Her bishop was filling the place of Cæsar. Her city was consecrated by the labours and blood of martyrs. Within her were the tombs of the apostles, and their protection would not be wanting to a city in which their ashes reposed. Bishops and Presbyters, as of old kings and ambassadors, were crowding to her gates. The churches East and West were beginning to recognize her as umpire and judge by submitting their quarrels and controversies to her decision. The barbarous nations were beginning to embrace her creed and submit to her sway; and surely her children in the faith would never come with armies to destroy her. If ever they should appear at the gates of Rome, it would be to bow at the footstool of her bishop, not to rifle her treasures and slay or carry captive her citizens. On all sides were prognostications of growing power and extending dominion. Deceived by these signs of outward

grandeur, the Romans failed to note the cloud of barbarian war which was every day growing bigger and blacker in the northern horizon.

### Endnotes

1. Bingham, *Origines Ecclesiasticæ*, vol. v., p. 90. London, 1719.
2. Eusebius, *Præpar. Evang.*, lib. xii., cap. 1.
3. Chrys., *Hom. in Ioan.*
4. Theod.; Bingham, *Origines Eccl.*, vol. v., p. 96.
5. *Life of Ninian*, by Ailred, chap. 2; *Historians of Scotland*, vol. V., *Lives of the Eng. Saints, Ninian*, p. 39.
6. Ruffin., lib. i. c. 10.
7. The Basilica of Sicinius is probably the church of the *Santa Marie Maggiore* on the Esquiline Hill.
8. *Am. Marcel.*, lib. xxvii. See also *Gregory Nazianzen, Orat.* xxxvii.
9. *Baronius*, tom. iv, An. 367.; Samson Lennard, *History of the Papacy*, prog. 6, 41.
10. *Am. Marcel*, xxvii. 3.
11. *Hieron. ad Eustochium*, Epist. 22.

## CHAPTER VI.

NINIAN RETURNS TO BRITAIN—VISITS MARTIN OF TOURS—  
BUILDS A CHURCH AT WHITHORN.

NINIAN returned to Britain before the storm burst. He stands once more amid the scenes of his youth. It is the silver tides of the Solway, not the yellow waves of the Tiber that flow past him: and over him is spread the hazy canopy which encircles the brown moorlands of his native land, not the vault of sapphire light which is hung above the vine-terraced hills and marble cities of Italy. This brilliance of earth and air he left behind him when he crossed the Alps. But Ninian knows that there is a better light than that which kindles the landscapes of southern countries into glory; and the supreme wish of his heart is to diffuse that light over his native Britain, and carry it into every mud hut and wattle-built dwelling of his beloved Galloway; and if he shall succeed in this he will not envy Italy those natural splendours in which it basks, and in which it so far transcends the dusky plains of the land of his birth.

The statement may be accepted as true, that on his way back to Britain, Ninian visited Martin of Tours. This doctor was beyond doubt a man of capacious intellect, of large and bold conceptions, of resolute will, and, we may add, of fervent piety. His genius stamped itself not only upon his own age, but also upon the ages that came after him. He aimed at elevating society by exhibiting to it a new, a grand, and a striking model of self-denial. We must be permitted, however, to caution our readers when we speak of these great fathers, by asking them to bear in mind that their greatness was relative rather than absolute. The general level of knowledge and piety in those ages was low, and men like Martin towered, therefore, all the more conspicuously above their fellows. Their contemporaries were somewhat prone to worship what seemed so far above themselves. It behooves us at this day, in taking the real measure of these giants, as they seemed to the men of their own age, and still more to the chroniclers of succeeding centuries, to reflect that we view them through the mythical and magnifying clouds of the Middle Ages; and the effect of being seen through such a medium may be fairly judged of when we say that the biographer of Martin, Sulpicius Severus, relates of him, that he was made bishop of Tours (A.D. 371) for the benevolent act of

raising two men from the dead. Christianity was then young, and it breathed its spirit of youthful enthusiasm into some of its disciples. We, at this day, walk by precedents; we inquire for the “old paths.” There was room in that day for bold, original, and untried experiments; and it was in this way that Martin of Tours put forth his great powers, and sought to benefit his age.

After Jerome, Martin of Tours was the great patron and promoter of monachism in the West. It seemed to him, the one only cure for the great evil of his age. He could not help contrasting the self-indulgent, easygoing lives of the Christians of the West with the austerities practiced by the anchorites, amid the sands of Nubia, or the rocks of Arabia Petræa; and he sought, by transplanting the monastic system into Gaul, to restore the moral tone of society. Martin would have better succeeded had he restored the purity of the church’s worship, and the vigour of her early discipline, the decline of which had occasioned the universal laxity and corruption he bewailed. Instead, he grafted on the church an order unknown to primitive times. He did not, however, transplant the monachism of the Thebaid into the West without very materially modifying it. In the East eremitism had been an utterly idle thing. The hermit could not have benefited the world less, if instead of retiring to his cell he had gone to his grave. Eastern eremitism was even a more idle thing than the idleness Martin sought to cure by it. The monachism of Gaul was not recluse and solitary, but social and operative. The members of the new brotherhoods worked together in the way of diffusing Christianity, or of reviving it in the particular localities in which their branches or houses were placed. The days of monastic greed and dissoluteness were yet remote; and, meanwhile, these religious confraternities were in a measure “the hearth of a near national life.” In a society becoming every day more demoralized, they were, in some cases, missionary institutes; in others, schools of letters and philosophy; and in others, examples and models of agricultural industry,—and not infrequently, all three in one.<sup>1</sup>

Martin, as a matter of course, could communicate his views to Ninian; and Ninian would as naturally defer to the great doctor then in the zenith of his fame. The missionary of Galloway became a convert to monachism as an agency for combating the corruption and dispelling the ignorance of the age. On these lines he would henceforward work on returning to

his native land. Accordingly, before leaving Tours he arranged with Martin that masons should follow him into Scotland and build him a sanctuary in which he might celebrate worship with more solemnity than aforesaid. Were there no workers in stone in Scotland? Doubtless there were, but they were unskilled in the architecture of such edifices as Ninian now wanted for the worship of the Britons. A church of wattles had contented him aforesaid, but now he had been to Rome, and he must needs frame his worship somewhat more on an Italian model. He had sat at the feet of Pope Damasus; and though he had not changed the substance of his Christianity, he had changed somewhat the outward forms of its expression. His piety bore about it henceforward a Roman flavour. The experts arrived from Tours in due time, and the building was commenced. It rose at Whithorn, on the north shore of the Solway, on a rocky promontory jutting boldly out into the Irish Sea.<sup>2</sup> It was constructed of white stone; hence its name, Candida Casa, the white house. Martin of Tours died while it was in course of erection, and this fixes its date at the year A.D. 397.<sup>3</sup> It was dedicated to Martin, and is believed to be the first edifice of stone which was built for the worship of God in Scotland.

No better site could Ninian have selected as a basis from which to carry on his missionary labours. His field of service lay within the two walls. This was the territory, of all others in Britain, the most exposed to the tempests of invasion and war. Now it was the Picts and Scots who descended upon it from the North to spoil the fair fields of the provincials; and now it was the Romans who hurried up from the South to drive back the plundering hordes and rescue the lives and properties of the helpless natives. It is hard to say whether the spiritless people suffered more from the ravaging Pict, or from their ally the Roman. When battle raged, Ninian could retire to his promontory, and there find sanctuary; and when the storm had passed, he would again come forth and resume his labours. For though the promontory of Galloway formed part of the debatable land, it was really outside of it, so far as concerned the incursions of plundering armies. It ran off to the southwest, stretching far into the tides of the Irish Channel, and was surrounded on all sides by the sea, save on the north where it joins the mainland. Its southern and western sides present a wall of precipitous cliffs, inaccessible to the invader, though they open in creeks in which a boat, pressed by the tempest, may find shelter. The remote and difficult character of the locality gave it exemption

from the inroads of war, though the echoes of battle sounded almost continually in its solitudes. The Romans in their progress northward passed it by, seeing nothing in the lonely wood-clad projection to make them diverge from their line of march; and when the mountaineers descended to rob the harvests and barnyards of its neighbours, they concluded, doubtless, that there was nothing in the barren promontory to reward a predatory visit, and so they too left it untouched. It was lying in its native ruggedness when Ninian took possession of it. It was covered with thick forests, amid which dwelt a tribe of native Britons, to which Ptolemy gives the name of Novantes, and which he tells us had built two towns, clearing, doubtless, a space in the forest, and constructing their houses with the timber which had grown on the site. The names of the two towns were Rerigionium and Leucopibia.<sup>4</sup>

Let us recall the scene as it presented itself to the eyes of the apostle of Galloway as he went and returned on his missionary tours. From the highest point of the promontory the view is extensive and imposing. At our feet are the waters of the Irish Channel laying the headland all round, save on the north where it expands into the mainland. Across a narrow reach of sea, looking distinct and near, are seen the mountains of the Isle of Man, rising before us out of the ocean. Turning to the north the eye falls on the successive headlands of Galloway, ranged in line along the coast, and running onwards to near Portpatrick. Following their rugged tops, the eye rests on the hills of Wigtown, Kirkcudbright, and Dumfries shires, which are seen, ridge behind ridge, swelling up from the shores of the Solway. The view to the east completes the picture. Spread out before us is the coast of Cumberland, with its nestling bays, and its white houses gleaming on the beach; and behind is the waving and picturesque line of its blue hills. Such was the chosen retreat of Ninian. Its clothing was not so rich as in our day. It wore its natural wildness and ruggedness, but its varied panoramic beauty of ocean and bay, of headland and mountain, was the same then as now.

Here, then, we behold Ninian establishing his headquarters, and founding a college or school of missionaries, or monks, as they now began to be called, though we must be careful not to confound them with the class that bore this name in after ages. That Ninian continued to labour in the cause of his country's Christianity we cannot doubt, but the change his



views had undergone was followed, doubtless, by some change in his modes of working. His methods were now more histrionic. He made less use of oral instruction, and relied for results more on the celebration of church services, after the pattern he had seen abroad. He had gone to Rome to be better instructed in Holy Scripture. Was its meaning clearer to him now? Did it open, as never before, and disclose hidden treasures of grace and wisdom? Or, rather, was there not now a shadow on the page of the Bible which dimmed its light, and made Ninian imagine that he was gazing into profounder depths when he was only looking through an obscurer medium? We much fear that so it was, in part, with the apostle of Galloway, after his return from Rome; for when popes and synods are accepted as the interpreter of the Bible, the Spirit, who is the divine interpreter, withdraws.

### Endnotes

1. Guizot, *Hist. de la Civilization en France*, t. i., p. 110.
2. Bede, *Eccl. Hist.*, lib. iii. cap. 4.
3. The precise year is disputed; but all, or nearly all authorities, place the death between A.D. 397 and 401. The Church of St. Martin in Tours was destroyed at the first French Revolution. His tomb was behind the grand altar, a plain erection, rising three feet from the ground, and without figures—Tillemont, *Memoires*; Le Brun des Marettes, *Voyage Liturgiques de France*, Paris, 1757.
4. All three, Leucopibia, or Leucoikidia, Candida Casa, and Whithern, are identical in meaning, signifying Whitehouse. The first is of Greek derivation, the second Latin, and the third Saxon, from *ærn*, house.

## CHAPTER VII.

EASTERN MONACHISM—SCOTCH MONACHISM—  
ARRANGEMENTS AND STUDIES IN CANDIDA CASA—NINIAN'S  
LAST LABOURS AND DEATH.

NINIAN'S visit to the metropolis of the Christian world had, doubtless, enlarged his knowledge of men, and made him more exactly informed as regards the actual condition of the churches of Italy and France. It gave him an opportunity of judging for himself how the current was setting at the centre of ecclesiastical affairs, and afforded him, moreover, a near view of the men, the fame of whose names was then filling the Christian world. He could not but feel how little successful he was in his search for the simplicity and humility of early days; and he must have noted the contrast, sufficiently striking, between the lowliness in which Paul had preached the Gospel in this same city, and the pomp in which Damasus, who claimed to be the apostle's successor, filled the chair and performed the duties of the Roman pastorage. Nor could he fail to observe what an affluence of music and painting, of festival and ceremony, was required to keep alive the piety of the age, and how successful the Christians of Rome were in combining pleasure with devotion. But what mainly drew his eye, doubtless, was the striking phase which was passing upon the Christian world. This was the rage for monachism. Speaking of the number of the monks of Egypt, Gibbon sarcastically remarks, that "posterity might repeat the saying, which had formerly been applied to the sacred animals of the same country, that in Egypt, it was less difficult to find a god than a man."<sup>1</sup> A colony of the disciples of Anthony, the patriarch and leader of the Egyptian hermits, made their appearance at Rome a little before Ninian's visit. Their savage appearance excited at first astonishment and horror, which, however, speedily passed into applause, and finally, into imitation. Senators and matrons of rank, seized with the new enthusiasm, converted their palaces and villas into religious houses; and frequent monasteries were seated on the ruins of ancient temples, and in places still more unlikely. A monastery arose in the midst of the Roman forum. Its inmates were here environed by no desert, unless it were a moral and spiritual one

The first preachers of the Gospel were sent forth into lands teeming with

inhabitants, and cities crowded with population. They were the salt of the world; and how else could they perform their function but by mingling with the mass of mankind? The new champions of Christianity and propagators of the Gospel retired to the desert and burying themselves in its solitudes, held converse with only the wild beasts of the wilderness. The good this accomplished for Christianity is at least not obvious. He who would disperse the darkness must hold aloft the light, not hide it under a bushel or bury it in the caves of the earth. He who would subdue the wickedness around him must grapple with it, not surrender the field to the enemy, by abandoning the combat. It is contact and conflict with evil that gives the finishing touch to the nobility and purity of human character. It is a low and selfish Christianity which has no higher aim than one's own perfection and happiness. No higher aim had the thousands of eremites who peopled the deserts of the East. Monachism at the best was an intensely selfish and self-righteous thing. It exacted, moreover, from its votaries, but little real self-denial. To sleep on a bed of stone, to make one's daily meal on herbs, and to drink only the water of the spring, is no extraordinary stretch of self-mortification. We are not sure that the hermits that swarmed in the deserts of Syria and Egypt in Ninian's day did not find a hazy pleasure in this sort of life. But to toil among the wretched and fallen; to put up with the thanklessness or the hatred of those whom one seeks to turn from the paths of ruin; or to endure the reproach and loss which fall to the lot of the man who stands up against the evil though fashionable courses of the world—that is real mortification, and it is also the highest style of Christianity. The Christianity that began to be popular in Ninian's day was not of this sort. It lacked bone and muscle; and instead of seeking to stem the tide of evil, it retired to sleep and dream in the sunny air and quiet solitudes of Egypt and Palestine, and left the great world to go its own way. It was said of old, "a living dog is better than a dead lion." We may repeat the saying with reference to monachism. One single man girded for Christian service would have been worth more than all this multitude of somnolent monks.

It is creditable to Ninian, coming from Rome, where this folly was beginning to be held in repute as the perfection of the Christian life; and coming too from the feet of Martin of Tours, who was introducing this type of religious life into France, thought as we have already said, in a modified form; that he instituted in Galloway, not a monachism that would

retire to its cell, and shut itself up from the people whose conversion it professed to seek, but a monachism that would walk abroad, traversing the length and breadth of Galloway, would mingle with the peasantry, visit them in their huts, and join itself to them as they pursued their labours, and by patient instruction and loving admonition, reclaim them to the "old paths" in which their fathers walked, but from which the sons had turned aside. The task before Ninian was not that of a first-planting of Christianity in Galloway. Earlier, if humbler, missionaries had kindled the light in this region two centuries before Candida Casa rose on the promontory of Whithorn. But much had gone and come since. The unsettling influences of war, the corrupting example of the Roman soldiery, and the difficulty attending access to the fountains of knowledge—all worked together to the effect of well-nigh obliterating the traces of the early evangelization of the region, and left it nearly as dark as before the first missionary had set foot in it. The roots of Druidic paganism were still in the soil; the unsettled times favoured an aftergrowth of this branch of heathenism, and the altars in the groves were being rebuilt; and with the old worship returned the old impieties. There followed a dismal train of evils—war, robbery, massacre, and famine. These occurrence sharply castigated but did not reform this degenerate race.

The work was too great for Ninian alone. It must be his first care to create a staff of fellow-labourers. The monastic institutions of the age suggested perhaps the first idea of the method by which he must proceed in gathering round him a fitting agency for his contemplated evangelisation. His institution must not be exactly of the sort of those now rapidly rising all over the East: for what good would a colony of drowsy monks, entrenched on the promontory of Whithorn, do the ignorant natives of Galloway? The monasteries of Martin in Gaul came nearer Ninian's idea of the community he wished to found. But history presented him with a still better model. He knew that there had flourished in ancient Israel schools of the prophets, and that the youth trained in these seminaries did not waste their energies in the desert, or shirk the duties of manhood and citizenship under the mantle of the prophet. Nothing that appertained to the good of their nation was foreign to them. They mingled with their countrymen, courted hard service, studied the law this hour, and cultivated their plot of ground the next. They taught in the synagogue and in the

school. They went their circuit, instructed, reprov'd, and warn'd, as occasion required, and thus kept alive the spirit of the nation, and delay'd, though they could not avert, its ultimate degeneracy. It was to these ancient and sacred models that Ninian turn'd back in search of a pattern to work by. He would revive the "schools of the prophets" on British soil, only borrowing from the monasteries of Gaul such alterations and improvements as the country and the age made necessary, and grafting the new appliances on the ancient Hebrew institution.

We are able thus to picture the interior of Candida Casa. It is at once a church and a school; a house of prayer on Sabbath, a scene of catechetical instruction on week day. The youth that here assemble to Ninian belong probably to all three nations—the Britons, the Picts, and the Irish Scots. They forget their nationality at the feet of their teacher. Their Christianity makes them one. They are fettered by no vow of obedience. They are voluntary recruits in the evangelical army; and the same devotion that led them to enroll in the corps makes them submissive to the commands of its general. Nevertheless there must needs be a prescribed order in the little community, and that rule all must walk by; otherwise the household will get into confusion, and the school of Candida Casa be broken up. Each portion of the day has its allotted task: there are hours for sleep, hours for devotion, hours for study, and hours for recreation or manual labour. Care is taken that there shall be no lost time. Horologes had not yet been invented, nevertheless the inmates of Candida Casa could measure the march of the hours with wonderful precision. They could read the movements of time on the great clock of nature. The first gleam of light on the summit of the mountains of the Isle of Man was the signal for quitting their dormitories, and commencing the labours of the day. The slow march of the western shadows up the sides of the Kirkcudbright hills announced in like manner the approach of the hour for retiring to rest. So did they pass the summer months. In winter they rose before the sun, and waited, in devotion or in meditation, the slow coming of the day. When its brief hours had sped, and evening had dropped her veil on the face of the Irish Sea, and wrapped in darkness the tops of the Cumberland and Dumfriesshire hills, they would prolong their labours far into the evening.

The main business of the monastery was study. Its inmates were there to

prepare for public work, and all the arrangements of the institution were with a view to that great practical end. They had bidden adieu to the world, not, like the eastern anchorites, for ever, but only for a while, that they might come back to it better fitted for doing it service. They could serve it only by knowledge; and they made haste to learn, that they might the sooner begin their work of teaching. The hours were precious, for every day their countrymen were straying farther from the path of true knowledge and heavenly virtue.

What were the branches that occupied the attention of the youth in Ninian's college, and what was the length of their curriculum? These are two points of great interest, but, unhappily, no history, and no tradition even, have transmitted to us any information respecting either of them. It is probable that the subjects studied were few, and that the curriculum was short. It was then "the day of small things" as regards philosophical and theological studies in Britain, and the two great universities of England might not be flattered were we to assign to Candida Casa the honour of being their pioneer. It is probable that the Scriptures, either in British Celtic or in Latin, were the textbook in this humble seminary. Jerome's translation of the Bible, the Vulgate, was already in existence; and the familiarity of the British youth with the Latin tongue, through their intercourse with the Romans, would enable them to peruse it. If the scholars of Ninian drew their theology from this fountain alone, that theology would be of crystalline purity. What other source than the Scriptures had the first evangelists who planted the Gospel on the ruins of Paganism? The works of Augustine, too, were finding their way into Britain, and it is possible that copies of some of the writings of this father may have enriched the monastery of Candida Casa. Numerous other commentaries were beginning about this time to make their appearance, and were being circulated throughout the Christian world. Whether these expositions traveled so far as Britain we cannot say. If they failed to reach our shores, their absence could be no cause of regret. They only made dark what the Bible had made clear. They contained a large admixture of the Platonic philosophy. Their authors, not content with the natural and obvious meaning of Holy Writ, searched beneath its letter for allegorical and philosophic mysteries; and instead of discovering the "deep things" of revelation, brought to light only the follies of past ages. They created a kind of twilight which was neither the Pagan night

nor the Christian day. The Platonic philosophy was the upas tree of the Church of the fourth century.

After the Scriptures the oral instructions of Ninian were doubtless the staple of the educational means of the young evangelists who gathered round him. If to have trodden the path is one's best qualification for being the guide of others, Ninian was well fitted to preside over the youth of Candida Casa. He had himself gone every step of the way along which he was to conduct them. He had sat in darkness, and knew how to lead them out of night. He had served on the mission-field on which their lines were to be passed. He had stood in the midst of the ignorance, the misery, and the vice of his countrymen, and he knew the patience needed to bear, and the courage needed to grapple with this host of evils. He knew how to equip those young soldiers for the battle into which he was about to send them forth. They must put on the armour of light; they must grasp more ethereal weapons than those with which earthly warriors fight. Moreover, he would fortify them beforehand with suitable counsels, so that they might not be taken by surprise when they encountered unexpected obstacles, nor grow fainthearted when they saw that victory was not to be so easily or so speedily won as they had hoped. Having clothed them in armour suited to their warfare, that even of both dogmatic and pastoral theology, as then known, he gave them their staff, their water bottle, their woolen robe, along with his benediction, and sent them forth.

But what of the theology of Candida Casa? Was it a well of knowledge undefiled, or was it slightly tintured with the Platonic philosophy? And what of the president of the institution? Was Ninian still the humble missionary, or was there now about him just a little affectation of prelatric arrogance and rule? It is possible that these things Ninian might have unconsciously brought with him from Rome. Ecclesiastical history presents us with not a few melancholy examples of men who have passed from light—into darkness, and from a first into a second and deeper darkness, believing all the while that they were advancing into clearer light. Many have thus fallen who have been altogether unconscious of declension. The change begins, not in the understanding, but in the heart—that fountain of life and death. The heart, beginning to disrelish the light, says, "It is not good." The understanding hastens to support the choice of the heart, and says, "The light is not sufficient." At this stage the man

turns inward in search of a clearer light in himself than the light which has been stored up in the Sacred Volume. He finds it, as he believes, in his own consciousness or inward judgment concerning things. "This," he says, "is a clearer and a surer light than any without me. I feel it; it is within me; I am sure of it. It cannot mislead, and I will guide myself by it." By this light within him, he tests the light without him. He inverts the true order; he puts the human above the divine; he makes his reason or the reason of other men, the church for instance, the judge and test of the light of revelation. From the moment that the exterior light, the one infallible guide is forsaken, the man rushes onward, with the full consent of heart and understanding, from error to error, never doubting that he is advancing from truth to truth. Each successive error is held to be a fresh discovery of truth; and each successive shade, as the darkness deepens around him, is welcomed as a new and brighter illumination. The delusion becomes at last complete, and the unhappy man, having wandered out of the way of understanding, "remains in the congregation of the dead." These are the mementos and monuments—very solemn and terrible they are—that meet one's gaze, at every short distance, on the highway of ecclesiastical history.

But we have no reason to think that the change Ninian's views had undergone was of this sweeping character. What must have helped to retain him within the old landmarks was his devotion to the cause of his country's evangelisation. While sojourning at Rome, he could hardly avoid being somewhat influenced by the two rising forces of the time, the Platonic philosophy and the old pagan ritual, but once back again in his own country, and face to face with its ignorance and vice, Ninian must have felt how short a way philosophic fancies and ritualistic ceremonies could go as a cure of these evils. If his understanding was somewhat dimmed, the fervour of his spirit was not extinguished. The fire within him continued to burn to the close of his life. We have no contemporary record of the reformation which Ninian accomplished, but there is enough of traditional and monumental proof to satisfy us that the change he effected was great, and that the school of prophets which he established at Whithorn continued, after he had gone to his grave, to be a centre of evangelical Christianity which diffused its light all round over a very wide area.



Bede has credited Ninian with the conversion of the southern Picts, and says that the glory is his of spreading the light of Christianity over that whole region of Scotland, which extends from the Clyde to the foot of the Grampian mountains,<sup>2</sup> and in this the monk of Jarrow has been followed by all who have written on the life and labours of the apostle of Galloway. But we know that the venerable chronicler is mistaken when he makes Ninian the first apostle of the Picts. There were earlier missionaries in those parts than the men of Ninian's school and time, though possibly Bede, in an unhistoric age, knew nothing of them, and was not unwilling to have it thought that the first light that shone on our country came from that city from which Ninian had just returned. There is undoubted historic evidence for the fact that the southern Picts were Christianized two centuries before Ninian flourished. The Gospel outran the arms of Rome, and won victories where Rome reaped only defeats. The terrible persecutions that broke out, first, under Domitian, and finally, under Dioclesian, forced many of the Christians to flee beyond the Roman wall into Pictland, carrying with them the light of Christianity. Irenæus of Lyons, Tertullian<sup>3</sup> of Carthage, and Origen, the men of the widest information and highest character of their day, in clear and unmistakable words affirm the same thing. Our own Buchanan, who is better informed on these matters, and whose judgment is more reliable than many of our late writers on early Scottish affairs, tells us that Donald I. (about 204) not only himself professed the Christian religion with his family, but used his influence to extirpate the superstition of the Druids and plant Christian teachers throughout his dominions; though his efforts were greatly hindered by his wars with the Romans. In these good labours he was followed by King Crathilinth in the end of the same century, and by his successor Fincormachus (A.D. 312-350), in whose reign "the Gospel did flourish in purity and in peace." These facts violently conflict with the assertion that Ninian was the first planter of Christianity among the southern Picts.<sup>4</sup>

But though we refuse to Ninian the honour of being the first to open the door of the evangelical kingdom to the Picts we willingly concede the probability of his having effected a much needed revival of religion in that nation. Matters had recently changed greatly for the worse in Pictland. The Romans contrived to sow dissension between the Picts and their allies the Scots. The latter were forced to leave the country for a time

and pass over into Ireland. The Romans seeing the Picts weakened by the departure of their companions in arms, fell upon them and exacted bloody satisfaction for the many raids they had made into the region beyond the wall. There followed confusion in both Church and State in Pictland. These were the sorrowful scenes that were passing before the eyes of Ninian. He knew well the miserable estate of his neighbors, and if he did not go in person, he would not fail to send missionaries from Candida Casa to reanimate the spirits of the people, borne down by so many calamities, and to restore the churches fallen into ruins mid the factions and wars which had overwhelmed the State. It is true that hardly could one bring with him a worse recommendation to the Picts than that he came from Rome, and bore a commission from thence. Rome they regarded as their mortal enemy; they were contending daily in battle against her as the invader of their country and the destroyer of their liberties, but affliction lay heavy upon them, and they listened to the missionaries of Ninian despite that their teaching mayhap bore about it a savour of Rome. So far we are able to concur in the statement of Bede, but not farther. Ninian revived but did not plant Christianity among the Picts.

We return to Candida Casa. On the promontory of Whithorn, looking forth upon the Irish Sea, the waters of the Solway at its feet, rises the fair white temple which the orthodox masons of Martin of Tours had reared as the first stone-shrine of the evangelical faith in our land. It attracts the eye of the mariner as he pursues his voyage up the Irish Channel. "What building is this," he asks, "so unlike all else in this land?" and he is told that "it is the church and school of the Apostle of Galloway." He carries tidings of it to Ireland. From across the sea come the young Scots of Ulster to take their place with the British youth at the feet of Ninian; and from this Missionary Institute, as it would now be called, go forth trained evangelists to spread the light of the Gospel on both sides of the Irish Sea. There is a doubtful tradition that Ninian's last years were passed in Ireland, and the 16th of September is sacred to his memory in the Irish calendar. We incline, notwithstanding, to think that the life and labours of Ninian closed where they had been begun. He died, it is said, in the year 432; but this too is only conjecture.

Ninian left behind him a name which continued to grow in brightness

during the succeeding centuries. Other doctors arose to fill his place, now vacant, at the head of Candida Casa, and this establishment, under the name of the “Monastery of Rosnat,” continued for a considerable time in great repute as a school of Christian doctrine and a nursery of religious teachers.<sup>5</sup> When we reflect how few are the recorded facts of Ninian’s life, it is truly marvelous to think with what a fullness and vividness of personality he has stood these fifteen centuries before the Scottish people. He owes this distinct and lifelike individuality, in part at least, to this immediate background. Behind him hangs the prehistoric darkness, and this sable curtain makes him stand out bold and full in the eyes of posterity. But there must have been in the man himself elements of power to make an impression so profound that it has never been effaced from that day to this. His name is still a household word in his native Galloway. The tourist stumbles on churches and memorials bearing his name, north and south—in short, in almost every part of the country. His biographers of the Middle Ages have thrown around him the glory of miracle. Ninian had no need of this legendary apotheosis. His true miracle was his work accomplished in so dark an age and amongst so rude a people.

Of the last hours of Ninian we have no record, not even a tradition. That his end was peace we cannot doubt. Let us hope that as he neared his setting the dimness of Rome departed and that the clear unclouded light of the Bible returned and once more shone around him. When the rumour spread that the missionary of Candida Casa was no more, we can well imagine there was mourning over all the land. From north and south devout disciples, who in former days had sat at his feet, assembled to carry their revered master to the tomb, sorrowing that they should hear his voice no more. Pict and Scot met with Briton around his grave, and the solemn act in which all three took part of committing his mortal remains to their last resting-place enabled them to realize their essential unity, and the oneness of their faith. He was buried probably on the scene of his labours, but no man knoweth of his sepulchre to this day.

We have seen in Ninian a missionary, but a great missionary; a little swayed, it may be, by the rising fashions of his age—monachism and ceremonialism—but his heart notwithstanding in the right place, and ardently set on the enlightenment of his countrymen and the redemption

of his native land from the twin powers of ignorance and superstition—in short, one of the three mighties in Scotland that preceded the Reformation as Reformers of the church and champions of Christianity. These three were Ninian, Patrick, and Columba.

### Endnotes

1. *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, vol. vi., chap. 37.
2. Bede, lib, iii., c. 4.
3. *Britannorum, inaccessa loca, Christo vero subdita*—contra Judæos,
4. Buchan. *Hist.*, lib. iv. See also David Buchanan's *Preface to Knox's History*, pp. xxxviii. xxxix. Edin., 1790.  
Patrick in his letter to Coroticus, speaks of the Picts as having apostatised, which clearly implies a previous conversion.  
Bishop Forbes, of Brechin, admits that "the circumstances of his (Ninian's) life, as well as other testimonies, make it evident that before his time the light of the Gospel had shone upon these remote shores."—*Life of Saint Ninian*, General Introduction, p. xxvi.; *Historians of Scotland*, vol. v.; Haddan & Stubbs, *Councils and Eccl. Documents*, vol. i., p. 1-14.
5. *Life of Ninian*, Introduction XLII, *Historians of Scotland*, vol. v.

## CHAPTER VIII.

PALLADIUS—PELAGIANISM—PALLADIUS SENT TO THE SCOTS IN IRELAND—REJECTED BY THEM. DIES AND IS BURIED AT FORDUN.

PALLADIUS is the next name in which the history of Scotland runs on. He comes upon the stage as Ninian is disappearing from it. The life and labours of Palladius are among the most obscure of which history has deigned to take notice. We see him dispatched from Rome on an important mission to the British Isles. We do not doubt that he arrives in due course on our shores, but when we search for his footsteps in our country, no traces can we discover of his presence, and the first monument on which we light of his having ever been in Scotland is his burial-place at Fordun, in the Mearns. So shadowy a personage could have no claim to appear on the historic page were it not that his name stands connected with a noted heresy which arose at that period, and which was beginning to corrupt the simplicity and dim the early glory of the Church in Britain.

There was then great fermentation of ideas going on at the centre of the religious world. It was now as when the four winds of the heaven strove upon the great sea, and creatures of new and monstrous shape lifted up their head above the waves. The appearance of Christianity had awakened into temporary life the worn-out energies of the Pagan world. The action and interaction of the Greek, the Roman, and the Asiatic mind, and the struggles of old and expiring systems to graft themselves on the living stock of Christianity, and so prolong their existence under a new name, gave birth to numerous and diverse theories in which the Gospel was modified, or metamorphosed, or altogether subverted. Among other heresies which arose at this time was Pelagianism.

The exposition of Pelagianism belongs to the province of the theologian rather than to that of the historian. Nevertheless the purposes of history require that we offer a sketch of the general features and character of this system. It will show how the current is setting, and what are the thoughts that occupy the men of the age, if we attend a little to this matter. Pelagianism has as its central proposition that man's freewill is unimpaired, that no influence fetters or dominates his choice between

good and evil, and that he has all the power he ever had, or needs to have, if he chooses to put it forth, to will and to do what is spiritually good. In short, that man now is as perfect as Adam was when he came from the hand of his Maker. One sees at a glance that this is a doctrine which cannot stand alone, and that it must needs be buttressed on all sides by cognate ideas and propositions. Pelagianism sweeps the whole field of theological science, and urgently demands that all within that field shall be brought into harmony with itself. In other words, it demands a remodeling of the Gospel as a remedial scheme. It is clear that a perfect man can have known no fall, and it is just as clear that he can need no saviour. The authors of Pelagianism, therefore, felt themselves bound, in consistency, to deny the fall in the Scriptural sense. They admitted indeed that Adam had sinned, but they maintained that the consequences of his sin were restricted to himself, that he did not transmit either guilt or corruption to his posterity, and that though he died, death was not a penalty but a natural evil. They farther taught, as a necessary consequence of their main and central doctrine, that every human being comes into the world with as pure a nature and as free a will as Adam possessed in innocence. So much for the back-look in the case of Pelagianism.

Turning to its forward aspect, it was seen to have attendant upon it, on this side also, certain very serious consequences. If man is not in bondage to guilt and corruption, where is the need of a Redeemer? If he retains his original perfection, where is the need of the Spirit to renew him. Is he not able to save himself? His understanding, as clear as Adam's was, shows him what is good; his will, as unfettered as was that of the first man, enables him to choose good; he has but to walk straight on and he will without fail inherit life eternal. Such are the conclusions at the two extremes of this system, and no other conclusions could such a middle position have, logically and consistently, save these—a denial of the fall on the one side, and a denial of the atonement on the other. Pelagianism was Greek thought in a Christian dress. The essence of the theology of Pelagius was the ethical development of man, as the Greeks taught it, resulting at last in perfection, and attained simply by his own natural powers.

Pelagianism was the boldest defiance which had as yet been flung down to Christianity. Its rise marks a noted advance in the war, already

organized, in which the Gospel was fated to struggle century after century for the redemption of the race. Pelagianism was a change of front in that war—in truth, a march back to old Paganism. All previous heresies had assailed Christianity from the Divine side, by impugning the rank or the nature or the person of its Author, the second person of the adorable Trinity. This assailed Christianity from the human side, by underrating the injury to man by the Fall, and representing his nature as so perfect as to need no renewal. The policy pursued till now had been to lower Deity; the plan now followed was to elevate humanity—to lift up man into a position in which he should not need the aids of Divine grace. All subsequent heresies have grown out of the Pelagian root; they have been but modifications or developments of Pelagianism. But we touch the verge of polemical theology, and must again return within the lines of history.

The Romans quitted our country about the year 410. Their departure was followed by a century of darkness, and during that dreary period we are left without historic guides, or guides that we can follow, their facts are so few, and their fables are so many. It was during this century that the Pelagian heresy broke out. It arose at Rome, but it had for its author a native of Britain. That author was surnamed Morgan, a Welshman, it is supposed, who, after the manner of the times, had Latinised his name into Pelagius.<sup>1</sup> Pelagius had as his fellow-labourer in the work of propagating the heresy which bore his name an Irishman called Celleagh, or Kelly, who too, following the fashion of the day, dropped the Hibernian appellation, and assumed the more classic term of Coelestius.<sup>2</sup> Morgan and Kelly, or, as they chose now to be called, Pelagius and Coelestius, were the first two promoters of this heresy. Its real author, however, if we may believe Marius Mercator,<sup>3</sup> was Rufinus, who having instilled his pernicious principles into the minds of his two disciples from the British Isles, sought through them to give currency to his opinions while he himself remained in the background.

Morgan and Kelly, or as we shall henceforth call them, Pelagius and Coelestius had arrived in Rome before the year 400. Sound in the faith, and blameless in life, they were honoured with the friendship of the eminent men then living in the Metropolis of Christendom. Their reputation for talent and learning was great. Though Pelagius gave his name to the

heresy he was not its chief propagator. This unenviable distinction fell to the lot of his coadjutor Coelestius. The latter was of noble birth; and being a man of acknowledged ability, and possessing, moreover, the quick wit of his countrymen, he stood forth at the head of the sect as its *facile princeps*, and the most successful expounder of its peculiar tenets. Jerome, who was at Rome when the Pelagian heresy broke out, opposed it with characteristic vigour. He could find no name to vent his contempt of it but the scathing epithet, “puls Scotorum,” that is, Scotch porridge, or Irish flummery. Morgan, he compared to Pluto, and Kelly to his dog Cerberus, hinting at the same time that of these two infernal divinities the “dog” was better than the “king,” and the “master rather than the disciple of the heresiarch.”<sup>4</sup>

Pelagius and Coelestius went forth to spread their doctrines at an hour dark with portents of coming evil. On the northern frontier of the empire was seen the avenging Goth; the twilight of the Middle Ages was already darkening the sky of the world; and more ominous still, the “shepherds” of the church slumbered at their post. Drowned in worldly pleasures, they gave no warning to the flocks over which it was their duty to watch. The two apostles of Pelagianism, finding the field free to them, divided Christendom between them. Pelagius selected the East as his field of labour, Coelestius turned his steps toward the West. The latter crossing the sea announced to the famous churches of Africa that he had come to emancipate them from the slavery of the Fall, and the enfeebling doctrine of man’s inability to work out his own salvation. Augustine, who was then in the zenith of his influence, was not slow to enter the lists against the preacher of these novelties. In presence of such an antagonist, the defeat of Pelagius was assured from the first. He failed to plant Pelagianism in Africa, and retired crestfallen from the field, where he expected he would be hailed as a deliverer, and over which he hoped to walk in triumph. The churches of Africa, even under the “Doctor of grace” might have no very clear or definite view of the great doctrine of justification by faith as the church had till Luther appeared; yet they were not prepared at the bidding of Coelestius, to accept a theology which made the history of the Fall little better than a fable, and the doctrine of original sin an ensnaring and enfeebling delusion.

Pelagius had better success in the East. There Pelagianism was already



in the air. This unhappy state of things was mainly owing to the teaching of Origen whose views were somewhat akin to those of Pelagius. The bishop of Jerusalem welcomed the heresiarch, and in that very city where the great Sacrifice had been offered did a doctrine find favour which made its offering to be in reality without purpose. In a synod held soon after at Diospolis, the ancient Lydda, the tenets of Pelagius were pronounced orthodox. This judgment, however, was reversed by Pope Innocent. Condemned by Innocent, Pelagius was next acquitted by his successor Zosimus. But again Zosimus, at the expostulation of Augustine, retracted his own judgment, and finally condemned Pelagius as a heresiarch.<sup>5</sup> So little theological discernment had the synods and bishops of those days. The Pelagian champion was bandied from council to Pope, and from one Pope to another; he was branded with heresy this hour; he was absolved and pronounced orthodox the next, and finally the brand was reimposed by the same hands which had taken it off. Ecclesiastics who show so little confidence in their own judgment have verily small claim to demand the absolute submission of ours.

Meanwhile the heresy which was being approved and condemned by turns at Rome, was spreading in the countries north of the Alps. It had infected the churches of France, and in that country synods were convoked to examine and pass sentence upon it. Traveling still farther northward Pelagianism reached at last the land which had given birth to its alleged authors. It was tainting the theology and rending the unity of the British and Scottish churches (A.D. 420), and this it is that now brings Palladius upon the scene. The mitre of the See of Rome—for as yet the tiara had not been achieved—now sat on the brow of Celestine. This Pope and his advisers could not but see that the opinions of Pelagius, whether true or false, menaced the unity and stability of the Roman See, and they resolved to discountenance the new tenets. Accordingly Pope Celestine dispatched Palladius to check the ravages which Pelagianism was making in the churches of the British Isles, and having recovered them to orthodoxy, he empowered him to place himself at their head, at least at the head of one of them, as its “first bishop.” Thus we read in the Chronicle of Prosper of Aquitaine, under the year A.D. 431: “Palladius is ordained by Pope Celestine, and sent as the first bishop to the Scots believing in Christ.”<sup>6</sup> The man and his mission bulk so little in after years that we might take Prosper’s words as the record of a myth, were it not that his statement is

repeated and confirmed by both Bede and Baronius.

This matter throws a clear light upon the ecclesiastical state of our nation in the centuries that preceded the coming of Palladius, and therefore we shall study a little fulness in our historic treatment of it. All the historians of the time agree that Palladius was sent as their first bishop to the Scots. Bede, as we have said, testifies to the fact, and Cardinal Baronius does so not less explicitly. The words of the latter are, "All men agree that this nation (the Scots) had Palladius their first bishop from Pope Celestine" <sup>7</sup> The same authority again says, "From this you will know how to refute those who allege that Sedulius, the Christian poet, whom Pope Gelasius so much extols, had for his master Hildebert the Archbishop of the Scots, for seeing even Sedulius himself lived in the time of Theodosius the emperor, how could he have had for his teacher Hildebert archbishop of the Scots, seeing there was no archbishop yet ordained in Scotland, and Palladius is without debate affirmed to have been the first bishop of that nation." <sup>8</sup> The same thing is asserted in a fragment of the "Life of St. Kentigern." The venerable Palladius, says the writer, "the first bishop of the Scoti, who was sent, in the year of the incarnation, 431, by Pope Celestine, as the first bishop to the Scots, who believed." <sup>9</sup> To the same purpose the Magdeburg Centuriators, who, speaking of the fifth century, say, "Nor were the Scots without a church at this time, seeing Palladius was sent as their first bishop from Celestine." <sup>10</sup> With this agree all the ancient writers of our own country. "Before the coming of Palladius," says Fordun, "the Scots, following the custom of the primitive church, had teachers of the faith and dispensers of the sacraments who were only Presbyters or monks." <sup>11</sup> And John Major says, "The Scots were instructed in the faith by priests and monks without bishops." <sup>12</sup> The current of testimony to this fact runs on unbroken to our own day, but to trace it farther were to heap up a superfluous abundance of proof. It does not in the least alter the meaning, or weaken the force of these statements on whichever side of the Irish Sea we shall place the Scots. Till Palladius appeared amongst them a diocesan bishop was unknown to them; and as he was the first, so he was the last bishop to the Scots for a long while; for as we shall see in the sequel, many centuries passed before a second appeared.

We come now to the vexed question, To what country was Palladius

missioned? We have no hesitation in replying that the Scotland to which Palladius was sent was the Scotland of the fifth century, the century in which Prosper of Aquitaine wrote. The Scotland of the fifth century was Ireland. The Scotland of our day was known in that age as Albania. For, as Bishop Usher remarks, "there cannot be produced from the whole of the first eleven centuries a single writer who has called Albania by the name of Scotia."<sup>13</sup> And "whoever," says Dr. Todd, "reads the works of Bede and Adamnan will not need to be informed that even in their times, *Scotia* meant no country but Ireland, and *Scoti* no people but the inhabitants of Ireland."<sup>14</sup> We have already shown that the Scots had a common origin with the other races which descended from the regions of the north, with life new and fresh, and ideas unfettered by the past, to begin the modern times on broader foundations than the Greeks and Romans which preceded them.

We take it as a matter about which there can hardly be any doubt that Palladius was sent to Ireland. There were at that time no Scots in Scotland. Pioneer bands of Scots had before this crossed the channel and planted themselves in the mountains of Argyleshire. They were welcomed by the Picts for the sake of the aid they brought them in the forays and raids in which they indulged. Pict and Scot fought beneath the same banner against their enemies the Romans, or joined their arms not infrequently in a common onslaught on their neighbours the British, on the other side of the Roman wall. But, as we have already said, the Romans, a little before this time, had succeeded in sowing dissension between the Scots and the Picts, and the result was that the Scots had found it convenient to quit Scotland, or had been driven out of it by force. The mission of Palladius took place in the interval between their expulsion and return, and this makes it undoubted that the Scots, to which Celestine, in A.D. 431 sent Palladius as their "first bishop," were those in Ireland, the *Scotia* of that day. Prosper says, in almost so many words, that Ireland was the scene of Palladius' mission, when he writes in another place, "Having ordained a bishop to the Scots, while he (Celestine) studied to preserve Roman Britain Catholic, he made the barbarian island Christian."<sup>15</sup> The words of Prosper may indeed be held to apply to the northern and barbarian part of Scotland in contradistinction to its southern and Roman portion, but it is much more probable that he has Ireland in his eye.

On the showing of Prosper then, the Scots in Ireland were already believers in Christ. We do not see what should hinder Ireland receiving the gospel as early as England and Scotland. It is nearer to Spain, where Christianity was planted in the apostles' days, than Scotland is. The navigation across from Cape Finisterre, the ancient Promontorium Celticum, to the south of Ireland is direct and short. The coasts and harbours of Ireland, Tacitus informs us, were better known in his day to the foreign merchant than those of Britain. Traders from Cartage and North Africa and even from the more distant Levant frequently visited them. If the merchant could find his way to that shore why not also the herald of the Gospel? That Ireland should remain unchristianised till the fifth century is incredible, we might say impossible. From Ireland came Coelestius, bringing with him from thence a pure faith to have it corrupted at Rome. From that same country came yet a greater theologian and scholar, Sedulius, that is Shiel. Sedulius, who was a contemporary of Coelestius, was amongst the most accomplished divines of his day: he was an elegant Latin poet, and a zealous opponent of Pelagianism. "Sedulius the presbyter," says Trithemius, "was a Scot." He speaks of himself as "Sedulius Scotigena," that is, a born Scot. Having left the Scotia of that day, Ireland to wit, he traveled over France and other countries, and ultimately settled in Italy, where his rich erudition and his beautiful genius gained him many admirers. His hymns, Dr. Lanigan informs us, were often used in the church services, and among his prose writings is a commentary on all the epistles of Paul, entitled "Collectaneum of Sedulius, a Scot of Ireland," a work not unworthy of taking its place in any Protestant theological library of our day. A church that could send forth a man so richly endowed with the gifts of genius and learning must have held no mean place among her sisters of the fifth century.

But the Scots of Ireland had opened their ears to the syren song of Pelagianism, and were being lured into a path which promises much at its beginning, but is bitterness in the end, that of one's saving one's self. Celestine seeing the danger to which they were exposed, sent Palladius from Rome to lead them back into the old ways. So has it been assumed, though no ancient writer says that Palladius came to combat Pelagianism. The pontiff had another end in view, though less openly avowed, that of breaking the Scots to the curb of a Roman bridle and preventing them

escaping from under his crozier in days to come. The Scots probably divined the real purpose underlying Celestine's affected concern, and hence the cold reception they appear to have given his missionary. From the time that Palladius sets out on his journey, we obtain only dim and shadowy glimpses of him. No bishop or church salutes him by the way. We pursue the dubious steps of this "first bishop" of the Scots through the fragmentary notices of successive chroniclers, only to find that he is enveloped in the haze of legend, and we are conscious of a touch of pity for one who had come so far, and encountered such a diversity of fortune, in quest of a miter, at least a diocese, which after all he failed to find. The earliest Irish traditions indicate Wicklow as the place where Palladius landed.<sup>16</sup> From this point he turned his steps inland. But again we lose all track of him. He makes no converts that we can discover. He finds no flock over which to exercise his episcopal authority, or flock willing to receive him as their shepherd.

The authorities that follow tell us in plain words that the mission of Palladius was a failure, and that the same year that saw him arrive in Ireland saw him take his departure from it. Those of the inhabitants of that country who were already Christians declined his authority, being jealous probably of his having come to impose a foreign yoke upon them, and a yoke which above all others they detested, and with good reason. From Rome the Scots had received nothing but war and persecutions. They dreaded her missionaries not less than her soldiers. It had cost then much suffering to resist the imposition of her political yoke, and they were in no humour to bow their necks to her ecclesiastical tyranny. Rome they had come to regard as the symbol of intrigue, of force, and of boundless ambition. Her bishops, they knew, were following in the footsteps of her emperors, and were seeking to grasp the universal government of the church and to become the one bishop of the ecclesiastical world as Caesar had been the one king of the political. Such were the feelings with which the Scots of that day were inspired towards Rome. It is probable that Palladius had not been an hour in their company till he discovered how the matter stood, and saw, that in no character could he approach the Scots which would be less welcome or more ungracious than that of missionary or bishop of the Pope. Like the raven from the ark; he goes forth from the foot of the pontifical chair, but he returns not, and the explanation of the matter lies in the point we have

stated—Scotch mistrust of Romish envoys.

As regards those of the inhabitants of Ireland who were still Pagan—that is, the descendants of the race that were found occupying the county when the Scots arrived in it, “God hindered him” —that is Palladius—says the first *Life of St. Patrick*, “for neither did those fierce and savage men receive his doctrine readily, neither did he himself wish to spend time in a land not his own, but returning hence to him that sent him, having begun his passage the first tide, little of his journey being accomplished, he died in the territory of the Britons.”<sup>17</sup>

The Scots declined to receive him, and Pagan Ireland he did not evangelize. Palladius was not the man to do this. He lacked the faith and courage requisite for such a work. Pope Celestine could elevate him to the dignity of the miter, he could not crown him with the higher glory of converting Ireland. The old Druidic priesthood of that island was still powerful—more powerful than in either England or Scotland. The Romans were great iconoclasts when Druidic oaks or altars were concerned; and hence a vast demolition of stone circles and sacred groves in Britain and Caledonia; but the Romans had never been in Ireland; and as a consequence, no ax or hammer had been lifted up upon the consecrated trees, and the sacrificial dolmens of that land, unless it might be that of some iconoclastic Scot, and so the priesthood of Ireland retained much of its ancient influence and power. This made the task of Christianising pagan Ireland a formidable one indeed. When Palladius shook off the dust from his feet against the Scots who had rejected him as their bishop, as manifestly they did, he might have turned to the pagan Irish, but his heart failed him, when he thought how hazardous the enterprise would prove. The Anakim of Irish paganism were “fierce and savage,” says an old chronicler Muirchu, “and ready to wash out in blood any affront that might be offered to their Druidic divinities,” and so Palladius leaving “those few sheep in the wilderness,” he had been appointed to feed, turned and fled from a land which, doubtless, it repented him he ever had entered. “He crossed the sea,” says the authority quoted above, “and ended his days in the territories of the Britons.”

In the second and fifth *Life of St. Patrick*, a similar account is given of the mission of Palladius, with this exception, that “the territories of the

Britons” is changed into “the territories of the Picts.”<sup>18</sup> The precise spot in the territories of the Picts where the ill-fated deputy of Pope Celestine died is fixed by another ancient biographer. The Scholia on Fiacc’s Hymn, given by Colgan in his collection of the Lives of St. Patrick, speaking of Palladius, says, “He was not well received by the people, but was forced to go round the coast of Ireland towards the north, until, driven by a great tempest, he reached the extreme part of Moidhaidh towards the south, where he founded the Church of Fordun, and Pledi is his name there.”<sup>19</sup> In harmony with these statements is a still later biography, of date probably about A.D. 900. This writer makes the death of Palladius take place at Fordun in Scotland, and adds a few particulars not found in the other accounts. He says, that Celestine, when he missioned him to Ireland, committed to him the relics of “the blessed Peter and Paul,” that he disembarked at Leinster, that he was withstood by a chief named Garrchon, that, nevertheless, he founded three churches, depositing in them the bones of the apostles, and certain books which the Pope had given him, and that, “after a short time, Palladius died on the plain of Girgin, in a place which is called Fordun.” Girgin or Maghgherginn was the Irish name for the Mearns.<sup>20</sup> One of his biographers, not unwilling, perhaps, to put honour on one who had borne so many humiliations, states that Palladius “received the crown of martyrdom” at Fordun. Even this compensation was denied him in all probability, for the southern Picts of that age were Christian.

The mission of Palladius is a tangled though interesting story. It is to the Scots in Ireland that he is sent, and yet it is among the Picts of the Mearns only that we find any monuments of him. If Palladius set sail from Ireland to go to Rome, his first port of disembarkation would be Wales, or the north of France. Instead, we find him arriving on the eastern coast of Scotland. This was to go a long way out of his road if he wished to return to the eternal city. There must have been some reason for this. Palladius would naturally be in no hurry to appear before his master. He had nothing to tell Pope Celestine, save that his mission had failed: that the Scots whom he hoped to bring to his apostolic feet had repulsed him as their bishop, and that the pagan Irish still clung to their idols. Palladius might think it well to let another carry these unwelcome tidings to Rome. Meanwhile, as some of his biographers hint, expelled by Garrchon, he set out northward in the hope of finding in some other part of Ireland a

tribe who might bid him welcome, and whose conversion to the Christian faith might extend the glory of the Papal See, and redeem his own mission from total failure. Nor is there any improbability in the statement that while so engaged he was caught in one of the Atlantic storms, and carried through the Pentland Firth, and along the coast of Scotland southward, and finally landed on the shore of Kincardineshire. Whatever the causes that operated, and these it is now impossible to discover, there can be no doubt that Palladius after years of wanderings, pursued now by fierce Irish chieftains, and now by the tempests of the sky, took up his abode at Fordun in the Mearns; and there, near the spot where, according to one theory, Galgacus made that noble stand which checked the northward advance of the Romans, did the first bishop sent from Rome to the Scots, also terminate his career, and spend his last years, most probably, in peace.

The village of Fordun is situated on a spur of the Grampians, looking sweetly down on the well cultivated plains of the Mearns, doubtless less fertile then than now. This is the spot which gave rest to the “traveled feet” of Palladius. All the ancient chroniclers say so with one voice. And if the singular unanimity of their testimony needed farther corroboration we have it in the chain of evidence, partly monumental, and partly traditionary, that comes down from Palladius’ day to our own. In the churchyard of Fordun is a little house of most ancient aspect. Its thick wall, low roof, and small window, through which the sun struggles with no great success to dispel the darkness of the interior, make it more like a cave than sanctuary. This edifice, which one can well believe was reared in the days of Palladius, enjoys the traditional reputation of being his chapel. Here, it is said, the image of the “saint” was kept, which crowds of pilgrims from the most distant party of Scotland, year after years, came to worship. So does Camerarius affirm on the authority of Polydore Virgil. And so, too, does Baronius. He tells us that “they highly honoured the relics of Palladius which are buried in the Mearns, a province of Scotland.”<sup>21</sup> In the corner of the manse garden is a well that goes by the name of Paddy’s well.<sup>22</sup> And the market held yearly at Fordun is styled Paddy’s fair, or, in the vulgar speech of the district, “Paddy Fair.” This last is the strongest proof of all that a church and festival in honour of Palladius once existed here. The festivals of the Roman church were always followed by a fair, and sometimes they were festival and fair in



one. At the Reformation they were abolished in their religious character of a festival, but retained in their secular form of a fair, and so here the festival is dropped, but the fair is continued.<sup>23</sup>

One other circumstance in the story of Palladius must we notice. It is surely touching to reflect that in the spot to which the “first bishop to the Scots” came to breathe his last, one of the earliest and noblest of our reformers first saw the light. Lying sweetly in the valley beneath Fordun, about a mile off, is Pittarrow. Fordun and Pittarrow! The first gave a grave to Palladius; the second a cradle to George Wishart.

### Endnotes

1. Mor is the Welsh word for *sea*, which is *Pelagus* in Latin.
2. Coelestius is the Latin for Celleagh.
3. See Dupin under Mercator.
4. O’Conner, *Rerum Hibernicarum*, vol. i., Prol. i., p. 74; *Baronius Annal*, cent. v.
5. All three judgments are infallible on the principles of the Syllabus of 1864, and the decree of the Vatican Council of 1870.
6. Ad Scotos in Christum credentes ordinates a Papa Celestino Palladius, et primus episcopus mittitur.—*Prosper Chron.*, A.D. 455.
7. Primum vero eam gentem a Cælestino papa episcopum habuisse Palladium omnes consentiunt.—*Baron. Ann.* 42D, Tom. vi., p. 587. Colon. 1609.
8. Ex his autem habes quibus redarguas asserentes Sedulium Christianum poetam quem tantopore Gelasius laudat habuisse præceptorem Hildebertum Scotorum archiepiscopum: etinam cum ipsæ Sedulius ad Theodosii imperatoris tempora referatur quo modo usus esse potuit Hildeberto, Scotorum Archiepiscopo preceptore, si nullus adhuc ordinatus erat in Scotia archiepiscopus et Palladius absque controversia primus dicatur ejus gentis artistes. *Ibid.*
9. Bishop Forbes, *Life of St. Kentigern, Historians of Scotland*, vol. v. p. 1.26.
10. Centur, *Magd.*, vol. ii., cent. v. cap. 2, p. 10. Basileæ, 1624.
11. Ante cujus (Palladii) adventum habebant Scoti fidei doctores, ac sacramentorum ministratores, prerbyteros sulummodo vel monachos, ritum

sequentes ecclesiæ primitivæ.—Fordun, lib. iii. c. 8.

12. Per sacerdotes et monachos, sine episcopis Scoti in fide erudiebantur. Major, *Die Gestis Scotorum*, lib. ii., cap. 2, p. 53. Edin. 1740.

13. Usher, *De Primord*, c. 16.

14. Todd, *Life of St. Patrick*, p. 282.

15. Et ortlinato Scotis episcopo, dum Romanam insulam studet servare Catholicam, fecit etiam barbaram Christianam. Prosper, *Cont. Collat.*, A.D. 432. See Skene's *Celtic Scotland*, "vol. ii., p. 5.

16. The Scholia on Fiacc's Hymn. Original Irish in the MS. at St. Isidore's Convent, Rome.

17. Written by Muirchu about A.D. 700, and preserved in the *Book of Armagh*, A.D. 800.

18. Dr. Todd, *Life of St. Patrick*, p. 288.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 290.

20. Todd, *Life of St. Patrick*, pp. 294, 295, Skene's *Celtic Scotland*, vol. ii., pp. 27-29.

21. Magno honore prosequentes ejus reliquias in Mernia Scotiæ provincia collocatus. Baron., *Annal. Ann.*, in. 31, cent. v., c. 2.

22. *Statis. Acct. of Scotland*, vol. iv., p. 499. We quote the "Statistical Account" at the same time we may state that we, ourselves, have seen and examined on the spot the objects we describe above.

23. Dr. Skene, who is unwilling to admit that Palladius was ever in Scotland, in his learned work, *Celtic Scotland*, assumes that the church at Fordun was built by Teranus, a disciple of Palladius, and dedicated to his master, and that he brought his master's relics from Ireland or Galloway to Fordun: a not very probable assumption.

## CHAPTER IX.

## PATRICK—BIRTH, BOYHOOD, AND YOUTH—CARRIED OFF BY PIRATES.

THE scene that next opens takes us to a land which a narrow sea parts from the country to which, at this day, the name of Scotland is exclusively applied. But though withdrawn for a time from the soil of Scotland, it does not follow that we are withdrawn from the history of Scotland. On the contrary, it is only now that we feel that we are fairly launched on the great stream of our nation's annals, and may follow without pause its ever-enlarging volume. The events on which we now enter, though episodic, are the pregnant germs of the great future that is to succeed. They determine that Scotland shall be a puissance in the world; not a puissance in arms like Rome, but a moral puissance, to go before the nations, and open to them the paths of knowledge and liberty.

This new and greater commencement in our country's career had its birth in the soul of one man. Let us mark its beginning, so obscure as to be scarce perceptible. We behold one of Scotland's sons, borne away to captivity in Ireland, and there, amid the miseries and wretchedness, bodily and mental, attendant on the lot of a slave, brought to the true knowledge of God, and prepared as an instrument for spreading the light of the Gospel in the land to which he was carried captive. From Ireland that light is to be carried back to Scotland where it is to shine in a splendour that shall far surpass the feeble illumination of all previous evangelisations. The time was driving near when the dim and expiring light of Candida Casa was to be superseded by the brighter lamp of Iona. Between the setting of the one and the rising of the other, comes in the episode of Succat. This youth, whose story rises from romance to the dignity and grandeur of history, forms the connecting link between the two Scotlands, the Scotland on the hither side of the Irish Channel, and the Scotland on this, its eastern shore. In his life and labours the history of the two countries runs on for some time in the same channel—in the same person.

In entering on the story of Succat, whom our readers will more familiarly recognise under his later and better known appellation of St. Patrick, we

feel that we tread on ground more stable and reliable than that which we had to traverse when relating the earlier evangelization of Whithorn. St Patrick, it is true, has not wholly escaped the fate which has usually befallen early and distinguished missionaries at the hands of their monkish chroniclers. Unable to perceive or to appreciate his true grandeur as a humble preacher of the Gospel, some of his biographers have striven to invest him with the fictitious glory of a miracle-worker.

No monk of the Middle Ages could have imagined such a life as Patrick's. These scribes deemed it beneath their heroes to perform, or their pens to record, whatever did not rise to the rank of prodigy. Humility, self-denial, deeds of unaffected piety and benevolence, discredited rather than authenticated one's claim to saintship. Boastful professions and acts of fantastic and sanctimonious virtue were readier passports to monkish renown than lives which had no glory save that of sterling and unostentatious goodness.

We can trace the gradual gathering of the miraculous halo around Patrick on the pages of his successive chroniclers. His miracles are made to begin before he himself had seen the light. His story grows in marvel and prodigy as it proceeds. Each successive narrator must needs bring a fresh miracle to exalt the greatness of his hero and the wonder of his readers. Probus in the tenth century outdoes in this respect all who had gone before him, and Jocelin, in the twelfth, outruns Probus as far as Probus had outrun his predecessors. Last of all comes O'Sullivan in the seventeenth century, and he carries off the palm from every previous writer of the "Life of St. Patrick." The man who comes after O'Sullivan may well despair, for surely nothing more foolish or more monstrous was ever imagined by monk than what this writer has related of Patrick. So rises this stupendous structure which lacks but one thing—a foundation.

But happily it is easier in the present instance than in most cases of a similar kind, to separate what is false, and to be put aside, from what is true, and, therefore, to be retained. Before the monks had any opportunity of disfiguring the great evangelist by encircling him with a cloud of legends, Patrick himself had told the story of his life, and with such marked individuality, with such truth to Christian experience, and with such perfect accordance to the age and the circumstances, that we are

irresistibly led to the conclusion that the life before us is a real life, and must have been lived, it could not have been invented. The confessions here poured forth could come from no heart but a heart burdened with a sense of guilt; and the sorrows here disclosed with so simple yet so touching a pathos, authenticate themselves as *real* not *ideal*. They are the experiences of the soul, not the creations of the imagination

Succat—the first name of the man who has taken his permanent place in history as Patrick or St. Patrick—was born on the banks of the Clyde. So much is certain, but the exact spot it is now impossible to determine. The present towns of Hamilton and Dumbarton compete for the honour of his birthplace; near one of the two must he have first seen the light. He himself says in his “Confession,” My father was of the village of ‘Bonaven Taberniæ,’ near to which he had a Villa, where I was made captive.”<sup>1</sup> In the dialect of the Celtic known as the ancient British, Bonaven signifies “the mouth of the Aven,” and the added “Taberniæ,” or place of Tabernacles, indicates, doubtless, the district in which the village of Bonaven was situated. This favours the claims of Hamilton, and leads us to seek in Avondale, on the banks of the torrent that gives its name to the dale, and near the point where it falls into the Clyde, the birthplace of the future apostle. And what strengthens the probability that here may be the spot where Patrick was born, is the fact that some greatly defaced remains show that the Romans had a station here; and as the legionaries had but recently quitted Britain, the buildings they had vacated may be presumed to have been comparatively entire and fresh in Patrick’s time. This would decide the point, if the evidence stood alone, and did not conflict with other and varying testimony.

Fiacc, one of the earliest and most reliable of his biographers, tells us that Patrick “was born at Nemthur,” and that his first name, among his own tribes, was Succat. Nemthur signifies in Irish the *lofty rock*; and the reference undoubtedly is to All-Cluid, or Rock of the Clyde, the rock that so grandly guards the entrance of that river, now known as the Rock of Dumbarton, which then formed the capital of the British Kingdom of Strathclyde. Here too are the yet unobliterated vestiges of a Roman encampment, and one of much greater importance than any on the southern shore, for here did the Roman wall which extended betwixt the Firths of Forth and Clyde terminate. This must have led to the creation of a town,

with suburban villas, and Roman municipal privileges, such as we know were enjoyed by the community in which the ancestors of Patrick lived. Tradition, moreover, has put its finger on the spot, by planting here “Kilpatrick,” that is Patrick’s Church. Here then, on the northern shore, where the Roman had left his mark in the buildings, in the cultivation, in the manners, and in the language of the people, are we inclined to place the birth of one who has left a yet deeper mark on Scotland, and one infinitely more beneficent, than any left by Roman.

There is yet greater uncertainty as regards the year in which Patrick was born. We can hope only to approximate the time of his birth; and we think we are not far from the truth when we place it towards the end of the fourth century. It was an evil age. Apostolic times were fading from the memory, and apostolic examples vanishing from the sight of men. An incipient night was darkening the skies of countries which had been the first to brighten beneath the rays of Christianity. There was need that the simple Gospel should anew exhibit itself to the world in the life and labours of some man of apostolic character, if the decline setting in was to be arrested. Tokens are not wanting that it is to be so. For now as the shades gather in the south, the light of a new day is seen to suffuse the skies of the north.

Patrick was descended of a family which, for two generations at least, had publicly professed the Gospel. His father, Calpurnius, was a deacon, and his grandfather, Potitus, a presbyter in the Christian Church. He was well born, as the phrase is, seeing his father held the rank of “decurio,” that is, was a member of the council of magistracy in a Roman provincial town. These facts we have under Patrick’s own hand. In his autobiography, to which we have referred above, written but a little while before his death, and known as “Patrick’s Confession,” he says, “I, Patrick, a sinner, had for my father, Calpurnius, a deacon, and for my grandfather, Potitus, a presbyter.” We should like to know what sort of woman his mother was, seeing mothers not infrequently live over again in their sons. Patrick nowhere mentions his mother, save under the general term of “parents.” But judging from the robust and unselfish qualities of the son, we are inclined to infer that tradition speaks truth when it describes “Conchessa,” the mother of the future apostle, as a woman of talent, who began early to instruct her son in divine things, and to instill into his heart the fear of

that God whom his father and grandfather had served.

Here, then, on the banks of the Clyde, within sight, if not under the very shadow of the rock of Dumbarton, was placed the cradle of that child, which, in after life, was to win, though not by arms, so many glorious triumphs. The region is one of varied loveliness and sublimity. It is conspicuous, in these respects, in a land justly famed for its many fine combinations of beauty and grandeur. As the young Succat grew in years, his mind would open to the charms of the region in which he lived. His young eye would mark with growing interest the varying aspects of nature, now gay, now solemn; and his ardent soul would daily draw deeper and richer enjoyment from the scenes amid which his home was placed. He saw the ebbing and flowing of the river on whose banks he played, And doubtless mused at times on those mighty unseen forces that now compelled its waves to advance, and now to retreat. He saw the white-winged ships going and coming on its bosom: he saw the fisherman launching his net into its stream, and again drawing it ashore laden with the many treasures of the deep. He beheld the silver morning coming up in the east, and the day departing behind the vermilion-tinted tops of the mountains in the west. He saw the seasons revolve. Spring, with her soft breath, wooing the primroses and the buttercups from their abodes in the earth to bedeck mountain and vale; autumn spotting the woods with gold; and winter bringing up her black clouds, in marshaled battalions, from the western sea. These ever-changing aspects of nature would awaken their fitting responses in the soul of the youth. His heart would expand this hour with joy as the hills and shores around him lay clad in light; and now again, as mountain and vale were wrapped in gloom, or trembled at the thunder's voice, there would pass over his soul, as over the sky, darkness and terror. Thus he would begin to feel how awful was that which lived and thought within him! How vast the range of its capacity for happiness or for suffering: and how solemn a matter it is to live.

So passed the boyhood of the future apostle of Ireland. As he advanced in years, his nature expanded and grew richer in generous impulses and emotions. All those exquisite sensibilities which fill the bosom in the fresh dawn of manhood were now stirring within him. Every day opened to him a new source of enjoyment, because every day widened the range of his capacity to enjoy. A sudden thrill of pleasure would, at times,

shoot through his being from objects he had been wont to pass without once suspecting the many springs of happiness that lay hidden in them. Relationships were growing sweeter, friendships more tender. In a word, all nature and life seemed to teem with satisfactions and pleasures, endless in number, and infinitely varied in character. He has only to open his heart and enjoy. But this was a happiness which was born of earth, and like all that springs of the earth, it returns to the earth again. Young Succat's sensibilities were quickened, but his conscience slept.

The youth had not opened his heart to the instructions of home. The loving counsels of a mother, and the weightier admonitions of a father, had fallen upon a mind preoccupied with the delights of sense, and the joys of friendship: his cup seemed full. He knew not that the soul which is the man cannot feed on such pleasures as these, nor live by them. It must drink of living waters, or suffer unappeasable thirst. His relations to God—that matter of everlasting moment—had awakened in him no thought, and occasioned him no concern. The age, we have said, was a degenerate one. The lamp of Candida Casa burned low and dim. The teachers that emanated from it possessed but little authority; their reproofs were but little heeded. The truth which is the light was dying out from the knowledge of men; and the feeble Christianity that remained in the kingdom and church of Strathclyde, in which Succat's grandfather had ministered, was becoming infected with pagan ideas and Druidic rites. A few more decades, it seemed, and the Christian sanctuaries of Caledonia would give place to the groves of the Druid, or the returning altars of the Roman.

The handful of missionaries sent forth from the school of Ninian, could but ill cope with the growing, apostasy. They were but poorly equipped for the warfare in which they were engaged. There needed one man of commanding eloquence and burning zeal to redeem the age from its formalism and impiety. But no such man arose; and so the stream of corruption continued to roll on; and among those who were engulfed in its flood, and drifted down in its current, was the grandson of the Presbyterian Potitus. Succat, with all his fine sympathies, and all his enjoyment of nature and life, lived without God, and he would so have lived to the end of his days, had not He who had "chosen him front the womb, and ordained him a prophet to the nations," had mercy upon him. Sudden as the lightning,



and from a cloud as black as that from which the lightning darts its fires, came the mercy that rescued him when ready to perish.

One day a little fleet of strange ships suddenly made their appearance in the Clyde. They held on their course up the lovely frith till past the rock of Dumbarton. Whence, and on what errand bound, were these strange ill-omened vessels? They were piratical craft from across the Irish ocean, and they were here on the shores of the Clyde on one of those marauding expeditions which were then but too common, and which the narrow sea and the open navigable firth made it so easy to carry out. Succat, with others, was at play on the banks of the stream, and they remained watching the new arrivals, not suspecting, the danger that lurked under their apparently innocent and peaceful movements. Quietly the robber crew drew their barks close in to the land. In a few minutes the bandits, rushing through the water, leaped on shore. The inhabitants of Bonaven had no time to rally in their own defense. Before they were well aware of the presence of the piratical band in their river, the invaders had surrounded them, and some hundreds of the inhabitants of the district were made captive.

Driving the crowd of bewildered and unhappy men before them, the pirates embarked them in their ships, and bore away with them to Ireland. In this miscellaneous company of miserable captives was the son of Calpurnius the deacon, now a lad of nearly sixteen. He himself has recorded the event, telling us that it happened at Bonaven Taberniæ, “near to which my father had a farm, where I was taken captive. I was scarcely sixteen years of age. But I was ignorant of God, therefore it was that I was led captive into Ireland with so many thousands. It was according to our deserts, because we drew back from God and kept not His precepts, neither were obedient to our Presbyters who admonished us for our salvation.”<sup>2</sup>

What a crushing blow to the youth! When it fell on Succat he had reached that season of life when every day and almost every hour brings with it a new joy. And if the present was full of enjoyment, the years to come were big with the promise of a still richer happiness. Standing at the portals of manhood and casting his glance forward, Succat could see the future advancing towards him dressed in golden light, and bringing with

it unnumbered honours and joys. For such must life be, passed amid conditions like his—a region so picturesque, companions so pleasant, a station securing respect, and dispositions so well fitted to win and to reciprocate love. But while he gazed on the radiant vision it was gone. In its room had come instant and dismal blackness. A whirlwind had caught him up, and cruelly severing all the tender ties that bound him to home and friends, and giving him time for not even one brief parting adieu, it bore him away and cast him violently on a foreign shore, amid a barbarous and heathen people.

Bending to their oars the sea-robbers swept swiftly down the Clyde. The meadows and feathery knolls that so finely border the river at that part of its banks where Succat's youth had been passed, are soon lost to his sight. Dumbarton rock, with its cleft top, is left behind. The grander masses of Cowal, not yet the dwelling of the Irish Scots, and the alpine peaks of Arran, are passed in succession, and sink out of view. The galleys with their wretched freight are now on the open sea, making straight for the opposite shore, where we see them arriving. The lot of the exile is bitter at the best, but to have slavery added to exile is to have the cup of bitterness overflow. This cup Succat was doomed to drink to the very dregs in the new country to which we see him carried. And without stop or pause did his misery begin. The pirates who had borne him across the sea, had no sooner landed him on the Irish shore, than forthwith they proceeded to untie his cords, and expose him for inspection to the crowd which had hastened to the beach on the arrival of the galleys, not failing, doubtless, to call attention to his well-shaped form, and sinewy limbs, and other points which alone are held to be of value in such markets as that in which Succat was now put up for sale. The son of Calpurnius was a goodly person, and soon found a purchaser. His captors sold him to a chieftain in those parts, at what price we do not know.

We can imagine Sucatt eagerly scanning the face of the man whose slave he had now become, if happily he might read there some promise of alleviation in his hard fate. But we can well believe that in the rough voice and stern unpitied eye of this heathen chieftain, he failed to discern any grounds of hope that his lot would be less dismal than his worst fears had painted it. His apprehensions were realised to the full when he learned his future employment: truly a vile and degrading one, for the

son of Calpurnius. Henceforth he is to occupy himself in tending his master's herds of cattle and droves of swine in the mountains of Antrim.

### Endnotes

1. *S. Patricii Confessio*, cap. i, sec. i. The best judges have pronounced this work the genuine composition of Patrick, Mabillon, Tillemont Dupin, Ussher. To these may be added Neander, who says, "This work bears in its simple rude style an impress that corresponds entirely to Patricius's stage of culture." Five manuscripts of the *Confessio* exist: one in the Book of Armagh (7th cent.), a second in the Cotton Library (10th cent. ), two in the Cathedral Library of Salisbury, and one in the French Monastery of St. Vedastus.

2. *Pat. Confess.*, section i. *Villulam enim prope habuit (Calpurnius) ubi ego in capturam dedi . . . nostrem salutem admonebant.*

These raids of the Scottish coasts, that is, on the Britons of the Roman Valentia, were not uncommon. They were made not improbably by the Scots of Ireland. Gibbon refers to them; and the early chronicler Gildas speaks of them as being made at regular intervals, and calls them "anniversarias predas."—Gildas, cap. xiv.

## CHAPTER X.

## PATRICK'S CAPTIVITY IN IRELAND—HIS CONSCIENCE AWAKENS—PROLONGED ANGUISH.

HISTORY is no mere register of events. It is the reverent study of the working of a Hand that is profoundly hidden, and yet, at times, most manifestly revealed. To the man of understanding there is no earthly actor so real and palpable as is that veiled agent, who stands behind the curtain, and whose steps we hear in the fall of empires and the revolutions of the world. We have come in our narrative to one of those sudden shiftings of the scenes that betoken the presence and the hand of this great Ruler. A stronger evangelization than any that can ever proceed from Candida Casa, is about to be summoned into existence to keep alive the elements of truth and the seeds of liberty during those ages of darkness and bondage that are yet to pass over Europe. We have already seen the first act of the new drama. It opens in a very commonplace way indeed, and is altogether out of keeping, we should say, with the grandeur of the consequences which are to spring out of it. A band of Irish pirates make their descent on the Scottish shore, and sweep off into captivity a wretched crowd of men and women. Amongst the miserable captives, kidnapped, and carried across the sea, is a youth who is destined to originate a movement which will change the face of northern Europe.

Neither the pirate crew, nor the agonized crowd that filled their galleys, knew who was in the same bottom with themselves, or how momentous their expedition was to prove. Meanwhile, Patrick is lost in the mass of sufferers around him. No one observes or pities the anguish so vividly depicted on the face of the youth. No one seeks to assuage the bitterness of his grief by addressing to him a few words of sympathy or whispering grounds of hope. Unhelped and unpitied he bears his great burden alone. Of his many companions in woe, each was too much absorbed in the sense of his own miserable lot to have a thought to bestow on the misery of those who were his partners in this calamity. Through dim eyes, and with a heart ready to break, Succat sees the Irish shore rise before him, and as the ship that carries him touches the land, he rouses himself from his stupor to see what change of fortune this new evolution in the tragedy, which still seems like a terrible dream, will bring him.

The *timing* of this event was not the least remarkable circumstance about it. Had this calamity befallen Succat at an earlier, or at a later, period of his life, and not just when it did, it would have been *resultless*. As a chastisement for the sins and follies of his past career it might have profited, but it would not have availed as a discipline for the lifework before him. This was the main thing in the purpose of Him from whom this affliction came. Patrick's life-trial befell him at that stage of his existence, which of all others is the most critical in the career of a human being. He was now sixteen years of age. It is at this age that the passions rouse themselves with sudden, and sometimes overmastering force. It is at this time of life accordingly that the character of the man in most cases becomes definitely fixed for good or for evil. He stands at the parting of the ways and the road then chosen is that which in all ordinary cases he will pursue to the end.

This, which is the law that rules human life and character in so many instances, is operative with special and almost uniform force in the case of those who have been born in a pious home, and reared, as Patrick was, amid the instructions and observances of religion. If they overpass the age at which Patrick had now arrived without experiencing that engrafting of the soul with a divine principle, which the Bible calls "being born again," they have missed the "new life," and very probably missed it for ever. At all events the likelihood of their ever attaining it grows less and less from that time forward. Habit, day by day, shuts the heart up yet more closely; the sleep of the conscience grows ever the deeper, and the man goes on his way content with such light and pleasure as the world can give him, and never sees the radiance of a new dawn, nor ever tastes the joys of a higher existence.

On this fateful brink stood Patrick when this whirlwind, with force so boisterous, yet so merciful, caught him up, and carried him away from the midst of enjoyments, where he would have fallen asleep to awake no more, and placed him where he could find neither rest nor happiness, because around him was only naked desolation. Not a moment too soon, if we rightly interpret Patrick's own statement, was the grasp of this strong hand laid upon him. He tells us, in his "Confession," that at this period of his life he fell into a grave fault. What that fault was, neither he

himself, nor any of his biographers, have informed us, or even dropped a hint from which we might infer its nature or form. A rather grave offense, we are inclined to think, it must have been, seeing it was remembered, and brought up against him long years after when he was about to enter into the sacred office. His foot had well-nigh slipped, and it would have slipped outright, and he would have fallen to rise no more, had not this strong hand been put forth at this critical moment to hold him up. He would have cast off the form of religion, which was all as yet that he possessed, and would have drifted with the current, and gone the same downward road which was being trodden by so many of his fellow-countrymen of the kingdom of Strathclyde. His ardour of soul, and his resoluteness of purpose would have made him a ringleader in the apostate band; and to show how completely he had emancipated himself from the traditions of his youth, and the faith of his ancestors he would have taken his seat in the chair of the scorner, and mocked at that which he had been taught in his early home to hold in reverence. It is the way of all who forsake “the guide of their youth.”

We must follow Patrick across the sea, and see him sent to a new school—seeing the first had been a failure—and put under a new instructor, one who knows how to open the ear, and not the ear only but the heart also. Patrick was not to be like the teachers of the age, and so was not reared in the same school with them. He must be stern, bold, original, but the sickly and sentimental influences of Ninian’s school would never have made him such. Rougher forces and hotter fires must melt and mould him. Kidnaped, forced down into the hold with a crowd of captives, tossed on the waters of the channel, and when landed on the Irish shore, sold to a heathen chieftain, and sent into the wilds of Antrim: such beginning had Patrick’s new training. In this solitude his mother’s voice will speak again, and Patrick will listen now. His heart will open at last, but first it must be broken. The iron will pierce his soul. It is Adversity’s school in which he sits, where the discipline is stern but the lessons are of infinite price, and are urged with a persuasive force which makes it impossible not to understand them, and once understood and mastered, impossible ever to forget them. From this school have come forth many of the worlds wisest instructors, and greatest benefactors. Let us mark the youth as we behold him at the feet, not of doctor or pope, but at the feet of a far greater Instructor.

On the mountain's side, day after day all the year through, tending his master's herds of cattle and swine, sits Patrick the son of Calpurnius the Scottish deacon. Was ever metamorphosis so complete or so sudden? Yesterday the cherished son of a Roman magistrate, today a slave and a swine herd. Pinched with hunger, covered with rags, soaked with the summer's rain, bitten by the winter's frost, or blinded by its drifts, he is the very picture which the parable had drawn so long before of that prodigal who was sent into the fields to keep swine, and would fain have filled his belly with the husks on which the animals he tended fed. No one would have recognised in the youth that sat there with famished cheek and mournful eye, the tenderly-nurtured and well-favoured son of Calpurnius, or would have remembered in his hollow and sepulchral voice the cheerful tones that had so often rung out on the banks of the Clyde, and awakened the echoes of that stately rock that graces its shores. Only through this death, and through a death yet more profound, a death within of all past feelings, hopes, and joys, could Patrick pass into a new life. When he awoke from the stupefaction into which the blow, doubtless, had thrown him, he opened his eyes upon blank misery. But he opened them on something besides. He opened them on his former self! on his former life!

How different did that life now appear from what it had seemed, under the hues in which it had clothed itself in his eyes but a few years, a few days before! The colourings in which a self-righteous pride had dressed it, and the less warm but equally delusive lights thrown over it latterly by an incipient scepticism, or a dreary formalism, were now completely dispelled, and it stood out before him as it really was, an unlovable, a ghastly, a guilty thing. Sitting here, the Irish Channel between him and his home, his past severed from his present by this great dividing stroke, he could calmly look at his life as if it were no part of himself, as if it had a subsistence of its own, and he could pronounce a dispassionate verdict upon it. It was a life to be wept over. But when again it refused to sever itself from himself, when it cleaved to him with all its blackness, and he felt that it was and ever would be his, it evoked more than tears; it awakened within him horror. A father's prayers and a mother's counsels, despised and scorned, all rose up before him in the deep silence in which he sat, amid the desolate hills, tending his flock under the gathering blasts.

He shuddered as the remembrance came back upon him. He had bowed the knee at the family devotions but he had not prayed; he had but mocked that Omniscient One he professed to worship. These hypocrisies gave him no concern at the time, he was hardly sensible of them, but they lay heavy upon his conscience now. He thought of them, and a darker cloud came between him and the heavens than that which was coming up from the western sea to let fall its rain or hail on the hills amid which he fed his swine. Still darker remembrances came crowding upon him, and he trembled and shook yet more violently. When preachers came from Candida Casa to warn him and his companions of their evil way, and entreat them to turn from it and live, had he not flouted and jeered, or given tacit encouragement to those that did so? Though the grandson of a Christian presbyter, he had helped to swell that chorus of derision and defiance with which these preachers of repentance, and dolorous prophets of evil were sent back to those from whom they came. The retrospect of his hardihood filled him with amazement and horror. Thus, as one's image looks forth from the mirror on one's self, so did Patrick's life look forth from the past upon Patrick in all its vileness and blackness and horror.

But deeper still was his eye made to pierce. It turned inward, and questioned his spirit what manner of life it had led in its thoughts and purposes. He was shown a chamber where lodged greater abominations than any that had deformed him outwardly. His heart, which he believed to be so good, he saw to be full of envy, hatred, malice, revenge, pride, lust, hypocrisy, idolatry, and all the things that defile a man. How was this fountain of evil to be cured, for if not cured, it would send forth even blacker streams in time to come than any that had flowed from it in the past. Where was the salt which, cast into its bitter waters, would sweeten them? This hidden iniquity, this ulcer in the soul, pained and appalled him even more than all the transgressions which had deformed him outwardly and given scandal to others.

Such was the odious picture that rose before the captive youth as he sat ruminating amid the mountains of Antrim; his past life, rather than his vile charge or his heathen master, before him. Such had been; and till his life was cleansed at its source, such would be the son of Calpurnius the Christian deacon. He stood aghast at this veritable image of himself. He felt that he was viler than the vilest of those animals that he tended. "Oh,



my sin! my sin!” we hear him cry! What shall I do? Whither shall I flee? It is no imaginary scene that we are describing. “In that strange land,” says he, speaking of this period of conviction and agony, “the Lord imparted to me the feeling <sup>1</sup> of my unbelief and hardness of heart, so that I should call my sins to remembrance though late, and turn with all any heart to God.” And again he says, “Before the Lord humbled me, I was even as a stone lying in the depth of the mire, and He who is able <sup>2</sup> came and lifted me up, and not only lifted me up but set me on the top of the wall,” that is, made him a corner stone in the spiritual building, for we cannot fail to perceive here an allusion to the beautiful emblem of Scripture which presents the church as a living temple built up of living stones.

While this sore struggle was going on, the outward discomforts of his lot, we may well believe, gave Patrick but little concern. The violence of the storm that raged within made him heedless of the blasts that beat upon him as he watched his herds in the woods and among the mountains. The black cloud would gather and burst, and pass away, and the stricken youth, absorbed in the thought of his distant home and his past life, and sick in soul, would hardly be conscious of the pelting rain, or the driving snow, or the bitter furious gusts that were shaking the oaks and fir trees around him. The hail and lightning of the clouds were drowned in the voice of those mightier thunders which came rolling out of a higher sky, and seemed to his ear to emphasize the award of that Book which says, “the wages of sin is death.”

The youth had been overtaken by a series of calamities, which singly were overwhelming, and taken together, were worse than death. He had been torn from his home and his native land, he had been robbed of his liberty, he had been sold to a heathen lord, and now he had no prospect before him save that of passing the years of his wretched life in a vile employment. The blow was the more crushing, that all these miseries had fallen upon him in the same moment, and had come without warning. And yet they were to Patrick but as the trifles of a day compared with those darker sorrows which gathered round his soul. These last were the ripened fruits of the evil seed his own hand had sowed. In enduring them he had not even this small consolation that he was suffering by the unrighteous will and cruel power of another. Nor would they pass with

the fleeting years of the present life, for death, which is the termination of all other evils, would only deliver him up to an endless misery. This terrible thought was ever present to him as he sat alone amid the desolate hills; it was his companion in the silence of the night. and in the nearly equally profound silence of the day. It was here that his miseries culminated. He was entirely in his master's power, who might for the slightest offense, unrestrained by any feeling of humanity, and without question from any one, doom him to die. But wherein was this master to be feared, compared with that Greater Master, who could kill body and soul? He had lost his liberty, but what was the loss of liberty to one who was in imminent jeopardy of losing himself, and that for ever?

Sleep forsook him, he tells us. He would lie awake for nights on end. From his lowly couch he watched the stars as they passed, each in its appointed place, and at its appointed time, across the sky. He feared as he looked up at them. Their ever-burning fires and silent majestic march, suggested that endless duration of which their vast cycles are but as a handbreadth. And when he thought of that Eye which was looking down upon him from above these orbs, with a light to which theirs was but as darkness, where, he asked, "shall I find hiding from it? When these orbs shall have paled their fires in an eternal night, this Eye will still be looking down upon me." Where was there night or darkness in all the universe deep enough in which to bury himself, and be unseen for ever?

He now broke out into meanings. When his grief ceased to be dumb, its paroxysm somewhat abated. These moanings were the first feeble inarticulate cries for pardon. Then followed words of supplication. He stood up, like the publican in the temple, and striking upon his breast, cried, "God be merciful to Patrick, the sinner." It was now seen that the lessons of his early home had not been in vain. The seed then sown in his mind appeared to have perished: yet no; though late, that seed began to spring up and bear fruit. Without the knowledge imparted by these lessons, Patrick would never have seen his sin, and without the sight of his sin his conscience would have continued to sleep, or if peradventure awakened, not knowing the way of pardon, he would have been driven to despair. He had heard, on the Sabbath evenings in his Scottish home, that the "King of Heaven is a merciful King." And now, in that far land, and far away from that father from whose lips the once-forgotten but now

remembered words had fallen, a sea of trouble all round him, nor help nor pity on earth, he turned his gaze upwards, and said, "I will arise, and go to my Father." He rose, he tells us, before the dawn to pray.

How long Patrick continued under this distress of soul before finding peace, we do not know. It is probable that his conflict lasted with more or less severity for some years. It is not the wont of that Physician who had undertaken his case to dismiss His patients till He has perfected their cure, and made them altogether and completely whole. And there were special reasons in Patrick's case why this severe but most merciful discipline should be prolonged. Patrick's sore had to be probed to the very bottom, and he had to know the malignity of the malady under which he laboured, and the strength with which it holds captive its unhappy victims, not only for his own sake, but for the sake of those many others, to whom he was in after years to act the part of physician. He was to be a Healer of nations. But how could he acquire the insight and tenderness necessary for the right discharge of his grand function—the reverse of the warriors, who goes forth to destroy—and know how deep these wounds go into the soul, and how they rankle there, and be able in his treatment of them to combine perfect sympathy with perfect fidelity—"merciful" and faithful like the great Physician—if he had not himself first been wounded, and made to bleed—aye, bleed unto death, well nigh—before being sent forth to be a healer of others?

### Endnotes

1. *Aperuit sensum.—Pat. Confessio.*
2. *Qui potens est.—Ibid.*

## CHAPTER XI.

## PATRICK FINDS PEACE—UNCONSCIOUS PREPARATION FOR FUTURE WORK—ESCAPES FROM IRELAND.

NOW, at last, a hand was put forth to heal this sorely wounded man. As he lay on the mountains of Antrim, stricken down by an unseen but mighty power, with no friend by his side to pour oil into his wounds and bind up his sores, there passed by One who turned and looked with compassion upon him, and stretching out His hand lifted him out of the "mire" to use his own phrase, in which he lay. "HE WHO ALONE IS ABLE" are the few simple but emphatic words in which Patrick records this mighty transaction, "He who alone is able came, and in His mercy lifted me up."

This deliverer, Patrick saw, had Himself been wounded, and so deeply wounded that He still retained the marks of His sufferings. Hence His sympathy, which would not let Him pass by and leave Patrick to die of his hurt. Drawing near to him, and showing him the wounds in His own hands and feet, and the scar deep graven in His side, He said to Patrick, "Fear not: I bore your sins on the bitter tree. All is forgiven you. Be of good cheer."

These words were not altogether new to the son of Calpurnius. He had heard them, or their equivalents, in his early home. They had been woven into his father's prayers, and they had received yet more formal statement in his mother's counsels and instructions. But he had failed to grasp their momentous import. The salvation which they announced was to him a matter of no immediate concern. What mattered it to Patrick whether this salvation were an out-and-out gift, or whether it were wages to be worked for and earned like other wages? What good would this birthright do him? So thought he then, but it was otherwise now. He saw that without this salvation he was lost, body and soul, for ever. When, therefore, these truths, so commonplace and meaningless before, were heard again, he felt as if the finger of a man's hand had come forth and written them before him in characters of light, and written them specially for him. The veil dropped. He saw that the words were "eternal life," not an abstract dogma announced for the world's assent, but an actual gift held out for

his own acceptance. He knew now what the wounds in the hands and feet of that compassionate One who had passed by him signified. He saw that they had been borne for him; and so he cast himself into His arms. A wonderful joy sprang up in his soul. In that moment the bolt of his dungeon was drawn back, and Patrick walked forth into liberty—into a new life.

The future apostle of Ireland, and through Ireland of Northern Europe, now clearly saw that it was not his own tears, though copious and bitter, nor his cries, though frequent and loud, which had opened the door of that dark prison in which he had so long sat. It was God's sovereign blessed hand which had flung back that ponderous portal, and brought him forth. There he would have been sitting still had not that gracious One passed by him, and shown him His wounds. He had been traveling on the great broad road which the bulk of Christendom was to pursue in the ages that were to come, that even of self-inflicted penance and self-righteous performances. But journey as he might he came no nearer the light; around him was still the darkness, within him was still the horror. He had not caught even a glimmer of the dawn. But when the sight of the Wounded One was vouchsafed to him it was as when the sun rises on the earth. He saw himself already at the gates of that Peace which he had begun to despair of ever finding. Thus was Patrick made to know the better and the worse road, that standing, as he did, at that eventful epoch, when Christendom was parting into two companies, and going to the right and to the left, he might lift up his voice and warn all, that of these two paths, the beginnings lie close together, but their endings are wide apart, even as death and destruction are from life. From tending his master's swine, on the bleak hillside, amid the stormy blasts, Patrick was taken to teach this great lesson at this formative epoch to the men of Christendom, having himself first been taught it. But not just yet was he to enter on his work.

As aforetime, weighed down by the great sorrow that lay upon him, he felt not the pangs of hunger, nor regarded the rude buffeting of the tempest, so now, the new-born joy, that filled his soul, made him equally insensible to the physical discomforts and sufferings to which he was still subjected. He was still the slave, if not of his first master, of some other chieftain into whose hands he had passed; for he speaks of having served four masters; and the vile drudgery of the swineherd continued to occupy him

from day to day; but, no longer sad at heart, the hills which aforetime had reechoed his complaining now became vocal with his joy. It was his wont to rise while it was yet dark, that he might renew his song of praise. It mattered not though the earth was clad in snow and the heavens were black with storm he “prevented the dawning,” not now to utter the cry of anguish, but to sing “songs of deliverance. He tells us in his “Confession” that he rose, long before daylight, and in all weathers, in snow, in frost, in rain, that he might have time for prayer; and he suffered no inconvenience therefrom, “for,” says he, “the spirit of God was warm in me.”

Patrick had now received his first great preparation for his future work. His conversion was arranged, as we have seen, in all its circumstances, so as to teach him a great lesson; and in the light of that lesson he continued to walk all his life after. It brought out in clear, bold relief, the freeness and sovereignty of God’s grace. No priest was near to cooperate with his mystic rites in effecting his conversion, no friend was present to assist him with his prayers. Patrick was alone in the midst of the pagan darkness; yet there we behold him undergoing that great change which Rome professes to work by her sacraments, and which, she tells us, cannot be effected without them. How manifest was it in this case that the “new creature” was formed solely by the Spirit working by the instrumentality of the truth—the truth heard when young, and recalled to the memory—to the entire exclusion of all the appliances of ecclesiasticism. What a rebuke to that Sacramentalism which was in that age rising in the church, and which continued to develop till at last it supplanted within the Roman pale the Gospel. And what a lesson did his conversion read to him, that “not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us.” When Patrick presented himself at his Heavenly Father’s door, it was in no robe woven on his own loom, it was in no garment borrowed or bought from priest; he came in his rags—the rags of his corrupt nature and sinful life, and begged for admittance. Was he told that in this beggarly attire he could not be admitted? was he bidden go back to the Church, and when she had purified him by her rites and penance, return and be received? No! the moment he presented himself, his Father ran and fell upon the neck of the wretched and ragged man, and embraced him and kissed him. Thus did Patrick exemplify, first of all, in his own person, the sovereignty of grace,

and the power of the truth, before being sent forth to preach the Gospel to others. It was here that he learned his theology. He had no Bible by him, but its truths, taught him when young, revived in his memory, and he read them all over again by the new light which had dawned in his soul. They were more palpable and clear than when he had read them on the actual page, for now they were written not with pen and ink, they were graven by the Spirit on the tablets of his heart. A theology so pure he could not have learned in any school of Christendom at that day. Patrick drew his theology from the original and unpolluted fountain: the Word of God, and the Spirit; the same at which the apostles had drunk on the day of Pentecost. It was the theology of the early church, which in God's providence is ever renewed when a Divine revival is to visit the world.

Patrick was now replenished with the gift of Divine knowledge, but he was not immediately let go from bondage, and sent forth to begin his great mission. He needed to have his experience deepened, and his knowledge enlarged. If meditation and solitude be the nurse of genius, and if they feed the springs of bold conception and daring effort, not less do they nourish that sublimer genius which prompts to the loftier enterprises of the Christian, and sustain at the proper pitch the faculties necessary for their successful accomplishment. The young convert, led by the ardour of his zeal, is sometimes tempted to rush into the field of public labour, his powers still immature. Patrick was preserved from this error, and it was essential he should, for the work before him was to be done not at a heat, but by the patient and persistent forth-putting of fully ripened powers. He lacked, as yet, many subordinate qualifications essential to success in his future mission. He must learn the dialect of the people to whom he was afterwards to proclaim the Gospel. He must study their dispositions and know how access was to be obtained to their hearts. He must observe their social habits, their political arrangements, and above all, he must ponder their deep spiritual misery, and mark the cords with which idolatry had bound them, that at a future day he might undo that heavy yoke, and lead them forth into the same liberty into which a Divine and gracious hand had conducted himself. Therefore was he still retained in this land, a slave to his master—though the sting had now been taken out of that slavery, and though occupied in ignoble tasks, learning all the while noble lessons.

Six years had passed away, and now Patrick had fulfilled his appointed term of captivity. Dreams of escape from Ireland began to visit him by night. In his sleep he heard a voice saying to him, "Youth, thou fastest well, soon thou shalt go to thy native home—lo! thy ship is ready." Was it wonderful that the exile should see in his sleep his fatherland, and imagine himself there again, or on the way thither? Without seeing miracle or vision in this, as many of his biographers have done, we see none the less the mysterious touches which the Divine Hand sometimes gives to the human spirit when "deep sleep falleth on man." Patrick knew that his captivity was wholly of Divine ordering; he knew also that it had gained its end; and this begot in him an ardent hope that now its close was not distant, and by night this hope returned clothed in the vivid drapery of an accomplished reality. The dream gave him spirit and courage to flee.

How far the youth had to travel, or at what point of the coast he arrived, it is impossible to determine amid the dubious and conflicting accounts of his biographers. The "Book of Armagh" makes Patrick journey two hundred miles; the "Scholiast on Fiacc" reduces the distance to sixty, others say a hundred. Lanigan makes him arrive at Bantry Bay.<sup>1</sup> On reaching the shore he saw, as it had seemed in his dream, a ship lying close in land. The sight awoke within him a yet more intense desire to be free. Lifting up his voice, he besought the captain to take him on board. A refusal, much to his chagrin, was the reply sent back. An emaciated figure, clad in the garb of a swineherd, the plight doubtless in which Patrick presented himself, was not an attractive object, nor one fitted to make the ship's crew wish to have any nearer acquaintance with him. The ship was on the point of departing without him. He sent up a prayer to heaven—the cry of a heart that panted for deliverance and fully confided in God. It was the act of an instant. The voice was again heard speaking to him from the ship, and telling him that the captain was willing to take him on board.

The sail spread and the anchor lifted, we behold the vessel, with Patrick on board, ploughing her way through the waters of the Irish Channel, her prow turned in the direction of the British shore. The youth was fleeing from slavery, with all its humiliating and brutalizing adjuncts, but with a heart full of thankfulness that the day had ever dawned upon him—the darkest he had ever seen, as he then deemed it; the happiest of all his



life, he now saw it to be, when the robber-band, darting from their galleys, and enclosing the quiet village of Bonaven, made him their prey, and carried him captive to that land whose mountains, in his flight from it, were now sinking behind him. By losing his liberty he had found it, but he had found a better liberty than the liberty he lost. Nor—though the crime reflected disgrace not only on its perpetrators, but also on the country to which they belonged—had Ireland cause to reflect, save with profoundest gratitude, as the sequel will show, on an occurrence which had brought this youth to its shore, and retained him so many years a bondsman.

#### Endnote

1. See Todd's *Life of St. Patrick*, p. 36, Dublin, 1864.

## CHAPTER XII.

## PATRICK AGAIN AT HOME—THOUGHTS OF IRELAND—DREAMS—RESOLVES TO DEVOTE HIMSELF TO ITS CONVERSION.

PATRICK, the apostle of Ireland, is not the first, nor is he by any means the last, whose career illustrates that great law, according to which the highest eminence in the church—by which we mean not the eminence of official rank, but the higher eminence of spiritual gifts and holy service—is attainable only through great and often prolonged struggles of soul. It is amid these throes and agonies that great souls are born. And then to inward distress and conflict there are added at times, as in the case before us, bitter outward humiliations and sufferings. The most cursory survey of the past justifies our remark. Whether we turn to the names that shine as stars in the firmament of Holy Writ, or to those that illumine the page of ecclesiastical history, we trace in all of them the operation of a law which was established in ancient times, and is as changeless and imperative as that other of which it was said that it “altereth not.”

And it must needs be so. The brilliant prizes which wait on ambition; the sweets of power, the grandeur which surrounds rank and wealth, the luster which superior knowledge sheds on its possessor—all these are potent enough to nerve the man whose aim—a high one, we admit—it is to maintain his country’s rights, or enlarge the boundaries of science. But it is far otherwise with those whose aim is the eternal good of their fellowmen. The very passions and ambitions which need to be fostered in the former class of workers, must be purged out in the latter. It is in the furnace—a furnace heated sevenfold—that this purgation is effected. It is in its fires that the dross of selfishness is consumed; the nobler but still earthly passion of ambition conquered; the love of human applause, which so enfeebles and vitiates, extinguished, and the soul becomes able to yield an entire devotion to truth, and to exercise an absolute dependence on God. The man now stands clothed in a moral strength which is proof alike against the seductions of error and the terrors of power.

Moses by one rash act threw back the deliverance of his people, and drove himself into exile. Many a bitter hour did the thought cause him in

the solitude of Midian. But we behold the hot impulsive spirit which he brought with him from Egypt, and which had been fostered doubtless by the flatteries of the court, toning down day by day amid these silent wastes, till of all the sons of men, Moses is now the meekest, and he who had fallen before the provocation of a moment was able to bear the burden of a whole nation for forty years. It was in a prison among felons, whose fetters he wore, that Joseph acquired that knowledge of human nature and matured those great faculties which he afterwards displayed in the government of Egypt. Luther entered the convent at Erfurt as proud a Pharisee as ever walked the earth, full of the project of being his own saviour, but he buried the Pharisee in his cell, and returned to the world "a sinner saved by grace." What the Augustinian convent was to Luther, the mountains of Antrim were to Patrick. There, in his struggles for his own eternal life, he learned the secret of Ireland's darkness and bondage, and matured the faculties by which he effected its emancipation, making it morning in that land when the shadows were falling thick and fast on so many of the countries of Europe.

Two months elapsed before the exile reached his home on the banks of the Clyde. This was a long time for so short a distance. But the two countries lay much farther apart in that age than in ours, if we measure the distance by the difficulties of the road rather than by the number of its miles. Three days, or at most a week, would be spent on the sea voyage, leaving seven weeks for the journey from the point of disembarkation, of which we are ignorant, to his father's dwelling at Bonaven. But the country to be passed through was unsettled, and liable to sudden raids; and the exile's journey, we know, was full of hazards and escapes, of which, however, we have only transient and scarcely intelligible glimpses. He would seem on his way to have fallen into the power of a hostile tribe, and to have suffered some detention at their hands, for he speaks of a second captivity undergone by him after his escape from his first in Ireland. But it does not concern the object of our history to arrange or reconcile these obscurely recorded incidents. Let it suffice that Patrick was again with his parents. "After a few years," says he, referring probably to his six years of absence in Ireland, "I was again with my parents in the Britanniaë," the customary term for the Roman provinces in Britain. Once more Succat stands at his father's door.

Emaciated, way-worn, attired in the garb of a swineherd, shall his father know him under this disguise? The shock of the first surprise over, Calpurnius recognizes in the figure before him—the flush of excitement contending on his cheek with the pallor of suffering and endurance—his long-lost son, of whom no tidings, probably, had ever reached him since the day the pirate fleet bore away and was lost to view beyond the Argyleshire hills. He throws himself upon the neck of his son, as unexpectedly restored as he had been suddenly snatched away. While he gives him the kiss of welcome, he little dreams how much more precious is the son whom he now receives back than was the son who went forth from him! He could not see, he could not even guess the rich experiences and the lofty aspirations that lay hid beneath the tattered raiment that covered the form he was now pressing to his bosom. The son he now so gladly welcomes had just returned from a school, though Calpurnius had yet to be told this, where, if the regimen is sharp, it is beyond measure salutary, and if the lessons are hard they repay an hundredfold the pain it costs to learn them.

We behold Patrick once more in the home of his youth. Around that home all was unchanged. There, as aforetime, were the vales flecked with flocks; there were the hazel and the birch crowning the rocky crests and knolls; there was the noble river washing as of yore the feet of the grand rock that towers up on its shore; there were the far-off mountains opening wide their stony portals to give exit to the expanding flow of the Clyde into the Irish Sea; lovely as ever were the gray tints of the morning and the vermilion dyes of the sunset. But Patrick gazed on all these with other eyes than those which had drunk in their beauties in his boyhood and youth. His old companions came round him in the hope of hearing the tale of his adventures, and helping him to forget in their jovial society the hardships of his exile. They found him strangely changed though they knew not why. He could not join their laugh nor re-echo their scoffs. Their delights were no longer his delights. Black melancholy, they said, has set her mark upon him. The light of his once exuberant spirit has gone out. Let us leave him to his moody humours. Yes! Patrick had come to himself. Awakened, he felt how solemn it is to live; how awful to laugh or mock all through the short years, and go down into the grave loaded with the guilt of vast undischarged responsibilities. In truth, those who said that he had escaped from Ireland only in body, were in the right; his

heart was in that country still.

“The traveller,” it has been said, “changes his sky, but not himself.” The remark does not hold good in the case of the exile whose history we are tracing. Patrick, when he crossed the Channel, the cords round his limbs, changed his sky, but he changed also himself. Ireland was the land of his birth, of his second and better birth; and he now thought of it, therefore, and felt towards it as towards his native land. The ties that bound him to it were holier and stronger than those that linked him to the home of his fathers. While he wandered by the banks of his native Clyde, he ever and anon turned his gaze wistfully in the direction of the western hills. The image of the poor country beyond them rose before him night and day. The cold, the hunger, the night-watchings he had there undergone, were now sweet and blessed memories. The bitterness had gone out of them. Amid the comforts of his home in his father’s house he looked back with regret to the nights he had spent watching his flock on the mountains of Antrim, his spirit within him singing songs of gladness while the storm was raging without. But though Patrick had as good as forgotten the miseries he had endured in that land, he had not forgotten the misery he had seen there. The thought of its sons groping on through life in darkness and going down into an eternal night, was ever present with him and ever uppermost. Could he wash his hands and hold himself wholly guiltless of their blood? He owed himself to Ireland, surely the least he could do towards payment of the debt was to give himself to it. Why had he left it? Had he not acted the part of the ancient prophet, who, when commanded to go and preach repentance to Nineveh rose up and fled, leaving the million-peopled capital of Assyria to its fate? These were the thoughts that stirred within him and gave him no rest.

What by day were abstract considerations of duty appealing to his conscience, took to themselves by night embodiment and shape, and appeared before him as suppliants who had come to plead the cause of that wretched country from which he had fled. It seemed to Patrick; as if a man of Ireland stood on the other side of the Channel, and gazing beseechingly across, like the man of Macedonia who beckoned to Paul, cried to Patrick and said, “Come over and help us.” “In the dead of the night,” says he, “I saw a man coming to me as if from Hiberio, whose name was *Victorious*, bearing innumerable letters. He gave me one of

them to read. It was entitled, 'The Voice of the Irish.' <sup>1</sup> As I read I thought I heard at that same moment the voice of those that dwell at the wood of Foclaid, near the western ocean; and thus they cried, as with one mouth, 'We beseech thee, holy youth, come and walk still among us.' I felt my heart greatly stirred in me, and could read no more, and so I awoke." <sup>2</sup>

"Again on another night, I know not, God knoweth whether it was within me, or near me, I heard distinctly words which I could not understand, except that at the end of what was said, there was uttered: 'He who gave his life for thee, is He who speaketh in thee.' And so I awoke rejoicing" On another occasion he tells us, that it seemed to him as if one were praying within him. But he makes clear in what sense he interpreted his dream by telling us that when he awoke he recollected the apostle's words, "The Spirit helpeth the infirmity of our prayer. For we know not what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself maketh intercession for us, with groanings that cannot be uttered, which cannot be expressed in words." And again, "The Lord our advocate intercedeth for us." <sup>3</sup>

Patrick has removed by only a few centuries from an age in which God had spoken to men in dreams, and visions of the night. Was the Most High again having recourse to this ancient method of communicating His will? There was divine interposition, but no miracle, in the occurrences we have related; nor does Patrick himself see miracle in them. They were the echo in his now awakened conscience of the great command given on the Mount of Olives, "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." This Patrick regarded as his special warrant to essay the great work of evangelizing Ireland. His commission had come to him, not from the Seven Hills, but direct from the Mount of Olives. Christ Himself it was who sent him forth; and that commission received in due course its seal and signature in a converted Ireland.

Days and months passed on, and Patrick was still with his parents in the Britannia. Had the cry of Ireland waxed faint, and died away? or had Patrick become deaf to an appeal which had stirred him so powerfully at the first? The cry from across the Channel grew louder day by day, and Patrick was more eager than ever to respond to it; but there were many and great hindrances in the way, which he feared to break through. Who was Patrick, the exile, the swineherd, that he should essay to bring a

nation out of darkness, from which he himself was but newly escaped? He must lay his account, in the prosecution of such an enterprise, with encountering the sophistry of learned Druid and the hostility of powerful chieftain. The one would fight for his altar, and the other for his slave, and he would draw down the wrath of both upon his poor head. Last, and perhaps greatest, he would inevitably rouse the suspicion and perhaps the violence of the masses, who would not take kindly that he should disturb and unsettle their long-cherished superstitions and beliefs. These were the formidable obstacles that arrayed themselves against his enterprise ever as he thought of it. What pretensions had he to the learning or eloquence without which it were folly to think of achieving so great a work?

As he hesitated and delayed, the cry of Ireland sounded again in the ear of his conscience. That cry, agreeably to the ideas of the age and the warm temperament of the youth, embodied itself in the dramatic form of voices and dreams by night. There seemed again to stand before him suppliants from across the Irish Sea, who pleaded with him in behalf of those who lay plunged in a misery from which he himself had been delivered. With the return of day these suppliants who had stood all night long by his couch took their departure, only to let conscience speak. He had no rest. If he wandered by the Clyde he saw its waters flowing away to join the Irish sea. If he watched the setting sun it was going down over Ireland, and its last gleam was gilding the wood of Focloid. If the storm-cloud came up from the southwest, it was laden with the sighs of that land over which it blew in its passage from the great Western ocean. At last his resolution was unalterably taken. He would arise and go in the character of a missionary to that land to which he had been carried as a slave. Unlettered, as regards the learning of the schools, unanointed, save by "an unction from the holy One," uncommissioned, save by the last words spoken on Olivet, and floated across the five centuries to his own day, he would cross the Channel, and borrowing the strength of Him who had dispelled the night around his own soul, he would attack the darkness, and throw down the idols of Ireland.

He broke his purpose to his parents. Surprised and grieved, they strongly opposed it. Had he not suffered enough already in that barbarous country? Was he ambitious of being a second time the slave of its chieftains, and

the keeper of its swine? Even some of the clergy of the Church of Ninian discountenanced his design. Their own dying zeal was far below the pitch that could prompt them to such an enterprise; and they derided the idea that it should be undertaken by a youth who had never passed a single day within the walls of Candida Casa, or of any missionary institute of the age, and who had no qualifications for the task, that they could see. Nay, the old fault was brought up against him; but all was in vain. Neither the tears of parents, nor the sneers of prudent-minded ecclesiastics, could shake his resolution. A greater than father or presbyter commanded him to go, and His voice he would obey. "Oh, whence to me this wisdom!" we find him writing in after days, "who once knew not so much as to count the number of the days, and had no relish for God? Whence to me this, so great and saving a grace, that I should thus know God, or love God? that I should cast off country and parents, refusing their many offers and weeping and tears, and, withal, offend my seniors (elders) contrary to my wish? . . . Yet not I, but the grace of God which was in me, which resisted all impediments to the end that I should come to the Irish tribes to preach the gospel." If he had been able to offer himself in the service of this heathen country, he takes no merit to himself. It was not strength of will that had achieved this victory. The old Patrick would have remained at home with parents and friends. The new Patrick must go forth and begin what he calls his "laborious episcopate." "Not I," says he, with a greater apostle, "but the grace of God that was in me."<sup>4</sup>

His biographers make Patrick prepare himself for entering on his field of labour by making the tour of the then famous monasteries or mission-schools of the continent of Europe. They send him first of all to Tours in Gaul, which then reflected the luster of the genius and labours of Martin, a near relation, as some have affirmed, though on no certain evidence, of his mother, Conchessa. From the school of Tours they make him proceed to that of Lerins, where Vincent was then rising into repute. Last of all, they place him at the feet of the celebrated Germanus, Bishop of Auxerre. In this training thirty years pass away, and when Patrick has become learned in all the wisdom which these seats of knowledge had to impart, his biographers send him to Ireland.<sup>5</sup>

This progress through the schools on the part of our missionary, we believe to be wholly imaginary; in short, a fable. Patrick himself says



not one word from which we could infer that he passed through so lengthened a course of study. When reproached with being unlearned, as he sometimes was, what more natural than that he should have pointed to the famous schools he had frequented, and the great teachers at whose feet he had sat. Instead of doing so, he always frankly confesses that the accusation was true, and that he was unlearned. Moreover, it is very improbable that one who knew, as Patrick did, Ireland's misery, and whose heart yearned, as his yearned, for that country's deliverance, have spent thirty years in going from school to school, where he could learn little that would be of use in his future work, and might forget much of essential service which he had been already taught by more infallible guides.

Patrick set out for Ireland clad in no armour of the schools. The scholastic age, with its great doctors, was yet a long way off. Aristotle had not yet come into vogue in the Christian Church. The clergy of those days bowed to Plato rather than to the Stagerite. The doctrines of Paul, in their estimation, lacked the "salt" of philosophy. By combining the wisdom of the Greek with the gospel of the Jew, they would produce a system more likely, in their belief, to find general acceptance with the nations. Augustine, who saw in this the subversion of Christianity, strove to stem the torrent of corruption, and lead back Western Christendom to the original sources of divine knowledge; and could we persuade ourselves that his writings had traveled as far to the north as the banks of the Clyde, we would say that the future apostle of Ireland was a disciple of the bishop of Hippo, and had learned from him the two cardinal doctrines which are the kernel of all theology, the beginning and the end of religion as a system, even the utter helplessness of man, and the absolute freeness of the grace of God. But Patrick was not taught by man. He had learned his theology on the mountains of Antrim. The two great doctrines of his teaching had been revealed to him, as the law was revealed to the Israelites, amid the darkness and thunders of an awakened conscience. There was a revelation of them within himself. When the terrors of God, like great waters, were rolling round his soul, and he was preparing to make his bed in hell, a Hand from above drew him out of the depths and set him upon a rock, and this sudden and gracious deliverance made him see how helpless he himself was, and how free and sovereign the grace that had rescued him.

It is in the furnace that the true priest receives his anointing: it is in the furnace that the soldier of the cross is harnessed for the battle. It was in a furnace heated sevenfold that the apostle of Ireland had the sign of his apostleship stamped upon him. His sufferings were a more glorious badge of office than crosier and miter. "I was amended of the Lord," he says, "who thus fitted me to be today what I was once far from being, namely, that I should busy myself with, and labour for the salvation of others at a time when I thought not of my own."

### Endnotes

1. *Vox Hiberionacum*.
2. *Pat. Confess.*, sec. xi.
3. *Pat. Confess.*, sec. xii.
4. *Pat. Confess.*, sec. 15.
5. See Todd's *Life of St. Patrick*.

## CHAPTER XIII.

PATRICK—THE GREATNESS OF HIS MISSION—ITS OPPORTUNENESS—YEAR OF PATRICK'S ARRIVAL—HE PRECEDES PALLADIUS—PALLADIUS SENT FROM ROME TO COUNTERACT HIM.

ATTENDED by a few companions, humble men like himself, Patrick crossed the sea, and arrived in Ireland. He was now thirty years of age. The prime of his days and the commencement of his life-work had come together. The work on which we now behold him entering, and in which he was to be unceasingly occupied during the sixty years that were yet to be given him, is one that takes its place among the great movements of the world. Till we come to the morning of the sixteenth century we meet with no work of equal magnitude, whether we have regard to the revolution it produced in Patrick's own day, or to the wide issues into which it opened out, and the vast area over which its beneficent influence extended in the following centuries. It was, in fact, a second departure of primitive Christianity; it was a sudden uprising, in virtue of its own inextinguishable force, of the pure simple Gospel, on new soil, after it had been apparently overlaid and buried under a load of pagan ideas, philosophic theories, and Jewish ceremonialism in the countries where it first arose.

The voyage of Patrick, to begin his mission, was the one bright spot in the Europe of that hour. The wherry that bore him across the Irish Sea may with truth be said to have carried the Church and her fortunes. The world that had been was passing away. The lights of knowledge were disappearing from the sky. Ancient monarchies were falling by the stroke of barbarian arms. The Church was resounding with the din of controversy, and the thunder of anathema. Religion had no beauty in the eyes of its professors, save what was shed upon it by the pomp of ceremony, or the blaze of worldly dignities. Christianity appeared to have failed in her mission of enduing the nations with a new and purer life. She had stepped down from her lofty sphere where she shone as a spiritual power, and was moving in the low orbit of earthly systems. It was at this time of gathering darkness that this man, in simplicity of character, and grandeur of aim, so unlike the men of his age, went forth to kindle the lamp of Divine truth in this isle of ocean, whence it might

diffuse its light over northern Europe.

Patrick arrived in Ireland about the year A.D. 405. In fixing this date as the commencement of his labours, we differ widely from the current of previous histories. All the mediæval writers of his life, save the very earliest, and even his modern biographers, date his arrival in Ireland thirty years later, making it fall about A.D. 432. This date is at variance with the other dates and occurrences of his life—in short, a manifest mistake, and yet it is surprising how long it has escaped discovery, and not only so, but has passed without even challenge. The monkish biographers of Patrick had Palladius upon their hands, and being careful of his honour, and not less of that of his master, they have adjusted the mission of Patrick so as to harmonize with the exigencies arising out of the mission of Palladius. They have placed Patrick's mission in the year subsequent to that of Palladius, though at the cost of throwing the life and labours of both men, and the occurrences of the time, into utter confusion. We think we are able to show, on the contrary, that Patrick was the first to arrive in Ireland; that he preceded Palladius as a worker in that country, by not less than twenty seven years, and that it was to the converts of Patrick that Palladius was sent as their first bishop. This is the fair, one may say, the unavoidable conclusion to which we are constrained to come after comparing the statements of history and weighing the evidence on the whole case. But this is a conclusion which inevitably suggests an inference touching the view held by the Scots on the claims of the pontiff, and the obedience due to him, which is not at all agreeable to the assertors of the papal dignity, either in our own or in mediæval times; and so the two missions have been jumbled and mixed up together in a way that tends to prevent that inference being seen. Let us see how the case stands. It throws light on the condition of the Christian Scots at the opening of the fifth century, and their relations to the Italian bishop.

The starting point of our argument is a fact which is well authenticated in history, and which must be held to rule the whole question. In the year 431, says Prosper, writing in the same century, "Palladius was sent by Pope Celestine to the Scots, believing in Christ as their first bishop." We know of no succeeding writer who has called in question the statement of Prosper; but let us reflect how much that statement concedes, and how far it goes to make good our whole contention. It is admitted, then, that in

A.D. 431 the Scots, that is, the Scots in Ireland—for Ireland<sup>1</sup> was then the seat of the nation—were “believers in Christ.” The words of Prosper cannot mean only that there were individual converts among the Scots; they obviously imply that a large body of that nation had been converted to Christianity. The fact of their Christianisation had been carried to the metropolis of the Christian world, it had received the grave attention of the pontiff. Celestine had judged the Scots ripe for having a bishop set over them, and accordingly, consecrating Palladius, he dispatched him to exercise that office amongst them. The words of Prosper can bear no other construction. They show us the Scots formed into a Church, enjoying, doubtless, the ministry of pastors, but lacking that which, according to Roman ideas, was essential to the completeness of their organization—a bishop, namely. And accordingly Celestine resolves to supply this want, by sending Palladius to crown their ecclesiastical polity, and to receive in return, doubtless, for this mark of pontifical affection, the submission of the Scots to the papal see.

But the mediæval chroniclers go on to relate what it is impossible to reconcile with the state of affairs among the Scots as their previous statements had put it. They first show us the Scots believing in Christ, and Palladius arriving amongst them as their bishop. And then they go on to say that the Scots in Ireland were still unconverted, and that it was Patrick by whom this great revolution in their affairs was brought about. Accounting for the repulsed flight of Palladius, they say, “God had given the conversion of Ireland to St. Patrick.” The words are, “Palladius was ordained and sent to convert this island, lying under wintry cold, but God hindered him, for no man can receive anything from earth unless it be given him from heaven.”<sup>2</sup> Of equal antiquity and authority is the following:—“Then Patricus is sent by the angel of God named Victor, and by Pope Celestine, in whom all Hibernia believed, and who baptised almost the whole of it.”<sup>3</sup>

So, then, according to the mediæval chroniclers, we have the Scots believing in Christ in A.D. 431 when Palladius arrived among them, and we have then yet to be converted in A.D. 432 when Patrick visited them. Either Pope Celestine was grossly imposed upon when he was made to believe that the Scots had become Christian and needed a bishop, or the mediæval biographers of St. Patrick have blundered as regards the year

of his arrival in Ireland, and made him follow Palladius when they ought to have made him precede him. Both statements cannot be correct, for that would make the Scots to be at once Christian and pagan. In history as in logic it is the more certain that determines the less certain. The more certain in this case is the mission of Palladius in 431, and the condition of the Scots as already believers in Christ. The less certain is the conjectural visit of Patrick in 432. The latter, therefore—that is, the year of Patrick’s arrival in Ireland,—must be determined in harmony with the admitted historic fact as regards the time and object of Palladius’ mission, and that imperatively demands that we give precedence to Patrick as the first missionary to the Scots in Ireland, and the man by whom they were brought to the knowledge of the Gospel. To place him after Palladius would only land us in contradiction and confusion.

Other facts and considerations confirm our view of this matter. Patrick’s life, written by himself, is the oldest piece of patristic literature extant, the authorship of which was within the British churches. As a sober and trustworthy authority, it outweighs all the mediæval chronicles put together. The picture it presents of Ireland at the time of Patrick’s arrival is that of a pagan country. Not a word does he say of any previous labourer in this field. He is seen building up the church among the Scots from its very foundations. Other witnesses to the same fact follow. Marcus, an Irish bishop who flourished in the beginning of the ninth century, informs us that Patrick came to Ireland in A.D. 405; and Nennius, who lived about the same time, repeats the statement.<sup>4</sup> “The Leadhar Breac,”<sup>5</sup> or Speckled Book, which is the most important repertory of ecclesiastical and theological writings which the Irish Church possesses, being written early in the twelfth century, and some parts of it in the eighth century, or even earlier, gives us to understand that it was known at Rome that Patrick was labouring in Ireland when Palladius was sent thither, for it informs us that “Palladius was sent by Pope Celestine with a gospel for Patrick to preach to the Irish.” And in one of the oldest lives of Patrick extant it is admitted that he was in Ireland many years before Palladius arrived in that country.<sup>6</sup>

There are three dates in the career of Patrick which have of late been ascertained with tolerable certainty. These are his birth, his death, and the length of time he laboured as an evangelist in Ireland; and while

these dates agree with one another, and so afford a strong corroboration of the accuracy of all three, they cannot be reconciled with the theory that Patrick's ministry in Ireland was posterior to the mission of Palladius. According to the best authorities, Patrick was born about A.D. 373; <sup>7</sup> and Lanigan has adduced good evidence to prove that he died in A.D. 465. The "Book of Armagh" furnishes corroborative evidence of the same fact. It says, "From the passion of Christ to the death of Patrick there were 436 years." <sup>8</sup> The crucifixion took place about A.D. 30; and adding these thirty years to the 436 that intervened between the crucifixion and the death of Patrick, we arrive at A.D. 466 as the year of his demise. Traditions of the highest authority attest that he spent sixty years in preaching the Gospel to the Scoto-Irish. And as between A.D. 405, when, we have said, Patrick arrived in Ireland, and A.D. 465 when he died, there are exactly sixty years, we are presented with a strong confirmation that this is the true scheme of his life, and that when Palladius arrived "with a gospel from Pope Celestine for Patrick to preach to the Irish," he found the British missionary in the midst of his evangelical labours among the Scots, and learned, much to his chagrin, doubtless, that the numerous converts of Patrick preferred to keep by the shepherd who had been the first to lead them into the pastures of the Gospel to following the voice of a stranger.

If anything were wanting to complete the proof that Palladius came not before, but after, Patrick, intruding into a field which he had not cultivated, and attempting to exercise authority over a flock who knew him not, and owed him no subjection, it is the transparent weakness of the excuses by which it has been attempted to cover Palladius' speedy and inglorious flight from Ireland, and the very improbable and, indeed, incredible account which the mediæval chroniclers have given of the appointment by Pope Celestine of Patrick as his successor. If one who had filled the influential position of archdeacon of Rome, as Palladius had done, had so signally failed in his mission to the Scots, and been so summarily and unceremoniously repudiated by them, it is not likely that Celestine would so soon renew the attempt, or that his choice would fall on one of whose name, so far as our information goes, he had never heard—at all events, one of whom he could have known almost nothing. Nor is this the only, or, indeed, main difficulty connected with this supposed appointment by Celestine. Patrick, we are told, was nominated as Palladius' successor,

when the Pope had learned that the latter was dead. The Pope never did or could learn that his missionary to the Scots was dead, for before it was possible for the tidings to have traveled to Rome, the Pope himself was in his grave. Celestine died in July the 27th, A.D. 432. At that time Palladius was alive at Fordun, or, if he had succumbed to the fever that carried him off, he was but newly dead; and months must have elapsed before the tidings of his decease arrived in Rome, to find the Pope also in his tomb. It hardly needs the plain and positive denial Patrick himself has given, that he never received pontifical consecration, to convince us, that his appointment by Pope Celestine as missionary or bishop to Ireland is a fable.

The more nearly we approach this matter, and the closer we look into the allegations of the chroniclers and of those who follow them, the more clearly does the truth appear. The excuses with which they cover the speedy retreat of Palladius only reveal the naked fact; they are a confession that the Christian Scots refused to receive him as their bishop. The story of Nathy, the terrible Irish chieftain, who so frightened Palladius that he fled for his life before he had been many days in the country, is a weak and ridiculous invention. Instead of a powerful monarch, as some have painted him, Nathy was a petty chieftain, who stretched his scepter over a territory equal in size to an English county or a Scotch parish; and if Palladius could not brave the wrath of so insignificant a potentate, verily his courage was small, and his zeal for the cause which Celestine had entrusted to him, lukewarm. We cannot believe that the missionary of Celestine was the craven this story would represent him to have been, or that he would so easily betray the interests of the Papal chair, or refuse to run a little risk for the sake of advancing its pretensions. The true reason for his precipitate flight was, beyond doubt, the opposition of the Scots to his mission. They wanted no bishop from Rome. Patrick had now for twenty seven years been labouring among them; he had been their instructor in the Gospel; they willingly submitted to his gracious rule; they rejoiced to call him their bishop, although there never was a miter set on his brow; and they had no desire to exchange the government of his pastoral staff for the iron crook of this emissary from the banks of the Tiber. If the "gospel" which Palladius had brought from Celestine to preach to them was the same Gospel which Patrick had taught them, what could they do but express their regret that he should have come so



long a journey to give them that which they already possessed? If it was another gospel, even though it had come down to them from Rome, which was now aspiring to be called the mother and mistress of all churches, they declined to receive it. In short, the Scots gave Palladius plainly to understand that he had meddled in a matter with which he had no concern, and that they judged his interference an attempt to steal their hearts from him who had “begotten them in Christ,” and to whom all their loyalty was due, and of inflicting upon them the farther wrong of robbing them of the liberty in which they lived under the pastor of their choice, and bringing them into thralldom to a foreign lord. But the plain unvarnished record of the fact was not to be expected from the mediæval chroniclers. They were worshipers of the pontifical grandeur, and hence the contradictions and fables by which they have sought to conceal the affront offered to the pontiff in the person of his deputy. Nor is the fact to be looked for from those writers of our own day who are so anxious to persuade us that the Scots were always in communion with Rome, and always subject to the authority of its bishop. History shows us the very opposite. The first acts of the Scots on their conversion to the Christian faith are seen to be these—they repel the advances of the bishop of Rome, they put forth a claim of independence, and they refuse to bow at the foot of the papal chair. Amen!!

### Endnotes

1. We must again remind our readers that the Scotland of that age was Ireland. Porphory (middle of third century) is the first who mentions the *Scoticæ gentes*, “the Scottish tribes,” as the inhabitants of the Britannic Isles. From that time Scotia occurs as the proper name of Hibernia. Claudian (A.D. 395) says: “When the Scots put all Ireland in motion (against the Romans), then over heaps of Scots the icy Ierne wept.” Orosius, in the same age, says: “Hibernia is inhabited by the Scottish nations” (lib. i. cap. 20). *Scotia eadem et Hibernia*, “Scotland and Ireland are the same country” (Isidore, lib. xii. c. 6). Ireland is properly the country of the Scots, says Bede. The word *properly* is used to distinguish them from the Scots who in his day had come to be settled in Argyleshire. Ancient Scotland is spoken of as an island, and Scotland never was an island, though Ireland is.

2. *Life of St. Patrick* (A.D. 700), preserved in the Book of Armagh;

Todd's *Life of St. Patrick* p. 288.

3. Annotation of Tirechan on the *Life of St. Patrick*, also preserved in the book of *Book of Armagh*, a MS. of the early part of the 9th century.

4. "Its claims," says Dr. Killen (Old Catholic Church), "have been acknowledged by the best critics of all denominations," by Usher, Ware, Tillemont, Lanigan, and Neander. Dr. Killen strongly supports the view advocated in the text. He thinks that Patrick arrived in Ireland immediately after the death of Nial, or Nial of the Nine Hostages, in the year 40

5. Introduction to the Irish version of Nennius, p. 19. Dublin, 1838.

6. Dr. Petrie speaks of the *Leadhar Breac* as the oldest and best MS. relating to the Irish Church, now preserved, or which, perhaps, the Irish ever possessed.

6. Interpolated version of his life by Probus—Dr. Petrie on Tara Hill.

7. Lanigan, i. 129, 130. *Ibid.* i. 362, 363.

8. Betham, ii. 288. *Transac. Roy. Irish Acad.*, vol. xviii. part ii. p. 52.

## CHAPTER XIV.

## PATRICK CROSSES THE SEA—BEGINS HIS MINISTRY—MANNER OF HIS PREACHING—EFFECT ON THE IRISH.

NOTHING could be more unpretending, or farther removed from display, than the manner in which Patrick entered on his mission. We see him go forth, not, indeed, alone, but with only a small following of obscure and humble disciples. He has communicated his design to a few select members of the British church of Strathclyde: they have approved his purpose, and caught a portion of his spirit, and now offer themselves as the associates of his future labours. On a certain day they proceed together to the sea shore, and pass over to the other side. On that voyage hang events of incalculable consequence. If the tempest shall burst and mishap befall the tiny ship now labouring amid the tides of the Irish Channel, history must alter its course, and the destiny of nations will be changed.

Tirechan, the eighth-century commentator on the “Life of Patrick,” deeming so mean an escort altogether unbefitting so great an occasion, has provided Patrick with a sumptuous retinue of “holy bishops, presbyters, deacons, exorcists, ostiari, and lictors.” It is hard to see the need he had of such an attendance, or the help these various functionaries could give him in his labours among the savage clans of pagan Ireland. But in truth the coracle that carried Patrick across the Channel bore no such freight. This army of spiritual men is the pure creation of the chronicler’s pen.

The little party crossed the sea in safety, and arrived at Innes Patrick, a small island off the coast of Dublin. Their stay here was short, the place being then most probably uninhabited. They next sailed along the coast northward, halting at various points on their voyage to recruit their stock of provisions. In some instances the inhabitants absolutely refused to supply their necessities, and sent them away fasting, and Patrick, his biographers say, punished their niggardliness by pronouncing the curse of barrenness on the rivers and fields of these inhospitable people.<sup>1</sup> These “bolts of malediction,” as his biographers term them, we may well believe, are as purely imaginary as the crowd of “holy bishops” that formed his train. Such fictions serve only to show how ill these writers understood

the man whose character they had undertaken to portray. Patrick bore neither weapon in his hand nor malediction on his lip: he had come to preach peace, and to scatter blessings, and, after the example of a Greater, he took no account whether they were friends or enemies on whom these blessings lighted.

Continuing their course, Patrick and his fellow-voyagers reached the coast of Ulster, and finally disembarked at the mouth of the Slain, a small river now called Slany. The spot lies between the town lands of RingLane and Ballintogher, about two miles from Sabhal or Saul. <sup>2</sup> Here it was that Patrick began his great career. In the little band which we see stepping on shore at Downpatrick to begin work among the Scots in Ireland, we behold the beginning of that great movement among the Celtic nations by which Christianity, during the course of the three following centuries, was spread from the banks of the Po to the frozen shores of Iceland.

Patrick's first sermon was preached in a barn. The use of this humble edifice was granted him by the chief of the district, whom, the legend says, was the same man as his former master, Milchu. When we see Patrick rising up before a crowd of pagan Scots in this barn we are reminded of the wooden shed in which Luther, ten centuries afterwards, opened his public ministry in the market place of Wittenberg. In a fabric having as little pretension to show or grandeur did Patrick open his mission in Ireland. He spoke in the dialect of those whom he addressed. The Celtic was then the common tongue of the North of Europe. The dialect of Ireland might differ from the dialect of Patrick's birthplace, but that presented no difficulty in his case, seeing he had made himself familiar with the dialect of Ulster during the six years that he herded sheep on its mountains. He knew not the tongue only but the hearts also of the men who now stood before him. He had learned to read them when he mingled with them as a slave. To what device had he recourse to gain their attention? How was he able to procure for his words entrance into their dark minds? How is it that the lightning penetrates the gloom of the deepest midnight? Is it not by its own inherent illuminating power? Patrick's words were light, light from the skies; and simply by their own silent and celestial power, like the lightning of the clouds, did they penetrate the pagan darkness and chase the night from the souls of these men.

The churchmen in Rome at that day were vying with each other in the glory of their official garments, and the grandeur of their temples, sure signs that they had begun to distrust the power of their message. It was in his perfect confidence in the unimpaired omnipotent power of the Gospel message, that Patrick's great strength lay. As the days when the Gospel walked in Galilee and preached to men by the sea shore and on the mountain's side, so was now to be in Ulster. The Gospel had returned to the simplicity, and with the simplicity, to the power of its youth. Smitten with premature decrepitude in the proud Italian capital, it was about to go forth with the footsteps of a mighty conqueror on the mountains of Antrim. While the eloquence of Chrysostom was evoking only the noisy plaudits of the gay citizens of Constantinople, the words of Patrick were to draw forth from the Scots of Ulster the tears of genuine penitence. Standing up before his audience in the same garb in which he had crossed the sea, and speaking to them in their mother tongue, Patrick told them the simple but grand story of the cross. The rugged exterior of the speaker was soon forgotten in the wonder and amazement which his message awakened. Like a fire, it searched the souls of his hearers through and through. Like a great hammer, it smote upon their consciences and awoke them from their deep sleep. As it had been formerly with Patrick himself, so was it now with these ignorant and fierce men; their own former selves came out of the darkness of their ignorance, and stood before their eyes. What had their past life been but one long transgression! So did they now see it. Like men coming out of a stupor, and struggling painfully back into consciousness, so these men, in whom a moral and spiritual consciousness was now being developed, returned to life with pain and agony, feeling the load of guilt and wretchedness that lay upon them. To efface the record of these iniquitous deeds was impossible, and it was equally beyond their power to atone for them. And yet satisfaction, they felt, there must be, otherwise the approach of a doom, as terrible as it was righteous, could not be stayed. What were they to do? On every side they saw themselves confronted with stern realities, not to be met by fictions or mystic rites, but by realities equally great. Behind them were acts of flagrant transgression. In front of them was a Law in which they heard the voice of a great Judge speaking, and saying, "The wages of sin is Death" Trouble and anguish took hold upon them.

Anon there began to pass another change upon the men gathered round

Patrick, and listening for the first time in their lives to the Gospel from his lips. They began to understand that this was a message from Heaven; and they gathered hope from the fact that the Great Father had sent one to call them from the errors in which they had long wandered, and bring them back to himself. It was clear that He had no pleasure in their death. Light began to break in through their deep darkness. And now there seemed to be unveiled before them, as if by an unseen hand, a Tree on which a Divine Victim was suspended, who was bearing their sins and dying in their room. It was this wondrous sight that changed the words of the preacher from a message of condemnation and death into a message of forgiveness and life. Here was the very satisfaction which their conscience craved in order that it might lay down its burden. Here was blood of priceless value, and not a spot in all the black record of their past lives which it could not wash out. This was the door of life—of life eternal. At its threshold neither money nor merit was demanded as the condition of admission. Why, then, should they not press into the kingdom, and sit down with the patriarchs and prophets, the kings and righteous men of former ages? They did so. Their pagan life cast off, their hearts purified by the truth, they entered and enrolled their names in that goodly and glorious company which counts among its members men of every age and of every race, and the least of whom is greater than the highest of the grandees of the empires of earth.

It was not every one in the assembly now gathered round Patrick whose heart was touched, and was able to press into the kingdom, the door of which he opened to his hearers. Nor was it, perhaps, the major part; but even if only a few responded to his call, that was much in the circumstances. The heart of the missionary was cheered. He heard in the occurrence a voice bidding him go forward and fear not. If he had been haunted by misgivings that one so humble as he felt himself to be had committed a grave imprudence in undertaking so great an enterprise, these misgivings were now set at rest. These first fruits were the pledges of a great harvest in days to come. The whole land would be given him provided he had zeal to labour and faith to wait. The Gospel had given another proof of its power, and one not the least illustrious of the many it had exhibited since it began its career. Ere this day it had visited many lands, and told its message in almost all the tongues of earth, barbarous and civilized; it had traversed the vast territory that stretches from the

shores of the Nile to the banks of the Ganges, from the snows of Atlas to the mountains of the Kurds, leaving on its path all throughout that immense field the monuments of its beneficent spirit, and transforming energy in tribes emancipated and civilized, in institutions and laws ameliorated, and in individual lives rescued from degradation and ennobled by purity and hope. But it may be questioned whether the Gospel had ever entered a region where, judged from human standpoint, its success was more improbable than among the Scots in Ireland, intractable and stubborn in disposition, held in bondage by their chieftains, and inspired with awe and terror by their Druidic priests. Yet here it was that the Gospel was destined to win its more conspicuous, and certainly its most enduring triumph.

The commission of Patrick had now received its first attesting seal. "He tarried many days there," says the "Book of Armagh." He journeyed over the whole district, preaching and teaching, "and there the faith began to spread."

#### Endnotes

1. Vita. Trip., i. 41; Todd, *Life of St. Patrick*, p. 405.
2. See a valuable paper (privately printed) by Mr. J. W. Hanna, of Downpatrick, entitled, *An Enquiry into the true landing Place of St. Patrick in Ulster*. Todd, *Life of St. Patrick*; p. 406, footnote.

## CHAPTER XV.

PATRICK' S BARN—HIS TOURS—IN COUNTRY DISTRICTS—IN TOWNS—CONVERSATIONS—SERMONS—TOILS AND PERILS—EFFORTS ON BEHALF OF SLAVES—WAS HE EVER AT ROME ?

IT is seldom that a great career destined to be crowned with complete and enduring success opens in victory. Yet so it was in the case of Patrick. He crossed the sea, and the Scots of Ireland surrendered to him at the first summons. So it may be said, for in these first converts the nation is seen giving pledges of full submission in due time. With the arrival of this man on the Irish shore a mighty unseen influence goes forth over the land, and like that plastic force that stirs in the bosom of the earth in spring, and sends forth the little flower to tell that winter has fulfilled its months, and that summer is returning, so this influence which was descending from a higher sky had sent forth these first blossoms to tell that the dark winter of the land was past, and that a sweeter spring tide than any that had ever before freshened its fields was drawing nigh.

In after years a church was erected on the site of the humble edifice in which Patrick had opened his ministry and gained his first triumphs. The form of that church was rectangular, like that of the barn which it replaced. And like the barn, too, the church stood from north to south. It had not yet been decreed that the true orthodox position of a church is from east to west, and that unless it is so placed, the sacraments dispensed in it lack converting power. The idea of such a thing had not dawned on Patrick's mind, and so he went on preaching in churches turned in every direction without finding that the efficacy of the Gospel was in the least impaired thereby; and the fact is undoubted that never was there such a multitude of conversions in Ireland as in those days when the churches of that country stood in directions that flagrantly transgressed the afterwards established rubric. This venerable, though uncanonical sanctuary, which arose on the site on which Patrick's first sermon was preached, was styled *Sabhal Padriuc*, that is, Patrick's Barn. <sup>1</sup> The place retains the name to this day, and is situated about two miles northeast of Downpatrick.

Drawing fresh strength, doubtless, from this auspicious commencement of his career, Patrick went forth to prosecute his ministry throughout the



surrounding region. Much he joyed to give liberty to a land which had given slavery to himself, and that joy received an accession with each new convert. In following the steps of our great missionary it is vain attempting to record his progress from day to day, or even from one year to another. We cannot tell the order in which he visited the several districts and clans, nor do we know the number or the rank of the converts he baptized at the various points where he preached. The task of chronicling such a progress, stage by stage, so easy in the case of a modern mission, is altogether impossible in the case of the missions and missionaries of fourteen hundred years ago. Not only are all contemporary records, such as the men of their own day would have given, wanting, but there hangs between us and these remote evangelists a cloud of fables and prodigies, the creation of men who lived long after these early labourers had gone to their graves, and who neither sympathized with their pure spiritual aims nor were able to rise to the conception of the simple greatness of their characters. The men and the events of those days look out upon us from a legendary fog.

In the case of the apostle of Ireland, this disadvantage exists in a more than usual degree. A score of legendary pens have been set to work to distort and disfigure him. Each individual biographer has created a St. Patrick in his own likeness. Open the pages of this biographer; the features on which we gaze are those of an excited visionary or a delirious fanatic. Turn to a second; it is a worker of miracles and a fore teller of future events, that stands before us. A third exhibits Patrick as a necromancer, silencing contradiction and compelling submission by the mysterious forces of incantations, spells, and exorcisms. A fourth paints him as proud and choleric, more ready to avenge than to forgive an injury, and thundering malediction on all who oppose him; while a fifth invests him with power over the elements of nature, of which he makes ready use for the discomfiture of his foes, covering them with thick darkness, or dispersing them with frightful tempests, engulfing them by earthquake, or consuming them by fire from heaven. We feel instinctively that this is not the apostle of Ireland, but a grossly conceived and hideously-painted caricature.

There is but one authentic likeness of Patrick; a likeness, it is true, drawn by his own hand, but drawn all unconsciously—the hand doing a work

which the mind listed not of, the *Confessio*, to wit. It authenticates itself by its unlikeness to all other biographies of the same man, and by being such as the mediæval biographers were utterly unable to have produced.

Let us mark the manner of the man as he has unwittingly revealed himself to us. He is clothed in a long woolen garment. His eye burns with energy; his brow is meek but courageous. Benign his aspect. He speaks, and his voice draws the natives round him. There is a tenderness and a beseechingness in it that compel them to listen. How artlessly he adapts himself to their prejudices and habits! and how gentle and patient is he with their gross and carnal ideas! how persevering in his efforts to find an entrance for the light into their dark minds! His own heart, schooled in spiritual affliction, knows how to lay itself alongside theirs. Thus quietly but earnestly he pursues his work from day to day, availing himself of the principles of natural religion which Druidism had dimly lodged in their minds, to awaken conscience to a sense of sin, and to call up the image of a judgment to come: and when he finds that the arrow has entered, and that the wound has begun to bleed—oh, how does he rejoice! Not that he has pleasure in the anguish of the sufferer, but because he anticipates the joy of the cure.

On his tours he entered the huts of the peasantry, shared in their humble meal, and while seated at table with them he would take occasion to draw the conversation from ordinary matters to those of highest concern. He would tell them in simple words of that great event which had come to pass, four hundred years before, in Jerusalem, which had been already made known in so many lands, and which was now published to them also for the forgiveness of their sins. He would tell them that He who died on Calvary was now alive, was reigning in Heaven, and would come on the great final day as Judge; but meanwhile, before that great day should come, He was sending His messengers to all nations with the command that they should believe and obey His Gospel. Their hearts would be touched by the tidings of a death so wonderful and a love so great, and the visit would end as similar visits had ended in primitive times, by the householder saying, “See, here is water; what hinders that we should be baptized”?

On the hillside he would sit down amid the shepherds and cowherds,

and tell them of a Shepherd who gave His life for the sheep. He would not despise his audience because they were mean, nor despair of them because they were ignorant, seeing it was while he himself sat on the hillside as a cowherd that his own hard heart began to melt and his own blind eye to open. How vividly now would the whole scene return and present itself before his memory! As the labourers rested in the fields at noontide, he would join himself to them, and opening the Scriptures, he would read to these toil-worn men a parable or a story from Holy Writ. It might be of that Lord of the vineyard who, when evening was come, summoned His servants before Him, and proceeded to reckon with them, giving, without stint or grudge, to the man who had laboured but one hour in the vineyard even as to the man who had laboured twelve hours, the penny of an everlasting glory. Would they not like to be the servants of such a Master, and when their evening had come, to be called into His presence and have their poor services acknowledged by so transcendent a recompense?

Or he discoursed to them of that runaway from home and father who kept swine in the far country. He showed him to them, as he sat amid his vile charge, raggedness on his back, famine in his hollow cheek, and remorse in his soul, a supremely pitiable spectacle. He asks them whether they had ever known one who resembled that poor prodigal; whether they had known any one who had committed the same folly and plunged himself into the same gulf of wanton wretchedness? They answer him with a sigh, and they begin to say each within himself, "I am that prodigal. I have wandered far from my Father: alas! I know not the way back to Him." "I, too," responds the missionary interpreting their unspoken thoughts, "have played the runaway. I, too, have been in the far country, and have felt the pangs of that hunger which there preys upon the heart. And I should have been sitting there to this hour, shut in with my wretchedness and utter despair, had not a voice spoken to me and said, 'In your Father's house there is bread enough and to spare, while you perish with hunger.' Being come to myself, I arose and went to my Father. I invite you to do so also. If you sit still in this land of famine you shall certainly perish. Your Father's door is open to you. The same welcome that met me at its threshold awaits you, and the same arms which folded me to His heart will be opened to embrace you. Arise and go to Him."

Patrick, in the prosecution of his mission, visited the towns as well as the villages and rural districts. On these occasions, we are told, he would assemble the inhabitants by tuck of drum. To face a town assembly was a more formidable affair than to open a familiar conversation with a company of shepherds on the hillside, or begin a discourse to a group of labourers in the field; but the centers of influence, which are the cities, must be won if Ireland is to be gained for the Gospel. The tocsin has been sounded, and the men of the city, knowing that it announces the arrival of one of whom they have heard such strange things, flock to see and hear him. Along with them come a multitude of the baser sort, zealous upholders of the customs of their fathers, which they have been told this man everywhere speaks against. They greet the missionary with clamour and scowls. Undismayed, Patrick rises up before them, and amid the gaping wonder of some, the rude mocking of others, and the silence of a few, proceeds to unfold his message. He does not directly attack the rites of the groves. He must first show them a better altar and a holier sacrifice than that of the Druid, and then they will forsake their bloody oblations of their own accord. He speaks to them of a God whom they have not seen, for He dwells in the heavens, but the workings of whose power, and the tokens of whose love, are all around them. Can He who spread out the plains of earth, who decks them with the flowers of spring, and waters them with the rain of the clouds, and clothes them year by year with bounteous harvests, take delight in the cruel sacrifices you offer to him in the dark wood? So far from demanding the immolation of your innocent offspring, He has sent His own son to die in your room. Other sacrifice He does not demand and will not accept. It is a cry for vengeance, not a prayer for pardon, which rises from the blood that streams on the altar of the Druid. But the sacrifice I announce to you speaks peace: it opens the heavens: it reveals to you the face of a Father: are you willing to be reconciled to Him? We hear some in that crowd, who had felt the unseen power that goes along with this message, reply, We are willing. From this hour we go no more to the altars of the Druids. We have borne their heavy yoke too long. We cast ourselves at the feet of our Father, and humbly beg for the sake of His own son to be receded back into His love.

It was in these simple and easily understood terms, for the Gospel is ever the mightiest when preached in plain unvarnished phraseology, that

Patrick found entrance for Christianity into the Scottish municipalities and clanships of Ireland. We have no written chronicle of his sermons, but we know on what model he formed himself as an instructor of the ignorant; and the incidental allusions which he makes in his "Confessio" to his ministry assure us that this was the spirit and style in which he discharged it. Yet meek and unassuming though he was, he spoke as one having authority, and not as the Druids. If his language was plain the truths he uttered were weighty, and such as even these poor ignorant men could not but see in some sort to be inexpressibly grand. They met the deepest needs and cravings of their hearts. Those who received them felt that by some marvelous power they had awakened within them feelings and motives they had never known till now. They felt that they were other men than they had been before. And this transformation of soul was not long of making itself manifest in the outward life. Their townsmen and neighbours saw that they were different men from them, and different men even from their former selves. There was a purity, a charity, an unselfishness in their lives which they could not well explain, but the power and beauty of which they could not but see, and this new and lovely character was exhibited with a grace so natural and easy that manifestly it was not assumed or acted, but genuine; it was the result of a change wrought in the deepest principles of their being. These were the monuments Patrick left behind him in every town which he visited, of the divinity of the Gospel. These men, changed in the very essence of their character, the whole scope, aim, and influence of their lives now become the very reverse of what they had aforetime been, were the most convincing proofs that in making known to them the death and rising again of that great ONE who had come on earth for man's deliverance, he had not been entertaining them with an idle tale, or trading on their simplicity and credulity by narrating to them "a cunningly-devised fable." Having delivered his message in one town, Patrick must needs go forward and publish the "good tidings" in this other also. When he took his departure he had the satisfaction of thinking that the Gospel remained behind him, and that it would speak to the pagan populations by the transformed characters and pure lives of those who had embraced it. Thus he multiplied missionaries as he went onward. They might be few: two in a sept, or one in a city, but their strength lay not in their numbers, but in their character; they were light-bearers in their several communities.

The conquest of Ireland to the Gospel was, there is reason to think, neither easy nor sudden. On the contrary, every reference to it, direct or incidental, in the "Confessio," confirms us in the belief that as the work was great so its accomplishment consumed long years of anxious and exhausting labour. We have seen the gleam of success that heralded its commencement; nevertheless it found no exemption in its after stages from the law that requires that every great cause shall be baptized in suffering. Delay, disappointment, and repeated failure must test the faith and mature the wisdom and courage by which ultimate success is to be achieved and rewarded. For the long period of sixty years, with but few intervals of rest, Patrick had to maintain this great combat with the two potencies—Druidism and Darkness—which had so long held possession of Ireland. Victory came slowly, and only late in the day. That pestiferous priestcraft which had struck its roots deep into the soil, was not to be extirpated in a day, and the nation delivered by a few rapid and brilliant strokes. Such a work could be done only in anxiety and weariness, often in cold and hunger, with many tears and strong cries for help, and amid privations cheerfully submitted to, reviling meekly borne, and dangers courageously braved. Such was the man who carried the Gospel to the Scots in Ireland, and through them to the whole island. Days and nights together, he tells us, he was occupied in reading and interpreting the Scriptures to the people. All his journeys were performed on foot. We see him, staff in hand, regardless of the blast, traversing quaking bog, and threading dark wood, happy if at the end of his way he could impart light to some dark mind. And this work he did without earthly recompense. He coveted neither dignity from pope nor gold from chieftain. "I accepted nothing for my pains," said he, "lest the Gospel should be hindered."

The only reward Patrick received was persecution. This, and not papal consecration, was the badge of his apostleship. And persecution in every variety of form, save that of death, befell him. His life, though often in extreme jeopardy, was providentially shielded, for it was the will of his Master that the desire of his heart, which was the conversion of Ireland, should be given him. But, short of this last extremity, every other species of indignity and suffering had he to endure. There were incessant journeying over a wild country; there were the ambushes set for him in the way; there were the discomfort and sleeplessness that wait on a couch

spread under the open night sky; there was the uncertainty of daily bread; there were the gibes and buffetings of pagan crowds; there was the dangerous wrath of powerful chieftains, who feared the effect Patrick's preaching might have on their serfs and who were not likely long to hesitate when called to decide between the life of the missionary and the loyalty of their dependents. And there was the fury of some mob or clan which the priests of Druidism had instigated to violence against the preacher, whom they branded as a contemner of their worship and a reviler of their gods. But when chased from any particular scene of labour by the frown of chieftain or the violence of the populace, his regret was the less from knowing that the work would not suffer interruption thereby, for the words he had spoken would germinate in hearts in his absence, and when the storm subsided he would find disciples to welcome his return.

It was after this fashion that Patrick stormed and won the Septs of Ireland. These were the real miracles that illustrated his career, and they far excel the marvels and prodigies which the fertile but credulous imaginations of his monkish biographers have credited him with. In these labours so patiently prosecuted, in these sufferings so meekly endured, and in the success which crowned his efforts, but of which he never boasts, we see the true Patrick—not the Patrick of monkish story or of vulgar romance, who routs hydras and chases dragons from the soil of Ireland, but the Patrick who, seizing the sword of the Spirit, rushes into the darkness of that land, and encounters things more difficult to be overcome than hosts of literal monsters, even the evils begotten of deep ignorance, and the beliefs engendered by an ancient superstition. All he discomfits, and cleanses the land from the dragon brood that possessed it. This was a higher achievement than if he had yielded sovereign authority over the elements, and been obeyed by the lightning of the sky and the waves of the deep. So did it appear to Patrick himself. “Whence to we this grace,” says he, “that I should come to the Irish tribes to preach the Gospel and endure these wrongs at the hands of the unbelieving? that I should bear the reproach of being a wanderer and an alien, and undergo so many persecutions, even to bonds and imprisonment, and sacrifice myself and my nobility and rank” (he was the son of a Decurio) “for the sake of others? And I am ready, if I should be found meet, and the Lord should indulge me so far, to lay down my life for His

Name, because I am greatly a debtor to God, who bestowed so great grace upon me.”<sup>2</sup>

Not in his own person only was Patrick persecuted; he had frequently to suffer in the persons of his converts. This, we may well believe, gave him more poignant grief than what touched himself. It wrung his heart to see the serf incurring the anger and enduring the blows of his pagan master for no fault save that of obeying the call of the Gospel and becoming a follower of the cross. His sympathetic nature would not permit him to stand aloof and refuse his mediation in behalf of “the sons of the faith,” when he beheld them enduring stripes and imprisonment at the hands of some cruel lord whose slaves they continued to be, although now they were the freed men of Christ. He would give his money when his other good offices failed, and in this way he was able to redeem from temporal slavery many whom he had already rescued from spiritual bondage. In the family, as in the clan, the influence of the missionary had often to be put forth. Enmities and rankling sometimes followed the entrance of the Gospel into households, and Patrick had to mediate between the heathen father and the Christian child. Such were the clouds that darkened the morning of the Christian Church in Ireland. But suffering only endeared the cause to the convert. Neither the leader in this war of invasion, nor any soldier in the army under him, thought of retreating. The auguries of final triumph were multiplying from day to day, and the banners of light were being borne farther and still farther into the darkness of the land.

It is at this point of his career that some of Patrick’s biographers throw in an unexpected and most surprising episode. Arresting him in his work, they dismiss him for a while from the field of his labours and of his fast-coming triumphs, and send him on a journey to Rome, to receive consecration as a bishop from the Pope. Had Patrick begun to covet the “pall” which the bishop of Rome was about this time beginning to send as a “gift” to the bishops of the Christian world, with covert design of drawing them into an admission of his supremacy? Or had he begun to doubt the sufficiency of that commission of which it had been his humble boast that he received it “from Christ himself” and did he now wish to supplement his Master’s grace with the pontiff’s consecration. It must be done so, if indeed it be the fact that he went to Rome to solicit the papal anointing. But where is the proof of this? What Pope anointed Patrick?



What contemporary record contains the alleged fact? Neither Prosper, nor Platina, nor any other chronicler, mentions Patrick's visit to Rome, till Marianus, a monk of Cologne, proclaims it to the world in the eleventh century, without making it clear in what way or through what channel a fact hidden from the six previous centuries was revealed to himself. There is no earlier Irish authority for it than a manuscript of the fifteenth century. The undoubted truth is, that oil of Pope never came on Patrick's head. He put no value on papal consecration, and would not have interrupted his work for the space of an hour, or gone a mile out of his way, though it had been to be anointed with the oil of all the Popes. Nay, we may venture to affirm that he would not have left the evangelization of Ireland were it to have been installed even in the chair of Peter. Let us first hear Patrick himself on the point. His words make it clear that from the moment he arrived in Ireland as a missionary till he laid his bones in its soil, not a day did he absent himself from the country. "Though I most earnestly desired to go to Britain," says he, "as if to my country and kindred, and not only so, but even to proceed as far as Gaul,—the Lord knows how much I wished it,— yet bound in the spirit which declares me guilty if I should do so, I fear lest I should lose aught of my labour,— nay, not mine, but Christ's, my Lord, who commanded me to come to this people, and live with them during the residue of my life." Dr. Lanigan, the able Roman Catholic historian of St. Patrick, treats the story as a fabrication. "This pretended tour to Rome," says he, "and the concomitant circumstances, are set aside by the testimony of St. Patrick himself, who gives us most clearly to understand that from the commencement of his mission he constantly remained in Ireland. And again: "It is clear from his own testimony that he remained with the Irish people during the whole remainder of his life." <sup>3</sup>

All the more authentic accounts of the life of Patrick discredit this alleged consecration by the Pope; or, rather, they make it certain that it never took place. The hymn of Fiacc is silent regarding it. The author, who was bishop of Sletty, and a disciple and contemporary of Patrick, is said to have written his work to record the principal events of his life, and published it not later than the middle of the century succeeding that in the end of which Patrick died. Nevertheless, he makes no mention of his visit to Rome. The ancient *Life of Patrick*, preserved in the *Book of Armagh*, is equally silent regarding it. <sup>4</sup> The story may be dismissed as

the invention of writers who believed that no one could be a minister of Christ unless he wore a “pall,” and had neither right to preach nor power to convert unless he were linked to the chief pastor on the banks of the Tiber by the chain of apostolic succession.

We must here remark that the organization of the British church in the fifth century was simple indeed, compared with the ecclesiastical mechanism of succeeding ages. There was then no Mission Board to partition heathendom into distinct fields of labour, and to say to one, go and work yonder; and to another, come and evangelize here. The church in the early ages was a great missionary society whose members sought the spring of evangelistic activity in their own breast, and were free to go forth without formal delegation from synod or bishop, and evangelize as they might incline, at their open doors or among remote pagan tribes. Merchants, soldiers, and even slaves were the first, in some instances, to carry the knowledge of Christianity to heathen lands. These facts help us to understand the position of Patrick. It is hard to say what church, or if any church, gave him formal delegation to Ireland. The church of Strath-Clyde in which his father was deacon, and himself a presbyter—the only ordination he ever received, so far as we can make out—looked with no favour on his projected evangelization of Ireland, and was not likely to have given it formal recognition. There is a story, founded on a doubtful legend in the Book of Armagh, that the church of Gaul sent Patrick to convert the Irish and that he received consecration from a bishop of that church, by the name of Amathorex.<sup>5</sup> But this and all similar allegations are sufficiently refuted by Patrick himself. He says, “I was made a bishop in Ireland.”<sup>6</sup> What meaning are we to attach to these words? Certainly not that of formal episcopal consecration, for there were then no bishops or presbyters in Ireland, save those which Patrick himself had placed in that office. These men, doubtless, recognized him as their chief and bishop; for he who had created the flock had the best right to wear the honour, or rather bear the burden of its oversight. And this interpretation of the words is confirmed by the statement that follows them, in which Patrick ascribes his mission or apostolate to God only. He appears to have viewed the extraordinary events that had befallen him as the Divine call to essay the conversion of Ireland; and hence though he passes lightly over human ordination, and even leaves it doubtful whether he ever received such, he is emphatic as regards the call of the people. He tells us that he heard

“the voice of the Irish” crying to him, and saying, “We pray thee, holy youth, to come and henceforth walk: among us.” He answered, “I, Patrick, the sinner, come at your call.”

### Endnotes

1. It is Latinised *Horreum Patrici*, Patrick’s Granary. Reeves, *Down and Connor*, p. 220.
2. *Patrici Confessio*, sec. xv.
3. Lanigan, *Eccles. Hist.*, i. 181, 319.
4. Todd, *Life of St. Patrick*, pp. 313-315.
5. Todd, *Life of St. Patrick*, pp. 316-319.
6. The statement occurs in his letter to Coroticus, a British pirate, who had made a descent upon Ireland and carried off a number of Patrick’s converts. The passage is as follows: “Patricius, peccator, indoctus silicet, Hiberione constitutum episcopum me ease fateor. Certissime a Deo accept id quod sum. Inter barbaros itaque habito, proselytes et profuga ob amorem Dei.” The words imply that Patrick’s ordination, whatever its form, was in Ireland; *Hiberione*, in Ireland —not *Hiberoni*, for Ireland

## CHAPTER XVI.

PATRICK'S—“DAY OF TARA”—CONVERSION OF IRELAND,  
ETC.

WE have followed the footsteps of our missionary as he scatters the good seed amid the rural populations and the provincial towns of the north of Ireland. His journeys had yet extended beyond the limits of the Irish Dalriada, the second cradle of the Scottish race, and the seat, as yet, of the body of the nation. But within these bounds the evangelistic labours of Patrick had been prosecuted with untiring assiduity. With a lion-like courage and a popular eloquence that remind us of Luther, Patrick would seem to have carried captive the understandings and hearts of the nation. So sudden an awakening we do not meet with till we come down to the era of the Reformation. In truth, there are certain great traits common to both Reformations—that of the fifth century and that of the sixteenth. Patrick may be said to have been the Luther of the earlier evangelisation, and Columba—though at a vast distance—its Calvin. Patrick gave the first touch to the movement; Columba came after and gave the laws by which its course must be governed, if it would not expend itself in a burst of emotion and enthusiasm. And for both Calvin and Columba a secure retreat was provided, where, in the very presence of countless foes, they might carry on their work. To Calvin was given the little town at the foot of the Alps, which had as its impregnable defense the rival and conflicting interests of the four great monarchies that lay around it. What Geneva was to Calvin, the rock of Iona was to Columba. It had for its rampart the stormy seas of the west. The gates of Geneva were opening day by day to send forth missionaries and martyrs into France and Switzerland, as at an earlier day trained evangelists from the feet of the elders of Iona were constantly crossing the narrow strait to spread the light amongst the British tribes and the pagan nations that were pouring into Europe.

Of the petty chieftains of the north of Ireland several had been won to the Gospel, and among the first fruits of their devotion were gifts of land for the service of the mission. On these plots of ground Patrick erected humble churches, into which he gathered his first converts, for instruction and worship. These young congregations he committed to the care of pastors,

whom he had converted and trained, and himself went forward into the surrounding heathenism to make other converts, whom he committed in like manner to the care of other pastors. Never did warrior pant more earnestly for new realms to subdue, than Patrick longed to win fresh triumphs for the Cross; and never was joy of conqueror so ecstatic as was that of the missionary over these flocks gathered out of the arid wilderness of Druidism and now led to the clear waters and green pastures of the Gospel.

Before Patrick began his mission in Ireland, it was the inviolable abode of almost every species of oppression and every form of evil. But now, we may well believe, its northern part began to wear the aspect of a Christian land. Wherever the feet of the missionary had passed, there was seen in the wilds a tract of light, and there was felt the sweetness and fragrance of Christianity. The terrible hardness and selfishness of pagan life had departed; a secret charm was infused into existence; and though the relation of master and serf still subsisted, it had been wondrously mellowed and sweetened. Every duty was somehow easier. Faces formerly dark with hatred or suspicion, now beamed with kindly looks; and the very soil bore testimony to the moral and social amelioration which had been effected, in the better husbandry of the fields, and the air of peace and comfort that began to surround the dwellings.

Patrick could now reflect with satisfaction that his mission had got a foothold in the country. The organisation of the infant church had reached a stage where it would be able to maintain itself, and even to make progress without the presence and the labours of its founder. But the missionary was not content with what he had accomplished. There were other septs, there were wider provinces, and there were more powerful chieftains to be subjected to the sway of the Gospel. The time was come, he judged, to carry the evangelical banners into the West and South of Ireland. It was now that his movement opened out into national breadth, and that Patrick from being the evangelist of a province became the apostle of a nation, and the herald of a movement that ultimately extended to the Celtic nations of northern Europe.

The fear of Patrick had already fallen upon the priests of the old religion. This helped to open his way into the land. In the footsteps of the missionary

the priests of the groves heard the knell of the downfall of Druidism. “Who is this,” we hear then say, as they turned on one another pale faces, and spoke in trembling accents,—“who is this who marches through the land casting down the altars of the country’s faith, and withdrawing the hearts of the people from their fathers’ gods? Whence comes he, and who gave him this power?” Prophecy from its seat amid the hills of Judah had announced the coming of a Great King who was to sway His scepter over all the world. The echoes of that Divine voice had gone round the earth, awakening expectation in some, terror in others. Nations groaning in chains listened to it as the Israelite did to the silver trumpet which at dawn of the year of Jubilee sent its glad peal throughout all his coasts, telling every Hebrew bondsman that his forfeited inheritance had come lack, and that his lost freedom was restored. So had this great prophecy sent its reverberations through all lands, awakening, even among savage tribes, the hope that the period of oppression would soon run out, and a golden age bless the earth. Even the bards of Druidism had sung in halting strains the coming of this King, and the happiness and peace that would illustrate His reign.

Fiacc records a prediction of the poets of Erin, similar to the vaticination that prevailed among the classic nations previous to the advent of the Saviour, to the effect that a King would arise who should sway His scepter over all the earth, and establish peace among all nations. And he adds, that no sooner did Patrick appear preaching than the Druids told King Logaire that the time for the fulfillment of the prophecy was come, and that Temor, the place of their great annual festival, was about to be deserted. We give below an extract from the hymn of Fiacc. <sup>1</sup>

This brings us to the “Day of Tara,” the greatest day in the career of Patrick. This day transferred the scene of his labours from the rural hamlet, with its congregation of rustics, to the metropolitan Temor, with its magnificent gathering of the clans and chieftains of Ireland. The year when the event we are about to relate took place, it is impossible to fix. The legends of fourteen hundred years leave in great uncertainty both the object of the festival and the season of the year when it was usually celebrated. The modern writers who have attempted to clear up the matter, after hazarding a multitude of guesses, and expending no little critical lore, have left the matter very much where they found it. We shall not

follow their example by indulging a profitless discussion over the subordinate circumstances of an event, the substance and issues of which are all that concern us; and in these all are agreed. Like all the great festivals of the age, that of Tara was, probably partly religious, partly political; the priesthood, to whom the regulation of such affairs was mainly committed, taking care, doubtless, to make the former character predominate. We shall keep as clear as possible of the mythicism of legend, and guide ourselves by the probabilities of the case.

The great annual festival of Tara, called “Baal’s fire,” was at hand. No other occasion or spot in all Ireland, Patrick knew, would offer him an equal opportunity of lifting his mission out of provincial obscurity and placing it full in the eye of the nation. The king, accompanied by the officers of his court, would be present. To Tara, too, in obedience to the annual summons, would come the chieftains of the land, each followed by his clan, over which he exercised the power of a king. The priests would there assemble, as a matter of course; nor would the bards be wanting, the most influential class, after the priests, in the nation. The assembly would be swelled by a countless multitude of the common people out of all the provinces of Ireland. Patrick resolved to lift high the standard of the cross in presence of this immense convocation. The step was a bold one. If he should convince the monarch and his people that Druidism was false, and that the Gospel alone was true, the victory would be great, and its consequences incalculable. But should he fail to carry the assembly on Tara with him, what could he expect but that he should become the victim of Druidic vengeance, and die on the altar he had hoped to overthrow? That his blood should fall on the earth was a small matter, but that the evangelization of Ireland should be stopped, as it would be should he perish, was with Patrick, doubtless, the consideration of greatest moment. But full of faith, he felt assured that Ireland had been given him as his spiritual conquest. So girding up his loins, like another Elijah, he went on to meet the assembled Druids at Tara, and threw down the gage of combat in the presence of those whom they had so long misled by their arts, and oppressed by their ghostly authority.

Mixing with the multitudes of all ranks which were crowding to the scene of the festival, Patrick pursued his journey, and arrived in the

neighbourhood of Tara without attracting observation. He and his attendants immediately began their preparations. Ascending the hill of Slane, which, though distant from the scene of the festival, was distinctly visible from it, the little party collected the brokers branches and rotten wood which were lying about and piling them up on the summit of the hill, they applied the torch and set the heap in a blaze. The flame shot high into the air. Its gleam cast a ruddy glow far and wide over the country around. On that night the fire on every hearth in Ireland must by law be extinguished. If even a solitary lamp were seen to burn, the rash or profane man who had lit it drew down upon himself the heavy penalties which fenced round the great annual solemnity of Tara. And yet on yonder hill of Slane, growing ever the brighter as the dusk deepened, a bonfire was seen to blaze. How came this? Some impious hand had kindled this unhallowed flame! The priests beheld the inauspicious portent with surprise and indignation. The ancient and venerable rites of Tara had been mocked, and the great act of worship, the solemn celebration of which, year by year, called together the whole nation of Ireland, had been studiously and openly outraged. Terrible calamity was sure to follow so flagrant an act if permitted to go unpunished. If the altar was thus contemned, how long would the throne continue to receive the reverence and obedience of the people? Let the king look to it. So reasoned the priests. They loudly demanded that the perpetrator of this odious deed should be sought for and made answerable for his crime.<sup>2</sup> The fire that continued to blaze on the summit of Slane guided the pursuers to the man whom the king and the Magi sought. Nor was Patrick loath to accompany the messengers to the presence of the king, seeing it was with this object that he had kindled this fire, to Druid so prophetic and ill-omened.

At last we behold Patrick at the gates of the citadel of Irish idolatry. If he shall succeed in storming this stronghold and replacing the black flag of the Druid, which for ages has floated over it, with the banner of the Cross, Patrick will have enlisted in the service of Christianity a race rude and unprofitable at this hour, but rich in noble gifts, which need only to be awakened by the Gospel to burst into the fair blossoms of literature, and ripen into heroic deeds of faith and grand evangelistic enterprises. The apostle of Ireland now maintains the great controversy between Druidism and Christianity in presence of the king, the priests, the chieftains, and the septs of Ireland. No chronicle records the arguments



he employed on this great occasion. Tradition has forgotten to carry down these, though it has carefully treasured up and transmitted a load of prodigies and wonders which transform the preacher of truth who yields only the "Sword of the Spirit" unto a necromancer who conquers by magic. Not so the man who now stood before Logaire, the reigning king. The monarch beheld in Patrick a man plain in dress, like one who dwelt more in the wilderness than in cities, his features roughened by exposure to sun and storm, yet stamped with an air of great dignity. On his brow the close-knit gathered lines of resolve; in his eye the fire of a lofty zeal; his voice strung with energy; his words courageous, but calm and wise; every step and movement of his person betokening self-possession. No such man had Logaire ever before looked upon. Rugged, weather-beaten though he was, no one of all the Druids at his court had ever inspired him with such awe as this prophet-like man. He must hear what he has to say. The king motions to the courtiers to stand aside and let the strange figure approach; he bids the Druids be still. There is silence, and Patrick speaks. Respectfully, yet not flatteringly, fearlessly, yet not offensively, does Patrick address Logaire. To know what is in man is to possess the secret of moving and ruling him. Patrick knew that in the heart of the monarch, as in that of the serf, is a deep-seated sense of guiltiness, and an equally deep-seated foreboding of punishment, and that no sooner does reason unfold than this burden begins to press. It is a shadow that will not depart. To find a region where this specter cannot follow one, a region where the heart, weary of its burden, may lay it down, is the object of desire and pursuit to all living. But before showing Logaire how this craving of his heart was to be met, Patrick must first stir yet more deeply the sense of guiltiness within him. He must awaken his conscience. With this view he appeals to his sense of sin; and what is this sense but just the being within himself testifying that there is a law which he has transgressed. He points to the forebodings and terrors which haunt him; and what are these but witnesses that cannot lie, and that will not be silenced, that there is a penalty attached to transgression—a judgment to come. Thus does the preacher avail himself of the monitions of the moral sense, the lights of nature, not yet wholly extinguished, to lead his vast audience around him through the deep night that enshrouds them to a clearer light. He asks them whether it is not these fears—this pale specter—which has driven them to the altars and sacrifices of the Druid? whether they have not sought these bloody oblations in the vague hope of expiation and

relief? Well, have you found the rest you seek? At the altar of the Druid, has the sense of guilt left you? Has the blood that streams on it washed out the stain? If you shall permit your hearts to speak, they will answer, No, the sin is still unpurged, and the terror is still unconquered. Why, multiply rites which are as profitless as they are cruel? Flee from these altars whereon never yet came victim that could avail for expiation. Cease from these sacrifices of blood, which pollute, but do not cleanse, the offerer. Listen to me. I will tell you of a better altar, and a greater Priest—a Priest who has opened to you the road to the skies. I will tell you of a Father who sent His Son to be a sacrifice in your room. That Son, having offered His sacrifice, and returned from the tomb, as the conqueror of death, has ascended into the heavens, and now sitteth on the right hand of His Father, the crown of an everlasting dominion on His head. He is sending His ambassadors to all nations to proclaim that there is not a wanderer on the face of the earth, there is not one of the sons of men, the humblest, the vilest, the guiltiest, who is not welcome to return, and who shall not be received by the Father, coming by that Priest, who, having no sin of His own, was able to make a real and complete expiation of the sin of others.

On these lines, doubtless, did Patrick proceed in announcing the “good news” to this great assembly. With a Divine message there ever comes the co-operating influence of a Divine power. That power meeting the sense of guilt within, opened, doubtless, not a few hearts for the entrance of that message—a message of a grace and love so stupendous, of a compassion and benignity so boundless, surpassing even in its scope and grasp the wide extent of their own vast misery and helplessness, that they felt that such a purpose could have its origin in no human heart; it infinitely surpassed the measure of man; it could originate only in the bosom of the great Father. On that bosom did many of those now around Patrick cast themselves. Turning away from the fires of Baal, and the altars of the Druids, they clung to the one sacrifice and the one Saviour whom Patrick had preached to them.

Among the converts of the day of Tara were some who held high rank and enjoyed great consideration in the nation. The king remained unconverted, but the queen and her two daughters transferred their faith from the altars of the groves to the Cross of Calvary. A few days after the

queen's conversion, the Christian party in the royal court was reinforced by the accession of the king's brother, Connal, who was not ashamed to confess himself a disciple of the Saviour. There followed, lower in rank, but perhaps higher in influence, Dubbach, chief of the bards, whom we should now call poet laureate, but who possessed an authority far beyond any known to this functionary in our day. To these is to be added a name not less eminent than any of the preceding ones, that of Fiecc. Logaire remained on the side of the old religion, though, it would seem, cooled in his attachment to it.

If the address of Patrick had not resulted in the conversion of the monarch, it had at least overcome his scruples to having the Gospel preached throughout his dominions. The Druids, it is said, had assured him that if this new doctrine should prevail, his throne would not be secure. The king had listened, but had failed to discover any ground other than illusory, for the fears with which it was sought to inspire him. Patrick might go wherever he would throughout his territories and proclaim the new faith. If his people should embrace it, well, the Druid might be less potential, but his subjects would be none the less loyal, nor his own throne any the less secure. These were the triumphs of the day of Tara.

This great victory was followed up by strenuous efforts to advance the standard of the Cross into the south and west of Ireland. From Tara, Patrick proceeded to Meath. A vast concourse was annually drawn to this spot by the games which were there wont to be celebrated, and Patrick resolved to go thither, and proclaim the "good news" to the assembled multitudes. The actors in the games had some cause to complain. A formidable competitor had unexpectedly entered the lists with them. From the moment the strange man stood up and began to tell his strange story, the players ceased to monopolise the attention of the onlookers. Those who came to feast their eyes on feats of dexterity and strength, were compelled, in spite of themselves, to forget the sports, and to have their attention absorbed by other and far more serious matters. They were made to feel that they themselves were runners in a race, were wrestlers in a combat, and that they should win or miss a prize infinitely higher than that for which the combatants in the arena were at that moment straining their every power to the uttermost. The words which fell from the lips of the preacher had, they felt, a strange power;

they refused to leave their memory. They carried them back with them to their homes. They imparted them to their neighbours, and, in cases not a few, these words doubtless became the seeds of a new life. Thenceforth the games of Tailtenn (Telltown) were to them one of the more memorable epochs in their past lives.<sup>4</sup>

From Meath, Patrick set out westward across the country. In those days the toil and danger attendant on such a journey were great. The country to be traversed was inhabited by wild tribes. The pathways were infested by robbers; the chieftains often held the traveler to ransom; and in the case of Patrick there were special dangers to be feared, springing out of the malice of the Druids. The seven sons of a chieftain who ruled in those parts formed his escort; nevertheless he, and the “holy bishops”—that is, the preachers whom he had trained, and who were the companions of his journey, and the sharers of his labours—were oftener than once exposed to violence and subjected to loss. Nevertheless they held on their way, till at last they arrived on the western shores of Connaught, where their farther progress was stopped by the waters of the Atlantic.<sup>5</sup>

This region, with its bleak surface, its uncivilized inhabitants, and its frequent tempests breaking in the thunder of ocean, and drenching its seaboard with the salt spray of the Atlantic, was one of touching interest to Patrick. Here was the *Wood of Focloid*,<sup>6</sup> which recalled some deep and tender memories. He had first heard the name in his dreams when a youth, for from the wood of Focloid, as it seemed to him, proceeded those voices which called to him, to come over and walk among them. Fully fulfilled was now his dream, and in its fulfillment he read a new and striking authentication of his mission. This doubtless quickened the ardour with which he laboured in those parts; and he had the joy of seeing these labours crowned with success. He opened his mission on the assembly ground of the clan Amaldaigh. This place is near the mouth of the Moy, between Ballina and Killala.<sup>7</sup> Here he found the clan assembled in force, their chieftains at their head; and, standing up before the multitude, he preached to these rude men who had known no god but that of the Druid: Him who made the sea and the dry land, and Jesus whom He had raised from the dead. “He penetrated the hearts of all,” says the author of the ‘Tripartite Life’<sup>8</sup> and led them to embrace cordially the Christian faith and doctrine.” “The seven sons of Amaldaioh, with

the king himself, and twelve thousand men, were baptised,” says Dr. Todd, quoting from the “Tripartite Life,” “and St. Patrick left with them as their pastor, St. Manchem, surnamed *the Master*, a man of great sanctity, well versed in Holy Scripture.” It is to these labours and their results, doubtless, that Patrick refers in his “Confessio,” where he says, “I went among you, and everywhere, for your sakes, in many dangers, even to those uttermost parts, beyond which no man was, and whither no man had ever gone to baptize.”<sup>9</sup> Having attacked and in part dispersed the darkness in this remote region, so long the abode of night, Patrick took his departure from Connaught, and went on to kindle the light in other parts of Ireland.

Following on the faint tract of the chroniclers as they dimly trace the steps of the missionary, we are led next into Leinster. Here, too, Patrick’s mission was successful. He is said to have preached at Naas, then a royal residence, and baptized the two sons of the king of Leinster. His reception by the chieftains was various: some repelled his advances; others met him with cordial welcome, and in the Gospel which crossed the threshold along with him they had an ample recompense. He next visited the Plain of the Liffey; from thence he went onward to the Queen’s County, preaching and founding churches. He passed next into Ossory, as the “Tripartite Life” informs us; and so pleased was he with the reception he there met with, that he pronounced a special blessing on the district, promising that Ossory should never feel the yoke of the stranger so long as its people continued in the faith which he had preached to them.<sup>10</sup>

Our apostle is next found evangelizing in Munster, although the “Book of Armagh” is silent on this portion of his labours. The chroniclers that record his visit to this province tell us that the idols fell before him, as Dagon before the Ark; that the king of Cashel came forth to meet him, and conducted him, with every mark of reverence and honour, into his palace, and received baptism at his hands. But here, it is evident, we tread on the verge of legend. These great spiritual victories were not won in a day, nor were they the result of a few stirring addresses delivered as the missionary passed rapidly over his various fields of evangelization. His biographers assign him a term of seven years labour in Connaught, and another term of seven years in Leinster and Munster. Even a shorter period would have sufficed to nourish into spiritual manhood those whom

by baptism Patrick had admitted into the Church. He could reckon his converts by thousands, but what pleasure could he have in them if they were only nominal disciples? What satisfaction could it be to administer the Christian rite to men who were immediately thereafter to lapse into paganism? He took every care that his labours should not thus miscarry, nor his dearest hopes be thus blasted. He erected churches for his converts, he formed them into congregations, and he ordained as pastors those whom he knew would watch over their flocks with diligence, and feed them with knowledge. His "Confessio" written at the close of his life, may be regarded as his farewell to his converts, and in it he discloses a heart full of the tenderest solicitude for his children in the faith, whom he alternately warns, exhorts, and entreats to stand fast, that they may be to him "a joy and crown" in the great day.

We cannot further pursue the labours of Patrick in Ireland. We must return to another land, where his evangelisation, continued through the instrumentality of others, was to yield its more permanent fruits. The light of the Gospel had now been carried from the northern extremity of the island to a line so far south that it met an earlier evangelisation, which had probably entered Hibernia from the neighbouring coast of Gaul, or the more distant shore of Spain. Rescued from a form of paganism specially polluting and enslaving, Ireland was now a Christian land. Not Christian as the countries afterwards evangelised by the Reformation of the sixteenth century are Christian. Patrick was a man of the fifth, not of the sixteenth century. He knew the Scriptures; he often quotes them; but the circle of truths in which he moved was that of his own times, not that of an age lying far in the future, and of which it had been foretold, "Knowledge shall be increased." True, the Bible of the fifth was the Bible of the sixteenth century. The sun is as full of light at the hour of morning as at the hour of noon; but his beams shining upon us through the not yet wholly dispersed vapours of night lack the brilliance which they possess when they fall direct upon us from the mid heaven. The Bible was as full of light in the fifth century as in the sixteenth, but its rays, struggling through the lingering fogs of paganism, reached the church in measure less full and clear than in after days. As time went on, the study of devout minds, the sharp contrasts of error, the severe siftings of controversy, the bold denials of skepticism, above all, the teaching of the Holy Spirit, brought out more fuller the meaning of the Bible. We do

not say that they put into the Bible anything that was not in it before—that they added so much as one ray to this source of light, or supplemented by a single new truth this storehouse of supernatural knowledge—but they enabled the Church more deeply to perceive, more accurately and comprehensively to arrange, and more perfectly to harmonize the several parts of that system of truth which was “delivered to the saints once for all.” Patrick, though “a burning and shining light,” attained the stature neither of an apostle nor of a reformer. Though ahead of all his contemporaries, he was yet in some respects a man of like weaknesses, like misconceptions, and like superstitious fears with them. He appears to have believed that the demons of Druidism had power to do hurt, and that a subordinate empire had been assigned them over the elements of the external world—a belief that descended far beyond his day. But if tainted somewhat with the superstition that was passing away, he was wholly free from that which was preparing new fables and inventions to mislead the human mind and forging for it the fetters of a second bondage. The doctrine which he so indefatigably preached was drawn, not from the font of Roman tradition, but from the unpolluted well of Holy Scripture; and if the Christianity which he propagated in Ireland was rudimentary, which, doubtless, it was, it is ever to be borne in mind that the feeblest Christianization is both a higher and a beneficent agency than the most advanced and refined paganism. The one is a fructifying dew which silently penetrates to the roots of national and social virtue, the other is a blazing sun which burns up that which it burnishes.

### Endnotes

1. The diviners of Erin predicted—  
 New days of PEACE shall come;  
 Which shall endure for ever,  
 The country of Temor shall be deserted.  
 His Druids from Logaire,  
 The coming of Patrick concealed not  
 The predictions were verified,  
 Concerning the KING whom they foretold.”  
 And again in a very ancient dialect of the Irish language, and preserved by the scholiast on Fiacc’s hymn, is the following prophecy:—

“He comes, he comes, with shaven crown, from off the storm-tossed sea,  
His garment pierced at the neck, with cork-like staff comes he,  
Far in his house, at its east end, his cups and patens lie,  
His people answer to his voice, amen, amen, they cry. Amen, Amen.”

2. The time of celebration was probably the first day of May, or the last day of October. The first date was the Druidical festival of Beltine, or Baal’s fire. The second date was the Feast of Temor, or Convention of Tara. One of the bards of Erin, Eochaidh O’ FIynn (984), describes this festival as of the nature of a Parliament or legislative assembly but partaking also of a religious character.

3. “On the king’s Inquiring,” says Dr Lanigan, “what could be the cause of it, and who could have thus dared to infringe the law, the Magi told him that it was necessary to have that fire extinguished immediately, whereas, if allowed to remain, it would get the better of their fires, and bring about the downfall of the kingdom.”—Petrie on Tara Hill, *Trans. Of Royal Academy*, vol. xviii., part ii. p. 54. Dublin, 1839.

4. Todd, *Patrick*, p. 439.

5. Todd, *Patrick*, 445-445.

6. Tirawley, County Mayo, Langan, i 162.

7. Dr. O Donovan, ex. Todd, *Patrick*, p. 448.

8. Lib. li c. 87.

9. Pergebum caussa vesta in multis periculis etiam usque ad extreras (extremas) pertes, ubi nemo ultra erat. Santi Patrici Opusscala, etc.-A *Joachimo Laurentio Villaneuva*, Dublin, 1835, p. 236.



## CHAPTER XVII.

## THE THREE HUNDRED AND SIXTY-FIVE CHURCHES.

AS regards the accumulated results of his mission there is a sort of unanimous consent among the biographers of Patrick. His labours are commonly summed up in three hundred and sixty-five churches founded, three hundred and sixty-five bishops ordained, and an army of three thousand presbyters, or about nine presbyters to every bishop. So says Nennius, writing in the ninth century, and his successors repeat the statement, with some variety as to numbers. This may be accepted as a probable approximation to the fact. It is a truly marvelous achievement, when we reflect that it was accomplished in one lifetime, and mainly by a single man, in a barbarous country, and in the face of a powerful Druidism. It truly entitles Patrick to the proud appellation of the "Apostle of Ireland." It justifies for him a high rank among the benefactors of mankind, and places him on a loftier eminence than the founders of empire. Lands far remote from the Hibernian shore, and generations long posterior to Patrick's day, have had cause to bless his memory and pronounce his name with reverence.

We must view the ecclesiastical machinery which he constructed, in the light of the age in which it was created, the condition of the country in which it was set up, and the stage which Christian knowledge and personal piety had then reached. "Three hundred and sixty-five" is the low estimate of the number of bishops ordained by him. The term "bishop" has since Patrick's day changed its meaning. That Ireland was partitioned into three hundred and sixty-five dioceses; that each diocese was presided over by a bishop; that each bishop had under him a staff of priests, and that each priest had committed to him a congregation or parish, is a supposition so extreme and violent that few, if any, we believe, will find themselves able to entertain it. Doubtless these three hundred and sixty-five bishops of the one country of Ireland, like the company of presbyters of the one city of Ephesus, whom Paul styles bishops,<sup>1</sup> were the overseers, pastors of single congregations. Their special duty was to preach. The others associated with them would find ample scope for their gifts in the various labours of teaching the youth, of visiting the sick, and exercising a general superintendence of the flock. Diocesan episcopacy was not possible in

Ireland in Patrick's day. Other organizations in the Irish Church, besides that stated above, we are unable to trace. We can see nothing like the modern machinery of Presbytery, Synod, and General Assembly, although it is reasonable to believe that Patrick at times took counsel with the body of the pastors, and, as the result of these joint deliberations, issued directions in cases of emergency and difficulty, and these would furnish a groundwork for the doubtful record of "canons" and "synods" of Patrick which have come down to our day.<sup>2</sup>

Nothing will assist us more in forming a correct idea of the ecclesiastical order established by Patrick in Ireland, than a short study of the Christian Church as seen in the pages of the New Testament, and the writings of the early Fathers. A flood of new light has been thrown on the organization of the Church at Rome in the first ages by the recently discovered work of Hippolytus.<sup>3</sup> His book gives a picture of the Roman church in the beginning of the third century—that is, about two hundred years before Patrick's time. The apostle of Ireland would naturally copy the model that was before him. Here it is as seen and depicted by Hippolytus while that model was still in existence. "Every town congregation of ancient Christianity was a church," says Bunsen, in his analysis of the work of Hippolytus. The first part of the church to come into existence was the congregation—not the bishops or overseers, but the flock—the body of believers. The essential powers of a perfect society—the right of liberty and the power of order—were lodged in these persons. All rights and privileges are inherent in the congregation, and are exercised by them and for them, and none the less when transferred by delegation to their pastors and elders. The epistles of inspired men are addressed to the congregations in the various cities and provinces. Acts of discipline are done by the congregation and declared and carried out by the pastor or elder. His power is not lordly but ministerial. In Paul's epistles and in the writings of Clemens, Romanus, Ignatius, and Polycarp, the highest organ of power in the church is the congregation, guided and ruled in the earliest times by a body of elders. These elders discharged the double function of teaching and ruling. The next step was to elect one of their number to preside over the body of the elders. The one judged the fittest was chosen, and to him was given the name of overseer, bishop or pastor. Through this functionary the congregation governed itself. Its bishop or pastor was its servant, not its master. The elder, whose special work

was teaching, was chosen by the congregation, and being so elected, the pastors of the neighboring congregations inducted him into his office by prayer, and the laying on of hands. Consecration and ordination was one and the same act. Such are the conclusions fairly deducible on this head from the facts disclosed by Hippolytus.<sup>4</sup>

Everyone who had charge of a congregation in a city was styled a bishop.<sup>5</sup> Hippolytus had charge of the congregation at Portus, a small town at the mouth of the Tiber, opposite Ostia, the harbour of Rome. As bishop or pastor of Portus, he was a member of the Presbytery of Rome. The Roman Presbytery in Hippolytus' day consisted of the bishop, the presbyters (pastors), and deacons of the city of Rome, with the bishops (pastors) of the suburban congregations. "Much smaller towns than Portus had their bishop," says Bunsen; "their city was called their diocese." In those times there existed no parishes in the proper sense of the word. The city of Rome, however, formed an exception. From the earliest days of Christianity there were certain centers of Christian work in the metropolis corresponding with the *regiones* of the city. After the time of Constantine, a church was built in each of these *regiones*. These churches were termed *cardines*, and from this is derived the title *cardinalis* for a parish priest, a word which has been in use from the time of Gregory, about A.D. 600. The parochial clergy of this city formed the governing body of the Church of Rome. With them were associated in this government the seven deacons, established for the service of widows and the poor, and the seven suburban pastors or bishops.<sup>6</sup> This body grew ultimately into the college of cardinals. We now see the congregational liberties beginning to be curtailed, and the laity excluded from the government of the Church. The plea of the Presbyterian divines of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, that the elders were both an officiating, that is, a teaching and ruling body, "is quite correct," says Bunsen, judging by the light thrown by Hippolytus on the early organization of the Church at Rome. "The ancient Church," says Bunsen, "knows no more of a single presbyter than of clerical government and election."<sup>7</sup> It was only in very small and remote villages that a single bishop—using the word in the sense in which Paul and Peter use it—managed his little community. "He was called," says Bunsen, "a country bishop" (*chorepiscopus*, *i.e.*, a country curate).<sup>8</sup> Standing alone he could exercise no act of government in the strict sense. The rule of the Church was in the hands of no single man in early times; it

could be administered only by a body or council of church officers.

For the pastor there was set a chair in the apse or circular recess at the eastern end of the church. On either side of the pastor's chair—not yet changed into a throne—were ranged rows of benches, on which sat the elders. The communion table occupied the space between pastor and elders and the congregation; it was the connecting link between clergy and people. It was a table, not an altar, for as yet no sacrifice had been invented save the symbolic one of self-dedication over the bread and wine, which alone were seen on that table.

In the times that preceded the Council of Nice (325), the government of the church was presbyterial; in the post Nicene period it was hierarchical. “The Ante-Nicene Law,” says Bunsen, “exhibits every town as a church presided over by a bishop and a board of elders (presbyters); but at the same time, it represents the bishops (not the congregations) of the smaller places, as clustered round the bishop of the large town or city, which was their natural metropolis. These bishops formed part of the council or presbytery of the mother-congregation for all matters of common interest. In the post-Nicene system the congregation is nothing, its bishop little. The ante-Nicene canon law is fundamentally congregational, and its bishop, as such, represents the independence and, as it were, sovereignty of the congregation.”<sup>9</sup>

In the days of Hippolytus, the bounds of the presbytery of Rome were modest, indeed, compared with what they soon afterwards came to be. Down to the middle of the third century, the presbyterial bounds embraced only the pastors of the city and those of its seven suburban towns. After the beginning of the fourth century, the presbytery of Rome extended its authority to all the subvicarian towns, its jurisdiction equal to the jurisdiction of the Vicar of the City, which stretched to the Apennines on the north and the shores of the Italian peninsula on the south. This was the prelude of much greater extensions in the centuries that followed; and as this jurisdiction widened its sphere it grew ever the more hierarchical and despotic, and departed ever the farther from the simplicity, the equality, the liberty, and also the purity of the church of apostolic and primitive days.

Our general summing up from the facts disclosed in the work of Hippolytus is to this effect, that where there was a congregation, a pastor, and a body of elders, there was held in early times to be a complete church, self-governing and independent. In this deduction we have the support of Bunsen's concurrence. "Where such a council can be formed," he says, "there is a complete church, a bishopric." The elders are teachers and administrators. If an individual happen to be engaged in either of these offices more exclusively than the other, it makes no real alteration in his position, for the presbyters of the ancient church filled both situations. Their office was literally an office, not a rank.<sup>10</sup>

Let us next turn our eyes for a few moments on the church of Africa. It is the middle of the third century, and the most conspicuous figure that meets our gaze is Cyprian, bishop of Carthage. But though styled bishop, Cyprian's rank, duties, and powers, are simply those of a pastor of a single congregation. He has no diocese save the city of Carthage. He has no pastors whom he superintends as their diocesan. There is but one congregation in Carthage, and Cyprian is its pastor. Sabbath by Sabbath we see him preaching to this flock and dispensing to them the sacraments. He has a body of presbyters, eight in number at most, and seven deacons who assist him in his pastoral work. These presbyters have no congregation; they instruct the youth, they visit the sick and the prisoners, and being supported by the congregation,<sup>11</sup> they give their whole time to their duties.<sup>12</sup> In his exile Cyprian writes to the people of Carthage,<sup>13</sup> as forming one Christian flock, himself being their one and only pastor, and Carthage his whole diocese. No candid reader of his letters can fail to see that the "bishop" of the Cypriatic age was a preaching minister, and that the Cypriatic presbytery in most things represented our parochial session.

The Irish Church in Patrick's day was the Cypriatic Church over again as regards the number of its bishops. In Pro-Consular Africa alone there were 164 bishops.<sup>14</sup> Now Pro-Consular Africa was only a small part of the Roman possessions in that continent. In the days of Cyprian there must have been several hundred bishops in Africa. Many of them discharged their ministry in towns and hamlets so obscure that the learned Pamelius is at a loss where to place them. It is not possible to believe that all these were diocesan bishops. There was not room enough in

Roman Africa for a fourth of that number. It was in Roman Africa only that Christianity had been embraced. Most of that great continent was still inhabited by the native population, the Moors. To them the Latin was an unknown tongue, and as the Gospel was preached in Latin only it ceased to be intelligible when it reached the confine of the Roman colony, and touched the Moorish border. This accounts for the fact that Christianity never gained an extensive footing in Africa, and that it disappeared at an early period. When the Saracens entered Africa the light of Christianity was found to be all but extinct.<sup>15</sup>

We conclude: it is the undoubted historical fact, attested by the records of the African Church in Cyprian's day, and by the records of the early Roman Church so unexpectedly and authentically brought to light through the discovery of the work of Hippolytus, that down to about the middle of the third century, bishop and pastor were terms indicating the same church officer; that this church officer presided over a single congregation, that his congregation was his diocese; and that he was assisted by a body of presbyters or elders, some of whom took part in the government only of the flock, while others of them, having earned for themselves a good degree, were admitted to teach, though without being set over a congregation. Such is the picture of the primitive church, which has been drawn by the hand of a man who lived while the church was still young. Mingling freely in her councils, Hippolytus had the best opportunities of observing and depicting her true lineaments. It is no imaginary portrait which he has given us. Long hidden in darkness, it has been unexpectedly disclosed, that we, too, in this late age, might be able to look upon the face of the church primitive, and know the simplicity, the purity, and the beauty that won for her the love and reverence of her early members.

There rose three hundred and sixty-five churches for the use of these three hundred and sixty-five bishops. This is proof, were proof needed, that these were not diocesan, but parochial or village bishops. Had they been dignitaries of the rank which the term "bishop" came afterwards to mean, with a clergy three thousand strong, not three hundred but three thousand churches would have been needed. These churches were humble edifices. Probably not one of them was of stone. Armagh, the metropolitan church of future times, was as yet an altogether undistinguished name in the ecclesiastical world. It enjoyed in Patrick's days neither pre-eminence

nor jurisdiction. In the north of Ireland the churches were constructed of planks or wattles, and in the south, of earth. Like the humble altars of the Patriarchs on the plains of the early Palestine, they borrowed their glory from the Almightyness of the Being to whose worship they were consecrated, and also from the fact that they were served by men adorned not with pompous titles, but with the gifts of knowledge and the graces of the Holy Spirit—the oil of their consecration.

A school rose beside the church, named not infrequently a monastery. The monasteries of Patrick's days, and of the following centuries, were not at all the same institutions with those which bore that name in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. They were not the retreat of the idle and the ignorant; they were not communities of men who groaned under the burden of exerting their drowsy voices in intoning the various offices which marked the passing of the weary hours between matins and evensong. The monasteries of Patrick's day were associations of studious men, who occupied their time in transcribing the Scriptures, in cultivating such sciences as were then known, and in instructing the young. They were *colleges* in which the youth were trained for the work of the home ministry and the labours of the foreign mission-field; and with what renown to their country and benefit to other lands the members of these institutions discharged this part of their important duties, we shall see when we come to speak of the great Columban establishment at Iona. When the youth had finished their studies for the day, they would shoulder axe and mattock, and would sally forth and address themselves to the laborious and profitable occupation of clearing the forest, or trenching the moor and changing the barren lands around their abode into arable fields, green in spring with the sprouting blade, and golden in autumn with the ripened grain.

It was Patrick's prudent custom, on entering a district, to address himself first of all to the chieftain. If the head of the sept was won to the faith the door of access was opened to his people. A plot of ground on which to erect a sanctuary was commonly the first public token that the chief had embraced the Gospel, and that he desired, at least did not oppose, its spread among his tribe. These churches were of small size; the whole inhabitants of Ireland did not then probably exceed half a million, and its sparsely populated districts could furnish no numerous congregations. In

the distribution of these churches, Patrick conformed himself to the tribal arrangements. His servitude in Ireland made him well acquainted with its social condition, and enabled him to judge of the best methods of overtaking its evangelisation. In some places he planted the churches in groups of sevens, probably because the population was there the more numerous; and each group had its seven bishops—another proof that, like the four hundred bishops of Asia Minor in early times,<sup>16</sup> these were parochial and not diocesan ecclesiastics. It was not unusual to surround the ecclesiastical building with a strong stockade. The power of the Druid, though weakened, had not yet been wholly broken, and the missionaries of the new faith were still exposed to hostile attacks from the mob, or from the chieftains, at the instigation, doubtless, of the priests of the ancient worship.

The time had now come when the labours of the apostle of Ireland were to close. They had been indefatigably prosecuted for upwards of thirty years—some, indeed, say sixty—and the latter is not too long a period for so great a work. Patrick was now verging on fourscore; and welcome, doubtless, was the rest which now came to him in the form of death. Of his last hours we have many legends, but not a single line of trustworthy record. Whether he descended suddenly into the grave like Wycliffe and Luther, or whether he passed to it by months of lingering decay and sickness like Calvin and Knox, we know not. The year of his death is uncertain. The Bollandists make it 460: Lanigan, founding on the annals of Innisfallen, 465. He died at Downpatrick. A star in the sky, say the legends, indicated the spot where his ashes were to repose. St Bridget, with her own hands, embroidered the shroud in which his corpse was wrapped, and his requiem was sung by a choir of angels, who were heard mingling their strains with the lamentations of the pastors as they carried his remains to the grave; and for twelve days, some say a whole year, the sun, ceasing to go down, shed a perpetual day on the spot where he was interred. After legend has exhausted its powers to throw a halo round his departure by heaping prodigy upon prodigy, the simple historic fact remains the more sublime. And that fact is, that on the spot where he began his ministry there he ended it, and there, after all his battles, did the gates of an eternal peace open to receive him.



Endnotes

1. Acts xx, 17,28.
2. Dr. Todd declares against the genuineness of the works ascribed to Patrick in Ware and Villeneuve, with the exception of the *Confessio*. And as regards the ecclesiastical canons ascribed to him, Dr. Todd holds these, from external evidence, to be the production of an after age. We believe most students of history will agree with him. —See Todd's *Life of St. Patrick*, pp. 484-488.
3. Hippolytus was the disciple of Irenæus, the disciple of Polycarp, the disciple of the apostle John. His book, which treats on the doctrines of the primitive church, was written under Alexander Severus about A.D. 225. His knowledge of the apostolic doctrine was drawn from the most authentic sources; and being a member of the Presbytery of Rome, he speaks with the highest authority on the affairs of the Roman Church. He lived at the period of the church's transition from the apostolic constitution to the ecclesiastical system. He was the contemporary of two Popes, Zephyrinus and Callistus, who played no unimportant part in the changes then in progress. Hippolytus has given us portraits of these two popes. These portraits are the first full disclosures of the real character of these two notable ecclesiastics, but they are not such as are fitted to enhance our esteem of the men, or exalt our veneration for the papal chair. "The book," says Bunsen (vol. i. preface v. ), "gives authentic information on the earliest history of Christianity, and precisely on those most important points of which hitherto we have known very little authentically."
4. *Hippolytus and His Age*, by C. C. J. Bunsen, D.C.L. London, 1852. Vol. iii. pp. 219-222.
5. *Ibid.*, vol. i. p. 207.
6. *Hippolytus and his Age*, vol. i. e. 208.
7. *Ibid.*
8. *Ibid.*, vol. iii. p. 221.
9. *Hippolytus and his Age*, vol. ii. p. 258, 259.
10. *Hippolytus and his Age*. Vol iii p.246.
11. Cypr. Epist.,i.
12. In his sixty-ninth epistle, the author of Cyprianus Isotimus says: "Cyprian dispenser of the Word and sacrements, but also insinuate that all under his charge, all that had any interest in calling or receiving him, were ordinarily fed by and received communion from him" —Cyprianus

Isotimus, chap. V. p. 460 by W. Jameson, Edin. 1705.

13. *Cypr. Epist.*, 81 Plebi Universe.

14. *Victor Uticensis*, lib. i.

15. *Nazienzeni Querela et Votum Justum*, by W. Jameson, part i, sec. Vii. pp 30,31. Glasgow.

16. *Bingham Antq.* Bk, ii c. xi.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

## The Schools of Early Ireland.

PATRICK stamped his image upon Ireland as Knox did at a later day on Scotland. Simply by the power of Christian truth he summoned into being an Ireland wholly unlike any that previous ages had seen, and if possible still more unlike the Ireland which we find in existence at this day. At the voice of Patrick the land shook off its hoary superstitions and its immemorial oppressions, as the mountains do the fogs of night when touched by the breath of morning. It stood forth an enlightened, a religious, and a prosperous country. The man who had wrought this wondrous transformation on it was now in his grave, but his spirit still lived in it, and the tide of renovated life which he had set flowing in the nation continued for some centuries in full flood. There came no foreign invader to put his yoke upon the neck of its sons, or to rob them of their scriptural faith. Left in peace they addicted themselves to the labours of the plough, and the yet nobler labours of the study. The first made their country a land of plenty, the second made them renowned throughout Europe as a nation of wise and learned men. The glory with which Ireland at this period shone was all the brighter from the darkness which had overwhelmed the rest of the world. Asia and Africa were passing into the eclipse of Islam. The rising cloud of superstition was darkening Europe. The nations seemed to be descending into the tomb, when lo! at that moment when knowledge appeared to be leaving the earth, there was lit in the far West a lamp of golden light, which was seen shining over the portals of the darkness, as if to keep alive the hope that the night which had settled upon the world would not be eternal.

We must now bestow a glance at the times that succeeded the death of the country's great reformer. They deserve our attention, for they were astir with noble and beneficent activities. To walk in the steps of Patrick was the ambition of the men who came after him. The labours of that most fruitful period may be arranged under the five following heads: there was the building of churches; there was the erecting of schools and colleges; there was the preaching of the Word of Life; the teaching of the Scriptures; and the training and sending forth of missionaries to foreign lands. The Gospel had given the Scots of Ireland peace among themselves.

The sea parted them from the irruptions and revolutions that were at that hour scourging continental Europe. They were not blind to this golden opportunity. For what end had they been provided with a quiet retreat from which they might look out upon the storm without feeling its ravages, if not that they might be ready, when the calm returned, to go forth and scatter the seeds of order and virtue on the ploughed fields of Europe. Accordingly they kept trimming their lamp in their quiet isle, knowing how dark the world's sky was becoming, and how pressingly it would yet need light-bearers. If sept strove with sept it was in the generous rivalry of multiplying those literary and religious institutions which were fitted to build up their country and reform their age. The national bent, the *perfervidum ingentium*, turned with characteristic force in this direction, and hence the sudden and prodigious outburst of intellectual power and religious life which was witnessed in Ireland, in this age—that is, in the sixth and succeeding centuries, and which drew the eyes of all the continental nations upon it as soon as their own troubles left them free to observe what was passing around them.

Leaving the missions for after narration, we shall here offer a brief sketch of the schools of Ireland. We have already said that wherever Patrick founded a church there he planted a school. From this good custom Patrick's successors took care not to depart. The church and the school rose together, and religion and learning kept equal pace in their journey through Ireland. The author of the ancient catalogue of saints, speaking of the period immediately succeeding Patrick, says, "It was the age of the highest order of Irish saints, who were, for the most part, persons of royal or noble birth, and were all founders of churches," and by consequence planters of schools.<sup>1</sup> The historian O'Halloran writes, "Every religious foundation in Ireland in those days included a school, or, indeed, rather academy." "The abbeys and monasteries," he continues, "founded in this (sixth) century, are astonishingly numerous." And again, "The abbeys and other munificent foundations of this (seventh) age, seem to have exceeded the former ones."<sup>2</sup>

Curio, an Italian, in his work on Chronology, also bears testimony to the number and excellence of the schools in Ireland. "Hitherto," he exclaims, "it would seem that the studies of wisdom would have quite perished had not God reserved to us a seed in some corner of the world. Among

the Scots and Irish something still remained of the doctrine of the knowledge of God, and of civilization, because there was no terror of arms in those utmost ends of the earth. And we may there behold and adore the great goodness of God, that among the Scots, and in those places where no man could have thought it, so great companies had gathered themselves together under a most strict discipline.”<sup>3</sup> We do not wonder that this learned Italian should have been filled with astonishment when the cloud lifted, and he saw, rising out of the western ocean, an island of wise men and scholars where he had looked only for barbarous septs tyrannized over by brutal chieftains. We at this day are just as astonished, on looking back, to find Ireland in that age what these writers have pictured it. And yet there comes witness after witness attesting the fact. “The disciples of St. Patrick,” says our own Camden, “profited so notably in Christianity, that in the succeeding age nothing was accounted more holy, more learned, than the Scottish monks, insomuch that they sent out swarms of most holy men into every part of Europe.” After enumerating some of the abbeys they founded abroad, Camden goes on to say, “In that age our Anglo-Saxons flocked from every quarter into Ireland as to the emporium of sound literature, and hence it is that in our accounts of holy men we frequently read, ‘he was sent for education to Ireland.’”<sup>4</sup>

Not less explicit is the testimony of the historian Mosheim. “If we except,” says he, speaking of the eighth century, “some poor remains, of learning which were yet to be found at Rome and in certain cities of Italy, the sciences seem to have abandoned the Continent, and fixed their residence in Ireland and Britain.” And again, “That the Hibernians were lovers of learning, and distinguished themselves in these times of ignorance by the culture of the sciences beyond all other European nations, traveling into the most distant lands, both with a view to improve and communicate their knowledge, is a fact with which I have been long acquainted; as we have seen them, in the most authentic records of antiquity, discharging with the highest reputation and applause the functions of doctors in France, Germany, and Italy, both during this (8th) and the following century.” And speaking of the teachers of theology among the Greeks and Latins in the ninth century, Mosheim says, “With them authority became the test of truth, and supplied in arrogance what it lacked in argument . . . The Irish doctors alone, and particularly Johannes Scotus, had the courage to spurn

the ignominious fetters of authority.”<sup>5</sup>

It is hard for us at this day to realise the Ireland of those ages as these witnesses describe it, the picture has since been so completely reversed. And yet, if it be possible to prove anything by evidence, the conspicuous eminence of Ireland during those centuries must be held as perfectly established. Like Greece, it was once a lamp of light to the nations; and, like Egypt, it was a school of wisdom for the world—a lamp of purer light than ever burned in Athens, and a school of diviner knowledge than Heliopolis ever could boast.

We have called these institutions *schools*. The chroniclers of the middle ages, who wrote in Latin, term them *monasteries*.<sup>6</sup> We prefer to speak of them as schools. It is the word that rightly describes them. The term monastery conveys to the modern mind a wholly false idea of the character and design of these establishments. They rose alongside the church, and had mostly as their founders the same royal or noble persons. They were richly endowed with lands, the gift of kings and chieftains, and they were yet more richly endowed with studious youth. They were just such monasteries as were Oxford and Cambridge, as were Paris and Padua and Bologna in succeeding centuries. They trained men for the service of church and state; they reared pastors for the church; and they sent forth men of yet more varied accomplishments to carry on the great missions movement in Northern Europe, which was the glory of the age, and which saved both divine and human learning from the extinction with which they were threatened by the descent of the northern nations, and the growing corruption of the Roman Church. Even Bede<sup>7</sup> speaks of them as colleges, and so, too, does Archbishop Usher. The latter says, “They were the seminaries of the ministers; being, as it were, so many colleges of learned men whereunto the people did usually resort for instruction, and from whence the church was wont to be continually supplied with able ministers.”

Historic truth, moreover, requires that we should distinguish between these two very different sets of institutions, which are often made to pass under the same name, that is, between the schools of the sixth and seventh centuries, and the Benedictine monasteries, which were obtruded upon and supplanted than in the twelfth and thirteenth. Till times long posterior

to Patrick no monk had been seen in Ireland, and no monastery had risen on its soil. On this head the evidence of Malachy O'Morgain is decisive. Malachy, Archbishop of Armagh, was one of the earliest perverts to popery among the Irish clergy, and he was one of the main agents in the enslavement of his native land. His life was written by his contemporary and friend, the well-known St. Bernard of Clairvaux in France. This memoir lifts the veil and shows us the first monks and monasteries stealing into Ireland. "St Malachy, on his return to Ireland from Rome," says St. Bernard, "called again at Clairvaux . . . and left four of his companions in that monastery for the purpose of learning its rules and regulations, and of their being in due time qualified to introduce them into Ireland." In all countries monks have formed the vanguard of the papal army. "He," (Malachy) said on this occasion," continues St. Bernard, "*They will serve us for seed, and in this seed nations will be blessed, even those nations which from old time heard of the name of monk, but have never seen a monk.*"<sup>8</sup> If the words of the Abbot of Clairvaux have any meaning, they imply that up till this time, that is, the year 1140, though Ireland was covered with institutions which the Latin writers call monasteries, the Irish were ignorant of monks and monkery. And this is confirmed by what we find Bernard afterwards writing to Malachy:— "And since," says he, "you have need of great vigilance, as in a new place, and in a new land that has been hitherto unused to, yea, that has never yet had any trial of monastic religion, withhold not your hand, I beseech you, but go on to perfect that which you have so well begun."<sup>9</sup> This evidence is decisive of two things: first, that monasteries, in the modern sense of the term, were unknown in Ireland till the middle of the twelfth century, when Malachy is seen sowing their seeds; and second, that the ancient foundations were not monasteries, but schools.<sup>10</sup>

The primary and paramount study in these colleges were the SCRIPTURES. They were instituted to be well-springs of evangelical light. But they were not restricted to the one branch of theological and sacred learning, however important it was deemed. Whatever was known to the age of science, or art, or general knowledge was taught in the schools of Ireland. The youth flocked to them, of course, but not the youth only; patriarchs of sixty or of threescore years, in whom age had awakened a love of knowledge, were enrolled among their pupils. As every age so all ranks were permitted to participate in their advantages.

Their doors stood open to the son of the serf as well as to the son of the prince. No nation but was welcome. From across the sea came youth in hundreds to be taught in them and carry back their fame to foreign lands. Thus they continued to grow in numbers and renown. Kings and noble families took a pride in fostering what then saw was a source of strength at home and glory abroad. In the centuries that followed the death of Patrick these schools continued to multiply, and the number of their pupils greatly to increase. In some instances the number of students in attendance almost exceeds belief: although the cases are well authenticated. We give few examples. At Benchor (White Choir) there was at one time, it is said, three thousand enrolled students. At Lismore, where the famous Finnian taught, there were three thousand. At Clonard, nearly as many. One quarter of Armagh was allotted to and occupied by foreign youth, attracted by the fame of its educational establishments. At Muinghard, near Limerick, fifteen hundred scholars received instruction. These foundations came in time to be possessed of great wealth. They shared, doubtless, in the revenues of the ancient priesthood on the downfall of Druidism. Moreover the waste lands with which they were gifted, and which the pupils cultivated in their leisure hours, were yearly growing in fertility and value, and yearly adding in the same ratio to the resources of the establishment. No fee was exacted at their threshold. They dispensed their blessings with a royal munificence. So Bede informs us. Speaking of the times of Aidan and Colman (A.D. 630-664) he says, "There were at that time in Ireland many both of the nobility and of the middle classes of the English nation, who, having left their native island, had retired thither for the sake of reading God's word, or leading a more holy life.... All of whom the Irish receiving most warmly, supplied, not only with daily food, free of charge, but even with books to read, and masters to teach gratuitously."<sup>11</sup>

Estimating it at the lowest, the change which Patrick wrought on Ireland was great. Compared with the reformation of Luther, it may be readily admitted, that of Patrick was feeble and imperfect. It did not so thoroughly penetrate to the roots of either individual or social life as the German reformation. The fifth century was poor in those mighty instrumentalities in which the sixteenth century was so rich. It lacked the scholarship, the intellectual vigour, the social energy, and the brilliant examples of personal piety which shed so great a splendour on the first age of the



reformation. The fifth century had no printing press. It had no Frederic the Wise; it had no theological treatise like the “Institutes,” and no compend of the Christian revelation like the “Augsburg Confession.” Moreover, the light did not reach Ireland till the day was going away in other lands. It was the beams of a rising sun that burst on the world in the sixteenth century: it was the rays of a setting one that fell on Ireland in the fifth. As Christian Ireland went forward, displacing slowly and laboriously pagan Ireland, it had to leave in its rear many a superstitious belief, and many a pagan custom. In numerous instances, doubtless, the oak groves of the Druid were given to the axe, and the dolmen and stone pillar lay overturned and broken by the hammer of the iconoclast. But not in all cases. In some localities these objects of idolatrous reverence were spared, and became snares and causes of stumbling to the converts. But with all these drawbacks, the change accomplished in Ireland was immense. The grand idea of a God who is a Spirit—a Father who has given his Son to be the Saviour of men—had been made known to it; and who can estimate what a power there is in this idea to humanise and to elevate—to awaken love and hope in the human breast, and to teach justice and righteousness to nations.

That the Gospel should flourish in Ireland during his own lifetime did not content Patrick; he took every means, as we have seen, to give it permanent occupancy of the land. The provision he made for bringing the whole nation under religious instruction, and drawing the people to the observance of Divine ordinances, was wonderfully complete considering the age in which it was made, and the difficulties to be overcome in a country newly rescued from paganism. A church, a school, and an academy in every tribe, was anticipation of the plan of Knox, which, as the author of the latter plan found, came too early to the birth even in the Scotland of the sixteenth century. Nor did the idea of Patrick’s remain a mere programme on paper. He succeeded in realizing it. The ministers whom he planted in Ireland were of his own training, and, moreover, they were men of his own spirit: and preaching the faith he had taught them with zeal and diligence, they raised Ireland from paganism to Christianity, while earlier churches, losing faith in the Gospel, and turning back to symbol and rite, lost their Christianity, and sank again into heathenism. These schools of Divine knowledge continued in vigour for about three centuries after their founder had gone to his grave, and

furnished an able but inexhaustible supply of evangelists and missionaries. Many of these men, finding their labours not needed in a land so plentiful supplied with evangelists as Ireland now was, turned their steps to foreign countries. From Ireland and Iona there went forth one missionary band after another to scatter the pagan darkness where it still lingered, or to stem the incoming tide of papal arrogance and usurpation. Rome was compelled to pause in her advance before their intrepid ranks. In Gaul, in Germany and other countries, these devoted preachers revived many a dying light, refreshed many a fainting spirit, and strengthened hands that had began to hang down, and they long delayed, though they could not ultimately prevent, the approach of a superstition destined to embrace all Christendom in its somber folds, and darken its sky for ages. We shall again meet these missionaries.

No less happy were the social changes that passed on the country as the immediate fruit of its submission to the Gospel. From that hour the yoke of the feudal lord pressed less heavily, and the obedience of his tribe was more spontaneous and cheerful. All the relations of life were sweetened. Gentleness and tenderness came in the room of those fierce, vindictive, and selfish passions with which paganism fills the breast and indurates the human heart. The ghostly domination of the Druid was shattered, the terror of his incantations dissolved, and no more was seen the dark smoke of his sacrifice rising luridly above the grove, or heard the piteous wail of victim, as he was being dragged to the altar. Nature seemed to feel that to her, too, the hour of redemption had come. As if in sympathy with man she threw off her primeval savageness, and attired herself in a grace and beauty she had not till then known. Her brown moorlands burst into verdure; her shaggy woods, yielding to the axe, made room for the plough; her hills, set free by the mattock from furze and prickly brier, spread out their grassy slopes to the herdsman and his flock; and plain and valley, cured of inhospitable bog and stagnant marsh, and converted into arable land, received into their bosom the precious seed, and returned with bounteous increase in the mellow autumn what had been cast upon their open furrows in the molient spring.

What a change in the destiny of the country since the day that Patrick had first set foot upon it! He had found its sons groping their way through the darkness of an immemorial night: one generation coming into being after

another, only to inherit the same bitter portion of slavery. Now the springs of liberty had been opened in the land; barbarity and oppression had begun to recede before the silent influences of arts and letters. Above all, the Gospel enlightened its sky, and with every Sabbath sun came rest and holy worship. The psalm pealed forth in sanctuary rose loud and sweet in the stillness; and on weekday the same strains, “the melody of health,” might be heard ascending from humble cot, where Labour sanctified its daily toils by daily prayer and praise.

We here drop the curtain on the story of the Scots on the hither side of the Irish Channel. After the days of Patrick the land had rest seven centuries. In the middle of the twelfth century there arose a new church in Ireland, which knew not Patrick nor the faith he had propagated. Breakspeare (Hadrian IV.), the one Englishman who ever sat in the papal chair, claimed Ireland as part of Peter’s patrimony by a bull dated 1155. He next sold it to Henry II. for a penny a year on each house in the kingdom. The infamous bargain between the Pope and the English king was completed in the subjugation of the country by the soldiers of the latter. The laws of history forbid us entering farther on this transaction, but the two short extracts given below<sup>12</sup> will disclose to the intelligent reader the whole melancholy drama. The revolution in Ireland has been followed by seven centuries of calamities.

### Endnotes

1. See Usher, *Antiquities*, c. 17.
2. *General History of Ireland*, vol. ii. pp. 85-96.
3. *Rerum Chronology*, lib. ii.; Usher, *Citante*.
4. “Amandatus est ad disciplinam in Hiberniam.”—Camden’s *Britannia*, vol. iii. O’Halloran says this was, a proverb abroad when any one was missing.
5. *Mosheim*. Century ix. part ii c.3, sec 10.
6. Their name in the Latin documents is *Cænobia*.
7. Bede says of Iona, *ex eo collegeo*.
8. *Apud Lanigan*, vol. iv. p. 112.
9. “Terra jam insueta, immo et inexperta monastics religionis.”
10. We doubt whether Malachy was in on the secret, or knew what a yoke he was imposing on his countrymen. He appears to have been a

good man in the main, of a warm, generous disposition, an enthusiastic admirer of the Romish system, and the tool of more cunning men. He did not live to see the work he had helped to begin completed. He died at Clairvaux, 1148, in the arms of his friend St. Bernard, while on a second visit to Rome to beg the pallium for the metropolitan See of St. Patrick. Malachy heads the roll of Irish saintship, being the first of his nation to receive the honours of canonization at the hands of the Pontiff. Romanist writers speak of him as the great church reformer of the twelfth century.

11. Bede, *Eccl. History.*, lib. 3 c. 27.

12. At a meeting of the Catholic Association in Dublin, Daniel O'Connell, speaking of the landing of Henry II to take possession of his new territories, gives us both a history and a picture:—"It was on the evening of the 23rd of August" (October), "1172" (1171), "that the first hostile English footstep pressed the soil of Ireland. It is said to have been a sweet and mild evening when the invading party entered the noble estuary formed by the conflux of the Suir, the Nore, and Barrow at the city of Waterford. Accursed be that day in the memory of all future generations of Irishmen when the invaders first touched our shores. They came to a nation famous for its love of learning, its piety, and its heroism; they came when internal dissension separated her sons and wasted their energies. Internal traitors led on the invaders—her sons fell in no fight, her liberties were crushed in no battle; but domestic treason and foreign invaders doomed Ireland to seven centuries of oppression."<sup>1</sup>

"The independence of Ireland," says Dr. William Phelan, "was not crushed in battle, but quietly sold in the Synods of the prelates, those internal traitors, to whom the orator alluded, but whom he was much too prudent to name."<sup>2</sup>

1. *Dublin Evening Mail.*

2. *History of the Policy of the Church of Rome in Ireland*, p. 3, Lond. 1827.

## CHAPTER XIX.

ABERNETHY—LINK BETWEEN IONA AND WHITHORN—ITS POSITION—ITS FOUNDING—BUILDINGS—CHURCHES OF EARLY SCOTLAND—MISSIONARY STAFF—EVANGELISTIC TOURS—ROUND TOWERS.

WHEN Ninian ended his labours and descended into his grave, he left the lamp burning which he had kindled on the promontory of Whithorn. But no sooner was the hand that had tended it withdrawn than its light began to wane, and soon thereafter it disappears from history. At no time had the lamp of Candida Casa illuminated a wide circuit. Hardly had its beams, even when they shone the clearest, penetrated beyond the somewhat circumscribed territory which was inhabited by the Picts of Galloway and the Britons of Strathclyde, and even within that narrow domain it was only a dubious twilight which its presence diffused. The Roman admixture which Ninian had admitted into his creed had proved an enfeebling element. The darkness was repulsed rather than dispersed; and when Ninian's ministry came to a close, and his work passed into the hands of his successors, men probably more Roman than himself, the powerlessness of a dubious theology, drawn partly from the Scriptures and partly from human tradition, became even more apparent. The ground which had been but half won was lost. The incipient darkness of Rome invited the return of the older and deeper darkness of the Druid, and the imperfect evangelisation of the south of Scotland—to designate the country by a name it had not yet received—melted away. If not wholly obliterated, it was nearly so.

What helped the sooner to efface the feeble Christianity which Ninian had propagated in this remote corner of the land, was the melancholy fact that the pagan night had again settled down deep and thick on England. That country was then partitioned into several kingdoms, but now all of them were overwhelmed by a common and most deplorable catastrophe. The rush of barbarous tribes from across the German Sea again darkened with their idols, as they subjugated with their swords, the southern portion of our island, and as the territory which we now behold borne down by this double conquest came all round the region in which Ninian had kindled his lamp, its light must have been much dimmed, if not wholly

extinguished. In times like these, even deeper footprints than those which the apostle of Candida Casa had left behind him would have run great risk of being effaced.

A century was yet to elapse before Columba should arrive. The light of Candida Casa quenched, or nearly so, and the lamp of Iona not yet kindled, what, meanwhile, was the condition of Scotland? Did unbroken night cover from shore to shore our unhappy land? The time was one in which, doubtless, the obscurity was great, but in which the darkness was not total. At the critical moment, when the light which had burned with more or less clearness for half a century on the rocks of Whithorn was about to withdraw itself, another evangelical beacon was seen to shine out amid the darkness. He that brings forth the stars at their appointed time kindled these lights in succession, and appointed to each its hour and place in the morning sky of Scotland. This leads us to narrate the little that is known respecting the second evangelical school that was opened in our country, and which was placed at Abernethy.

The site of Abernethy, if regard be had to its immediate environments, is picturesque. And if we take into account the panoramic magnificence of its more distant landscape, walled in by noble mountain barriers, it is more than picturesque, it is grand. It reposes on the northern slope of the Ochils, looking down on the Tay, which rolls along through the rich carse lands of Gowrie, broadening as it nears the estuary into which it falls. The wooded spurs of the mountain-chain on which it is placed, and from which rushes down the torrent of the Nethy, lean over it on the south, while the loftier summits, bare but verdant, prolong their course till they sink and are lost in the level sandy downs that hem in the waters of the bay of St. Andrews, some twenty miles to the eastward. On the north, looking, between the heights that border the valley of the Tay, is seen the great plain of the Picts, now denominated the valley of Strathmore. At Abernethy the kings of the southern Picts had fixed their capital; and truly the position was wisely as grandly chosen. From their palace gates they could look forth over well-nigh the whole of their kingdom, stretching from the cloudy tops of Drumalban to the eastern border of the Mearns. On one side was the Firth of Forth, forming the boundary of their territories to the south; and yonder in front were the Grampians, running along to the eastward, and walling in their dominions on the north.

The seat of royalty, Abernethy now became for a short while the center of the Christianisation of Scotland. Even in this we trace advance in the great work of our country's elevation. Candida Casa, set down on the frontier of Scotland, washed on the one side by the waters of the Irish Channel, and hemmed in on the other by the darkness of Bernicia, the modern Northumberland and Lothian, enjoyed but straitened means of evangelizing the country, at the gates of which it stood. But the new champion, who stepped into the field as the other was retiring from it, to maintain the battle with the old darkness, advanced boldly into the very heart of the land. Placed midway between the eastern and western shore, it was out of the way of the foreign invasions which were beginning to ravage the coasts of Scotland. Under the shadow of royalty the evangelical agency established at Abernethy enjoyed a prestige, doubtless, which was wanting to that which had had its seat in the more remote and provincial district on the Solway.

Abernethy has other and most important significance. Its rise shows us that the new life of Scotland had begun to broaden. That life had flowed hitherto in the channel of individual men; now it begins to operate through the wider sphere of associated workers. For whatever name we give the establishment at Abernethy, whether we call it a community, or a church, or a monastery, what we here behold is simply a congregation of pious men associated for the purpose of diffusing Christianity. Their arrangements and methods of working are all of the simplest kind, and such as are dictated by the circumstances of the men and their age. They are no more like the graduated and despotically ruled confraternities into which monasteries grew up in the tenth and twelfth centuries, than the patriarchal government of early times was like the military despotisms of succeeding ages. The members are voluntarily associated, and stand to each other in only the relation of brothers. Outwardly separate from the heathen population around them, they yet mix daily with them in the prosecution of their mission. The new doctrine which they have received is their law. The teacher from whom they have learned it is their ruler, just as in primitive times the first convert ordinarily became the pastor of the congregation that gathered round him. They are distinguished from the rest of the population by character rather than by dress. The Gospel has sweetened their spirit and refined their manners. And they enjoy

certain privileges unknown outside their community. They have the school, they have the Sabbath, and they enjoy the advantage of mutual defense. They are, in short, a new nation rising on the soil of Scotland.

The foundation of Abernethy is commonly referred to the middle of the fifth century. Fordun and Wintoun date it between A.D. 586 and A.D. 597, and attribute its founding to Garnard, the successor of that King Brude who was converted by Columba, and who reigned over the northern Picts. But the legend of its first settlement connects it with the church of Ninian, and attributes its foundation to King Nectan, who is called in the Pictish chronicle king of all the provinces of the Picts, and reigned from 458 to 482.<sup>1</sup> He is said to have just returned from a visit to Kildare, in Ireland, where St. Bridget was held in honour, when he founded this church at Abernethy, and dedicated it to God and St. Bridget. King Nectan is farther credited with having piously endowed it with certain lands that lay in the neighbourhood, so providing for the support of the labourers to be in due time gathered within its walls.

We are curious to know the style of building in which the missionary staff at Abernethy was housed. The Scotland of that day possessed no lordly structures. It could boast no temple of classic beauty like Greece, no Gothic cathedral like those that came along with the Roman worship. The singing of a psalm and the exposition of a passage from Holy Scripture, needed no pillared nave or cloistered aisle, such as banners and processions and chantings require for their full display. The Norman architecture, or rather the Romanesque, the earliest of our styles, had not yet been introduced into Scotland. A cave dug in the rock, or a shed constructed of wattles, served not infrequently in those early days as a place of worship. But about this time edifices of a more elaborate character began to be reared for the use of Christian assemblies. Candida Casa had been built of stone, and it is not probable that the later sanctuary of Abernethy, standing as it did in the immediate proximity of the royal residence, would be constructed of inferior materials. A house, or rather cells, in which the evangelists might reside, a church in which the people might worship, and a school in which the youth might be taught, would probably comprise the whole structural apparatus of the new mission. But all was to be plain and unpretending, such as met the ideas of the times, and such as was adapted to the uses intended to be served. The



light which these buildings were to enshrine, and which was thence to radiate over all the territory of the southern Picts, must be their peculiar glory.

The church at Abernethy resembled, doubtless, the early churches of Scotland. The type of these fabrics is not unknown. Two specimens at least remain in the remote western islands of Scotland which enable us to determine the style and appearance of the churches in which the first congregations of Picts and Scots, gathered out of heathenism, met to offer their worship. On the mainland no such remains are to be met with, for this reason, that when the early fabrics fell into decay they were replaced by larger and finer structures, whereas in poor and lonely parts the inhabitants were without the means of erecting such restorations. Judging from the ruins that exist in some of the island of our western seas, the early Scottish churches were marked by three characteristics—a severe simplicity, a diminutive size, and an entire absence of ornament. They were rectangular in form; they were one chambered, and the average size of the chamber was 15 feet by 10. The wall was low, and the roof was of stone. The door was commonly in the west end, and the window, which was small, was placed high in the eastern gable.

The early churches of Scotland did not belong to the European or Continental type. They were of a style that was found only within a certain area, that areas being Scotland and Ireland. Outside these islands no such humble religious edifices were to be seen.<sup>2</sup> Nor were their architecture or arrangements borrowed from the Roman churches. The churches of Rome from the fourth century to the middle of the twelfth were basilicas, *i.e.*, they terminated in a circular apse. Not a single instance of an apical church is to be found among the remains of the early sanctuaries of Scotland. All of them consist of a simple rectangular chamber, exactly resembling the small and undecorated churches in which the early Christians worshipped while under persecution, but which had perished from the face of the earth, swept away by the fury of Dioclesian, and we ought to add, by the sunshine of imperial favour that succeeded, which reared in their room sumptuous temples, but failed to fill them with equally devout worshippers.

Around the church were grouped the houses of the ecclesiastics. These

were equally primitive with the church. They consisted of bee-hive shaped cells, formed of dry-built masonry, the wall thick, and rising to a height of seven feet or so. The roof was dome-shaped, being formed by stone overlapping stone till the circle was roofed in. In some instances a rash, or strong palisading, was drawn round the whole for protection. When we have put this picture before the reader, he will have a tolerably correct idea of the external appearance of the second great missionary school that was set up in Scotland, Abernethy.

Who or what were the numbers of this missionary colony? What was their ecclesiastical rank, and by what titles were they designated? Were they called presbyters, or monks, or were they styled bishops? It is natural that we should wish to be informed on these points, but the legendary mists that have gathered round this early institution and its venerable associates are too dense to permit any certain knowledge regarding them. It is most likely that these fathers bore the early and honoured name of presbyter or elder. If we read of the monks and bishops of Abernethy, we must bear in mind that it is on the pages of writers who flourished in times subsequent to this early foundation, and that in thus speaking they employ the nomenclature of Italy to describe an order of things in Scotland which was far indeed from resembling that which was now beginning to exist on the south of the Alps. These designations, in most cases, would have been unfamiliar and strange to the men who are made to bear them. The community of pious persons which we see establishing themselves on the banks of the Nethy, have not come from Rome. Her scissars had not passed upon their heads, nor have her cords been wound round their minds. The Popes of those days had neither throne nor tiara; the Vandal tempest was hanging at that hour in the sky of the Seven Hills, and was about to burst in desolation over the temples and palaces of the eternal city. Amid the confusions and revolutions of the time, the Bishop of Rome might well be content if his crosier was obeyed on the banks of the Tiber, without seeking to stretch it so far as the Tay. The associated evangelists at Abernethy formed a brotherhood. The idea that these men were under "rules" which had not then been invented, is inadmissible. It was not till several centuries after this that Rome sent forth those armies of cowed and corded "regulars," with which she replenished all the countries of western Christendom.

The following, picture of Boethius may be held as fairly applicable to this period. "Our people," says he, "also began most seriously at that time to embrace the doctrine of Christ by the guidance and exhortation of some monks, who, because they were most diligent in preaching, and frequent in prayer, were called by the inhabitants 'worshippers of God,' which name took such deep root with the common people, that all the priests, almost to our time, were commonly without distinction called Culdees (*cultores Dei*), worshippers of God."<sup>3</sup> In other places Boethius calls these teachers indifferently priests, monks, and Culdees. Other of our early historians apply the same appellations indiscriminately to the same class of men, and speak of them sometimes as monks, sometimes as presbyters, and at other times as bishops, doctors, priests, or Culdees. Hence it is clear that the term monk in this case does not mean a lay hermit. These, our primitive pastors, were called monks only by reason of their strictness of life, and their frequent retirement to meditate and pray when the work of their public ministry admitted of their withdrawing themselves. It is possible also that divers of them may have abstained from marriage, solely on grounds of expediency, and with the view of keeping themselves disentangled from the cares of the world, but without enjoining this practice on others.

But these early communities did not disdain the advantages that spring from organization. That order might be maintained, and the work for which they were associated go regularly on, one of their number, doubtless, was chosen, as in the subsequent case of Iona, to preside over the rest. Without claiming any lordship over his brethren, he appointed to each his sphere, and allotted to all their work. They obeyed, because devotion to that work constrained them. Their duties lay outside their monastery—if so we must call it—rather than within. They did not think to serve God and earn salvation by singing litanies and counting beads within the walls of their building. On the contrary, they had assembled here that by united counsel and well-organised plans they might diffuse the light of Christianity among their countrymen. They were not recluses; they had not forsaken the world; they had not set down their building in the heart of a desert, or on the top of an inaccessible mountain, nor had they buried themselves in the depth of some far-retreating glen: on the contrary, they had taken up their position at the heart of the kingdom; they had fixed their seat where the kings of Pictland had planted theirs, that

they might have easy access to every part of the Pictish territory, and that they might spread the light from the one extremity of it to the other—from the foot of Ben Voirloch, which rose in the west, to the rocky shores of Angus and Mearns on the east.

On what plan did these pious men carry on their mission? How engrossingly interesting it would be to read the record of their early missionary tours! and to be told, in their own simple language, or in that of some chronicler of the time, how they journeyed from village to village and from one part of the country to another, telling in artless phrase, such as might win the ear and penetrate the understanding of the sons of the soil, their heavenly message! How, among their hearers, some mocked, and others wondered at the tale! How the Druid launched his anathema, and raised tumults against the men who had come to overturn the altars of their ancestors, and to extinguish the fires which from time immemorial had lighted up their land on Beltane's eve. How, while multitudes scoffed and blasphemed, there were hearts that were opened to receive their words, and how the missionaries rejoiced when they saw men who had withstood Caesar bowing to Christ, beholding in these converts the undoubted proofs that at the foot of the mountains of Caledonia, as amid the hills of Palestine and on the shores of the Levant, the Gospel was "the power of God unto salvation." But, alas! no pen of chronicler records the battles of these soldiers of the cross with the champions of the ancient darkness, though issues a thousand times more important hung upon them than any that depended upon the obscure and doubtful conflicts between Pict and Scot, which form the long and wearisome thread of our early annals. Or if such records ever existed, the accidents of time, the carelessness of ignorance, and the ravages of war have long since scattered and annihilated them.

We can draw the picture of the labours of these early preachers only by borrowing from what we know of the method commonly pursued in similar establishments of the period. Affecting neither high-sounding titles, nor costly raiment, nor luxurious living, and fettered by no monastic vow, they went in and out, discharging their ministrations with all freedom, and seeking no reverence save what their piety and their many kind offices might procure from those around them. At the first dawn they left their couch, and the day thus early begun was diligently occupied to its close.

Its first hours were given to the reading and study of the Scriptures, to meditation and prayer. They taught themselves, that they might be able to teach others. These exercises they intermitted and varied at certain seasons with manual labour. They did not disdain to cultivate with their own hands the lands of the fraternity, and their fields, waving with rich crops, taught the Picts what an abundance of good things a little pains and labour might draw forth from the soil, and that the plough would yield them a less precarious subsistence than the chase, and a more honest one than the spoil of robbery or war. Others of the brethren practiced various handicrafts, and making no monopoly of their skill, sought to instruct the natives in the art of fabricating for themselves such implements as they needed. Thus they made it their aim that civilisation and Christianity should advance by equal steps, and that the arts of life and the Christian virtues should flourish together.

But they knew that while art is powerful the Gospel is omnipotent, and that the light of heavenly truth alone can chase the darkness from the soul, and lay the sure foundations of the order and progress of a realm. Accordingly, they never lost sight of what was their main business, the spiritual husbandry even. Their morning duties concluded, we see them issue from the door of their humble edifice, and staff in hand, wend their way over the surrounding country. Some of them penetrate into the hills that sweep past their abode on the south, others descend into the strath of the Earn and the valley of the Tay. The wayfarers whom they chance to meet tender them respectful greeting, and the fathers courteously return the salutation. They turn aside into the fields, and sitting down beside the workers, they converse with them during the hour of rest on divine things, or they read a portion of the Scriptures, mayhap of their own transcription, for even already in the Scottish monasteries copies of the Word of God, beautifully illuminated, had begun to be produced. The budding taste of our country showed itself, first of all, in works of exquisite beauty created by the pencil, before throwing itself on the mallet and the chisel, and aspiring to the grander achievements of architecture.

We return to our pilgrims,—humble men, but the bearers of a great message. No crucifix nor rosary hangs suspended from their girdle; they buckle on instead, mayhap, some trusty weapon of defense, lest peradventure wolf or wild boar should thrust his attentions upon them

when traversing lonely moor or tracing their steps by the margin of dusky wood. They enter the wigwams of the Pictish peasantry. The produce of the chase, or of the herd, or of the stream, hastily cooked, furnish a plain repast, and as the strangers partake, they take occasion to say, "Whoso eateth of this bread shall hunger again, but whoso eateth of the bread that we shall give him shall never hunger." "Give us of that bread," we hear the unsophisticated listeners say, "that our tables may be always full, and that we may never again have to dig and toil and sweat." That bread grows not on the earth," we can fancy the missionaries replying, chiding gently their dull and gross understandings; "that bread grows not on the earth, it came down from heaven. He who made the world sent His Son to die for it, that so He might redeem man who had destroyed himself by transgression. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." These simple men muse and ponder over the strange saying. They only half comprehend it; and yet it has awakened a hope within them till then unfelt, and which they would not willingly let go. With that story, mysterious and almost incomprehensible as it is to them, a new light has dawned on their path, and should that ray withdraw the darkness around them would be deeper than it was aforesaid. The great message has been delivered, the words of life have been spoken, and with the benediction, "Peace be on this house," the missionaries arise and go on their way.

Over all the land do they journey. Some hold their way eastward to where the jutting coast of Fotherif (Fife) spurns back the German tides; and others turning their face towards the Grampians traverse the great plain of Strathmore, and halt only when they have reached the foot of the great hills. This is the vineyard which has been given then to cultivate. Before their arrival it was all overgrown with the briars and thorns of an ancient Druidism. They will essay with spade and mattock to root up these noxious plants, and set in their room that Tree, the leaves of which are for the healing of the nations. They enter the villages that lie on their path. They turn aside to the towns that they may kindle a torch in the centers of the population. We can imagine them lifting up their voice and saying, to the crowds that gather round them, "Seek not God in dark woods: He that made the world, and the things that are therein, dwelleth not in groves planted by the hand of man. He dwells in heaven, and also in the heart of the contrite on earth. We come to make known to you that Great Father. Ye also are His offspring, and He hath sent us forth to bid

you, his erring children, return to Him. It is not by the altar of the Druid that the way to that Father lies. We proclaim to you a better sacrifice. It is others whom the Druid binds and lays upon his altar. This Priest offered up himself. His sacrifice expiates your sin; His blood cleanseth your souls. Come to Him and He will make you the sons of this Father, and admit you to the fellowship of a holy and glorious society which He is gathering out of all nations by His Gospel, and which at a future day He will come to raise from the grave and carry with Him to the skies.”

So may we picture these early missionaries, their headquarters at Abernethy, traversing the Pictish territory in all directions, and of “these stones” raising up children to Abraham. We see the Pict pressing into the kingdom, while the Jew who had monopolized its honours and privileges so long that his eyes were darkened and his heart was indurated, is cast out. We by no means imagine that the theology of these preachers was systematic and complete. On the contrary, we believe it was imperfect and crude, and their views were narrow and clouded. Nevertheless they had grasped the two cardinal doctrines that underly all theology, even the sin of man and the grace of the Saviour. One great beacon they made to stand out full and clear amid the darkness of Pictland—the Cross. One ray from it, they knew, would chase away the night and overturn the altars of the Druid. As they gazed on the men who stood round them, encrusted all over with barbarism, brutalized by passion, and their native fierceness whetted by the bloody rites of their worship and the cruel wars in which they were continually occupied, they reflected that thereon was not one of them into whose heart a way had not been made ready beforehand for the Gospel. In the Pict, as in the most barbarous and vicious on earth, God had placed a conscience. And what conscience is it that does not at times feel the burden of sin. Herein lies the strength of the Gospel, and herein consists its infinite superiority as an elevating agency over every other influence. It touches that within the man which is the strongest force in his nature. While letters, science, and philosophy, make their appeal to the barbarian in vain, because they address themselves to the understanding and the taste, and presuppose some previous cultivation of these faculties, the Gospel goes directly to the mighty inextinguishable and divine power in man—inextinguishable and divine in the savage, as in the civilized—and awakens that power into action. Conscience can expire only with the annihilation of the being in

whom it resides. And herein lies the hope of the reclamation of the race. For without this point of stability, placed so deep in humanity as to be unremovable by the combined powers of ignorance and licentiousness and atheism, the Gospel would have lacked a fulcrum on which to rest its lever, and the world would have lain hopelessly engulfed in those abysses into which at more than one epoch of its career it has descended.

When the first buildings at Abernethy, which were of a very humble description, fell into decay, they were replaced, doubtless, by statelier structures. By this time too, the missionary staff had grown more numerous, and larger accommodation had to be provided for the fathers. It was, doubtless, in connection with these modern restorations—modern as compared with Nectan's church, but ancient looked at from our day—that the well-known round tower of Abernethy arose. Scotland possesses only three examples of this unique and beautiful species of architecture: one in the island of Egilsay, Orkney; one at Brechin, and one at Abernethy, that of which we now speak. The native land of the round tower is Ireland, and there we should expect to find the specimens in greater abundance. In that country there are not fewer than seventy such towers still entire, and twenty-two in ruins. The Irish round towers are divided into four classes. To the third class belongs the round tower of Brechin. Its height is 86 feet 9 inches. It was built, according to Dr. Petrie, between 977 and 994, and with this estimate of its age agrees Dr. Anderson, who supposes that its erection was later than the first half of the tenth century. It is the more elegant of the two, its workmanship being finer, and its symmetry more perfect than its companion tower at Abernethy.

As regards the question of antiquity, the balance of opinion inclines in favour of the Abernethy tower. Dr. Petrie thinks that it was built by Nectan III., from 712 to 727. Dr. Anderson, however, places its erections somewhat later, deeming its date to lie somewhere between 900 and 1100. The three Scottish round towers are included in the third and fourth class of their Irish brethren; and the era of the Irish round towers Dr. Anderson places betwixt the end of the ninth and the beginning of the thirteenth century.

What was the purpose intended to be served by these round towers? This question has given rise to much ingenious discussion. Some have



said that they were simple belfrys. In those ages the bells were made rectangular, and instead of being swung in steeples were sounded from the top of lofty edifices. But if they were bell-towers, why were they so few? There were surely bells at more places than Brechin and Abernethy?

Others contend, and we think with more probability, that these round towers were constructed as safes for church valuables. By the ninth and tenth centuries the church had amassed a considerable amount of treasure. The monastic houses had store of valuables in money, in plate, in church vessels, in gifts of devotees, in crosiers and rich vestments, and these were a tempting prize to the Northmen when they swept down on Scotland. The hut of the peasant could yield them nothing worth their carrying away. Even the dwelling of the chief would not, in all cases, repay a visit; but these marauders could reckon without fail on finding a rich booty in the ecclesiastical establishments, and seldom passed them by unvisited. When sudden danger emerged, the inmates of these places would convey their goods, and sometimes themselves, to the loftier chambers of the round tower, which stood in close proximity to their church buildings, but did not form part of them, and there they would enjoy comparative safety till the torrent of invasion had rolled past, and it was safe to descend. It strengthens the supposition that these towers were erected for some such purpose as this, that their remains exist most numerous in what was the ancient track of the northern ravagers.

We have already shown that the evangelistic operations, of which Abernethy was the center, were not the first planting of Christianity in the region of the southern Picts. The Gospel had found disciples here in the third century, if not before. The numbers of these disciples had been reinforced by refugees from the all but exterminating storm of the Dioclesian persecution. But the seeds of Druidism were still in the soil, and after the tempests of persecution had lulled, there would seem to have come an after growth of this noxious system, covering up, and all but effacing, the footsteps of the earliest missionaries. The altar was seen rising again under the oaks, and the smoke of the Druid's sacrifice was beginning once more to darken the sky. It was at this crisis that the southern Picts were visited first by the missionaries of Candida Casa, and now by the evangelists of Abernethy, and the Christianity which was on the point of becoming extinct was revived, and the seed sown by the

hands of the first cultivators, watered anew, sprang up in a vigour unknown to it before. On the other side of the Grampian range no evangelical lights had yet been kindled. The darkness reigned unbroken, and the inhabitants still served the gods of their fathers, and offered sacrifice to the Baal of Druidism. But in the region occupied by the southern Picts, which was the heart of Scotland, Christianity now obtained such a footing that it never again receded before Druidism. Abernethy kept its place as an evangelical light in the sky of Scotland during the latter half of the fifth century, that is, till a greater light shone out from Iona; nor did it even then become extinct: it merged its rays in those of the great northern luminary.

In due time Abernethy multiplied itself. Branch institutions arose on the great plains on which it looked down, which owned dependence upon it as the parent foundation. We can name with confidence at least Dunkeld and Brechin as its affiliated institutions. These daughters became the praise of the mother by their evangelistic activities, which soon bore fruit in the Christian virtues which began to flourish in the neighbourhood, in the fairer cultivation which markets the district to which their operations and influence extended, and the cleansing of the land from the foul rites which accompanied the worship of the groves and the stone circles.

When Iona rose to its great pre-eminence as a fountain of Christian light and letters, Abernethy fell, of course, into the second place. It ranked as one of the affiliated institutions of the northern establishment. But when Icolmkill began to wane, and its first glory had departed, Abernethy resumed once more something like its early position and influence. About the time of the union of the Scots and the Picts in the ninth century, it became again the ecclesiastical head of the nation. An old house of Culdees, with its abbot, survived at Abernethy the great revolution of David.<sup>4</sup> And a convent of Culdees existed at the same place till the end of the reign of William the Lion, till they seem to have expired, though in what manner is not certainly known, for no record exists of their transference to St. Andrews, which was the mode of suppression in the case of some other houses.<sup>5</sup> In the charters of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the lands of the Culdee establishment at Abernethy appear divided into two unequal parts. The larger half is possessed by a layman, who has the title of abbot; and the smaller half remains the property of

the ecclesiastics, who, with their head, the prior, discharge the duties for which the whole of the estates had been originally assigned.<sup>6</sup>

Abernethy retains now little beside the imperishable interest of its name. This ancient capital, once graced by monarch and abbot, has faded into a lonely provincial town. Lying landward, its solitude is deep. But that solitude is sweetened by the noble landscape that lies spread out around it in all its old magnificence of valley and mountain chain, with the Tay—that ancient river, whose banks the Roman has trodden, and whose waters have been so often dyed with the blood of Pict and Scot,—pursuing its course amid orchards and cornfields, past village and baronial castle, to the ocean. As it rolled when the Picts crossed its stream on their way from the bloody field near Dundee, carrying the head of King Alpin to fix it on the walls of Abernethy, so rolls it now. But it is not the trophies of victory or the tragedies of the battle-field that give interest to this little town. It owes the fragrance of its name not to the Pictish kings who made it their capital, but to the humble and pious men who fixed here their abode, and made it a fountain of light in the realm of the southern Picts, in the dawn of our country's history. The spot will ever recall to Scotsmen the most sacred and the most touching of memories. For about a century its lamp continued to shine bright amid the shadows of that long morning that in Scotland divided the night of Druidism from the day of Christianity. The one remaining memorial of its old glories is its famous round tower. It is one of the oldest, if not the oldest round tower that now exists. While later and far stronger edifices have disappeared, overturned in the blast, or shaken by earthquake, or thrown down by the violence of war, storm and battle have spared the tower of Abernethy, and to this day, gray with age, it lingers lovingly on this venerable site of early Scottish Christianity.

### Endnotes

1. Skene, *Celtic Scotland*, vol. i. p. 32; Anderson, *Scotland in Early Christian Times*, vol. i.
2. For the reasons assigned in the text, examples of the early churches of Scotland are to be met with only in lonely and uninhabited islands. There is one such specimen in Loch Columcille, Skye.—Anderson, *Scotland in Early Christian Times*, vol. i. p. 94. There is another specimen of an

early church in the island, Eilcan-na-Naoimch, one of the Graveloch islands. It is simply a rectangular cell, 21 feet 7 inches, built of undressed stone without mortar. Adjoining it is a cluster of dry built cells. It has no enclosing rash; the island furnishing the needed security. The ruins occur in a grassy hollow. There are a number of graves beside it, and some of the grave-stones are considerably ornamented, from which it is concluded that the place was deemed of great sanctity.—*Ibid.* i. 96, 97. In the Brough of Durness occurs a third. In front of the great cliffs that form the magnificent promontory of Durness are the ruins of an early church, 17 feet in length surrounded by eighteen oval shaped cells of uncemented masonry. It was still in the sixteenth century a place of pilgrimage. These examples of the earliest church buildings in Scotland agree with all the historic evidence we possess respecting them. —(*Ibid.* vol. i. pp. 103-104.).

3. *Boeth.*, lib. vi. fol. 95 v. 40.

4. Anderson's *Scotland in Early Christian Times*, vol. i. p. 150.

5. *Ibid.* vol. i. p. 156.

6. *Ibid.* vol. i p. 236.

## CHAPTER XX.

## COLUMBA—BIRTH—EDUCATION—FOUNDS NUMEROUS COLLEGES—INVOLVED IN POLITICAL QUARRELS.

THE light which Patrick had come from the banks of the Clyde to kindle in the darkness of Ireland, was in due time carried back to the native country of the apostle, and made to burn on the mountains of Scotland. There that light was to create a church, and that church was to mould a nation, and that nation was to become in after times one of the most powerful organizations on the face of the earth for the propagation of that Christianity and liberty, of which it was itself, first of all, to be an illustrious example and an unsurpassed model. Following in the steps of the man who carried back this light across the Irish sea to the Scottish shore, we return to that country whose history we are to trace along the line of conflict and achievement, till at last Scotland is seen standing before the world with its great lesson, that a perfect and stable liberty can be attained not otherwise than through a full and perfect Christianity.

This is the proper business of the historian, and in so far as he comes short of it he falls beneath the dignity of his theme, and misses the end and reward of his labour. What boots it to grope in the grave of thrones and nations, and to bring up from the darkness bits of curious lore and forgotten information? To know when this battle was fought, or when this hero died, makes the world none the wiser, if the information terminates in itself. There is a spirit in man and there is a soul in nations, and till that soul has been breathed into a people, they will continue to grovel in the dust of barbarism and slavery. To note the birth of this soul, to trace its growth, and to mark how it slowly but surely leads nations onward to power and grandeur, and so put on record models that may guide, lessons that may teach, and examples that may stimulate the ages to come, is the high office of history. And thus it is that with the arrival of a stranger who sought our shores on a mission as sublime as his appearance was humble and unpretending, the interest of our country's story begins.

In the year 563, on one of the days of early summer, an osier-built wherry was seen on the waters of the Irish Channel, its prow turned in the

direction of the Argyleshire mountains. It bore as its freight a little company of venerable-looking men. Steering their slim but buoyant bark; warily amid the currents that circle round the outlying islands, and the surges that roll in from the Atlantic, they moor their vessel in a little creek in the island of Iona. Their voyage ended, the strangers step on shore and straightway proceed to erect a few huts for temporary shelter and dwelling. Who are the men who have just taken possession of this little isle, till now hidden amid the Hebridean waves, but destined from this day forward to be illustrious through all time? And, in particular, who is he who is the chief and leader of the little band, if we may judge from the air of authority that sits so easily on him, and the deference which we see so spontaneously paid him by his companions.

We hear them address him by the name of Columcille. Translated into our own vernacular, this term signifies the dove of the church. The name is of good augury. He who owns it cannot be other than the bearer of good tidings. And a bearer of good tidings he truly is. "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who bringeth good tidings." So had the prophet said of old, and this ancient strain might well have awakened the echoes of our glens and mountains when this currach touched the strand of Iona, for now the knell of a pagan Druidism in Scotland was rung out.

Columcille, or Columba,—for we shall speak of him under this last and better known form of the name,—was born at Gartán, amid the wilds of Donegal, Ireland, on the 7th of December, A.D. 521.<sup>1</sup> He was related by blood to more than one of the royal houses of Ireland. His father, Fedhlimidh, belonged to the Northern tribe, the Hi Niall, or O'Neill. The Nialls were one of eight powerful and warlike races which had governed Ireland for centuries, and whose lineage, when we attempt to trace it, is lost in the darkness of the ages. Fedhlimidh was descended from the eighth son of a great king, who figures in Irish story as "Niall of the nine hostages," and who was so named because he had received that number of hostages from a king whom he had conquered.<sup>2</sup> This Niall was the monarch of all Ireland at the beginning of the fifth century, and was probably the reigning king at the time when Patrick, the future apostle of that land, was carried thither as a captive. By the mother's side, also, Columba was royally descended. Eithne—such was her name—was the

daughter of the king of Leinster, one of the four subordinate kingdoms into which Ireland was then divided.<sup>3</sup> The blood of two royal houses thus flowed in the veins of the son of Fedhlimidh and Eithne, and it was just possible that on some future vacancy, Columba might be called to mount the throne. In Ireland the son did not always succeed the father. By the law of Tanistry, the sceptre, on the demise of the monarch, became the right of that one of the blood relations who chanced to be the oldest. If the son was the oldest, he succeeded to the government; if not, the throne fell to a brother, or to some more distant relative of the deceased monarch. This law was designed to obviate the more than ordinary perils attendant on the rule of a minor in a country such as Ireland then was. A firm and strong hand was needed where the sceptre was to be swayed over powerful vassals always at feud among themselves, and often by their ambitions disturbing or upsetting the government.

Nature had withheld from Columba no endowment of mind and person which could fit him for the task before him. All those advantages which men admire, and, it may be, envy, when they see them in others, and are pleased with, or perhaps vain of, when they find them in themselves, met in him. He was royally descended, his stature was lofty, his person was majestic, and his intellect was capacious. He possessed, moreover, a rich and sonorous voice, and this, combined with a quick apprehension and a graceful utterance, enabled him on all occasions when he addressed his fellows to command their attention and win their confidence. His deportment was at once dignified and affable. In disposition he was naturally quick and choleric, but withal generous and confiding. This was an assemblage of qualities which would have gained him distinction and given him influence in any age, but in the age in which his lot was cast these various endowments left him without a peer as regards the ascendancy he wielded and the submission accorded to him. His commanding presence and other physical endowments contributed not a little to the respect which waited on him, for among barbarous tribes bodily strength is often accounted a higher prerogative than intellectual power. One would be strongly tempted to suspect that the biographers of Columba have striven to decorate him with all the attributes which go to form the hero and the evangelist in one, were it not that the work which he accomplished remains the imperishable proof of the sagacity, the courage, the eloquence, the piety, and the moral and spiritual elevation

of the man. Had Columba possessed only the graces which monkish devotees are capable of imagining, he never would have done his work. Sterling qualities and real virtues, we may be sure, were needed to bring Pictish Scotland out of the darkness of Druidism. Columba was greater far than any of his mediæval biographers have been able to concede,—greater than Adamnan makes him,—greater; even, than the elegant and fascinating but superficial picture which Lamartine has painted of him.

We know absolutely nothing of Columba till we find him at school. His earliest years are a blank. They are no blanks, however, in the pages of some of his biographers, and, in particular, of Adamnan, who was the heir of his chair, but not of his theology. Even his boyhood Adamnan has glorified with prodigy and miracle. Not a few of these wonders are grotesque, some are absolutely silly, others are painfully profane, and all are incredible. A greater even than the apostle of Iona has had to endure a similar infliction at the hands of writers of the same school. We turn from these fictions to the undoubted facts which lie embedded in gossip and fable in the amazing pages of Adamnan. When he was come to years, Columbia devoted himself to the service of that Christianity which was not over a century old in Ireland, and which had still a battle to fight to make good its position in the face of a Druidism, on the ruins of which it had risen, but which it had not as yet been able wholly to dislodge. Not a few highborn youths were, in that age, emulous of entering the service of the Church. But birth, even royal birth, was not of itself a passport into the ministry. One must be a theologian and a scholar—at least after the measure of the age—before being admitted into sacred office. Columba the scion of a royal house, equally with the peasant's son, had to comply with this rule. Before becoming a preacher of the Gospel, he must first sit at the feet of some doctor of name.

But where was the young Columba to receive the training which was deemed indispensable for the office to which he aspired? Must he set out for those far-off cities in the East that basked in the learning and eloquence of the great doctors of the Church? There was no need for Columba to take so long a journey. The barbarous Ireland of a century ago had now its schools of letters and theology like Egypt and Asia Minor. If not so renowned, these fountains were purer than any that now existed on the original seat of Christianity. The latter had begun to receive an admixture



from a pagan source. The Irish seminaries still continued to send forth the pure waters of evangelical truth. Quitting “the scene of his fosterage,” Columba placed himself at the feet of Finnian, where, in the words of Adamnan, “he learned the wisdom of Holy Scripture.”<sup>4</sup>

Finnian, one of the lights of his country, presided over a theological seminary at Moville, at the head of Strangford Loch. We may infer from the words of Adamnan quoted above, that the doctor of Moville made the Bible his textbook. Here Columba was made a deacon, and here his biographer makes him work his first miracle, which, like that at Cana, was the turning of water into wine.<sup>5</sup> Of many possible prodigies, Adamnan might have selected one less likely to suggest comparison with the opening of a greater Ministry. Quitting the school of Moville, the young deacon traveled southward, and entered the seminary of Clonard. Here, it is said, not fewer than 3000 pupils were at that time receiving instruction. Three thousand, and three hundred are favorite numbers with the Irish chroniclers. But there is nothing incredible in these numbers. The Ireland of that day, as we have seen, was famous throughout Christendom for its schools and its learned men. Even war helped to crowd its educational establishments with scholars. The Franks were ravaging Gaul; the Saxons were treading out Christianity in England; but in Ireland it was peace; and all who wished to pursue their studies without distraction repaired to the quiet shores of that land. Clonard, to which we see Columba repairing, was one of the largest schools of the day. Its abbot or principal was also named Finnian. But the second Finnian did not unite the two offices of abbot and presbyter, for when Columba had finished his course of study at Clonard, and was ready to receive ordination, he was sent to Etchen of Clonfad.

Within the walls of the monastery, the youth of royal descent was on the same footing as the son of the peasant. To both were presented the same lessons, and both sat down and partook of the same meal. To both were equally allotted those manual labours with which it was customary to diversify the studies prosecuted indoors. Columba had to take his turn with others in grinding overnight the corn for the next day’s food. He had to assist in dressing the garden of the monastery, in clearing out the wood in the midst of which these early institutions were often set down, in cultivating the lands already brought under the plough, and in carrying

home the sheaves in autumn, and storing up the grain against the approach of winter. These sons of the prophets made war upon the noxious growths with which long neglect had covered the landscape, at the same time that they prepared themselves for the yet more arduous battle that awaited them with the errors which had darkened the soul and enslaved the intellect of the nation.

The evangelistic energy and enterprise of that age found vent in the erection of monasteries. The reader has already been admonished not to let the name mislead him. The monasteries of the sixth century were essentially different from the monasteries of the twelfth and succeeding centuries. These last were the abodes of drowsy and oftentimes luxurious idleness. Or at the best they were inhabited by a superstitious piety, which, eschewing the unholy field of the outer world, immured itself within conventual walls, diversifying the passage of the monotonous hours by the practice of a routine which could hardly have been more lifeless, and certainly not more profitless, if, instead of an ecclesiastical, it had been performed in a literal, tomb. The monasteries of Columba's day and country, on the other hand, were astir with life. They were great schools in which the youth of many lands quenched their eager thirst for knowledge. They were, moreover, centers of active evangelical propagandism. They combined in a wonderful degree the function of school and church, as their inmates did that of student and missionary.

The monastery grew up in quite a natural way. A church of clay and wattle was the beginning of what was afterwards, perhaps, to become a famed seat of learning, and by consequence a crowded resort of youth. Around the church was placed a few modest dwellings, constructed of the same humble materials. The whole was enclosed by a strong palisade, to defend its inmates from the beast of prey, or the worse violence of the robber. But as its fame spread, and scholars from distant parts began to resort to it, its first humble erections were replaced by statelier buildings, and the little cluster of cells rapidly grew into a town. Religion and intellectual light began to spread around it, and the waste in which it had been set down was transformed into a cultivated country. These establishments were admirably adapted to the age in which they flourished. The circle of study pursued in them was as extensive as the advance of knowledge permitted. In addition to the sacred and classic

tongues, theology, astronomy, and other branches there taught in them. Sound and systematic knowledge was thus the basis of all the operations they carried on; and the inmates, being under rule, the waste of power in desultory or individual effort was arrested, and the labours of all were turned into a common channel, and resulted in the accomplishment of a common end. For instance, it was as a school, and not as a primatial see, that Armagh first rose into distinction. Its monastery was founded in the fifth century, and being presided over by a succession of eminent scholars, it became in process of time famous. Its day of glory has left a touch of light after long centuries upon the old town.

Ordained a presbyter by Etchen, Columba was fairly launched on public life. In what walk of labour shall he serve his country and his age? In none can he do so more effectually than in that commonly chosen by the best spirits of his time. It became his aim to multiply the schools of divine and human knowledge,—to open springs of water in the barren places of the land. In A.D. 545, Columba being then only twenty-five years of age, founded the church of Derry<sup>6</sup> and the monastery of Durrow, the first situated at the northern extremity of Ireland, and the second in the middle of the County Meath. Both stood in the heart of an oak forest. It was usual in these circumstances to cut down the trees, and convert the cleared space into fields and gardens for the use of the monastery; but Columbia took so great a pride in his grand embowering oaks, that he would not permit one of them to be laid low. They might fall by the hand of time or by the violence of the tempest—from these accidents he could not protect them—but they were jealously guarded from stroke of axe.

Having made a beginning with these two monasteries, the young churchman went on opening another and yet another school of Christian instruction in the land. Before he had attained his prime, quite a crowd of monasteries called Columba their founder and father. The Irish annalists reckon them roundly at three hundred; but we have already called the reader's attention to the marked propensity of these writers to run into threes when dealing with numbers. Adamnan has given us a list of thirty-seven monastic institutions founded by Columba during the fifteen years that followed the erection of Derry, *i.e.*, from A.D. 540 to 560. Even this was much for one man to accomplish. In virtue of being their founder, Columba exercised jurisdiction over them. He prescribed their discipline, and arranged the

course of study to be pursued in them. At times he made a tour of visitation through them, that he might judge of the progress of the scholars, rectify what was amiss, and stimulate by his presence the zeal and diligence of both masters and pupils. As he approached their gates, the youth came out to receive with princely honours—and seldom have such honours been so justly bestowed—the man from whose Christian philanthropy flowed all the great benefits they were there receiving. In these journeys Columba lingered longest at Derry. It was the “beginning of his strength,” and the many monasteries that rose after it so far from diminishing his affection for this his “first-born,” made his heart cling the more fondly to it. He may be pardoned if he beheld with a glow of pride this galaxy of lights kindled by his exertions in a sky where a century before all had been dark.

It was at this hour when the labours of Columba were being crowned with remarkable success, and he was cheered with the hope of being able to erect yet more monasteries, and gathering into them yet greater crowds, that those perplexities sprang up in his path that led to a great and unexpected change in his life. Although he knew it not, Columba had reached the end of his labours in the land of his birth; and the troubles in which he now embroiled himself were overruled for transferring him to that other country where he was to render that special service which should cause him to be remembered in the ages to come as one of the world’s greatest benefactors. Great obscurity rests on this part of his career. How far the political complications into which Columba was drawn were unavoidable on his part, and how far they were the result of a choleric temper and an ambitious spirit, it is hardly possible now to say. Adamnan, as is natural, hesitates to pronounce him blameworthy, and yet he does not wholly exculpate him. We can only collect the disjointed statements which his biographers have transmitted, and request our readers to look at them in the light of the age, and the exceptional position of Columba.

His troubles began thus. Columba let slip no opportunity of multiplying copies of Holy Scripture. It happened, when on a visit to his former master, Finnian of Moville, that he made a transcript of a Psalter belonging to the latter. He shut himself up in the church where the Psalter was deposited, and worked overnight at his self-appointed task. He could

kindle no lamp without making Finnian aware of the business that occupied him. This method of nocturnal working must have involved considerable difficulty; but his biographers tell us that he guided his right hand by the light which issued from his left. The transcription, notwithstanding all his caution, came to the knowledge of the good Finnian, who claimed the copy as belonging to himself, much as an author in our day would claim property in a reprint of one of his own works. But Columba refused to give it up, and the dispute was referred to the arbitration of King Diarmid. "To every cow," was the decision of the sage king, "belongs her own calf, and to every Psalter belongs its own copy. The transcript must go to Finnian." Columba, who felt, doubtless, that the analogy—for argument it could not be called—pointed in just the opposite direction, bore from that hour a grudge against King, Diarmid, and his displeasure was deepened by an incident that soon thereafter fell out. A youthful prince, who had committed an involuntary murder at the feast of Tara, fled for protection to Columba. The offender was pursued by the servants of King Diarmid, brought back, and put to death. The Brehon law visited homicide with no graver punishment than a small fine. But the umbrage which Columba conceived at the proceedings of the king in this case, was owing, not so much to his having stretched his power beyond the limits of the law, as to his having violated the right of sanctuary, which he as Head of so many monasteries, was entitled to exercise. Columba resolved to maintain the rights of the Church against the rights of the king, in this case illegally exercised. He had the art to engage his relations, the northern O'Nials, in his quarrel, and the result was a battle near Sligo, in which King Diarmid, who was related to the southern O'Nials, was defeated. To avenge the defeat he had sustained in arms, the king resolved to measure weapons with Columba in the ecclesiastical arena. He convoked a synod at Telton, in the county of Meath, and arraigning Columba as a fomenter of domestic feuds, he carried against him, though not unanimously, a vote of excommunication. Such, in brief, is the story which has received current belief in Ireland since early times. There seems little doubt that the great churchman had some connection with the battle of Kooldrevo, and that some sort of excommunication was pronounced upon him by his brother ecclesiastics. So much is admitted by Adamnan, jealous as he is of the honour and sanctity of his great predecessor. There may have been peculiarities about these transactions which, were they known to us, would possibly mollify our judgment of

them, and palliate, if they did not wholly exonerate, the man whose great name has come to be mixed up with them. But these peculiarities can now never be known. Columba, a scion of the royal house, the first ecclesiastic of his day in Ireland, could not easily have disentangled himself from national and political affairs, even had he wished it.

Shall we, therefore, deny to Columba a place in the great roll of Christian heroes? No! History enables us to trace advance, from age to age, in the perfection and grace of the Christian character. As a divinely revealed system, Christianity stands complete in the Bible. In that holy book; it is without increase and without diminution. The ages as they pass cannot add one truth to it, nor take so much as one truth from it. But as a system comprehended by the world, Christianity has been growing all along, and in proportion as it develops, so does it elevate its professors to a higher ideal of character and a higher platform of acting. The men of the sixteenth century stand on a higher level than the men of the sixth. They may not be men of greater intellect or greater faith, but they have a truer conception of the character which Christianity requires, and they make a nearer approach to the Divine Exemplar. We cannot imagine Luther seeking reparation on the battlefield for any affront or wrong that might have been done him. Calvin saw his followers dragged to the stake by hundreds, but he never once instigated the Huguenots to avenge their martyred countrymen by arms. But when we turn to the ecclesiastics of Columba's century, and when we go back to Chrysostom, to Athanasius, to Cyprian, and others, we find that we are among great men, it is true, but men whose character is less symmetrical, and whose souls are less lofty than their successors of the era of the Reformation. In the words of the great Chalmers, "We are the fathers, the ancients are the children."

### Endnotes

1. Life of Saint Columba, by Adamnan, edited by Reeves, *Historians of Scotland*, vol. vi. p. xxxiii. Edin., 1874.
2. Montalembert, *Monks of the West*, vol. iii. p. 102. Edin. and Lond., 1867.
3. Montalembert, vol. iii. p. 103.
4. *Vita Sancti Columbæ*. Adam. lib. ii. cap. i.

5. Adamn. lib. ii. c. i.

6. The church of Derry, like Patrick's Sabhail, is recorded to have stood north and south. Its remains were still in existence in 1520. In the fourteenth century it was called the Black Church of Deria. Its round tower was standing in the seventeenth century. *Durrow* was called the "abbey church." A sculptured cross, called Columkille's Cross, stands in the churchyard, and near it is Columkille's Well. The abbey possesses one most interesting relic, known as the *Book of Durrow*, a MS. believed to be nearly, if not altogether, as old as Columba's time. It is preserved in the library of Trinity College, Dublin. Another famous monastery founded by Columba was Kells, in the north-west of County Meath. Its fine round tower, ninety feet high, still stands in the churchyard. Its great literary monument, the *Book of Kells*, is preserved in Trinity College, Dublin. The monasteries of Tory, Drumcliff, Swords, Raphoe, Kilmore, Lambay, Moone, Clonmore, Kilmackrenan, Grattan, Glencolumkill, and a host besides, called Columba pater et fundator. See Life by Adamnan, Introduction. Edin., 1874.

## CHAPTER XXI.

COLUMBA—DEPARTS FROM IRELAND—VOYAGE—ARRIVES AT IONA—ASPECT AND PROPERTIES OF THE ISLAND—ADAPTATION FOR MISSION—ERECTS HABITATIONS—CHRISTIANITY IN A CRISIS—REFORMS ITSELF—FINDS A NEW FOOTHOLD—IONA AND ROME: THE FIRST THE ANTIPODES OF THE LAST.

THE considerations which induced Columba to throw himself into the work of converting the northern Picts have been variously stated by the writers who have undertaken the task of elucidating this part of the missionary's career. But all these explanations connect themselves more or less directly with the political and ecclesiastical embroilment into which he was plunged, and which we have been able only partially to explain. To Columba, in the flower of his days, it was, doubtless, a painful step to go forth and leave a land in which his ancestors had exercised sovereign sway, and which he himself had enriched with numerous munificent institutions of learning and piety. These it was his pride to build up, and he had fondly cherished the hope of seeing them rising, year after year, in efficiency and fame. But the step he was about to take would compel him to withdraw from them his fostering care. Might they not, left without a head, become demoralized, and be deserted by the youth that were now crowding to them? Besides, would not the Church in Ireland sustain an irreparable loss in the departure of one from whose great talents and high social position she had profited so much in the past, and might hope to profit still more in the future? Why should she consent to lose, much more drive out, her greatest son and most eminent ecclesiastic.

These considerations might have had a counterbalancing force, and retained him in the country of his birth; but the hermit Molaise leaves Columba no alternative but expatriation. He represents the powerful churchman, dreaded or envied by his brother ecclesiastics, and under sentence of perpetual exile, with this farther penalty annexed, that he must convert as many pagans to the faith of the Gospel as there were Christians slain in the battle with which he was unhappily concerned. This last statement reveals the touch of a legendary hand, and awakens



the suspicion that the mediæval fabulists have been at work on the causes which determined Columba to set sail for the Scottish shore. His mission, we are persuaded, was not one of compulsion, but of choice. It sprang from other motives and influences besides those that had birth in the excommunication of the Synod, or the unworthy treatment which he had experienced at the hands of his brethren. The missionary spirit was strong in the hearts of the Irish churchmen of that day. They were always on the outlook for tribes to evangelise, and lands to enlighten with the Gospel. Columba could not but know that a little way off from the Irish shore was a country where the harvest was great and the labourers few. What should hinder his planting schools of piety and knowledge in that land now that he had been so unexpectedly stopped in this good work in his own? A colony of his race and nation had gone thither before him, and were at this hour laying the foundations of the Scottish kingdom and church. He will follow then thither. Where dwell the Scottish race, there shall burn the lamp of the faith.

His purpose is inexorably taken. The schools he has founded, the youth he has gathered into them, and who call him father, and the circles in which he has shone, all are now forsaken; and Columba, as a man who has sold all that he has, goes forth to begin life anew. A career such as that on which we behold him entering must ever begun in sacrifice. He selects twelve companions, which he knows will not take their hand from the plough, nor turn back from inhospitable shores and savage tribes.

The party now embarking take with them a small stock of carpenter's tools and agricultural implements, and a sack or two of seed corn. With special care they wrap up some manuscript portions of the Bible, and stow them away, together with provisions for the voyage, in the currach that is to carry them across. The osier ribs of their little ship are covered with sheets of cowhide.

Hoisting sail, they drop down between the level grassy banks of the Foyle. The river expands into the estuary, the estuary into the ocean, and now they plough the open main. They navigate a sea swept by frequent and angry squalls, and vexed by racing currents, but their buoyant barque mounts the billow and hangs fearlessly on its crest, where a larger and heavier craft might have some difficulty in breasting the long surge, and

descending from its airy, curling top. They leave behind them the shores of Erin, here turreted with black basaltic columns, there green and sloping to the ocean. They pass the island of Rachrin, which at a future day is to give asylum to the Bruce, when his own country has none to offer him. They sight the low, fertile hills of Islay, and beyond, rising dark and high, are seen the gigantic paps of the Jura. They now pursue their way northward in a sea sprinkled with islands. They are struck with the endless diversity of their shapes as they raise their naked rocky forms above the lonely sea, some running along in a ridgy, serrated skyline, and others gathering their converging mass into a pyramidal top, a belt of green at their feet, and, if the breeze be fresh, a line of foam encircling them. On their left, seaward, are the outer Hebrides, a mighty breakwater of nature's building placed there to break the shock of the Atlantic, when tempest hurls its mountain masses against the shore of Alba. On their right is the mainland, a messy line of promontories and cliffs, its continuity broken by frequent clefts which admit the waters of the ocean, which are seen spreading out in friths and lochs amid the rocky glens and the brown moorlands of the interior. Nothing could be imagined more lonely than the scene which lies spread around them, and yet it is grand. Nor does it lack that beauty of colouring which light imparts to event the most bare and stern of scenes. As the clouds come and go, what magical picturings delight the eye! Now the shadow falls, and sea and island are dyed in the richest purple; anon the sun shines out, the waters sparkle, and the rocks gloss-like burnished gold. The scenes through which we see them moving are amongst the oldest of nature's creating. Those islands that lie scattered on their left, and that coast-line that rises precipitous and lofty on their right, with its backing of heath-clad or pine-covered hills, smiled to the sun when the mountains of the Alps and the giants of the Himalayas were still at the bottom of the ocean.

They are said to have first touched at the Isle of Oronsay. As they near it, we hear them say to one another, "May not this be the end of our journey"? We are arrived, mayhap, at the destined scene of our labours, and the spot where we shall sleep when these labours have come to an end. Let us disembark and explore the little isle. They step on shore. They climb the highest summit of Oronsay, and survey its bearings. There, on the east, is the ragged line of Kintyre, inhabited, they knew, by the same Scottish race who had preceded them across the sea, and established

themselves amid these mountains, but found it hard to make good their foothold in the presence of their powerful neighbours on the north. Indeed, only three years before they had fought a great battle with the northern Picts; and the day having gone against them, they were now hard pressed, and in danger of being driven out of the country. Their possession of Alba was at that moment trembling in the balance. It was the arrival of Columba that turned the scale. When his foot touched its shore, the Scots received “sign and signature” that the land was given them for an inheritance.

Turning to the west, our voyagers beheld, lying along the horizon, low and dim, yet distinctly visible, the coast of Ireland. Our voyage, said they, is not yet ended. We must again betake us to our currach, and place a yet greater stretch of sea between us and that beloved shore, lest in heart we should turn back to it. The legend assigns as the reason why they could not make Oronsay their headquarters, that the sentence of exile passed on the chief of the expedition compelled him to seek a spot where he could not even see Ireland. There is a touch of fancy in this which discredits it as the true reason. The tear that filled the “gray eye” of Columba as he gazed on a land where his ancestors had reigned, and where there were so many flourishing monuments of his own past labours, told him and his associates that it was dangerous to remain in sight of their native Erin. “We are yet too near it,” said they all. And so hastily piling a cairn of stones on the summit as the memorial of their visit, they descend the hill, reenter their currach, and proceed on their voyage.

As the party pursued their way northward a small island was seen to rise out of the waves just opposite that point on the coast where the territory of the Scots bordered with that of the northern Picts. It lay moored like a raft on the west side of the much larger island of Mull, from which it was separated by a sound only a mile in width. No spot better adapted as a basis of a mission which had respect to both the Scots and the Picts could be found in all these western seas. They direct the course of their coracle towards its shore. A creek with deep water opens on the south-western side of the island. They run their boat into the little bay, and their voyage is at an end.<sup>1</sup> It was Whitsuntide, and the little island was just putting on its first green, as if to welcome the venerable strangers whose feet were about to be planted upon it. So quietly opened one of

the grandest episodes in the history of Christendom! It was the year 563, and the forty-second of Columba's age.

Stepping on shore, the little party climb the highest eminence, and take a survey of their nest-abode, and note its leading features and capabilities. Their territory lies within narrow limits. The island does not exceed three and a half miles in length, and is barely mile and a half in width. Scenery it has none, in the common acceptation of the term. It is not picturesque, much less is it grand; it has no bosky dell, no shady wood, no mountain rising into the sky; it is simply pleasant, almost tame—an undulating grassy plot in the blue sea. On the east, parted from it by the narrow sound of which we have spoken, stretch the dark masses of Mull. On the west the Atlantic discloses its mighty face—a pleasant enough object when the winds sleep, and the waters laugh to the sun but not to be beheld without terror, when it clothes itself in the awful majesty of storms, and makes war upon the little isle, in thick clouds, and with thundering noise, while the giant rollers, born in the far-off waters of the ocean, grow bigger as they come nearer, and threaten to overflow and drown the land.

Yet the island has not a few good properties which adapt it to the purposes of the little party which have just arrived upon it. Its soil, which is light and sandy, permits the harvest to ripen early. The fine plain, which forms its western side, and which is only a few feet above the level of the waters, yields excellent crops of grain, and the little hollows that nestle among the rocky knolls of the interior are covered with a fine rich pasturage. Corn and milk were thus the two main products of which the island could boast, and of these luxuries the fathers had no lack. The climate was temperate. If the heats of summer never were scorching, the frosts of winter were never intense. Indeed, hardly ever did it freeze. The little isle would sometimes be gay with verdure when the mountains of the adjoining Mull were white with winter. This general mildness and equability of the seasons favoured the growth of fruits, of which the island yielded a considerable variety. It was no place of "olive-yards and vineyards," it is true, but the fruits proper to Scotland, and which are as finely adapted to our northern country as is the vine to southern lands, could ripen here, and were cultivated in the garden of the monastery. As for flowers, the foot of man can journey to no spot where the flower is

not seen to blossom. The modest properties of earth and air with which the isle was blessed the fathers would not fail to turn to account.

But the main aspect in which Columba and his companions looked at the island on which they had arrived was its mission suitabilities. Were its position, its size, and its general environments, such as would adapt themselves to their special object, and afford facilities for carrying on their mission? A little reflection must have satisfied them that they had been led to the spot of all others best suited for their contemplated operations. They were to act on the territories of the Scots and the Picts, and mainly on the Picts, for the Scots were converts to Christianity when they fixed their permanent settlement in Argyshire, and had been so, as we have seen, since the days of Patrick, though, doubtless, their zeal needed quickening. Seeing, then, that their mission-field embraced both the Pictish and the Scottish dominions, it was desirable that their headquarters should be placed betwixt the two, or as near as possible in the center of the field. Now here was such a spot; for the boundary line between Pict and Scot, if prolonged, would run right through the island. Thus was the first requisite secured. But farther, it was desirable that the spot selected as the headquarters of their mission should be near and yet afar off. This island was both; it was parted from the mainland of Mull by only a narrow sound, across which sail would waft, or oar row them in less than half an hour. Yet that same sea was a rampart round them, and, in a sense, removed them to a distance. It guarded them against the intrusion of curious or hostile visitors. The key of their stronghold was in their own keeping, and they could admit only whom they pleased. As regards troublesome or plying neighbours, there was room on the island for only themselves. They were its sole inhabitants. There was thus no danger of insurrection against its government, and no liability to interruption in its duties. Whether it was labour or devotion that called them afield, they could reckon on pursuing their task without hindrance or annoyance. They could plough in peace, or they could pray in peace. No profane or mocking eye rested upon them. On the mainland, their mission-field proper, they must lay their account with contradiction and derision; but when they re-crossed the sound, and again set foot on their island, they entered a region where all things were congenial, and their chafed spirits quickly recovered their tone, and the pervading calm imparted fresh elasticity and strength to body and soul. After a season of

rest they would return with reinvigorated powers to their work among the pagans of the mainland.

By what name was the little island known? Till this hour it was one of the obscurest spots on earth. Lying in the lonely sea, afar from any highway, and with nothing notable about it to draw thither the feet of the pilgrim, a thick darkness hid it from the eyes of the world. But the moment that Columba and his followers set foot upon it, it started out of the immemorial night and took its place on the historic page, and wherever the lamp that burned here shall shine, be the shore ever so remote, or the land ever so barbarous, there shall the story of this island be told, and there shall men join in the same song of thanksgiving and commemoration the names of ZION and IONA.

But Columba must be put into legal possession of the island by the competent authority. Without this his mission was liable to be broken up at any moment, and himself and his companions driven out, and compelled to seek another, and, perhaps, less convenient spot as a basis of their operations. Iona belonged to Conal, King of the Scots of Argyllshire, and a relative of Columba. Thus there could be no great difficulty in obtaining a grant of the island from the Scottish monarch; and such would seem to have been given him soon after his arrival. But the ownership of Iona was a matter not quite beyond dispute. Both kings—the Scottish and the Pictish—claimed sovereign rights over it, on the ground that it lay between their dominions, and equally adjoined both, and Columba could not deem his tenure quite secure till he had a grant of the island from both kings. This he ultimately obtained. Brude, the monarch of the northern Picts, appears to have ratified the previous concession of Connal, so placing the right of Columba to Iona beyond challenge.

The first labour of the fathers was to prepare themselves habitations. None but the humblest materials were within their reach, but they aimed at neither cost nor magnificence in their style of architecture. There was abundance of stone on the island. The creek into which they had run their boat was lined with green serpentine rock; but they had not brought with them instruments for quarrying the strata, and they must be content meanwhile to build with less durable materials than stone. Twigs gathered on the island, sods dug in its meadows, branches of trees brought across

in their wherry from the mainland—these must serve for the erection of such structures as will suffice meanwhile for their shelter. The summer, as we have said, was just opening, and the breath of the western seas at that season is soft, if not balmy. They add yet another structure. Their little hamlet of booths they hallow by rearing a sanctuary in the midst of it. Their church is humble, and built of like simple materials with their own dwellings. It must owe its grandeur to the purity and fervor of the worship performed in it. In this humble fashion did they make a commencement in their great enterprise.

At a critical hour in the history of the world was this enterprise commenced. When Columba and his fellow labourers arrived on Iona, human society was trembling on the brink of moral destruction. For five centuries Christianity had been struggling with the inexpressibly corrupt civilization of the Roman empire. It sought to conquer that corruption, and stay the downward tendency of the world, now verging on ruin, by presenting principles of far mightier force, sanctions of more tremendous obligation, and maxims lovelier and sublimer by far than any which had ever before been made known to men. But the success of the Gospel, though great, was not complete. It had rescued innumerable individuals, and segregating them from the mass, it had gathered them into holy societies, which walked in “newness of life.” But the great world of government, of art, of literature, of common custom and everyday life, still went on in its old course. Many centuries must elapse before the poison of paganism, so deep-lodged and so wide-spread in the populations of the world, could be purged out, and the entire lump quickened with the new life.

While this healing and restorative process was going slowly forward, another disaster overtook the world, in which all that had been already gained appeared to be lost. The northern nations, descending on Christendom, overlaid the decaying civilisation of the Roman empire, and the emasculated Christianity of the Church, with their wild savagery and their grovelling superstitions. The world was rolled some centuries back. A condition of things already sufficiently gloomy had now become seemingly hopeless. This overflow of robust and rude nations had in it elements of hope, it is true, inasmuch as it replaced the utterly vitiated and effete soil of the Roman world, with a new and fresh mould in which

the Gospel might a second time take root and grow. But these germs of promise could be developed only in after ages. Meanwhile a great calamity pressed upon the world. What policy did “the Church” adopt in presence of this tremendous revolution? The worst possible. It recognized the altered state of things, but it set itself to devise a *modus vivendi* amid the near barbarisms and paganisms with which it found itself surrounded. Instead of sustaining itself the one power not of earth, it sought alliance and partnership with the new superstitions. It came down to the low mundane sphere, and mingling with the other powers of the world, soon found itself the least potent of them all. Christianity is divine and spiritual, or it is nothing. It must sit aloft and maintain its high claim, unmoved alike by the threat or the seduction of the ruler, by the sophism or the sneer of the scientist; it must keep this high ground, or it must abdicate as the ruling power of the world. Unhappily, what now passed as Christianity forgot this maxim at this great crisis. The Church faltered, and kept her heavenly powers in abeyance at an epoch when it behoved her most of all to have asserted them, and challenged recognition of them. She opened her gates and admitted the nations of the north into her communion in much the same condition as when they lived in their native forests. In the words of Chateaubriand, she received them with the “whole baggage of their superstitions.” Their deities, their rites, their festivals, their beliefs changed in little more than in the mere nomenclature, were assimilated with the Christian church, and the new converts were hardly conscious of having undergone transition, certainly not transformation. A great error had been committed. The salt had lost its savour; and what else than inevitable and utter corruption could happen to the world when its one regenerating, and purifying agency had itself become corrupt?

But that Omniscient Power, which shapes the world’s course, and through thick darkness and often shipwreck of the ages keeps it ever advancing towards the light, had prepared beforehand this movement which we are now tracing. It was the exact reverse—the reverse in both its nature and its issues—of that which we see taking place at the opposite extremity of Europe. First of all, Christianity had to be brought back to the simplicity and purity of its early days. It must begin the new reform by reforming itself.

We have seen how Christianity was reinvigorated at this epoch. From a



little spark came the great illumination. Sitting solitary on the mountains of Antrim, heedless of the storm that beat upon him without, because of the fiercer tempest that was raging in his soul, Patrick came to the knowledge of that Truth which, with divine force, revivifies and regenerates humanity. He preached what he had thus learned to the barbarous and pagan Scots of Ireland. That same Christianity which in the temples of southern Europe seemed to be almost dead, and, like the mythologies of Greece, about to pass for ever from the knowledge of the world, uprose in Ireland among the tribes of the savage Scots, instinct with the power of an immortal youth, and as able to reduce barbarous nations to its gracious yoke, as when it went forth, in the first age, over the lands of ancient paganism, and the gods of Rome fell before the doctrine of the Crucified.

The next step was to find for reinvigorated Christianity a new center from which it might operate. It was now that the seat of this divine principle was transferred from southern to northern Europe—from lands where the air to this very hour was thick with pagan memories and influences, to lands which, if still barbarous, were uncorrupted either by dominion or by luxury, or by an idolatrous aestheticism. We have seen a distinguished son of Ireland—a member of the family of the *Scoti*, compelled by political and ecclesiastical embroilments to leave the land of his birth and cross the channel with the lamp of the evangelical faith in his hand to set it amid the seas and rocks of the north. While Phocas was installing Pope Boniface at Rome, Columba was kindling his beacon-lamp at Iona. Henceforward, for many ages, Rome and Iona were to be the two points around which the history of Europe was to revolve. From the city on the Tiber we see the night descending, in ever lengthening shadow, upon the nations. From the rock of Iona we see the day shining out, and with persistent and growing ray struggling to widen the sphere of the light and drive back the darkness.

Endnote

1. The creek is called *Port-na-curach*, or harbour of the boat.

## CHAPTER XXII.

ORGANISATION OF IONA—ITS MATERIAL FRAMEWORK  
 —ITS SPIRITUAL MECHANISM—ITS TEXT-BOOK—ITS  
 PRESBYTER-ABBOT—PRESBYTER MONKS—ECCLESIASTICAL  
 GOVERNMENT.

They who measure the greatness of an enterprise by its outward pomp and magnificence, still see nothing grand in the voyage of Columba and his twelve companions across the Irish Channel. They traverse the sea in their modest wherry, they step ashore on their lonely isle; no shout of welcome hails their arrival, even as no adieus, that we read of, had greeted their departure. They kneel down on the silent strand and implore the blessing of the Most High on their mission. Their supplications ended, they address themselves, just as ordinary settlers would, to the humble tasks connected with the preliminary arrangements. Nothing could be more unpretending. It is not thus that political enterprises are inaugurated. The warrior goes forth at the head of armies and fleets. There is “the thunder of the captains and the shouting.” The footsteps of the Gospel are in silence. The eclat which serves to disguise the essential littleness of the former, would but hide the grandeur of the latter.

We have seen how wisely Columba chose the site for the headquarters of his mission—a little island, ringed by the silver sea, yet closely adjoining the mainland on which he was to operate. On the south the territories of the Scots, his countrymen, stretched away to the Clyde. On the north lay the far ampler domain of the Picts, his proper mission-field, bounded on the south by the Grampian chain, which parted it from the southern Picts, and stretching eastward and northward till it met the ocean. Iona being neither exclusively Pictish nor exclusively Scottish, the danger was less of its inhabitants becoming mixed up in the quarrels of the two nations; and the neutrality of their position would tend to disarm prejudice, and facilitate access to both peoples. Their little dale was at once the oratory in which they might meditate and pray; the arsenal in which they might forge the weapons with which they were to wage their spiritual warfare; the school in which they trained the sons of princes and nobles; the tribunal to which kings and chieftains carried their differences and quarrels; and, above all, a great missionary institute whence the pure light of the Gospel

was to be radiated by evangelists, not only over all Scotland, but also over a large part of England, as well as over wide regions of northern Europe.

Let us describe first the general appearance and arrangements of the little hamlet which we see rising on this Hebridean isle, and destined to be for centuries the headquarters of the evangelical faith; and next, let us attend to the ecclesiastical and spiritual mechanism enshrined on this spot, the influence of which is felt in countries far remote from the center from which it works.

After the labour of two years the material framework of the Columban mission stands complete. Iona is the rival of Rome, yet it is not of marble but of mud. Its builders have neither the means nor the inclination to make it vie with its great antagonist in the glory of its architecture. In the center of the humble settlement rises the church. It is a structure of oaken planks, thatched with rushes. Around the church are grouped the cells of the brethren of the mission. They are of clay, held together by a wickerwork of wattles. Columba has a hut appropriated to his special use. It stands apart on a small eminence, and is built of logs. He writes and studies in it by day, and sleeps in it by night, laying himself down on the bare ground, with only a skin interposed, and resting his head on a stone pillow. To these are added a refectory, where the fathers take their meals at a common table, and a guest-chamber, for the reception of strangers who happen to visit the isle. These comprise the strictly ecclesiastical portion of the little city, and around them is drawn a rath of mud and stones.

Outside the rampart are the erections required for the commissariat of the community. There is a barn for storing the harvest, a kiln for drying the grain, mill for grinding the corn: there is a stable, a byre, a smithy, and a carpenter's shop. A stream, which has its rise in a lakelet hard by, rushes past the cluster of huts, and turns the mill wheel. The dress of the members of the mission was as primitive as their dwellings. They wore a tunic of white linen, and over it a gown of undyed wool, with an ample hood which hung down on the shoulders, and on occasion could be drawn over the head. They were shod with sandals of cowhide, which they put off when they sat down to eat. Their board was plainly though amply

furnished. Their meals consisted almost exclusively of the produce of their island, which their labour and industry had made wonderfully fruitful. They had milk from their cows, eggs from their barnyard, apples from their garden trees, fish and seal's flesh from their seas, and barley bread grown in their own fields. Latterly the establishment enjoyed the services of a Saxon baker; for Adamnan records certain words of "the saint," which he tells us were heard "by a certain religious brother, a Saxon, by name Geneve, who was at the moment working at his trade, which was that of a baker."<sup>1</sup> Such was the usual simple fare of the brethren. On Sabbath, or when it chanced that a stranger visited them, they enriched their table by adding to their ordinary diet a few dainties.

No mystic or symbolic sign adorned or sanctified dress or person. The only badge which they permitted themselves was one that indicated that their calling was a sacred one. They enlarged the fore part of the head by shaving. The tonsure of the head was an ancient custom, in universal practice among the priests of paganism, but strictly forbidden to all who served at the altar of Jehovah. This custom had been resuscitated, and was now in common use among the Roman clergy, whom it was supposed to endow with peculiar holiness. Among the Columban clergy it was simply an official mark, and it was worn in a way that indicated their perfect independence of a church that was now claiming to be mother and mistress of all churches. The elders of Iona shaved the fore part of the head from ear to ear, in the form of a crescent, whereas the fashion of the Roman ecclesiastics was to shave a circle on the crown of the head. Rome saw heterodoxy in the tonsure of the presbyters of Iona, and even Bede laments the perversity with which these good men clung to this wicked usage. In truth, the monk of Jarrow had great difficulty in conceiving how sound theological knowledge could lodge in heads so unorthodoxically shorn. He acknowledges their learning, extols their piety, and commends their diligence; but alas! of what avail were all these graces when their heads were not "clipped" after the pattern approved at Rome?

A traveler from the distant Italy, where the clergy of the day were attiring themselves in robes of silk and sitting at tables that groaned under a load of luxuries, has visited, we shall suppose, our remote country. He is sailing along in the narrow sound of Iona. He marks the island on his left

rising out of the billows of the Atlantic, lonely and desolate its look, with the storm mist, may be, hanging over it. His eye lights on the little cluster of rude huts which he sees covering beneath the western hill, which gives it a little shelter from the furious blasts which sweep across it from the world of waters. He descries, moreover, some of the members of the community, in their garments of homespun, going about their daily avocations. "What colony of misanthropes," he exclaims, "has chosen this forlorn and wretched spot for their dwelling? What miserable and useless lives they must lead in this savage region, where rarely is the sun able to struggle through the thick air, and where only at times does ocean sleep and its thunders subside in silence." How astonished would our traveler have been to be told that his steps had led him to the Luminary of northern Europe; that on this lonely isle and in these rude huts dwelt theologians and scholars, and that he saw before him a higher school of wisdom and a purer fountain of civilization than any at this hour to be found in the proud city from which he had come.

From the material framework we turn to the apparatus enshrined in it, constructed for spiritual conquest. It was the middle of the sixth century, and the growing superstition at Rome had obscured the lights which Paul and the first preachers had kindled in the sky of that city. To have gone into the darkness of Druidism with the dying lamp of tradition would have been vain. Columba turned to a quarter where the Gospel never grows old. At the center of his mechanism he placed the Word of God. His textbook was the Bible. Around its open page he gathers the youth in his college, and in their remote and solitary isle they hear the voices of prophets and apostles speaking to them as they had spoken to the men of early times.

The first duty and main business of every one on Iona, whether master or scholar, was to study the inspired volume, not to seek for allegory, but to discover its plain sense, to commit large portions of it to memory, and to occupy their leisure hours in multiplying manuscript copies of it.

We see the young Columba, in the school of Finnian, instructed in the "wisdom of Holy Scripture." The first work in which we find him occupied is the transcription of the psalter; the last of his mortal labours was to write the thirty-fourth psalm. He halted in the middle of it to die.

He was a quick, accurate, and elegant penman, and he reared a race of swift and accurate scribes, who anticipated the achievements of the printing press by the dexterity of their pens. We learn from Adamnan that the substance of Columba's preaching was the "Word of God." It was the fountain of his theology, the pillar of his faith, and the lamp with which he enlightened the dark region of Pictland.

The multiplication of manuscript copies of the Bible was specially the work of the older members of the establishment. While the younger brethren were abroad on their missionary tours, the elders remained in their cells, engaged in the not less fruitful labour of multiplying copies of the Scriptures which the younger men might carry with them in their journeys, and which they might leave as the best foundation stone of the communities or churches which they formed by their preaching. These copies were probably without embellishment. In other cases great labour was bestowed on the ornamentation of these manuscripts. 'The Books of Kells and Durrow are wonderful monuments of the conception, the skill, and the patience of the Columban scribes in the seventh century.'<sup>2</sup> The Bible thus stood at the center as the vital propelling power of the whole Columban mechanism.

Let us reflect how very much this implied, what a distinct and definite character it stamped upon the church of Iona, and how markedly different in genius and in working it proclaimed this young church to be from that great ecclesiastical body on the other side of the Alps, which was beginning to monopolise the name of church. Iona was a proclamation to the world that the BIBLE and not ROME is the one source of Truth, and the one fountain of law.

Wherever the missionaries of Iona came, they appeared not as the preachers of a new creed, elaborated and sanctioned by their leader Columbia, and which till now had not been heard of beyond the precincts of their isle; they published the "common faith," as contained in Holy Scripture, which they held to be the one authoritative standard of religious belief. This was what the age needed. The theology of the Roman Church had received a large admixture from impure sources. It had become a medley of tradition, of the canons and decrees of councils, and the revelations or reveries of saints. The world needed to be shown what

Christianity is as contained in its primeval fountains.

Iona, moreover, presented a public claim of Independence. The church of Iona, founding herself upon the Scriptures, had thereby the right of ruling herself by the Scriptures. Her government was within herself, and drawn from her Divine charter. An oracular Voice from the Seven Hills was then claiming the homage of all churches, and the submission of all consciences. The reply of Iona virtually was, "Christ our Head we know, and the Bible our rule we know, and to them we willingly render obedience, but this voice that speaks to us from afar is strange, and the claim of submission which it urges is one which we dare not entertain." At an hour when Rome was monopolizing all rights, and preparing for all churches a future of slavery, the flag of independence and freedom was boldly and broadly unfurled amid the seas of the north. It was a Protest, at even this early age, against ultramontanism. It was not so full and distinct a protest, nor was it emitted on so conspicuous a stage, or ratified by so many legal formalities as that which the princes of Germany published at Spires in A.D. 1529; but in spirit and substance the protest which these thirteen men lifted up on the rock of Iona in A.D. 563, and the Protest which the confederated German princes published to the world ten centuries afterwards, were, in truth, the same. Iona was the earliest organized opposition offered to a tyranny which was destined, when it had come to its full growth, to cover for ages the whole of Christendom.

The great cause of liberty, too, owes much to Iona. And let it be carefully noted that the liberty in which we find Iona giving us our first lesson, and fighting our first battle, was the highest liberty of all—the liberty of conscience. It is here all liberty begins, whether that of an individual or that of a nation; and it was in this liberty—the liberty of the soul—that Iona now began to educate and train the Scots. This was a liberty unknown in the schools of Greece; it was a liberty unknown to the patriots, who contended against the phalanxes of Philip, and the hordes of Xerxes. Nor did the Caledonians who died fighting for their moors against the Romans, dream of this liberty. They knew only the half, and that not the better half, of it. The wide range and surpassing grandeur of this principle was unknown in the world till Christianity entered it. It did not begin to be understood in Scotland till Iona arose. We are accustomed to speak of Iona as a school of letters, and a nursery of art, but we fail to perceive its



true significance and the mighty impulse it communicated to the national life, if we overlook the first great boon it conferred on Scotland—**FREEDOM OF SOUL.**

The next question is touching the government of this little ecclesiastical community. Order, of course, there must be, otherwise confusion would speedily have overwhelmed the mission, and the end sought would have been defeated. But order implies power somewhere, and in someone. The government of Iona was lodged in the hands of Columba. Naturally so, as the projector of the enterprise, and the man of highest social position and greatest talent in the little band. He exercised jurisdiction under the name of Abbot. He was the father of the family; and truly paternal his government appears to have been. In the annals of Iona, at least while Columba presided over it, we read of no act of insubordination, no violation of duty, nothing, in short, calling for the exercise of a punitive jurisdiction.

The obedience which the elders of Iona fielded to their presbyter-abbot was *perfect*. Yet it was rendered under the compulsion of no oath. A promise or vow of submission to the authority of the superior was all that was exacted of the entrant. The spring of their obedience was higher than any vow or oath; it was found in the zeal which burned in the hearts of all to carry forward their common mission, and the love they bore their common head. Columba had but to signify his will, and it was instantly done. The easiest and the most difficult tasks were undertaken with a like alacrity. We see the brethren ready to set out on the most distant journey the moment the command is given, and work in the remotest part of the mission-field. The summons to return and present themselves in Hy obeyed with equal promptitude. Has it been said, Go, labour in the field? go, plough, or carry home the grain. The command which enjoins the humble task is accepted in the same willing spirit as that which enjoins the most honourable service. Are spiritual exercises prescribed? The brother retires without a murmur into seclusion, spends the time in meditation and prayer and fasting, and emerges only at the expiry of the allotted period. No soldiers ever obeyed their general with a more hearty goodwill. No monks of the middle age were ever more submissive and alert. And yet the brethren of Iona knew when not to obey, which is more than can be said of the mediæval fraternities. The obedience of the

Columban elders was ruled by a higher Will than that of the father-abbot. A century afterwards, when Adamnan sought to seduce them from the paths which Columba, their founder, had set them, and win them to the customs of Rome, they refused to follow him, abbot though he was, and he was forced to demit his office and retire.

It is not uncommon to speak of Iona as a monastery, and its inmates as monks. These terms in this case are altogether inappropriate. They bring up before the mind an order of men and a class of institutions essentially different from those of Iona. Monachism was a method of organising and acting which the violence of the times rendered so far necessary, and which offered possibilities of benefiting the world not easily procurable in that age in any other way. But in process of time declension set in, and monachism became as corrupt a thing as the world it had forsaken, and the end was that society had to step in with a sentence of condemnation and sweep away a system that, instead of purifying the world, as it professed to do, was sapping its morals and devouring its substance. But we challenge for Iona an essential difference, not from monkery at its worst, but from monkery at its best. Let us see in how many points the monastery and monks of Iona stand contrasted to the monasteries that rose in such numbers in the East, and in a short time became equally flourishing in the West.

*Isolation* was one of the fundamental principles of the early monasteries. The African hermit fled to the desert or buried himself in the cave. He forsook the world on pretext of reforming it. Columba, on the contrary, founded his institution on the social principle. So far from forsaking society, he courted contact and familiarity with men, not seeing how otherwise he could diffuse among them the benefits of knowledge and the blessings of Christianity. The devotions of the eastern hermit in the lonely wilderness might edify himself, but we fail to see how they could benefit his fellows. So far as his example could stimulate or his words instruct others, he might about as well have been in another planet or in his grave. With Columba and his brethren it is the very opposite. If they have fixed their headquarters on Iona, it is that they may be near the two great families of the Picts and the Scots; and how often are their wherries seen crossing and recrossing the "silver streak" that parts them from the mainland. What strath or hamlet or tribe is it to which their anxious steps

do not carry them? We see them instructing the ignorant, consoling the sick and the dying, and initiating the rude native in the arts and industries of life, as well as teaching him the “things of the kingdom.” And if again, for a little space, they seek the solitude of their island, it is that, recruited by its quiet, they may issue thence to resume their benevolent and fruitful labours in the world.

The monks of the Eastern and Western Church were under *vow* and *rule*. Of the three main orders of monks, the eremites, the anchorites, and the caenobites, the last come nearest the model established by Columba; but still we trace a wide and essential difference betwixt the caenobite monk and the presbyter of Iona. The caenobites, like all the other orders, promised a blind obedience to the will of their superior, and bound themselves to live according to his rule, practicing the two virtues of poverty and celibacy. Previous to their vow it was open to them to marry, and possess property, or to live as celibates, and pass through the world without being owner of so much as a penny. There was just as little merit or demerit in the one state as in the other. The error of monkery was this: it held the renunciation of lawful enjoyments to be a meritorious act. It was an aggravation of this error, that abstention from things indifferent was made the one end and aim, and not a step towards higher and nobler services. The monks rested here. Drawing around them the triple cordon of their vow, their habit, and the walls of their convent, they associated together for the profession of celibacy and poverty in the fond belief that this was pleasing to God and in some mysterious way profitable to the world. It was this that constituted them monks.

Nothing of all this can we discover at Iona. Whatever abstinence its inmates imposed upon themselves, they made it not the end, but the means to the end, which was the diffusion of the light of Christianity. It is plain, from facts that have come down to us on unimpeachable authority, that the missionaries of Iona took no vow of celibacy. Columba, it is true, was not married. The brethren who crossed the sea with him were celibates, and women were forbidden to live in the colleges; but it is certain that celibacy was not the rule either in Iona or in any of the later establishments which sprang from it. In the Culdee establishment of St. Andrews the father was succeeded in office by the son during thirteen generations.<sup>3</sup> The author of the *History of the See of Dunkeld* tells us

that “the Culdees had wives after the manner of the Eastern Church.”<sup>4</sup> In the houses which Columba founded in Ireland marriage was had in honour among the brotherhood by which they were served, and the right of hereditary succession was recognized. In the diocese of Armagh, son succeeded father during fifteen generations.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, the office of abbot came to be hereditary, descending from father to son, a thing impossible if celibacy had been the law of the community.

Nor did the clergy of Iona take the vow of poverty. The proof of this is not far to seek. Laws were enacted for regulating the distribution of the goods of the Culdees among their children, an absurd arrangement, if they were incapacitated from acquiring and possessing property. Their wealth might not be great, but private property they did own; it was theirs while they lived, and their children’s when they died, as the laws to which we have just referred attest. Hence the agriculture which they taught others to practice they themselves were careful to exemplify; thus diligently provided for themselves and their families. Columba had fields waving with corn, and barns filled with plenty, at a time when it was rare in Scotland to see field turned by plough or harvest stored in barn. St. Mungo is said to have yoked the deer and the wolf to his plough; a legend which simply means that the Culdees tamed the barbarian and broke him in to the peaceful pursuits of agriculture.

Moreover, the inmates of Iona yielded no passive or servile obedience to their superior. We have noted above a fact which puts this beyond dispute. One of the more eminent abbots in the line of Iona—perhaps the most eminent after Columba himself—Adamnan to wit, the brethren expelled, because his tendencies ran in the direction of assuming a lordship over them. This shows how they understood the relations that bound them to their abbot. Order there was, we have said, in the establishment. This is involved in the very idea that its members lived in society, and sought the attainment of a common end. But though there was government, there was no tyranny; and though there was obedience, there was no slavery. They practiced no idle austerities, and they submitted to the yoke of no immoral vows.

It has been asked, was it a graduated hierarchy which Iona exhibited, or did it present the platform of a Presbyterian polity? This question hardly

admits of a categorical answer, and for an obvious reason. Iona was not an organised church. The name that fits it best, and best describes it, is that of a Missionary Institute. It was set down on the borders of what was virtually a heathen country, to redeem its desolation by diffusing over it the light of science and the blessings of religion, and all its arrangements were determined by this idea. It founded itself neither upon the mode of Rome, nor upon the model of the Presbyterian Church, which was yet far in the future; it grew out of the exigencies of its position and its age. Columba was a presbyter, his fellow-missionaries were presbyters, and his successors in the abbatial office were also presbyters. "Columba," says Bede, "was not a bishop, but a presbyter."<sup>6</sup> "In Iona," says another authority, "there must ever be an abbot, but not a bishop; and all the Scottish bishops owe subjection to him, because Columba was an abbot, and not a bishop."<sup>7</sup> There was no bishop resident at Iona in Columba's day. There was not a single diocesan bishop in all Scotland till the great ecclesiastical revolution under David I. Pinkerton, who is not infected by Presbyterian notions, admits "that the Abbot of Iona was in effect Primate of Scotland till the ninth century."<sup>8</sup> The testimony of Bede, which is well known, is to the same effect. "That island," says he, "is always wont to have for its governor a presbyter-abbot, to whose authority both the whole province, and even the bishops themselves, by an unusual constitution, owe subjection, after the example of their first teacher, who was not a bishop, but a presbyter and monk."<sup>9</sup> It is clear there was neither episcopal throne nor miter at Iona.

The above passage shows us a presbyter governing the clergy of the whole kingdom. This raises the question, What was the ecclesiastical rank of the Pictish and Scottish clergy? Facts are the best answer to this question. They had received ordination from presbyters. There was no bishop, as we have shown, resident at Iona to give ordination. We learn from Bede himself that ordination was performed by the abbot, and certain seniors or elders acting with him. Speaking of Aidan, who was sent to Northumbria from Iona in the seventh century, the historian tells us that he received his election and ordination by "the assembly of the elders."<sup>10</sup> Coleman, who disputed at the Synod of Whitby, A.D. 664, was ordained by the hands of presbyters. These men, ordained and sent forth by the elders of Iona, had no diocese; they exercised no jurisdiction over other ordained men; and though Bede styles them bishops, and though at times

they so designate themselves, we are unable to see in what they differed from ordinary pastors. The term bishop had not come in our northern church to designate a man in whom was vested the exclusive power of the transmission of orders, in which some have made the essence of a bishop to consist. The conclusion to which we are led is: that it was then in Scotland, as it undoubtedly was in apostolic times, when bishop and presbyter were two names for one and the same office; and that just as we find inspired writers in the New Testament addressing the same church-officer at one time as bishop, and at another as presbyter, so we find Adamnan speaking of Columba or Colmonel, who paid two visits to Columba, styling him bishop on occasion of his first visit, and presbyter when he comes to speak of the second. These presbyters, on whose heads had been laid the hands of the “elders,” as they kneeled in the chapel of Icolmkill, might be called bishops, but they obeyed the Presbyter of Iona, and they ordained other bishops by the laying on of hands, as instance the case of Finnian, who ordained Diuna, Bishop of Middlesex. The “Book of Deer,” written not later than the ninth century, “exhibits a period when ecclesiastical institutions were so far conformed to the original model, that the monastic orders, and the hierarchy of ecclesiastical degrees, were unknown among us.”<sup>11</sup> Elsewhere a strong line of demarcation parted bishop and presbyter, but in the churches of Ireland and Scotland they were equal.<sup>12</sup>

In the discipline of the Culdee Brotherhoods we see the rudiments of church government, but no fully-developed plan, whether episcopal or Presbyterian. It was not till after the Reformation that the Presbyterian system, with its perfect equality of pastors, but a graduated order of courts, so finely conservative at once of the liberty of the individual and the authority of the body corporate, came into existence. Luther never advanced beyond the threshold of this question. He grasped the grand idea of the universal priesthood of believers, not of the clergy only, but of all believing men, and he left it to those who were to come after him to evolve from this principle the right form of ecclesiastical government. Zwingle and Calvin put their hands to the work, but did not quite finish it. It remained for Knox to solve the difficult problem how best to guard the equal rank and the individual rights of the pastors, and at the same time maintain their responsibility and loyalty to the Church. His Metropolitan was the General Assembly: his Diocesan Bishop, the Synod:

his Rector, the Presbytery: his Vicar, the Kirk Session. These alone were the ruling bodies. As regarded individual ministers, no one of them singly could exercise an act of government, or claim jurisdiction the one over the other. All were brethren.

### Endnotes

1. Adamnan, book iii., chap. xi.
2. *Life by Adamnan*, Introd. cxvi.
3. Pinkerton's *Enquiry*, i., Appendix, 462.
4. See Publications of Bannatyne Club.
5. *Vita Malach.*, c. 7.
6. Bede, iii.4.
7. *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. ad ann. 565.
8. Pinkerton's *Enquiry*, ii. 271.
9. Bede, iii. 4.
10. Conventu seniorum.
11. Anderson's *Scotland in Early Christian Times*, i.
12. In Hibernia episcopi et presbyteri unum sunt. "—*Ekkehardi liberArx Geschichte von St. Gall*, i. 267; *apud D'Aubigne*, v. 31. According to Spottiswood, our bishops had neither distinct titles nor dioceses till the times of Malcolm III., who first divided the country into dioceses. *Spots. Hist.* p. 40; *Vazianzeni*, p. 40. Glas., 1697.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

## COLUMBUN AGRICULTURE—SCIENCE AND LITERATURE—THE HEALING ARTS—COLUMBAN THEOLOGY, AUGUSTINIAN.

IONA was a school of letters and art as well as a college of scriptural theology. Its founder aimed at redeeming the land from the desolation, and its people from the barbarism in which the Druid from immemorial time had kept both. The men Columba sent forth were not only able teachers of Christian truth, they were skillful agriculturists, trained artisans, and cunning handicraftsmen. They could teach the poor, ignorant, indolent natives what miracles husbandry can work on the soil of a country. They would show them by actual experiment that it can change the brown moor into rich pastureland, and the bog into a cornfield, so that there shall be store of grain in the barn of the Caledonian, and abundance of bread on his table when the blasts of winter are howling round his dwelling, and neither from the frozen stream nor from the snow-clad earth can he obtain the supply of his wants. Under the reign of the Druid the seasons had run their round in sterility and dearth. The spring had come at its appointed time and the autumn had followed in due course, but ploughman came not at the one season to open the bosom of mother earth to receive the precious seed, nor reaper at the other to gather the golden sheaves with his sickle. Such was the desolation of the land. Christianity called it into life. It restored the ancient but forgotten ordinance of seedtime and harvest. The little Isle which had become the seat of the mission was an example of what could be done in the way of teaching the moorlands of Caledonia to cast off their ancient barrenness, and exchange their eternal brown for the summer's green and the autumn's gold. Under the labours of the missionaries, in all of which Columba had taken his share, Iona had become a garden. Not only did it feed the mission staff, but its produce supported its daily increasing number of students and attendants, besides yielding an over-plus, in the shape of seed corn, which Columbia bestowed upon his neighbours, that they might have the means of repeating on the mainland the experiment he had shown them within the limited area of his island.

Not only the arts and industries, the sciences strictly so called, were studied in Iona. What these exactly were it is now very difficult to say.



The age of Bacon was still remote, and the inductive sciences were yet unborn. The great discoveries that heralded or accompanied the Reformation were undreamed of. But no branch of learning known to the age, no study that could discipline or enlarge the mind was overlooked in the school of Columba. It is interesting to reflect that the very first book, so far as we know, on the "Geography of the Holy Land," issued from the printing press, that is, from the experts, of Iona. A Neustrian bishop, Arculf by name, who had been on a visit to the East, was overtaken by a storm on his homeward voyage, and suffered shipwreck in the Hebrides. In return for the hospitality shown him in Iona, he related to the Fathers what he had seen in the then rarely visited lands of the Nile and the Jordan. We can imagine the overwhelming interest with which they listened to the words of one whose foot had trodden these "holy acres," and who had stood within the gates of Jerusalem. Adamnan, who was then Abbot, noted down all that fell from the lips of Arculf, and laboriously published it as a description of the Holy Land and of the countries lying around it. The book is remarkable only as being the pioneer of hundreds of volumes on the same subject which have followed it since.

Though the modern physical sciences had not yet come to the birth, a wide field lay open for the cultivation of the students in Columba's college. The history of ancient nations, the laws and constitutions of early states, the literature of classic times, the geography of storied lands, the Hebrew and Greek tongues, the knowledge of which was not yet lost in the West, and the logic of the ancients; all invited and received doubtless the study of the youth who resorted to this famed seat of learning. The Art of Healing—a very ancient science—had special prominence given it in the Columban curriculum. Theology, as we have said, came first, but medicine followed as the handmaid of a great mistress.

Columba, we know, was himself "well skilled in physic," and was not likely to neglect to urge upon his pupils the study of a science which he himself had been at pains to master, and which, by alleviating the sufferings to which humanity is liable, and drawing forth the gratitude of those who are benefited by it, is so powerful an auxiliary of the missionary. The door of many a hut had been opened to Columba in his character of physician which would have been closed against him as the simple teacher

of Christianity. The Druids enjoyed a high reputation as proficient in the medicinal art. They were believed to know the mysteries of all herbs, and to be able to cure all diseases. It behooved the Columban missionaries to be able to meet them on equal terms. The pharmacopæia of those days was simple indeed. He who knew the virtues of plants was reckoned a skilled physician. Not an herb was there on their island, or on the adjoining shores of the mainland, the function of which in the cure of disease was unknown to the Columban missionary. In this, as in many other points, we trace a resemblance between the evangelists which issued from the college of Iona in the seventh and eighth centuries, and those who issued from the college of the Prata della Torre in the thirteenth and fourteenth. Not a plant was there on all his mountains which the Waldensian barbe did not make himself acquainted with, and armed with the knowledge of its secret virtues he descended into the plains of Italy and met a welcome at palatial doors as a healer of the body, where, had he come as a physician of the soul, he would have encountered a repulse. "The Olla Ileach and Olla Muileach the ancient and famous line of physicians in Islay and in Mull, must, no doubt, have derived their first knowledge from this seminary,"<sup>1</sup> that is, from Iona.

But a question of greater moment than any of the preceding ones, in fact, the question vital beyond all others touching Iona, is, what was the doctrine taught in it? If we look for a theology arranged in system, and fitted with a nomenclature, we shall hardly find such in the great missionary college of the north. The one symbolic book in that seminary was the Bible. It was with theology in the first age of the Church, as it was with astronomy in early times. The only symbolic book of the early astronomer was the open face of the heavens, whereon he saw written the path of each star, and the times and seasons of its appearing. It was only after long observation and study that he was able to compile his tables, and formulate his knowledge of the orbs of heaven into a system of astronomical science. So was it with the early theologian. His first glance was directed to the open page of the Bible, where the great truths of revelation lay scattered about just as they had dropped from the pen of inspiration. It is only when he begins to study the laws of truth, and the relations and interdependencies of its several parts, that the theologian feels the necessity of gathering together what lies scattered in histories, epistles, prophecies, and psalms, and constructing it into system, that

thus he must have before his own mind, and present to that of others, a comprehensive view of truth as a whole. This process was at this time being more zealously than wisely prosecuted on the south of the Alps. The ecclesiastical world of Rome had been shaken by violent controversies, and parted into schools. The decrees of councils were beginning to claim a higher authority than the precepts of apostles, and theological creeds had begun to be imposed upon the Church, in which truths were missing, which held a conspicuous place in Holy Writ, or tenets avowed, which were not to be read at all on the page of inspiration, much as if an astronomer should construct a map of the heavens with certain of their brightest constellations left out, and their place supplied with stars new and strange, and which were unknown to the most careful observer of the sky.

These controversies had not yet traivailed so far north as the quiet world of Iona. Occupied in the study of the Scriptures, the men of that remote region heard the din only from afar. The Bible, as we shall see, was the text book of Icolmkill. While their brethren in the south were contending with one another for jurisdictions and precedence, the elders of Iona, gathered round the open Scriptures, were drawing water from the well, "holy and undefiled." This is, decisive as regards both the letter and the spirit of their theology. To the youth who crowded to their ocean rock in quest of instruction, we hear them say, "The Holy Scriptures are the only rule of faith."<sup>2</sup> In these words the presbyters of Iona in the sixth century, enunciate the great formal Principle of the Reformation, while the Reformation itself was still a thousand years distant.

Even their enemies have borne them this testimony, that they made the Bible the fountain-head of their theology. "For dwelling far without the habitable globe," says Bede, "and consequently beyond the reach of the decrees of synods, . . . they could learn only those thing contained in the writings of the Prophets, the Evangelists, and the Apostles."<sup>3</sup> And speaking of Aidan, who was sent to Lindisfarne from Iona, he says, "he took care to omit nothing of all the things in the evangelical, apostolical, and prophetic writings which he knew ought to be done." And yet the venerable man cannot refrain from mildly bewailing the lot of these benighted men who had only the light of the Bible to guide them, when he says again, "They had a zeal for God, but not altogether according to

knowledge.” Had Bede lived in our day he might have seen reason to acknowledge that, as with the man who attempts to serve two masters, so with him who thinks to walk by two lights: if he would keep in the straight path he must put out one of the two and guide himself by the other. It was the light of the Bible, not of the Church, that shone on the Rock of Iona; and by this light did the elders walk.

One of the more famous of the Culdee missionaries, Columbanus to wit, we find, in the famous dispute respecting Easter, confronting the authority of Rome with the simple but mightier authority of the Scripture which he calls “those true and singular canons of our Lord Jesus Christ.” And after stating that the western (British) churches grounded their Pash on the Scriptures, he exclaims, “For our canons are the commands of our Lord and his apostles: these are our faith: lo! here are our arms, shield, and sword: these are our defense: in these we desire to persevere unto death, as we have seen our elders also do.”<sup>4</sup> The rule which Columbanus laid down for his disciples on the Continent was expressed in these words, “Let your riches be the doctrines of the Divine Law.”<sup>5</sup> There is no divided allegiance here: no attempt to follow two guides.

Not less did the Presbyters of Iona hold the Material Principle of the Reformation, even Salvation through faith alone in Christ’s righteousness. This brief formula, intelligently held, necessarily implies the recognition of the leading doctrines of Christianity. It presupposes the eternal appointment of the second Person of the Trinity as the substitute of the sinner; His work of obedience and suffering on earth in the sinner’s room; the offer of a free salvation on the ground of that work, and faith as the hand by which we lay hold on that offer: all this, with the attendant doctrines, the fall, man’s helplessness, renewal by the Spirit, and admission through Christ’s mediation into the eternal mansions, are necessarily bound up in the brief summary of doctrine, “Justification through faith alone.” Hence, it is termed the *material* principle, that is, the body and substance of the Reformation, even as the Bible is called its *formal* principle, being the rule by which it is shaped and moulded. We find these two great doctrines—the two heads of the Reformation theology—in the school of Columba as really as we afterwards find them in the school of Luther and Calvin. The Reformation was in Iona before it was in Wittenberg and Geneva. The Scottish theology is not of recent

times. Its sons have no reason to be ashamed of it as a novelty. It is older than the days of Knox. It flourished on the Rock of Iona a thousand years before the Reformer was born. It was waxing dim at Rome, but in proportion as the doctrine of justification by faith was being forgotten in the city where Paul had preached it in the first age, it was rising in our poor barbarous country, and after illuminating our northern land and the surrounding regions of Europe during some centuries, it lingered here all through the darkness that succeeded, and broke forth with fresh splendour in the morning of the sixteenth century.

In the absence of written creed—for written symbol there was not at Iona save the Bible—we must have recourse for proof of what we have said touching the theology of Columba, and the missionaries he trained, to the sermons, commentaries, and letters which have come down to us from the evangelists which this school sent forth. We wish our space for quotation had been larger, that it might be seen how full and clear a Gospel it was which these men preached at that early day. If they were behind the moderns in respect or the appliances they possessed for criticism and explication, which the advance of knowledge has since multiplied, they were quiet abreast of their successors as regards the grand essentials of God’s revelation. Their views lacked neither depth nor breadth. The Christianity preached in the Scotland of that day was the same full-orbed system, the same galaxy of glorious truths, plain yet profound, simple yet surpassingly sublime, which constitutes the Christianity of this hour. Geneva shakes hand with Iona across the gulf of a thousand years.

Columba speaks through his successors. Let us listen to a few of the utterances of these men. It is Gallus who speaks, the fellow-labourer of Columbanus, and the founder of the monastery of St. Gall. “The apostle says, ‘God has chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world,’ that is, by his eternal predestination, his free calling, and his grace which was due to none.”<sup>6</sup> They teach the sovereignty not less than the eternity of God’s purposes. “God,” says Sedulius, “Hath mercy with great goodness, and hardeneth without any iniquity; so that neither can he who is saved glory of his own merits, nor he that is lost complain but of his own merits. For grace only it is that makes a difference between the redeemed and the lost, both having been framed together into one mass

of perdition by a cause derived from their common original. He (God) sees all mankind condemned with so just and divine a judgment in their apostatical root.”<sup>7</sup>

The keenness with which the subject of free will was discussed at the period of the Reformation is well known. It is, perhaps, the deepest question in the science of supernatural theology, as both the fall and redemption hang upon it. For if the state of man's will be such that he is able to save himself, where is the need of One to redeem him? The utterances of the Columban missionaries from the sixth to the ninth century are in entire harmony with the opinions of the Reformers on this great question. Let us listen to Sedulius. “Man, by making an ill use of his Free-will, lost both himself and it. For, like a man who kills himself, is able, of course, to kill himself, because he lives, but by killing himself becomes unable to live, neither can raise himself again from the dead after he has killed himself; so when sin was committed by means of free-will, then, sin being the conqueror, free-will itself also was lost, for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he also brought into bondage. But to a man thus brought into bondage and sold, whence can there be the liberty of doing good, unless He shall redeem him whose voice this is, ‘if the Son make you free ye shall be free indeed.’”<sup>8</sup> And Claudius Scotus, in the ninth century, says: “God is the author of all that is good in man; that is to say, both of good-nature and goodwill, which, unless God do work in him, man cannot do, because this goodwill is prepared by the Lord in man, that, by the gift of God he may do that which by himself he could not do of his own free-will.”<sup>9</sup> Equally clear are these evangelists on the uses of the Law to man fallen, “By the law,” says Sedulius, “cometh neither the remission nor the removal, but the knowledge of sin.” “The law worketh wrath to the sinner, because it forgiveth not his sins, but condemneth them; it shuts up all under sin to the end, that men, being humbled, might understand that salvation is not in their own hand, but in the hand of a mediator.”<sup>10</sup> “The Law,” says Claudius Scotus, “only shows us our sins, but does not take them away.”<sup>11</sup> On the subject of the new birth, the following exposition, among others, of Sedulius, is not a little striking. “Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptised into his death,” quoting first the words of the apostle, and then proceeding, “Observe carefully the order and sequence of these words; for the apostle having compared

the death that was by Adam, to the life which is by Christ, here answers an objection, and says, ‘How shall we who are dead to sin live any longer therein,’ teaching us hereby, that if any one has *first* died to sin, he has necessarily been buried together with Christ. But if one *first* (*i.e.*, before baptism), dies not to sin, he cannot be buried with Christ, for no one is ever buried while yet living. Die thou first to sin that thou mayest be able to be buried with Christ, seeing that it is to the dead only we give sepulture.”<sup>12</sup> In this teaching, which is that of a death unto sin and a new birth unto righteousness, we can discover no trace of the *opus operatum* of a sacrament.

On the doctrine of Faith as the alone instrument of Justification, Sedulius thus expresses himself:—“Ye are saved by grace through faith, not through works—through faith, that is, not through works; and, lest any careless one should arrogate to himself salvation by his faith, the apostle has added, ‘and that not of yourselves,’ because faith is not from ourselves, but from Him who hath called us.” “Ye are made nigh by the blood of Christ, that is, by *believing* that ye are saved by His blood and passion.” Again, “I live by the faith of the Son of God, that is, by *faith alone*, as owing nothing to the law. Grace is abject and vain if it alone is not sufficient for me.” Christ is the end of the law to every one that believeth, that is to say, *he has the perfection of the law who believes in Christ.*”<sup>13</sup> Similar is the teaching of Claudius Scotus: “By believing in the Son of God, we are made the sons of God by adoption.” “Nothing taketh away sins but the grace of faith, which worketh by love.”<sup>14</sup> These utterances must satisfy us that “justification by faith alone” was not a theology invented by Luther, and unheard of till the sixteenth century. It was preached to the nations of northern Europe in the sixth century, even as it had been in the churches of Asia and Africa, and the cities of Italy in the apostolic age.

But this *faith* was not a barren one; it was a root on which grew many a lovely blossom, and rich fruit. Let us hear the evangelists from Iona on this point also. “The ungodly man, believing in Christ his faith is imputed to him for righteousness, as to Abraham also,” says Sedulius; but there ends the old life of the man, and now begins the new, “This faith when it has been justified,” adds Sedulius, “sticketh in the soil of the soul, like a root after having received the shower, so that when it hath begun to be

cultured by the law of God, those boughs spring up upon it which bear the fruit of works. *Therefore the root of righteousness grows not from works, but the fruit of works grows from the root of righteousness, namely, that root of righteousness which God doth reckon to our account for righteousness without works.*"<sup>15</sup> "It is not," says Claudius, "that the faithful man lives by his righteousness, but the justified man lives by his faith."<sup>16</sup> Luther could not have said it better.

One of the grandest attributes of Christianity, as seen in history, is its unchangeableness and indestructibility. But this unchangeableness and indestructibility belong only to Christianity in its evangelical form, that is, to a Christianity that gives to men entrance into life not by *working*, but by *believing*. Ever as Christianity revives and becomes again a power on the earth, it is in this form that it returns. We sometimes meet the thought that what satisfied our fathers ought not to satisfy us, and that we need a Christianity more in accordance with the "advanced thought" of the age. The past history of Christianity gives no countenance to this idea. When it would surprise and bless the world with some fresh demonstration of its heavenly influence, it prepares for the task by disencumbering itself of the accretions with which philosophy and ceremonialism are continually labouring to encrust it, that it may return to the simplicity of its first estate. With Christianity "a thousand years are as one day." Thus it challenges our confidence by giving us assurance that it is on no speculation of a day, on no mere opinion of an age that our faith is placed, but on "The Word of our God, which endures for ever."

To restore the Spring it is not necessary that we have a creation of new flowers year by year; it is enough if the old ones come up out of the darkness of the earth, where they have been lying hidden yet living in their root, during the months of winter. The Spring times that have gladdened the church and the world have come round, by the shining forth of old truths at the command of that almighty Spirit, whose prerogative it is to "bind the sweet influences of Pleiades or loose the bands of Orion." It was an old theology, bursting out from Jewish type and symbol, that produced the morning of the Gospel day. It was the same old theology installed on the rock of Iona, from which came the early Celtic illumination that shone on Europe in the seventh and eighth centuries. It was the theology of the Christian fathers and the Culdees,



coming forth from the tomb of mediæalism, that created the Reformation of the sixteenth century. It is this same old theology which the missionary at this hour is carrying to China and Africa, and all round the globe. The same will form the foundations of that kingdom of righteousness and peace that is to be set up on the earth in the latter days. The constellations of the spiritual firmament, like those of the natural heavens, are for all time. They do not pass away to be succeeded by new and brighter lights. Occasionally, indeed, it happens that a comet blazes forth in the sky, or a nebulosity, broad and huge, and without determinate limits, looms overhead, awakening the wonder, and dazzling the eyes of the gazers, and threatening, it may be, the orbs of the firmament with eclipse. But the blaze of its bewildering effulgence is soon spent, and it sinks in the blackness of darkness. These prodigies are for a month or a year; the stars are forever.

### Endnotes

1. *Iona*, by the Rev. W. Lindsay Alexander, D.D., chap. iv. p. 125. London. 1820.
2. Adam. *Life*, i. 22.
3. Bede, iii., iv.
4. *Coumban. Epist. ad patres Synodi Gallicanae in Biblioth. per Gulland.*
5. *Epist. ad Hunald.*
6. *Sermon at Constance, in Gallandius*, vol xii.
7. "Videt enim universum genes humanum tam justo judicio in apostatico radice damnatum," *Sedul. in Rom.*, c. 9.
8. *Sedul. on Romans.* c. 9.
9. *Claude Scot. on Matthew*, apud Usher.
10. *Sedul. on Rom.*, c. 4 and c. 7; *Gal.*, c. 3.
11. *Claud. Com. on Gal.*, c. 2.
12. *Sedul. on Rom.*, c. 6.
13. *Sedul. on Eph.*, c. ii., and *Rom.*, c. iii.
14. *Claudius on Math.*, BK. i., and *Gal.* Pref
15. *Sedul. on Rom.* c. iv. "Non ergo ex operibus radix justitiæ, sed ex radice justitiæ fructus operum, crescit."
16. *Claud. on Gal.* c. iii. "Non fidelem vivere ex justitia sed justum ex fide."

## CHAPTER XXIV.

COLUMBA VISITS KING BRUDE—INTERVIEW—STRATEGICAL PLAN OF EVANGELISATION—COLUMBAN COLLEGES PLANTED ALL OVER SCOTLAND—COLUMBA'S GENERALSHIP—NO BISHOP AT IONA—MS. COPIES OF THE SACRED SCRIPTURES.

ON a day at the end of two years from his arrival on Iona, Columba goes to the beach, where his craft of wicker and cowhide lies moored, waiting the use of any member of the community of Hy whose occasions may call him away from the island. He is accompanied by two friends and former fellow-students, Comgal and Cainnech,<sup>1</sup> and followed by a little escort of faithful attendants. Taking his seat in his currach, he and his party are rowed across the sound to the mainland. On what errand does Columba journey? If the presbyter-abbot absents himself from his post, we may be sure it is on business of grave moment, appertaining vitally to the success of his mission. It is even so. Let us go with him and see how he speeds.

The two years he has already passed on the island have been busily occupied in the multifarious preliminary arrangements incident to his enterprise. These arrangements are now all complete, and Columba is this day to begin in earnest the great spiritual campaign he has crossed the sea to wage. He has come to challenge the Druid's longer possession of Alba, and now we are to see him throw down the gage of battle and strike the first blow. There is already a feeble Christianity among the Scots who inhabit the Kintyre hills, which are seen, looking across the sound, stretching southward along the coast. But beyond the cloudy bilge of the Drumlban Mountains, where dwell the northern Picts, there reigns to this hour unbroken night. Columba must carry the evangelical torch into the midst of that darkness. But he will not endanger the success of his enterprise by any hasty or precipitate step. He will begin by conciliating the powerful king, who reigns over the numerous and warlike tribes whose Christianization he has come to seek; and having obtained the consent of the monarch, he will with more confidence essay his task, which must be a difficult one, in even the most favourable circumstances. We now see him setting forth on a visit to King Brude, whom we have already met, and whose exploits on the battlefield—some of them won at the cost of the Scots—make him one of the few of our early monarchs

who are historic.

Columba's companions have been wisely chosen. It is the northern family of the Picts whom he seeks to translate from the darkness of Druidism into the light of Christianity, and he selects as his associates in the work two men, both of whom are of the race of the Irish Picts, and, therefore, able to express themselves in the Pictish tongue with more intelligibility and fluency than Columba could well be supposed capable of doing.<sup>2</sup>

The modern missionary tries to find his way to the great centers of population. The missionary of a former age sought how he might approach the most powerful chieftain. It was only another way of influencing the largest number, seeing through the monarch lay the door of access to the nation. The journey of Columba from Iona to the Castle of Brude was scarcely less toilsome and perilous than an expedition in our day into the interior of Africa. The distance was only about 150 miles. But the difficulty of the journey was not in the length of the road, but in the character of the country to be passed over. It was wild and savage. There were no roads to guide the steps or facilitate the progress of the traveler. There were arms of the sea and inland lochs to be crossed, occasioning long and frequent delays, for the traveler could not reckon that the ferryman with his coracle would be waiting his arrival. There were rugged hills to be clambered over, where the furze and the thorn masked the chasm, and a heedless step might precipitate the wayfarer to destruction. There were dark woods and jungle thickets to be threaded, where the wolf and the wild boar lay in ambush. There were trackless moors, where the bewildering mist gathers suddenly at times and blots out the path of the hapless traveler; and there were morasses and bogs, where the treacherous surface tempts the too venturesome foot only to betray it. To all these dangers was added that of barbarous and cruel tribes, who might challenge the traveler's right to pass through their territory, and rob or kill him. That these perils were inseparable from his projected journey Columba well knew. He might decline it; but how, then, could he inaugurate his mission with the hope of success? At whatever risk, he must visit King Brude in his northern fortress. We see him and his two companions, with their escort, crossing the mountains of Mull, and navigating the frith that separates it from the mainland. The currach that bore them across put them ashore a little to the south of the spot where

the town of Oban now stands. The hints dropped by Adamnan enable us to follow faintly the dubious track of the travelers. They steer on Urchudain, the Glen Urquhart of the present day, whose opening between noble hills greets the tourist on the left as he ascends the Caledonian Canal. We see them tracing with painful steps the wild and broken districts of Lorn, of Appin, of Duror, of Lochaber, and Glengarry, with their frequent intervening ferries. And now they skirt along the northern shore of Loch Hess, on whose pictured face sleep the images of its grand enclosing mountains. A little beyond, following the river which issues from the loch, the party arrive at the castle of the Pictish monarch.

King Brude was probably aware of the coming of Columba, and had taken counsel beforehand with his Druids, who were the advisers of the Pictish monarchs in all matters of State policy. In accordance with their advice, the king kept the gates of his fortress closed, and refused audience to the missionary. This only made the triumph of Columba over the pride of the king and the enchantments of his Magi the more conspicuous. Assembling under the walls of the castle, the party joined in singing the forty-sixth psalm. Columba was gifted with a voice of wondrous melody and strength, which on this occasion, doubtless, was put forth to its utmost pitch. The stanzas of the psalm, pealed forth by so many voices, and re-echoed from the hills of the narrow pass, would gather force and volume at each repetition, and reverberate, we can well believe, with “a noise like thunder” in the halls of the palace. The king and his counselors were terrified. But Adamnan is not content that the matter should end without a miracle. The hymn concluded, Columba advanced to the closed gates, formed upon them the sign of the cross, and striking them with his hand, the bolts and bars that held them fast were rent asunder, and the gates flew.<sup>3</sup> The king and his counselors now hastened to meet Columba, and accorded him a conciliatory and gracious reception. There followed a private interview between Brude and the missionary. The interview was probably repeated, and at last ended in a profession of adherence to the Christian faith on the part of the Pictish monarch. We have already, in the first volume of this history, given a detail of these transactions, and do not need to repeat them here.<sup>4</sup>

Columba had accomplished the object of his journey. The conversion of the king was, in a sense, the conversion of the nation. It opened the door

through which Columba could pour in his missionaries upon the clans of North Pictland, and bring to an end the gloomy reign of the Druid. Well pleased, therefore, he turns his face towards Iona, where he would give himself to the task of training armies of preachers to carry on the war he had come to wage in Alba, and which he was resolved should not cease till the last Druidic altar on its soil had been overturned. We expect his biographer to show us phalanx after phalanx of spiritual warriors going forth into the field, and taking up the positions assigned them by the great captain who directs the movement from his headquarters on Iona. In a word, we wish to follow the light as it travels from district to district, till at last the whole country is illuminated, and it can be said that now the night of the Druid is past. Adamnan, surely, will recite, with minute and loving care, the labours of his great predecessor; the methods by which he carried on his evangelization; the missionaries he sent north and south, and all over the land; their early struggles, their disappointments, their ultimate triumphs; and the exultation with which, after a certain term of labour, they returned to Iona and gave in their report of another province wrested from the darkness, and another clan enrolled in the Christian Church. No theme would have been more thrilling, and none would have been read with so engrossing an interest by all succeeding generations of Scotsmen.

We open Adamnan, alas! only to experience a painful disappointment. Page after page is occupied with prophecies, miracles, and prodigies; and record of the Columban evangelisation we find none. We must turn to other sources—the incidental allusions of Bede, the Culdee missions in England and on the Continent, which reflect light on the country which was their base, and the ruins of the monastic buildings scattered over the face of Scotland, which tell where Culdee establishments once existed, if we would gather some knowledge of the methods by which Columba worked in that great movement which first changed the whole of Scotland into a Christian country. The “Life of Columba,” by Adamnan, was discovered at Shaffhausen in 1845. It was found buried at the bottom of a chest. It had formerly lain in a monastery in the Lake of Constance. The writing belongs to the beginning of the eighth century. The Colophon attributes the writing to Sorbene, Abbot of Hy, who died 713, just nine years after Adamnan. There is no doubt that this copy was written at Hy from the Life by Adamnan. It is one of the products of the first school of

religion and literature established in Scotland. The Irish clerics wrote with marvelous dispatch, and all but infallible accuracy, and with a grace and beauty all their own. They transcribed both Latin and Greek, and they introduced a style of penmanship on the Continent which is peculiar, and which was imitated till the times of the Renaissance. The calligraphy is so marked by its elegance and form that the Scottish MSS. are easily recognisable.

Columba had the mind of a statesman. His conceptions were large, and his administrative talents of the first order. He had given proof of this in the organization and government of his numerous Irish monasteries, and he arrived in Scotland with a ripe experience. We have seen how he pioneered his way to the nation through the king. In like manner he pioneers his way to the clan through the chieftain. He saw at a glance the importance of working on the lines made ready to his hand in the tribal organization of the country. He went to the chieftains as he had gone to the king, and disabusing their minds of Druidic influence, he obtained their consent to the evangelization of their followers. We see the missionaries from Iona arrive. They select a convenient spot in the territories of the clan, a sheltered valley, or the banks of a river abounding in fish. They begin operations by driving a few stakes into the ground. They fetch twigs and turf, and speedily there rises a little cluster of huts. They add a few necessary erections for storing their winter supplies. They lay out a small garden for summer fruits; the net will enable them to supplement their cuisine with the produce of the stream. They draw a pallisade round their establishment. All arranged within, they next bestow their attention on the ground outside, which they bring under cultivation. If it is wood, they clear it away with the axe. If it is moor, they set to work with mattock and plough, and soon are seen meadow and cornfield where before all was waste and barrenness.

All the while the higher world of the mission was not neglected. Full of zeal—and no age since has witnessed that noble passion in greater intensity—they devoted so many hours a day to the instruction of the natives. Simple and elementary these lessons had need to be, for the mind of the Pict was dark. He had worn the bandage of the Druid for ages. But the missionary had a story to tell him which had power to touch even his heart. The bandage fell from his eyes. The light entered: faint at

first, doubtless, but clear enough to make even the Caledonian feel that he had been in darkness, and only now was beginning to see the light. He retires to meditate apart on the strange things he has heard. He returns to the missionary to have them told him over again. They seem more wonderful than ever. He communicates them to his neighbours. They, too wish to hear these tidings from the mouth of the strangers from Iona. There is soon a little company of enquirers. Their numbers increase from day to day, and now there is formed a congregation of converts. A church and school are set up. Christian worship is inaugurated; and how amazed is the Pict to find himself addressing the great Father in heaven, and singing the psalms written of old by kings and prophets. Compared with these holy services, how revolting seem to him now the rites in which he was wont to take part at the stone circle. He goes no more to the altar of the Druid. The thought of it brings up only images of blood and terror. He has learned a sweeter service than that of the groves.

The Columban establishments—now beginning to dot Scotland—were all framed on the model of Iona. The missionary staff of the provincial house was the same in number as that of the parent institution. The Culdees went forth to form a new settlement in bodies of twelve, with one who presided over the rest. The discipline in the branch institutions was the same as at headquarters. The main business of the brethren was the instruction of the natives. Their evangelistic labours they varied with agricultural work, for as yet there was no rule or custom in Scotland excluding men in sacred professions from taking part in secular occupations. At certain seasons they retired to solitary places to meditate. One of their number was sent at regular intervals to headquarters to report how matters went in the provincial monastery, and what progress the evangelisation was making in its neighborhood. The deputy was received with commendation, or reproof, as the case might be, and after a short residence in Iona was sent back to resume his labours in his provincial field.

These institutions were set down on a strategic principle. They were so planted as not to overlap, and yet so as to enlase the whole country in their working when fully developed. Each clan, eventually, had its monastery with lands attached, the gift of the chieftain. The honour of the clan was at stake, touching the safety and good treatment of the fathers,

and the chieftain came to see that the patronage and protection he vouchsafed the establishment were more than repaid in the greater loyalty of his subjects, and the better cultivation of his lands. Year by year there issued from Iona bands of young disciples, thoroughly trained, and full of enthusiasm to carry the evangelical standard into districts where Culdee had not yet been seen. Every year the number of institutions multiplied. Nothing could repress the ardour or daunt the courage of these warriors of the Cross which Iona sent forth. Nor savage tribe nor stormy frith could make them turn back. They reared their huts and built their oratories in the storm swept isles of the Hebrides. They crossed the racing tides of the Pentland, and carried the "great tidings" to the dwellers in the bleak Orkneys, and the inhabitants of the lonelier Shetland. They penetrated the fastness of Ross-shire and Athol, and awoke the echoes of their glens with the plaintive music of their psalms, and the thunders of their Celtic orations. In the savage straths of the Grampians and the wooded and watered valleys of Perthshire they established their settlements, clothing themselves with the wool of their sheep, supplying their table from the stream, the wild berry of the woods, the roe which they snared, and the corn which their labour and skill taught to grow in these inhospitable wilds, accounting their hardships repaid an hundredfold in that they were privileged to give the "bread of life" to men who were perishing with hunger while no man gave to them. Along the east coast of Scotland, from Dunnet Head to St. Abb's; in the great plain of Strathmore; in Fife; in the islands and shores of the Forth; on the banks of the Clyde where St. Mungo placed his cell, and laid the first stone of the great western metropolis, and onward, over lands which great poets have since made classic, to the time honored promontory where Ninian at an earlier day had kindled his lamp, did these Culdees journey, rearing, at every short distance, their sanctuaries and schools. Of these ancient sites not a few have been effaced, but a goodly number still remain indelibly marked, of which we can with certainty say that there, in early days, Culdee took up his abode and thence spread around him the light of Christianity. There are not fewer than thirty-two such places in the former territory of the Scots, and twenty-one in the region occupied by the Picts.<sup>5</sup>

Wherever the Culdee came, brightness fell on the landscape. The brown moor blossomed beneath his footsteps, and the silent wilderness burst into singing. The Christianity which the missionaries from Iona preached



to the Caledonians worked all round. It was Christianity set in the golden framework of civilization. The doctrine branched out into a life; it summoned art and industry from their deep sleep; it set the plough in motion. An ancient barbarism had frozen it in the furrow, and the soil lay untilled. The lazy glebe, which for ages had known neither seed-time nor harvest, ran over with corn; the arid pastures, so long unfamiliar with the browsing kine, flowed with milk; the moss-covered bough shook off its rust, and clothed itself with young buds; and roaming herds and flocks began to mottle the naked, lonely mountains as the fleecy clouds speckle the face of the morning skies. But the change wrought on the Caledonian himself was far greater than any that had passed on the face of his country. The idea of an everlasting and omnipotent Being had been flashed upon him through his darkness. What an astonishing revelation! It was a new existence to him. This new and amazing idea took the sting out of his serfdom. He saw that he was not the property of his chief, as he had been taught to regard himself; he was the subject of a higher lord, he was now able to taste somewhat of the dignity of manhood, and to feel the grandeur of liberty; for in soul he was already a freeman. More than half his former misery and degradation passed away from the Caledonian with this change in his position and relationships. It does not follow that the system of clanship was broken up. Christianity knit closer the bonds between chieftain and clansman, at the same time that it sweetened and hallowed them.

All these Christian institutions which we see rising from north to south of Scotland were ruled from Iona. There was set the chair of their presbyter-abbot. From that chair issued the laws which all were to obey, and to the same quarter all eyes were turned to know the sphere each was to fill, and the work each was to do. The obedience was loving, because the rule was gracious, and the work was cheerful, because the heart of the doer delighted in it. A very vigilant oversight did Columba exercise over all the workers. Like a skilful general, his eye ranged over the whole field, and he knew how the battle with the Druid was going at all points. If any detachment of his army was falling back before the enemy, he hastened to send forward recruits to restore the fortunes of the day. If any were overburdened with work, he sent fresh labourer to their help. If any soldier of his army needed repose after a prolonged period of service, he said to him, "Put off your armour, and come and rest awhile

in this quiet isle.” He made tours of visitation, to see with his own eyes how all went. He put right what he found amiss; he supplied what he saw was lacking; he encouraged the timid; he strengthened the faint-hearted. If any were cast down, he lifted them up; if any were indolent and doing the work of the mission deceitfully, he reproved them. And to those who in faith and heroism were scaling the strongholds of an ancient heathenism, dethroning, the stone idols of the Druid, and urging bravely onward the tide of evangelical victory, he had words of benediction to pronounce, which those to whom they were spoken esteemed honour higher and more lasting than the stars and coronets with which princes crown the victors in those battles of the warrior, which are “with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood.” It was thus, under a leader sagacious, far-seeing and indomitable, served by devoted and enthusiastic soldiers, that this great battle of our country against its ancient enslaver was won. There is no battle like this in our annals till we come to the days of Knox.

The war was long, and, doubtless, the burden of carrying it on pressed heavily at times on Columba; but he bore it with patient atlantean strength all his days, sustained by the sublime hope that before going to his grave, he should see his grand conception realized, and Scotland become a Christian land. Columba united the Picts and Scots under his spiritual scepter long previous to their becoming one nation under the sway of Kenneth Mac Alpin.

To Columba’s age, and in his own country at least, there seemed nothing abnormal in this vast ecclesiastical sovereignty being exercised by a simple presbyter; for Columba was nothing more. But in the following centuries it appeared to the writers of the Latin school anomalous, if not monstrous, that a presbyter should exercise jurisdiction over the bishops of a whole nation. We have quoted above the words of Bede in reference to his successor. “under his jurisdiction,” says he, “the whole province, including even the bishops, by an unwonted order, were subjected, after the example of the first teacher, Columba, who was not a bishop, but a presbyter and a monk.”<sup>6</sup> It truly was an *unwonted order*, for a presbyter to bear rule over bishops. But where in the Scotland of that day are the bishops? We cannot discover any, at least any whom Bede would have acknowledged to be bishops. We see the Scottish youth, after being trained in Iona, ordained to the ministry by the laying on of the hands of the

elders; we follow them to their field of labour; we see them itinerating as evangelists, or becoming settled teachers of congregations; we see Scotland better supplied year after year with this class of bishops, and the oversight of all exercised from Iona. But as regards a bishop with a diocese, and the sole power of conferring ordination—the two things that constitute a modern bishop—the Scotland of that day possessed not one solitary specimen. The very imagination of such a thing appears to us eminently absurd. All our writers, ancient and modern, concur that St. Andrews is the <sup>7</sup> most ancient bishopric north of the Clyde and the Forth, and its foundation is ascribed to Grig, who began to reign in 883. It had been a famous seat of the Culdees who were endowed with lands by Hungius, transferred to the canons-regular in the end of the twelfth century.<sup>8</sup> The author of “Caledonia” admits that Cellach, Bishop of St. Andrews, was the first bishop of any determinate See in Scotland; and speaking of Tuathal, styled Archbishop of Fortern, or Abernethy, he says, “It is a florid expression.”<sup>9</sup> Cognac, under Alexander I. was the first Bishop of Dunkeld. There were no regular dioceses in Scotland before the beginning of the twelfth century.

It has been said that “a bishop always resided at Iona,” the reason of his stay being that he might perform ordination when the act was necessary. “We have not been able,” says Dr. Jamieson, “to discover a single vestige of such a character.”<sup>10</sup> We may be permitted to add that we have been equally unsuccessful in our search. In what ancient document is it written that such a functionary resided at Iona? and where shall we find the names of those on whom he conferred ordination? Certainly there was no bishop at Iona when Aidan (634) was sent to the Northumbrians, else why was he ordained by the laying on of the hands of the Presbyters, the Abbot Segenius presiding? If a bishop there were at Iona, we have to ask, Whence came he, and from whom received he his Orders? If it be answered, from Rome, we reply that neither the Irish Church nor the Scottish Church of that age had any intercourse with Rome. If it be farther urged that some apostolically ordained bishop may perchance have found his way to Iona, and been retained there for the purpose of bestowing ordination on entrants into the sacred office, then we ask, why were not the orders of the Scottish clergy recognized as regular and valid by their brethren of England? A council of the Anglo-Saxon church was held at Cealtrythe in A.D. 816, the fifth decree of which runs thus: “It is interdicted

to all persons of the Scottish nation to usurp the ministry in any diocese, nor may such be lawfully allowed to touch aught belonging to the sacred order, nor may aught be accepted from them, either in baptism or in the celebration of masses,<sup>11</sup> nor may they give the eucharist to the people, *because it is uncertain to us, by whom or whether by any one they are ordained*. If, as the canons prescribe, no bishop or presbyter may intrude into another's province, how much more ought those to be excluded from sacred offices who have among them no metropolitan order, nor honour it in others.”<sup>12</sup> This is a distinct repudiation by the council of the orders of the Columban clergy, and it completely explodes the idea of a resident bishop at Iona, whose business it was to send forth apostolically ordained men.

Not the least important of the services of the Culdees was the transcription of the Scriptures and other books. This was one main branch of their labours, and in this way they furthered mightily the interests of religion and letters. They had attained to amazing proficiency in the art of calligraphy. Swiftly did their pens travel down the page, and in not one of many hundred lines would there be found slip or error. Columba, despite the many cares that pressed upon him, was a voluminous transcriber. Not fewer than three hundred volumes, Odonell tells us, did he transcribe with his own hand.<sup>12</sup> This close and daily contact of the Culdees with the sacred volume must have powerfully helped to enrich their understandings and store their memories with its truths, and give to their sermons that moral power and spiritual grandeur which come only from the Bible, and the absence of which can be compensated by no rhetoric, however brilliant, The *Belles Lettres* are a poor substitute for the *Evangel*; and when the preacher becomes the tragedian, the stage, and not the pulpit, is the place to air his histrionics and shout his vocables. Iona sent forth no tragedians. Its children were evangelists, not artists. Fresh from the study of the Scriptures, around them breathed the odour of their fragrance and sweetness. And, what a wonderful thing it must have seemed to the Caledonian, newly come out of Druidic darkness, to be introduced all at once to such a galaxy of splendours as the histories, the songs, the doctrines of the Bible. How amazing to hear its sublimes mysteries floated out upon the air of his mountains, in his own mother tongue: a tongue scarcely if at all less ancient and venerable than the language in which these truths were first written, and offering a vehicle

capable of giving them transmission in unabated force and undiminished beauty. We can imagine the assemblages that would gather from hill and valley, from hamlet and loch to listen to some Chalmers or Spurgeon of the seventh century, and the mingled astonishment and rapture with which they would hang upon their lips, from which there would flow in a stream of impassioned Celtic speech, the “glad tidings of great joy.” Now they knew that the “day-spring from on high” had visited them.

### Endnotes

1. Reeve's. *Vit. Colum.*, p. 152.
2. THE CELTIC LANGUAGE.—The principal conclusions established by Zeuss in his *Grammatica Celtica* (Leipsic, 1853) are: — (1st), The Irish and Welsh languages are one in their origin. Their divergences began only a few centuries before the Roman period, and were very small when Caesar landed in Britain. Both nations, Irish and British, were identical with the *Celtæ* of the Continent. (2nd.) The Celtic tongue is in the full and complete sense one of the great Indo-European branches of human speech, and, consequently, there must be an end of all attempts to assimilate either Hebrew, Egyptian, Phoenician, or Basque, or any other language which is not Indo-European, with any dialect of the Celtic. Zeuss performed a feat unsurpassed. He had never set foot on Irish soil, and yet, simply by the study of Irish and Welsh writings, dispersed in the monasteries and libraries of the Continent, he constructed the Irish language as it had existed in the eighth and ninth centuries.
3. *Vit. Columb.*, c. xxxvi.
4. See *History of the Scottish Nation*, vol. i. chap. xxiii. pp. 306, 307.
5. Reeve's *Life of Adamnan.*, Introduction, pp. Ix.-lxxi. *Historians of Scotland*, vol. vi.
6. Bede, Lib. iii. c. 4., qui non episcopus, sed presbyter exstitit et monachus.
7. Pinkerton, ii. 263.
8. Monasticon, i., 70, 71; *Culdees*, Jamieson, 151
9. *Caledonia*, i., 429, Jamieson p. 151.
10. Jamieson's *Culdees*, p. 140.
11. The sacrifice of the mass had not yet been invented. The term *missa* is here used evidently in its original sense as denoting the service of the

sanctuary, seeing it is distinguished from the eucharist mentioned after it. See Bingham's *Antiquities*, vol. v. bk. xiii. chap. i. London, 1715.

12. Spelman, *Concil.*, i. 329

13. The best Celtic MSS. of the Gospels are as early as the close of the seventh century. The art with which these MSS. are decorated is the same which is seen upon our sculptured stones. The best decorations in stone and metal come later, being about the end of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. The inference is that the art was perfected by the Scribes before it was adopted by the sculptors. We possess a wealth of decorated art material which no other nation possesses, or ever can possess, consisting of sculptured and decorated monuments lying about in corners, fields, ditches, and graveyards; for some of the elements of this art are common to a much wider area than Celtic Britain, or even Europe. We find interlaced work on Babylonian cylinders and Mycenium ornaments, and sculpture, but not in the Celtic style. As developed into a system and taken in its totality it is restricted to Scotland and Ireland. It never gave a distinctive character to any art save Celtic art. The cradle of the art is believed to be Ireland. There the decoration of MS. reached its highest pitch, but the sculpture work on stone remained poor. The essential and peculiar element of Celtic art is not its interlacing nor its fret work, but the divergent spiral line which gives it a form of beauty known to no other nation.—See Anderson's *Scotland in Early Christian Times*, ii. 114, 115.

## CHAPTER XXV.

GENEALOGY OF SCOTTISH KINGS—”THE STONE OF DESTINY”  
—COLUMBA NEGOTIATES SUCCESSFULLY FOR THE  
INDEPENDENCE OF THE SCOTTISH MONARCHY—HIS DEATH.

THE first and greatest service which Columba rendered to Scotland was to complete its unfinished evangelization by Christianising all its three nations. Yet another service did he render. He it was who planted the Scottish monarchy. The first really independent king who swayed the scepter over the Scots had the crown placed upon his head by the abbot-presbyter of Iona. The arrival of Columba, we have said above, was at a critical moment in the history of the Scots of Kintyre. In 560 they had sustained a severe defeat from King Brude, and their possession of their lands had in consequence become exceedingly precarious. Their expulsion from Kintyre, which then hung in the balance, would have been the extinction of whatever Christianity there was in Alba. But with the arrival of Columba in 563 came the turning of the tide in their fortunes. The influence of Columba with the now Christian Brude was exerted in their favour, and the colony took a new and deeper root. They were ruled over at the time of Columba’s arrival by a king of their own nation, and had been so from the days of Fergus I., who led them across to the Argylishire coast. But their king was a tributary of the supreme monarch of Ireland, whose seat was at Tara. Columba, whose views were far-reaching, and who took the deepest interest in the fortunes of his countrymen in Kintyre, aimed at consolidating their nationality on this side of the channel, and making the sovereign authority among them independent. An opportunity of effecting this patriotic purpose soon offered.

The King of the Scots died about four years after the arrival of Columba. His successor in the direct line lacked the talents requisite for the government of a little territory occupied by not the most docile subjects, and in danger of being swallowed up by a powerful neighbour. Columba set aside this feeble prince, and, acting according to Brehon, or Irish law, which permitted such deviations when the regular heir was a minor, or incapable, he selected Aidan, who had been trained in the institution of Iona, to fill the throne. Seating him on the “stone of fate,”<sup>1</sup> he solemnly

anointed him King of the Scottish Dalriada, exacting from both monarch and subjects a promise that they would abide in the profession of the Christian faith. Aidan's reign was exceptionally prosperous. <sup>2</sup> He was a descendant of the famous Hibernian monarch Niall of the Nine Hostages, A.D. 400, and his descendants continued to occupy the throne till the union of the Picts and the Scots in 843. Kenneth MacAlpin, under whose rule the two nations became one, was a prince of his house. The male line of these Celtic kings ran on till the close of the thirteenth century, ending with Alexander III. in 1285. Their reign, however, was prolonged in the female line. For now came the dynasties of Bruce and Stuart, which were sprung from a female branch of the royal stock of Kenneth MacAlpin, and through them the blood of Aidan, crowned by Columba in about 567, flowed down to our present gracious sovereign Queen Victoria.

A few years afterwards the National Parliament of Ireland met at Drumceatt, in the neighborhood of Newtonlimavady. That meeting had a decisive influence on the matter of which we now speak, the independence of the Scottish sovereignty. The assemblage which we see gathering on the great plain of Drumceatt was historic, and continued to be spoken of through many following centuries. Thither came every one of rank in Ireland—the chieftains and lords, the abbots of monasteries, the heads of the great schools, and the clergy of the land. It continued in session for the unusually long period of fourteen months. Columba, as a man of princely rank and of large experience, was asked to assist with his counsel at this Convention. He accepted the invitation, and repaired to Ireland. It was the weight of his influence that led the assembly to the decision to which it came on two important matters. The first related to the Bards of Ireland. They were a powerful order, and presuming on their high office, they had been guilty of some arrogant acts which had kindled the popular wrath against them; and at this moment a decree of expulsion hung over their heads. Columba, himself a poet, pleaded the cause of the bards so sympathetically, that his eloquence disarmed the popular odium and the obnoxious decree was revoked, and harp and song continued to resound in Erin.

The other matter which engaged the negotiations of Columba at the Drumceatt Council was a still weightier one, and this affair, too, he was



able to conduct to a successful termination. It was the question of the independence of the Scottish kings. The princes of the Scottish Dalriada thought it hard that they should have to send tribute across the sea to the King of Tara. A monarch who ruled over so ample a dominion, and was master of the rich meadows of Meath, had no need to tax their bare mountains and heaths moors. Columba was able to put the matter in such a light that the King of Tara consented to forego the tribute, and to relieve his Scotch colony in Alba from the suzerainty he had exercised over it. From that day the Scotch were their own masters, and their rulers took the rank of independent kings. It was the hand of the presbyter-abbot of Iona that laid the foundation-stone of Scotch independent monarchy.

King Brude lived after his conversion twenty years, dying in 585. His throne continued to be filled by a Christian prince, who favoured, and, doubtless, also furthered the evangelization of his dominions. These northern kings do not appear to have taken offense at the erection of the Scots into an independent monarchy. Perhaps they judged that the wide realms and numerous tribes of Pictland had nothing to fear from the handful of Dalriadan Scots in Kintyre. But in truth, Columba, while he lived, was a bond of union between the two nations; and when he went to the grave, the Christianity he had planted kept the peace between Scot and Pict. The sword rested, but the plough was busy at work. The mattock and the spade were in great request in a land which had lain fallow for ages; and the Caledonian speedily discovered how much more profitable it was to water the soil with his sweat than with his blood. There were hurrying feet in valley and glen, but it was not the tread of men hastening to battle, but the throng of worshippers gathering to the sanctuary, to offer their homage to One who was no longer to them the unknown God. There were voices among the mountains, but these sounds were not the echoes of the war-cry of other days, nor the wail of widow over the slain of the battlefield, nor the shriek of victim as he was being dragged by Druid to be immolated on the altar, they were the deep, solemn melody of the psalm pealed forth by a thousand voices, or mayhap, the clear and eloquent tones of a Culdee orator preaching in the fervid Celtic the Gospel which Chrysostom had poured forth in a stream of mellifluous Greek in the great church of Constantinople, or which had been thundered in Latin by Augustine to the crowds of Hippo.

But of all changes, that which had passed on the people themselves was by far the greatest. No words could adequately depict their altered circumstances and prospects. Till the day that Columba anchored his osier craft on their shore, their wretched lot had been to be born in serfdom, to pass life in exile from the duties and dignities of manhood; to starve on an infertile soil; to shiver in the winter's tempests, and pour out their blood in the quarrels of their chiefs. This sad heritage father had transmitted to son for many generations. The Caledonian had never hoped to see an end of these evils. The chief must tyrannize, and the serf must submit and suffer. So had it been in his father's days, and so would it be in those of his sons after him—darkness, slavery, misery in interminable vista. While so he thought, lo! all suddenly these evils were gone. How, he could not well explain. He had fought no battle, he had shed no blood; and yet his whole condition was changed: a new world was all round about him. What a marvelous transformation! and how unaccountable, till he came to understand that it was the silent mighty energy of Christianity that had wrought it.

The hour was now come when Columba must die. As cometh sleep to the infant, soft and sweet, so came death to the aged presbyter-abbot of Iona. The sublime calm of his latter end formed a fitting close to the quiet, simple grandeur in which his whole life had been passed. He knew that he was to be taken up, even as the traveler knows that he is approaching a serener clime when he feels a balmier air, and a brighter light all round him; but his demeanor did not alter in the least, save that it partook of a deeper solemnity. His interest in his island, and all in it, continued the same, though soon to exchange it for a fairer dwelling. Columba bids his cart be got ready that he may make his last circuit of his isle, and take his last look of endeared, familiar objects, and speak his last greetings to his companions in labour. He drops obscure hints of what is to happen, but his heart is too tender to permit him to break the intelligence in plain words, knowing the sorrow into which it would plunge the family of Hy. Crossing to the western plain, where some of the brethren were at work in the field, we hear him say to them in gentle tones, "during the paschal solemnities in the month of April now past, with desire have I desired to depart to Christ the Lord. But lest a joyous festival should be turned for you into mourning, I thought it better to put off for a little longer the time of my departure from the world." Then, turning his face towards the east,

he blessed the island and its inhabitants.

It was the month of May. The sun of summer was on the seas around Iona, and the early green was brightening the shore and mountains of the mainland. The scene would vividly recall to mind his first arrival on the island at the same season of the year, thirty-four years before. What a succession since of labours and sorrows, of hopes and disappointments, of joys and triumphs! But the work has been done, the lamp has been kindled, and we hear Columba say, "I depart in peace, since my eyes have seen Caledonia a Christian land."

Another week passes. Columba is still with his brethren, but there remain to him only a few hours, and then, by the upward road, which the good and the great of all ages have trodden, he shall ascend above the stars and enter the gates of an everlasting life. The sad presentiment of his departure weighs down his brethren. It was Saturday (June 8th, 597).<sup>3</sup> We hear him say to his trusted attendant, Diormit, "This day in Holy Scripture is called Sabbath, which means rest. And this day is indeed a Sabbath to me, for it is the last day of my present toilsome life, and on it I rest after the fatigues of my labours." They then went together to the barn, and Columba expressed his joy at the store of corn laid up in it, as securing the brethren against want during the coming winter—a matter of some importance in a climate where the seasons were so variable, and the harvests so uncertain. Returning on foot, Columba felt fatigued, and sat down by the wayside. As he rested, the old white horse that had been used to carry milk to the monastery came up, and laying his head upon his master's breast, seemed to court his caresses as if he knew it was the last time he should ever feel the touch of his hand. Diormit was for driving the animal away. "No," said Columba, "suffer it, for why should not the dumb brute express his sorrow, for surely he knows that his master is to leave him?" Accompanied by Diormit, Columba next ascended an eminence which commanded a view of the college. Spreading forth his hands, he blessed it, foretelling, according to Adamnan, its future prosperity and glory. It was a benediction from the portals of the sky. Descending, Columba entered his hut, and straightway resumed his usual task—to him not labour but solace—of transcribing the psalter. Having come to that verse of the thirty-fourth psalm, where it is written, "They that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing," he laid down the pen

and said, “Here let the page and my work end together;” what follows let Baithen write.” It was now the hour of evening service. He arose and went to the church, and joined in the singing of the psalms. Returning to his dormitory, he dictated a few lines of farewell counsel to the brethren, recommending mutual and unfeigned charity. This done, he lay down to sleep. Soon came the hour of midnight. The Lord’s Day had commenced: the bell sounded for prayers. Columba arose from his couch, and hastening to the chapel, he was the first to enter it. Diormit, his faithful servant, followed, but all was dark, and he could not see his master. Lights were speedily brought and Columba was discovered lying prostrate before the altar. Gathering round their presbyter-abbot, the brethren gently raised him up. As they stood awestruck and silent, he raised his hand slowly and feebly, in token of blessing. It dropped, and all was over. There rose a wail of sorrow from the assembled elders. Their head had been taken from them; and while the church resounded with their lamentations, he whom they mourned was lying as warrior lies who rests on the field of his last battle, and sleeps his deep sleep with the wreath of victor round his brow. Truly, the fight was a hard one. Columba had stood up against two Goliaths at once. He grappled with the pagan Druid on the one side, and with the almost pagan Pope on the other. He had fallen fighting gloriously, and not unsuccessfully, against both; and posterity has pronounced its verdict upon the man, and upon his battle by voting him—we speak figuratively—a tomb of the whitest marble.

### Endnotes

1. In the *Monasticon* we find the following description of the “Fatal Stone”—*lia fail*, or *Kaiser Stuhl* —“the ancient coronation-stone of Scotland,” which is now placed below the seat of the coronation chair in Westminster Abbey, with one end or side visible. We may admit the possibility of its being the same stone on which the ancient kings of Ireland seated themselves when crowned on the hill of Tara, and which Fergus (the son of Eric), the first king of Scotland, took with him when he led the Dalriads to the shores of Argyleshire. He himself was crowned upon it.... Our earliest monarchs made the like use of the stone at Dunstaffnage. It continued there as the coronation seat till the reign of Kenneth II., who removed it to Scone. Every Scottish king was crowned

and consecrated thereupon till the year 1296, when Edward I. took it to England, where ever since, in the church of Westminster Abbey, every British sovereign, seated on this “stone of destiny,” has had the crown placed upon his head. A record exists of the expenses attending its removal to Westminster. Edward is said to have taken away the stone for the purpose of defeating an ancient prophecy which runs thus:—

“Unless old prophecies and words are vain,  
Where'er this stone is found, the Scots shall reign.”

The prophecy was regarded as verified when James VI. ascended the throne of England. See *Monasticon*, vol. i. pp. 28-30.

2. See *Scottish Nation*, vol. i. 321; Reeve's *Vita. Colum.*, pp. 81, 82; *Historians of Scotland*, vol. vi.

3. Adamnan, *Life of Colum.*, p. 95.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

THE CELTIC EVANGELIZATION—FRIDOLT AND FRANCE—  
DISIBOD AND THE RHINE—COLUMBANUS AND THE VOSGES,  
SWITZERLAND AND ITALY.

COLUMBA had gone to the grave, but there came no pause in his work. The mourners around his bier doubtless thought, as they bore him to the sepulchre, that along with his ashes they were consigning to the urn the work he had inaugurated, and that the sun of Iona had set. They were mistaken. There is only one Life with which the perpetuity of the Gospel is bound up, but that Life is not on earth, nor is it subject to the laws of mortality. In truth, it was not till the tomb had closed over the Great Presbyter that it was seen how enduring his work was destined to prove, and how vast the dimensions into which it was to open out. The evangelisation of the northern Picts was but the dawn of that glorious day which the Lamp of Iona was to diffuse around it. Its rays were to cross the sea, and illuminate far-off realms which the descent of the northern nations had plunged into the darkness of a second night.

We must trace rapidly the flight of the “doves of Iona,” from country to country, bearing the olive branch of the Gospel. Their first field of missionary labour out of their own country was Northumbria, and the north-eastern counties of England generally. England needed to be evangelized the second time. The Anglo-Saxons had brought with them the paganism of the North. They had mercilessly slaughtered the British population, and swept away the early Christianity of England, setting up the worship of Thor and Woden on the ruins of the British churches.<sup>1</sup> It required no ordinary courage to venture into the midst of these fierce warriors, and to proclaim that Thor was not a god but a demon. At the one extremity of Britain we see Augustine and his monks newly arrived from Rome; at the other extremity we behold Columba and his disciples encamped on Iona. We wait to see which of the two shall venture into this mission field, and brave the wrath of the cruel blood-thirsty idolatrous northmen, who have conquered and possessed the land, razing the churches and slaying the pastors. Augustine and his monks abide under the shadow of the towers of Canterbury, chanting, prayers, and singing canticles. They leave it to the men of Iona to seek out and convert the worshippers

of Thor. Donning their gown of undyed wool, thrusting their feet into sandals of cow-hide, swinging their leather water bottle on their shoulder, and grasping their pilgrim staff, the missionaries of Columba set forth on this hazardous enterprise. They cross the Tweed, and enter Northumbria, still wet with the blood of the British Christians, and mayhap to be watered over again with their own. These adventurous men pursue the methods they had practiced in their own northern land. They retire to the island of Lindisfarne on the coast, and make it the base from which to operate on the field they have come to cultivate. It is a second Iona. Its theological teachings were equally evangelical as those of the great school of the north, being drawn from the same fountain, the Bible. In the arts of calligraphy and ornamentation it attained to even higher excellence. The illuminations of the Gospels of Lindisfarne are said to be the finest in Great Britain, and contain all the most elaborate forms of Celtic decoration.<sup>2</sup>

Between thirty and forty years after the death of Columba, Aidan was ordained by the “Elders,” and sent to superintend the work of combating the new paganism of England. Bede has described the man and his manner of working; a truly beautiful picture it is, and, we may be sure, not overdrawn, for the monk of Jarrow was, to say the least, not prejudiced in favour of a class of men who opposed his church in the matter of the tonsure, and, as he tells us, on many points besides. Aidan’s character came nobly out in contrast with the teachers of Bede’s own day. “In his constant journeys,” says the historian, “everywhere, through the towns and country places, he traveled not on horseback, unless when necessity compelled him, but on foot, to the end, that as he went along he might preach to all he met, whether rich or poor; that if pagans, he might invite them to the Christian faith; or if already Christians, he might confirm their faith and encourage them, by words and deeds, to the performance of good works. And so widely did his way of living differ from the laziness of our times that he made it a rule that all who went with him, whether of the clergy or the laity, should give themselves to meditation—that is, either to the reading of the Scriptures or the learning of the psalms. This was his own daily occupation, and that of all who accompanied him, wherever they happened to be or to lodge.”<sup>3</sup>

The result was just what might have been expected to follow the labours

of such an evangelist. The Northumbrians, forsaking Thor, whom their fathers had worshiped, turned to Christ, and the light of the Gospel spread over the eastern and midland counties of England as far as the Thames. We mention the following as among the more illustrious of these evangelists—Aidan, Finian, Colman, Tuda, Ceadda, Caedd, Diuma, Cellagh, Fursey. Under their labours the whole region of the Heptarchy—that is, all England from the Thames to the Forth and Clyde, was enlightened with the knowledge of the Saviour. But the northern missionaries found that the worshippers of Thor were not their only opponents. The monks from Rome, who had established their headquarters at Canterbury, offered them a more determined though insidious opposition than the Anglo-Saxon pagans. Of the two religions which had entered England from the north, that of Thor and that of Iona, the monks seemed to believe that the latter was the more heterodox. They gained over Oswy, the King of Northumbria, to their cause, and the first use they made of their triumph was to stop the evangelization and drive out the preachers who had come from Iona. The second result was the bloody battle at Nectan's Mere, which in its turn stopped the march of the monkish host which was advancing northwards on purpose to attack Iona, and root out the nest of heretics which in such numbers were taking their flight southwards. Of the Columban missionaries whom we see the monks of Augustine chasing out of Northumbria (684), Bede has given us a fine picture, which we here quote. He says: "How parsimonious, and how disinterested and strict in their manner of life, he (Colman) and his predecessors were, even the very place which they governed testified, by its simplicity and plainness; for, upon their departure, very few houses, the church excepted, were found there, and those only such, that, without them, there could be no civil existence. They had no money, possessing only some cattle. For whatever money they received from the rich, they immediately gave to the poor. Nor, indeed, had they need to collect monies, or provide houses for the reception of the great men of the world, who, then, never came to the church, but only to pray or *hear* the Word of God. This was the case, then, with the king himself and his retinue, who, if it ever so happened that they *did* take any refreshment, were content with the simple and daily food of the brethren. For, then, the whole solicitude of those teachers was to serve God, not the world; their whole care was to cultivate the heart, not the belly. Consequently, the religious habit was, *at that time*, in great veneration; so that, wherever a clergyman or



monk appeared, he was welcomed by all with joy as God's servant, and they listened earnestly to his preaching. And on the Lord's days they flocked with eagerness to the church or to the monasteries, not for the sake of refreshing their bodies, but of hearing the Word of God; and, if a priest happened to come to a village, the villagers immediately gathered around him, and asked him for the Word of God. Nor had the clergy themselves any other motive for going to the villages than to preach, to baptize, to visit the sick—in one word, the cure of souls, etc., and so far were they from the pest of avarice, that it was even with reluctance they accepted territories and possessions from the secular powers, for the building of churches and monasteries. All which customs prevailed for some time after in the churches of the Northumbrians.”<sup>4</sup>

But the seas that bounded Britain could not set limits to the enterprise of the Culdee missionaries. They crossed the Channel and boldly advanced with the evangelical torch into the darkness with which the Gothic irruption had covered France and Switzerland, and generally the nations of western Europe. It would not be easy to find in the whole history of the church a greater outburst of missionary zeal. Iona and its numerous branch colleges in Scotland, and the rich and famous schools of Ireland opened their gates and sent forth army after army for the prosecution of this great campaign. These were not coarse, fiery declaimers, who could discharge volleys of words, but nothing more. They were trained and scholarly men, who could wield “the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.” It was a second northern irruption, not this time to sack, and slay, and plunge realms into darkness, but to restore and build up, and say, “let the morning again visit the earth.” Without doubt we should have known nothing of the Dark Ages, and we should have had instead a thoroughly evangelized and Scripturally reformed Europe all down through the centuries, if it had not been that Rome, whose power was now great, and whose ambition was even greater, organised numerous orders, and sent them forth to cope with and turn back this army of light-bearers, and efface their traces in all countries by sowing dogmas and rites not very dissimilar from those which the new inhabitants of Europe had brought with them from their native north, and which she persuaded then to accept as Christianity.

The first Culdee to set foot on the great European mission field was

Fridolt. He arrived in France in the first year of the sixth century (AD. 501). He was of the school of Patrick, and came from Ireland, for Columba had not yet kindled his lamp on Iona. He is said to have been of noble birth, for none were so eager to serve in the missionary ranks as the Scottish princes of Hibernia. Accompanied by twelve companions, Fridolt made his way to Poitiers, and there, on the banks of the Clain, where Hilary had flourished a century before, but where he was now forgotten, and where, ten centuries afterwards, Calvin planted the first of the Reformed churches of France, did he establish a monastery or school of evangelical theology. This was just four years after Clovis and his soldiers had assembled in the Cathedral of Rheims to have the baptismal waters sprinkled upon them, and retire from the church as pagan in heart as when they had entered it. At Poitiers was the beginning of the Celtic evangelization on the Continent, and its first fruits were the conversion of numbers of the western Goths from Arianism.<sup>5</sup>

After a period of most successful labour, Fridolt, leaving his monastery at Poitiers in the care of two of his companions, repaired to the court of Clovis, to solicit permission to open a mission among the pagan populations of the eastern and south-eastern parts of France. The monarch gave his consent, and the Culdee missionary proceeded first to Lorraine and next to Alsace, establishing centers of evangelization in both of these fruitful and well populated provinces. His next move was to Strasburg. Here the great roads of France and Germany intersect, drawing hither at all times a vast concourse of people; and here Fridolt established another center of the "good news," judging that the Gospel would travel quickly along the highways that radiated in all directions from this point. Turning southward and ascending the Rhine towards its sources, he planted a monastery in the high-lying canton of Glarus, another in Choire, which shelters so sweetly at the foot of the Splugen, and a third at Sackingen, an island in the Rhine, a little way above Basle. Before resting from his labours Fridolt had kindled along this great valley, then as now the highroad of nations, a line of beacon-lights, which extended from the Grisson Alps to well nigh the shores of the German Sea.

Forty years afterwards (about A.D. 540), we see another little band of Culdees arriving in the valley of the Rhine and throwing themselves into this great effort of the Celtic Church to Christianise the Continent. In that

year Disibod, with twelve companions, arrived from Ireland. He struck the Rhine at the confluence of the Glan and the Nahe, near Bingen, and there he erected a monastery or college on a neighboring hill, which in memory of the event still bears the name of Disibodenberg. Beginning his evangelisation at the point where Fridolt had ended his, and operating down the stream towards its efflux into the ocean, Disibod completed the Christianisation of the Rhine valley so far as regarded the planting of mission posts and the preparation of a staff of workers. Thus, in fifty years from the commencement of this great movement, we see a line of evangelical beacons kindled along the valley of the Clain in France, and throughout the valley of the Rhine, from its rise in the Alps of the Grisson onward to the sands of the German Sea. Native assistants came to the help of the original Irish and Scotch evangelists. French and German youth were received into the Culdlee colleges, trained and sent forth to evangelize among their countrymen. Many of the names that meet us in the records of the movement are German and French; nor from anything that appears were these recruits from without lacking in genuine Culdee ardour and zeal. This work was done in times no ways peaceful or happy. The storm of the northern invasion was not yet spent. The skies of Europe were still black with gathering and bursting clouds. The tempests of war were sweeping to and fro in the valley of the Rhine region that was seldom exempt from battle when the sword happened to be unsheathed. When the Culdee went forth on his missionary tour he knew not if he should ever return, for every step was amid perils. If he visited the city, famine or plague met him. If he traversed those parts of the country which the sword had desolated, he was exposed to the wild beast or the robber; and if he found himself amid camps, he might encounter at the hands of a lawless soldiery the loss of life or the loss of liberty. Nevertheless, amid the tumults and miseries of which the times were full, the Culdees went onward proclaiming the tidings of salvation. They remembered the heroism of the early Christians, and how they had faced the lions, and the burning pile, and other and more horrible forms of death, to spread Christianity in the Roman empire. They saw the soldiers of an Alaric and a Clovis braving death every day to win a victory, or plant a throne which the sword of the next conqueror would sweep away; and should they be sparing of their blood when the victories to be won were deathless, and the seat to be set up was a throne for the world's Saviour and King?

Another half century passes, and now the stream of Celtic evangelization sets in full flood. The great Culdee figure at this epoch is Columbanus, or as he is sometimes styled, Columba the younger. He towers above all who had been before him, and he has no successor of equal stature in the work of the evangelization. About the time that the first Columba was being borne to his grave in Iona, the second Columba was stepping upon the mission field of the Continent. He was a man signally cut out for his age and his work. His education had been carefully attended to in the schools of his native land. He had studied in the Monastery of Bangor, under the best masters, among whom were Abbots Silenes and Comgal, who had taught him grammar, rhetoric, mathematics, and all the sciences of the age. A Scot of Ireland he left his native land (A.D. 590), being now thirty years of age, and crossed to France with twelve companions. He was gifted with a natural eloquence, carefully cultivated. He was a ripe theologian. He was of noble and courageous spirit, and like Columba the elder, he was a person that would have graced a court and delighted the eyes of a monarch. He relinquished without a sigh all the openings his own country offered him of rising to distinction, to dignity, and to emolument. His devotion to the work of the mission was entire and perfect. To dispel the heathenism which had settled down with the new nations on Europe, and to withstand the ceremonialism which was supplanting Christianity at Rome, was the grand passion of his soul. Compared with the supreme aim of giving a free gospel to Europe, all things were held by Columbanus to be loss. His career was chequered but brilliant. His life was full of painful vicissitude, but full also of true grandeur. He never turned aside from his grand object whether monarch smiled or frowned upon him, whether princes courted or persecuted him, whether barbarous tribes listened to or hooted at him. Amid alternate favours and neglects, amid journeyings, watchings, perils, incessant toil and frequent disappointment and defeat, Columbanus held on his way with steadfast faith to final victory. At last after many evangelical battles he crowned his career by unfurling the banner of a Scriptural faith in the north of Italy, and in the very face of Rome. He died leaving a name the glory of which has come down to our day.

We do not propose to give in detail the many great services which Columbanus rendered to his age and to the Christian church. His life is an inviting theme, and would form an exciting as well as most instructive

story: we can here chronicle actions only so far as they assert their claim to a place in the general stream of history. We must concentrate our observations on one special topic, even the testimony borne by Columbanus to the evangelical faith, and the condemnation he pronounced on the rising superstition of the churchmen and churches of his day. This will enable us to judge how near the Celtic evangelization came to the breadth and completeness of a Reformation; a reformation having Iona instead of Wittenberg for its cradle, and to be dated in ages to come, from the sixth instead of the sixteenth century. Had the times been more auspicious, and the instrumentalities for the diffusion of knowledge more numerous, it might have been unnecessary for Luther to emit his grand protest at Worms, or for the hundreds of thousands of martyrs of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to die.

Columbanus stood up at an epoch of marked historic impress. It was big with a most portentous future. His appearance was the signal of far reaching changes in both north and south Europe. It was the year 596. For two years more, and only two years, was Columba to occupy his seat at the head of Iona, and then he should descend into the grave. While this light was seen to set in the north, a star of lurid portent was beheld mounting into the skies of the south. Eleven years were to run their course, and Phocas (A.D. 606) was to place Boniface on the episcopal throne of Christendom. How wonderful the forethought and precision with which the cycles of history have been arranged, and their revolutions measured. No event comes before its time, or lingers a moment behind its appointed hour. There is no miscalculation, no surprise; for unlike the reckoning of mortals, in this high sphere it is never the unexpected that happens. The shadow of a deep darkness was gathering upon the earth, but before it shall close round the nations and shut them in, they are to be given yet another warning to forsake the gods of wood and stone to which they were beginning to bow the knee. It was at this hour that this man, endowed with the gift of a powerful eloquence, learned in all the wisdom of the schools and "full of the Holy Ghost," was sent as a prophet to the European nations. He exhorts kings, he withstands popes, and lifting up his voice, he cries aloud to peoples, "Make haste, and press into the evangelical kingdom while yet the door stands open. There cometh a night, in which you shall not be able to find the way of life, and your feet shall stumble upon the dark mountains."

In 595, as we have said, Columbanus, with twelve companions, crossed to France, taking Britain on his way. The same motive that made Columba to visit Brude at his royal palace at Inverness, led Columbanus and his companions to present themselves at the French court soon after their arrival in the country. Their errand was to obtain the royal sanction for their contemplated evangelistic tours. Clovis, who had restored by his triumphant arms the church, with dogma and ritual as taught at Rome, after its temporary suppression by the Goths of Alaric, was now in his grave, and his throne was filled by Childebert II. The fame of the missionary had preceded him, his preaching having made a deep impression as he passed along, and he was already known to the monarch when he presented himself in his presence. Struck with the noble bearing and intellectual power of Columbanus, Childebert would have attached him permanently to his court. He saw before him a man who would be the light of his kingdom and the glory of his reign, and he offered him a high position in the French national church, provided he would domicile himself in France. But Columbanus had not come to Gaul to serve in courts, or wear these honours which kings have it in their power to bestow. He declined the royal invitation, saying that so far from coveting the wealth of others, he and his associates had, for the sake of the Gospel, renounced their own. Turning his back on the court, he set out, staff in hand, to the Vosges.

The Bishop of Rome had not yet been heard of among these mountains Thor was still the reigning deity of their inhabitants. Recently arrived from their northern forests, they were still pagan. But the rudeness and superstition which might have deterred another from entering this mountainous region, drew Columbanus towards it. He believed that the Gospel, which he should be the first to preach to the new settlers, would enlighten their deep darkness and tame their savage passions. Nor was he disappointed. After twelve years of labour, passed amid the greatest privations and perils, triumph came to Columbanus, or rather to the Gospel. Thor fell and Christ was invoked. Springs of water opened in this wilderness; and the woody heights and pleasant valleys resound with psalms and prayers to the true God. Columbanus planted in the Vosges three monasteries or colleges, Anegray, Luxovium (Luxeuil), and Fontaines. These schools rose into great fame. Many of the youth,

converted by the preaching of Columbanus and his brethren, were trained in them as preachers, and were sent forth throughout the region on the service of the mission. Nobles and men of rank sent their sons to be educated in the schools of Columbanus; and princes, following his example, founded similar institutions in their dominions, and the light of Christian learning spread on all sides. Waidelenus, a Duke of Burgundy, became patron of the three monasteries which Columbanus had established, and had himself enrolled as a corresponding member of the Culdean brotherhood.

The monasteries which were the first to be founded became the parents of a numerous progeny. Like a strong and flourishing tree they sent their shoots wide around, and clusters of Culdee schools sprang into existence. The region adjoining the Vosges, and the plains of north-eastern France, then styled Austrasia, began to be dotted with these establishments. They were, equally with the greater houses, schools of the prophets, though on a smaller scale. Each had its complement of scholars, some of whom were in training as preachers of the Gospel, and others, without any special destination, were being initiated into the various learning of which the schools of Ireland and Scotland were the fountain-heads. About this time, too, that is, in the first decades of the seventh century, the missionary bands from Iona began to cross the Channel and enter France. Phalanx after phalanx, from the school of Columba, poured in upon the Continent, flung themselves with a sanctified courage, and an exalted enthusiasm into the midst of the rude warlike pagans of Europe, scenting the battle from afar, and panting like the war horse to join the noble strife. They mightily reinforced the great evangelical movement which their Culdee brethren from Ireland had inaugurated. They were in every point thoroughly trained and equipped for such a warfare. They were hardy. They did not mind the winter's blast. They could bear hunger. Were they thirsty they had recourse to their leather water-bottle. They did not fear the Goth. They could weave and fabricate their own clothes. They could extemporize a currach when they found no bridge on the river they must needs cross. A few twigs and a little clay was all they needed to build a dwelling, and wherever they were masters of a piece of soil they would not want bread, for they were skilful cultivators. Nor did the practice of these various and homely arts in the least dull their ardour or lessen their influence as missionaries. In cities, at the court of princes, in the schools

of the age, the Culdee took no second place as a scholar and a theologian. He was a many sided man, and his mastery of the arts of life gave him enhanced prestige in the eyes of the natives. When the barbarians saw his wilderness converted into a garden, and cities rising in places which had been the habitation of the beast of prey, he was inclined to believe there was some mysterious power in these men, and some beneficent virtue in the Christianity which they preached. In the fifth century Patrick had crossed the Irish Channel, a solitary missionary, and now, though it is only the opening of the seventh century, we see into how mighty a host his disciples have grown. Armed with weapons, forged in the schools of Ireland and the Columban institutes of Scotland, these warriors rush across the sea, they cover France, and now—sight terrible to Rome—the gleam of their evangelical banners is seen upon the summit of the Alps.

We return to Columbanus. He had kindled the Vosges. The pagan night had given place amid these mountains to the Christian day. The three evangelical beacons—Anegray, Luxeuil, and Fontaines—were radiating their light over the eastern kingdom of the Franks. The tide of success is at the full, when lo! the career of Columbanus is suddenly arrested. Brunhilde, the queen-mother, was a woman of flagitious and scandalous life. She was the Catherine DeMedicé of her age, equally greedy of power, and equally abandoned to pleasure. Of Visigothic descent, she acted as regent for her grandson Thierry, and threw in the path of the young prince numerous seductions to sensual indulgences, that she might enfeeble him in body and in mind, and so prolong her own powers. Columbanus, like another John the Baptist, reproved her, though he could not but know that he was rousing a tigress. He had to pay the penalty of his fidelity and bravery. The enraged queen dispatched a strong detachment of soldiers to his monastery of Luxeuil to apprehend him. The troops found him chanting the psalter with his companions. They arrested him, and carrying him across France to Nantes, they put him on board a ship that was about to sail for Ireland. The vessel, with Columbanus on board, proceeded on its way, but a storm setting in, it was driven back, and stranded at the mouth of the Loire. The captain, who saw in Columbanus the Jonah who had raised the storm, commanded him, and the companions who had been sent into exile with him, to leave the ship, and go wherever it might please him. Columbanus was again at liberty, and after a while, pursuing a circuitous route, for he did not pass



through Burgundy, he reached the frontier of Helvetia.

In every age the fugitive from oppression and persecution has sought asylum in this grand mountain citadel of central Europe, whose walls of rock would seem to have been piled high in air that the bondsmen on the plains below might see them and flee thither. Doubtless, the sublimities amid which he now found himself had a soothing effect upon the chafed spirit of Columbanus, even as the majestic stillness of the desert had on Elijah when he fled from the rage of Jezebel. The mountain piercing with needle-like peak the ebon firmament; the snows kindling into living flame at sunrise; the dark and solemn pine forests; the lake, placid and clear as crystal mirror, presented a spectacle that contrasted refreshingly with the turbulence of the passions that had driven him forth, and stilled the rising fret in his own breast. Peace breathed upon him from the mountain tops. His trust in God, helped by the stupendous scene of calm on which he gazed, returned. His despondency departed. The buoyant and courageous spirit of the great Culdee recovered its usual tone. He saw that he had not been dismissed from labour as an unprofitable servant, but, on the contrary, was being called to new triumphs. He girds himself, and straightway sets to work in this new field.

Columbanus was accompanied in his journey by several of those who had come with him from Britain. His exile was shared by his faithful coadjutor Gallus. They go on together to the south. They made their first halt at Tuggen, in the valley of the Linth. Tokens soon made themselves visible to the natives that the Culdees of the north had paid the region a visit. There arose a cluster of huts, schools were opened, the fathers, in long woollen mantle, with pastoral staff in hand, were seen itinerating the district, and drawing the inhabitants into conversation. The night of northern superstition was being broken up, and light was beginning to fill the valley of the Linth. So quietly did the evangelical day dawn in a land which, nine centuries afterwards, was to enjoy for a little space the full splendour of the Reformation.

Columbanus makes another move. We find him next at Bregenz, on the shores of the lake of Constance. The welcome given him by the natives was not a kindly one. They took it ill to have the altars of their gods cast down, and their drink-offerings of beer poured on the earth. They thought

to starve out the missionaries, but Columbanus, and his companions, went to the lake and fished, to the wood and gathered the wild berries, and made a shift to live. Meanwhile they returned good for evil by continuing to teach, preach, and evangelize, and not without success. They came on the traces of the churches and schools which Fridolt had planted a hundred years before, and raised them up from the partial ruin into which they had fallen, and set going a more rigorous evangelization on their foundations. Having kindled the light on a spot on which the stakes of Huss and Jerome were afterwards to shed a glory, Columbanus went on still farther towards the south, and arrived at Zurich. On the lovely shores on which we behold him and his fellow-labourer Gallus arriving, was to be passed the ministry of Zwingli. In the preaching of Columbanus the men of the Bodensee had a promise of the fuller light which was to break on this region in the sixteenth century. The great Culdee missionary, as he passes on through the cities, lakes, and mountains of Switzerland, seems sent as a pioneer to open a track for the light-bearers of the Reformation.

He had thought to find rest amid these schools of his own planting, and to spend what yet remained to him of life in nursing them into full maturity and vigour, and marking, as his own sun declined, the evangelical day-brightening apace, and filling with its glory this whole region. But his old persecutor still lived. Brunhilde had not yet forgiven the affront he had offered her by his reproof of her profligacy. She found means of making him feel her displeasure in these parts, though distant. He must place the Alps between the queen-mother and himself. We now see Columbanus departing for Italy. It is a mitigation of his sorrow that if he shall see the faces of his converts and scholars no more, he leaves behind him the best beloved of his associates, Gallus, to superintend his monasteries. Faithfully does Gallus discharge the trust committed to him. He tends, as if they had been his own, the schools of his father, instructing the young flocks which had been gathered into them. He inquires into the condition of the monasteries of the Vosges. He finds Luxeuil half destroyed since the departure of Columbanus. He builds it up again, and it becomes the mother of a family of Culdee cloisters. He concludes his labours by founding the monastery of St. Gall, which afterwards became so famous, and which has transmitted the name and fame of this Culdee to our own day.

By what route Columbanus passed into Italy we do not know. Starting from Zurich he probably took the Rhine as his guide. Threading the rocky gorges by which its stream descends to the lake of Zurich, he would climb the Splugen, and passing under the snows of Monte Rosa, and skirting the shores of the blue Como, he would emerge on that great plain, which along with its new inhabitants had received a new name, and was now known as Lombardy. The path he was traversing led through scenery, grand beyond description, but savage. He had only one companion to share his journey. His spirit was weighed down, not by the length of the way, but by the mystery of the provinces through which he was as passing. No sooner is he about to reap what he has sowed, than he must rise up and leave the harvest to be gathered by others, while he goes elsewhere to break up new ground. What means this? Those who are selected for the highest service must pass life in solitariness. They are pioneers, and they can never receive the full sympathy of the men of their own age, nor even themselves comprehend the full bearing of the labours in which they are called to be occupied. Columbanus, as he plods onward with heavy heart, knows not that he is entering Italy to do a work of greater moment than any he had yet accomplished; a work that should profit not his own age only but the ages to come. He had kindled the Gospel lamp in the Vosges, and its light had streamed down on the plains of France. He had crossed the frontier of Helvetia, and preached the "good news" to the herdsman of its mountains. But he must come nearer that portentous combination of pagan ideas and Christian forms that was developing at Rome, that he may take its measure more accurately, and gauge the extent of the danger with which it was fraught to the world than he could do at a distance. Like Elijah, who was summoned from the mountains of Gilead to reprove Ahab and warn Israel, so Columbanus descends from the Alps to rebuke the Bishop of Rome, and sound a note of warning to the nations of Christendom. To the Pontiff he says, "Cleanse your chair," and the nations he exhorts to return to their obedience to the Chief Shepherd which is not he of the Tiber, but Jesus Christ. Divine judgments, we hear him tell them, are at the door, and will certainly enter unless speedy repentance and amendment shall intervene. Such was the commission borne by this prophet of the nations. He appeared on the eve of the great darkness, and he called on the nations of Europe to rouse themselves before the night had shut them in, to bewail their folly in the

prison house of their oppressor. The testimony of Columbanus, as courageously as faithfully discharged, re-echoed from the Alps to the very gates of Rome, as we shall see in our next chapter.

Few personal traits have been left us of these Culdees; but the incidental glimpses we obtain of their private lives reveal to us a class of men of most patient, gentle, and loving spirit. Under their homely clothing they carry a sensitive and tender heart, and amid their toilsome and perilous journeys, and the rude and cruel treatment to which they are subjected, we see them preserving a wonderful equanimity and sweetness. They are full of sympathy with nature, and with all that is pure and beautiful. Wherever they raise their huts, there fertility and loveliness spring up. They know how to disarm the suspicion and win the confidence of the savage. Nay, the very beasts of the field come under the spell of their kindness. We have already given an instance in the case of Columba. Who is not touched when he sees the old white horse of the monastery come up to the aged abbot as he rests by the wayside, and lay his head confidently on Columba's breast. Jonas, in his "Life" of Columbanus, relates a similar anecdote of that Culdean father, which shows that, despite the stormy scenes amid which he lived, and the wrongs meted out to him, he cherished a singular sweetness of disposition and a kindly sympathy with all living creatures.<sup>6</sup> The squirrels, says Jonas of Bobbio, would come down from the trees and sit on the shoulder of Columbanus, and creep into the breast of his mantle. The birds knew his voice, and when he called them they came to him. Jonas says that he had it from the mouth of Chagnold, a fellow Culdee. Other animals, usually less amenable to the control of man, owned the strange spell of Columbanus sympathetic nature, and yielded compliance with his wishes. He commanded a bear to leave the valley in which he was evangelising, and forthwith the animal quitted the district. The narrator does not claim the credit of miracle for this, inasmuch as the brown bear never attacks human beings unless anger enrages, or hunger impels it.

#### Endnotes

1. See *British Nation*, vol i, pp. 310, 311.
2. Paper read by Mr. J. Romilly Allen before Society of Antiquaries,

Scotland, May 11, 1885.

3. Bede, lit. iii. c. 5. Let us mark the distinction of Bede. The Culdees read the "Scriptures," and "learned the psalms." They got them by heart, and could sing them by night as well as by day. The man who has reached the age of fifty, and cannot sing the psalms without a printed psalter, has either a weak memory or a weak piety.

4. *Eccles. Hist.*, lib. iii. c. 2.

5. The main source of information on the subject of the Celtic Evangelisation in the sixth and following centuries is the laborious and learned work of Dr. Ebrard of Erlangen, entitled, *Zeitschrift für die Historische Theologie—Die Iroschottish Missionskirche des sechsten, siebenten und achten Jahrhunderts, und ihre Verbreitung und Bedeutung auf dem Festland*, Von Dr. J. H. A. Ebrard, Gutersloch, 1873. Dr. Ebrard's *History of the Culdee Missions* is compiled from the most authentic ancient authorities, among others, from Mabillon, "Acta Benedictinorum," sæculum ii.; Mone, "Quellensammlung der Badischen Geishichte;" "Columbanus Epistles" in "Bibliotheca Patrum Maxima;" "Vita Columbani," by Jonas of Bobbio; Pertz, "Monumenta Germanica," "Kirchengeschichte Deutschlands," and the most ancient lives of a few of the saints.

6. Dr. J. H. A. Ebrard *Die Iroschottische Missions Kirche des sechsten, siebenten und achten Jahrhundert und ihre Verbreitung und Bedeutung, auf dem Festland*, p. 268.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

## COLUMBANUS IN ITALY—HIS GREAT PROTEST AGAINST THE PAPACY—HIS LETTER TO POPE BONIFACE IV.—FOUNDS BOBBIO.

WE have followed Columbanus across the Alps. Over him is now the sky of Italy, and around him is many a town and river, renowned in the heroic age of Rome, and suggesting to the cultured Culdee the virtue and patriotism of an earlier day, in contrast with the venality and pusillanimity which led to the fall of the great empire. The once invincible Roman was gone, and the barbarous Lombard had come in his room: where Cæsar was law, Alboin now swayed his scepter. So passes the glory of States; and so do empires created by the sword fall by the sword; but the kingdom, in the erection of which Columbanus was privileged to take part, was one which the arms of no conqueror should ever overthrow. The motto on the banner under which he fought was the same with that which remains to this hour written on the walls of the mosque of St. Sophia at Constantinople—"Thy Kingdom, O Christ, is an everlasting Kingdom"—an unconscious prognostication by the Turk, one would think, that Islam must yet yield up the scepter to Christianity.

Columbanus had been only a short while in Italy when tidings reached him that his enemy, Brunhilde, had fallen from power, and that the throne was now filled by Clotaire II., a sovereign friendly to the Culdee evangelisation, and in particular to Columbanus himself. This opened his way back to his monasteries, should he feel inclined to return. His children in the Vosges sent him a pressing invitation to come and live amongst them, and preside over the churches and schools which had been of his own planting, and which were now beginning again to flourish. But his new environments had shed new lights on the path of duty. A Divine hand had led him into this land. Many things he should never have understood in the remote Vosges, and the sequestered Bodensee stood here revealed in the light of day. A mysterious power was rising in the chair of the Roman bishop, which, if allowed to develop into full stature, would, he foresaw, one day extinguish the faith and crush the liberty of the Christian church. Columbanus was the right man, and he had come at the right hour. He was here to sound a warning peal of what

was coming. He must first of all admonish the bishop of Rome that he was climbing like Lucifer, and that unless he retraced his steps, while yet there was time, he should fall like Lucifer. And second, he must show the peoples of Christendom the bondage that was preparing for them, and exhort them to resist before the yoke had become too strong to be broken. He was here, moreover, to hold open the door to the Culdee army that was advancing behind him, to whom Columbanus was to bequeath the battle after he had gone to his grave. He struck the first blow, and the rank and file of the Culdee host rushed in and long maintained the struggle against Gothic paganisms and Roman corruptions. To the teachings of these men it is owing that the church of Milan retained its independence in the face of Rome till the eleventh century, and that Christianity flourished in a measure of apostolic purity in the north of Italy, long after it had been grossly corrupted in many places both south and north of the Alps. We have a noble relic of the pre-Reformation Christianity of sub-Alpine Italy in the Waldensian Church.

Occasion soon offered for Columbanus to raise his voice. Just eight years before his arrival an imperial decree had installed the Bishop of Rome spiritual sovereign of Christendom. It is as not to strengthen Christianity but to strengthen himself that Phocas, the usurper and murderer, conferred this stupendous dignity on Boniface III. It was simply a piece of State policy. The residence of the emperor was now at Constantinople, and who so well fitted to fill his place at Rome, and to conciliate the provinces of the western world, to the rule of the absent emperor, as the supreme pastor of the church? Phocas, therefore, placed Boniface, in his empty chair. The priestly influence of the one would be a prop to the imperial power of the other, and the chair on the banks of the Tiber would uphold the tottering throne at Byzantium. So thought Phocas; and his policy has been pursued, to the infinite damage of both states and churches, by the kings of Europe for 1200 years; nor is it antiquated even yet. We may conceive how startling to the simple and spiritual minded Culdee must have been the spectacle that met his gaze when he entered Italy—a chair changed into a throne, a pastor transformed into a monarch, who instead of preaching the Gospel, was occupying himself with political cares and ambitions, was imposing taxes, regulating finance, and giving orders for the enrolling of soldiers and the movements of troops!

And now we hear the voice of Columbanus clear and loud, and verily there is no uncertain sound in the trumpet peal that resounds through Italy. The more immediate occasion of Columbanus' interference was what is known in history as "the Controversy of the Three Chapters." To see how it bears on our subject, and especially how it brings out in the clearest possible light the INDEPENDENCE of the Culdee Church, and its explicit refusal to submit to the dictation of the Roman See in matters of faith, we must attend a little to this dispute. In the middle of the sixth century three eminent fathers—Theodore of Mopsuestia, Theodoret, and Ibas of Odessa—were condemned as heterodox by a council at Constantinople (A.D.553), now called the fifth Ecumenical council. The fourth general council, that of Chalcedon, had approved the writings of these Fathers as orthodox. The influence of the Emperor Justinian, however, procured, as we have said, the condemnation of their writings as execrable and blasphemous, and pursuing his victory over the three bishops, Justinian, by imprisonment and exile, compelled Vigilius, Bishop of Rome, to concur in the condemnatory sentence of the council of Constantinople. The question—was the condemnation of the three Fathers just and righteous, or false and iniquitous?—divided the Church. We have seen the side on which Rome ranged herself. Which side did the Celtic, that is, the Culdee Church, take? Did she follow in the wake of Rome? Far from it. She gave her verdict on the side of the three Fathers, and in condemnation of Rome. We can see no belief in the infallibility of Peter's chair here; no submission to the alleged papal supremacy. Cardinal Baronius brings out most clearly the independence of the Culdee Church at this epoch, while at the same time he rebukes that church most severely for daring to differ from Rome. The Cardinal says:—

"By the malice of the evil spirit it happened that the Irish Church, which up to this time had been well cultured, was overcast with dense gloom, having suffered shipwreck by her not following in the wake of the bark of Peter, which sails at the head of all, pointing the way into the harbour of salvation.... For *all* the bishops which were in Ireland rose up unanimously, with most ardent zeal, in defense of the Three Chapters. And when (afterwards) they heard that the Church of Rome had adopted the condemnation of the Three Chapters, and strengthened the fifth synod by her concurrence, they added also this further impiety, that they separated themselves from the same. And in this state they continued a very long



time, pitying those who followed the fifth synod as wanderers from the straight path of the faith."<sup>1</sup>

The clear meaning of this highly metaphorical passage is that the judgment of the Scoto-Irish Church in this controversy was in flat opposition to that of Rome, and added thereto this farther impiety," "that she separated herself from the Roman communion," that is, excommunicated the Pope and all his adherents, and continued "a very long time wanderers from the straight path." Yes, she continued till the middle of the twelfth century, when the soldiers of Henry II., crossing the Channel, drove the Irish into the Roman fold at the point of their swords.

So far Baronius: let us next hear Columbanus. He arrives in Italy in A.D. 612, just eight years, as we have said, after the title of "Universal Bishop," had been conferred on Boniface by imperial decree. Columbanus takes up his abode at Milan, and commences evangelistic efforts among the Lombards. The controversy of the "Three Chapters" is still raging, and Aigilulf, King of the Lombards, requests him to indite a remonstrance to the Pope, exhorting him in steering the bark of Peter, to eschew the tackings and shiftings which were causing so many scandals. Columbanus fell in the more readily with the king's proposal, because he saw in it an opportunity of vindicating his own church by pronouncing adversely on the action of Rome. He sat down and wrote an epistle to Boniface IV, who now filled the papal chair. To ears accustomed, as were those of the Pope, to the siren song of adulation, the honest words of the Culdee missionary must have fallen with the stunning force of a thunderclap. As we read Columbanus' letter, we feel as if Luther held the pen. Certainly, till we come down to the sixteenth century, we meet with nothing breathing a sturdier independence or a more uncompromising protestantism than this famous epistle. The Culdee missionary gives the Pope all his legal titles, and then proceeds:—

"It is not vanity, but grief, that compels me, a mere dwarf, of the meanest rank, to write to such lofty personages, seeing that the name of God is blasphemed among the nations, through you contending with one another. For I do grieve, I confess, for the infamy of the chair of St. Peter. . . . The storm threatens the wreck of the ship of the church; and hence it is that I, a timid sailor, cry out, 'Keep watch, for the water has already made its

entrance into the vessel, and the ship is in jeopardy.’ For we are the disciples of Saints Peter and Paul, and of all those their disciples, who by the Holy Ghost have written the divine canon. Yes, we, the whole body of the Irish, who are inhibitors of the ends of the world, and receive nothing beyond the teaching of the evangelists and the apostles. There has never been amongst us any heretic, any Judaizer, any schismatic; but the catholic faith has been held unshaken by us, as it was first delivered to us by you, the successors, to be sure, of the holy apostles.... Therefore that thou mayest not be deprived of apostolic honour, preserve the apostolic faith,<sup>2</sup> confirm it by testimony, strengthen it by writing, fortify it by synod, to the end that none may justly resist thee. Despise not the poor advice of a stranger, as being a teacher of one who is zealous for thy sake. The world is now drawing to an end; THE PRINCE OF PASTORS<sup>3</sup> is approaching; beware lest he find thee remiss and negligent, both beating thy fellow servants with the blows of an evil example, and eating and drinking with Hebrews; lest what follows (in that place of Scripture) befall thee, as the consequence of thy security. ‘For he who is ignorant shall be ignorant’ (1 Cor. xiv. 38). Watch, therefore, I pray thee, O pope; watch, and again I say watch, because, doubtless, Vigilius did not keep Vigil,<sup>4</sup> whom those who throw blame upon thee cry out to be the HEAD OF THE SCANDAL.”

This places, first of all, the creed of the Scoto-Irish Church beyond dispute. On the testimony of her most distinguished son in the seventh century, that church held nothing “beyond the teaching of the evangelists and the apostles.” There is not a word here of the “traditions of the Fathers,” or the “decrees of councils,” which form so large a part of the creed of Rome at this day. “You, the successors of the holy apostles,” says Columbanus. You, as discharging the office of bishops in the same city, but not, therefore, vested in the peculiar powers and prerogatives of the apostles, much less those higher prerogatives, which the popes arrogate to themselves, though the apostles never claimed then. Columbanus continues:—

“Lest, therefore, the murderer from the beginning (Satan) bind men in this his very long cord of error, let the cause, I beseech thee, of the schism be immediately cut off from thee by the sword, as it were, of St. Peter, that is, by a true confession of faith in a synod, and by a renouncing

of all heretics, that thou mayest cleanse the chair of Peter from every error; nay, horror! if any (as is reported) has gained an entrance there, if not, that its purity may be known of all. For it is doleful, nay, deplorable, if in an apostolic seat the catholic faith is not held . . . Therefore I beseech you, for Christ's sake, come to the relief of your good name, which is torn to pieces among the nations, that your silence be no longer imputed to your treachery by your rivals. Dissemble, therefore, no longer, keep no longer silence, but send forth the voice of a true shepherd. Surely the blame is yours, if you have wandered from the true faith, and made void the first faith. Deservedly do your juniors resist you; deservedly do they refuse communion with you, until the memory of the wicked be wiped out from you, and consigned to oblivion. For if these charges are more certain than false, then the tables being turned, your sons are changed into the head, and you into the tail, which is a grief, even to say. Therefore, also, they shall be your judges who have always kept the catholic faith, no matter who they be, even though they may appear to be your juniors.<sup>5</sup> For the orthodox and true catholics are they who have never, at any time, either received or defended heretics, or any persons suspected of heresy, but have always zealously persevered in the true faith."

Columbanus could not recognise Boniface as "Head of the Church," but he did not for a moment question his right to be called "Head of the Scandal." It is also here assured that the Church of Rome may lose the apostolic faith; nay, it is distinctly intimated that she had already done so, and that her title to "apostolic" had lapsed; and Columbanus puts it to her whether she does not hear the approaching footsteps of the PRINCE of pastors coming to call her to a reckoning? We proceed with Columbanus:—

"Inerrant !" we hear Columbanus exclaim. You have already erred, O Rome !—fatally, foully erred. No longer do you shine as a star in the apostolic firmament. You have fallen from that high sphere; you have plunged into the night, and unless you speedily regain the orbit in which you once shone, there is reserved for you only the "blackness of darkness," "An apostolic seat!" again exclaims Columbanus. Your chair, O! Pope, is defiled with heresy. Deadly errors have crept into it; it harbours horrors and impieties. "Catholic!" again cries Columbanus. The true Catholicism you have lost.

Could any one better define Catholicism than this Protestant of the seventh century? *The orthodox and the true Catholics are they who have always zealously persevered in the true faith.* So does the Culdee tell the man who claimed to have a monopoly of Catholicism. Columbanus goes further still:

“With us it is not persons, but reason, that has weight; but the love of gospel-peace compels me to speak out freely, what a stupor has come over you both that ought to have remained one choir.... For we, as I said before, have been devoted to the chair of St Peter; for though Rome be great and renowned, yet with us she is great and renowned only on account of that chair. For though that ancient and most august name (Rome) of Ausonian glory became renowned even to our western and out-of-the-world parts; yet from the time in which God vouchsafed to be the Son of God, and, riding on his two most glowing steeds, Peter and Paul, stirred up the stagnant waters of this world, and multiplied charioteers to the millions of innumerable nations; the head charioteer Himself—namely, Christ, the true Father, the Horseman of Israel, came even unto us. Since that time you (Romans) are great and illustrious with us, and Rome is more noble and renowned; nay, you are, if one may so speak, well-nigh celestial with us, for the sake of Christ’s two apostles, and Rome is the head of the churches of the world, saving the singular prerogative of the place of our Lord’s resurrection.”

This passage abounds in delicate touches of sarcasm, as does the whole epistle. “The Head-charioteer and the true Father—namely, Christ.” He it was who sent the Gospel to the countrymen of Columbanus by his two radiant steeds, Peter and Paul, speaking in their inspired writings, and not that other who styles himself, by the grace of Phocas, “universal Head and Father.” “With us,” says Columbanus, speaking in the name of the Scots of Ireland, “we are devoted to the chair of St. Peter.” not, surely, to the chair of Boniface, which was “defiled with heresy,” but to the chair of St. Peter; which was none other than the confession of faith made by Peter. Only so long as the Popes retained Peter’s faith did they sit in Peter’s chair. So does Columbanus affirm, as the following extract will show. And even with the glory of that faith around her, Rome was second to Jerusalem. This makes clear the sort of Headship which

Columbanus ascribed to Rome. It was a headship of honour, and not of authority. It was Jerusalem first, Rome next; and both on grounds of pious and reverent feeling, and not of Divine appointment. And this honour and dignity, he tells the Roman bishop, would remain with him not a day longer than he retained the true faith. The chair of Peter lacking Peter's faith was no better than the chair of Roman Augur or of pagan Druid.

“Thus it is, then, that as your honour was great, in consideration of the dignity of the chair; so you have need of great care, that you lose not your dignity through any perversity. For so long shall power remain with you, as right reason remains with you. For the key-keeper of the Kingdom of Heaven is He who, by true knowledge, opens to the worthy, and shuts to the unworthy; otherwise, if He do the contrary, he will be able neither to open nor to shut. Seeing, then, that these are true principles, and received as indisputably true by all the wise—since you (because forsooth, no one is ignorant how our Saviour gave to St. Peter the keys of the kingdom of Heaven)—since you, I say, assume to yourselves, by some arrogance or other, I know not what, an authority and power in Divine things above others, know that, if you even think such a thing in your hearts, the less will your power be with the Lord; because that which makes unity of power and prerogative, all the world over, is unity of faith, to the end that liberty to the truth be given everywhere by all, and access to error, be in like manner refused by all; seeing it was a right confession, that gave the privilege, even to the holy key-keeper himself, THE COMMON FATHER-ABBOT OF US ALL”<sup>6</sup>

This is conclusive as regards the opinion of Columbanus and the Culdee Church on the claim of Rome to exclusive power. Columbanus scouts it. You the Roman Church, says Columbanus, affirm that the “keys” which Peter received from his Lord, he has transmitted to you, and to you only, and, therefore, that you possess the exclusive prerogative of opening and shutting to men the kingdom of heaven. It is an unheard-of arrogance—the very thought sinks you. These “keys,” Peter received not for himself, nor for you, but for ALL of us. He was the father-abbot, not of the Roman Church only, but of all churches. All of us have a common interest in him, and all of us who have what Peter had—namely, a right confession of faith, have the same power to open and to shut which he had. It was his Confession of Faith that made Peter a door-keeper and a key-bearer,

and the church only that retains Peter's faith sits in Peter's chair, and wields Peter's sword. The passage is a distinct claim on the part of the Celtic church to full equality with, and entire independence of, the Church of Rome.

The epistle of Columbanus to Boniface IV. is one of the noblest monuments of antiquity. It is a specimen of the classic polish, the lettered grace, and the intellectual power which flourished in the schools of Iona and Ireland at that age. It is more: it is an enduring monument of the apostolic Christianity that formed the creed of the Scottish churches of Ireland and Scotland. Its sarcasm is refined, but cutting. Its logic carries the reason captive; its honesty and courage are beyond all praise, considering that when it was written from east and west flattery only was pouring in upon the man whom Phocas had made head of the universal church. In the midst of the hundreds of bishops who cringe and grovel at the foot of the papal chair, Columbanus stands erect. But the crowning excellence of this manifesto is its moral earnestness. The finger of Providence is seen in ordering that such a manifesto should be emitted at this epoch. It was a weighty and solemn call to Rome to adventure not a step farther in her newly path; and it was an equally weighty and solemn call to the nations of Europe to abandon her communion and get out from under her shadow should Rome refuse to reform. Neither Rome nor the nations gave heed to the warning. The former, century by century, departed farther from the simplicity and purity of Christianity, climbing higher and higher into the empyrean of political power, and the latter sank apace into darkness and bondage. Nevertheless the manifesto of the great Culdee was not in vain, nor did his words fall on the ground.

The epistle of Columbanus stood on the records of the age a public notification of an apostasy into which almost all churches had gone headlong, and after lying neglected for a thousand years, Luther brought it forth, and in substance published it a second time in the hearing of assembled Christendom at the Diet of Worms. It received subsequent ratification in the ever-memorable PROTEST of the German princes at Spires. It lives in the Reformation. And it will go down the ages an imperishable monument that the Reformed church is the *old*, and the church of the pontiff the *new*. The former has its institution from Christ, the latter from Phocas.

When Columbanus laid down his pen after writing his epistle, or rather his three epistles—for besides his letter to Boniface IV. he wrote two to Pope Gregory;—he may be said to have finished his work. He lived after this two years and founded the monastery of Bobbio, in a gorge of the Apennines between Milan and Genoa. He died at Bobbio, 615, and his tomb was still to be seen there in the seventeenth century, when it was visited and described by the learned Mabillon.

### Endnotes

1. *Baron. Annales*, Tom. vii., an. 566, col. 619. Coloniae Agrippinae, 1609.
2. Ut ergo honore apostolico non careas conserva fidem apostolicaam.
3. One of the titles of the Pope when the epistle was written.
4. Vigilius non bene vigilavit.
5. Younger churches, i.e., who received the faith later.
6. *Epistola S. Columbani ad Bonifacium Papam IV. Maxima BibliothecVeterum Patrum*. Tom. xii. p28, et seq. Lugduni, 1677.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

## THE CULDEAN CHURCH—IN THE RHINELAND—IN GERMANY—IN HOLLAND, ETC.—WILLIBROD AND BONIFACE—OVERTHROW OF THE CULDEAN CHURCH.

WE return to the Celtic evangelization. The Culdee host which is seen doing battle with the darkness of Europe, is being numerously recruited both from Iona and from the colleges of Ireland. The result is that the Columban houses are multiplying, and the area of the evangelization is, year by year, being enlarged. We begin with France. Fridolt, as we have said, broke ground at Poitiers in 501. Having started the work at this central point he removed to the Rhine, a stream already historic, though the dwellers on its banks were still heathen. This dark land now began to see a great light. Ultimately Columbanus, as we have seen, came to the Vosges, and planted, along with other monasteries, Luxeuil, which became a fruitful mother of Culdee cloisters, which in due time dotted the Frankish plains to the west. Anthurius, a personal friend of Columbanus, we find enrolled in this army of evangelical crusaders. He founded a number of Culdean houses on the Marne, of which the most famous was the monastery of the Rebaix. His two sons, Dado and Ado, were united with him in this pious labour. At Hombeg, near Remirmont, to which Arnulf, of Metz, had retired <sup>1</sup> was not a cloisters but a single cell.

There came hither Germanus, the son of the senator of Treves, a lad of seventeen, who was instructed in the faith, and after being trained in agriculture, as was the Culdee fashion, he set out, in company of Fridvald, one of the few surviving brethren of Columbanus, in search of a spot on which to build a monastery. He found a suitable place on the banks of the Birs, a river well stocked with fish, and there he reared a cloister which he named Grand Ville. Other two houses owe their erection to him—St. Paul, upon the Wohrd, and one at Ursetz, on the Doubs. After Germanus came his contemporary Wandregisil, who had a more adventurous career. He set out for Bobbio, but on his way thither, stopped in the Jura. Thence he went to the well known Culdee Audoin, who had become bishop of Rouen, by whom he was consecrated as sub-dean. He afterwards repaired to the Culdee Abbot-bishop, Anudomar of Boulogne, who ordained him a presbyter, and now he founded the cloister of St. Vaudrille. His exclusive



work was the conversion of the heathen in the parts about. He lived amongst the wild men, and in this he evinced the genuine Culdee spirit. He took as his motto, “Not unto us, but unto Thy name be the glory.”<sup>2</sup>

Under Clodwig II. the wealthy Frankish noble Leudobode founded the Cenobite cloister of Fleury, near Sully, on the right bank of the Loire, east of Orleans. The letter of foundation contains as witnesses the name of Odonus, four abbots, one presbyter, three deacons, of which one subscribes himself “*decanus et vice-dominus*” also a lay deacon, an attender on the sick, and eight lay witnesses.<sup>3</sup> Culdean houses arose in Laon, Bourges, Paris, Solignac, Charenton, at the sources of the Moselle, in the mountains of the Jura, and on the banks of the Seine. “Towards the end of the seventh century,” says Ebrard, “there were in the north of France alone, *i.e.*, to the north of the Loire and the Rhone, more than forty monasteries, all daughters and grand-daughters of Luxeuil, and all obeying the rule of Columbanus.” We find the whole of France, about A.D. 600, strewn with Culdee cloisters, Languedoc, Provence, and Dauphine excepted.<sup>4</sup> At that time it was not uncommon for persons to come all the way from Constantinople to Britain to learn the methods of evangelising.<sup>5</sup> In Aquitaine there existed a great number of Culdee houses. In that province, under the rule of the Western Goths, who had been converted from Arianism by Fridolt, the Culdee Church government appears to have been the prevailing form; almost, indeed, the universal form. King Witiza (701-711) commanded all his clergy to be married, or as Anisette expresses it, “he introduced everywhere the Culdee form of church government with its married clergy.” This drew upon him the displeasure of the Roman clergy of Spain, who succeeded at last in expelling him from his throne.<sup>6</sup> Throughout the vast extent of French territory which has come under our eyes, “the Culdees,” says Ebrard, “found no opposing agencies, no rival monasteries; they met with only a secularized and debased clergy. All the Merovingian sovereigns, Brunhilde excepted welcomed them.” Their lands were cultivated, their subjects were instructed, and the disorders of the national clergy were held in check. These benefits repaid an hundredfold the patronage the Merovingians extended to the Culdee institutions.. Even so dutiful a son of the “Church” as Montalemlert cannot withhold the tribute of his praise from these early reformers—Protestants before the age of Protestantism. “The great Abbey of Sequania (Luxeuil),” says he, “became a nursery of

bishops and abbots, preachers and reformers, for the whole Church of these vast countries, and principally for the two kingdoms of Austrasia and Burgundy. Luxeuil was the most celebrated school of Christendom during the seventh century, and the most frequented. The monks and clerks of other monasteries, and, more numerous still, the children of the noblest Frank and Burgundian races, crowded to it. Lyons, Autun, Langres, and Strasburg, the most famous cities of Gaul, sent their youth thither.”<sup>7</sup>

Pressing over the frontier of France on the east, the Culdees established themselves in the Rhine valley. The first to break a path into this wilderness of heathenism—for such this lovely valley then was—we have seen was Fridolt and Disibod; but its full illumination begins with the arrival of Columbanus in the end of the sixth century. His persecutor, Queen Brunhilde, became, unconsciously, a fellow-worker with the great missionary. As he fled before her, he kindled lamps of Divine knowledge in his track. While he passed upon his way, these continued to burn, and in the seventh century a line of Culdean churches and schools stretched along the whole course of the Rhine, from Moire, underneath the Grisson Alps, to the islands of the Rhine-delta.

It was the Culdee lamp that burned at Constance, at Basle, at Spire, at Worms, at Mainz, and at Cologne. Boniface, the emissary of Rome, came afterwards to put out these lights. Where the Culdee abbot had exercised his paternal government, Boniface installed a mitered hierarchy with lordly power; and where the simple Culdee oratory had stood, there rose a superb cathedral, in which the scriptural worship of Iona was replaced by the new and gorgeous rites of Rome.

Beyond the Rhine was a vast territory, broken by woody mountains and intersected by great rivers, stretching eastward to the mountain barriers of Bohemia. In that age this wide tract was inhabited by pagan races. It was a daring feat for the Culdee to carry his lamp into this great and terrible wilderness—this land overhung by the shadow of death; yet the ardor of the Culdee enabled him to accomplish this unspeakably hazardous, but unspeakably glorious enterprise. “One man,” it has been said, “does the work, and another runs off with all the praise.” It never was more signally so than in this case. The man who figures in history as the “apostle of the Germans” is Boniface, the emissary of Rome. The

real “apostle of the Germans” was the Culdee Church. It was the first to break a pathway into this great heathen world. But for it the Germans might have continued the worshippers of Thor till Luther arrived. The missionaries of the North and the West knew well the moral condition of this land, and they entered it on purpose to plant the Cross on the ruins of its pagan shrines. The greatness of the conquest fired their imagination not less than their piety. And the work they came to do they accomplished, though at infinite toil and hazard. They spread themselves, in the course of their peregrinations, from the banks of the Rhine to the frontier of Bohemia. They searched amid the forests and the morasses and mountain chains of that vast expanse for suitable centers from which to diffuse the light, and having found such, they proceeded to erect their little city of log huts, with its oratory, its school, its refectory, its barn for storing their grain, and its mill for grinding their meal. It was another Iona on the German plain. Their little village they prudently enclosed with a rath; for their encampment was in the midst of barbarians, who were not likely to show much consideration to the strangers, till they knew something more of the errand on which they had come. Christian life was possible only in an insulated Christian community.

The first lesson the Culdees gave their heathen neighbours was in the arts. The fields around their encampment ploughed and cropped, the fishing-net flung into the lake or into the river, the gin set to snare the wild fowl or the roe, would suggest to the wild men, in whom the disposition to roam was still strong, the advantages of settled over barbarian life. The good order of the Culdee families was a yet higher picture of civilization not likely to be thrown away upon those who were both quick to observe and apt to learn. Years might pass till the Germans were gained to listen to higher teachings, but the patient labours of the missionaries, who gave their lessons by the wayside, in woods, anywhere, in short, were at last crowned with success; and over the whole of western Germany schools and churches arose, which there under Culdee government, and were fountains of Culdee theology.

We can give only a few of the names that figure in this first Christianization of Germany. From North Friesland and Heligoland to the Rhine Delta, and from the Rhine Delta through Hessen to the Saale; and on the Maine through the whole of Thuringia, known at this day as the Black Forest,

did the sons of the Culdees lay the solid foundation of a mission-work in accordance with the Word of God.<sup>8</sup> One of the more distinguished of this mission band was Willibrod, an Anglo-Saxon by birth. He threw himself with great ardour into the conversion of the Germanic nations, and in the end of the seventh century he passed over into Holland, with eleven of his countrymen, and began operations among the Frieslanders. From thence he went to Heligoland, but being cruelly treated by King Radbod, who put a member of the mission-party to death, he departed to Denmark, where he evangelized. Finally he returned to Holland, where his second ministry was attended with remarkable success. We shall see in the sequel that he was ultimately compelled to lay these evangelical spoils at the feet of the Pope. He died at Utrecht, and did not live to see the damage which the compliance of his old age inflicted upon that cause for which he had spent the vigour of his manhood, with a devotion and success that have carried his fame down to our day.<sup>9</sup>

About the same time, or a little before (685), Killean, born in Scotland, entered the field. One Sabbath, as he sat in church, the text, "Whosoever taketh not up his cross and followeth me, cannot be my disciple," came into his mind, and he resolved to become a missionary. He set out with twelve companions for the country of the eastern Franks, among whom the labours of this little band of Scotchmen were rewarded with numerous conversions. The first conversion of Bavaria was by Eustasius about 618, a few years after the death of Columba. Its second evangeliser, Erfurt, was sprung of an aristocratic Frankish family, and under him the mission greatly prospered. Culdeeism ascended the Danube, entered the Lower Pannonia, churches and cloisters were founded everywhere in the region, on the Waller See and on the ruins of the Roman city of Salzburg. The years 696-710, embrace the labours of this missionary. The footsteps of the Culdees can be traced as far north as Iceland. They had their stations there, and continued their labours, relieving each other by turns, till driven out by the Norwegian invaders in the ninth century. "There were then," says Ara, the Norwegian historian,<sup>10</sup> "Christians there whom the Norwegians call *Papas*" (Fathers). "There were left by them," says another Icelandic writer, "Irish books, bells, and crooked staffs, and several other things, which seemed to indicate that they were west men," *i.e.*, Culdees.

Throughout the wide extent of our survey Culdeeism stood distinct and apart in its faith, in its worship, and in its government from the Roman Church. As regards all these points the Culdee Church continued unchanged during the sixth, seventh, and eighth centuries. Its one supreme authority was Holy Scripture. Each house—which combined in one, church, school, and colony—had an abbot chosen by its members, who exercised not lordly but paternal sway. To him the bishops, or missionary pastors, were subject. The bulk of its clergy were married men. They trained their own missionaries, and having ordained them, sent them forth to fields, the selection of which would seem to have been left largely to themselves. They dwelt in clusters of timber huts, and not in one stone building, as was the Roman fashion in succeeding centuries. They united agricultural labours with their mission work proper. Some of the richest provinces in Germany and France at this day were first broken in from the wilderness by the industry of the Culdees. They were indefatigable transcribers of theological treatises, psalters, and Holy Scripture. The museums of many of the Continental universities are stocked with the fruits of their pen. The Ambrosian Library of Milan has a Commentary of Columbanus on the Psalms, long ascribed to Jerome, which, with other Culdee relics, it accounts amongst its most precious treasures. The crowning gift of the Culdee pen to these early churches was a translation of the Bible into the vernacular. The first Frankish translation of the Scriptures, Ebrard says, was given by Oatfridis to the German people in 750. It was no part of the policy of the Culdees to keep under the spirit of their converts by imposing upon them the yoke of a foreign tongue, or the authority of a ruling city. The Gospel adapted itself to the nations among whom it journeyed, addressing each in its own tongue. To the Germans it became a German; to the Franks a Frank. The Romans invited the nations to come to Italy if they would receive the Gospel; the Culdees brought the Gospel from Italy to the nations.

The explorations of Ebrard have revolutionized our conceptions of the early Christian church of western Europe. History till now knew nothing really of this great, widespread, apostolic church. It had tracked the footsteps of a few individual Culdees; it had registered a few incidents of their story. But the facts it had picked up and transmitted were fragmentary, insulated, and failed utterly to give us any adequate idea of the importance and grandeur of the drama of which they were broken-off

parts. History has enriched itself by this discovery which has made us acquainted with an enterprise of spiritual chivalry so vast and so long sustained that we hardly know where to look for its like. Historians had filled their page with the miserable jealousies, quarrels, and battles of Roman bishops and Roman councils when, lo! the veil rises from the sixth century, and there stands to view a church at Iona and Bangor, at the ends of the world, instinct with the spirit of the Bible, bursting with missionary zeal, pouring out armies of thorough-trained missionaries, who spread themselves south and north—in short, over all western Europe, and in the face of a thousand dangers—wars, deserts, seas, barbarous tribes—invite the nations to drink of the Water of Life from the golden fountains of the Scriptures. It is, says Ebrard, “of this Rome-free and essentially evangelical church, which was governed from the island of Iona, that Columba, the younger, writes that it numbered a thousand abbots, all under the jurisdiction of one Archimandrite.”<sup>11</sup>

We shall sum up our rapid sketch of this church—in the presence of which that of Rome in the same centuries stands dwarfed—in the words of Ebrard:— “If now we look back upon all the ground we have gone over, leaving out of view altogether the extension which the Culdean Church had obtained up to 661 in Ireland, Scotland, and Northumberland, and confining our attention to its spread on the Continent, we find this religious community in France, at the beginning of the eighth century, existing in the heart of the National Church, and not merely tolerated, but over the whole country, from the Jura to Nantes, and from this line as far north as the delta of the Rhine, Rome-free, and entirely unrestricted in its internal organisation, decidedly favoured by the Merovingian kings, even dominating the National Church in the sense of spiritual and intellectual influence, and often also taking a part in its external government by the appointment of its abbots to important sees. We find the whole of the northern half of France sowed, so to speak, with monasteries, with all their peculiarities, in unopposed development. Then we find the whole of Rhineland converted to Christianity by this Culdean Church, and ecclesiastically governed by it in its own peculiar manner; likewise the whole of the country now called Franconia, and Alamannia, and Bavaria, converted and ecclesiastically governed by Culdeans, and Culdeans alone. And if we are to speak of the influences of the British Church, as some express themselves, it must at least be confessed that these influences

might be compared to the overflow of a river, which covers the whole land. All the distinctive peculiarities of the Culdean Church—its married priests, its sending out of its missionaries by twelve, its practice of constructing its settlements in separate houses, its subjection of *chorepiscopi* (or bishops of monasteries) to the rule of the abbots—all this we find in Bavaria and Alamannia in 730-739, just as it was in Scotland in 565. It is all one and the same church-fellowship, that of the *Viri-Dei*, or in Irish, the *Keile De*. In the whole south and west, and in a great part of the north of Germany, before ‘the apostle of Germany was heard of, we find in existence a flourishing, well-organised, Rome-free church, whose sole supreme authority was the Holy Scriptures, and whose preaching was the word of the free redeeming grace of God in Christ Jesus.’”

Gladly would we permit the curtain to descend on the Culdee Church while yet its root is firm in the soil and its boughs are stretched from Iona in the West to Bohemia on the East, and its shadow covers France and Germany besides. Gladly would we spare ourselves and our readers the melancholy recital of the tragic extirpation of this once noble vine. We must, however, pursue our subject a little further. We behold Western Europe on the point of completing its reformation. The spiritual illumination which has broke upon it from the north is year by year filling its sky with glory, when, all suddenly, its nations are thrown back again into night. What has occasioned a reversal so sad? It is the off-repeated tale of profound dissimulation on the one side, and a too credulous trust on the other. Winfrid, an Anglo-Saxon by birth, and a Benedictine monk, in 719 seeks out Willibrod, then at the head of the Culdee evangelization, and under a great show of guilelessness and much pious zeal, insinuates himself into his favour. He desires to study the methods of evangelising under the Culdee leader. “He crept in beside Willibrod,” says Dr. Ebrard, “as the wolf steals in beside the shepherd,” and lived for three years with him, a professed coadjutor, but in reality a spy. At the end of three years he returned to Rome, whence he had come, and where he had been instructed.<sup>12</sup> Pope Gregory II. consecrated him as bishop, and changed his name to Bonifacius, the “good-doer,” as if in anticipation of the services expected from him. He returned to Germany, no longer wearing the Culdee mask, but as the legate extraordinary of the Pope. He brought with him letters from the pontiff, addressed to all princes, enjoining them

to assist him in ruling the churches over which he had been set. Supported by the authority of Carloman and Pepin of France, he proceeded to suppress the Culdee establishments by changing them into bishoprics subject to the authority of Rome. He founded in Germany the Sees of Wartzburg, Burabourg, Erfurt, and Aichstadt, and in 744 the monastery of Fulda. This was the method Boniface adopted to evangelise the Germans, even metamorphosing Culdee missionaries into Benedictine monks, and Culdee colleges into Romish Sees, by fair means if possible, by force where artifice failed. It was in this way that he earned his title of “apostle of the Germans.” Even historians who think him deserving of the honour do not conceal the startling vices that deformed his life. Mosheim, for instance, observes of him that his “zeal for the glory and authority of the Roman pontiff equaled, if it did not surpass, his zeal for the service of Christ and the propagation of his religion,” and that he “often employed violence and terror, and sometimes artifice and fraud, in order to multiply the number of Christians,” “and discovered a cunning and insidious turn of mind,” and “ignorance of many things appertaining to the true nature and genius of the Christian religion.”<sup>13</sup> The historian Ranke speaks in similar terms of this “apostle of the Germans.”<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, both ascribe to him, mistakenly of course, the glory of converting the Germans from heathenism. We see the foundations of Culdeeism beginning to be sapped.

What helped, doubtless, to pave the way for the fall of the Culdee Church, was the partial apostasy of Willibrod. In his latter days he was drawn into an acknowledgment of the supremacy of the Pope, and accepted at his hands the bishopric of Utrecht. Willibrod could plead precedents for accepting a Roman miter. Some eminent Culdees in the century before had accepted high positions in the National Church from the kings of France, though they still remained within the lines of Culdeeism. Willibrod accepted his appointment from the pontiff, a power before which, if one begins to bow, he is sure at last to fall. His locks were shorn, and though he still governed the Culdee Churches of Thuringia, it was with a diminished authority. Next, Boniface arrived from Rome as legate extraordinary, and soon to be primate of Germany. In his former pupil and colleague Willibrod now found a superior and master. The papal legate had no inclination to betake himself to the forests and break up new ground. It was not to his taste to risk his precious life amongst those



of the Germans who were still heathens. He preferred to build upon the foundations that Willibrod and other Culdees had laid, and to effect a second conversion of Germany on the ruins of its first conversion.

Meanwhile, another cause hastened the downfall of the Culdean Church. The supreme political power of the West had passed from the Merovingian to the Carolingian race. Pepin of Heristal stood up. He turned back the Moslem by his arms, and saved Europe. The Pope, seeing it for his interests, allied himself with this rising house. Thus the pontiff was able to wield the Carolingian power against his rivals and enemies the Culdees. This turned the balance in the conflict. Boniface, the papal legate, was supported by the friendship and authority of the French monarch. Willibrod was handicapped in the struggle. He had to contend against both the papal and the royal power wielded by Boniface, now become primate of all Germany, and to whom he, as bishop of Utrecht, owed obedience. The issue was that Willibrod, after forty years labour (680-720), had to surrender this whole region to Boniface, and the battle was lost.

The transformation of these countries went on apace. It became the policy of both courts, that of Rome and that of France, to wear out the Culdees, and eventually efface every vestige of them. Where had stood a Culdee oratory or church, there rose a superb cathedral for the Roman worship. Where a Culdee abbot had ruled, there a diocesan bishop bore sway. Where a cluster of log huts, inhabited by Culdee brethren, had stood, there was erected a large stone building, in which monks of the Benedictine order sheltered. The words which Bishop Aungerville addressed to the friars of his day apply to the change we see passing on the Rhineland and the German countries with even more point:—“Now base Thersites handles the arms of Achilles; the choicest trappings are thrown away upon lazy asses; blinking night-birds lord it in the nest of eagles; and the silly kite sits on the perch of the hawk.” The traveler, as he passes along the lovely valley of the Rhine, or visits the German cities, fails to reflect, it may be, that the ecclesiastical edifices that everywhere meet his eye and awaken his admiration are in truth the memorials of the great Celtic evangelization of the early centuries. These monuments of the wealth and power of Rome rise on the spots where Culdee builders were the first to rear human habitations, where Culdee

agriculturists were the first to cultivate the ground, and where Culdee missionaries were the first to open the Book of Life to the eyes of the ignorant natives.

When the light of the Culdee Christianisation began to fade away, and at last went out, the shadows of the Dark Ages fell fast and thick. Who, we ask, is responsible for the loss of these ten centuries? There is no room here to hesitate. The Destroyer of the Culdee Church must answer at the bar of posterity to this terrible indictment. The fiat that decreed that the Celtic evangelization should be suppressed, also decreed that Christendom should abide for ages without light and without liberty. That decree will yet crush into dust many a marble tomb, and sweep from history's page many a name which at this hour shines brightly there. The world will not easily condone so great a crime once it has come to the clear apprehension of it. Meanwhile it is far from having attained to this. With a touch of Islam resignation it looks on the Dark Ages as a dispensation, so fixed and absolute that it was no more in its power to avoid passing through its darkness than it is in its power to forbid an eclipse, or stay the going down of the sun. But the world will one day come to think more rationally of it, and then it will ask why knowledge was enchained, and why so many ages were given over to wars and superstition and slavery, which, but for the suppression of the Celtic evangelization, would have been ennobled with freedom, enriched with the spoils of art, and crowned with the blessings of a pure Christianity.

#### Endnotes

1. Ebrard, *Die Iroschottische Missionskirche des sechten, sieventen und auchten Jahrhunderts*, p. 313.
2. Ebrard, *Die Iroschottische Missionskirche &c.* pp. 313, 314.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 315.
4. *Ebrard*, p. 318.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 316.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 320.
7. *Monks of the West*, Book vii. This brilliant work is not exempt from the charge of misleading. It confuses in the mind of the reader two very different classes of monks and monasteries, even the Culdee missionaries

and the Roman monks who succeeded them, men of a wholly different spirit, and who worked for wholly different ends, and who ultimately succeeded in undoing the labours of the Culdee evangelists. But in this Montalembert has only followed the example of his church, which has claimed many of these early Culdees as belonging to herself, by placing them in her calendar of saintship. It will amuse the reader to learn that among others whom she has canonized is Columbanus, the man who was her greatest and most uncompromising opponent in the early ages. We need not say that these Culdees had been long in their grave before Rome ventured to "honour them," as Montalembert calls it, "with public worship."

8. *Ebrard*, p. 390.

9. Mosheim, cent. vii. part i. chap. i. See also Alcuin's *Life of Willibrod*, in Mabillon's *Lives of the Saints*.

10. Ara, *Multeisius*, cited by Lanigan.

11. *Zeitschrift für die Hiatorische Theologie*. Paper 5th. *Die Iroschottische Missionskirche des sechten, sieventen und auchten Jahrhunderts und ihre verbreitung auf dem Festland*, p. 389.

12. *Ebrard*, p. 393.

13. Mosheim, cent. viii., part i., chap. i.

14. *History of the Popes*, Book i., clap, i.

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