

ST. PATRICK

A.D. 180







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By

Rev. John Roche Ardill, LL.D.

Trinity College, Dublin



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## PREFACE

ST. PATRICK gives no information as to when he lived. But he refers to certain peoples, places and customs, and it is possible to compare those references with the histories of the early Christian centuries, and thus to throw some light on the date or period in which the references were made.

The most generally accepted opinion is that Patrick came to Ireland in the year 432. It has been suggested that he came in 440, but it is not necessary to inquire as to any later date. It may be assumed that he came in 440 or earlier.

The peoples, places and customs to which Patrick alludes are not confined to Ireland and Britain, but lie, to some extent, beyond the sea, on the Continent of Europe. It is, therefore, necessary that our inquiries should cover the same area. The importance of this procedure is laid stress upon by Mr. F. S. Haverfield in his study of the archaeology of Roman Britain. "The same Celtic races", he states, "dwelt on both sides of the sea." "It is useless to examine Roman Britain or Roman Gaul, or even much



of Roman Germany, without constant reference to this whole, and much good work attempted by modern French or German or English archaeologists has failed to yield its proper fruits from neglect of this fact.”<sup>1</sup> This applies with equal force to the life of Patrick, which was passed “on both sides of the sea”.

Professor Freeman had also the same thought in mind when he informed his class of students at Oxford that, in order to introduce them to the history of their Anglo-Saxon ancestors, he should lead them through the realms of Gaul for the study of the elements out of which France grew, not merely because of the surpassing interest of the story, “but”, he states, “because a full understanding of their position in their Gaulish realms is the best means to enable us, by force of contrast, to grasp the true position of the Angle and the Saxon in their British realms”.<sup>2</sup> Hence he led them to Northumbrian Baeda by the guidance of Arvernian Gregory.

In pursuing this course, and seeking for information from far and near, we are helped by such writers as W. T. Arnold (*The Roman System of Provincial Administration*), Dr. Bigg,

<sup>1</sup> F. S. Haverfield, *Romanization of Roman Britain*, p. 28.

<sup>2</sup> E. A. Freeman, D.C.L., *Western Europe in the Fifth Century*, p. 3.



Dr. Bright, Professor Burkitt, Dr. Bury, Sir Samuel Dill, Signor Ferrero (*The Ruin of Ancient Civilization and the Triumph of Christianity*), F. Funck-Brentano (*The Earliest Times*), Dr. Gwynn, Theodore Haarhoff (*The Schools of Gaul*), Professor Harnack, Archbishop Healy, Dr. Douglas Hyde, W. H. Jervis (*History of France*), Dr. Kidd, Dr. Eoin MacNeill, W. Menzel (*History of Germany*), F. Max Müller, A. C. M'Giffert (*The Apostles' Creed*), Professor J. S. Reid (*Municipalities of the Roman Empire*), Sir William Ridgeway, Lewis Sergeant (*The Franks*), Dr. Whitley Stokes, L. J. Tixeront (*History of Dogmas*), Dr. N. J. D. White, and others who are referred to in the following pages. These all will be used in our inquiry in relation to persons or events which are removed from our own time by eight or more centuries. What the effect may be of our conclusions or suggestions on history since the twelfth century or thereabouts must be determined by the reader in each case.

JOHN ROCHE ARDILL.

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## CHAPTER I

### THE LIVES OF PATRICK

THE FIRST BISHOP.—In the year A.D. 431 Pope Celestine sent Palladius to Ireland as “the first Bishop of the Irish believing in Christ”. There has been some difficulty in explaining the term “first”. It could not mean first in point of time, as there were bishops in Ireland for some centuries before that date. Dr. MacNeill’s account is probably the most correct: “that these particular Irish believing in Christ, to whom Palladius was sent, had no Bishop in communion with Rome”.<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Gwynn states that Palladius was sent to Ireland “on a like mission” to that on which Bishop Germanus of Auxerre, and another prelate, were sent to Britain two years previously (429), that is, to withstand Pelagianism.<sup>2</sup> It is a pity that Dr. Gwynn did not say a little more on the subject, but the evidence in support of

<sup>1</sup> *Phases of Irish History*, p. 163.

<sup>2</sup> *Book of Armagh*, App. C.



his statement is very strong, as we gather from a cluster of events recorded at the time, which show that both Pope Celestine and Palladius were very keen opponents of Pelagius, who was the first and greatest of the heretics from the British Islands.

A CLUSTER OF EVENTS.—*A.D.* 429. A Council in Gaul sent the two bishops just referred to into Britain in answer to a request received from Britain to help in the uprooting of the doctrines of Pelagius. This course *was suggested by Palladius*, who was himself sent to Ireland in 431 as “the first Bishop”.

*A.D.* 429. Marius Mercator,<sup>1</sup> who was a layman and a very enthusiastic disciple of St. Augustine’s, petitioned the Emperor for the expulsion of the Pelagians from Constantinople, which was done. (Pope Celestine had secured their expulsion from Italy five years previously—*i.e.* 424.)

*A.D.* 430. St. Augustine died, having continued writing against Pelagius to the end.

*A.D.* 431. Prosper of Aquitaine, who was afterwards secretary to Pope Leo I., petitioned Pope Celestine to restrain certain Gallic clergy from teaching the errors of Pelagius and denying the doctrines of St. Augustine.

<sup>1</sup> Bright, *Age of the Fathers*, ii. 286.



*A.D. 431.* Pope Celestine wrote to six bishops in Gaul, whose names are given, and did as Prosper suggested.<sup>1</sup>

*A.D. 431.* Pope Celestine exhorted a new Patriarch of Constantinople, named Maximian, not to cease opposing Celestianism.<sup>2</sup> Pelagius had "disappeared", and his teaching was called after his friend and follower Celestius. (The resemblance between the names Palladius and Celestine on the one side, and Pelagius and Celestius on the other, is only a coincidence, but might easily lead to confusion. The latter two were the heretics.)

*A.D. 431.* The Council of Ephesus, which was the third General or Ecumenical Council, condemned Celestianism, and deposed any bishops or clergy who embraced it.

*A.D. 431.* Celestius disappeared.

*A.D. 431.* Pope Celestine sent Palladius to Ireland as "the first Bishop to the Irish believing in Christ".

*A.D. 432.*—Pope Celestine died on the 27th January.<sup>3</sup>

In view of all this anti-Pelagian activity, we can understand the force of Dr. Gwynn's statement that Palladius was sent to Ireland "on a

<sup>1</sup> T. Scott Holmes, *Christian Church in Gaul*, p. 299.

<sup>2</sup> Bright, ii. 357.

<sup>3</sup> Kidd, *History of the Church to A.D. 461*, iii. 154.





like mission" to that of Germanus to Britain two years previously.

"SO-CALLED BISHOPS." — Dr. MacNeill's statement that Palladius was the first bishop in Ireland "in communion with Rome" is to some extent explained by the fact that St. Augustine and the Western Church generally regarded Pelagian bishops as only "so-called Bishops". There were eighteen or nineteen of these who had cast in their lot with Pelagius, and were all deprived of their sees and banished. Any bishops of this school in Ireland would therefore be regarded by Prosper as heretics, and not true members of the episcopate, and on that account were to be ignored.

It looks as if there was no bishop in Ireland before Palladius came who was in communion with Rome.

There were other blemishes also from which the Irish bishops suffered, and continued to suffer for many centuries afterwards, which, to the mind of St. Augustine and the Roman authorities, would be sufficient to exclude them from the orthodox episcopate. The most important of these blemishes were the observance of an heretical Easter (which had already been denounced at various Councils); the use of a Druidical Tonsure, which was spurned abroad



as "The Tonsure of Simon Magus"; the custom of consecrating bishops by the laying on of the hands of one bishop only instead of three. A remarkable instance of this had occurred in Gaul two years previously (A.D. 429), where two bishops received drastic punishment for consecrating a new bishop without the presence of a third to assist in the consecration. There were some other blemishes of a minor type attaching to the Irish bishops in the year 431 which explain how it came about that Palladius was then the first, and the only bishop in Ireland in communion with Rome.

ORTHODOX BRITAIN.—There were many orthodox bishops in Britain at the time. One hundred and seventeen years earlier there were three British bishops at the Council of Arles—A.D. 314.<sup>1</sup> This fact is one of the surprises of history. It is well known that there was a Christian Church in Britain before the year 314; but it here blossoms out before our eyes, all on a sudden, as a fully organized Church, with the Bishops of London, York and Lincoln (or some other if not Lincoln) representing it in Southern Gaul, and this is a surprise. These three were probably representatives of a larger number—one each from the north and south and one from the midlands. These were in-

<sup>1</sup> E. H. Landon, *Manual of the Councils*, i. 44.





vited to the Council by the Emperor Constantine the Great, and had their travelling expenses paid. Ireland, being outside the Empire, and being, in addition, openly hostile, was not invited to send bishops, and she sent none. It was at this Council of Arles that the Church departed from the primitive mode of consecration, and from other primitive usages which continued to thrive in Ireland for many centuries, and the question arises, Who brought these old third-century, or second-century customs into Ireland?

A REVOLUTION.—The Council of Arles in 314 was merely a stepping-stone to the far greater Council of Nicaea in 325. This is what is called the first General, or Ecumenical Council. It confirmed what was done eleven years before at Arles, and went further in the introduction of changes. Professor Glover calls it “a Revolution”,<sup>1</sup> but the Revolution did not touch Ireland, which remained *in statu quo*, and continued the customs which had been observed *always everywhere and by all*.

AN ABSURDITY.—But Palladius died almost immediately, or was at once expelled from Ireland; and in the next year, 432, St. Patrick is said to have been sent to step into his shoes and to fill the gap. In this connection Dr. Gwynn

<sup>1</sup> *Life and Letters, Fourth Century*, p. 17.



refers to "the absurdity" of sending an untrained man like Patrick to do the work of a trained theologian.<sup>1</sup> Patrick, in his own writings, is ceaseless in laying stress on his ignorance, and no one would suspect him of any affectation. He attributes all his success to the power and grace of God. He believed that he was ignorant, and he said so, and as a matter of fact it was true, although Dr. Gwynn does not admit that he was as unlearned as Professor Zimmer represented him.

It certainly required a trained theologian to take part in the controversy which had St. Augustine and St. Jerome (the two greatest of the Latin fathers) on the one side, and Pelagius and his friend Celestius, who had been a lawyer by profession, on the other.

TWO IRISHMEN.—Dr. Kidd, writing of Celestius, says: "He, too (like Pelagius), was of Irish birth, and in early years a man of singular piety who wrote three letters to his parents useful for the practice of virtue".<sup>2</sup> He may have been almost the equal of Pelagius in ability. He was certainly the more eloquent, but he wrote very little. A hostile Spanish priest, named Orosius, describes Pelagius as a "Goliath". Probably he was six feet three or more in height, broad-shouldered, thick-necked, with only one eye,

<sup>1</sup> *Book of Armagh*, p. xcix.

<sup>2</sup> Kidd, *History*, iii. 58.



well-groomed, and gave the impression of being "able to hold his own"; not talkative, but a prolific writer, and is the author of the oldest extant book written in the British Islands, dating A.D. 405-409. Both were men of fine and spotless character, and both spoke Greek and Latin, which was sometimes a source of confusion to their adversaries. As to the orthodoxy of their theological opinions, we are not concerned here.

TWENTY YEARS AN OUTLAW.—Pelagius denied the doctrine known as Original Sin, and was accused of denying the grace of God. The controversy was the longest heresy-hunt in history. It began in the year 411 in Carthage, where there was a Council; thence to Palestine, where there were two Councils; back then to Rome, where there was a Council (or two independent Sessions of one Council); thence to Carthage, where there were two Councils; thence, touching at Constantinople, to Ephesus, where Pelagianism was condemned in the year 431, the year in which Palladius came to Ireland. The drama lasted for twenty years. Three Emperors (Honorius, Theodosius and Valentinian) took active parts in it, and four Popes (Innocent I., Zosimus, Boniface and Celestine), all against the heretics. We can hardly doubt that it required a trained theologian to follow in the track of Palladius.



Dr. Gwynn evidently did not believe that St. Patrick came to Ireland in the year 432, but he did not clearly indicate a preference for a later or an earlier date.

HASTE.—Joceline, in his *Life of St. Patrick*, tells us that “the Pope (Celestine) being certified of Palladius’s death, immediately gave Patrick the command which hitherto, keeping more secret council, he had delayed, to proceed on his journey and on the salutary work of his legation”.<sup>1</sup>

As Palladius was sent in the year 431 and Pope Celestine died on the 27th January 432, it is not easy to account for the rapid succession of events. This is the date of the Pope’s death given by Dr. Kidd,<sup>2</sup> but Duchesne and Professor Zimmer say that Celestine died in July of that year.<sup>3</sup> They were probably led to this date by the fact that the next Pope—Sixtus—was consecrated in that month. Professor Whitney, of Cambridge, says: “Pope Celestine certainly died before July 432, as ambassadors for Sixtus’s consecration were in Rome at the end of July”. In any case, the time was very short for the coming of Palladius to Ireland, the news of his death reaching Rome, and the choice and sending of Patrick. But the point

<sup>1</sup> p. 35.

<sup>2</sup> *History*, iii. 154.

<sup>3</sup> Zimmer, *The Celtic Church*, p. 32.





need scarcely be dwelt upon, as the witness of Joceline is not reliable.

Archbishop Healy states that "nothing can be adduced from the silence regarding Celestine and the Roman mission of Patrick, especially in view of the authentic testimonies which assert it".

SILENCE.—Possibly the Archbishop did not realize that the silence is not one of years but of centuries. If we imagine a circle with A.D. 432 as its centre, and having a radius two hundred years long, there is not a trace of Patrick anywhere within the scope of that radius. We may follow it in its sweep around by every point of the compass, but we shall not hear a word from anyone who heard of Patrick, or saw him. Not that we have no information about the period, or that it was one of impenetrable gloom. It was, and is, in fact, a veritable historian's paradise. And the Irish historian as much as any other revels in its records. In the year 411—the year after the Sack of Rome by Alaric and his Arian Goths—Patrick, according to Dr. Bury, escaped from Ireland and took his journey down through Gaul, or possibly into Italy. It was the same year Celestius was tried before the Council at Carthage. He and Pelagius had been there for a while after they had left Rome, before the Sack, and spent a while in Sicily, where they



instructed some people about what they called Augustine's innovations as to Adam and Eve being created immortal—never to die. There was no grave-digger in Augustine's picture of primitive human life. At Carthage, Celestius sought ordination, but a monk named Paulinus—he who wrote the life of St. Ambrose, by whom Augustine had been baptized—brought certain charges against him. Aurelius was the Primate, and he presided at the Council. Pelagius had called on Augustine at Hippo—some miles to the west—where he was bishop, but did not see him, though they met a few times later on. Pelagius had left for Palestine before Celestius was tried. The accounts of the trial of Celestius are many and elaborate. The French historian, Tixeront,<sup>1</sup> who wrote with the *imprimatur*, gives a full picture of it all. He gives a full and true account of Augustine and his doctrines. He refers to him always politely as the Saint, or the Bishop of Hippo, or Saint Augustine, while Celestius was "the Culprit". But this culprit persisted in saying that Adam and Eve would have died in any case, even if they never had sinned, and thereupon was anathematized. He sailed away to Ephesus at once, and was ordained there both deacon and presbyter. The records are very complete.

<sup>1</sup> *History of Dogmas*, p. 445.



If Pelagius in one of his letters—he was fond of writing—had mentioned that Patrick, the slave-boy whom the people at Fochlut, in Mayo, were so fond of—who used to tell them such stories around the firesides at night about Bethlehem and the lake and the fishermen, and the Pharisees and the mountain scenes, and the Garden and Calvary, and the first Easter and the Ascent from the hill-top—they never had heard such stories in all their lives—if Pelagius could only have said that this boy, assuming that he was living at the time, had run away from slavery in the year 411, the year of Celestius's trial, and that he was seen at Lyons with a company of men who were selling Irish wolf-hounds—that one remark would have nipped a knotty problem in the bud. As the case stands, a voice, or a company of voices, can be imagined calling out from A.D. 432, and echoing across two centuries, Where is Patrick? Who has seen him? Who has heard him? What place has he touched? Did he leave a finger-print anywhere? Did anyone write about him or talk of him? The response is the same as with the worshippers of Baal on Mount Carmel: "There was neither voice nor any to answer, nor any that regarded".

The Archbishop's remark as to the silence is, therefore, well grounded, but it is centuries deep, and the "authentic testimonies" are more



than centuries removed from the events to which they refer.

THE TRIPARTITE LIFE.—It would be tiresome and profitless to attempt a description of the Lives which have been written of St. Patrick, yet some of them have been edited with learning and skill of the highest order, as in the case of the Tripartite, which comes from the pen of Dr. Whitley Stokes. Of this, Archbishop Healy says: "The Tripartite life is on the whole the most valuable document concerning St. Patrick which has come down to our time".<sup>1</sup> Again, "far the most valuable and complete of all the extant lives of the Apostle". One incident may be given from the Tripartite as typical of the whole. It is necessary to let the reader see what kind of book the Tripartite is. "Patrick, having completed his sixtieth year and having learned 'the lore' with Germanus of Auxerre, went then to sea, and it is then that he came to the island, and he saw the new house, and the married couple in youth therein, and he saw the withered old woman before the house on her hands. 'What is it that the hag is,' saith Patrick, 'great is her feebleness.' The young man replied and this he said: 'She is a granddaughter of mine', saith the young man. 'If thou wert to see the mother of that girl she is

<sup>1</sup> *Life of St. Patrick*, p. 90.



still feebler.' 'How came that to pass,' saith Patrick. 'Not hard to say,' saith the young man. 'We are here since the time of Christ, Who came unto us when He dwelt among men here, and we made a feast for Him. He blessed our house and blessed ourselves, and that blessing came not upon our children, and we shall abide, without age, without decay, here until the judgement. And it is long since thy coming was foretold unto us,' saith the young man. 'And God left with us that thou wouldst come to preach to the Gael, and He left a token with us, to wit, His staff, to be given to thee.' 'I will not take it,' saith Patrick, 'till He Himself gives me His staff.'

"Patrick stayed three days and three nights with them, and went, thereafter, to Mount Hermon in the neighbourhood of the island, and there the Lord appeared to him and told him to go and preach to the Gael, and gave him the staff of Jesus, and said that it would be a help to him in every danger and in every unequal conflict in which he should be, and Patrick asked three boons of Him, namely, to be on His right hand in the Kingdom of heaven, that he (Patrick) might be Judge of the Gael on doomsday, and as much gold and silver as the nine companions could carry to be given to the Gael for believing."<sup>1</sup>

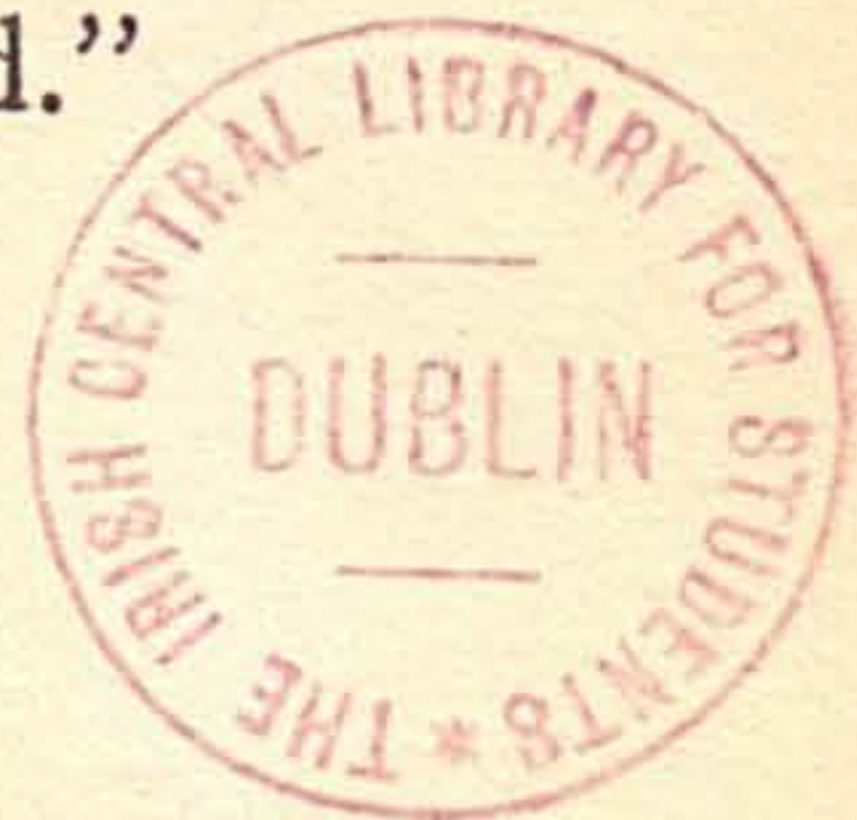
<sup>1</sup> Tripartite Life, I. p. 29.



The story goes on to tell how Pope Celestine, "the forty-second man from Peter", sent Palladius and twelve men to preach to the Gael, "for it belongs to Peter's successor to benefit Europe".

Palladius came to Inver Dea in Leinster, but Nathi expelled him after he had baptized a few, and founded three churches in Cell Fine, "in which he left his books, and the casket with relics of Paul and Peter, and as Palladius was returning, sickness seized him in the lands of the Picts and he died there". Patrick, thereafter, went to Rome and received orders from Celestine, "and when the orders were a-reading out the three choirs mutually responded, namely, the choir of the household of heaven, and the choir of the Romans, and the choir of the children from the wood of Fochlut. This is what all sang, 'All we Irish beseech thee, holy Patrick, to come and walk among us and to free us'."

When Patrick was putting out from Britain for Ireland, a leper was asking for a place in the pinnacle, but there was none vacant, "so he (Patrick) put out before him the portable stone-altar whereon he used to make offering every day. *Sed tamen* God wrought a great miracle here, to wit, the stone went not to the bottom, nor did it stay behind them, but it swam round about the boat until it arrived in Ireland."





JOCELINE.—Joceline's account is: "The pen trembles to relate what, through the Divine power happened; the Stone, thus loaded, was borne upon the waves, guided by Him who is the headstone of the corner, and diverse from its nature floating along with the ship held therewith an equal course and, at the same moment, touched at the same shore".<sup>1</sup>

The Archbishop's opinion of Joceline is that "like his countryman and contemporary Gerald de Barri he was credulous, but we have no reason to doubt his veracity, and hence the sixth life (Joceline's) is of considerable value as reflecting the current views of the literary men of his time in the North-East of Ireland regarding the history of our national apostle".<sup>2</sup>

Joceline wrote, Dr. Healy tells us, at the request of John De Courci, "the conqueror and plunderer of Ulster, but the loving servant of Saint Patrick, who wished to have the saint's life and deeds worthily recorded". He was a "black monk" from Chester, one of a colony imported to the cathedral of Down at the time, the regular canons having been expelled from there, as generally happened all over Ireland then. This, it should be remembered, was in the twelfth century, when De Courci went to Ulster as its "plunderer", with Joceline as his chaplain.

<sup>1</sup> p. 37.

<sup>2</sup> p. 15.



Joceline, in ideas and sympathies, was a man after De Courci's heart.

These narratives are given here with a view to letting the reader understand the kind of compilations we have in the best of the Lives of St. Patrick.

DR. BURY'S LIFE.—More weight has been attached to Dr. Bury's Life of St. Patrick than to any other that has been written because of his eminence as a writer on Greek and Roman history, but he had certain preconceived ideas as to the kind of religion which Patrick came to propagate in Ireland, and these ideas may have been a hindrance to a fair statement of Patrick's life and work. "The fact", he says, "that the Christian Church, by its recognition of demons as an actual power with which it has to cope, stood in this respect on the same intellectual plane as the heathen, was an advantage in diffusing the religion. The belief in demons as a foe with which the Church had to deal was expressed officially in the institution of a clerical order called Exorcists, whose duty it was, by means of formulae, to exorcise devils at baptism. Patrick had exorcists in his train, and it was not unimportant that the Christian, going forth to persuade the heathen had such equipments of superstition."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> p. 77.



✓ As a motive for a visit to Rome, reference is made by Bury to a desire for further "equipments of superstition". "It is certain that Patrick could not have helped sharing in this universal reverence for relics, and could not have failed to deem it an object of high importance to secure things of such value for his Church. The hope of winning a fragment of a cerement cloth, or some grains of dust, would have been no small inducement to visit Rome, the city of many martyrs."<sup>1</sup> Patrick's writings do not give a trace of the "certainty" here alluded to.

The first of these two quotations begins with reference to "the fact" that the Church goes forth to her work with official exorcists and other equipments of superstition, but it should be understood that this fact is imported by Dr. Bury from a date two centuries distant from the time St. Patrick is supposed to have lived. The earliest Life of Patrick is that by Muirchu, which is contained in the *Book of Armagh*, and was written about the end of the seventh century. Dr. Gwynn describes it as "a very phantasmagoria of miracle".<sup>2</sup> Dr. Bury's theory is that these fables contain particles of truth, "metallic particles",<sup>3</sup> he calls them, which possibly a skilled critic may be able to discover. But we do not need to search for metallic particles in

<sup>1</sup> p. 152.

<sup>2</sup> p. xxix.

<sup>3</sup> p. 267.



Patrick's own writings; he gives us truth in the mass, and anything that is inconsistent with these writings should not be set forth as facts in his life and work. Metallic particles might be as slippery as sand, and might afford an unsafe foundation on which to erect a great structure.

The second quotation begins with: "It is certain". This refers to the *motive* of Patrick's journey to Rome, that is, the hope of winning a fragment of cerement cloth or some grains of dust. Patrick's writings do not give a trace or show a tendency towards the "certainty" here referred to.

TWO CERTAIN DATES.—"The chronological framework of St. Patrick's life", Dr. Bury states, "is determined by two certain dates, the year of his coming into Ireland, which rests upon clear and unvarying tradition, A.D. 432, and the year of his death, A.D. 461. This last date is supplied by the earliest source we have, Tirechan, and is supported by the independent evidence of the Annals. For although the false vulgar date (A.D. 493) established itself in the Annals, the true date remained inconsistently side by side with it."<sup>1</sup>

The compiler of the Annals died in A.D. 1498. Tirechan's Memoir was compiled about A.D. 670, that would be over two hundred years after the

<sup>1</sup> p. 331.



✓  
supposed date of Patrick's death. It is from these the "two certain dates" are derived. When Gibbon was reminded that there were sixty-six Lives of St. Patrick in existence, he replied, "as many thousand lies".<sup>1</sup> This may have been a flippant and rude remark, but it is surprising to find one of his most eminent disciples taking the whole collection and labelling it "clear and unvarying tradition", and making it the chronological framework of his Life of Patrick.

PATRICK'S FAILURES.—One of the most striking features of Dr. Bury's Life is the number of failures it puts to St. Patrick's account.

(1) *Easter*.—The Irish Church was in a state of heresy until the seventh century over the question of Easter. On page 372 Dr. Bury gives a table of the various cycles which had been adopted from time to time for the fixing of the Festival. The years in which new methods of computation were adopted were A.D. 312, 343, 457 and 525. These were modifications of "an older computation", which somehow found its way into Ireland, but had been in use abroad in very early times. "What surprises us is", says Dr. Bury, "that this Paschal reckoning which prevailed in Ireland in the sixth and seventh century was not the *supputatio Romana* of the fourth and fifth centuries." It is not probable,

<sup>1</sup> *Decline and Fall* iii. 201.



he tells us, that Patrick would introduce *any other system than that which was observed abroad*. "There is no evidence so far as I can discover", writes Bury, "that the Gallic Church did not agree with the Roman in the fourth and fifth century as to the Paschal limits." The same applies to the Alexandrian Church. The explanation given is that the old system had taken root among the Christian communities in Britain and Ireland "*before the arrival of Patrick*".<sup>1</sup> (Italics here are Bury's.) "This is what we should expect. It is in accordance with the hypothesis of the British origin of pre-Patrician Christianity in Ireland. It is easy to comprehend that Patrick, though accustomed to the *supputatio Romana*, acquiesced in the continuance of the other system or was unable to change it."

A reasonable curiosity might have prompted Dr. Bury to have followed this old usage back towards its origin before the year 312, but he did not move in that direction. He is insistent on asserting the existence of the usage *before Patrick came* to Ireland, but he offers no explanation of the firmness and resolution of the earlier Church in clinging to her old customs. How and when the older usage came to Ireland, and by whom it was brought, are questions

<sup>1</sup> p. 373.

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✓ which are carefully avoided, although they are obviously such questions as any ordinary reader might ask.

Since Patrick's writings are not given by Dr. Bury, he might have informed his readers as to how Patrick felt and acted in view of this Irish stubbornness. Did it grieve Patrick? Was he depressed by his failure at the beginning of his mission?

(2) *Armagh*.—Patrick had set his heart on fixing the chief seat of the Irish Church at Armagh, but in this also he failed. "When the day of his death drew near", we are told, "an angel came and warned him. Forthwith he made preparations and started for Armagh, which he loved above all places. But as he went a thorn-bush burst into flames on the wayside and was not consumed. And an angel spoke to him, not Victor, the angel who was accustomed to visit Patrick, but another sent by Victor, and turned him back, bidding him return to Saul (in County Antrim) and granting him four petitions as a consolation for the disappointment. Of these petitions two are significant; one was that the jurisdiction of his Church should remain in Armagh, the other that the posterity of Dichu (with whom Patrick lodged) should not die out."

This quotation is interesting, because it is



almost the only occasion on which Bury allows his authorities to speak for themselves. They are all kept in the background, and in this instance we are not told where the narrative is taken from. We might like to know what the other two petitions were which were granted, but this is denied to us.

If Armagh were specially dear to Patrick's heart, the name does not occur anywhere in his own writings. Bury's system of reasoning with regard to it is remarkable. The Tripartite Life, like Tirechan's, "is intended to support the claims of Armagh. Dr. MacCarthy even describes it (the Tripartite), as in its present form, rather a plea for the privileges of the primatial See than a eulogy of the Apostle of Ireland."<sup>1</sup>

But although there is no record of St. Patrick's own views as to Armagh, "it is hardly possible", we are told, "to escape the conclusion that he consciously and deliberately laid the foundations of its pre-eminence. It is true", Bury continues, "that some of his successors in the See supported and enhanced its claim to supremacy and domination by misrepresentations and forgeries, just as in a larger sphere the later Bishops of Rome made use of fabricated documents and accepted falsifications of history in order to establish their extravagant

<sup>1</sup> p. 270.



pretensions.”<sup>1</sup> And then the climax of the argument is reached as follows: “Misrepresentations could only increase an authority which already existed. They could not originate an authority *de novo*.” This applies to Rome. The forger had there a basis which lent itself to his plans, so also with Armagh. “If the Church of Armagh had been originally on the same footing as any of the other churches which were founded by Patrick, it is inconceivable that it could have acquired the pre-eminence which it enjoyed in the seventh century merely by means of the false assertion that the founder had made it supreme over all his other churches.” But Patrick died and was buried at Saul and his plans failed. “The Irish Church developed on lines which were quite distinct from the purpose of his design. The central authority at Armagh”, writes Bury, “could not maintain itself against the centrifugal spirit of the land, or resist the local love of local independence which operated in ecclesiastical exactly as in political affairs.”<sup>2</sup>

(3) *Appeals to Rome*.—“The injunction to appeal to Rome, though none would have thought of repudiating it, became a dead letter.”<sup>3</sup> This is Bury’s pithy admission. He does not suggest how a custom which no one would think of repudiating died out completely, especially in and

<sup>1</sup> p. 159.

<sup>2</sup> p. 183.

<sup>3</sup> p. 183.



after the fifth century. Nor is anything suggested as to St. Patrick's total silence on the subject in his own writings.

(4) *Tonsure*.—Bury states that Patrick introduced and “enforced” the Roman Tonsure, but that his rule was “disregarded” after his death, “the native clergy adopting the old National Tonsure of the Druids”.<sup>1</sup> In the course of time the Roman fell completely out of use, till it was restored in the seventh century.<sup>1</sup> We shall touch on the subject again, but we note for the present that Patrick failed wholly in enforcing this emblem; and the Celts were not fond of borrowing emblems from their enemies, yet they preferred the Druidical to the Roman in this instance.

(5) *Consecration*.—Patrick's greatest failure was in the continuance in Ireland of the primitive practice by which one bishop consecrated another by the laying on of hands. This continued in Ireland until the twelfth century, and was an endless source of controversy. But Bury does not take any notice of this, as if he felt ashamed of having to record so many failures. He represented Patrick and another bishop as going to Rome in the year 429 just when the case of one Armentarius<sup>2</sup> was being tried, and

<sup>1</sup> p. 143.

<sup>2</sup> Bishop Hefele, *History of the Councils*, iii. 157.



two bishops were punished for consecrating him without the presence of a third. No controversy as to how bishops should be consecrated appears to have been known to Patrick.

(6) *Patrick not needed*.—There is another fact on which Bury lays stress, and which points not so much to Patrick's failure as to the smallness of his importance in Ireland, and that, perhaps, is the strongest of all proofs of his failure. Dr. Todd believed that certain canons attributed to Patrick and two other bishops indicate a nearer approach to diocesan jurisdiction, and a more settled state of Christianity in Ireland than was possible in the days of St. Patrick. Dr. Bury replies: "So far as a relatively settled state of Christianity is concerned, it must be remembered that Todd did not realize how far Christianity had spread in Ireland before St. Patrick".<sup>1</sup> In the same connection, he says, "The circumstance that Patrick's missionary work was in the north and west of Ireland suggests that Christianity had made considerable progress in the south, and an apostle was *not needed* there in the same way". All this gives rise to the thought, Would the loss have been very great if Patrick had never come to Ireland? <sup>2</sup>

PATRICK'S MAIN SUCCESS.—Over against this sixfold failure there is one splendid achieve-

<sup>1</sup> p. 243.

<sup>2</sup> p. 351.



ment due to Patrick which, in Dr. Bury's eyes, covered a multitude of defeats. "Though his organization partially collapsed, and though the Irish Christians did not live up to his ideal of the *unitas ecclesiae*, there was one feature of his policy which was never undone. He made Latin the ecclesiastical language of Ireland."<sup>1</sup> Yet Latin was not his familiar tongue, as he was very painfully aware.

CARICATURES.—Strange to say, there is a candid admission that all these traditions about St. Patrick are of the nature of a caricature. The accounts of his acts, Bury tells us, "were not written from any historical interests, but simply for edification; and the monks who dramatized both actual and legendary interests were not concerned to regard, even if they had known, what manner of man he really was, but were guided by their knowledge of what popular taste demanded". The mediaeval hagiographer may be compared to the modern novelist: he provided literary recreation for the public, and he had to consider the public taste. This is an extraordinary admission from one who is supposed to be a serious historian. His authorities "dramatised both actual and legendary incidents". The mediaeval novelists "were guided by their knowledge of what popular taste demanded".

<sup>1</sup> p. 184.



The term "caricature" is Dr. Bury's. "The Bishop", he says, "of British birth and Roman education is gradually transformed into a typical Irish saint, dear to popular imagination, who curses men and even inanimate things which incur his displeasure. He arranges with the Deity that he shall be deputed to Judge the Irish on the day of doom. The forcefulness of the real Patrick's nature is coarsened by degrees into *Caricature*, until he becomes the dictator who coerces an angel into making a bargain with him on the Mount Murrisk." <sup>1</sup>

In contrast to the series of failures, St. Patrick writes as one who was conscious of success both as regards the numbers of his converts and of their character. Not one of the topics referred to is mentioned by him, and the tone and spirit of his writings are not in keeping with the circumstances pictured by Dr. Bury. In this connection the reader is advised to consult St. Patrick, as he opens his mind in two of the most honest documents to be found in the whole range of literature.

<sup>1</sup> p. 205.



## CHAPTER II

### PATRICK'S WRITINGS

THE two documents which we have from Patrick's pen are his Confession and his Epistle to Coroticus. Dr. White has bestowed upon these the skill of an expert in the criticism of manuscripts and the care of a seeker after truth. Every line, every syllable, every letter is placed under the microscope, not for the purpose of making explanations, but chiefly in order to remove, as fully as possible, the errors and such like blemishes which crept in during the course of the ages, so that we may be able to read with all the exactness possible what St. Patrick wrote.

St. Patrick's Confession is divided by Dr. White into a number of short sections, the last of which shows the solemn and deliberate spirit in which the whole was conceived and written. "I pray those who believe and fear God, whosoever shall have deigned to look upon or receive this writing, which Patrick, the sinner,



unlearned as everybody knows, composed in Ireland, that no one ever say it was my ignorance that did whatever trifling matter I did, or proved, in accordance with God's good pleasure, but judge ye, and let it be most truly believed that it was the gift of God, and this is my confession before I die."

PATRICK'S CREED.—In harmony with the feeling that the end was drawing near is the tone and spirit of the Confession all through—a sense of the Divine Presence is never absent. As might be expected under such conditions as these, we have a statement of his beliefs at the beginning of the Confession. The Creed is given here, not for the purpose of discussing any question of theology, but merely to let the reader compare it with other Creeds, as we might compare two independent reports of a football match, or the specifications of two carpenters for the making of a table, to see how far they agree and how far they differ.

#### ST. PATRICK'S CREED

There is no other God, nor was there ever any  
in times past,  
Nor shall there be hereafter, except God the  
Father,  
Unbegotten, without beginning, from whom  
is all beginning.



Almighty as we say,  
And His Son Jesus Christ,  
Whom we declare to have always existed  
with the Father,  
From the beginning of the world with the  
Father  
After the manner of a spiritual existence,  
Begotten ineffably before all beginning.  
And by Him were made things visible and  
invisible.  
He was made man,  
And having overcome death  
He was received up into heaven to the Father.  
And He gave to Him all power  
Above every name of things in heaven and  
things in earth,  
And things under the earth.  
And let every tongue confess to Him  
That Jesus Christ is Lord and God in whom  
we believe.  
And we look for His coming soon  
To be the judge of the quick and the dead,  
Who will render to every man according to  
his deeds.  
And He shed on us abundantly the Holy  
Ghost,  
The gift and earnest of immortality,  
Who makes those who believe and obey to  
become children of God





And joint heirs with Christ,  
Whom we confess and adore as one God  
In the Trinity of the Holy Name.<sup>1</sup>

PATRICK IGNORED ALL CREEDS.—The most remarkable feature of St. Patrick's Creed is not anything that it contains but its *unlikeness* to every other form of Creed in existence, and this unlikeness is greater in the Latin than in the English version. (The Latin is given at page 44.) Assuming that the reader himself is moderately familiar with the Nicene or the Apostles' Creed, I suggest that if he should take pen and paper in hand, and proceed to write down a statement of his beliefs as to the nature of the Deity and the work of Redemption, he will find the expressions of the old Creed flowing through his pen, unless he very deliberately avoids their use. But there was no reason why a fifth-century bishop, in view of his decease, should shun the use of the old form of belief, which had been so carefully hammered out about one hundred and twenty-five years previously at the Council of Nicaea amidst much contention, the results of which contention were still painfully evident in the world around him.

“LIKE.”—Next to the controversies of the

<sup>1</sup> Dr. White, *Latin Writings of St. Patrick*, p. 260.



sixteenth century, that of Nicaea in the year 325 was the greatest in the history of Christendom. Practically it all hinged around the word "like". The Orthodox said the Son is of "one substance" with the Father; the Arians said of "like substance"—like but not the same. The point at issue was of enormous significance. On the Arian theory another Messiah may yet come and the Revelation is not complete; on the Orthodox theory another Messiah will never come and the Revelation is complete.<sup>1</sup> Then, and during some years later, the Arians submitted as many as seventeen statements of belief with the object, "by hook or by crook", of getting the "like", or something equivalent to it, into the Creed, but they failed.<sup>2</sup> Never was there such hair-splitting. The result of the struggle was disastrous. Christianity was divided into two great camps. The Ostrogoths, Visigoths, Burgundians and Vandals were Arians, and, as a military force, stronger at times than the Catholics. The Empire—parts of three continents—was split in two over the one word "*like*".

Some explanation ought to be forthcoming of St. Patrick's avoidance of the carefully forged expressions of the Nicene Creed. If he

<sup>1</sup> Ferrero, p. 166.

<sup>2</sup> W. P. Du Bose, *The Ecumenical Councils*, p. xxx.



deliberately refused to use these formulae he was one of the greatest Dissenters in history. All the leading truths of the Gospels are contained in Patrick's Creed, which makes an explanation the more difficult. If he differed seriously from the Church of the fifth century a different form of Creed would naturally be expected, but where there was no difference, nor a trace of any, the old and universally received forms of belief should be as fitting as any other, and the production of a totally new form comes as a surprise.

Patrick laments the poverty of his Latin, yet he takes upon himself to introduce a whole series of novelties in his form of belief.

PRIMITIVE CREEDS.—We have Tertullian's Creed dating from about the end of the second, or early in the third century. It is found in the writings of St. Irenaeus with slight differences. The Creed of those two fathers is given by Professor M'Giffert as follows:

“I believe in God the Father Almighty,  
And in Jesus Christ His Son,  
Who was born of Mary the Virgin,  
Was crucified under Pontius Pilate and buried,  
On the third day rose from the dead,  
Ascended into heaven, sitteth on the right  
hand of the Father,



Whence He cometh to judge quick and dead;  
And in the Holy Spirit,  
Resurrection of the flesh.”<sup>1</sup>

Tertullian died in the year 220, but Irenaeus carries us back to the second century, when he taught the Celts in Southern Gaul in their own tongue, and Gaul is the only country referred to by Patrick in connection with his travels abroad. Irenaeus died about the year A.D. 202.

This Creed is probably the basis of the Nicene Creed of A.D. 325, the latter being brought up to date to meet the requirements of the time. As to this form also (Tertullian's) it must be said that Patrick could hardly have seen it, and ignored it as he is supposed to have done. Why, for example, did he omit the clause “Born of Mary the Virgin”? In the year 431, when Nestorius was condemned at the Ecumenical Council at Ephesus, a serious charge brought against him was that he objected to using the term “Theotokos”, or “Mother of God”. Although Patrick might not be expected to introduce this expression for the use of his converts, the controversy of the year 431—*the year before he is said to have come to Ireland*—should prompt him not to omit the closely related expression, “Mary the

<sup>1</sup> *The Apostles' Creed*, p. 7.



Virgin". No one knew better than did Pope Celestine of the "Acts" of the Council of Ephesus, and he would be the last to send a dissenting bishop to Ireland.

"Crucified under Pontius Pilate" is a clause which indicates clearly the date, to within a few years, of Calvary. Why was this omitted? Also the reference to "the third day", which Irenaeus and Tertullian give, but which Patrick omits. Nor is the word "resurrection" included. There is no question here being raised as to the *correctness* of Patrick's belief, but as to why he did not state his belief in the terms which he must have been accustomed to. He should have been afraid, if he were a fifth-century bishop, to depart from the accepted standard, in view of the bitter and widespread contentions which surrounded him over the insertion of even one small word in the Creed, which he would have learned as a boy. Yet he proceeded to cast aside all the authorized confessions of faith as he was preparing his "legacy" for his converts, as he says, "before I die".

ARISTIDES'S CREED: A.D. 131-161.—We have an older Creed which carries us back still further into the second century, that of Aristides (A.D. 131-161):<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Dean Spence, *Early Christianity and Paganism*, p. 130.



“We believe in one God, Almighty,  
Maker of heaven and earth,  
And in Jesus Christ His Son,  
Born of the Virgin Mary,  
He was pierced of the Jews,  
He died, and was buried,  
The third day He rose again,  
He ascended into heaven,  
He is about to come to judge.”

It is easy to see here how Tertullian's later document is modelled on the earlier of Aristides, as might be expected where no substantial difference exists between the authors. Two medical doctors, for example, make a *post-mortem* examination and are in complete agreement as to what they have found in their subject. One doctor prepares the report for the inquest, but the other reads it over before it leaves their hands, and adds a few trifling details which the former had omitted. Similarly, in the later of these two Creeds, the word “Father” is added in the first clause. Instead of “pierced of the Jews”, we have a fuller expression, “crucified under Pontius Pilate”; and so on. If a controversy had arisen in the Church between the preparation of the two forms, it might suggest an addition to the later form. The reference to the “Holy Spirit” in the second of these two



Creeds might have been due to some such controversy or discussion. But when we come down to the fifth century, and find the Church worn out and at her wits' end, and fighting with almost unchristian violence and bitterness for what she regards as essential truth, it is impossible to account for Patrick's Creed as coming from the hand of an aged bishop for the guidance of a Church which was perplexed by heresies on every side.

PATRICK KNEW NO CREEDS.—Professor M'Giffert has gone very fully into the composition and history of all the primitive Creeds. As to one very old one, which originated in the East or in Rome, and which he calls "R", he says that the *silence* of certain very early writers in Rome as to its existence proves that "it was not in use in Rome before the middle of the second century". He regards "silence" in such a case as this as an evidence that it was not known. Those Roman writers who lived before A.D. 150 would certainly have referred to it; and because they did not refer to it, it could not have been known to the Church in Rome. This applies to Patrick also. He referred to no Creeds because *he knew of none*.

Professor M'Giffert goes on to say, with reference to the form "R", that "it would be natural to see in the false teachings, which were now for



the first time causing alarm, the primary reason for its composition",<sup>1</sup> and that it must have been written about A.D. 175.<sup>2</sup> Patrick referred to no false teachings because *he knew of none*, and was not alarmed. That Patrick could have written his Creed in the fifth century, or in the fourth, and ignored the carefully drawn out teaching of his Church, especially the Nicene Creed, is incredible.

There were British bishops at the Council of Arles in 314. Patrick is supposed to have been taught his religion in a clerical home and by British clergy about a century later—clergy who knew all about the niceties of Arianism and of Nicaea, and who knew of the points of controversy between Augustine and Pelagius; and yet their pupil, Patrick, lived to be an old bishop, and appears, under the most unlikely circumstances, to be oblivious to everything about the doctrines of the Church, *except as he read them in the Bible for himself*.<sup>3</sup> This is the method by which the very earliest Creeds were drawn up, according to M'Giffert, that is, "under the influence of the common Gospel tradition".

PATRICK KNEW NO HERESIES.—Dr. Kidd is to the like effect. The earliest form of Creed, he tells us, gave simple instruction about the Lord Jesus. "It was positive, not controversial in

<sup>1</sup> p. 106.

<sup>2</sup> p. 83.

<sup>3</sup> p. 77.



intention, being concerned mainly with the facts of our Lord's life and not with the doctrinal interpretation of them, so we have a witness to its origin in remote antiquity from a period *before the heresies arose*."<sup>1</sup> Here again is an account which tallies with every word of Patrick's Creed—it was written before the heresies arose.

More important still is the account given by Dr. Gwynn. Dr. Kidd was referring to the very early Creeds in general; for all we know, he may never have seen Patrick's Creed; but Dr. Gwynn was writing on Patrick's Creed in particular. His reference to it is: "It is in form a single affirmation of a series of articles of faith, not a negation of error or heresies; the Creed, in a word, not of a controversialist but of an evangelist".<sup>2</sup> This would apply with equal force to any very early Creed that we know of. Neither errors nor heresies nor controversies are reckoned with.

Here it should be remarked that all our scholars have assumed that St. Patrick was a fifth- or fourth-century bishop, and that his writings must be taken as documents of that period. Whether it ever crossed their minds or not that Patrick's language was out of keeping with the time in which he was said to live, we cannot tell. Dr. Gwynn, in any case, was not

<sup>1</sup> *History*, i. 266.

<sup>2</sup> p. xcix.



engaged in writing a Life of St. Patrick, but in the huge task of editing the *Book of Armagh*. This book contains the whole of the New Testament, every word and letter of which had to pass, figuratively at least, under the microscope. It also contains Muirchu's Life of St. Patrick; also Tirechan's Memoirs of him; also the Liber Angeli, which deals with Armagh; also a Life of St. Martin of Tours, and along with all these St. Patrick's Confession.

THE CREED-TESTING AGE.—The Athanasian Creed was not drawn up by St. Athanasius, as all the writers admit, but was probably composed by St. Hilary of Arles and St. Vincent, who were both together at Lerins. The opening clause is: "Whosoever will be saved before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholic Faith". In their day the Arians were in the habit of speaking of the Catholics as "Athanasians",<sup>1</sup> and when their new form of belief was put forth it was called "the Athanasian Creed". But the date given for this is A.D. 429, that is three years before St. Patrick is said to have come to Ireland. Apart from this exact date, it was a *creed-testing time* and controversies were rife, but Patrick was oblivious to them all.

WOULD PATRICK TAMPER WITH THE NICENE CREED?—We should notice how Patrick takes

<sup>1</sup> Bishop H. Browne, *Thirty-nine Articles*, p. 224.



the sentence "made things visible and invisible" and predicates it the Second Person of the Trinity instead of the First, as in the Nicene Creed. Would a fifth-century Patrick thus tamper with the Nicene Creed by taking one of its sections and using it in a way of his own, while he ignored all the remainder?

Notice also how he uses this sentence exactly as Professor M'Giffert says the primitive Creed-makers always did—by drawing their definitions directly from the Bible, that is, writing "under the influence of the common Gospel tradition"—thus he draws from Colossians i. 16.

Notice further the definiteness of his doctrine. Dean Liddon refers to this passage five times in his *Divinity of Christ*.<sup>1</sup> Patrick uses also the expression, "Jesus Christ is Lord and God in whom we believe". Also

"Whom we confess and adore as one God  
In the Trinity of the Holy Name."

THE VITAL CLAUSE.—Christendom was split in two before a fifth-century bishop's eyes by the vital clause "of one Substance with the Father", but Patrick, the Legate of Pope Celestine, ignored this vital clause—he shelved it! I suggest that this theory is impossible.

<sup>1</sup> pp. 309, 313, 314, 319, 413.



CREED-MAKING.—Dr. Kidd, Professor M'Giffert and other writers are in perfect agreement as to the way in which the earliest Creeds were produced. The authors were not controversial but instructive, they hardly knew that they were writing formal Creeds, they meant to set out certain important truths which it would be well for people generally to understand. Certain errors, which *we* know all about, were not referred to, because these errors *had not yet been broached*. Certain credal expressions, which we are familiar with, were not mentioned, because these expressions *had not yet been formulated* or heard of. We believe the old form "R"—whether it originated in Rome or the East is doubtful—did not come into existence till the latter part of the second century, because the silence of earlier writers with regard to it is reasonably good evidence that *they had never seen it*. All this fits in perfectly with St. Patrick's Creed as a document of very early date. Any twentieth-century theologian, or historian, or other critic who can account for it in any other hypothesis, will be doing a service to history. He might try his hand. That is, let him assume that Patrick came to Ireland after Palladius, in the year 432 or later; that he was sent by Pope Celestine or Pope Sixtus, or any later Pope; that he was a bishop; that he was



educated in Britain or Gaul or Spain or Italy; that he spent the remainder of his life in Ireland, and towards the end he wrote this Creed—I suggest that this theory is incredible.

PATRICK'S LATIN CREED.—Quia non est alius Deus nec umquam fuit nec ante nec erit post haec praeter Deum Patrem ingenitum, sine principio, a quo est omne principium, omnia tenentem ut dicimus, et eius Filium Iesum Christum, qui cum Patre scilicet semper fuisse testamur ante originem saeculi spiritualiter apud Patrem inenarrabiliter genitum ante omne principium. Et per ipsum facta sunt uisibilia et inuisibilia, hominem factum, morte deuicta in caelis ad Patrem receptum. Et dedit illi omnem potestatem super omne nomen caelestium et terrestrium et infernorum, et omnis lingua confiteatur ei quia Dominus et Deus est Iesus Christus quem credimus. Et expectamus aduentum ipsius mox futurum iudex uiuorum atque mortuorum, Qui reddet unicuique secundum facta sua. Et effudit in nobis habunde Spiritum Sanctum, donum et pignus immortalitatis, qui facit credentes et oboedientes ut sint filii Dei et coheredes Christi, quem confitemur et adoramus unum Deum in Trinitate sacri nominis.

PATRICK THE FIRST BISHOP.—Dr. Bury states that St. Patrick's work was mainly confined to the north and west of Ireland—that he



was not needed in Leinster and Munster in the same way as in Ulster and Connaught. This view is based upon certain of the Lives which propagate local rivalries. I suggest that the writings of Patrick himself show no trace of any such rivalry, but that his episcopate was wholly of a national character. His own writings convey the impression that he was the *first bishop who ever set foot in Ireland*, and that he found there believers who were unbaptized and without any clergy to minister amongst them. Dr. MacNeill and Mr. King,<sup>1</sup> on the other hand, suggest that there were both bishops and clergy in Ireland before Patrick's time, and that his writings bear witness to this. What they refer to is Section number 51 of his Confession, which, on this account, is specially important.

There are, in all, 83 sections in the Confession and Epistle, but the MacNeill and King theory rests wholly on Section 51.

A SEEMING IMPLICATION.—Dr. MacNeill's comment on Section 51 is: "St. Patrick himself in his Confession seems to testify by implication to the existence not merely of Christians but of Christian communities with their clergy in and before his time in Ireland. 'For your sakes', Patrick writes, 'I have faced many dangers, going even to the limits of the land

<sup>1</sup> Rev. R. King, *Church History of Ireland*, p. 3.



where no one was before me, and whither no one was yet come to baptize or ordain clergy.'"

"This surely implies (says Dr. MacNeill) that there were places in Ireland, not in the remoter parts, places where some had come before Patrick and had performed the purely episcopal functions of ordination and confirmation."<sup>1</sup>

Dr. White's rendering is slightly different. I underline a few of his words: "I spent for you that they might receive me, and *both amongst you*, and wherever I journeyed *for your sakes* through many perils, even to outlying regions beyond which no man dwelt, and where never anyone had come to baptize or ordain clergy, or confirm the people, I have, by the bounty of the Lord, done everything, carefully and very gladly, *for your salvation*".

I suggest that the Confession was addressed to all Christians in Ireland, both in "the remoter parts" and the most central, and that Patrick reminded all of them that "for their sakes" he had faced many dangers.

Dr. White recognizes the vagueness of Section 51, on which he says: "This language certainly permits us to suppose that there may have been not only Christian congregations, but an organized Christian Church, in those parts of Ireland more accessible to Britain and the

<sup>1</sup> *Phases of Irish History*, p. 162.



continent of Europe than was the Wood of Fochlut". On the other hand, Dr. White states that if we accept Section 41 (not 51) without any qualifications "we must suppose that Ireland was *utterly heathen* until his arrival as a Christian preacher. . . . Moreover, Patrick certainly speaks of the establishment of a Christian Church in Ireland as *a recent event*, and implies that it was *due to his efforts*." Again, "Patrick speaks as if he were *the only bishop* in Ireland, and claims to have ordained clergy everywhere. He reckons his converts by thousands, countless numbers, and refers to his constant journeyings through the country."<sup>1</sup> Dr. White does not try to reconcile these contradictory statements from St. Patrick's pen. It was not his province to do so. He merely explains the various sections as he passes along.

AN ILLUSTRATION.—The implication referred to might be illustrated by a reference to Japan at the present time. Missionary work has been going on in Japan for a long period, with the result that there are now bishops and clergy there, and dioceses in which Christianity is fairly well rooted, but there are *remoter parts* in Japan into which the Church has not yet penetrated. If it were reported to us that in these "remoter parts" *laymen* had been in-

<sup>1</sup> p. 229.



structing the people, with the result that a goodly number of believers were amongst them wishing for baptism and the ministrations of the Church, but that the existing bishops and clergy were unable or unwilling to push out into those "remoter parts", and that a new and enthusiastic evangelist comes on the scene—a bishop, who believes that he is called by God for a great national work in Japan, and that he has dreamt of the voice of the Japanese calling to him to come to their rescue—we should then have a parallel to what happened in Ireland on St. Patrick's coming, according to the theory with which we are concerned. If, furthermore, the new-comer were to write an autobiography, or Confession, in which he sets forth very joyfully the splendour of his success in Japan, and makes no reference to any of the bishops or clergy who had been working there before him, completely and proudly ignores them, in fact, except for one very vague and doubtful expression in "Section 51", we should have a still closer and more obvious parallel to what is said to have happened in Ireland at the time of Patrick's coming. We should at once suspect that those bishops and clergy in Japan were unworthy of their office, and, if we were subscribers towards their maintenance, we should shut our purses until an explanation was received which would



remove our suspicions. We should also wonder how the laymen who had been working in the "remoter parts" felt on the failure of the neighbouring Church to come to the rescue of "the few sheep in the wilderness".

WANTED! AN ADJUSTMENT.—No attempt has been made by Mr. King or Dr. MacNeill to adjust the doubtful phrase in Section 51 to the other contradictory statements pointed out by Dr. White, who does not take a "side" in the discussion. I suggest that such an adjustment should have been made, seeing that a theory of enormous proportions is being supported by this one expression. These writers follow quite sincerely the lead given by the "Lives" in bringing Palladius first into Ireland, where there was already an organized Church, and then bringing Patrick a year later. Some confirmation of the whole arrangement would naturally be looked for in Patrick's own writings and it is found in the phrase referred to. Dr. MacNeill describes this phrase, quite fairly, as only a seeming implication. Patrick "seems to testify by implication", but the drift of the implication is accepted unreservedly without regard to the contrary statements. There is not another phrase, nor a word, from St. Patrick of a similar tendency.

The whole substance and tone and spirit of



his writings are those of a missionary who believed that he was divinely sent to evangelize a heathen nation, and to organize a Church in it from shore to shore—to the limits beyond which no man dwelt; and who is devoutly grateful that, ignorant and all as he was, he performed a work “so holy and so wonderful”. Patrick was no mere local preacher who was “not needed” far from the wood of Fochlut. The fact that these two writers did not attempt to make an adjustment which was obviously necessary should be noted.

THE ADJUSTMENT.—How can Section 51 be reconciled with the general purport of St. Patrick’s writings? What adjustment can be made from this point of view?

I suggest that the seeming contradiction between Section 51 and the other sections is due to Patrick’s awkwardness in expressing himself in Latin. In this connection he envies others who “have never changed their language from the time that they were born”.<sup>1</sup> His speech, he tells us, was translated into a tongue not his own, “as can easily be proved from the savour of my writing”. “I blush”, he continues, “and am exceeding afraid to lay bare my skillessness, because, not being learned, I am unable to make my meaning plain in a few words.”<sup>2</sup> He comes

<sup>1</sup> Sec. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Sec. 10.



back to the same thought also in Sections 11, 13, 34, 35, 62, 20 Ep.

Further, in Professor Zimmer's opinion, Patrick's Confession is "an illiterate and inane production". Dr. Gwynn protests that there is no excuse for a contemptuous expression such as this, but we are justified in taking Zimmer's statement as evidence that Patrick was awkward in expressing himself in the Latin tongue.

But more than all this, Dr. Gwynn himself admits that Patrick's Latin was "disjointed", and the Confession "irregular and confused"<sup>1</sup> in form, and "difficult (sometimes to the point of unintelligibility) in style and diction".<sup>2</sup> In view of this, is it to be wondered at that, for once, there is such an ambiguity as we meet with in Section 51?

Bearing further on the point is Dr. Gwynn's statement that "Patrick declares himself as charged with the evangelization of *heathen Ireland at large*, and thanks God for the success that, notwithstanding its hindrances, has crowned his labours".<sup>3</sup>

On the other hand, no theory of "awkwardness" or irregularity in form could account for this last quotation, where Patrick rejoices over his success in evangelizing heathen Ireland at large.

<sup>1</sup> p. lxxx.

<sup>2</sup> p. xxi.

<sup>3</sup> p. xcix.





I suggest, therefore, that Section 51 does not warrant us in believing that St. Patrick found bishops and clergy in Ireland before him, or that he himself informs us of the existence of such bishops and clergy.

ONE THREAD.—But the whole weight of the argument for a pre-Patrician Christianity in Ireland, so far as Patrick's evidence is concerned, rests on this one thread. If it is not here, it is nowhere.

At the same time it must be admitted, as a matter of course, that all the scholars and critics believed there were bishops and clergy in Ireland before St. Patrick's time. But what we are concerned with here is not what the critics say, but what Patrick himself says. It is a case of *Patrick contra mundum*.

PATRICK'S MISSION WAS A NATIONAL ONE.—Sec. 13.—“I was called by God”, he says, that “I should faithfully serve *the nation* to whom the love of Christ conveyed me, and presented me, as long as I live if I should be worthy, in fine that I should with humility and in truth serve them.”

Sec. 15.—“I was not worthy . . . that He should bestow on me so great grace towards that *nation*, a thing that formerly, in my youth, I never hoped for nor thought of.”

Sec. 61.—“I testify in truth . . . that I had



never any cause except the Gospel and His promises for ever returning to that *nation* from whence previously I scarcely escaped."

Sec. 10 (Epistle).—"Did I come to Ireland without God or according to the flesh? . . . I am a slave in Christ to a *foreign nation* on account of the unspeakable glory of eternal life which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Sec. 14.—He was sent to make known the gift of God and "to spread *everywhere* the name of God without fear, confidently, so that after my decease I may leave a legacy to my brethren and sons whom I baptize in the Lord, so many thousands of persons".

Sec. 38.—"I am debtor exceedingly to God, who granted me such great grace that many peoples through me should be regenerated to God and afterwards confirmed, and that clergy should *everywhere* be ordained for them, to a *people newly come to belief* which the Lord took from the ends of the earth."

Sec. 50.—"The Lord ordained clergy *everywhere* by means of my mediocrity, and I imparted my service to them for nothing. If I demanded from one of them even the price of my shoe, tell it against me and I shall restore you more."

PATRICK CAME TO A HEATHEN PEOPLE.—  
Secs. 36, 37.—Many gifts were offered to him



by his elders, with weeping and tears, but he parted "with fatherland and parents". God, who overcame in him, "withstood them all, so that I came to the *heathen* Irish to preach the Gospel . . . until I die if the Lord would grant it unto me".

Sec. 46.—"They were talking among themselves (in Britain) behind my back saying, why does this fellow thrust himself into danger amongst enemies *who have not the knowledge of God.*"

THERE WAS NO LOCUM TENENS FOR PATRICK.—  
Sec. 43.—Patrick longed *to visit his parents* in Britain, and to go as far as Gaul *to visit the brethren*, "and to behold the face of the saints of my Lord. God knoweth that I used to desire it exceedingly. Yet I am bound in the Spirit, who witnesseth to me that if I should do this, *He would note me as guilty*, and I fear to lose *the labour which I began*, and yet not I but Christ the Lord, who commanded me to come and be with them *for the remainder of my life* if the Lord will, and if He should guard me from every evil way so that I may not sin in his sight."

Sec. 58.—"Wherefore *let it not happen* to me from my God *that I should ever part with His people* which He purchased in the ends of the earth. I pray God to give me perseverance and



to deign that I render myself to Him as a faithful witness *until my passing hence* for the sake of my God."

WAS PATRICK PRESUMPTUOUS?—If there had been other bishops working in Ireland, does not Patrick display some undue presumption in ignoring them and their work?

Sec. 34.—"*Who am I, O Lord, or what is my calling that Thou hast disclosed such Divine power in me?* so that to-day, among the heathen, *I should steadfastly exalt and magnify Thy name* wherever I may be, so that I, ignorant, should in the last days *begin* to undertake this work *so holy and so wonderful, so that I might imitate, in some degree, those whom the Lord long ago foretold would herald His Gospel, for a witness to all nations before the end of the world.* And accordingly, as we see, this has been so fulfilled. Behold, we are witnesses that the Gospel has been preached to the limit beyond which no man dwells."

Patrick is almost irreverent in supposing that *through him*, as in times past God had promised through His prophets, "the Gentiles shall come from the ends of the earth", and that *he* (Patrick) was set to be a light to the Gentiles and for salvation to the ends of the earth.<sup>1</sup> There is more in the same strain, unduly egotistical, in a mere

<sup>1</sup> Sec. 38.





third- or fourth-rate missionary coming to a country where the Cross had long since been raised "with considerable success" by pioneers whose names he, Patrick, takes care will not be mentioned. This thought is unjust to Patrick. It is a perversion of his whole character and spirit as reflected in his Confession, which is that of the first bishop who set foot in Ireland.

WERE THERE IRISH SECTS BEFORE PATRICK?—Furthermore, there must have been three parties in Ireland claiming Patrick's attention if he came in 432. Palladius had been sent the previous year as "the first bishop to the Christians in Ireland". This, Dr. MacNeill says, meant the first bishop *in communion with Rome*.

Then Patrick came to fill the gap left by Palladius, and he would be the second bishop in Ireland in communion with Rome, but all the other bishops there—and, according to Bury, their number would be greater than Dr. Todd realized—would be, we may suppose, Pelagians, certainly heretics, following a heretical Easter, and using a Druidical Tonsure, and being consecrated by one bishop only. Along with these, there would be "the heathen". Let us try to picture a modern bishop going into Japan, and spending many years there amid Roman Catholic and Anglican bishops, and also the heathen, and then writing such a Confession as we have



from St. Patrick. I suggest that Patrick's mission was purely national in its character and at a very early date, and that there is not a trace of any such ecclesiastical parties in Ireland, and that Patrick's writings are out of keeping with the existence of any such. Nor is there any evidence that Patrick resisted the observers of a peculiar Easter, or of a peculiar Tonsure, or of a peculiar method of consecrating bishops. He dealt with heathen and converts from heathenism only. These he baptized and confirmed, and ordained clergy for them.

NO ORTHODOX BISHOP IN IRELAND BEFORE 431.—The Popes regarded Pelagian bishops as "so-called bishops", and it is easy to see why Palladius was regarded as "the first bishop". All who were in Ireland before him were not truly members of the Episcopal Order. This is borne out by Archbishop Wilfrid at Whitby in A.D. 664, who says: "Now are here in Britain many bishops whom it is not for me to criticize, but I know for a fact that they are Quarto-decimans like the Britons and Scots (Irish), by them were ordained men whom the Apostolic See does not receive into Communion, nor does she even receive those who have fellowship with the schismatics. So in all humility I ask you to send me under your protection across the sea to the land of the Gauls, where there are many



bishops who are considered Catholic, so that, without any objection on part of the Apostolic See I may, though unworthy, deserve to receive the rank of Bishop." The same Wilfrid makes the following boast: "Was not I the first, after the death of the first elders who were sent by Gregory (A.D. 595), to root out the poisonous weeds planted by the Scots"—as to Easter and the Tonsure, etc.

A CONTRAST: THE TRUE PATRICK.—We have read two sentences which are worth bringing together, even at the inconvenience of repetition.

(1) Patrick longed to visit his parents in Britain, and to go as far as Gaul to visit the brethren, "and to behold the face of the saints of my Lord. God knoweth", he said, "that I used to desire it exceedingly. Yet I am bound in the Spirit, who witnesseth to me that if I should do this, He would note me as guilty, and I fear to lose the labour which I began, and yet not I but Christ the Lord, who commanded me to come and be with them for the remainder of my life if the Lord will. . . . Wherefore let it not happen to me from my Lord *that I should ever part with his people . . . until my passing hence*".

THE CARICATURE.—(2) As a motive for a visit to Rome, reference is made by Dr. Bury to a desire for further "equipments of superstition". "It is certain", he tells us, "that Patrick could



not have helped sharing in this universal reverence for relics, and could not have failed to deem it an object of importance to secure things of such value for his Church. The hope of winning a fragment of a cerement cloth, or some grains of dust, would have been no small inducement *to visit Rome*, the City of many Martyrs", and therefore he went.

These two statements are directly opposed to each other, nor can they be reconciled. If we take away from the first statement Patrick's resolution and vow never to part with his people in Ireland until his "passing hence", there is practically nothing left. The one thing for which the Spirit would note him as "guilty" was his leaving Ireland. God knew how exceedingly he longed to visit his parents in Britain and the brethren in Gaul, but it must not be.

If from the second statement we take away the fact of the journey to Rome, there is nothing left but a few trivial words. But the Tripartite Life informs us that Patrick went three times to Rome "after having been a-learning in the land". An angel came to Patrick at Armagh and said, "To-day the relics of the Apostles are divided in Rome throughout the four quarters of the globe". And the Angel carried Patrick in the air, and God appeared to him in the shape which He will have on the Day of Judgment.



And Patrick came to Rome, "and sleep fell on the inhabitants of Rome so that Patrick brought away as much as he wanted of the relics. Afterwards these relics were taken to Armagh by the counsel of God and the counsel of the men of Ireland. What was brought there was three hundred and three score and five relics, together with the relics of Paul and Peter and Lawrence and Stephen and many others. And a sheet was there with Christ's blood (thereon), and the hair of Mary the Virgin. Patrick left the whole collection in Armagh according to the will of God and of the Angel and the men of Ireland."<sup>1</sup>

How then must we deal with these two antagonistic statements? Dr. Bury would probably say that the "metallic particle" of truth in the Tripartite story is that Patrick went to Rome, and that all the references to the relics might be discarded (although he was "certain" that Patrick would covet such things). On the other hand, it will be said that the metallic particle in St. Patrick's own statement is that he did not go to Rome; that he believed God would hold him "guilty" had he done so. How are we to decide between the two? I suggest that in Patrick's statement there is not a particle of error, and that in the Tripartite statement there is not a particle of truth.

<sup>1</sup> Tripartite, p. 239.



## CHAPTER III

### LOOKING OUTWARDS

SECOND-CENTURY CHURCHES.—There is evidence from foreign sources as to the early introduction of Christianity into Ireland which cannot be overlooked. St. Ignatius, who died about A.D. 140, spoke of bishops as “extending to the boundaries of the world”, but this is too vague to be of much value in our inquiry.

Justin Martyr, *who lived to about* A.D. 175, is more definite, although the British Islands are not specially named by him.

“There exists”, he says, “not a people whether Greek or Barbarian, or any other race of men by whatsoever appellations or manners they may be distinguished, however ignorant of arts or agriculture, whether they dwell under tents or wander about in covered wagons, among whom prayers are not offered up in the name of the Crucified Jesus to the Father and Creator of all things.”<sup>1</sup> If we regard the author of this state-

<sup>1</sup> W. W. Capes, *Roman Empire of the Second Century*, p. 138.



ment as a careful writer, who measured his words by the evidence at hand, we should feel that the Gospel had come to Ireland in his day.

St. Irenaeus, who died about the year 202, said that in his day many barbarous nations had the traditional faith of the Church written in their hearts by the Holy Spirit "without the instrumentality of paper and ink".<sup>1</sup> The reference to the absence of paper and ink is peculiar. There was no more inkless spot in the West than Ireland, the home of the Druids, who loved learning and despised paper and ink. It might seem over-fanciful to suppose that Irenaeus had this thought in his mind, yet there must have been something to account for his peculiar way of expressing himself. There was hardly any barbarous nation in which there were not a few at least who were able to write. In Ireland the learned people refused to write anything in their own language. Irenaeus himself was a prolific writer, and if he met with eccentric people (as they would seem to him) who drank in all he taught them, and stored it in their memories, and refused to write down a word, he would be unlikely to forget such a strange procedure. At all events, the Gospel was received in some far-off place where paper and ink were not used, and it

<sup>1</sup> *Adv. Haer.* III. iv. 2.



is a fact that Druidism was sworn against writing anything in its own language.

CAN WE BELIEVE TERTULLIAN?—We next come to Tertullian, who said that “places in the Britains inaccessible to the Romans are subject to Christ”. He died about A.D. 220. Dr. Pullan makes the strange comment that, while he may have spoken truly about Britain, “he probably exaggerated”<sup>1</sup> in reference to “places in Britain inaccessible to the Romans”. There is no evidence offered for this doubt, except that generally there is the impression that Tertullian was “rhetorical” in his statements. There are some kinds of subject which lend themselves to rhetoric; but when Tertullian says that Christians were to be found above Hadrian’s Wall, or beyond the Irish Sea, his words were either true or false. Professor Harnack said “Tertullian’s notice is of no consequence”,<sup>2</sup> but Professor Glover’s opinion of him is: “In some ways he very much resembles Thomas Carlyle; he has the same passion, the same vivid imagination and keen sensibility, the same earnestness and the *same loyalty to truth* as he sees it, regardless of consequences”.<sup>3</sup> The awkward feature of the case is, that the most interesting and important

<sup>1</sup> p. 103.

<sup>2</sup> II. 272.

<sup>3</sup> *The Conflict of Religions in the Early Roman Empire*, p. 311.



correspondence between Pliny and the Emperor Trajan concerning the early Christians, and how they should be dealt with, rests upon the witness of Tertullian. The Dean of St. Patrick's (Dr. Lawlor) and Canon Oulton in their edition of *Eusebius*, just published, inform us that "Eusebius knew nothing of the correspondence between Trajan and Pliny except what he learned from the Greek version of Tertullian's apology".<sup>1</sup> What Tertullian said about Ireland is far less important than what he said about Trajan and Pliny.

Professor Harnack admits that Christianity may have been in Britain "by the end of the second century".<sup>2</sup> Dr. Pullan says "there can be little doubt that Christianity was the foreign superstition" of which, according to Tacitus, Pomponia Graecina, wife of Aulus Plautius, the conqueror of Britain, became a votary in the reign of Nero (A.D. 54-68). This suggests that the beginning of the Church may have been planted in Britain in the first century, although it might not have been an organized Church.

Just as Tertullian was writing at Carthage, the Emperor Septimus Severus was dying at York (A.D. 211), the headquarters of the Brigantes, who were kinsmen to the Brigantes of Wexford. Septimus was a persecutor to the

<sup>1</sup> ii. 105.

<sup>2</sup> p. 410.



extent that he forbade the further extension of Christianity.<sup>1</sup> Naturally, people everywhere—in Carthage, Rome, Gaul, Britain and Ireland, too—would be on the lookout to see the result. But if Tertullian's evidence as to Ireland or Scotland goes for nothing, the Trajan-Pliny correspondence goes too, and Pliny is regarded as a "first-rate witness". "A chain is no stronger than its weakest link", and if the "Tertullian" link is but a cobweb, then Pliny is gone.

TRAVELLING EASY IN FIRST CENTURY.—There is no good ground for doubting Tertullian either as regards Pliny or the British Islands.

During the first and second centuries the Empire was in comparative peace as regards outside enemies—the Picts and Scots were probably the most aggressive—and travellers were numerous. Sir Samuel Dill, writing of the time of Nero (54–68), says: "Apart from the immense stimulus which was given to trade and commerce by the pacification of the world, liberal curiosity or restless ennui, or *the passion to preach and propagate new ideas*, carried immense numbers to the most distant lands. The sea was alive with merchantmen, deserts have become populous scenes of industry, the great roads are carried over the broadest rivers and the most defiant

<sup>1</sup> H. S. Jones, *Roman Empire*, p. 302.



mountain barriers. At the gates of country towns, such as Pompei, Praeneste and Tibur, there were stations of the posting corporations where carriages could be hired, with changes of horses at each station."<sup>1</sup> So it was in the East and the West. There were 200 post stations or mansions<sup>2</sup> between Bordeaux and Constantinople, and ninety-one inns—an inn at an interval of every half-day's journey. A milestone was placed at the end of each thousand paces.

The roads, horses, chariots, drivers and changing-stations between Rome and Boulogne were as efficient and up-to-date soon after the time of Augustus as they have been at any later period before the invention of the steam-engine, and the boats crossing from Holyhead and St. David's (Fishguard) were as well built, masted, sailed (in canvas or skins) and manned as at any time before A.D. 1820.<sup>2</sup> Tertullian's statement ought to be accepted in its literal sense, that places in the Britains, inaccessible to the Romans, were subject to Christ at about the year A.D. 200, and the Church should be fairly well organized before it would be talked of in Carthage.

NO CORPORATION—NO CHURCH.—Professor Harnack made the discovery, or at least im-

<sup>1</sup> Dill, *Roman Society from Nero to Marcus Aurelius*, p. 206.

<sup>2</sup> Dean Stanley's *Eastern Church*, p. 87.



agined that he did, that unless there were certain "municipal" arrangements, such as town councils or corporations, or bodies of that nature, in a district, any Christianizing process was almost out of question. "It was only in certain Celtic provinces," he states, "such as Ireland, that a Church surmounted this obstacle, and not until she had acquired in monasticism a fresh and more opportune instrument for her propaganda."<sup>1</sup> He held the idea that there was no organized Church in Ireland until the fifth century, and this is his explanation.

Yet when St. Paul had that dream—not unlike Patrick's—which brought him across to Macedonia, he could not even find a Jewish synagogue there which might be of use to him, but he went out to a river-side where a few Jews resorted for worship, and there made his first convert in Europe—a woman from Asia who was a seller of purple. There he fell foul of the magistrates—the Town Council—who beat Paul and his companion Silas, "laid many stripes on them" and "thrust them into the inner prison and made their feet fast in the stocks". But it dawned on the impetuous decurions that they had made a mistake, and the following day they sent the sergeants ordering their release, to whom Paul answered, "They have beaten us

<sup>1</sup> *The Expansion of Christianity*, ii. 437.



openly uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast us into prison, and now do they thrust us out privily? nay, verily, but let them come themselves and fetch us out". "And they came and besought them and brought them out and desired them to depart out of the city." And when they (Paul and Silas) had seen the brethren in the purple-seller's house and comforted them, they departed. This was all the help Paul got from the Town Council in founding his first church in Europe. And if, afterwards, he had a favourite among all the churches he founded, it was certainly that at Philippi. At Ephesus again—where the great temple was of Diana of the Ephesians, one of the seven wonders of the world—there were silversmiths who made little figures of the goddess, which people bought and carried away to their homes. Paul said to the people, "There be no gods which are made with hands". The smiths became furious, and gathered a crowd and nearly tore some of Paul's friends to pieces. But the Town Clerk intervened, saying, "Ye ought to be quiet and to do nothing rashly, for ye have brought hither these men which are neither robbers of churches nor yet blasphemers of your goddess", and with some wholesome advice he dismissed the assembly. Neither here nor anywhere did St. Paul seek, or even desire, the help of Town Councils in found-



ing his churches, and it is not easy to explain the frame of mind of the historian who entertains such a notion.

SECOND-CENTURY CHRISTIANS IN BRITAIN.—For all this, Professor Harnack makes an admission which fully accords with the early introduction of Christianity to Ireland. "It is quite possible that Christians had arrived in Britain and laboured there by the end of the second century." <sup>1</sup>

Another remark of his is exemplified in the undeveloped kind of church to which St. Patrick's Confession refers, such as traders might have founded merely by telling the news. "We cannot hesitate to believe", he states, "that the great mission of Christianity was in reality accomplished by means of informal missionaries. Justin says so explicitly. What won him was the impression made by the moral life which he found among the Christians in general. . . . It is impossible to see in any one class of people inside the Church the chief agents of the Christian propaganda." <sup>2</sup>

It is not then antecedently unlikely that Christianity was introduced into Ireland in the second century. In view of the links of contact between St. Irenaeus and Ireland, we might

<sup>1</sup> *The Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries*, ii. 410.

<sup>2</sup> ii. 460.





say it is antecedently probable that there were Irish Christians at that time.

ST. PATRICK'S NOBILITY: THE DECURIONS.—Patrick wrote, "I am born of a father who was a decurion, but sold my noble rank (*nobilitatem meam*). I blush not to state it, nor am I sorry for the profit of others." This quotation is from the Epistle to Coroticus. A corresponding statement is found in the Confession at Section 37. Dr. White translates it "my free condition" (*ingenuitatem meam*), Dr. C. H. H. Wright makes it "my noble birth".<sup>1</sup> The same sentiment occurs in both documents.

When a province came under the control of the Empire, a commission of ten senators was sent into it to inquire into all its conditions and to draw up for it a "constitution of the province", whereby it was divided into communities and provision made for justice, local government and the collection of tribute to be levied off each community. This tribute might be in kind, as in the case of Egypt, which gave corn, or hides, as from Holland, but usually it was in money. Under the Republic it was in the shape of tithes, but Julius Caesar abolished this method and substituted a fixed sum, as the commission might determine. It was with a view to this adjustment of tribute to the popula-

<sup>1</sup> *The Writings of Patrick*, p. 62.



tion that a census was required of every province. In the case of Judea, for example, the census was taken on its being united to the province of Syria; and the same measure was carried out, notwithstanding its unpopularity, in Britain and Dacia immediately on their formation, as in other provinces.<sup>1</sup>

THE CURIA UNPOPULAR.—The members of the Curia had each a certain property qualification, and this was liable for any deficit which might occur in the collection of the tribute. Under the Republic and the early Empire the office of decurion was an honourable one, and generally involved the providing of games and festivals for the populace, for which the only return was popularity and its usual concomitants; but as time went on and a variety of changes occurred in national life and habits the office of decurion lost its popularity.

As early as the time of Caesar Augustus (27 B.C.—A.D. 14) it was difficult to find members for the Senate, and *compulsion had even then to be applied* to procure the requisite number. This compulsion was regarded as one of the blots on the new imperial system.<sup>2</sup> Formerly the Senate contained a thousand members, but Augustus had to reduce it to six hundred, and

<sup>1</sup> W. T. Arnold, p. 92.

<sup>2</sup> E. S. Shuckburgh, *Augustus: Life and Times*, pp. 142, 220.



to impose fines for non-attendance. The same tendency can be noticed everywhere throughout the Empire, where each municipality had its own Senate, which was a miniature of the great Senate at Rome. These also began from an early date to lose their attractions. Their history resembles that of the different Guilds. Towards the end of the Republic these Guilds were becoming political, and useful to the State,<sup>1</sup> and were granted exemption from taxes and other privileges. This applied to sailors and bakers amongst others, indicating the importance of providing food.

FIRST - CENTURY SERFS. — The Emperor Claudius (A.D. 41–54) laid down rules for these Guilds, such as the age and physical fitness of candidates for membership, and no one should join more Guilds than one. All went well until trade began to dwindle, and then, when a member sought to “better” himself, he was compelled to remain at his post. The hasty outcome was that membership became hereditary, and all were bound “*as serfs to the soil*”.<sup>1</sup> A corresponding change passed over the decurions throughout the Empire.

THE “POSSESSED” SENT TO THE CURIA.—In the statutes of Malaca and Salpensa in Spain there is a provision made for the compulsory

<sup>1</sup> F. F. Abbott, *The Common People of Ancient Rome*, pp. 232, 234.



election of magistrates if voluntary candidates could not be found.<sup>1</sup> These date from Vespasian and Domitian (A.D. 69–96). By the time of Trajan (98–117) further evidence of unwillingness to serve are met with, and in the reign of Marcus Aurelius (160–180) the reluctance had grown already more intense. The Sophist Aristides (A.D. 129–189) tells us frankly of his eagerness to escape from civic charges—how he wept and fasted and pleaded with his gods, till he saw the vision of a white maid who came to set him free, and found the dream was followed by imperial despatches which contained the dispensation so much longed for. The writer goes on to say that more marks of honour (“hot air”, Brentano calls them) were devised, but the stress on the decurions grew greater while their numbers dwindled, and “the press-gangs gathered in tax-gatherers—they were little more—from every class”. The veteran’s son of weak and idle character, the coward who had mutilated himself to be unfit for military service, the unfrocked curate or the priestly gambler who had been counted hopeless and excommunicate, and who was declared to be *possessed with an evil spirit*, was sent not to the hospital *but to the Curia*.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Reid, p. 480.

<sup>2</sup> W. W. Capes, *Roman Empire, Second Century*, p. 208.



SECOND-CENTURY RUIN!—Dr. Bigg says that in Pliny's time (A.D. 98–117) we hear of men compelled to serve as decurions, and by the end of the second century the office seems to have been regarded as *nearly synonymous with ruin*.<sup>1</sup>

Long before Constantine's time the ranks of the decurions were being deserted to an extent which the Emperors lamented. The "flight of the curiales" was quite as menacing to the Empire as "the inroads of the barbarians".<sup>2</sup> This significant statement is borne out by a great crowd of facts. The property of the decurion, as well as his person, was held at the mercy of the State. If he had no children he could dispose only of one-fourth of his property by will, the remainder going to the State. If he died intestate the State took all. He could not sell his property, as it was held liable to the tribute, nor could he enter into a partnership which might weaken the State's grip, nor accept any agency of an estate, nor rent public lands, nor farm the taxes. He could not seek for ordination without renouncing ownership, and leaving the property in the hands of a proper substitute, or abandoning it to the community.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Church's Task under the Empire*, p. 118.

<sup>2</sup> Dill, *Roman Society from Nero to Marcus Aurelius*, p. 248.

<sup>3</sup> Dill, *Roman Society in Last Century*, p. 214.



THE MUTILATED IN THE CURIA.—All the while the Emperors were using “honorific titles”, which were *centuries out of date*, towards the unfortunate decurions. When the sons of soldiers mutilated themselves to avoid the hereditary duty of serving in the army, Constantine forced them into the Curia.<sup>1</sup> When Constantine wished to confer privileges on the newly enfranchised Church by enacting that the clergy should be free from all civil duties and their lands from tribute, the rush of the decurions into the ministry was so great that a sensation followed. After six years (320) Constantine had to revoke the grant, and to order that henceforth no one should be ordained but men who were too poor to serve in the office of the decurion. Not only was the “rush” to ordination a loss to the body of collectors of revenue, but the grant was a loss also to the amount of revenue, so great that the imperial treasury was seriously affected, and from this we can infer the extent to which the Christian population had grown. This was about the year A.D. 315.

Constantine’s nephew, Julian (A.D. 361–363), called the “apostate”, wished to inflict hardships on the clergy, and he ordered back to the curiae all those who had escaped from it under Con-

<sup>1</sup> Reid, p. 488.



stantine's grant. "Let those decurions who decline to serve on the ground of being Christians be recalled to their duty"—such was Julian's order.<sup>1</sup>

THE HEREDITARY CURSE!—All the while the great landholders were growing greater, to the vexation of the Emperors, and were absorbing the decurions as *coloni* or *slaves* attached to the land. Often the decurions married women who were slaves, and thus saved their children "from *their father's hereditary curse*".<sup>2</sup> A reward of five gold pieces was offered for the capture of a decurion, or member of a college, who had run away.<sup>3</sup>

THE AVENGING FLAMES.—For nearly a hundred years, till about A.D. 325, the Theodosian Code shows that the Emperors were determined to put an end to the growing power of the aristocracy from this form of patronage. All sorts of punishment, and of increasing severity, such as fines, confiscation and infamy were threatened, "till the law of Honorius in 415 orders the agent or bailiff who connives at the offence to be given to *the avenging flames*".<sup>4</sup>

THE WHIPPED DECURIONS: MALEFACTORS.—

<sup>1</sup> Bright, *Age of the Fathers*, i. 307.

<sup>2</sup> Dill, *Roman Society in Last Century of Empire*, p. 215.

<sup>3</sup> Reid, *Municipalities of Roman Empire*, p. 520.

<sup>4</sup> Dill, p. 219.



In view of the fine phrases which were used towards the ancient office of decurion, it is almost incredible to find in the Code that some members of the Order, not the highest, could be punished by *plumbatarum ictis*, that is, blows of a whip loaded with lead. Theodosius forbade the punishment (A.D. 367–395), but he proved its existence.<sup>1</sup>

“We have not by any means”, says Professor Reid, “exhausted the miseries of this wretched class”. Certain *malefactors* were at this time relegated to the Curia as a punishment. Valentinian I. (346) and Theodosius (367) prohibited this, while they proved the existence of the rule. The Curia had become an *ergastulum*. Some of its members hid themselves amongst the miners and lime-burners, and in quarries and the haunts of outcasts, whither the hue-and-cry was sent after them.<sup>2</sup> This is all more easily understood when we know that each department of labour and public service was “a sort of *convict labour* in a hereditary caste”.

From the Senator in Rome down to the waterman on the Tiber and the sentinel at his post on the frontier, the son was bound to his father's Guild, and was not allowed to marry out of it—at least, should he do so he must go over to his wife's Guild. A man's property here

<sup>1</sup> Dill, p. 220.

<sup>2</sup> Capes, p. 209.



must not be alienated. A navicular's (sailor's) estate was sold away, and after twenty years was found and brought back to the guild.

Soldiers were deserting from the army and slaves were called to arms. The third-century recruits on entering the ranks were branded "as if they were slaves of the ergastulum",<sup>1</sup> and by the end of the fourth century—about A.D. 390—men cut off their right thumbs (it is said the Celts never did this) to avoid the army. Constantine sent such men—*those who mutilated themselves*—to the Curia, if they were possessed of the necessary wealth.<sup>2</sup> How contemptible the Curia was in the fourth century!

THE CURIA: A CAGE.—The reference to the decurions hiding themselves in mines and limekilns and quarries reminds us of Bury's own account of them, written sixteen years before his Life of St. Patrick. His account is that about A.D. 300 the office was "metamorphosed into a machine for grinding down the provincial proprietors by a most unmerciful and injudicious system of taxation", that the system tended "to reduce the provincial gentlemen to the state of *serfs*. They were enclosed in *a cage* from which there was almost no exit, for laws were passed which forbade them to enlist in the army,

<sup>1</sup> A house of correction. Dill, *Last Century*, pp. 190, 215.

<sup>2</sup> F. S. Marvin, *Western Races*, p. 137.



to enter the Church or go to the Bar. They were not allowed to quit their municipality without permission from the governor, and travelling was in every way discouraged. Moreover, the obligations of the decurionate were hereditary, and exclusion from all other careers rigidly enforced. Thus a *caste system* was instituted, in which individual life must have been often a hopeless monotony of misery." The decurions should have been regarded as the sinews of the Republic, but they were reduced to such conditions that "they took refuge in obscure hiding-places".

The underlying principle of the whole system was "to transfer to the imperial treasury as much as possible of the wealth circulating in the Empire", and a decrease in wealth resulted in "a decrease in population". An additional "sting" was the uses to which the fiscal income was largely put—first, to grant doles of corn to "the idle populates of the great cities", where "the drones were fed by the labours of the bees", resulting in "pauperism on a tremendous scale"; and secondly, to maintain "the court ceremonial and aulic splendour introduced by Aurelian (A.D. 270–276), confirmed by Diocletian (A.D. 284–305) and elaborated by Constantine (312–337)." This is Bury's picture of the Empire from the third century, at the base of which were the



decurions "enclosed in a cage" and reduced to the state of serfs.<sup>1</sup>

DR. BURY'S VAGUE SUPPOSITION.—He tells us also that "the Western suffered more than the Eastern provinces", and also that "after the division of the Empire in A.D. 395 the state of the West seems to have become rapidly worse". This was written by Bury in the year 1889, and sixteen years later (A.D. 1905), when writing his *Life of St. Patrick*, all he can say about the decurions is that "it is possible, for all we know, that the members of the British municipalities may have enjoyed a less dreary lot than the down-trodden decurions of the provinces".<sup>2</sup> After centuries of Roman rule in Britain it ought to have been possible, especially to one who was a master of the subject, to give some evidence in support of this vague supposition. Haverfield states that Britain was a singularly good example of the Roman system.<sup>3</sup>

It is of this system that Patrick is supposed to have written towards the latter part of the fifth century when he said he sold his nobility!

WAS PATRICK ARROGANT?—Professor Zimmer saw the absurdity of Patrick's claim to nobility—that is the fifth-century Patrick—and he accuses him of "arrogance". No more groundless

<sup>1</sup> *Later Roman Empire*, i. 28.

<sup>2</sup> *St. Patrick*, p. 19.

<sup>3</sup> *Roman Occupation of Britain*, p. 149.



slur could be cast upon the true Patrick than to charge him with arrogance, but from Professor Zimmer's point of view it was fully deserved.<sup>1</sup>

I suggest that Patrick was writing of what happened in the second century, and that the fifth-century idea is untenable.

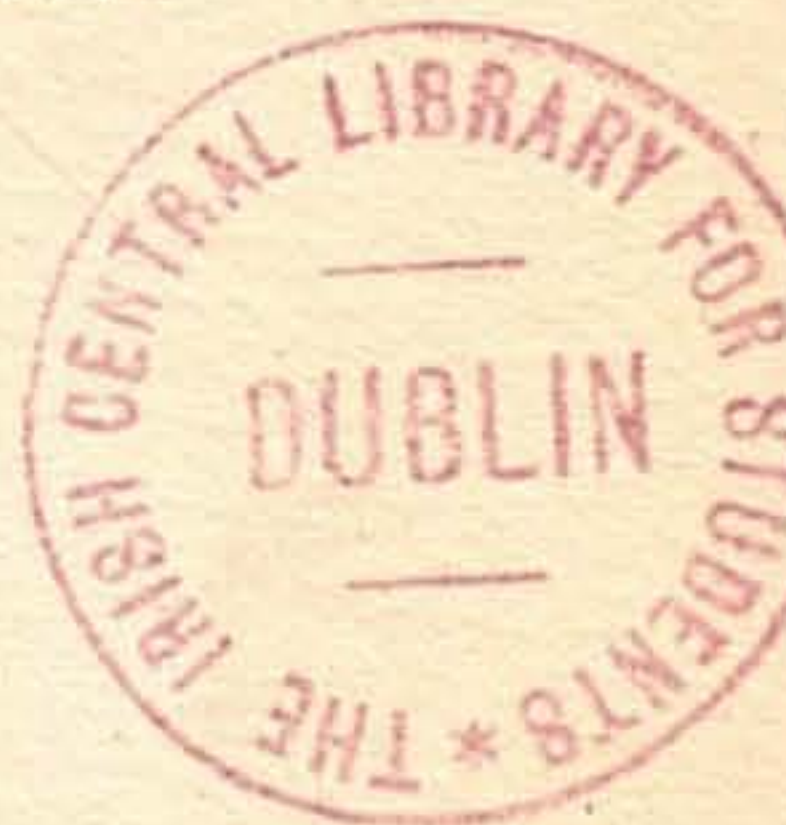
THE FRANKS.—Patrick's reference to the "Franks" has been the subject of some diversity of opinions. His words are: "The custom of the Roman Christians in Gaul is this—They send holy and fit men to the Franks and other heathen with many thousands of solidi to redeem baptized captives".

Sir Samuel Ferguson and Dr. Whitley Stokes assume that the Christian captives were carried off "beyond the Rhine", and therefore the statement must have been written by Patrick "before A.D. 428". Dr. Bury alleges that "the argument is based on ignorance of Frank history", because the Salian Franks were on the western side since A.D. 358. "Consequently," he says, "if there was any validity in the argument, it would prove that the Letter must have been written before A.D. 358." He concludes with the words, "the argument that the Franks must have carried their captives *beyond the Rhine* is to me unintelligible". (The italics are Bury's.)<sup>2</sup>

I am going to suggest that the captives *were*

<sup>1</sup> p. 39.

<sup>2</sup> *St. Patrick*, p. 317.





carried "beyond the Rhine", as Sir Samuel Ferguson and Dr. Whitley Stokes very naturally suppose, and also that the Letter, that is the Epistle, was written long before A.D. 358.

What is generally regarded as the first distinct reference to the "Franks" dates about the year A.D. 241, when Aurelian, who had been military tribune, and afterwards Emperor, finished a campaign on the Rhine against the Germans and was preparing for an expedition to the East against the Persians. A "soldiers' song" among his legions was, "We have slain a thousand Franks and a thousand Sarmatians, we want a thousand, thousand, thousand Persians".<sup>1</sup> But this reference does not give us any information as to when the title Frank first came into use.

THE SICAMBRIAN LEAGUE.—Sergeant tells us that when Caesar's army, on its way to Britain (55 B.C.), crossed by his famous wooden bridge at Coblentz, they were then in the country of the Sicambri, where they remained pillaging for eighteen days, but the Sicambri, with their neighbours, the Ubii and the Usepii, had cleared off to their hiding-places till Caesar retired and cut his bridge. Then the fugitives reassembled and formed the famous *Sicambrian League*, which has been generally regarded as the original,

<sup>1</sup> M. Guizot, *History of France*, p. 120.



or at all events the forerunner, of the confederacy which at a later date acquired the name of Franks.<sup>1</sup>

An interesting light is thrown on this from the baptism of Chlodovic, the first Frankish King, in the year 496, when Remigius (St. Remi), Archbishop of Rheims, made use of the expression, "Bow thy head gently, O Sicamber".<sup>2</sup> Here the title, Sicamber, is given solemnly to the representative of the flower of the Frankish race. We cannot imagine the Archbishop applying such a title to the King unless the tradition was in accordance with fact, that is, that the Sicambrian League was the original of the confederacy of the Franks.

THE FIRST CENTURY.—Menzel, in his *History of Germany*, traces the title much further back than the time of Aurelian (A.D. 241). In the year A.D. 69, Civilis, the great Batavian leader, or rebel, roused all the lower Germans in the name of Freedom, and, according to Tacitus, said expressly to the people of Cologne, "You will be free (Frank) among the free (Franken)". With great probability, *Menzel ascribes the title Frank to the time of Civilis* (A.D. 69).<sup>3</sup> We are at liberty, therefore, to choose any date for Patrick's reference to the Franks, so far as the

<sup>1</sup> Lewis Sergeant, *The Franks*, p. 15.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 16.

<sup>3</sup> W. Menzel, *History of Germany*, p. 112.



use of the title is concerned, *back to the end of the first century A.D.*

PRIMITIVE PLANS FOR REDEMPTION OF CAPTIVES.—MommSEN lets in another sidelight on the Sicambrians which has a bearing on the statement of Patrick. It is that, about the year 12 B.C., in the time of Caesar Augustus, the Sicambrians and their neighbours, the Cherusci and the Suebians, were preparing for an attack on Gaul, but they agreed beforehand that in dividing the spoil the captive *people* should be given to the Sicambri,<sup>1</sup> the horses to the Cherusci and the gold and silver to the Suebians. This is only a small point, and it refers to three-fourths of a century before the time of Civilis and the use of the title “Frank”, but it shows what the custom was amongst those peoples in the transaction of their business, for it was with them as much a matter of commerce as of war—they were keener on money than on blood. If the custom were for, say, the Cherusci to take the captive people, and the Sicambrians the horses, it would not fit in so accurately with Patrick’s words.

MommSEN refers to a mistake made by the poet Sidonius, who, mixing up old and new, makes Agrippina, under the Emperor Trajan, “the terror of the Sicambri—that is, in his

<sup>1</sup> T. MommSEN, *Provinces of Roman Empire*, i. 27.



sense, the Franks".<sup>1</sup> This refers to A.D. 98, that is twenty-nine years later than the use of the term Frank by Civilis.

Menzel gives another hint which bears, perhaps slightly, on the redemption of captives. It is that amongst the Alemanni and the Bavarians the wergeld, or fine, for injury to a woman was twice as much as that for injury to a man, but amongst the Franks and Thuringians it was three times as much for a woman, and more still if she were a prospective mother.<sup>2</sup> This does not refer to captives—at least, not directly—but it shows that *the Franks were prominent in the traffic to which St. Patrick referred*, and that the author of the Confession was not drawing in the least degree on his imagination, but that, on the contrary, the truthfulness of the document is borne out, so far as this bit of evidence goes.

W. T. Arnold points out that if the Barbarians of *the second century* had been wholly barbarians they would not have been able to break the power of Rome, and as evidence of this he reminds us that some of their leaders, such as the one-eyed Civilis (A.D. 69), and Tacfarinus of Vespasian's time (A.D. 69–79) and others, had been officers in the Roman Legions and were no mere uncivilized boors. The rank and file

<sup>1</sup> p. 160.

<sup>2</sup> p. 43.



of the people also beyond the Rhine were not strangers to generous feelings, as shown by the fact that "they had often spared and *taken back their captives with them across the Rhine*".<sup>1</sup> These people are not referred to as Franks but under the broader term of Germans. Patrick's reference is to Franks "and other heathen". It can hardly be supposed that those Germans, in very early days, were in the habit of risking their lives in taking captives, and that they penitently brought them back again across the Rhine and restored them to their friends without any compensation or reward. We have, in this fact, the working out of the custom to which Menzel refers, that is, that different peoples or tribes had different prices laid on the heads of different classes of persons—men and women, and prospective mothers as the case might be—and that they brought them back over the Rhine to receive the customary redemption price. This statement from W. T. Arnold corroborates that by Patrick, when he asserts that the Christian Church was in the habit of sending men to buy back captive Christians.

As a further evidence of a tolerant spirit existing on both sides of the river, Arnold informs us that, "as the burden of taxes and conscription grew heavier, Roman subjects

<sup>1</sup> *Roman Provincial Administration*, p. 239.



often settled beyond the frontier to secure themselves from the recruiting officer and the tax-gatherer".<sup>1</sup>

FIFTH-CENTURY REDEMPTIONS IMPRACTICABLE.—But there is reason to doubt that Patrick's statement can be applied to the period given by Bury, that is, the early part of the fifth century. Previous to that time, warfare had become more intense, men were scarce, slaves had to be enlisted, the Empire was tottering, Britain was just lost. Concubinage was encouraged by the State,<sup>2</sup> and sanctioned by the Church for communicants; almost the whole population of Gaul, including Gallic captives in enemy hands, were formally "baptized". Jervis states that "after A.D. 313 Gaul became almost wholly Christian".<sup>3</sup> The Church had her mind bent on other aims than sending men with gold pieces to buy back captive Christians. In the year A.D. 359, the Emperor Julian delivered from the German Allemans in their own country twenty thousand captives, which shows the scale on which such transactions were carried out. The number of Christians taken in such a raid would be greater than the Church could redeem.<sup>4</sup> *In the early part of the fifth century the Church had*

<sup>1</sup> *Roman Provincial Administration*, p. 239.

<sup>2</sup> Bury, *Later Roman Empire*, i. 26.

<sup>3</sup> *History of France*, p. 18.

<sup>4</sup> Sergeant, p. 72.



*more to fear from the Arians than from the heathen.* Alaric and his Arian Goths, who sacked Rome in the year 410, did not deal in selling "Catholics", as his opponents were then called. Nor would the circumstances of the fifth century make it likely.

During the crisis of the *third century*, Christianity had spread throughout the Empire and among all classes. "It had penetrated the army, the Senate and the Court, and had conquered alike the rich and the poor, the ignorant and the cultured."<sup>1</sup> Two great upheavals shook the Empire during this third century, that is, the spread of Christianity, as just stated, and the German invasion.<sup>2</sup> Between 253 and 268 the Franks crossed the Rhine, overran Gaul, ravaged Spain, seized vessels in Spanish ports and crossed into Africa. We should seek for an earlier date than this to meet a state of things which would correspond with the custom mentioned by Patrick. We have just seen that the customs of the second century resemble those with which Patrick was familiar, when the Franks in particular had their regular market plans arranged for the selling back of captives, and when they, or their neighbours, were known to fetch them back across the Rhine, doubtless with a view to receiving the market price in exchange.

<sup>1</sup> Ferrero, p. 71.

<sup>2</sup> F. E. Funck-Brentano, p. 174.



In addition, we have St. Jerome's account of the state of the Church and society in the beginning of the fifth century, which shows how unlikely it was that Patrick's reference could be to it. Writing in the year 406, just about the date to which Patrick would refer, according to Bury's theory, Jerome says: "Savage tribes in countless numbers have overrun all parts of Gaul. The whole country between the Alps and the Pyrenees, between the Rhine and the ocean, has been laid waste by the hordes of Quadi, Vandals, Sarmatians, Alans, Gepids, Herules, Saxons, Burgundians, Alemanni, and alas, for the Commonwealth—even Pannonians. For 'Assur also is joined to them'. The once noble city of Moguntiacum (Mayence) has been captured and destroyed. The people of the Vangium (Worms), after standing a long siege, had been extirpated. The powerful city of Rheims, the Ambiani (near Amiens), the Atrebates (near Arras), the Belgians in the skirts of the world, Tornacus (Tournay), Teroney Nemetae (Spires) and Argentoratus (Strasbourg) have fallen to Germany, while the provinces of Aquitaine and of the Nine Nations, of Lyons and of Narbounne are, with the exception of a few cities, one universal scene of desolation, and those which the sword saves without, famine ravages within. I cannot speak without tears of Toulouse, which has been



kept from falling hitherto by the merits of the revered bishop Exuperius. Even the Spains are on the brink of ruin (the Vandals crossed the Pyrenees three years later, September 409), and tremble daily as they recall the invasion of the Cymri; and while others suffer misfortunes once in actual fact, they (the Spains) suffer them continually in anticipation.”<sup>1</sup>

These are not the conditions under which a zealous little Church would send a band of her leaders with gold pieces in their pockets to buy back Christian captives. Jerome’s account is borne out by Sergeant as to the same period. “On 1st January 407,” he tells us, “a host of Stilicho’s countrymen—Germans of various tribes—seeking refuge in the West from the fury of the advancing Huns, crossed the frozen Rhine on foot and pierced into north-east Gaul, sacking the cities as they went, and carrying destruction to the walls of Rheims, Amiens and Tournai. There must have been ten or a dozen fighting tribes in the country during the first decade of the fifth century, and *the Franks were prominent amongst them*. We read of them at this time as far as Arles, where they were beaten by Ulfilas the Goth.”<sup>2</sup> The turmoil of this period does not indicate the atmosphere in which pious

<sup>1</sup> Kidd, *Documents*, ii. p. 187.

<sup>2</sup> p. 75.



people would be given the privilege of buying back their captured friends.

A REPLICA.—On the other hand, we have evidence that *already* in the third century a custom existed—and customs are of slow growth—which appears to be identical with that which Patrick describes. “Christianity”, says Signor Ferrero, “had already organized that wonderful system of works of benevolence which was one of its greatest social creations, and one of the causes of its triumph. The Christian *communities* undertook everything; not only did they provide for the expenses of their *cult* and the payment of its ministers, but they undertook the assistance of widows and orphans, of the sick, the impotent, the aged and the unemployed, and of those who had been condemned for the cause of God. They took upon themselves *the task of buying back the prisoners carried off by the Barbarians*, they founded churches, took care of slaves and buried the poor.” Here is a reference, not to a great fifth-century State and imperial Church, but to the small “Christian communities”, who provided for “the expenses of *their cult*” and “buried the poor”.<sup>1</sup>

A century later—at the beginning of the fourth century—Constantine made the Church inde-

<sup>1</sup> Guglielmo Ferrero, *The Ruin of Ancient Civilization and the Triumph of Christianity*, p. 72.



pendent of some of these demands, but Signor Ferrero's account, as given here, takes us back to the *infancy of the Church*. There are pathetic accounts on record of the longings of the poor to feel that burial would be granted to their bodies when they had passed away. The Bishop of Rome was, to the best of my belief, first recognized by the State in his capacity as the president of a Burial Club. The whole list is primitive—founding churches, paying ministers, caring for widows and orphans and buying back the captives. I suggest that we have here a distinct and disinterested and striking corroboration of Patrick's statement.

A FIVEFOLD CORD.—In these notices we have not the proverbial "threefold cord" but a fivefold one: Mommsen, Menzel, W. T. Arnold, Ferrero and Patrick. Mommsen is included, because his reference cannot be explained, except it means *barter*. Why should the Sicambrians (or Franks) take all the captured people and none of the horses, the Cherusci all the horses and none of the people, and the Suebians the silver and gold only? If they meant to use their booty for the tilling of their lands, or some such purpose, each people would take a part of each kind, whereas it would be easier, in view of barter, to keep and guard and sell in the market one kind of booty only.



Of these five witnesses, there is not one who has a taint of bias, or an axe of his own to grind. No one of them repeats the witness given by any other, or is dependent on any other. No two of them view a fact from the same standpoint, but each from a standpoint of his own. Yet the testimonies of the five—two Germans, an Italian, an Englishman and Patrick—dovetail into each other with a smoothness which indicates agreement around a central fact.

The "custom" which Patrick describes existed in his own day. He does not say "it was" but "it is" the custom.

We should note that the custom to which Patrick refers was not one which existed in some remote and comparatively peaceful region, such as the British Islands, or in North Africa, or in the Near East, where redemptions may have been carried out between small but unfriendly tribes. Whether there was such a custom in any of these regions or not, I cannot say. What Patrick alludes to was a custom which operated at the very storm-centre of the greatest struggles and upheavals in the world from the third to the fifth centuries—that is, at the dividing line between Roman Gaul and the German peoples, which line was the weakest and most dangerous point in the Roman line of defence. We have just read that two great



upheavals shook the Empire during the third century, namely, the spread of Christianity and the German invasions, and the latter continued to shake the Empire till long after the year 411. All the facts point to the existence of the custom Patrick tells us of *well before these upheavals*, which might be far back into the second century, when the two great Powers were beginning to play at a miniature warfare; raiding it might be called—raiding to-day and redeeming to-morrow, or selling in the open market. This, I suggest, is what Patrick himself witnessed in or about the latter part of the second century.

PATRICK'S JOURNEY.—In a dream, or vision, Patrick heard a voice saying, "Lo, thy ship is ready!" and very soon he took to flight and made a journey of about 200 miles, where he found the harbour and the ship. If his abode had been at Fochlut, in Mayo, a journey to Wexford or Waterford would fit in with his account. He had been six years in the place—"tending flocks"—and must have reached the age of twenty-two at the time of the journey. The harbour was all new to him, and he was a complete stranger in the place. The ship was about to sail when he arrived, and he proposed to go aboard, and probably offered to pay his way—"I had wherewith I might sail with them",



is his account. As a slave he would have no hire, but his diligence might have brought some gifts. His application was promptly refused by the shipmaster, and Patrick turned away despondent but trustful—he continued to seek guidance in prayer.

If there were any bishops or clergy in the country he should have known of them. In his reference to the journey of two hundred miles there is no trace of his having come across any. When the shipmaster rejected him, “I left them”, he says, “to go to the hut where I was lodging, and on my way I began to pray”. If this were on the south or south-east coast of Ireland, it would be where, on his return after some years as a bishop, “he was not needed”, according to Bury, because the Church was organized there already and Easter would have been celebrated in Ireland in those days, and the old Paschal Table “had taken root among the Christian communities there”. Patrick’s account does not agree with this; he appears to have been spiritually a Robinson Crusoe in the island, with no one to turn to but God.

A BOY MISSIONARY.—“Before I had finished my prayer,” he said, “I heard one of them shouting loudly after me, ‘Come quickly, for these men are calling thee’, and straightway I returned to them, and they began to say to



me, 'Come, for we receive thee in good faith, make friends with us in any way thou desirest'; and so, on that day I refused to suck their breasts, on account of the fear of God", that is, he refused to be "adopted" by them, in the sense of entering into any binding engagement with them that might hurt his conscience. In the very early days it was held by some in the Church, but with very little effect, that a Christian should not enter the army or become a magistrate lest he might have to observe heathen rites. "But, nevertheless," he continues, "I hoped that some of them would come into the faith of Jesus Christ, for they were heathen, and on this account I continued with them and forthwith we set sail." Patrick was a Christian missionary already, of that lay type to which, perhaps, the spread of the Gospel owes more than we realize.

After three days they touched land, probably on the west or north coast of Gaul. There is no reference to anything unusual on the voyage either in the way of storm or calm. A journey of twenty-eight days followed in a desert or lonely place. Nothing is said as to the road or roadless course by which they went. There was the twenty-eight-day pack-horse way from Calais to Lyons, but that could not be described as "desert". They were in charge of a pack of



hounds, and probably had to forage for food along by woods and secluded places. The great forests which shut Brittany off from the inland parts might have taken many days to penetrate. Or if they kept closer to the east, along by the Rhine, some huge forests would be passed. On the far side—the German side—of the Rhine were the forests of the Ardennes, of which Caesar says, “There are no Germans who, after sixty days’ march, can say where it ends or know where it begins”. Altogether, Patrick seems to have spent sixty days at the most with the ship’s crew, including the three days at sea, but the narrative here is not easy to follow. It is clear that after many days hunger fell on them, and some of their dogs were left for “half dead”, though none were lost. A twenty-four hours’ fast for a pack of big dogs would be very unpleasant, one for twice as long would be distressing. Anyhow, one of these days, “the shipmaster began to say to me”, writes Patrick, “‘What sayest thou, O Christian? Thy God is Great and Almighty, wherefore then canst thou not pray for us? for we are in danger of starvation. It will be hard for us ever to see a human being again.’ Then said I plainly to them, ‘Turn earnestly and with all your heart to the Lord my God, to whom nothing is impossible, that this day He may send you food in your



journey until ye be satisfied, for He has abundance everywhere'."

Patrick's zeal for his convictions was decisive at the age of twenty-two. "And by the help of God," we read, "so it came to pass. Lo, an herd of swine appeared in the way before our eyes; and they killed many of them, and in that place they remained two nights, and they were well refreshed, and their dogs were sated, for many of them had fainted and were left half dead by the way."

A PAGAN GRACE AT MEALS.—"After this," writes Patrick, that is, after they all, man and beast, had been refreshed by an ample meal, "they rendered hearty thanks to God, and I became honourable in their eyes, and from that day they had food in abundance. Moreover, they found wild honey, and gave me a piece of it, and one of them said, 'This is offered in sacrifice'. Thank God, I tasted none of it."

This is the same pagan custom as St. Paul wrote of, to Corinth. "If any man say unto you, 'This is offered in sacrifice to idols', eat not, for his sake that showed it, and for conscience' sake."

St. Paul and St. Patrick had experience of the same pagan custom. The warning in St. Paul's day was required in St. Patrick's day also. Patrick incidentally illustrates Paul.



THE GLOVE FITS THE HAND.—There is another illustration also from a wholly independent source in Brentano's *Earliest Times*. "On leaving the woods", he tells us, "the huntsman would emerge into some clearing consecrated to a Druidic God—a propitious spot for cutting up the game *and sacrificing part of it to the protecting divinities.*"<sup>1</sup>

Surely the writer of the Confession passed along by a spot such as this. It would be from a forest the herd of swine would emerge, and there also the wild honey would be found. That would be the "game" in this case, and "part of it" was offered in sacrifice. Patrick's account is true to history. It takes us back to the Druidic times, before their heathen relics had all vanished. We need not be surprised at the pagan gratitude for honey. The Franks in particular set great store by it and had the bee as their emblem, while the Romans had the wolf, and the Gauls the boar. There are bees carved in gold on the tomb of Childeric in Tournai. The fleur-de-lis of the Capets has been regarded as a development from the wearing down of the bee, and Napoleon I., curiously enough, put the bee instead of the fleur-de-lis.<sup>2</sup>

It is not here suggested that Patrick was in the country of the Franks when the honey

<sup>1</sup> p. 61.

<sup>2</sup> Brentano, p. 220.





incident occurred, although, of course, it is possible that he was, and that he learned then of the custom in the infant church of sending gold coins to the Franks for the redemption of Christian captives. But what is here suggested, and that very deliberately, is that Patrick's account of his journey *fits into second century history as easily as a glove fits its owner's hand*.

PATRICK WAS THE ONLY CHRISTIAN IN THE COMPANY.—We are not told how many the crew consisted of. The solitary Christian amongst them was regarded as a *rara avis*. From the moment he left his place of abode at Fochlut for his two-hundred-mile journey through Ireland, until he completed a further journey of twenty-eight days with the ship-men, *no trace of a Christian ever came into view*.

Dr. Bury supposes that Patrick was born in the year 389,<sup>1</sup> and therefore his journey, at the age of twenty-two, would be in the year 411, the *year after Rome was sacked by the Arian Goths*. The greatest armies in the world at the time were Christian. We must not imagine that the Arians were heathen, or anything approaching thereto. It was in A.D. 311—exactly a century before St. Patrick's supposed journey—that Ulphilas was born, who was the Apostle of the Goths, and who translated the greater portion

<sup>1</sup> p. 334.



of the Old and New Testaments into the Gothic language. Some Christian writers had a higher opinion of the characters, in those days, of the Arians than of the Catholics.

St. Jerome and St. Augustine were in their prime in 411. That was the very year when Celestius was first tried by a Council at Carthage.

Innocent I. was Pope at the time (402-417). Looking backwards over a century we see in the year 314 over two hundred bishops, at least, nearly all from the West, met at Arles, representing a widespread Christianity. The whole force of the Diocletian persecution—from about A.D. 287—originated in the growing influence and numbers of Christians. Diocletian disliked persecution, and held back until he was dragged into it by the vitally important fact that Christianity was eating into the life of the Roman Empire. There were Christians everywhere. The servants in his own palace and those of his daughter, who was married to Galerius the Caesar, were Christians, and were permitted to declare themselves as such, and to worship in the fine church or cathedral at Nicomedia. The army and the civil service were honeycombed with Christians. In the year 177 there were many martyrdoms of Christians at Lyons, including an aged bishop and some slaves, and some of the professional



classes. Patrick and his company were probably journeying towards Lyons, which was then the greatest market in the world. I suggest that the story of *the solitary wandering Christian* is more in keeping with that of Lyons and the period it represents (A.D. 177) than with that of Pope Innocent the Great, and Jerome and Augustine, and the armies of Christian soldiers. I suggest that the account of the solitary wandering Christian refusing to taste wild honey at the Druidic oratory on the outskirts of a wood, where sacrifice was usually and formally offered to the protective divinity, as recorded in the history of "the earliest times", is more in keeping with a second-century than with a fifth-century Patrick.

No forger could have put to Patrick's credit a composition so closely resembling truth as do these documents which bear his name. They bear the marks of truth on their face, but if they needed corroboration, it is provided for them not only by the formal records of history but by the spirit in which the history expresses itself. Yet the history, both in the letter and the spirit, is congenial to the second century but not to the fifth.



## CHAPTER IV

### PRIMITIVE CUSTOMS

EASTER.—In the year A.D. 154 two remarkable men met at Rome. One was Pope Anicetus, who held the See from A.D. 157 to 168, the other was St. Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, in Asia Minor. One of the Seven Churches of Asia to which the letters in the Book of Revelation are addressed was Smyrna, and some of the best scholars believe that the “Angel”, or Messenger, of that church was Polycarp, who was bishop there at that time. We are not informed as to the purpose for which Polycarp came to Rome, but we know that a weighty discussion took place between himself and Pope Anicetus as to the day and date on which the festival of Easter should be observed.

Nearly everywhere in the Church the Resurrection was commemorated on a Sunday from the first, but in Asia Minor it had been the custom to keep the festival on the fourteenth day of the Paschal moon, or Jewish month,



*regardless of the day of the week* on which that might happen to fall. The conference between Anicetus and Polycarp was entered into with a view to bringing about uniformity as to the Easter day. The problem was an awkward one for all concerned. If the Pope had given way, and requested the churches under his jurisdiction to observe the approaching Easter on a Wednesday, or some other week-day, the strain on the obedience of the people might be too great. On the other hand, if Polycarp had agreed to a change in the eastern practice the strain there might be very great also. Since the time of St. John, the Asiatic custom had prevailed, and it rested on a very solemn command, for the old Mosaic law had laid it down that "ye shall observe the feast of unleavened bread, for in this self-same day (the fourteenth) have I brought your armies out of the land of Egypt, therefore shall ye observe this day in your generations by an ordinance *for ever*". Had Polycarp signified to his flock at Smyrna and the surrounding districts that henceforth the sacred "fourteenth" ought to be abandoned, and that the seventeenth, or any other date, might be observed in its stead, the strain there also might reach the breaking point. But the result of the discussion was that Anicetus and Polycarp agreed to allow the existing customs



to continue. Before they separated, they joined in Holy Communion, Polycarp being invited to officiate, while the Pope received his blessing, doubtless in a kneeling posture. The spirit of the incident was very beautiful and very Christian. It is worth remembering, for we do not always meet it in our studies. It would be pleasant to think that these two great men, one of the West and the other of the East, were typical of the whole Christian Church at the time. We know of no reason why they should not be so regarded. They lived in the Golden Age of the Church, and they appear to have been worthy of it. Greek was then the language of the Roman liturgy, so that Polycarp would have felt quite at home in a Roman church.

About three years later—A.D. 157—St. Polycarp was put to death in a vigorous persecution of Christians which broke out in Asia Minor. "Death to the atheists!" was the cry of the mob. "Let search be made for Polycarp, their leader." On his way to execution he was called on to "revile Christ", to which he answered, "Eighty and six years have I served Him, and He hath done me no wrong. How can I say evil things of my King who saved me." Fifty years earlier, when Ignatius was on his way to a similar doom in Rome, he charged his young friend Polycarp to "be sober as God's athlete. Stand firm as an



anvil under the strokes of a hammer. It becomes a great athlete to endure blows and to conquer." The account of Polycarp's death is such as an eye-witness would be likely to write.

About twenty years later, when Soter was Pope (168-176), the Easter question was again causing trouble in the city. There was a company of Christians there who were called Ebionites, with a tendency towards the observance of Jewish customs, amongst which was the keeping of Easter on the fourteenth Nisan, regardless of the day of the week on which it fell. The result was that all the Christians in Rome were called upon to observe Easter *on a Sunday*, but this demand was not made of Christians elsewhere. The practice of the Church in Asia was not questioned.

THE QUARTODECIMANS.—Soon again, during the episcopate of Pope Victor (A.D. 190-202), the question was agitated, but in a more acute form. It appears that one Blastus, a presbyter, was giving trouble in Rome by supporting the tenets of the sect of the Montanists, and by encouraging the quartodecimans, or fourteenth-day people, at the same time. The Montanists were the extreme puritans of the period. They held that anyone who sinned after baptism should never be readmitted to communion, that new and more severe fasts should be established,



that Christians should never enter the army, that all second marriages were sinful, and other like stringencies. The result was that Pope Victor proceeded to cast out of the Church not only Blastus and his followers, but the eastern Christians also who observed the fourteenth day as Easter. Victor wrote in the name of the Church in Rome to various Sees, but his drastic suggestion was disapproved of by some of the synods to whom it was submitted, even though their customs were in agreement with his. Eusebius, the historian of the Primitive Church, gives an account of the dispute.

POLYCRATES.—The Church in Asia Minor made itself very clearly heard through Polycrates, the bishop of the great trading city of Ephesus, the Liverpool of that day. This prelate declared that he was the eighth bishop of his family who had observed the fourteenth day, and appealed to the continuous practice of the Church in Asia, also to the “great lights” of that Church, among whom was Philip, one of the twelve apostles who fell asleep at Herapolis, also his two aged virgin daughters who lived in the Holy Spirit and rested in Ephesus, and to St. John, who leaned on the breast of the Lord and fell asleep at Ephesus, and to Polycarp, bishop and martyr. Polycrates concludes his letter by saying that he is “not



affrighted", and by hinting that he regards it as his duty to God to continue the old custom. St. Jerome has written a Life of Polycrates, and does not hint that he was regarded as being in schism owing to his action.

ST. IRENAEUS.—St. Irenaeus of Lyons was a native of Asia Minor and a quartodeciman by early usage, but an observer of the western practice since he came to live in the West. He succeeded St. Pothinus, who was put to death at Lyons in 177, at the age of ninety. There was a Greek colony in that region since about 600 B.C. and it continued there till about A.D. 600. But the Celts were the predominating people in the place, and Irenaeus acquired the Celtic language, and used it in his work as a bishop amongst his Celtic neighbours. For the most part he spoke Celtic, and apologised to his friends in the East for the rustiness of his Greek. "You will not expect from me," he says, "who am resident among the Keltae, and am accustomed for the most part to use a barbarous dialect, any display of rhetoric which I have never learned, or any excellence of composition which I have never practised, or any beauty and persuasion of style to which I make no pretensions." His description of this tongue as "barbarous" need not be regarded as in the nature of a slight. The Greeks viewed all peoples, the Latins included, as bar-



barous. Even St. Paul, who was an out-and-out Hebrew, refers to Greeks and Barbarians as if this division embraced humanity. The Greeks looked upon themselves as, above all others, the city-founding, freedom-loving people,<sup>1</sup> while the other races, who did not possess these qualities, and who uttered a strange and unintelligible speech, were Barbaroi, or stammerers. In the course of time the Romans developed the same type of civilization, and then were admitted within the pale.

A TRES-LINGUAE.—The southern part of Gaul, embracing Massilia (Marseilles) and Lugdunum (Lyons), was a "tres-linguae", or a place where three great languages were in *common* use. Jerusalem, before its destruction, was another "tres-linguae", of which the inscription on the Cross was a sign, being written in Hebrew and Greek and Latin. These three tongues were common in Jerusalem at that time, but in the days of Irenaeus there was probably only one spot in the Empire, or elsewhere, of which the same could be said—that was Lyons and the surrounding regions. Greek had been the language of commerce and learning in that region since about 600 B.C. Latin had been brought in, and had been officially fostered by the Romans, while Celtic was the old language of the place

<sup>1</sup> F. S. Marvin, *Western Races and the World*, p. 21.



from time immemorial. As Patrick spent part, or probably the whole, of his time away from Ireland in Gaul, this reference to Irenaeus may not be without interest.

On the Easter question Irenaeus at first took the side of Polycrates of Ephesus, and wrote to various bishops on the subject, and to Victor also, "becomingly admonishing him not to cut off whole churches of God which preserve the ancient custom".

Irenaeus was strongly opposed to enforced uniformity in things non-essential. A certain artist preferred the Irish hedgerows to the English because the former were, to a large extent, unclipt. Irenaeus was an admirer, in things ecclesiastical, of the unclipt hedge. Varieties of custom he regarded as proof of the richness of the life of the Church, which could send many branches from one root all differing in appearance, but all equally fruitful.<sup>1</sup> Pope Victor thought that unity was not enough without uniformity, and that even in the smaller details the minority should submit to the majority. This principle was adopted generally about a hundred years later.

THE IRISH EASTER.—But the presbyter Blas-tus was a most aggressive Judaiser; he appears to have gone so far as to commemorate both the

<sup>1</sup> Bigg, *Origins of Christianity*, p. 203.



Christian Easter and the Jewish Passover on the same day. Whenever, therefore, the Passover, that is the fourteenth Nisan, fell on a Sunday the position was painful, and it was decided that it must cease. Thereupon three Councils were held to put an end to the practice, by directing that in future when the fourteenth Nisan fell on a Sunday, *Easter should not be observed until Sunday the 21st.*

At Rome, in the year 196, it was resolved to celebrate Easter "on the Sunday after the fourteenth day of the moon". In the following year, 197, a Council met at Lyons under St. Irenaeus, adopting the same rule, and in 198, at Osbroene (Edessa in Syria), it was enacted "that Easter should be celebrated after the Latin custom".<sup>1</sup> *But the older custom which these three Councils set aside had already found its way into Ireland, and continued here until the seventh century.*

There was not a corner of Christendom, either within the Empire or outside of it, where the old second-century usage was retained except in Ireland, so far as can be discovered. And if it were found that the old usage had survived in some other remote place, such as Abyssinia, or over in Syria, or up in Persia, it would make no difference as regards the question at issue. It would only provide an interesting parallel.

<sup>1</sup> Landon, ii. 79; i. 348; ii. 9.



Somebody brought the second-century usage into Ireland, and I suggest that if the reader will study St. Patrick's writings in the light of these facts, he will be convinced that the "somebody" was St. Patrick himself.

With the exception of the vague expression referred to by Dr. MacNeill and Mr. King on Sec. 51 of the Confession, there is not a line or word in the whole of St. Patrick's writings which is out of harmony with this conclusion, or, to put the argument positively, every line and every word he wrote, with the one exception, is in harmony with this conclusion.

A fair inference is that Patrick brought to Ireland an Easter usage with which he was familiar. It would be unlike him to go contrary to the law or usage of the Church in which he lived. If, therefore, we were to suppose that he came to Ireland in the year 200, we should find our position untenable. He would not introduce a cast-off custom—one that had been rejected by his friends. We must, therefore, push the supposed date back to the year 190. But this does not give us a firm standing ground.

Professor Harnack states that "when the Paschal controversy was raging about the year 190, there were several bishops in Gaul".<sup>1</sup> The letter of Polycrates of Ephesus, already referred to,

<sup>1</sup> II. 403.



is evidence of that "rage" (at Ephesus). But we know that a Council was held there also in the year 196, where it was ruled "that Easter should be celebrated on the fourteenth day of the moon, *on whatever day of the week it might be*". It is unlikely that Patrick would come away in the middle of that "rage" and forget all about the question at issue, and, consequently, when the new regulation was made in 197, ignore it and continue the old Paschal custom; at the same time longing to go so far as Gaul in order to visit the brethren and to behold the face of the saints of the Lord. Patrick was on terms of friendship, or rather of affection, with the brethren in Gaul, and he would not willingly separate himself from any of their reasonable customs.

Only about once in seven years would the Passover fall on Easter Sunday, when the controversy would be brought to people's minds. It would not be difficult for Patrick to *revise* his Paschal rule in 197, or as soon afterwards as the two festivals coincided. I suggest, therefore, that a more likely date for his coming to Ireland would be about 180, or earlier.

PREPOSTEROUS!—I am afraid of some person—one in authority possibly—intervening in this inquiry and exclaiming "Preposterous!" and then running off, having shot his bolt. I suggest



that this should not be allowed, but that whoever intervenes should be invited to put all his cards on the table and to explain himself.

Dr. Bury never, as far as we know, studied the early history of the Easter usage further back than the year 312, but his statement with regard to that year bears directly on the Council held in Gaul, at Lyons, in 197. He admits quite readily that Patrick would not be likely to bring to Ireland any custom as to Easter but that which he was already familiar with. "It is easy to comprehend", he states, "that Patrick, though accustomed to the *supputatio Romana*, acquiesced in the continuance of the other system, or was unable to change it." "It would be not at all easy to comprehend", he continues, "that if he had found Ireland a *tabula rasa*, ready to receive any Paschal calculation that he might choose to inscribe, he should not have introduced the system generally received in the Western Church, unless it were the system generally received in the Eastern Church. The Paschal evidence appears to be another proof of pre-Patrician Christianity in Ireland."

What has been said already aims at showing that there was no such thing as pre-Patrician Christianity in Ireland, except the unbaptized believers, who had no organized Church amongst

<sup>1</sup> p. 373.



them. We should not be surprised at the existence of such believers far and wide if, in those days, there were many laymen of the same spirit as that of Patrick at the age of twenty-two.

The statement, by Professor Harnack, that there were several bishops in Gaul about 190 goes without saying. Thirteen years earlier (177) the fierce persecutions at Lyons revealed a strong and active Church, which is one of the surprises of history. A further statement of Harnack's is, that possibly Christians had arrived in Britain and laboured there by the end of the second century. It would be unsafe to deny that they might have been there by 150. It is supposed that they had come to Marseilles—the Greek colony—by A.D. 63, and that would not indicate any abnormal zeal on the part of the early Church to spread the news, and the mode of conveying the news to Britain was in full swing since the time of Augustus (27 B.C.—A.D. 14).

THE IMPERIAL GAZETTE.—The official courier was constantly on the road, doing at least fifty miles a day, or a hundred if necessary, with the *Acta Diurna*<sup>1</sup>—the Imperial Gazette—telling the latest speech of Pliny, the latest epigram from Martial, the tit-bits of Roman gossip, who were promoted to be centurions or to other offices of State; and the curious Celts

<sup>1</sup> Dill, *Roman Society from Nero to Marcus Aurelius*, p. 205.



flocked around him in every village and town where it was his duty to read the news—for he was qualified to read—and his destination was York, the capital of the Brigantes, where a crowd awaited him, as it surrounds our newspaper windows in an election time. In this connection we read, that “the prince’s secretary required a high degree of literary skill. He was to speed the missives of the monarch through the world, to guide the march of armies, to receive the glad news of victory from the Rhine, the Danube, the Euphrates, from the remotest lands of Thule (the Shetland Islands), whither by sea or land the conquering eagles had made their way already.”<sup>1</sup> Travelling was as rapid and safe and luxurious then as at any time till the invention of the steam engine in the nineteenth century.

By the year 177, bankers had developed far-reaching methods of transacting business. In Cicero’s time (106–43 B.C.) the *Argentarii*,<sup>2</sup> who had been money-changers in Rome, had grown into bankers. They received money on deposit and paid it out on a written order. They lent it at interest to their clients in other parts of the Empire. Without any transfer of cash, an Italian could make payments in a province, and a provincial could pay his debts in Italy. The notion that Ireland at that time was “cut off” from the

<sup>1</sup> Capes, p. 196.

<sup>2</sup> Marvin, p. 168.



Continent—that boats could not cross from Ireland to Wales—is groundless. It is not unlikely that the news of the martyrdoms of Lyons would rapidly travel to Ireland.

CELTIC CURIOSITY.—The Celts had an organized system of heralding important news from place to place by loud shouts, every man feeling bound to send on the cry over the countryside till it reached its goal. This method of news-vending might have easily extended to Ireland. Apart from anything like an organized custom, the Celts, like the Athenians, had a passion for learning the latest news. Caesar calls this a “Gallic liveliness of spirit”, which shows itself “in a curiosity about different lands, an eagerness to learn from travellers, whom they detained against their will, plying them with questions on every subject. In the towns a crowd would gather round a newly arrived merchant and compel him to describe the countries of his travel and their affairs.” There is no evidence for the idea that Ireland was “cut off” from the outer world in Caesar’s time, or later. It is quite true that Ireland was cut off from her enemies, but not from her friends, and the newsvendors always received from her a warm welcome. Agricola (A.D. 84) was troubled by the “spectacle” of Irish liberty, and at the end of Roman rule in Britain it was the same. Somebody wrote that



when the barbarians swept down upon the Empire about A.D. 410 "Ireland remained unconquered". Mr. Haverfield's criticism is: "This is no doubt true, but of the barbarians who swept down on Britain, the Irish were the chief". Most people would say that the Saxons were more aggressive than the Irish, but Mr. Haverfield puts the Irish first in this respect. Their liberty was undiminished.<sup>1</sup>

DR. STOKES'S MISTAKE.—Sometimes the Irish Church had been accused of being quartodeciman, as by Wilfrid at Whitby in the year 664, and this was partly true. The Irish Christians did not shun the fourteenth day of the moon if it fell on a Sunday, but kept their Easter while the Jews held their Passover on the same day. Whether it was a wise or an unwise plan does not concern us, we emphasize only the fact that it was the old plan. The failure of Professor G. T. Stokes to notice the point of Wilfrid's censure is significant. "The Irish have been accused", says Professor Stokes, "of quartodeciman practices as to Easter, which is quite a mistake. They simply adhered to the old Roman cycle, which was superseded in 463 by the Victorian cycle. The invasions of the barbarians then cut off the Celtic Church from a knowledge of the more

<sup>1</sup> *Athenaeum*, Oct. 1912.



modern improvements in the Calendar, which they afterwards resisted with a horror natural to simple people.”

It is true that the Irish Church resisted the innovation of 463, which had nothing to do with choosing between Sunday the fourteenth of the moon and Sunday the twenty-first, but Professor Stokes's mistake lies in not seeing that they also resisted the innovation of 197, which ruled that Easter should not be on Sunday the fourteenth but on Sunday the twenty-first. Once in seven years, or thereabouts, when the fourteenth Nisan, that is the fourteenth day of the Paschal moon, fell on a Sunday, the Irish Church was, for the occasion, as quartodeciman as it possibly could be.<sup>1</sup>

THE JEWS AT ARM'S-LENGTH.—The Western Church (not including the Irish) went further still and determined that when the Passover was being held on a *Saturday*, Easter should not be observed until the Sunday week, which would be the twenty-second day of the moon. There must be a clean break between the two festivals, the Jewish custom must be kept at arm's-length, hence the rule just mentioned.<sup>2</sup>

THE BOY MISSIONARY.—We naturally inquire as to the lay person or persons who taught

<sup>1</sup> *Dict. Christian Biog.* p. 806.

<sup>2</sup> Synod of Augustine's Oak, A.D. 601.



the *essentials* of Christianity to those believers whom Patrick baptized after his return to Ireland as a bishop. He does not vouchsafe to us a word on this topic. No answer to the question is more reasonable than that, as a youth tending the flocks in Mayo, he talked to his neighbours of what was near to his heart. He tells us that during that period he used to pray as often as a hundred times in a day, and at night nearly as often. When sailing away, after his two-hundred-mile journey, he hoped that some of the sailors "would come into the faith of Jesus Christ, for they were heathen". We cannot suppose that this was the first moment at which he began to cherish such aims. If we think of a young man on the quay at Waterford or Wexford, active, intelligent, honest and earnest, longing that men "would come into the faith of Jesus Christ", are we not irresistibly forced to believe that, during a stay of six years in the quiet homes and haunts of the West, he left a mark upon the minds and hearts of the friends whom he met there? Does he not remind us of the woman who hid her leaven where it spread till the whole lump was leavened, or the man who sowed a grain of mustard seed, and it grew and waxed a great tree? If Patrick had inspired only one boy-companion with his zeal, what might not that account for during



his absence? It is not hard to believe that he was loved in the house of his bondage. In his vision he heard the voice of the Irish at Fochlut calling, "We beseech thee, holy youth, to come hither and walk among us". Perhaps he also longed for them.

But how painfully unreal the picture becomes if he sailed away from Ireland leaving behind him—as we are asked to believe—a staff of indolent bishops and clergy, who had neither the will nor the way to baptize a few converts by the wood of Fochlut! This is an essential part of the fifth century tradition which is derived wholly from what Dr. Bury describes as "caricature".

I suggest that not only was Patrick the first bishop to come to Ireland, but, furthermore, that as a young layman he was the *first Christian who named Christ to the Irish*. And this would mean that Christianity came to Ireland not through the medium of a bishop but of a slave.

THE TONSURE OF THE DRUIDS.—This Tonsure, Bishop Dowden tells us, with much probability, was in the form of a band shaved in front of a line drawn across the head from ear to ear, but not *wholly* shaved—a fringe of hair was left over the forehead.<sup>1</sup> Viewed from behind, there was nothing to distinguish the ecclesiastic from the layman. Tonsures probably originated

<sup>1</sup> *Celtic Church of Scotland*, p. 242.





in the warrior devoting his hair to his protecting divinity in case of victory.

We cannot tell why the first Irish Christians adopted the Tonsure of the Druids. It is a mystery, but it is a fact.

The Druids were the guardians of Celtic religion and of the sum total of Celtic knowledge, including language, law, poetry, astronomy, mathematics, medicine, mental and physical science, physiology, education and magic. Looking on them as the guardians of religion *only* has been the cause of misunderstandings on the part of many critics. It has been held, for instance, that the Celts learned "it", that is Druidism, from a Stone Age or pre-Celtic people, as if "it" were merely a system of ritual, or a stage play, instead of the whole intellectual equipment of a very clever people.

5000 B.C.—We cannot tell the date or period at which Druidism came into existence. All that can be said with certainty is that the Order grew and took its shape at some period since 5000 B.C., when the Indo-European languages branched off from the old mother Aryan. This is the date given by Max Müller, whose conclusions are generally accepted. The seven sister tongues, which sprang from the same source and from the same era, are Sanskrit, Zend (Persian), Celtic, Latin, Greek, Teutonic and Slavonic.



There are points of resemblance between these through which they throw some light on each other. They all count with the same numerals, call their individual speakers by the same pronouns, address parents and relations by the same titles, decline their nouns by the same system, compare their adjectives alike, conjugate their verbs alike, and form their derivatives by the same suffixes—a sevenfold sameness.

Other members of the Aryan family have been recently discovered by Sir George Grierson, who has spent his life among some hundreds of tongues and dialects in India.

MEMORY.—This remarkable “sevenfold sameness” was preserved down through all the ages by the one mysterious agent of Memory. The load that a human memory can bear is unthinkable—almost miraculous—to the modern Western mind, but such it was in the case of the Druids with Celtic, the Brahmins with Sanskrit, the Parsees with Zend and corresponding agencies with the other tongues.

The Druid felt, as did the Brahmin, under a solemn obligation to cherish and preserve his language as a sacred trust, and in an unwritten state. The author of the laws of Manu actually excommunicated those who wrote the Veda (the most ancient Sanskrit scripture) and learnt it



from a book by heart, and not from the mouth of a qualified teacher. The aim was not merely to keep all their knowledge to themselves, nor was it the fear that the lack of mental exercise would have had a bad effect on their pupils. The main reason was the old idea of the sacredness of the language, and of the mode of the transmission: "What was considered sacred, revealed by the Godhead, handed down to them from teacher to teacher, at first probably from father to son, and the loss of which involved the loss of all that was most valued in this life and most essential for the next".

We may not appreciate these exalted terms as to the value of any particular tongue. Yet the sense of sacredness was real. Perhaps a psychologist can best understand it.

Not only were those languages sacred, but also their "mode of transmission". A Druid was never excommunicated, so far as we know, for having written a word of Celtic. All his writing on commercial and such-like topics was in Greek, or, if he did not understand the language, in Greek letters.

The preservation of the sevenfold sameness in places so remote as the Achill and Arran Islands and the Hebrides was a feat of Druidic memory. While the "sameness" exists between the Seven Sisters, there is no trace of it amongst



the Hebrews or any of the other linguistic families.

LOST LANGUAGES.—While Druidism thus preserved its own tongue, it crushed out—strangled—all the pre-Celtic tongues with which it came in contact. A Druid would give no quarter to the profane speech—as he regarded it—of the aborigines. “Not a vestige” of these tongues was left, as we are informed by Sir William Ridgeway.<sup>1</sup>

Professor Elliot Smith is now inquiring as to how these pre-Celtic tongues disappeared about four thousand years ago.<sup>2</sup> Possibly he may find an explanation in the one word, Druidism.

It took the Druid twenty years to reach the highest grade of his Order, and by that time he had mastered about twenty thousand proverbs, parables, maxims, precepts or axioms, not a letter or a pause missing, if we suppose his mastery to have been equal to that of his kinsman the Brahmin, and there is no cause for doubting it.

The Order was recruited from the wealthier classes who did not need to earn their living. The youthful candidate could give all his time to the preparation for his great task.

<sup>1</sup> “Who are the Romans?” *Proc. Brit. Acad.*, April 1907.

<sup>2</sup> *Human History*, A.D. 1930, p. 179.



AN AWFUL BLOT.—The awful blot on the Druid's name is the practice of human sacrifice. But this was common to all peoples at a stage in their development. Probably it ended amongst the Hebrews with Abraham and Isaac on Mount Moriah. In the account of that strange episode we are given to believe that Abraham was sincerely pressed by conscience and the *custom of the age* in which he lived, and that when he took the knife in his hand he was not shamming. At the same time he was called "the friend of God".

Very justly we have gruesome thoughts of the Druid, and from what we sometimes read of Christians in primitive times, we should expect that if a Druid entered a room a Christian would at once walk out. But in Ireland the Christian took a chair while the Druid cut upon his head the brand of the Order. Already the Christian had been marked with the sign of the Cross, now he is marked with the sign of the Druid. This is passing strange. It has never been explained how Druidism officially came into Patrick's Church. In any case, the Church and Druidism agreed in accepting the primitive customs. They declined to adopt the new Easter regulation of the three Councils—Rome, Lyons and Edessa; they kept to the old plan.



LINKS OF SYMPATHY.—From the beginning there were some strong links of sympathy between the Christians and the Druids. One was a common fear of the pagan Roman enemy. The first Emperor, Caesar Augustus, removed a town—Mount Beauvray<sup>1</sup>—sixteen miles off from its old site because of the Celtic recollections which surrounded it. The policy was “to cut across memories of freedom”. Claudius Caesar deprived a citizen of the Empire of his privileges because he was unable to answer questions in Latin. “He is no Roman”, said the Emperor, “who is ignorant of the language of Rome.” Claudius realized that uniform obedience to Rome depended on her subjects uniformly understanding her language. He found a Celtic knight in possession of a Druid charm known as the “snake’s egg”,<sup>2</sup> and although the charm was actually being used to bring good fortune to Claudius himself, the knight was put to death. These are merely tokens of a fixed and hostile policy which banished the Order from the Empire and drove it into Ireland, although much of it remained hidden in Gaul and Wales.

Mommsen alleges that it was Druidism that forced Rome to conquer Britain. “The conquest of Britain”, he says, “was not military

<sup>1</sup> Haverfield, *Roman Occupation*, p. 194.

<sup>2</sup> E. Conybeare, *Early Roman Britain*, p. 70.



nor financial, but Celtic", which means Druidic, for it was the fire of the Druidic spirit that urged on their people. The Romans, when they had conquered Gaul, expected to find a barrier in the British Channel, but instead they found a bridge, across which the enemy and the rebel and the deserter could fly for shelter. They knew the Empire was already too large, but the desire for *security* urged them on. And then, when Britain was subdued, they were unhappy over Ireland. Here also we have Mommsen's comment: "What Britain had been for Gaul, the large island Ivernia (Ireland) was now for Britain. The freedom on one side of the Channel did not allow foreign rule to take firm root on the other".<sup>1</sup>

A note by Arnold is worth quoting: "We find under the Empire even so moderate and sensible a man as Agricola seriously meditating the barren conquest of Ireland, so that the Roman arms might be carried everywhere and no country might be tempted by the spectacle of another's freedom".<sup>2</sup>

We are not told how the "spectacle" of Irish freedom was presented to the Britons in such a way as to tempt them from their allegiance. It was probably the presence of "swarms" of Irish raiders around the British coast. When-

<sup>1</sup> I. p. 178.

<sup>2</sup> p. 8.



ever the news came to Ireland of Christians being martyred in the Empire the common anger drove Christians and Druids into each other's arms. What Nero and others were to the Christians, Claudius and others were to the Druids.

There was a substratum of religious faith also common to Christians and Druids, as it was in the East to Christians and Jews—that is, belief in the Fatherhood of God, which was cherished by all the Aryan peoples.

Max Müller is very insistent on this, and takes us back to prehistoric times when the mother Aryan tongue began to get distinctive—that is, we may suppose, when it branched off from the Hebrew or other linguistic families. The account of those remote ages is not without interest.<sup>1</sup>

THE ANCIENT HOME OF THE CELTS.—They had houses and towns, they cultivated the ground, reared cattle, kept domestic animals, made cloth and pottery, and were acquainted with the more easily worked metals. The bear and the wolf were the foes that ravaged their flocks, the mouse and the fly were their domestic pests. There was no common word for stables or hay or straw, showing that their cattle slept out in winter. But they were not mere hunters, their flocks were kept together, either tied “or

<sup>1</sup> *Chips from a German Workshop*, i. 46-48.



with the help of the dog, the earliest of domesticated animals". They kept poultry for their produce, and also for testing foods as to poison. In their old Aryan home they appear not to have been acquainted with the sea, or to have used sails or masts, but they had small boats moved by oars or paddles on rivers or lakes. They do not seem to have had a priesthood. Their families, or clans, were presided over by chiefs, who acted also as judges. Their religion was based on the Fatherhood of God.<sup>1</sup>

All this deals with their state before the Dispersion. On their religion Max Müller has a beautiful comment, which ought to be repeated:<sup>2</sup> "Thousands of years have passed since the Aryan nations separated to travel to the north and to the south, the west and the east. They have each formed their languages, they have founded empires and philosophies, they have each built temples and razed them to the ground, they have all grown older and, it may be, wiser and better. But when they search for a name for what is most exalted and yet most dear to every one of us, when they wish to express both awe and love, the infinite and the finite, they can do but what their old fathers did when gazing up to the eternal sky, and feeling

<sup>1</sup> F. Max Müller, *Oxford Essays*, 1856.

<sup>2</sup> *Nat. Ency.* i. 478.



the presence of a Being as far as far and as near as near can be, they can but combine the self-same words, and utter once more the primeval Aryan prayer, Heaven-Father, in that form which will endure for ever, Our Father which art in Heaven."

Here we have a glimpse into the old home from which Druidism sprang. The Druids were not priests, as Max Müller indicates. This is borne out by Dr. MacNeill, who states that "no Celtic word has yet been interpreted priest".<sup>1</sup> The Druids had everything to do with religion, including sacrifices, but the same applies to law, medicine and knowledge in all its branches.

The different Aryan families developed in various ways as time went on. For instance, the Brahmins developed caste, and the Celts evolved an order of Druidesses, thus indicating their value of female education.

The Chief Druid, who was elected for life, dwelt at Chartres in Gaul from time immemorial. A great annual Druidic festival was held there. It may be assumed that Irish members of the Order were usually present. The Emperors suppressed this, but the Druids did not forget it. Henceforth the seat of the Chief Druid was probably in Ireland.

<sup>1</sup> *Celtic Religion*, p. 20.



“MY DRUID IS CHRIST.”—The Druidic Tonsure on the head of the Christian cleric was certainly a badge of concord. There was no compulsion on either side. As a great company of the priests became obedient to the faith in Palestine, might not a great company of the Druids, including the Chief Druid, have become obedient in Ireland? This would solve the problem of the Druidic Tonsure being adopted and cherished by the early Irish Church. Somehow the amalgamation came about. The union should have had happy results. The Church of Patrick might well be weak on the side of intellect, but Druidism would bring in the intelligence of a clever people inherited through many ages.

Some writers have represented the Druid as a mere unenlightened wizard. Possibly some relics of the Order of that type may have been found in later ages. Dr. MacNeill gives the suggestive hint that the Christian clergy monopolized the finer elements and left the straggler with his mere magic. Mommsen states that “the ancient noble houses of Gaul still for long boasted of Druidic progenitors on their ancestral roll”.<sup>1</sup> The lustre of the Order passed into the Church.

The Roman Church spurned the Irish Tonsure as “the Tonsure of Simon Magus”. About the same time the Simon Magus epithet was

<sup>1</sup> p. 106.



being thrown at St. Paul in Rome by the author of the spurious *Clementine Recognitions* (A.D. 150). "Simon Magus", he says, "withstood Peter to the face", and Peter "was to be blamed".<sup>1</sup> This is a veiled attack on St. Paul in reference to his having censured Peter.

Pope Anicetus (A.D. 157-168) is supposed to have introduced the Roman Tonsure for the clergy.<sup>2</sup> There were many types of the emblem in the East. Whether one of these was copied by Anicetus, or a new type designed, we are not told. Certainly the existence of these two forms of Tonsure within the limits of the Church was a certificate of mutual independence. Whether this was accompanied by mutual charity or mutual enmity is not easy to determine.

St. Columba (A.D. 521-597) wrote:

I adore not the voice of birds,  
Nor the *sreod*, nor a destiny on the Earthly world,  
Nor a son, nor chance, nor woman.  
My Druid is Christ, the Son of God.<sup>3</sup>

St. Peter refers to Christ as a Shepherd and as a Bishop. It is significant that Columba said, "My Druid is Christ".

<sup>1</sup> Salmon, *Intro. N.T.* p. 13.

<sup>2</sup> *Dict. Christian Biog.* p. 28.

<sup>3</sup> Translated from an Irish hymn by Dr. John O'Donovan. The Archdeacon of Meath (Dr. Healy) states that the meaning of the Irish word *sreod* is not known.



In the seventh century a rule was made which points to a semi-Roman influence in Ireland directing that "all the clergy, from the priest to the door-keeper, are to wear the complete Roman Tonsure and their wives are to veil their heads".<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Bury, p. 167.



## CHAPTER V

### EARLY CONTROVERSIES

THE sixty-six Lives of St. Patrick (I do not vouch for the correctness of this number) appear to agree in placing him in the first half of the fifth century. Some of the best of these Lives have been harmonized and explained, as never before, by Dr. Bury's masterly pen, and if he has failed to establish the fifth-century theory it is unlikely that anyone else will succeed.

It is quite easy to write about some of the leading men of the fifth century, who would certainly have known Patrick, either by reputation or face to face, if he had lived then. Three names, which would have been subjects of daily conversation, were Pelagius, Celestius and Palladius. These were in their prime when Patrick should have been in Gaul.

The story of the Lives is that Patrick went to the School on the island of Lerins, off the southern coast of Gaul, about the year 411. The Abbot there was Honoratus, and Patrick would



have been his pupil for three years. Honoratus was afterwards Metropolitan of Arles, and held the See until his death in 429. Lupus, who became Bishop of Troyes, was also a pupil at Lerins, and probably knew Patrick, if he were there, face to face. He certainly would have known him by repute. Lupus was sent to Britain in 429, on the suggestion of Palladius, to withstand the Pelagians.

St. Hilary—brother-in-law to Lupus—was at Lerins probably after A.D. 414, and succeeded Honoratus in the See of Arles in 429, and could hardly escape having heard of the second bishop sent from Rome to Ireland.

Faustus, a Briton, became Abbot of Lerins in 433. He had been a monk or pupil there, and would certainly know all about the bishop sent to Ireland to take the place of Palladius.

Eucherius and his two sons, who afterwards became bishops, were at Lerins and should have heard something of Patrick.<sup>1</sup>

St. Vincent of Lerins lived in the same period and became the leader of the semi-Pelagians, whom the admirers of St. Augustine greatly disliked. Vincent wrote an account of the Church controversies of the time, and defined the term "Catholic" as a corrective to the innovations of

<sup>1</sup> T. Scott Holmes, *The Christian Church in Gaul*, p. 282 *et seq.*



Augustine. He could not but have learned of the bishop who came to Ireland in 432 to replace his own keen opponent, Palladius.

It is a very interesting coincidence that as Patrick entered Lerins—so it is said—in 411,<sup>1</sup> Celestius was being tried and condemned at Carthage on the opposite shore of the Mediterranean. Pelagius was there with him, but he moved away to Palestine, while Celestius remained behind, expecting to be ordained. But charges were brought against him by a friend of Augustine's named Paulinus, and he was excommunicated. The main charge was that he said Adam and Eve would have died in any case, even if they had never sinned. Augustine taught that they and their posterity would have been translated to heaven in angelic form. This was the pivot around which Augustine's theories as to the condemnation of unbaptized infants and all the heathen revolved. Whoever touched this, touched the apple of Augustine's eye, and he held it till his death. Celestius sailed off to Ephesus, where he gained his object.

Patrick at Lerins should have been introduced to the Pelagian side of the question, or, if not then, during the twenty years through which the Empire "rang" with the subject, and we should expect to find some traces of the great

<sup>1</sup> Bury, p. 338.



controversy in his writings, specially in his Creed.

Amid all that we know of the men and affairs of the time there is no trace of Patrick.

In the year 414 Patrick is supposed to have left Lerins, and to have visited his family in Britain. The Roman armies had left Britain in 410, and the whole Roman organization in the country had crumbled at the same time. The Britons had declared their independence, and were fighting their old enemies the Picts, Scots and Saxons, and for a short while "rejoiced in the important discovery of their own strength".<sup>1</sup> Patrick never in his life gives a hint as to any change having taken place in his father's honourable rank as a decurion, which would be strange if he wrote about his father forty or more years after the Romans had left Britain and the Saxons had destroyed nearly all the towns.

After a sojourn of about a year in Britain the Lives take Patrick back to Auxerre—about midway between Lyons and Paris—in the year 415. Here he remained for seventeen years, until he is brought to Ireland in 432. The See and School of Auxerre may be regarded as the *Alma Mater* of Augustinianism in Europe. Augustine himself always lived in North Africa, where he was Bishop of Hippo, near Carthage.

<sup>1</sup> Gibbon, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, iii. 281.



His friend, and fellow-disputant against Pelagianism, was St. Jerome, who had his home in Asia, at Palestine. Augustine was the greatest figure of the time. The Pope was Innocent I. (402-417), but Augustine was the greater influence. A proverb current then was that "a sermon without Augustine was as a stew without bacon".<sup>1</sup> The Emperor in the West was Honorius, who had no energy for anything except persecuting heretics, of whom Pelagius and Celestius were the chief. Patrick should show in his writings some sign of having known of these controversies, which were burning in the whole Church, including Ireland, during the first half of the fifth century.

WAS PATRICK AN AUGUSTINIAN?—When St. Augustine died in the year 430, Pope Celestine found it necessary to write to the bishops of Marseilles, Trejus, Vivers, and other Gallic Sees exhorting them to forbid presbyters from discussing undecided points of doctrine and preaching against the truth. "Augustine of holy memory", he says, "was a man in full communion with the Apostolic See, and that which he taught was not to be indiscriminately denounced by men far his inferiors."

Tixeront, the French historian, who wrote with the *imprimatur* of the Papacy, says that the

<sup>1</sup> Kidd, iii. 18.



progress of St. Augustine's theology was "not his main title to theological glory. He rendered his greatest service in the battle against Pelagian error, and his genius has thrown an ever-enduring light on the obscure problems of the original fall and of grace."<sup>1</sup> Again, "in rendering this great service against Pelagianism, his genius truly organised supernatural and Christian anthropology".<sup>2</sup>

Augustine continued this contest until nearing his end in 430.

PATRICK TWENTY YEARS IN THE GREAT SCHOOLS.—There could be no doubt that under these circumstances Patrick should have had a clear idea as to what the controversy was about. He saw the end of it, and he also saw the beginning twenty-one years previously, in 411, when Celestius was condemned at Carthage. But he had a much better means of understanding the question because of his residence of three years at Lerins, and at Auxerre for seventeen years as a deacon and priest—for that was the scene of his work since the year 415, according to Dr. Bury, having been ordained deacon there in that year by Bishop Amator, who was succeeded by Germanus.

A problem arises here over St. Patrick's doggerel Latin after a residence of seventeen years

<sup>1</sup> Vol. ii. p. 432.

<sup>2</sup> p. 455.



at the prominent See and School of Auxerre. How could the *seniores* in Britain laugh at his acceptance of a bishopric on the ground of his rusticity, and why did he feel so keenly his unfitness on the same ground? Such a question could not arise if he lived in Gaul in the second century, when St. Irenaeus had, at considerable trouble, to acquire the Celtic tongue so as to go out from his Greek-speaking community and teach the Celts all around him. That would fit in exactly with all we know of Patrick from his Confession, and his account in this respect is very plain. Dr. Bury gives no explanation on this head. He ignores the subject.<sup>1</sup>

A PAPAL ENCOMIUM.—It was just when he was ordained at Auxerre, or supposed to be, that Pope Zosimus pronounced his splendid acquittal of Pelagius and Celestius at Rome, rebuking at the same time the whole of the churches of Latin Africa, with Carthage as their head. Patrick should have known of this and have been impressed by it. He should have had some feeling of sympathy with his two fellow-countrymen, who had now been seven years “under a ban”.

The Pope’s inquiry was held in the subterranean Church of St. Clement in Rome, and the summing-up of the decision was that the

<sup>1</sup> p. 338 *et seq.*



holy men who were present on the Council "all but wept with admiring sympathy towards Pelagius"; and he reproved the Africans for credulous and uncharitable haste in admitting the cavils of contemptible slanderers against two men ascertained to be perfectly satisfactory in belief, and admonished them not to welcome every wind that blew their way as if it carried truth along with it. "Rather", said Pope Zosimus, "let them imitate the scrupulous and patient caution of the civil tribunals in criminal cases, with respect to the choice of judges and to adjournments with a view to further evidence. Yes, and let them also remember how the Saviour Himself, the Sacrifice and High Priest of the whole world, had been done to death on Calvary, and as the return of the son in the parable was a cause of joy, much more should they rejoice over Pelagius and Celestius as brethren proved not to have been dead or lost, to have never been separated from the Christian body, or from Catholic truth."<sup>1</sup>

AN IMPERIAL EDICT.—But St. Augustine and the Africans had secured the Emperors on their side, and on the 30th April an edict was issued which Patrick could not have missed, unless by some strange coincidence. It is rather long, but every word of it must have rung in

<sup>1</sup> Bright, *Age of the Fathers*, ii. 208.



Patrick's ears, if he were there at all, and is worth repeating:

"We are informed by common rumour that, in order to confuse the light of Catholic simplicity, which ever shines with pure radiance, a new subtlety has suddenly emerged, concealed under the misstatements of *pseudo-science*. It has raged with such controversial madness as to affect the tranquil stability of heavenly faith by inventing falsehoods of criminal novelty. Of this false and irreligious system report affirms that Pelagius and Celestius are the authors. Indeed, the ears of our clemency have been assailed by recent report that, as well within our sacred city as in other places, this noxious contagion has been so implanted in the hearts of some as to break up the path of simple faith. Wherefore we have by law enacted that Celestius and Pelagius, the original heads of this execrable doctrine, be expelled from the city, and that if, besides, there are any other adherents of this execrable teaching (this must have hurt Pope Zosimus), in whatever place they may be found, or wherever they put forth any utterance out of the depths of their damnable heresy, they may be seized by any man and brought before a competent judge. Anyone, cleric or laic, shall have the power to bring them to trial, and, without notice, to



press his suit whenever he shall find them. Such men, wherever they are found holding conference together about this criminal piety, we order to be seized by all and sundry, taken before a public tribunal, and accused by anyone at pleasure, so that proof and conviction of crime may be followed by public pronouncement, and the parties condemned to irrevocable banishment; for the source of evil ought to keep clear of public society, and those ought to have no place in common intercourse whom we ought not only to abhor for their evil doings, but to be on our guard against because of their im-poisoned temper. Further, it is our pleasure that these edicts be published far and wide throughout the Empire, and to the full extent of the world, lest perchance a pretended ignorance of them should afford food for error, and someone should think himself at liberty to venture upon what he feigned not to know had been condemned by authority.—Given at Ravenna, 30th April (418), in the twelfth consulate of Honorius and the eighth of Theodosius as Lords Augusti.”<sup>1</sup>

The reference to “pseudo-science” makes it likely that Pelagius rejected the notion of Adam’s immortality as being against common sense and sound knowledge.

<sup>1</sup> Kidd, *Documents*, ii. 167.



Events moved with great rapidity, for on the following day, 1st May 418, the great Council at Carthage, of two hundred and seventeen bishops, including Augustine, pronounced their anathemas, beginning, as might be expected, with Augustine's basic dogma of the immortality of Adam's body:

"Whosoever says that Adam the first man was created mortal, so that whether he had sinned or not he would have died in body, that is, he would have gone forth of the body, not because his sin merited this, but by natural necessity, let him be anathema."

Pope Zosimus saw that he had brought his See into a humiliating plight, and at once endeavoured to reopen the inquiry by sending for Celestius to appear before him again; but Celestius had "fled". It did not need a legal training to show Celestius the completeness of the Pope's defeat. But Zosimus was a weak man; he issued a "tractoria" to the bishops of Constantinople, Thessalonica, Jerusalem, Egypt and Africa, condemning Pelagius and Celestius of all the charges on which, with a flash of courage, he had acquitted them. He denounced the notion of an intermediate state for unbaptized infants, which Pelagius never taught (he believed such infants were in heaven), and accepted the whole Augustinian Creed. Augus-



tine was elated, Carthage felt that it had brought Rome to its knees, and we may assume that Pelagius and Celestius were depressed.

ANGRY BISHOPS.—Eighteen bishops refused to anathematize Pelagius, and they were deprived of their Sees and banished. No such thing had happened since the Church was established by Constantine in the year 314. Only two bishops (Egyptians) were deposed in the controversy at Nicaea almost a century earlier. The eighteen were very angry. They believed that Augustine's teaching as to the damnation of all the heathen and all unbaptized infants was "a libel on God". One of them, Julian of Eclanum, near Beneventum in Italy, told Augustine to "take himself away with that unjust God of his. It made the Creator of men a devil; it was a hideous, monstrous, infernal idea, an indescribable sacrilege, worse than any idolatry". This outburst lacks reverence, but it does not lack logic. Pelagius would not deliver himself in this overheated fashion. Julian may have made statements which Pelagius would not make, but then, Pelagius was only a layman, while Julian was a bishop.

It is incredible that Patrick at Auxerre was not impressed, or shocked, by these bitter contentions. All the virtues of the heathen were sins in Augustine's judgment—meekness, justice,



filial piety, charity, patience—all were sins. “They overcome some sins”, he said, “by other sins.”<sup>1</sup> (*Aliis peccatis alia peccata vincuntur.*)

It might be supposed that the teaching of Pelagius and Celestius must have contained something very demoralizing and godless, and such as Patrick in his Confession might be expected to controvert.

A HEATHEN PRAYER.—For a practical example of what Pelagius taught, we may refer to a dark corner of the heathen world.

Max Müller tells us of some wandering tribes in Patagonia whose civilization was so low that they hardly deserved to be called fellow-creatures. Captain Cook had compared their language to a man clearing his throat, and Darwin said that no European ever cleared his throat with so many hoarse, guttural, clicking sounds. But Max Müller shows that they had a good vocabulary; and a sympathetic Italian, Giacomo Bove, described their language as sweet and pleasing, and full of vowels. “How”, asks Max Müller, “shall we reconcile such conflicting statements?” But he proceeds to give a copy of a Patagonian prayer, and it is that which concerns us. The prayer is:

O Father, Great Man,  
King of this land,

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<sup>1</sup> Tixeront, *Hist. of Dogmas*, vol. ii. p. 482.





Favour us, dear Friend, every day  
With good food,  
With good water,  
With good sleep.  
Poor am I, poor is this meat,  
Take of it if thou wilt.

Max Müller goes on to point out that the prayer was not addressed to a fetish, or a totem, or an ancestral spirit, but to the unseen Father, to a dear Friend, the King of their land, to whom they offer the best they have, though it is only, as they say, a very poor meal. Pelagius, rightly or wrongly, would say that this prayer was as truly prompted by the Grace of God as any prayer that was ever said in St. Peter's at Rome, and here we have Pelagianism in a nutshell.

A MISSION FROM AUXERRE.—We could continue giving accounts almost *ad infinitum* of the contentions of the period (which is, as already remarked, a historian's paradise), of which the reader would soon grow tired. But there is another edict and its sequel that should have made an unforgettable impression on Patrick. It was in the year 424. Patrick had been, it is supposed, nine years at Auxerre then. Two Emperors directed it to Amathius, the Prefect of Gaul, charging him to see "that if any Bishop of Gaul were accused of holding Pelagian opinions, he was to be tried by Patroclus, Bishop of



Arles, and if found guilty he was to be deposed, and Patroclus had authority to appoint another bishop in his stead". This edict to Patroclus in the year 424 did not have the effect of silencing Pelagianism in Gaul. The heresy was spreading in Britain also. In the year 429 it was found necessary to hold a Council in Gaul, "very numerously attended", probably at Arles in Campagne, to deal with the prayer of the Bishops of the British Church that someone would be sent to them capable of combating the errors of Pelagius which had taken root there.

The Council appointed St. Germanus of Auxerre and St. Lupus of Troyes to go to England to support the true faith. The deacon, Palladius, is mentioned in connection with this event as having brought it to the notice of Pope Celestine. When the bishops came to Britain they assembled a Council at St. Albans. "The authors of the detestable heresy", it is said, "came to the Council glittering with pomp and fine dresses, and surrounded by their partisans. An immense number of people of all ages—men and women—were present. The Pelagians first set forth their tenets at much length, then the two venerable bishops poured forth in answer the torrent of their eloquence, supporting their assertions by Divine testimonies. Their opponents testified by their silence that they could not withstand



them, and the assembled multitude, with loud shouts, proclaimed the victory of the Catholics."<sup>1</sup>

Germanus works wonders, as would be expected of him, in the fifth century. When the damnable unbelief is suppressed, and the minds of all men are settled in the purity of the faith, they betake themselves to St. Alban's grave and command the tomb to be opened for the reception of relics of all the apostles and other saints. A great number of new converts are made the same day, and more remarkable miracles follow, but no mention is made as to the place where St. Alban's grave was!

Patrick should have heard of these thrilling episodes, if he were there, and thought of his old friends at Fochlut. But it is almost twenty years since he had seen them, and many changes must have taken place in that time. He is no longer the "holy youth" to whom the vision pointed.

TWENTY YEARS A CULPRIT.—But the time for sending Patrick to Ireland has not yet come. Celestius has to be tried again for his heresy at Ephesus in 431, and we have the fullest details of the trial and its surroundings. Pope Cyril of Alexandria was on the spot. The Emperor rebuked Cyril for "subtle diplomacy" and "mischievous rashness" in trying to influence the Queen "apart from the Emperor, as if there

<sup>1</sup> Landon, *Manual of Councils*, ii. 115.



were any divisions in the imperial family, or as if he saw his way to causing any such". Cyril spent in bribes, or "benedictions" as they were called, fifteen hundred pounds of gold (upwards of £63,000) which had been contracted in the name of his Church at Alexandria. Thus Celestius and, along with him, Pelagius were condemned. Nestorius, the author of another heresy, was condemned at the same time. Then Celestius "disappeared". Pelagius had "disappeared" after the Imperial Edict of 418. Any spiteful person might "catch" him and drag him to trial. He was one of the easiest of men to identify—the one-eyed "Goliath" heretic, of whom the Empire rang for all those years. Palladius is then despatched to Ireland.

FIFTH-CENTURY LATIN.—This legendary Patrick must have been an Augustinian after his training and experience at Auxerre; and neither Pope Celestine nor Pope Sixtus would have chosen any other to send to Ireland. Prosper of Aquitaine and Marius Mercator and all the zealous admirers of Augustine would have made an uproar if any other were sent to fill the place which Palladius had left vacant. Yet, strange to say, in the Confession there is not a trace of anti-Pelagian purpose, that is, not a trace of pro-Augustinian purpose. And after all his scholastic experience he was a novice in writing a Creed,



as if he had never seen a Creed in his life. But the legendary Patrick must have been a good Latin scholar, unless he were an imbecile. There was nothing but Latin spoken through all that time, especially in the schools—and the very purest of Latin at Auxerre, during his stay of seventeen years. Haarhoff states that “by the fifth century the victory of Latin was complete. It was the language of civilization, of government, of society. Slaves brought from all parts of the world made a common language between master and servant a necessity. Soldiers settled in Gaul spread its influence. Finally, it was the official language of the Church and (a fact which was more important for its propagation) of the school.”<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Cyril Bailey states that while the vulgar Latin of the laity went on departing gradually from its original form, the clergy maintained it in comparative purity. In the schools the pupils used it as a spoken tongue, and in the monasteries—no matter what the inmates’ native speech was—the conversation was carried on in Latin. “The best monastic Latin, as an instrument of literary expression, is not much inferior to classical Latin.”<sup>2</sup>

ST. VINCENT OF LERINS. — Furthermore, Patrick was at Lerins, according to Bury, from

<sup>1</sup> p. 27.

<sup>2</sup> *The Legacy of Rome*, p. 378.



411 to 414 as a layman. This was the home of the semi-Pelagians, who were as much hated by the majority as Pelagius himself. St. Vincent was there about the same time. He died eleven years before the traditional Patrick. Vincent gave his well-known definition of the term "Catholic" (what is believed everywhere, always, and by all) as a protest against Augustine's innovations. He also extracted from Augustine's writings sixteen statements which were errors. It is enough to quote one, namely, that Christ did not die for all men but only for all classes of men: that is, if a fisherman had a number of children, he could not say that Christianity was intended for them, but that *some* fishermen's children would reach heaven as representatives of their *class*.<sup>1</sup> The boldness of Augustine is amazing.

A CHASM.—In view of these twenty years' experience of Patrick at the two renowned schools,<sup>2</sup> Dr. Bury's avoidance of the chasm between his experience and his attainments is remarkable. The chasm was seen quite distinctly. Bury looked at it and passed by. Zimmer could not have realized the fact of Patrick's training—he did not believe in it—when he poured contempt on his Latin.

The legendary Patrick had a long and varied

<sup>1</sup> Bright, ii. 229.

<sup>2</sup> p. 338.



and distinguished training. He was in the centre of the great and stirring movements of his time; he was well abreast of the questions of his day; he was a well-equipped theologian and a good Latin scholar, and fully qualified for any bishopric in Western Christendom. So either Dr. Gwynn was wholly wrong in asserting the "absurdity" of sending an untrained man like Patrick to follow in the steps of Palladius in Ireland, or else Dr. Bury must have been faced with a problem which he could not explain, and, therefore, he ignored it. Patrick himself—the real Patrick—leaves us in no doubt as to what the truth is. He had lived centuries before those schools were founded.

FIERCE CONFLICTS.—This was not the time when a fifth-century bishop could write of "the Roman Christian Gauls" sending men with gold coins to redeem "baptized captives". When Patrick wrote this statement he included all the Christian Gauls. There was not one sect known as "the Roman Christian Gauls" and another known by a different title. There were no sects in his day. No fifth-century bishop would describe the great Gallic Church of his time as "the Roman Christian Gauls". Such a description would be absurd. Nor did the Gallic Church send gold coins to redeem "baptized captives". If there were any such redemptions, care would



be taken in the fifth century that "baptized Catholics" or "baptized Arians" only were bought back. In Patrick's mind every baptized person was a Christian; and all "baptized captives", without any exception, were in the full sense baptized Christians. It is unlikely that St. Augustine would advise the Gallic Church in the fifth century to buy back baptized Arians or baptized Pelagians. He was at the time giving eight reasons why the baptized Donatists of North Africa should be subjected to the "secular arm", and they were not heretics. All their trouble arose over the consecration of a bishop—the formalities were said to have been irregular—and then one word borrowed another till Augustine borrowed the sword and the Church borrowed it from him. Sir Samuel Dill<sup>1</sup> tells us that the men of the time (fifth century) saw the Church torn by fierce conflicts; common humanity forgotten for what seemed verbal subtleties; bishops anathematizing each other; good men driven into exile. "An honest pagan, Ammianus Marcellinus, said no savage beasts could equal the cruelty of the Christians to one another." Ammianus died in 391, that is, two years after the legendary Patrick is said to have been born.

A further statement from Dill—and he is only summarizing all the evidences of the

<sup>1</sup> *Roman Society in Last Century of Empire*, p. 28.



period—is that “the Gothic (Arian) power has securely established itself in Southern Gaul. Roman (Catholic) authority in Spain is confined to a corner in the north-east. Burgundians (Arians) are advancing from the middle Rhine to the valleys of the Rhone and Isere (from Basle to Lyons and Grenoble). In the meantime the imperial power was growing daily weaker and the administration more corrupt than ever, and more oppressive. The upper classes are taking advantage of the paralysis of the Government, and of the economic chaos, to aggrandize themselves, unrestrained by any public spirit or feeling of pity for the distressed. Can we wonder that in the eye of Salvian (a Catholic priest) the Empire seems almost in its last throes, while the Germans in their victorious strength seem to hold the future in their grasp. Salvian may have exaggerated the sensual excesses of his countrymen, as he has probably idealized the purity of the German morality, but he discerned the real weaknesses of Rome, the crushing taxation, the cruelty of the official classes, the selfish rapacity of the rich which made many Romans welcome the humaner rule of the Gothic chief. In an age of fierce intolerance it is singular to find a Catholic extolling the superior virtue of the men who denied the deity of Christ. He praises not only



their chastity, but their justice, their kindness to one another, even their tolerance towards those who anathematized them as heretics. . . . Christianity has failed to regenerate the Roman world: the future belongs to the barbarians."<sup>1</sup>

Salvian was eleven years junior to the supposed Patrick, and would have been in his thirty-second year when Patrick came to Ireland. He was "almost certainly" at Lerins, and they would have been in Gaul together and in the ranks of the clergy of the same Church.

A MYTH.—But Salvian did not exaggerate or draw too dark a picture of the religion of his time. The State desired concubinage,<sup>2</sup> and the Church sanctioned the practice for communicants, at the Council of Toledo,<sup>3</sup> in the year 400. The Church's right to the title "Christian" might well be doubted. Salvian's allusion to "the unconcealed licentiousness of Gaul and Spain" was well grounded, and he might have included Italy in the imputation.

We have here the time, the place, the persons, the acts and the environment, all from evidence taken on the spot—not from fabulists at a distance of centuries; we have the very atmosphere

<sup>1</sup> p. 268.

<sup>2</sup> Bury, *Later Roman Empire*, i. 26.

<sup>3</sup> G. Papini, *Augustine*, p. 123; Hefele, ii. p. 421; Landon, ii. p. 151; Labbe, tome ii. 1239.



from which Patrick is said to have emerged as he crossed to Ireland in A.D. 432, and we have his account of what he witnessed before his emergence, given thus: "The custom of the Roman Christian Gauls is this—they send holy and fit men to the Franks and other heathen with many thousands of solidi to redeem baptized captives". I suggest that this is incredible, and that the facts afford convincing proof that the fifth-century Patrick is a myth.

FABLES.—I have said that Dr. Bury made no attempt to adjust the contradictory accounts of Patrick's experience and his attainments. It will be asked: Are there no adjustments required on the other side? Is the evidence against a fifth-century Patrick so clear and smooth that there are no gaps to be filled and no knots to be unravelled? There is certainly one large gap to be filled, that is the gap between the legendary Lives of Patrick on the one side and his own writings and the authentic histories on the other. The Lives are calling to us across the centuries and pleading: Have you no use for us? Are we not to be heard in your story of Patrick?

As we journey with Patrick and the shipmen, the Lives come with us, and proffer their assistance on the way. In Section 21 of the Confession there is a case in point. Patrick seems



to imply here—it is another “seeming implication”—that he was taken captive again after his escape from Ireland. The statement is “not lucid”, Dr. Bury says, and does not mean that such an episode really occurred, but that the sentence is “a parenthetical reference to his life-work in Ireland conceived as a second captivity”.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps the thought is something like that of St. Paul when he refers to himself as the “bondservant” of Christ.

But the Lives took the surface-meaning, and proceed accordingly to recount the incidents of the second bondage. Joceline, for instance, says that during this time Patrick was sold for a kettle, but the kettle refused to boil water; as the fire grew hotter the kettle grew colder, the flame raged without, the water froze within. But the purchaser returned the kettle and took Patrick back, and the kettle behaved naturally afterwards! Joceline has about one hundred and ninety-six of these impudent forgeries, and all the Lives are the same. Muirchu's is, according to Dr. Gwynn, “a very phantasmagoria of miracle”. Tirechan is not so gross but more deliberate; the *Liber Angeli* is, if possible, more worthless; and the *Tripartite* can be the most credulous of them all. Joceline tells us that a thief stole Patrick's goat and ate it, and

<sup>1</sup> p. 294.



denied the theft to Patrick, whereon the goat bleated from within the thief. The Saint doomed him and his progeny ever after to have a goat's beard. The Tripartite says there were three thieves, and that the goat bleated "out of the bellies of the three".<sup>1</sup>

A MAZE.—Professor Zimmer tried to prove that Patrick and Palladius were the same person, but he convinced nobody. Dr. Gwynn said that he "invented" a Patrick who was impossible.<sup>2</sup> Yet the fact that a scholar of his acumen should attempt such a task shows that he felt baffled by the current theory of St. Patrick's date. He does not account for the coming of Christianity to Ireland—it might have trickled in from Britain before the fifth century—but he gets rid of the legendary Patrick, and in so doing makes more knots than he untied.

If the legendary Patrick were a Pelagian, Zimmer thinks that the popularity of Pelagianism in Ireland could thus be partly accounted for, but he regards it as nonsense to suppose that the friend of Germanus of Auxerre could be a supporter of Pelagius.

The Lives and Dr. Bury take Patrick first to the Pelagian school at Lerins and then to the Augustinian school at Auxerre, and having brought him through these two schools in

<sup>1</sup> p. 181.

<sup>2</sup> p. xcix.



twenty years they produce, in the classical sense, a simpleton!

A SCOTCH DETECTIVE.—Much might be said as to the fact that the heretic Pelagius wrote his commentary on St. Paul and some of his other works a quarter of a century before Palladius, the first bishop, and the traditional Patrick were sent to Ireland, but the subject may be omitted except for one point.

It used to be denied that Pelagius was Irish, because he was sometimes referred to in his day as a "Briton". Even in the twentieth century Irishmen travelling abroad are often described as Britons, whether they like it or not. St. Jerome dwelt at Bethlehem, and Pelagius also was there, and in other parts of Palestine, for some years. (Pelagius must have been a member of a wealthy family.) They knew each other well, though they may not have met face to face. Jerome describes Pelagius twice as Irish. He was "an Alpine dog fattened on Irish porridge" (the Alpine dogs were probably Irish hounds, or related to them), also that "he had his home among the Irish in the neighbourhood of Britain". It has been suggested that Jerome knew he was born in Roman Britain, but that he "maliciously" described him as Irish to blacken his character. This is absurd and unfair to Jerome, who was not vicious enough for



such a form of attack. Dr. Bury, as a way out of the difficulty, suggested that Pelagius was born of an Irish family which had migrated to Wales, but this does not solve the problem. The recent discoveries of the writings of Pelagius appear to confirm the belief in his Irish birth. The manner in which those writings were "stolen" from the *Book of Armagh* and elsewhere, and circulated under various names, mainly that of his great opponent Jerome, is almost unbelievable. The demand for them was keen, but no one would dare to use the author's name. The Caroline Books (four books put forth in the name of Charlemagne (A.D. 768-814)) contain a fine and much-admired Confession of Faith, but it was not suspected that it had been "stolen" from the Confession which Pelagius sent to Pope Zosimus, and at which the holy men who were present at his Council "all but wept with admiring sympathy towards Pelagius".

The first to get on the "scent" of these thefts was Professor Zimmer, who gave the signal, but it was taken up and pursued by Professor Souter of Aberdeen, who is one of the keenest literary detectives of the present day. The search occupied his spare time—perhaps more than his spare time—for eighteen years; it took him to the continent of Europe nine times, and



through about forty-four libraries at home and abroad. He reported his progress from time to time to Dr. Gwynn, who was working on the *Book of Armagh*, but that work was finished before the final discovery was achieved. The result is that Pelagius on St. Paul is now, by a long way, the oldest book extant in the British Islands. The date is A.D. 404-409. Again we are reminded of the obscurity of the fifth-century Patrick in view of the light that comes to us from his day. Among all the actors who pass before us on the stage there is not a trace of the elusive Patrick, although from centuries off he is said to have taken a leading part in the drama, and in his own writings he is as unconscious of the creeds and controversies and heresies and heretics of the time, as one ought to be who was two and a half centuries in his grave.

A GREAT PAINTING.—If Patrick had come to Ireland in the fifth century he would have brought some typical fifth-century morals with him, of which the true Patrick had none. Ireland was not then importing Christian morals, but she was exporting them in the persons of Pelagius and Celestius, two of the earliest of Patrick's brilliant sons in the faith—two fourth-century scholars whom any country might regard with pride. But the greatest two



of the Latin Fathers chased them back to Ireland, and their morals with them. A painting by Domenichino represents Augustine administering the Last Sacrament to Jerome. It now hangs in the Vatican Gallery. No artist had painted Pelagius. No gallery would care to "hang" him! There was no Last Sacrament for him! Probably he received it for all that in the purer atmosphere of the Tonsure of the Druids.





## CHAPTER VI

### EXCURSUS

CATHOLIC.—The controversies of the fourth and fifth centuries rang with the cries of “Catholic” and “heretic”. It is surprising to find the term “Catholic” wholly absent from St. Patrick’s writings. If he were sent to Ireland to withstand Pelagianism he could scarcely avoid its use in giving warning and counsel to his people. But there would be nothing remarkable in the absence of the word from a second-century document. Its use had not then become common.

The word was applied at first to a superior state official “who collected the Emperor’s revenue in several provinces united into one diocese, as distinct from the inferior officers each belonging to a particular province. The former was the *Catholicus*”.<sup>1</sup> It was first applied in the Church to the *common* church as distinct from *private* churches. In Rome, when

<sup>1</sup> Pearson on *The Apostles’ Creed*, p. 517.



St. Paul wrote to the Christians there, he sent greetings to Priscilla and Aquila and "the Church that is in their house"; we may suppose that for the time being this, even without a bishop or clergy, would be the nearest approach to a Catholic Church.

The word, which is ancient and honourable, might be understood to mean an institution of boundless charity, but it fell on evil days when it came to distinguish the orthodox from the heretics. It has been much degraded by emperors. For instance, when Theodosius, in the year 380, was going to fight the Arian Goths he first branded them with the name heretic, to arouse against them hatred as an ally to his arms. Here is his edict:

"It is our pleasure that all the nations which are governed by our clemency and moderation should steadfastly adhere to the religion which was taught by St. Peter to the Romans, which faithful traditions have been preserved, and which is now professed by the Pontiff Damasus, and by Peter, Pope of Alexandria, a man of Apostolic holiness. We authorize the followers of this doctrine to assume the title Catholic Christians, and as we judge that all others were extravagant madness we brand them by the infamous name of Heretics, and declare that their Conventicles shall no longer usurp the



respectable application of Churches. Besides the condemnation of Divine justice they must expect to suffer the severe penalties which our authority, guided by heavenly wisdom, shall think proper to inflict upon them."<sup>1</sup>

Theodosius does not hesitate to confer the title "Catholic" as if he were the source and fountain of all it meant. The following year he proceeded to summon the second General (Ecumenical) Council of Constantinople, which was wholly eastern, the decrees of which he formally confirmed.

The Nicene Creed of 325 ended with the article, "we believe in the Holy Ghost". The remaining eight articles, including that on "the Holy Catholic Church", were not added until 451 at Chalcedon, that would have been ten years before the fifth-century Patrick is supposed to have died, so that he would have been familiar with the term. By that time, Professor M'Giffert says,<sup>2</sup> it had come to be used in the narrow sectarian sense, as applying to the Roman Church only. On that account all the more stress would be laid upon it by Pope Celestine and his successors. In the earlier centuries it indicated the Holy Church Universal, and was not employed in clamorous disputes. The total omission of the word from Patrick's

<sup>1</sup> Kidd, *Documents*, ii. 97.

<sup>2</sup> pp. 32, 199.



“legacy” to his people, in view of his death, is easier to explain if he wrote in the second century than in the fifth. It is unlikely that the legate of Pope Celestine, and the successor of Palladius, with schisms and heresies swirling around him, would not even have mentioned the Catholic faith. It is more likely that Patrick lived and wrote long before the word Catholic was bandied about in controversy, as it had been for more than a century previous to A.D. 432.

LANGUAGE.—Patrick’s mother-tongue was practically Celtic. Bury implies that it was the predominance of Celtic which made the “Hibernicizing” of Patrick an easy task by the hagiographers. Latin was awkward to him, and his remark, “I wrote this in Latin”, would not be made by one from whom nothing else would be naturally expected. As the son of a Roman decurion, he must have been introduced to Latin by the time of his capture at the age of sixteen, and, had he spent his years on the continent in Gaul during the fifth century, it would have continued to be his native speech. Even in the second century, in parts of Gaul, he might have lived in a Latin quarter, but this would not apply to Gaul generally, as St. Irenaeus very clearly shows.

Zimmer gives no quarter to the theory that



Patrick introduced Latin to Ireland in the fifth century. "It is altogether incredible", he says, "that the Latin loan-words of the old Irish should have been introduced by Patrick and his Romance-speaking companions from the Continent after A.D. 432. On the other hand their linguistic form is easily explained if Christianity was gradually spread throughout Ireland in the fourth century by Irish-speaking Britons."<sup>1</sup> This does not preclude the coming of the "loan-words" in an earlier century. Dr. MacNeill also sees traces of an early date in Patrick's Irish. He tells us that the Irish and Welsh names are not taken directly from Iverni but from an older form "Iveri". Both the Irish name Eire and the Welsh Iwerddan go back to an older Iverio, "and the older name is actually found in the writings of St. Patrick in the slightly-disguised Latin form of Hiberio".<sup>2</sup>

Patrick was probably an accomplished Celtic scholar. He knew some Latin, which would have been of little or no use to him if slanders had not come from the Latinists in Britain. Fortunately, these slanders did come, else the Confession might never have been written.

THE LORDLY RHETORICIANS.—There were stylists in those days amongst the Latin Chris-

<sup>1</sup> p. 26.

<sup>2</sup> *Phases of Irish History*, p. 67.



tians in Britain, as there were amongst the friends of St. Irenaeus, who had to apologize for the crudeness of his Greek on the ground that, for the most part, he was using Celtic. "You will not expect from me", he says, "who am resident among the Keltae, and am accustomed for the most part to use a barbarous dialect, any display of *rhetoric* which I have never learned."

The schools in those days were poisoned by flowery rhetoric, which cared nothing for truth so long as the stylists were pleased and the Emperor duly applauded. Irenaeus had to be on his guard against these. Hence his apology.

It is not without interest that Patrick had exactly the same feeling rankling in his mind as that expressed by Irenaeus. His complaint is: "Wherefore then be ye astonied ye that fear God, both small and great, and *ye lordly rhetoricians*, hear and search out. Who was it that called me, fool though I be, out of the midst of those who seem to be wise and skilful in the law, and powerful in word and in everything? And me, moreover, who am abominated of this world, did He inspire beyond others—if such I were—only that with reverence and godly fear and unblamably I should faithfully serve the nation to whom the love of Christ conveyed me, and



presented me, as long as I live, if I should be worthy; in fine that I should with humility and truth serve them.”<sup>1</sup> Patrick adopts a rather defiant tone towards these “lordly rhetoricians”.

These two writers—Irenaeus and Patrick—spoke the same language, they lived in the same country, they were occupied with the same work, and they met with the same kind of unfriendly criticism, but it is said that they lived nearly three hundred years apart. If it could be shown that rhetoric had lost its power for chastisement in the fifth century, we should then have evidence tending to prove that Patrick did not live and write in that period.

It must be admitted that the rhetorician occupied his chair in the fifth century, and that he was still an influence to be reckoned with, but there is reason to believe that his lash had lost its venom by that time.

Haarhoff tells us that although there was a tradition in the fifth century to bind and intimidate, “there was no Domitian (A.D. 81–96) to put historians to death”. Furthermore, he says that in the Christian schools there was “a reaction against the superfluities of rhetoric”; there was a tendency towards history; and this tendency affected thought as well as style; the students began to look for first principles in

<sup>1</sup> Sect. 13.



the series of events. The universality of Christianity made them look to the whole world, that is, the "imperialistic use of history" was superseded. The students tried to see all things in relation to their conception of the Divine. Hence there was a tendency to a philosophy of history. "Bible history had no politics behind it." "The smug complacency of the glib rhetoricians"<sup>1</sup> could not stand before the greater desire for truth. This goes to show that the lash had lost its venom.

The same thought is confirmed by Sir Richard Jebb's historical note on the rise of the rhetorician.<sup>2</sup> Vespasian (A.D. 70-79) was the first emperor who gave a public endowment to the teaching of rhetoric. Under Hadrian Antoninus and Marcus Aurelius (A.D. 117-180) "the public chairs of rhetoric became the objects of the highest ambition", and the holders of these chairs were further encouraged by grants of various immunities. "The complete constitution of the schools at Athens was due to Marcus Aurelius", and *St. Irenaeus lived in his reign*. He sanctioned the martyrdoms at Lyons in 177. I suggest that these were the days when the rhetorician was rampant, and not in the fifth century, when his sting had been drawn and his voice carried

<sup>1</sup> p. 214.

<sup>2</sup> *Ency. Brit.* xxiii. 236.



only to the ears of his pupils. Also that it was then Patrick defied the "lordly rhetoricians", and that the Confession is a second-century document.

IRENÆUS AND POLYCARP.—By far the most important piece of information we possess about St. Irenaeus is the fact that a link of friendship existed between him and St. Polycarp. He tells us that he can recall the very place where Polycarp used to sit and teach, his manner of speech, his mode of life, his appearance, the style of his address to the people, his frequent reference to St. John and others who had seen Christ, how he (Polycarp) used to repeat from memory their discourses, and how he had heard from them concerning our Lord's miracles and teachings, and how he was instructed by those who were eye-witnesses of the Word. *Irenaeus looked into the eyes of Polycarp, Polycarp looked into the eyes of John, and John looked into the eyes of Christ.* This record is unique. There is nothing like it to be found anywhere else. Any serious error in the teaching or practice of the Church would be known to these three. Their total ages cover five generations. St. John was the youngest of the Apostles, and he lived to a great age—probably close on a hundred. Polycarp was eighty-six, and Irenaeus



died, or was martyred, about A.D. 202. Here is a chain of three links connecting Calvary with the third century, and through St. Patrick it connects Calvary with Ireland also. St. Patrick lived in the same country and at the same time as St. Irenaeus, and may have looked into his eyes. For that matter he may have looked into the eyes of old St. Pothinus, who was martyred in 177 at Lyons at the age of ninety.

The evidence, which rests upon plain facts, places Patrick and his writings along with the Fathers and literature of the second century.

EDUCATION.—Dr. Douglas Hyde especially is nonplussed over the suddenness with which an advanced culture in law, poetry and folklore sprang up in the fifth century. Manifestly it would be to him the solution of a knotty problem if he could put an earlier century in the place of the fifth. He puts his difficulty thus: "The churches and monasteries established by him (Patrick) soon became so many nuclei of learning, and from the end of the fifth century a knowledge of letters had completely permeated the island. So suddenly does this appear to have taken place, and so rapidly does Ireland seem to have produced a flourishing of laws, poems, and sagas, that it is



difficult, or impossible, not to believe that our people before this arrived at a very high state of indigenous culture."<sup>1</sup>

Then the biologist comes to the rescue in the person of Dr. Sigerson, who is positive that *un-discovered influences* must have been evolving the Irish intellect for generations, of which few had previously dreamt. "I assert", says Dr. Sigerson, referring to the laws at the revision of which St. Patrick is supposed to have assisted, "that, speaking biologically, such laws could not emanate from any race whose brains had not been subject to the quickening influence of education for many generations." Someone else has said that these laws must have been "inspired by the Holy Spirit".<sup>2</sup>

We are reminded of two astronomers whom Sir James Jeans tells us of—one an Englishman named J. C. Adams, and the other a Frenchman named Leverrier—who both, about the same time, but independently of each other, as the result of certain "intricate mathematical calculations", came to the conclusion that there ought to be another planet in a certain region of the sky, and they both continued watching, and both about the same time discovered Neptune!<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Literary History of Ireland*, p. 133.

<sup>2</sup> MacNeill, *Celtic Religion*, p. 162.

<sup>3</sup> *The Universe Around Us*, p. 18.





Doctors Hyde and Sigerson were faced with a corresponding problem, that of an enlightening influence or force which has not been so far recognized and located. Perhaps, if the disciples of the learned Doctors would look to a quarter of a millennium before A.D. 432, they might discover the mysterious force.

“Many generations” are required to solve this problem. Two and a half centuries would cover about seven generations. Have we not here again a second-century Patrick fitting into the facts as a glove does to its owner’s hand? Dr. Douglas Hyde, failing a better solution, concludes that even the pre-Christian Irish were not uncultured.

The same thought was in Professor Zimmer’s mind. He says: “A tree planted by the Patrick of history could never have borne such fruit as Finnian of Clonard, Columba of Hi, Comgall of Bangor, Columban of Bobbio, Adamnan, Dicuil, Sedulius, Johannes Scotus Erigena, etc. Thus the seventh-century legend that Christianity was brought to Ireland by Patrick during the fifth century is inconsistent with his own writings.”<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Bury’s answer is that the “tree” was not planted by Patrick, but by some unknown worker in the vineyard, who came to Ireland

<sup>1</sup> p. 31.



long before him; in other words, that the tree was more fruitful by the fifth century than Dr. Todd could realize. A better answer would be that Patrick's was indeed the tree planted in the second century, whose fruit came to perfection in the fifth.

COROTICUS.—Unlike the Patrick whom Dr. Bury pictures, of whom failure upon failure has to be recorded, the Patrick of the Confession, as Dr. Gwynn remarks, was full of gratitude for almost uniform success. But he had one real and cutting sorrow over the prince Coroticus and his apostate Picts, who captured and sold a band of virgins whom Patrick had baptized, and shed blood at the same time.

Coroticus is supposed to have been Carodig, a Welsh prince of the fifth century, who gave his name to the county of Cardigan. A family name like this does not fix any point in history. Such names come down from father to son through many generations. There is not a point in English history, for many centuries, at which an Edward and a Henry cannot be found among kings or princes of the English Royal family. The same applies to chieftains everywhere.

Patrick refers to the apostate Picts in such a way as to indicate nothing as to a date. Dr.



MacCulloch tells us that the Picts had Druids,<sup>1</sup> and therefore we may believe they were Celts, and were as likely to be Christians at an early date as any other section of the Celtic people. It would not take long for a prince to apostatize. Ten days would be ample for the process. It did not take Judas Iscariot so long. We are told by Menzel that eleven thousand British maidens were conveyed to Gaul before A.D. 235 by the Emperor Maximin.<sup>2</sup> The number seems to be almost incredibly large. In any case, the practice of conveying maidens from Britain to Gaul existed in the third century, and an unprincipled and "apostate" prince, having found the opportunity of engaging in the profitable traffic, would be as likely to do what Patrick describes in the second century as in the fifth. There is no hint given as to how the maidens fell into the prince's hands.

MARRIED CLERGY.—Patrick's reference to his father and grandfather having been in Holy Orders and married, shows very little concern for the rules and laws of various popes and councils. The statement would be likely to annoy a fifth-century pope. It would have shown better taste on Patrick's part, if he lived in the

<sup>1</sup> *Religion of the Ancient Celts*, p. 18.

<sup>2</sup> *History of Germany*, p. 108.



fifth century, not to have needlessly reminded his readers that the laws of the Church in his day had been ignored by his immediate ancestors. Dr. White did not feel quite at ease in explaining this. "The remarkable thing about this statement", he says, "is that it is made without any explanation, qualification or apology. The point is, not what was allowed or connived at in later times, but what was likely to be the character of public utterances by Church dignitaries on the subject of clerical marriage."<sup>1</sup> If it had occurred to Dr. White that Patrick lived in the second century his difficulty would have vanished at once. Neither explanation, qualification nor apology would then be required. Anything of the kind would have been quite out of place.

Spurious documents in the name of St. Clement of Rome advocated celibacy, and these were much valued by St. Jerome.<sup>2</sup>

PATRICK'S FALSE FRIEND.—Next to the sorrow and anger caused by Coroticus, Patrick was most disturbed by a breach of trust on the part of a former friend, who was probably the bishop by whom he was consecrated. There was something done by Patrick when he was a boy which troubled his conscience, and he felt that before

<sup>1</sup> p. 222.

<sup>2</sup> Kidd, i. 138.



he took upon himself the office of a bishop he ought to mention it, which he did, but afterwards—probably after many years—it was talked of and made the occasion of unfriendly criticism. It is useless to speculate as to what the wrong or sin was. At the time Patrick “did not know the difference between right and wrong”. But as he was brought up in a Christian and clerical home, he was probably familiar with the Ten Commandments, and it was something which was not plainly indicated by any one of them. The incident is of interest to us chiefly to show the honesty of Patrick in not concealing the matter, and also his sensitiveness in after years as to his reputation. He was so agitated over it that his words are not easily understood. He appears to convey that he had some unfriendly critics in Ireland. This thought impressed Dr. White, who regards the Confession as addressed to Patrick’s “Irish Converts”.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, the gossip began abroad, and was continued there amongst his *seniores* in Britain or Gaul. Dr. Bury thinks that the document “might almost be described as an open letter to his brethren in Britain, published in Ireland”.<sup>2</sup> Patrick says it was “composed in Ireland” (Section 62), which he would be unlikely to say if he had only Irish readers in mind, and the same

<sup>1</sup> p. 230.<sup>2</sup> p. 203.



idea explains his saying in the Epistle (Section 20) that his words are "set forth in Latin". He was trying, so to speak, "to kill two birds with one stone". He has an eye all through on his Irish converts and, at the same time, on his Latin detractors. He aimed at leaving a "legacy" to his Irish converts and a defence to his foreign critics. We can understand his sensitiveness as to his reputation when we know that hitherto it was stainless so far as his conduct was concerned. Not that Patrick was not conscious of sin; we get the feeling on reading him that he was honestly penitent. Dr. MacNeill describes the Confession as "one of the great documents of history"; he doubtless means "great" not because of its language or learning, but because of the honesty and courage and unselfishness of the writer, because Patrick was a man of a great heart.

MIRACLES.—Archbishop Healy laments the modern tendency to disbelieve in miracles, and appeals to St. Patrick's Confession as a protest against this tendency. "The Confession itself", he remarks, "records several miracles, and we are by no means prepared to say that St. Patrick was either deceived or a deceiver."<sup>1</sup>

This statement might easily convey a wrong

<sup>1</sup> p. iv.



impression. Patrick had some strange dreams, as in the case of his ship being ready at the harbour and his finding it exactly as he dreamt. There are also some strange answers to prayer mentioned by Patrick, as when the herd of swine appeared at an opportune moment, and some others. Apart from these there is not a trace of miracle in St. Patrick's writings.

The Lives of Patrick, on the other hand, are full of prodigies, such as those of the leper on the floating altar and the stolen goat. These are specimens of Gibbon's "sixty-six thousand lies".

But the friends of the Archbishop need not be afraid that the idea of the miraculous is about to vanish. The latest writer on the subject is Lord Balfour. Shortly before he died he wrote: "Superstition may be negative as well as positive, and the excesses of unbelief may be as extravagant as those of belief. Doubtless the universe, as conceived by men more primitive than ourselves, was the obscure abode of strange deities. But what are we to say about a universe reduced without remainder to collections of electric charges, radiating energy through a hypothetical ether?"<sup>1</sup> Thus, to set limits to reality must always be the most hazardous of speculative adventures. To do so by eliminating the

<sup>1</sup> About one-half of the scientists say there is no ether.—Sir A. S. Eddington, *Science and the Unseen World*, p. 42.



spiritual is not only hazardous but absurd. For if we are directly aware of anything, it is of ourselves as personal agents; if anything can be proved by direct experiment it is that we can, in however small a measure, vary the natural distribution of matter and energy. We can certainly act on our environment, and as certainly our action can never be adequately explained in terms of entities which neither think nor feel nor purpose nor know. It constitutes a spiritual invasion of the physical world—it is a miracle.”<sup>1</sup>

BURIAL CUSTOMS.—Patrick prayed that he might die with his converts even though he should lack burial itself, or that in most wretched fashion his corpse “be divided limb by limb to dogs and wild beasts or that the fowls of the air eat it”.<sup>2</sup>

It is unlikely that in the fifth century there was no provision made for the burial of the dead in Ireland. This would have been one of the first aims of a pre-Patrician Christianity if there had been such. Patrick’s statement points to the barbarism of the earliest times, when the poor were hopeless as to sepulture. “It is pathetic”, says Dill, writing of the time of Nero (A.D. 54–68), “to see how universal is the craving

<sup>1</sup> *Science, Religion, and Reality*, p. 15.

<sup>2</sup> Sect. 59.



to be remembered felt even by slaves, by men plying the most despised and unsavoury crafts".<sup>1</sup> "A place of burial was a coveted possession which was not easily attainable by the poor and friendless." Hence burial clubs were one of the earliest marks of the organic life of the Church. Patrick's statement does not prove anything as to date, but it resembles a second-century statement more than a fifth.

BRIBING JUDGES.—"I paid to those who acted as guides (indicabant) the price of fifteen men."<sup>2</sup> Instead of the word "indicabant", which denotes guides, Dr. Bury inserts the word "judicabant", which denotes *judges*, and he goes on to represent Patrick as having "provided for the security of the clergy in those districts which he most frequently visited by paying large sums to the judges or brehons".<sup>3</sup> Dr. Bury knew that his reading of "judges" had been rejected by Dr. White, and we might expect at least a foot-note informing us of the rejection in the point of such importance. It is unfair to St. Patrick to assert that he was accustomed to spend money in such a very questionable manner, except on the strength of clear evidence. From this Bury goes on to say

<sup>1</sup> Dill, *Roman Society from Nero to Marcus Aurelius*, p. 258.

<sup>2</sup> Sect. 53.

<sup>3</sup> p. 172.



that Patrick "adopted" boys, evidently for the ministry, and adds, "a similar policy was contemplated by Pope Gregory the Great for England. We have a letter which he wrote to a presbyter, bidding him purchase in Gaul English boy slaves of seventeen or eighteen years for the purpose of educating them in monasteries". The idea of "adopting" boys is taken from the fables, not from Patrick's writings. There is, in the reference to the brehons, a suggestion of underhand dealing which is not in keeping with the spirit of Patrick.

Travellers in heathen lands may give presents to chieftains or kings as tokens of goodwill, and pay for all the services they obtain, but the paying of large sums to judges is a transaction of a different complexion.

It might be said that Dr. Bury, when writing, had not noticed Dr. White's translation, which is of course quite possible. Dr. C. H. H. Wright also has "judges". Another rejected reading is "distressed persons" (*indigebant*).<sup>1</sup>

MONKS AND VIRGINS.—In Sections 41 and 42 of the Confession, and 12 of the Epistle, St. Patrick refers to Monks and Virgins of Christ.

Monasticism, in its growth, passed through

<sup>1</sup> *The Writings of St. Patrick*, p. 141.



three stages. In the first asceticism was practised by Christians "in their homes".<sup>1</sup> St. Paul evidently referred to such in his advice to virgins and men at Corinth (1 Cor. vii. 25-28). Polycrates (A.D. 175-200) tells of St. Philip's two aged virgin daughters "who lived in the Holy Spirit" at Ephesus. This also was in the first stage. In the second stage "it was the custom for such ascetics to live in solitary retirement in the neighbourhood of towns and villages". This *custom* existed about A.D. 250, but we cannot say how long it took for the custom to grow. It may have originated by A.D. 200 or earlier.

The third stage was that of "monastic societies", which must have been developed between A.D. 250 and 300.<sup>2</sup> "This alone", Professor Stokes tells us, "can explain its sudden up-growth in every direction during the first half of the fourth century." But there is ground for believing that monastic societies were in existence before the year 250. St. Anthony about 270 "placed his sister in a nunnery".

St. Patrick makes no allusion to monastic societies. Some virgins in his time were "in slavery", while others endured persecution "from their parents", probably, as they still do

<sup>1</sup> *Ency. Brit.* xviii. 687.

<sup>2</sup> G. T. Stokes, *Ireland and the Celtic Church*, p. 168.



in heathen lands, because they have embraced Christianity and refuse to take pagan husbands. There is no reference to anything in the nature of a conventual system. The whole is in keeping with second and early third century history. There were pagan monks in Egypt and the East before the Christian era.

In its developed state early Irish Monasticism knew nothing of lifelong vows. Members might withdraw to their ordinary avocations at will, as Professor Carew of Maynooth informs us.<sup>1</sup>

THE ROMAN EASTER.—The Roman Easter was first observed in the seventh century by St. Cumman, who so aroused the anger of the Abbot of Iona (Segienus) that he regarded Cumman and his friends as heretics. The latter justified themselves on the ground of compliance with “the four-fold Apostolic See”—Rome, Jerusalem, Antioch and Alexandria. As for the little party formed by the Britons and Scots, they were almost at the very end of the world “and but a mere scap, so to speak, on its surface”. What can be more injurious to our mother the Church, asks Cumman, than to say “Rome errs, Jerusalem errs, Alexandria errs, Antioch errs, the whole world errs, the Britons and Scots (Irish) are the only people who think

<sup>1</sup> *Ecclesiastical History of Ireland*, p. 175.



aright''? Cumman's history was correct. The Irish only, and their British friends, retained the usage which was abolished in A.D. 197. At Iona the Roman Easter was adopted in the year 716, in North Wales in 809, and West Wales in 842.

The fourth-century regulations as to the Roman Easter throw some light on the independence of the Irish Church. Immediately after the Council of Nicaea in 325, the Emperor Constantine drew up a Synodal Letter on the subject of Easter which he addressed to the Bishop of Alexandria and his suffragans. A Canon was not adopted, probably because it was considered unwise to anathematize churches in the East which hitherto had been in communion with the West. These churches now, for the most part, but not wholly, gave up their custom of holding Easter on the fourteenth day, and accepted the rule of observing a Sunday always. Constantine's Synodal Letter directed the Bishop of Alexandria to inform the Bishop of Rome as to the date on which Easter should be held, so that from Rome all the churches might be conveniently told of it. Hefele describes this as "a very good way of smoothing difficulties",<sup>1</sup> that is, as to the rivalry between the two Churches, but in effect it was a very good way of ruffling tempers. Constantine in his letter ignored the

<sup>1</sup> Bishop Hefele, *History of the Councils*, i. 327.



fact that the Roman method of finding the correct Sunday for Easter differed from that of Alexandria. Both Churches agreed that Easter should be on a Sunday, and on the 21st of the moon if the 14th fell on a Sunday, and that it should be *after* the Equinox, but they did not agree as to the date on which the Equinox fell. At Rome it was held to occur on the 18th of March, whereas Alexandria fixed it on 21st March. When, therefore, the full moon fell on the 19th, 20th or 21st March, Rome proceeded at once to celebrate Easter, but Alexandria took no notice, and waited for the next full moon to come round, with the result that a space of between four and five weeks might separate the two Easters. And it so happened that in the very next year, 326, the two Churches had different Easter Sundays. The same occurred in the years 330, 333, 340, 341, and 343. In the last-mentioned year the Council of Sardica suggested that a truce should be arranged by the mutual concession of the two parties, and that one common day be observed for fifty years. This was agreed to, but the truce only lasted for a few years when the diversity of practice was renewed. At length, in the year 387, when the Roman Easter was on the 25th March and the Alexandrian on the 25th April, the Emperor Theodosius the Great asked for





an explanation from Theophilus, Bishop of Alexandria, on the subject. The result was that Pope Leo I. agreed to observe the Alexandrian arrangement and there was peace. But during these contests, extending over sixty years (325–387), the Irish Church stood aloof and unconcerned, holding to her second-century Easter, undisturbed by the “rage” of A.D. 325 and the years following, as she was by the “rage” of A.D. 190 of which Professor Harnack informs us.

At the present time the Eastern Church observes her Easter festival twelve days later than the Church in the West. This is due to a new calendar introduced by Pope Gregory XIII. in the year 1582, which the Eastern Church never accepted.

In spite of the meticulous care with which Easter had been dated to keep clear of Judaism, the Gregorian calendar landed the Church in the year 1825 into holding her Easter on the same day as the Passover! How a Patrician, or, for that matter, a Columban Catholic, would have smiled at the confusion. The same thing may happen again.

IN THE BRITAINS.—Patrick, in referring to his native land, uses the plural number, *in Britannis*. On this Dr. White, quoting Dr. Todd, ob-



serves "that the plural number denotes the Roman *Britanniae*, or provinces of Britain",<sup>1</sup> of which there were five. Sir Samuel Ferguson is also quoted in the same sense. As Britain was not divided into a number of provinces until the opening of the fourth century, the inference is that Patrick must have lived after that period.

In the same connection, Dr. C. H. H. Wright quotes Professor G. T. Stokes as saying, "this (plural number) was strictly accurate and is an interesting little proof of the genuineness of our document. The correct designation among the Romans for Britain was *Britannae*, because it was divided in the fourth century, the age of Patrick's youth, into five provinces".<sup>2</sup>

On the other hand, Tertullian, writing about A.D. 208, uses the plural in the same sense—"places in the Britains inaccessible to the Romans are subject to Christ".<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, Edward Conybeare, with no thought of Patrick in his mind, says "it is noteworthy that in all ecclesiastical notices of this period [up to the fifth century] Britain is always spoken of as a single province, in spite of Diocletian's reforms".<sup>4</sup> As a case in point, he quotes St. Jerome, who

<sup>1</sup> *The Latin Writings of St. Patrick*, p. 289.

<sup>2</sup> *The Writings of St. Patrick*, p. 134.

<sup>3</sup> Zimmer, *The Celtic Church*, p. 3.

<sup>4</sup> *Early Roman Britain*, p. 230.



died in 420, when the legendary Patrick was at Auxerre, where Britain was always referred to in the singular! This evidence appears to favour a second rather than a fifth century Patrick.

GAULS AND AFRICANS.—We have had a glimpse at Church life in Gaul in the second and early third centuries, and saw how the Christian communities then bore the expenses of their “cult”, and rendered assistance to their widows and orphans, to the sick and impotent and unemployed, and to those condemned for the cause of God. Also, how they bought back prisoners carried off by the barbarians; they founded churches and took care of slaves and buried the poor.

A parallel to this narrative is found on the opposite coast of the Mediterranean where, at the same time, Tertullian wrote in Carthage, giving an account of what was happening in his own day. Tertullian does not here write of an act or an event, such as a great battle, or the holding of a Council of the Church, which might be identified with a particular date or a particular year. He writes of a custom, which grew up in the half-century or more before his time, and which continued for some decades at least after his death. His account is short but very comprehensive. He says: “Every one pays something



into the public chest once a month, or when he pleases, and according to his ability and inclination; for there is no compulsion. These gifts are, as it were, the deposits of piety. Hence we relieve and bury the needy, support orphans and decrepit persons, those who have suffered shipwreck, and those who, for the word of God, are condemned to mines and imprisonment. This very charity of ours has caused us to be noticed by some: 'See', say they, 'how these Christians love one another!'"<sup>1</sup> The closing sentence was written in all sincerity as being actually true, but it has been parodied a hundred times since in history. "See how these Christians love one another!"

These two accounts from Gaul and Africa agree as closely as would any two pages of the same story. The variations are few but natural. The Gallic Christians made no provision for brethren who were "shipwrecked"; they were hardly at all identified with seafaring life; whereas no Euroclydon ever passed which was not felt by the city of Carthage and the promontory on which it stood. But the Africans took no special account of baptized persons carried off by barbarians. Unlike to Gaul, there was no river in Latin Africa resembling the Rhine, with two great and hostile peoples on its banks, between whom raiding and buying back was an endless

<sup>1</sup> Milner's *Church History*, i. 246.





process. Here we find a clear and detailed account of how Christian benevolence operated in North Africa in the second and early part of the third centuries. Tertullian wrote about A.D. 208 and died about 220.

An account of Church life in Gaul in the fifth century—the time of the legendary Patrick—does not need repetition. It is summed up in a few sentences by St. Jerome: “The Roman world is sinking into ruin . . . it is owing to our vices that the Roman armies are conquered”; and Salvian: “The Roman world goes laughing to her death”. And they mean the Catholic Roman world. Of the heretical enemy, Salvian tells us: “Although they have been denied the full light of the Catholic faith . . . yet a righteous God has given them that great heritage to punish the enormous corruption of the Christian Roman world”.<sup>1</sup> This is the European side of the picture.

When we turn to the African fifth-century page we find that the Governor of that Province was a Count Heraclian, who succeeded one Olympius as “the leader of the Catholic party”. This Heraclian is described as “a Christian ruffian”; he assassinated Stilicho, the Commander of the Forces of the Western Empire—

<sup>1</sup> Dill, *Roman Society in the Last Century of the Roman Empire*, pp. 256, 266.



that is, he murdered the general on his own side. Furthermore, Heraclian had a crowd of Syrian slave-dealers there to convey his victims to the eastern harems.<sup>1</sup>

In contrast to these fifth-century European and African pictures we have an Irish gem by Patrick, showing what he himself knew of the Roman Christian Gauls buying back baptized captives from the Franks and other heathen. This Irish gem requires resetting in view of the African details. Where shall we find a fitting environment for it? Will it be amongst the second-century narratives of the Christian communities of Gaul and Carthage? Or shall we place it among the fifth-century facts of Gaul, already given at length, and those of fifth-century Africa, which are reflected very truly in the personality of the Governor, Heraclian, the Catholic leader and Christian villain, the assassin and pander to the harems of the East? The reader must make his choice.

<sup>1</sup> Dill, p. 256.



## CHAPTER VII

### THE TWELFTH CENTURY

A WELSH POET.—None of the other so-called schismatical customs were abandoned until the twelfth century. The Danish invasions in the ninth century damaged the repute of Ireland for learning and religion. Churches and books were destroyed, but these hardships only added zeal to the desire for knowledge.

A poem written about the year 1070 by John, son of Bishop Sulien of St. David's, gives us a glimpse into Ireland, and shows that the traditional friendship with Wales—specially the western area—was still maintained. John tells us that his father came to Ireland to study the Scriptures and spent ten or perhaps thirteen years there.

With ardent love for learning, Sulien sought  
The school in which his fathers had been taught,  
To Ireland's sacred isle he bent his way,  
Where science beamed with bright and glorious ray,  
But lo, an unforeseen impediment  
His journey interrupted as he went,



For sailing toward the country where abode  
The people famous for the Word of God,  
His bark by adverse winds and tempests toss'd  
Was forced to anchor on another coast,  
And thus the Albanian shore the traveller gain'd  
And there for five successive years remained.

At length arriving on the Scottish [Irish] soil,  
He soon applies himself to studious toil.  
The Holy Scriptures now his thoughts engage,  
And much he ponders on the oft-read page,  
Exploring carefully the sacred mine  
Of precious treasures in the Law divine.  
For thirteen years of diligence and pains  
Had made him affluent in heavenly gains,  
And stored his ample mind with rich supplies  
Of costly goods and sacred merchandise,  
Then having gained a literary name,  
In high repute for learning home he came.  
His gathered store and golden gains to share  
Among admiring friends and followers there.<sup>1</sup>

The sincerity of this writer is obvious, and he gives a pleasant impression of the characters of the peoples in both Ireland and Wales.

ST. BERNARD AND ST. MALACHY. — St. Bernard gives a dismal account of the state of religion in Ireland in his *Life of St. Malachy*, who was born about the year 1095, that would be about twenty-five years after Sulien became Bishop of St. David's. Malachy is supposed to have been greatly honoured in having his life

<sup>1</sup> King, p. 437.



written by one so eminent as St. Bernard, who ranks in the eye of history before all but a few of the popes.

“Our Malachy,” he says, “born in Ireland of a barbarous people, was brought up there, and there received his education. But from the barbarism of his birth he contracted no taint, any more than the fishes of the sea from their native salt. But how delightful to reflect that uncultured barbarism should have produced for us so worthy a fellow-citizen with the saints and members of the household of God. He who brings honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock, Himself did this.”<sup>1</sup>

When Malachy entered upon the duties of his office he “ordained the Apostolic sanctions, especially the customs of the Holy Roman Church. Hence it is that to this day there is chanting and psalmody by them at the canonical hours after the fashion of the whole world. For there was no such thing before, not even in the city. He however had learnt singing in his youth.”<sup>2</sup>

But when Malachy began to administer his office “the man of God understood that he had been sent—not to men, but to beasts. Never before had he known the like, in whatever depths of barbarism, never had he found men

<sup>1</sup> H. J. Lawlor, *Life of St. Malachy*, p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> p. 17.



so shameless in regard to morals, so dead in regard to rites, so impious in regard to faith, so barbarous in regard of laws, so stubborn in regard of discipline, so unclean in regard of life. They were Christians in name; in fact, pagans. There was no giving of tithes or first-fruits, no entry into lawful marriages, no making of confessions, nowhere could be found any who would either seek penance or impose it, ministers of the altar were exceedingly few. But, indeed, what need was there for more, when even the few were almost in idleness and ease among the laity? There was no fruit which they could bring forth from their offices among a people so vile. For in the churches there was not heard the voice of either preacher or singing."

But Malachy's work brought about a great transformation, according to Bernard's account. "Hardness vanished, barbarity ceased, the rebellious house began gradually to be appeased, gradually to receive reproof, to submit to discipline. Barbarous laws disappear, Roman laws are introduced, everywhere the ecclesiastical customs are received, their opposites are rejected, churches are rebuilt, a clergy is appointed in them, the solemnities of the sacraments are duly celebrated, confessions are made. . . . In fine, all things are so changed for the



better that to-day the word which the Lord speaks by the prophet is applicable to the nation, those who before were not my people are now my people."<sup>1</sup>

Malachy's pained surprise at the barbarous kind of people he came amongst at ordination is not easily explained, since they were his own people amongst whom he was born and brought up. His ignorance as to their character is puzzling. But it should be remembered that this account is not from Malachy's own hand. It was written after his death by a biographer, who probably had little or no first-hand evidence as to the facts.

The feeling towards the Irish in Bernard's breast was in marked contrast to that of the son of the Bishop of St. David's. The most glaring vice which Bernard laments is that men were "so shameless in regard to morals" and "no entry into lawful marriages". Possibly the explanation of the latter is that marriages in accordance with the civil law were regarded by the Irish Church as good and Christian, so long as they were loyally observed. In the papal eyes at that time, such marriages were little accounted of. The Council of Winchester in 1076 declared that "a marriage without the priest's benediction is a state of fornica-

<sup>1</sup> Lawlor, p. 39.



tion". Archbishop Lanfranc of Canterbury presided over this Council, and made a speech in which he tried to prove that the primacy of England and Ireland belonged to Canterbury. The Conquest was not yet talked of, although it may have been thought of. The Danish settlers in Ireland were encouraging Lanfranc in these pretensions.

At all events, contempt for civil marriages was entirely papal, while in Ireland, as everywhere in primitive times, the Church was satisfied with marriages which were legal.

TITHES.—In addition to there being no entry into lawful marriage there was, according to St. Bernard, "no giving of tithes".

The introduction of tithes to the Irish Church was calculated to have the same effect as Constantine's doles, and the other privileges he conferred upon the Church of the fourth century. There is no satisfactory means of knowing to what extent the Irish bishops and clergy were attracted by the promised boon. In any case, it is very far-fetched to suggest that the absence of tithes was a mark of paganism.

Tithes were demanded "under pain of excommunication" at a Council in Macon in Southern Gaul in the year 585. This appears to be the first canonical declaration of the divine right of tithes. Malachy's reforms in Ireland did not



include the introduction of this usage. At the Synod of Cashel in 1172, under the papal legate, Christian, Bishop of Lismore, payment was ordered of the tithes of their cattle, corn, and other produce, "for many did not know it was due and had never paid it". At the same time, it was ordered "that the Irish Church shall thenceforth follow the customs of the Church of England".

Three years later (1175) at Westminster, under Richard, the successor of Thomas à Becket, all who refused to pay were admonished, according to the precept of the Pope, to yield tithes of grain, wine, fruits of trees, young of animals, wool, lamb, butter, cheese, flax, hemp, etc., offenders to be anathematized. At Dublin in 1186 they were ordered to be paid to the Mother Churches out of provisions, hay, the young of animals, flax, wool, gardens, orchards, and out of all things that grow and renew yearly, under pain of an anathema after the third monition, and that those who continue obstinate in refusing to pay shall be obliged to pay more punctually for the future.<sup>1</sup>

At Rouen in 1190 all who refused were to be excommunicated, and in 1195 at York it was ordered "to be paid to the Church first before the wages of the harvestmen", and at Westmin-

<sup>1</sup> King, p. 612.



ster, five years later, it was to be given "without abatement for wages", etc. Priests were granted power of excommunicating before harvest all withholders of the tithe. That tithes were sometimes seized by unauthorized parties appears from a decree of a Latern Council under Pope Innocent II. in 1139, which ordered lay persons possessed of Church tithes to restore them to the Bishop under pain of excommunication, and warns them that "they are guilty of sacrilege and liable to eternal damnation". There were five English bishops and four English abbots at this Council. Various other levies, in addition to tithes, were made in Ireland during the Middle Ages, which were often used by the Kings and Popes for wars and other non-religious purposes.

THE PAPAL GIFT.—If St. Malachy effected any improvement in the state of Ireland the Popes—Adrian IV. and Alexander III.—found it worse than ever, but they are not unbiassed witnesses. They were anxious to extend their jurisdiction to a country where at the time they had none. These Papal Acts have been excused by some writers on the ground that Ireland had already approved of the conquest by Henry II., which is contrary to fact. The Bulls were issued before the approval. A Synod of Cashel in 1172 was supposed to have consented to the con-



quest—or rather conveyance—but the laity were excluded from it. This was the first great Council of Ireland to which the laity were denied admission, except some “commissioners of our Lord the King”, who were not free agents. Oddly enough when King John made a present of Ireland to the Pope at the Council of Lyons in 1245, the English representatives were very angry because the consent of the people had not been obtained. They therefore regarded the donation as “altogether null and void”. The revenues of Ireland were a convenient subject of barter. What the King’s *quid pro quo* was in this case is not stated, nor are we told what the result of the protest was. The foundation of these “donations” was the forged Donation of Constantine, of which Grisar gives the summary following:

“The Donation is an eighth or ninth century document. The unknown author informs us that the Emperor Constantine, after his legendary cure from leprosy and alleged baptism in Rome, gave the Latern Palace to Silvester and graciously bestowed upon him a diadem, that is (according to Constantine’s own words as recorded in the text) the crown upon our head, and the frigium (Phrygium) and the superhumeral or lorum about the Emperor’s neck, likewise the purple chlamys and scarlet tunic:



likewise outriders, such as the Emperor has, and the imperial sceptre, with all the imperial regalia and the whole pageant. To the most venerable clergy of the Holy Roman Church of every degree we further grant the rank of Senators:<sup>1</sup> they shall be Patricians and Consuls, and be allowed to adorn themselves with other imperial distinctions: and as at Court the different chamberlains, ushers, and other functionaries have badges of office, so shall it also be with the clergy of the Roman Church: their horses, when in use, may be caparisoned with smart linen trappings: their feet shall be shod with the shoes of Senators. Earthly things in their splendour shall be a type of heavenly to the praise of God. And let none sin through pride or conceit."

The authority, or office, indicated by the insignia in each case was bestowed.

PALLS.—Malachy conceived the idea of procuring from Rome one or two palls for Irish bishops, but he died before his plan took effect. Augustine of Canterbury received one on the conversion of that see into an archbishopric soon after A.D. 597, the year of his arrival. Three years after Malachy's death (1151) four palls were brought over by Cardinal Paparo for the prelates of Armagh, Dublin, Cashel

<sup>1</sup> Hartman Grisar, S.J., *Hist. of Rome and the Popes*, ii. 312.



and Tuam, that is more than five hundred years after the favour had been shown to Canterbury. At Ravenna in 877 Pope John VIII. commanded the Metropolitan to send to Rome for the pallium within three months after his consecration, and forbade him to exercise any of the functions of his office until that be done.

The Irish bishops were never called upon to submit to consecration by the laying on of the hands by three bishops. The palls for the archbishops were supposed to cover the irregularity.

TORN UP BY THE ROOTS.—The whole episcopal system in Ireland was reformed, in fact revolutionized, by the Anglo-Roman conquerors. The Dean of St. Patrick's tells us that when Gilbert of Limerick adumbrated a scheme of reform "it was manifest that, if his guidance were to be followed, no mere modification of existing arrangements would suffice, the old hierarchy must be torn up by the roots and a new hierarchy planted in its place".<sup>1</sup> The old system had been rooted there since it was introduced by St. Patrick, and it is not surprising to find that it would not yield to mere transplantation. To root it up and put in a new stock was the only sensible course, and that is what Cardinal Paparo did. Consciously or unconsciously he repeated the process of the fourth century, which

<sup>1</sup> *St. Malachy*, p. xxxiii.



was, not to consecrate new bishops for small country sees, but to fill the offices with presbyters, and to give them the title of Visitors. Paparo ordered that, "as the bishops of the weaker sees died off, archpriests, or as we would call them, rural deans, should succeed to their place and take charge of clergy and people within their borders". The office of rural dean still continues in full vigour in the Church of Ireland.

The earliest result of Cardinal Paparo's regulation was that the Bishoprics of Trim, Kells, Slane, Skreen and Dunshanghlin were left unfilled as they became vacant, and all were merged in the Bishopric of Meath, but the old sees are still held by rural deans. The "Ordinance" by which these changes were carried out was intended for the whole of Ireland, and was doubtless executed in due course, though the details are not given to us, except that tradition points to various little sees which were long since suppressed.

Opinions may vary as to the utility of these changes in the organization of the Church, but these opinions do not alter the fact that the old organization was a continuation of the primitive system, which was universal up to the first decade of the fourth century. It was the system wielded by the Church in her purest age, and



never fell into disuse except when it was undermined and crushed by the pressure of anti-Christian forces. Bishops under this system, when they were not abbots, "were influential in proportion to their learning and piety".<sup>1</sup>

FOURTH-CENTURY CHANGES.—Small sees were suppressed in the fourth century as part of the movement to add dignity to the office. A Council at Laodicea in or about 314 decreed that bishops shall not be placed in small towns or villages, but simply visitors, who shall act under the direction of the bishop of the city. A Council at Sardica in 347 forbids to consecrate a bishop for a small place where a priest suffices, for fear of lowering the episcopal dignity. This was a new movement which was never heard of before. The old usage had already come to Ireland, where it was found in the little sees of Trim and Kells and others. The bishops in these sees were elected by the clergy and people, with the approval of a neighbouring bishop, in each case, who admitted the nominee to the episcopate.

Country priests were subjected to a rule similar to that of country bishops. At Neocaesarea in Cappadocia, in the year 314, a rule was made that "country priests must not offer the holy sacrifice<sup>2</sup> in the town church when the

<sup>1</sup> Lawlor, p. xiv.

<sup>2</sup> The Greek word is not here correctly translated.



bishop or the town priests are present, they must not do more than distribute, with prayer, the bread and the chalice. But if the bishop and his priests are absent, and the country priest be invited to celebrate, he may administer holy communion”.

The Church was regulated on the same plan as the State from the time of Constantine. “If the Emperor had newly raised, or shall raise, any place to the dignity of a city, then the regulation of the ecclesiastical parishes (dioceses) shall follow the political and civil arrangements.”<sup>1</sup>

“The fathers properly gave the primacy to old Rome because it was the imperial city, and the one hundred and fifty bishops (at Constantinople) being moved with the same intention gave equal privileges to the most holy throne of New Rome”,<sup>2</sup> that is, Constantinople.

The old Rome in due course became the apex of the system. In the year 445 St. Hilary of Arles seems to have enjoyed some degree of independence in his see, but he was suppressed by an edict from the Emperor, Valentinian III., declaring that “it shall not be lawful for the bishops of Gaul, or of the other provinces, contrary to ancient customs, to do aught without the authority of the Venerable Pope of the Eternal City, and whatsoever the authority of the

<sup>1</sup> Hefele, i. 229.

<sup>2</sup> Chalcedon, A.D. 451.



Apostolic see has enacted, or may hereafter enact, shall be lawful for all, so that if any bishop summoned for trial before the Pope of Rome shall neglect to attend, he shall be compelled to attendance by the governor of the province, in all respects regard being had to what privileges our deified parents conferred on the Roman Church".<sup>1</sup> Any Judge who allows this law to be disobeyed is fined ten pounds (£420). The reference by a Christian emperor to his "deified parents" is peculiar.

The legendary Patrick would have lived for sixteen years after the issue of this edict, and he should be familiar with its provisions. The Patrick of the Confession appears to have been unconscious of its existence.

A FIRST-CENTURY USAGE.—Previous to A.D. 314 consecration by one bishop was the practice everywhere, but since then nowhere except in Ireland. The new rule requiring three consecrators was enforced by repeated enactments and penalties. In the case of Armentarius,<sup>2</sup> already referred to (A.D. 439), there were two consecrators who were, in consequence, deprived of their right ever again to take part in a consecration, or to sit in a synod, while Armentarius was allowed to officiate only at confirmations

<sup>1</sup> Kidd, *Documents Illustrative of the History of the Church*, ii. 282.

<sup>2</sup> Hefele, iii. 157.



and the consecration of virgins, and only in his own Church.

For all this, Dr. Bright believes that three ordainers were not a minimum, that two would do, or even one, and he quotes Van Espen as having defended the validity of the consecration of Steenhoven by one bishop for the See of Utrecht in the year 1724.<sup>1</sup>

Professor Burkitt,<sup>2</sup> in a paper on "The Old Malabar Liturgy", shows that one bishop and two presbyters were sufficient to set a Church going again in India, where the episcopate had died out through persecution from Indian Moslems. The date was 1490, and the bishop and two presbyters were sent by the Nestorian Church of Mosul in Mesopotamia. The suggestion is that the episcopate was revived by the acts of one bishop. The witness of the Irish Church until the twelfth century is in support of that course without any reservation.

THE FIRST MILLENNIUM.—The Church which Patrick founded was now a thousand years old, and had enjoyed a degree of liberty and self-command such as we meet with nowhere else. In the East there were some churches outside the Empire which were free from external control,

<sup>1</sup> *Notes on Canons of Councils*, p. 14.

<sup>2</sup> *J.T.S.*, Jan. 1928, p. 156.



both civil and ecclesiastical. For instance, a Persian Metropolitan—Mar Dadiso Catholicus—in the year 424 summoned a Council of thirty-six bishops and governors who, “by the Word of God”, decreed that “the Easterns will not be permitted to carry complaints against their Patriarch before the Western Patriarchs, and that the cause which cannot be determined in the presence of their Patriarch shall be left to the Judgment of Christ”.<sup>1</sup> An invitation, or command, to submit to the jurisdiction of the Church of the Empire was thus rejected by the Church in Persia.

It was in accordance with the spirit of the time that such a command or invitation should emanate from the Church of the West. Pope Innocent I. was the first to put forward such a claim. This was done in connection with the condemnation of Pelagius at Carthage in the year 417. Pope Zosimus repeated the claim, and sent a legate named Faustinus to enforce it. The ground of the claim was that the Council of Nicaea had sanctioned it. The Africans were surprised at the reference to Nicaea, and they made careful inquiries into the subject. But it was not until the time of Pope Celestine that their reply was put into definite form. To this Pope they wrote saying that “the receiving of

<sup>1</sup> Kidd, *Documents*, ii. 198.



appeals to Rome was an attack upon the rights of the African Church", and that the Council of Nicaea gave no such authority as the Bishop of Rome had claimed. Also that "the Pope would not surely expect the African Church any longer to endure the insolence of the Legate Faustinus".<sup>1</sup>

Professor Burkitt<sup>2</sup> mentions another independent Church outside the Empire, in Syria. One of its scholars was Aphroates, who wrote a series of homilies which show the Church's freedom from external control.

There may have been other Churches in the East in a like position, and it is highly probable there were such in Africa, outside the borders of the Empire, in Nubia and Abyssinia and elsewhere. Previous to the year 314, but not later, a bishop might wander off with his gospel into heathendom and found and organize Churches, ordaining clergy and bishops single-handed, as if he were an Apostle, and then die at his post, unknown to history and soon to be forgotten. Such was the fate of most of the Apostles as regards their missionary work, and such was almost the fate of St. Patrick too.

But not one of these was a transmarine Church. They were all subject to raids and wars

<sup>1</sup> Kidd, iii. 167.

<sup>2</sup> Two lectures delivered in Trinity College, Dublin.





in the thick of which they lived, and by which they were affected in things spiritual as well as temporal. *In Ireland only* was there a Church which was isolated and self-governed ecclesiastically, politically and geographically. Patrick seems to have been almost fond of emphasizing the thought that he knew of no limitation except the coast-line, beyond which no man dwelt. Patrick, in a unique way, monopolized Ireland, and Ireland monopolized Patrick.

It was thus the Church of Ireland made her start in the second century, with her apostolic Easter and other customs of Pentecost, and wearing her Druidic Tonsure, of which she had no ground for feeling ashamed,<sup>1</sup> and so passed through her Golden Age.

In the seventh and later centuries the hagiographers, always prompted from abroad, robbed the Church of some of her distinctive elements by the means of volumes of fabrications, which ran parallel to the False Decretals of the same period operating throughout the Empires in the West and East.

At what is called the Conquest of the twelfth century—more correctly the Conveyance—the

<sup>1</sup> Druid means “a man of *thorough knowledge*, one who is qualified to investigate the *origin* of things. And this is indeed”, writes Dr. MacNeill, “the character that unites the various functions which antiquity and tradition ascribe to this singular order”.—*Celtic Religion*, p. 19.



last trace of the usages of Patrick vanished, and the Church of Ireland was received—not as a convert but as a conscript—into the Church of Rome. It is not amiss to say that the two agencies by which this was brought about were Forgery and Force. The Papal Bulls and Letters were based upon the spurious Donation of Constantine, and, thus grounded, they gladly commissioned and sanctioned the forces of King Henry II.

So ended the First Millennium of the Church which Patrick—Slave and Bishop and Saint—planted in Ireland.









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