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Celtic Chrisitinaity A Survey of its History and Influence

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CELTIC CHRISTIANITY

A SURVEY OF ITS HISTORY AND INFLUENCE

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OUTLINE

CELTIC CHRISTIANITY: A SURVEY OF ITS HISTORY AND INFLUENCE

I. A Short History of Celtic Christianity

A. Ancient Druidisms

Legends of Irish Until comparatively recent times, many people were of the opinion that one could learn practically no actual facts concerning the early history of the Celtic Church because of the myriad of legends which have come to surround the various men who made up this church. And if one sought to go further back into the history of Ireland, he became completely lost in the sea of imaginative stories about spirits, fairies, saints and superstitions all rolled into a conglomerate mass. However, in the light of thorough research in this field by outstanding historians, it would be a rather serious admission of a lack of completeness of historical study to hold with the old view, namely, that nothing factual is known about Celtic Christianity! Now this paper makes no pretensions of being a complete coverage of the history of Celtic Christianity, for that is impossible to do in a work

of this length. The purpose, rather, is to present an overall picture of the labors of the Celtic Christians and to compare the Celtic Church with the Church of Rome.

Name 'Druid' Although there is still a great deal which we do not know about this earliest period of the history of the British Isles, yet for the sake of completeness, it is necessary to at least make mention of their very early religion which was Druidism. The popular opinion is that the name 'Druid' is derived from the Greek word for 'oak', but De Vinne, on the basis of research by Toland, maintains that it stems from the Irish word draiod, meaning 'a learned man'.[1] He also holds that Druidism, "had evidently been imported from the East, from the plains of Shinar".[2]

Nature of Druidism Concerning the nature of Druidism, one may say that it had much in common with many other heathen religions in this, that it purported to be the summation of all knowledge and learning for the people. To their people they were the medical doctors, the ministers, the philosophers and the teachers, all rolled into one person. Divination and foretelling of the future, too, were a prominent part of Druidism.

Decline of Druidism But Druidism was on the decline by the end of the fourth and the beginning of the fifth centur-

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1. Daniel De Vinne, History of the Irish Primitive Church, p. X of Introduction.
2. Ibid.

ies, thus leaving the way open for the gradual infiltration of Christianity. After all, the Irish were no exception to the general rule that all men are by nature religious, so that when Druidism was no longer held to be the absolute in religion, they were more ready to give Christianity a hearing, because they too felt the need of spiritual life, and therefore sought a substitute for declining Druidism.

B. Early Christian Period

Aim of Discussion

It would naturally be impractical in a brief discussion of this type, because of the vastness of the field, to try to cover all the phases and to attempt to evaluate and weigh the import of all the events which go to make up Celtic Christianity. But since it is impossible to weigh or to evaluate events unless one has them concretely fixed in his mind, the first portion of this discussion is given over to a summation of the history of the outstanding events and people of Celtic Christianity.

Legendary Accounts of Coming of Christianity

Many attempts have been made to explain the coming of Christianity to the British Isles. Some of these attempts even try to place the coming of Christianity as far back as the first century. Schaff, in his History of the Christian Church, provides a list of some of the legendary explanations for the coming of Christianity; it is as follows: "1) Bran, a British prince, and his son Caradoz, who is said to have become acquainted with St. Paul in Rome, A.D. 51-58 and to have introduced the

Gospel to his native land on his return, 2) St. Paul, 3) St. Peter, 4) St. Simon Zelotes, 5) St. Philip, 6) St. James the Great, 7) St. John, 8) Aristobulus (Rom.xvi,10), 9) Joseph of Arimathaea, who largely figures in the post-Norman legends of Glastonbury Abbey, and is said to have brought the holy Graal (sic) -the vessel or platter of the Lord's Supper- containing the blood of Christ to England, and 10) Missionaries of Pope Eleutherus from Rome to King Lucius of Britain."[3]

This last named legend is mentioned by Bede, nevertheless, it is not credited by modern historians. Eusebius is another of the ancient historians, (325 A.D.) who gives credence to some of these legends when he favors the opinion that some of the Apostles came to the British Isles.[4]

Christianity Present; Mission of Palladius

The only thing which is known for fact is that suddenly, about 200 A.D., Christians were discovered in Britain. The standard quotation which sets the date for Christianity in England is that of Tertullian. About A.D. 208, Tertullian declares that,

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3. Philip Schaff, History of the Christian Church, vol. 4, p. 23, cf. also, Haddan & Stubbs, Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents, I, 22-26, and Pryce, 31 sq. Haddan says that, 'Statements respecting, a) British Christians at Rome, b) British Christians in Britain, c) Apostles or Apostolic men preaching in Britain in the first century - rest upon either guess, mistake, or fable,' and that, 'evidence alleged for the existence of a Christian Church in Britain during the second century is simply unhistorical'. Pryce calls these early agencies, 'gratuitous assumptions, plausible guesses, or legendary fables'.

4. Bede, Ecclesiastical History, I, 4, p. 12. Bede reports that Pope Eleutherus received a letter from King Lucius of Britain requesting missionaries and that the request was granted.

Eusebius, Demonstrationis Evangelicae, III, 5, p. 112. He speaks of the disciples preaching the name of Jesus in various places, and then says, "καὶ ἑτέρους ὑπὲρ τὸν Ὠκεανὸν παρελθεῖν ἐπὶ ἃς καλουμένας Βρεττανίας." "and others went across the ocean to those places (islands) which are called Britain." The Latin parallel reading is, "allios porro trans Oceanum evasisse, ad eas insulas, quae Britannicae vocantus."

"places in Britain not yet visited by Romans, were subject to Christ".[5] This, then, at least provides a starting point for a consideration of the Celtic Church.[6] This, despite the fact that the chief interest here is in the Irish development of the Church since this early English Christianity is, at most, only an early predecessor of the Celtic Church, having for its connection with Ireland only the link that St. Patrick came from England. But even St. Patrick is not the originator of the Irish Church. This is also held by Dr. Lanigan, the Roman Catholic historian, who goes even further, and admits that the mission of Palladius (A.D. 431) was not the introduction of Christianity to Ireland. He states, "It is, however, universally admitted, that there were Christian congregations in Ireland before the mission of Palladius...", and also, "Palladius was the first Bishop sent from Rome to Ireland".[7] The stronghold of

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5. Tertullian, Opera, Adversus Judaeos, Quinti Septimi Florentis, Tomus II, p. 713. "et Britannorum inaccessa Romanis loca, Christo vero subdita".

6. Schaff, op. cit., p. 7 has an instructive footnote concerning the term Celts: "Κελτοί or Κελταί, Celtae, Γαλάται, Galatae, or Galati, Galli, Gael. Some derive it from celt, a cover, shelter; others from celu (Lat. celo), to conceal... Herodotus first mentions them as dwelling in the extreme northwest of Europe.... The Galatians in Asia Minor, to whom Paul addressed his epistle, were a branch of the Keltic race, which either separated from the main current of the westward migration, or, being obstructed by the ocean, retraced their steps, and turned eastward. Wiesler, (in his Commentary), and in several articles in Studien und Kritiken, and in Zeitschrift fuer Kirchengeschichte, 1877, no. 1), tries to make them Germans, a view first hinted at by Luther. But the fickleness of the Galatian Christians is characteristic of the ancient Gauls and the modern French".

7. Lanigan, Ecclesiastical History, vol. 1, pp. 9, 23.

early Christianity in Ireland seems to have been in the south-eastern part of the Island, that is, in the present County Wicklow.[8]

Sources Before going into a detailed account of the history of the Celtic Church, it might be well to mention the original sources of information concerning this time, and also to give a general summation of the periods of the Irish Church. The sources of material are the Catalogue of the Saints of Ireland, and the Litany of Angus the Culdee. The first was published by Ussher from two manuscripts, and is found also in Haddan and Stubbs, pp. 292-294. The second is contained in Leahbar Breac, and in the Book of Leinster. Nor may one neglect Patrick's own Confession.

Three Periods Three periods are usually distinguished in the Irish Church. These distinctions which are made in practically all studies of this section of history give a rather good overview of the Celtic Church. The first period extends up to the year 534 or thereabouts. The distinguishing feature of this period was the large number of bishops.[9] They were subject to one head, Christ, and to one leader, Patrick. The clergy of the Irish church of

a) To 534
b) To 599
c) To 665

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8. P. E. Kretzmann, Ph. D., The Independence of the Early Irish Church, in C.T.M., vol. XIV, no. 9, Sept. 1943, p. 633.

9. When using the term bishop, one must distinguish between the Irish and the English branch of the church. The English bishops functioned according to the episcopal interpretation of their office; whereas the Irish bishops were bishops according to St. Paul's usage of the term; viz., overseers.

this period all wore the same tonsure (from ear to ear), and all observed the same date for Easter, (on the fourteenth moon after the vernal equinox). The second period extends till about the year 599. This was a period of more presbyters and fewer bishops; and Schaff states that at this time women were excluded from the monasteries.[10] However, there was still uniformity in the observance of the date for Easter which remained as it had been previously; the tonsure remained the same, and they still held Christ to be the only Head of the Church. The third period covers the time from 599 until 665.[11] In this period there is a weakening of the old Celtic Church. There were fewer bishops, and still fewer followers than at any other period. The unanimity in matters of Easter date, tonsures, mass, etc., were now gone.

First Period: Palladius-- a Failure

But now for the business at hand, namely, the consideration of the first period, which Skene describes as follows,

> "It was a congregational tribal episcopacy, united by a federal, rather than a territorial tie under regular jurisdiction. During Patrick's life he, no doubt, exercised superintendence over the whole; but we do not see any trace of the metropolitan jurisdiction of the church of Armagh over the rest.".[12]

The first man usually mentioned in connection with the early times of the Irish Church is Palladius. However, there also

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10. Schaff, op. cit., p. 54.
11. 665 A.D. not ultimate end of Celtic activity.
12. Skene, Keltic Scotland, II, 22.

is much confusion concerning him, since some neglect to distinguish clearly between him and St. Patrick, and thus come to the conclusion that St. Patrick was sent by Pope Celestine. Little is known about Palladius himself, and about his mission, only that which is related by Prosper of Aquitaine and later repeated by the venerable Bede. Apparently the Pope had gained knowledge of Christians in Ireland, and therefore sent Palladius to be their bishop; this was in the year 431, according to Bede. Joyce states that, "Palladius landed on the coast of the present County Wicklow, and after a short and troubled sojourn he converted a few people, and founded three little churches in that part of the country, namely, in Cill Fine, Tech-na-Roman ('House of the Romans') and Dommach Arte".[13] But on the whole, Palladius' mission was a failure, for as Ellis states, "Rome's emissary was rejected by the Irish Christians, and he withdrew after about a year's sojourn in Ireland".[14] Although Palladius was not successful in his mission, the work which he did there does give lie to the common error which is so often repeated, that St. Patrick introduced Christianity to Ireland. However, all must admit that although St. Patrick was not the first to bring Christianity into Ireland, in view of his long and successful ministry in that country, to him must go the credit for having Christianized Ireland.

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13. P. W. Joyce, A Social History of Ireland, p. 313.
14. Ellis, op. cit., p. 10.

St. Patrick-- His Father St. Patrick, or Sukkat, as was his earlier name, was born of Christian parents. His father's name was Calporneous, and his mother's name was Conchessa. St. Patrick's father was a deacon in the Church, and his grandfather was a presbyter, (his name was Potius). Although this is merely negative evidence in a certain sense, it still goes far to prove that the celibacy of the clergy was not practised at this time. This holds true despite the historically unfounded Roman claim that St. Patrick's father and grandfather remained married only until they became clergymen.

St. Patrick's Birthplace There has been much vieing among various towns and districts of England, Ireland, Scotland, and even some portions of the Continent to claim Patrick as a native son. For quite a while, Bonaven, in the southern part of the present Scotland, seemed to be the historians' choice because of the fact that there is a reference to Bonavem Taberniae in the opening sentence of the first chapter of St. Patrick's Confession: ("Ego Patricius...patrem habui Calpornium diaconem, filium quondam Potiti presbyteri qui fuit in Vico Bonavem Taberniae"). But the most recently published article encountered on this subject states the following, "...careful research work seems to have established quite definitely that Caerwent in Romanized Britain was the place where the apostle was born".[15] Incidentally, the date for

15. Kretzmann, op. cit., p. 633

Patrick's birth is usually given as about 387 A.D.

Patrick's Family Greek? In view of later developments in the Irish Church in doctrine and custom, an interesting point is made by De Vinne when he points out that Patrick's family connections go back to Ephesine influence and that his father's and his grandfather's names stem from Greek roots.[16]

Patrick's Slavery-- Early Studies When Patrick was sixteen, he is said to have been sold into slavery to a certain Milcho. It was during this time that Patrick first lived in Ireland. After six years of servitude, he escaped, or at least obtained his liberty in some way, and returned to England. It has been stated that after this period in his life he spent some time on the continent as a pupil of St. Germaine in Auxerre in Burgundy. De Vinne holds that this is "possible, but... without any proof".[17] However, judging from his later knowledge of Scriptures and other theological works, it seems that one may safely assume that Patrick did devote a great deal of time to the study of Scriptures. Possibly his father aided him in his studies, and then again, it is quite likely that the son of a deacon in the church, would be given an opportunity to study with some priest. However, this is a mere speculation.

Patrick's Commission Not Papal All the authors encountered are unanimous in denying that St. Patrick was com-

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16. De Vinne, op cit., p. 19, footnote; also Ibid, ch. III.
17. Ibid, p. 25.

missioned by Pope Celestine to be the Bishop of the Irish. However, despite broader statements by other historians, it will be sufficient to quote the admission of Dr. Lanigan, the Roman Catholic historian, on this point. Lanigan says,

> "the account of St. Patrick's consecration by Pope Celestine is not to be met with in any of the lives (of the saints), except those two compilations of all stories "(i.e. fables)","namely, Jocelin's and the Tripartite, whence it made its way into some breviaries and other late documents."[18]

In this case, like in many others of history, once the fable has been printed, it will live, despite any later proof to the contrary. So it is that one still hears people saying with all sincerity and intentions of truthfulness, that St. Patrick was commissioned by the Pope. But the only commission about which St. Patrick himself speaks in his writings is that he was called by God to preach to these people, (cf. pp. 44-43).

<u>Patrick's Conversion of Ireland</u>

At any rate, Patrick arrived in Ireland at a place called Inver Dea (Joyce, <u>op cit</u>., p. 313, holds that this is the present port of Wicklow), and began his work among the Irish people. Characteristic of most great missionaries' plan of action, Patrick proceeds boldly to the heart of Irish heathenism, which was the festival at Tara. Here he arranged to preach in the palace before the king, and here drove the opening wedge for Christianity in this section of the country. During the thirty years of his ministry in Ireland, Patrick journeyed to practically every part of the

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18. Lanigan, <u>op cit</u>., vol. 1, p. 191-192.

island, and conquered practically the entire island for Christ. By no means a minor accomplishment!

Since a discussion of Patrick's Christianity is a subject which deserves to be treated in detail, suffice it to say for now that from his works,[19] and from the practices of Christian living which he established among his followers, one can learn that he was a humble Christian, filled with missionary zeal, and desirous of living a God-pleasing life. Patrick, naturally, had many followers, and they carried on his work after his death in 493(?). But one can pass over the remaining portion of the first period of the Irish Church which ended ca. 534, and enter upon the second period, about which Hunt has the following to say,

> "When the first period of the church ended, about 534, a period began during which religion was revived and strengthened by monasticism. Churches served by secular clergy gave place to monasteries, and the Church at large was organized on a monastic basis. A close connection was formed with the British Church...".[20]

Before entering this period, one should mention that many monasteries were founded for the training of missionaries. An example of such a monastery was the one at Clonard, founded by St. Finian. It is said that there were three thousand students at this school at one time, and it was from here that

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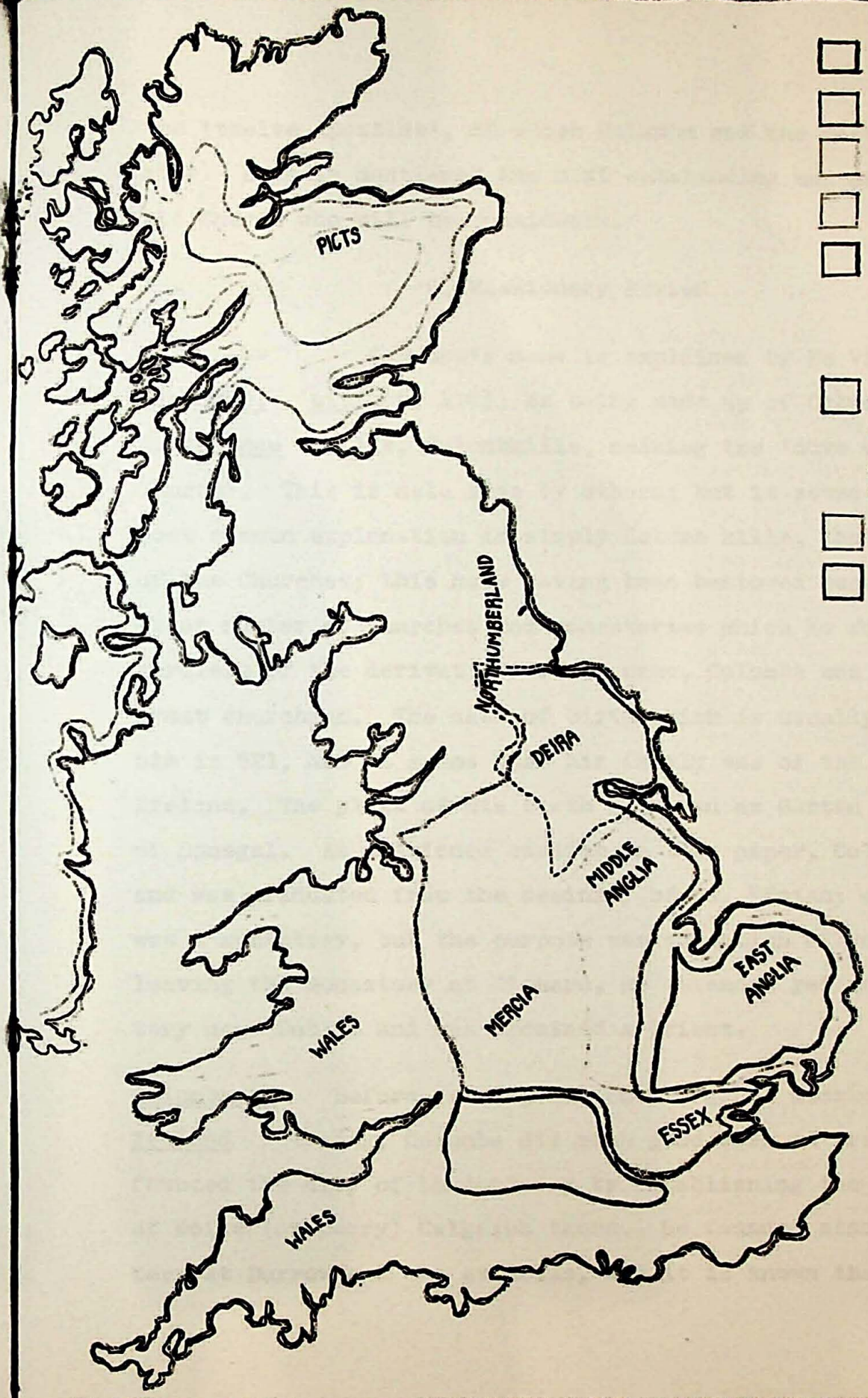
19. "We have only two genuine documents from Patrick, both written in semi-barbarous (early Irish) Latin, but breathing a humble, devout and fervent missionary spirit, without anything specifically Roman, viz., his autobiographical Confession (in twenty-five chapters), written shortly before his death, 493(?), and his Letter of remonstrance to Coroticus." - Schaff, op cit., p. 48.

20. William Hunt, M.A., History of the English Church, vol. 1, p. 7.



- ☐ PATRICK
- ☐ COLUMBA
- ☐ KENTIGERN
- ☐ AIDAN
- ☐ ST. FURSEY AND HIS BROTHERS, ULTAN AND FOILAN.
- ☐ CED, ADDA, BETTI AND DIUMA [MIDDLE ANGLIA FIRST, THEN MERCIA, ESSEX, DEIRA]
- ☐ FINAN
- ☐ COLMAN [NOT DEFINITE, BUT HIS WORK EXTENDED FARTHER SOUTH THAN ANY PREVIOUSLY.]*

the 'twelve Apostles', of which Columba was the most famous, came. Here is mentioned the next outstanding man of the Celtic Church who will be considered.

C. Missionary Period

Columba--His Name, Birthplace

Columba's name is explained by De Vinne, (op. cit., p. 110), as being made up of Columb na Ceille, Columbkille, meaning the 'dove of the Church'. This is held also by others; but it seems that the most common explanation is simply Columb kille, that is 'Columb of the Churches; this name having been bestowed because of the great number of churches and monasteries which he founded. Regardless of the derivation of his name, Columba was indeed a great churchman. The date of birth which is usually given for him is 521, and it seems that his family was of the royalty of Ireland. The place of his birth is given as Gartan in the county of Donegal. As mentioned earlier in this paper, Columba entered and was graduated from the seminary of St. Finian; actually this was a monastery, but the purpose was education of youths. After leaving the monastery at Clonard, he attended yet another monastery near Dublin and was ordained a priest.

Columba in Ireland

Before setting out on his great missionary undertaking, Columba did much good work in Ireland. He founded the city of Londonderry by establishing the monastery of Doire (or Derry) Calgaich there. He founded also the monastery at Durrow and one at Kells, and it is known that he planted

many other monasteries and churches throughout the land.

Judging from events in his life in Ireland which preceded his leaving the country, Columba was a man given to anger and warfare. Apparently, at one time, he copied a book written by Finian. When Finian claimed not only the original but also the copy, Columba insisted upon permitting the king to judge the case. King Diarmit, king of Ireland decided in favor of Finian on the basis of "whose is the cow, his is the calf also". Not satisfied with the decision, Columba, deciding to fight it out, gathered some of his followers and defeated the king's troops in battle. Columba now set out for Scotland,[21] together with twelve companions, in order to bring the Gospel to his fellow-countrymen who had gone over there at an earlier date. Most of the writers follow the lead of Adamnan who says (p. 108) that Columba went to Scotland, 'Pro Christo peregrinari volens'. While not doubting that Columba truly desired to preach Christ and to save souls, it still seems unlikely that the Irish king would overlook this little incident of warfare, and it therefore, undoubtedly, was not any too safe for Columba to remain in Ireland much longer than he did. Schaff provides some evidence for this belief when he says, "In one of the Irish Keltic poems ascribed to Columba, he laments to have been driven from

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21. This occurred ca. 563. 'Scotland' refers to present-day Scotland. Present-day Ireland was originally called Scotland; present day Scotland took over this name when a group of Christian Scots from the northwestern part of Ireland founded a kingdom called Dalriada between Loch Linnhe and Loch Long. Gradually the rest of the country took over the name Scots.

Erin by his own fault and in consequence of the blood shed in his battles".[22]

Columba Settles on Iona

Columba settled on Druid's Island which later became known as Iona, the fabulous Isle of miracles and culture in the midst of darkness. And every bit of the fame which Iona attained was directly due to Columba and his followers. Iona was practically the peak of monasteries of that time, or any time as far as that is concerned. But the subject of Iona and the heights to which it and other great monasteries of this period attained are a separate subject which will be taken care of, in more detail in a later portion of this paper. The important thing right now is that Iona was the starting place for the spread of the Celtic Church in Scotland and England.

Mission Work Among Picts

Columba's first attempt at mission work was to the northern Picts. In this very first undertaking, Columba established the pattern which was followed by his missionaries during the following century. That pattern consisted in first approaching the king of a nation and winning his cooperation, after which it was a comparatively simple matter to win the people, with the king's cooperation. But this is a rather cold way of looking at it. One cannot deny that the word of God which Columba and his monks preached was a power for converting the people, but then again, one cannot help noticing the

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22. Schaff, op. cit., p. 66.

coincidence in method of procedure. To accomplish his missionary purpose, Columba went to Brude, king of the Picts, converted him, and from then on proceeded to convert most of the people of the kingdom. But Columba's work cannot be properly evaluated on the basis of this one missionary undertaking. After all, one must remember that his forte as a missionary was this, that he prepared missionaries for their task of converting the heathen. Countless numbers of men went forth from Columba's monastery-training school at Iona. The credit for even the later success of Iona goes to Columba, because, even after his death, the pattern set by him for training men in Iona, "The Star of the West", was continued. Then too, Columba aided the mission work of his pupils through his own zealous work and devotion. Because of Columba's zealousness and devotion, his name became known far and wide so that his missionaries had a reputation established before they even began their working. Columba died in 597.

"Culdee"-- its Meaning

But this was not the only mission work carried out by the Celts in the British Isles. The followers of Columba did much more work, not only in Scotland but also in England and on the Continent. Incidentally, the term Culdee as applied to the Celtic Christians came into use in Scotland. Actually it is not, strictly speaking, correct to refer to all Celtic Christians as Culdees since the term applies only to the Scottish branch of the Church and their immediate successors. Even among them, the term did not appear, until the eighth

century. Schaff and De Vinne hold that the term likely means 'servants or worshippers of God'.[23]

Ninias and Kentigern

But here too, the Celts were not the first Christians in the field. A Briton named Ninias first brought the knowledge of Christianity to Scotland. He built the famous Candida casa, or white church, and dedicated it to the memory of Martin of Tours. However, one cannot properly classify him with the Celts, since, in actuality, he was a disciple of the Roman church. The same seems to apply to St. Kentigern, the other well-known Scottish churchman; however, here the evidence, is slimmer. This much is true; he did establish a college of Culdees. Also, he apparently was on good terms with St. Columba, having met with him and having exchanged pastoral staves with him.[24] Kentigern was the first Bishop of Glasgow, and labored among the people in Cumberland, Wales, and on the Clyde; also, he reconverted the Picts who had fallen from the faith. St. Kentigern, also called St. Mungo (the gracious one) died in the year 603.

Celts in England

The scope of Celtic missionary activity was not limited to Scotland; their endeavors took them also

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23. Schaff, op. cit., p. 50; De Vinne, op. cit., p. 122. "It (Culdee) was applied to anchorites, who, in entire seclusion from society, sought the perfection of sanctity. They succeeded the Columban monks. They afterwards associated themselves into communities of hermits, and were finally brought under canonical rule along with the secular clergy, until at length the name of Culdee became almost synonymous with that of secular canon." - Schaff, op. cit., p. 72.

24. Schaff, op. cit., p. 64.

to England. The work which the Celts did in England, strictly speaking, belongs in the third period of the Celtic Church, that is, after 597.

St. Augustine - Roman Missionary The first missionary who draws attention in England is another man who was not a Celt, but a disciple of the Pope; viz., St. Augustine. The only reason that he is here mentioned is to show the hesitation of the Britons to accept him. Even at this time they were a stubborn race who did not like being told what they had to do. Schaff explains Augustine's unpopularity in most quarters by describing him as follows:

> "He was a pendantic and contracted churchman. He met the Britons (the clergy), who represented, at all events, an older native Christianity, with the haughty spirit of Rome, which is willing to compromise with heathen customs, but demands absolute submission from all other forms of Christianity, and hates independence as the worst of heresies."[25]

Augustine, incidentally, arrived in England in the year 597.

Aidan Concerning the next man to be considered, it is very difficult to determine whether he belongs in the Celtic church, or whether he, too, was a disciple of the Pope. This much seems certain, Aidan was from Iona, and outwardly he did seem to cling to the form of the Celts, but in spirit, he seems to have been Roman. This matter will be considered at greater length in the discussion of his bishopric.

Lindisfarne In summary, the story of Aidan is as follows:

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25. Schaff, op. cit., pp. 35-36.

Oswald, who was king of Northumbria had been forced to flee to Ireland due to failure in battle. While there, he learned of Christianity, and was later baptized at Iona. Desiring to have Christianity for his nation, he sent to Iona and asked for a bishop for his people. Seghine, the abbot of Iona, sent a man who has been referred to as Corman; however, he was vastly unsuccessful and returned to Iona with the report that the task was hopeless. Aidan, who was at the monastery at the time, heard his report and suggested that possibly his approach was at fault. Whereupon, as one might naturally expect, Aidan was selected to try his methods upon these people. It was about the year 635 that he was consecrated for his task. Aidan began his work and founded his monastery at Lindisfarne, an island off the north-east coast of England. Here he formed a school for instructing native clergy. It seems that Aidan had leanings toward Rome, in practice at least, for two reasons; one was his treatment of his office of bishop; his seemed to be more of an episcopal regard for the office. The second point was that he seemed to place an over-emphasis on the value of good works. Possibly this was just an extreme case of the Celtic Church piety; after all, Columba was said to have stood in the ocean up to his neck at night and recited the whole psalter. Aidan died in the year 651, after a most successful ministry in Northumberland. He was able to prove that the conversion of these people was, after all, a matter of using the Word of God in the proper manner.

Fursey, Ultan, Foillan

Another man who must be mentioned in passing is St. Fursey, who, together with his two brothers, came to East Anglia and did very good work. The brothers' names were Ultan and Foillan. Proving himself no exception to the usual Celtic rule, Fursey also founded a monastery; this he did on the site of an ancient fortress, the present Burgh Castle in Suffolk. Later on, Fursey retired to a life of seclusion and meditation, leaving the active work of the ministry in other hands; however, before he did this, another kingdom in England had been added to the roster of Christian kingdoms.

Middle Anglia: Cedd, Adda, Betti, Diuma

The next mission project of the Celtic Church in England to be considered is its mission to Middle Anglia. This was done under the influence of Finan (the bishop of whom we shall hear more), and Oswiu, king of Northumbria. Note that here too the work was carried out under royal instigation, or at least, with royal cooperation. Peada, the king of Middle Anglia, desired to marry the daughter of king Oswiu of Northumbria. However, Oswiu said that he would give his consent only on the condition that Peada and his people first submit themselves to Christianity. This Peada did and became converted. When he returned to his own land, after the marriage, he brought with him four priests who were to work among his people; they were Cedd, Adda, and Betti, from Northumbria, and Diuma, a Scot. In this way, Christianity was brought to

Middle Anglia in the year 653.

Work in Mercia

However, Cedd and his fellow-preachers were not satisfied to confine their efforts to Middle Anglia, but branched over to Mercia. Here, too, they met no opposition from the king (Penda). Although he himself professed to be a heathen, he said that,

> "the men whom he hated and despised were the professors of Christianity who did not act in accordance with their faith and disobeyed their God; his heathenism was probably at least as much a matter of policy as of religious conviction".[26]

Work Among East Saxons, Cedd Their Bishop

The next endeavor along missionary lines was among the East Saxons in the year 654. The king of the East Saxons was Sigbert, a friend of King Oswiu, the king of Northumbria, who often spent long hours trying to point out to Sigbert the foolishness of worshipping idols instead of the true God. Sigbert became converted and was baptized. Cedd, and his companions were then sent to the East Saxons where they were very successful. After a time, Cedd decided that he should go to Lindisfarne and report to Finan, the abbot, concerning his work. The narrative can be continued in the words of Hunt; this is done to present a conclusion which he draws; a conclusion with which it seems that one cannot agree. Hunt states,

> "Finan, hearing of it, considered that the work demanded a bishop. He therefore sent for two other bishops, doubtless Scots like himself, and in con-

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26. Hunt, op. cit., p. 97.

> junction with them, consecrated Cedd to be Bishop of the East Saxons. This, then, is conclusive proof, if proof be needed, that the Church of the Scots, in spite of their peculiar arrangements with respect to bishops, was an episcopal church, and it is noteworthy that though Finan's fellow-bishops did not always procure the assistance of bishops at consecrations, he evidently thought it necessary.".[27]

Without taking exception to Hunt's position that Finan may have had episcopal ideas concerning the bishopric, because after all, his predecessor at, and the founder of, Lindisfarne, Aidan, also seemed to have leanings in this direction, ~~but~~ the portion of this statement to which one may object is this, that the act of Finan of calling in other bishops to help with the consecration of Cedd, proves that the Celtic Church was episcopal in organization. After all, it is common practice also in the Lutheran church to call in several of the surrounding clergy, and even the president of district, to perform installations whenever feasible, but that does not make the Lutheran Church an episcopal church.

<u>Cedd, a 'Monastic Bishop'</u>

Cedd had no official see, and so cannot be classified with the Bishops of London as some attempt to do. Hunt narrates that,

> "While in the East Saxon kingdom, he lived with his monks at two monasteries which he made his missionary centers. Of these two monasteries, one was at Ythanceaster, identified with the Roman military station Othona, which has disappeared into the sea, the other at Tilbury.".[28]

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27. <u>Ibid</u>., p. 98.
28. Hunt, <u>op</u>. <u>cit</u>., pp. 98-99.

Cedd in Deira

Still another venture from his home fields was undertaken by Cedd; whenever he had the opportunity, he left his East Saxon flock and preached in Deira. Aethewald, the king here, greatly admired Cedd's holiness, and because of his respect for Cedd, chose one of his brothers, Caelin, by name, to be the royal chaplain. The king asked Cedd to choose a site for a monastery, for the king desired a place where he, too, might retire for meditation and prayer. Cedd chose the beautiful location of Lastingham, where a monastery was built over which Cedd served as abbot, as well as serving as bishop of the East Saxons.

Finnan; Colman

In concluding the resume of Celtic churchmen who labored in England, one should mention two successors of Aidan. They were Finnan (d. 661), who, as has just been stated, was in charge of Lindisfarne at the time of Cedd, and who worked especially in Middle and East Anglia, and Colman, of whom more is yet to be heard in the discussion concerning the Council of Whitby. His labors in England extended farther south.

D. The Council of Whitby

Council of Whitby, 664. Controversial Subjects

This, then, brings the discussion up to 664 and the Council of Whitby. But before one can enter into a review of the Council itself, it is necessary to review the background material. There were differences between the Roman and the Celtic church in the following matters: 1) the Easter date; the Celts held

to the Eastern Church computation, 2) the form of the tonsure; the Celts did not use the halo effect, 3) the Scripture source; the Celts quoted from the Greek rather than from the Latin Scriptures, 4) the system of government; among the Celts, monasticism ruled supreme, but this monasticism was mixed with secular life. Another point here is that the Celtic clergy were not bound by vows of celibacy. In the Roman Church the monastic system was subordinate to the hierarchical system of secular clergy. 5) Most important of all, the Celts were independent of Rome. That anyone should have the nerve to deny to the Pope absolute rule in all spiritual matters on earth was more than the Roman church could endure. In a later section, the vast superiority of the Celtic church over the Roman in matters of culture, knowledge, and Christian living will be considered. Suffice it for now to say that the Roman Church was conscious of these differences between it and the Celtic church, and now desired to bring the Celts into conformity. The attempts of Rome to accomplish this purpose led up to the Council of Whitby in 664.

<u>Roman Attempts to Force Conformity</u>

Preceding the Council of Whitby, the Roman Church had already taken steps to try to bring the Celts into conformity. In 629, Pope Honorius addressed the first Papal Encyclical to Ireland, urging the Irish to accept the Roman Easter date. The next step was that the synod at Margh-Lene, (631 A.D.), sent a

deputation to the Pope about the matter. After three years, the deputation gave a report which was favorable to the Roman method of computation. About 634, this then was adopted by the southern portion of the Irish church. The leader in this movement was Cummian, a well-known and widely respected Irish churchman. Even in the north, the Roman influence was exerted; this through a Scot, named Ronan, who came into sharp conflict with Finan over the matter. Other opponents of Finan included James, a deacon from Deira, and Romanus, the chaplain to Queen Eanflaed. Finan, however, died before matters came to a head.

Decision of Whitby The Council of Whitby of 664 was a mixed gathering of royalty, ecclesiastics, and laymen. Hunt has an excellent summary of the line-up of those participating; there were,

> "two kings, Oswiu and Alchfrith, and on the Roman side, Agilbert and his attendant priest Agatho, Wilfrith, James the deacon, Romanus, and probably Tuda. Tuda had been educated and consecrated as a bishop in Southern Ireland, where the Roman customs had been accepted, and had been doing useful work in Northumbria both by word and deed during the episcopate of Colman. On the side of the Scots were Colman and his clergy, the Abbess Hilda and her monks, and Bishop Cedd, who, having probably studied in Ireland, acted as interpreter.".[29]

Colman held that they had their Easter date on the authority of St. John. Agilbert, for the Roman side, held that they had followed the universal Christian usage. Oswiu, the king who was to decide, decided against the Scots on the basis of the passage, "Thou art Peter, and on this rock will I build my Church". His classic decision was given in the following

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29. Hunt, op. cit., p. 110.

words, "I will not decide against the doorkeeper, lest when I come before the gates of heaven, he who holds the keys should not open unto me".[30] When the Council of Whitby decided against the Celts, there was an immediate shortening of their lines of activity. Colman, because of the fact that the Lindisfarne clergy had sided with the Roman faction,[31] took the remainder of the clergy and retreated to Iona. This decision, however, did not mean that all the members of the Celtic church submitted to Rome.

Split in Ranks of Celts

Later on, a split appeared also in the ranks of the clergy at Iona. Adamnan (d. 704), the ninth successor of Columba, conformed his observance of Easter to the Roman custom. His fellow monks refused to follow him in this, but after his death, the matter split wide open. This break remained until the Columban monks, "who adhered to the old custom, were, by royal command, expelled (715). With this expulsion, terminates the primacy of Iona in the kingdom of the Picts.".[32]

E. Missionary Work on the Continent

Missionary Work on the Continent

But now it is necessary to turn back in order to consider a phase of the Celtic church for which it is most noted, and that is its missionary zeal and endeavors, even on the Continent. One might normally expect

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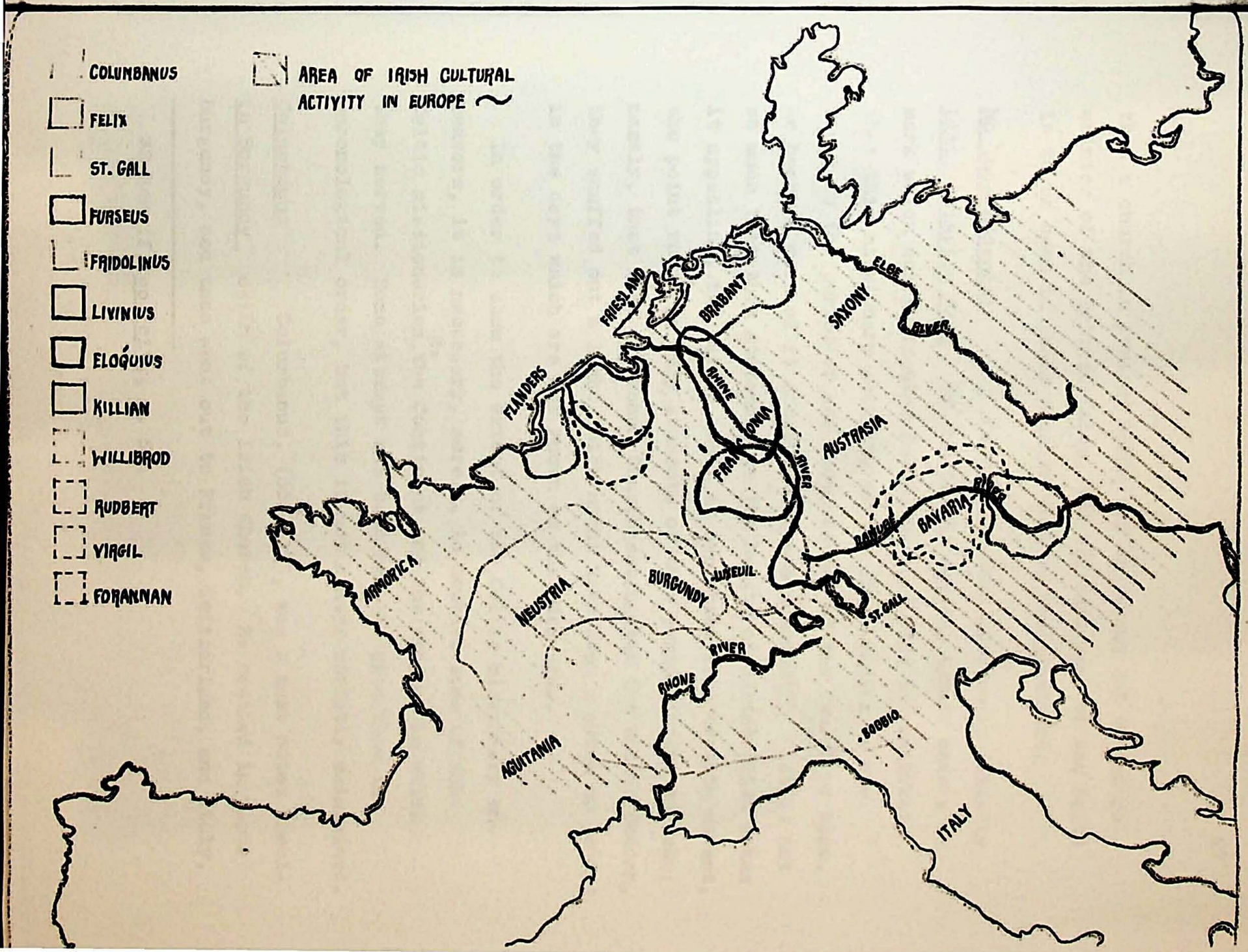
30. Ibid.
31. Kretzmann, op. cit., p. 640.
32. Schaff, op. cit., p. 71.


COLUMBANUS
FELIX
ST. GALL
FURSEUS
FRIDOLINUS
LIVINIUS
ELOQUIUS
KILLIAN
WILLIBROD
RUDBERT
VIRGIL
FORANNAN
AREA OF IRISH CULTURAL ACTIVITY IN EUROPE
FRIESLAND
BRABANT
SAXONY
ELBE
RIVER
FLANDERS
RHINE
FRANCONIA
AUSTRASIA
RIVER
DANUBE
BAVARIA
RIVER
ARMORICA
NEUSTRIA
BURGUNDY
LUXEUIL
ST. GALL
RIVER
RHONE
BOBBIO
AQUITANIA
ITALY

that a church in Ireland would try to spread out to the remainder of the British Isles, but the real zeal of the Celts is to be seen in their mission work on the Continent.

No Independence; Little Mission Work

Concerning this missionary activity of the Celtic church, Schaff made a remark which has particular force; he said, "It is remarkable that this missionary activity of the Irish church is confined to the period of her independence of the Church of Rome. We hear no more of it after the Norman conquest".[33] It is not so much that this statement is the height of wisdom which makes it appealing, but rather, that it expresses, to a certain extent, the point which so many students of this period strive to make; namely, that when the Roman Church subjugated the Celtic Church, they snuffed out a light which might have been a guide to people in the days which are now known as the Dark Ages.

In order to show the extent of the Celtic missionary endeavors, it is necessary, merely, to mention some of the Celtic missionaries to the Continent and the regions in which they served. Some attempt has been made to give them in chronological order, but this is not always strictly maintained.

Columbanus in Burgundy

Columbanus, (559-615), was a most noted theologian of the Irish Church. He settled in upper Burgundy, and then went out to France, Switzerland, and Italy,

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33. Schaff, op. cit., p. 54.

and did much good work. He died in Bobbio, Italy, in 615. Concerning him, Ellis has written, "From his writings, it is evident that he was no Papist; and so far was he from believing the infallibility of the Popes, that he held that Pope Vigilius died a heretic".[34]

St. Felix St. Gallus Two men who were connected with the work of Columbanus were St. Felix and St. Gallus. St. Felix, apparently, kept the Roman date for Easter; he labored in Gaul. St. Gallus labored in Switzerland, and it was after him that the Abbey and the town of St. Gall, Switzerland, were named. He was so successful and so highly thought of, that Nother's ancient Martyrology says of him, "Divine mercy raised up blessed Gallus to be the apostle of the Alemannic people. He was himself experienced in the ways of God, and finding the people enveloped in Paganism, he instructed them in the true faith, and brought them out of the darkness of ignorance to the sun of righteousness, which is Christ".[35]

Missionaries on the Continent Others who labored on the Continent were, Furseus (b. 615), who worked in England, Austria, Brabant, and Flanders. Fridolinus, (d. 670), surnamed, Viator, the Traveller, labored in Switzerland and Germany, going through Lorraine and along the Rhine. Livinius, (ca. 668), started from the monastery of the Irish at Brabant,

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34. Ellis, op. cit., p. 22.
35. Ibid., p. 21.

and did missionary work along the Rhine. St. Eloquius (680), went with twelve disciples to Belgium. St. Killian (ca. 689), who later died a martyr's death, was called the apostle of Franconia. St. Willibrod (692) took twelve disciples with him to Friesland. St. Rudbert, or Rupert, went to Bavaria about 700. Virgil, Bishop of Saltzburg was an Irish Church man; he and Boniface, the English Papist, both worked among the heathen tribes of Germany. Boniface had Virgil condemned by the Pope, "because he said that the world was round".[36] The date for Virgil was about 704. The final missionary to be mentioned is St. Forannan, who took twelve disciples with him to the Belgian frontier as late as 970. Thus, when one considers this list of men and the countries in which they labored, one sees the extent of the mission work of the Celtic Church. A peculiar fact is this, that a Celtic missionary always took twelve companions with him when he set out on his journeys; this an emulation of Christ.

F. Later History

The later history is the period of the decline of the Irish church. The Council of Whitby had practically broken the back of the Celtic Church in 664, but one still hears occasional movements of last breath coming from the Celtic Church up to 1172.

<u>Decline of Celts</u>

Ireland suffered from the Danish and Norse invasions of the tenth and eleventh centuries, but

36. <u>Ibid</u>., p. 22.

by the battle of Clontarf, A.D. 1080, the power of the Danish and Norse invaders was broken, but so was the Irish Church, in the main. Not that it no longer existed, but degeneration had set in. The clergymen were no longer the aggressive churchmen they had been previously; especially is this true of the Celtic Church in England and Scotland. Its Irish branch held out longest against the forces of Rome and England. No longer were the Celts interested in contesting for their doctrines; rather, they now contested the ownership of church properties with the Roman Church.

Rome Continued Efforts to 1152

Up to 1095, the Roman Church continued her efforts to woo the Celts, and to bring them into conformity. Three documents to this end were, Lanfranc of Canterbury's letter, 1065; Pope Gregory's missive, 1090; and the attempt of Anselm of Canterbury, made in 1095. "In 1152, Pope Eugenius sent Cardinal Papyrio as his legate to Ireland to call a synod and to incorporate the Irish Church into the See of Rome".[37] Papyrio presented the palliums sent by the Pope to the four archepiscopal dioceses - Armagh, Cashel, Dublin and Tuam. But still the Irish Church was not dead.

Papal Bull of Adrian IV Synod of Cashel, 1172

The next step which the Roman Church took to bring Ireland into submission is one which is denied by many good Catholics, and that was a Papal Bull of Adrian IV to Henry II of England

37. Kretzmann, op. cit., p. 642.

encouraging him to lead a military force against Ireland and bring it into subjection to the Roman Church. Do not get the impression though that Henry, on his own initiative, was not anxious to do this very thing. He undoubtedly either broached the subject to the Pope, or at least hinted strongly about it.[38] In 1171, the English troops invaded and conquered Ireland, and in 1172, Henry directed the holding of the Reformatory Synod of Cashel[39] which finally snuffed the last breath of life from the Irish Church. Here then is the strange picture of Ireland being forced into conformity with Rome by a nation which later herself broke from the Roman Church. But strange as it may seem, the Irish since this time, up to the present day, have been the staunchest supporters of the Roman Church, despite occasional insignificant lapses into rebellion against the Pope. And with the Snyod of Cashel ends the period of a church

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38. "The Bull of Adrian IV of 1155 in which he encouraged and justified the intended invasion of Ireland to 'extirpate the nurseries of vice', and to 'enlarge the borders of the Roman Church', and to secure to St. Peter from each house, 'the annual pension of one penny', is not found in the Bullarum Romanus, and is denied by many Roman Catholics as fraudulent. Nevertheless, "it was given by Matthew Paris (1155), was confirmed by Pope Alexander III, and in a letter to Henry II, (A.D. 1172), published in Ireland in 1175, printed in Baronius' Annales ad A.D. 1159 who took his copy from a Codex Vaticanus, and is acknowledged as undoubtedly genuine by Dr. Lanigan, the R.C. Historian of Ireland, (IV, 64), and other authorities; comp. Killen, I, 211 sq." - Schaff, op. cit., p. 59.

39. Here it was decreed that, "for the future, all divine offices be performed in all parts of the Church of Ireland after the likeness of the most Holy Church, according to the rule the Anglican Church observeth".#

M.S. of Giralus Cambrinsis, F.4.4 (in the library of Trinity College, Dublin) p. 24, transcribed by King in Church History Appendix No. xxxvi, p. 1054-5. Ellis, op. cit., p. 28.

in which "for more than five hundred years, the popes had no ecclesiastical jurisdiction";[40] the only church which at that time resisted Rome.

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40. Daniel De Vinne, The Irish Primitive Church, p. 179.

II. The Influence of Celtic Christianity

A. Introduction: Roman Claims

Extent of Celtic Missions

From the brief historical sketch just given, one can see the extent of the work of the Celtic church. Their missionary zeal led them to strike out in all directions to bring unbelievers to the knowledge of Christ. As has been shown, their labors extended from Ireland to Scotland, to the European continent. In addition, it is quite well authenticated that their endeavors led them as far north as Iceland. To the south, their efforts also extended beyond the boundaries of the European continent, for it is reported that an Irish monk, by the name of Augustin, labored in Carthage, Africa.[41]

Divisions of British Church

Larson holds that there are four divisions of Christianity in the British Isles during this period. The four which he lists are: 1) the Old British Church in Wales, 2) The Church of St. Patrick in Ireland, 3) The Church of St. Columba in North Britain, and in north and central England, and 4) The Roman Church in Kent ,

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41. "We find a distinguished Irish monk named Augustin in Carthage in Africa, in the seventh century:" - P. W. Joyce, A Social History of Ancient Ireland, vol. 1, p. 345.

and Wessex.[42] However, since the doctrines of St. Patrick and St. Columba are essentially the same, Columba having learned his Christianity through St. Patrick, one might just as well combine two and three of Larson's division of churches in the British Isles, and call them simply, the Celtic Church.

Rome's Claim — As is well known, the Roman Church has long laid claim to universal jurisdiction over all the churches of Christianity, nor did the Celtic Church escape these claims of Rome. According to Rome, St. Patrick is now a saint who is equal in their estimation with the other saints of their church. In fact, Rome has even held that the Celts were merely an erring branch of the Roman Church which eventually came into the fold.

Rome's Attitude — The attitude of Rome toward the Celtic Church is well typified in a communication with them by Pope Honorius, A.D. 630, this concerning the Easter question. Bede describes this communication by saying that Pope Honorius wrote to the Scots, "exhorting them not to think their small number placed in the utmost borders of the earth, wiser than all the ancient and modern churches of Christ throughout the world.".[43] Without entering here upon the dispute concerning the date for Easter, one cannot help but notice the extravagance of Honorius' claims; first, that the view of Rome represents the view of all

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42. Lauren M. Larson, History of England and the British Commonwealth, pp. 20-21.
43. Bede, Eccl. Hist., lib. II, cap. 19, p. 120.

other churches, and secondly, his complete ignoring of the fact that the Celts were merely following the rule for computing Easter which had been established by the Eastern Church. De Vinne makes an interesting point concerning Rome's claim to jurisdiction over the Celtic Church when he points out that,

> "The claim of that church (the Roman Catholic Church) to universal jurisdiction was not made till the seventh century, or one hundred and fifty years after the commencement of the Irish Church.".[44]

According to this, the Roman Church is standing on a shaky foundation, even from the viewpoint of the time element when it claims the Celts as its own.

B. The Celts Distinct from Rome

Before one can enter upon a discussion of the position of the Celtic Church as distinct from Rome in doctrine and practice, one must realize that the position of any church must be determined according to the teaching of its leading theologians. This holds good also in the case of the Celts, and so it is that if one can point to a definite teaching of St. Patrick, or St. Columba, or any other outstanding Celtic churchman, one may refer that teaching to the entire Celtic Church. This does not mean that what was taught by St. Patrick became part of any official Traditions of the Celtic Church, for they had none. However, it means simply, that St. Patrick, as

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44. De Vinne, op., cit., p. 61.

founder and leader of the Celtic Church, was looked to by others for guidance in his day, as were Columba and other leaders in their day.

Various Views re Distinctness

Because of the controversial nature of this subject, wide varieties of opinion running from the extremely anti-Roman view, to the equally extreme and prejudiced Roman position are encountered. Between these two one might expect to find historical accuracy, but even this is not the case, for between the two, one usually finds a mediating viewpoint, aimed at pleasing both parties, but succeeding in pleasing neither. A common weakness of historians working in this field seems to be that of noticing the external differences between the two churches and making that the basis of their conclusions. This seems to have been done by Schaff when he states,

> "There is not the least evidence that the Keltic (sic) Church had a higher conception of Christian freedom, or any positive distinctive principle of Protestantism, such as absolute supremacy of the Bible in oppostion to tradition, or justification by faith without works, or the universal priesthood of all believers.".[45]

Again Schaff says,

> "It has been asserted, that the Kelts or Culdees were opposed to auricular confession, the worship of saints and images, purgatory, transubstantiation, the seven sacraments, and that for this reason they were the forerunners of Protestantism. But this inference is not warranted. Ignorance is one thing, and rejection of an error from superior knowledge is quite another thing. The difference is one of form rather than one

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45. Schaff, op., cit., p. 73.

> of spirit. Owing to its distance and isolation from the Continent, the Keltic Church, while superior to those in Gaul and Italy - at least during the sixth and seventh centuries - in missionary zeal and success, was left behind them in other things, and adhered to a previous stage of development in truth and error.".46

This is the position held by one who is himself not a Romanist historian, but who nevertheless feels that the difference between the Church of the Celts and that of the Romans was 'merely one of form, rather than one of spirit'. A weighing of the evidence is now in order. The question to be answered is this: what was the doctrinal position and practice of the Celtic Church?

Greek Origin? As has been previously indicated, De Vinne holds that the roots of Celtic Christianity are to be found in the Greek Church. To support his position, he states,

> "Her observance of Easter, the reception of the Three Chapters, the frontal in opposition to the coronal tonsure, her form of marriage, wailing at funerals, smiting the breast in prayer, quotations from the Greek, rather than from the Latin Scriptures, and many other usages".47

He holds then, that St. Patrick's parents were members of a missionary group of the Greek Church which had come to Gaul. Despite the fact that later research maintains that St. Patrick was not born in Gaul (cf.mss.,p.9), the conclusions drawn by De Vinne need not necessarily be nullified, for St. Patrick's parents might well have been members of an Eastern Church missionary endeavor to Gaul, and then have gone to

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46. Ibid.
47. De Vinne, op. cit., p. 50.

Britain at a later date.

During the period of his captivity, St. Patrick gave evidence, through his own testimony which he has left for all to read in his early Confession, that he was a devout and sincere Christian.[48] There is no evidence that he ever changed from this position during his later life. It is well to keep this background in mind as one considers the teaching of St. Patrick.

Object of Patrick's Faith

The writings left by St. Patrick are not extensive enough to provide a complete picture of his faith, but from them this much is certain. Patrick did not rely on his own merits for his salvation, for he states in his Confession, "I was like a stone, cast into the deep mire: and He who is mighty came, and in His mercy sustained me.".[49] Ellis, who, although at times allowing his enthusiasm for the Celts to sway his historical judgment, nevertheless is a studious historian, has the following to say concerning Patrick's Christianity,

> "St. Patrick was no Papist. Christ Jesus was all his salvation and all his desire. He did not look

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48. St. Patrick, Confession, Ware's translation, para. 6, p. 212, reprinted in De Vinne, op cit., Appendix. "I was frequent in prayers. The love and fear of God more and more inflamed my heart. My faith and spirit were augmented, so that I said a hundred prayers a day, and almost as many by night. I rose before day to my prayers, in the snow, and in the frost, and in the rain, and I received no damage. Nor was I affected with slothfulness, for the spirit of the Lord was warm within me."

49. "ego eram velut lapis qui jacet in luto profundo: et venit qui potens est, et in sua misericordia sustulit me", Patrick's Confession, para. V., p. 211.

> to, or trust in the Virgin Mary or saints, or angels, but in Jesus, his Lord and Savior. This is evident from his prayer which he wrote on his way to Fara, supplicating protection and support from on high for the great duties of preaching which there awaited him.".[50]

One may hold this to be negative evidence, showing merely in what Patrick did not believe, nevertheless, it does go to point to some errors of the Roman Church to which Patrick did not become subject. What is more, St. Patrick's own words show that which he considered the source of his teaching and work, for he states, when speaking of the work which he was doing among the heathen, "also of my work which I learned of Christ".[51] But the greatest direct evidence of Patrick's trust in Christ for his salvation is to be found in the fact that in his Confession, he quotes both Matth. 28, 19 and 20, and Mark 16, 15 and 16. One cannot help but see that these two passages teach salvation by faith, and one notes that they are quoted by him as the basis of his work among the heathen.[52]

Source of Patrick's Faith

Having considered the center of Patrick's faith, it now follows logically that the next question to be considered is: wherein lay the source of Patrick's beliefs? It is interesting to again turn to Schaff and view what he has to say. Schaff maintains the position mentioned

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50. Ellis, op. cit., p. 13.
51. "et de meo quoque opere quod a Christo didiceram", Patrick, op. cit., para. XII., p. 217.
52. Patrick, op. cit., para. XVII., p. 221. These passages are the Great Commission of our Lord. Especially is the second to the point here, 'he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, he that believeth not shall be condemned.'.

earlier; namely, that the Celtic Church differed from the Roman only in minor matters. However, Schaff then continues and admits that Patrick's sole source of authority in matters of faith is the Scriptures, including the Apocrypha. He admits, too, that Patrick never appealed to the Pope, nor to Rome, nor to tradition, in matters of faith.[53] Surely this is more than a mere minor matter of polity or practice! This is an absolutely basic difference! This is one of the most important differences between modern Protestantism and the Roman Catholic Church of today, and failure to see it as such can only be caused by a lack of understanding of the difference between the Roman Church and the Protestant church of the Reformation.

But others have spoken concerning the basis of Patrick's Christianity. The venerable Bede, who was a supporter of Rome in contrast to the Irish, spoke in what he thought a derogatory manner concerning the Irish Church by saying, "They only practised such works of piety and charity as they could learn from the prophetical, evangelical, and apostolical writings.".[54] Is not this valuable evidence that the

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53. "The Christianity of St. Patrick was substantially that of Gaul and old Britain, i.e., Catholic, orthodox, monastic, ascetic, but independent of the Pope and differing from Rome in the age of Gregory I in minor matters of polity and ritual. In his Confession, he never mentions Rome or the Pope; he never appeals to tradition, and seems to recognize Scriptures (including the Apocrypha) as the only authority in matters of faith. He quotes from the canonical Scriptures twenty-five times; three times from the Apocrypha.". - Schaff, op. cit., p. 47.

54. Bede, op. cit., III., lib., cap. 4., p. 132.

Celts relied solely on the Scriptures for their doctrine?

De Vinne draws the only logical conclusion which one can make from the evidence which can be gathered concerning the source of Patrick's faith when he says,

> "The Irish Church...derived its doctrines solely from the Holy Scriptures, while the Church of Rome drew hers from the Holy Scriptures and from tradition jointly, and both of these only as they were interpreted by the bishops or the ecclesiastical councils of that Church.".[55]

De Vinne further maintains that Patrick followed the obvious meaning of Scripture as his rule and guide, and that this practice was maintained by his followers for several centuries.[56]

When reading through Patrick's Confession one cannot help but feel the love which P atrick had toward his God, and the evident joy which he found in citing passages from the Word of God. In his Confession he cites twenty-five quotations from the Holy Scriptures, and three from the Apocrypha - "a practice that was almost wholly discontinued when the Irish Church became Romanized".[57] As further proof of the love which St. Patrick had for the Word of God, Jocelin, an early Roman Catholic writer, states concerning St. Patrick, "and for three continual days and nights he read and explained to them (the people) in their order, the four holy Books of the Evangelists.".[58] But Patrick was not the only Celtic churchman to hold to Scrip-

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55. De Vinne, op. cit., p. 68.
56. Ibid., p. 65.
57. Ibid., p. 47.
58. Jocelin, Life and Acts of St. Patrick, p. 132

tures as the only source of faith; Columba also held this position.

Columba's Faith Based on Scriptures

In fact, Columba stated his position in so many words when he said that a person was, "not to receive as religious truth anything not sustained by proofs drawn from the Holy Scriptures, 'prolatis sacrae Scripturae testimoniis'".[59] Lest anyone feel that this position was held only by two of the leaders of Celtic Christianity, although the two most important leaders,[60] Adamnan, who is widely recognized as an authority in this field, holds that, "All the first Irish Christians were remarkable for the veneration of the Scriptures.".[61] So much, then, for the source and the foundation on which rested Celtic Christianity. Now a matter comes under consideration, which, although in a manner not as fundamental as those just discussed, nevertheless is of importance when one is viewing Celtic Christianity as distinct from Rome.

Partrick's Authority

Despite all the historical proof to the contrary, and despite admissions to the contrary even by Roman Catholic historians,[62] the old fable still exists, and is believed by many, that St. Patrick was commissioned by Pope Cel-

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59. Adamnan, Life of Columba, quoted in De Vinne, op. cit., p.71.
60. Cf. mss., p. 35, concerning the teaching of church leaders as being the faith of the people even in the absence of an hierarchical system.
61. Adamnan, op. cit., as found in De Vinne, op. cit., p. 69.
62. Cf. citation from Lanigan found on p. 11.

estine to be the Bishop of the Irish, and that therefore, the Celtic Church is merely a branch of the Church of Rome. Patrick himself does not mention anything about having received his commission to teach the heathen Irish from any Pope; rather, he gives credit to God only for having directed him to this work. In his Confession Patrick states, "But God directing me, I consented to no other way, nor did I yield to others, nor even to what was pleasing to myself.".[63] Then he continues and speaks of this, that God overcame his own self-will, and thus he came to preach the Gospel to the heathen of Ireland. Accordingly, then, in the matter of his call to preach, Patrick definitely held that his call was from God and not from any Pope; but there is still another instance, recorded by Patrick, in which he refers to his authority as a minister of the Gospel as being directly from God and not resting on the foundation of Popes or Councils. This instance is his excommunication of Coroticus, a British chieftain, who had made a raid into Ireland and carried off a number of Patrick's converts as slaves. In order to bring Coroticus to repentance and to cause him to return the slaves to their homes, Patrick finally is forced to excommunicate him. Before pronouncing the excommunication, Patrick gives his authority to do so in the following words, "I, Patrick, an unlearned man, to wit, a bishop constituted in Ireland", continuing he

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63. "Sed gubernante Deo, nullo modo consensi, neque acquievi illis, non mea gratia" - Patrick, Confession, para. XV., p. 219.

states, "What I am, I have received from God",[64] and then, solely on the basis of the authority just cited, he proceeds to excommunicate Coroticus in the full sense of the term; this excommunication to remain in effect until Coroticus should return the captives to their homes.

Differences in 'Minor Matters' In addition to the differences between the Celtic Church and the Roman Church previously cited in connection with the Council of Whitby,[65] there are some other variances in 'minor matters' which are pointed to by Ellis. Ellis states, "Concerning prayers for the dead, St. Patrick writes: 'Give not that which is holy unto dogs; for he who in his lifetime will not deserve to receive the sacrifice, how can it help him after his death'".[66] About Patrick's views on the celibacy of the clergy, Ellis has the following to say,

> "St. Patrick did not believe that the clergymen should necessarily be unmarried, as the Church of Rome teaches. One of his canons enacted a penalty against the wife of any clergyman who should venture out of doors without having her head veiled.".[67]

An interesting notation is made by De Vinne when he points out that "St. Patrick and the early Irish never applied even the word 'Saint' as a prefix to the Apostles, or even to the four

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64. Patrick, Epis. ad Coroticus, in Patrologia, vol. LIII., p. 814, "Patricius peccator, indoctus scilicet, Hiberione constitutum episcopum me esse fateor. Certissime reor, a Deo accepi id quod sum.".
65. Cf. Discussion of Council of Whitby, mss., p. 23.
66. Ellis, op. cit., p. 14.
67. Ibid. Although it is realized that celibacy was not as absolute doctrine of the Roman Church at that time, the question was still being raised by Rome throughout Christendom.

Evangelists".[68] But these citations are all about St. Patrick and the early Irish Church. What about a later period? One might point to Columbanus as an example of the later period. Ellis presents an interesting view of Columbanus by stating, "So far was he from believing the infallibility of the Popes, that he held that Pope Vigilius died a heretic".[69] At least one can say that Columbanus felt some antagonism toward Rome.

Lest anyone gain the impression from the material presented, that the only difference between the Church of Patrick and Luther's Church of the Reformation is one of time, let it here be stated that this is not the case. As far as can be ascertained by facts, Patrick had a long way to go before he could have arrived at anything near Luther's clear comprehension of the truth taught in Scripture; but the point affirmed is, that in distinction to Rome, Patrick was on the right way! He was working on the only basis which could lead to the proper goal; viz., faith in Christ, based solely on the revelation of Scripture. In addition, one may say without fear of contradiction, that Patrick's Church presented the purest form of Christianity found in the world at that time. In answer to the question, was St. Patrick's Church a branch of the Roman Church, De Vinne has the final say when he states,

> "But St. Patrick was no Romanist. His purer form of Christianity did not originate in Rome: it was

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68. De Vinne, op. cit., p. 47.
69. Cf. mss., p. 28; Ellis, op. cit., p. 22.

established in Ireland before Romanism had been matured. During his life and times we find nothing of the peculiarities of Popery in Ireland. There is not even an allusion to them.".[70]

That this condition of distinctness from Rome was maintained for centuries afterwards is proven by the very efforts made by Rome during later times to force the Celts into the Roman Church.[71]

C. The Organization of the Celtic Church

The organization of the Celtic Church is a subject which could well have been treated in the previous section, for, as will be seen, in this respect also the Celts differed from the Roman Church; but because of the amount of material on this subject, it may be better to treat it separately. Here, too, care must be taken and sources must be carefully weighed. Two particular dangers are present. Either there is a lack of understanding of the ecclesiastical terminology used by the Celts, so that historical writers accept the ancient ecclesiastical titles with their modern connotations, or else there is a deliberate attempt made by tendential writers to establish a hierarchy among the Celts, so that some writers even, "laboured to trace the line of apostolic succession from St. Patrick down to their own time".[72] Another danger to be avoided is that of confusing the Irish Church with the English Church, for in the

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70. De Vinne, op. cit., p. 47
71. Cf. Discussion of Rome's efforts to bring the Celts into conformity, pp. 24, 25, 30, 31.
72. Godkin, James, Religious History of Ireland, p. 45.

English Church the hierarchical system was maintained, whereas in the Celtic Church this was not the case. Godkin states it this way, "The parish, we know, is the basis of the ecclesiastical system in England and Ireland. The old Irish Church was built without this foundation-stone of Episcopacy".[73]

However, the Irish did use the term bishop. This is universally acknowledged. As early as the eighth century there is an historical work, The Book of Armagh, which points to the fact that Patrick ordained three hundred and fifty bishops.[74] But despite this early use of the term, there is also early evidence that bishop among the Celts was not understood in an hierarchical sense, for Bede, the eighth century historian says, "In all Britain there was not a bishop that was canonically ordained except Wine".[75] Godkin states it thus,

> "The word bishop, in the sense in which it is used by Churchmen, and generally understood, means a prelate who rules over a number of parochial clergy, be the same more or less. There was nothing of the kind known in Ireland till it was imported by the Normans and imposed by the Pope".[76]

As has been pointed out previously in this paper, the Irish used the term bishop in the sense in which St. Paul used the term; namely, a pastor, a minister, an overseer over the flock, and not in the sense in which the Roman Church uses the term. The very fact that St. Patrick appointed so many - three hundred

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73. Ibid. p. 40
74. Book of Armagh, vol. IV, p. 325, found in Ussher's Primord, p. 913, cited by De Vinne, op. cit., p. 30.
75. "Non enim erat tunc nullus, excepto Wino, in tota Britannia canonice ordinatus episcopus"-Bede, op. cit., Lib. III, cap. 28, p. 188.
76. Godkin, op. cit., p. 40.

and fifty - bishops, would indicate that the office did not entail the possession of See and lower clergy subservient to the bishops; after all, one cannot imagine that there were more than three hundred and fifty clergymen in Ireland at Patrick's time. And that Patrick did not appoint them bishops in the sense that through them is maintained the apostolic succession, has been shown in the discussion concerning Patrick's authority.[77] One would do well to adopt Godkin's explanation of especially the later Irish use of the word bishop, "Every man of eminence for piety or learning was advanced to the order of a bishop as a sort of degree or mark of distinction".[78] It was through the monastery, and not through the cathedral, that the Irish Church was governed. So far as the term archbishop is concerned, it is a term and an office which was entirely foreign to the Irish. Ussher states that previous to A.D. 1152, "neither the name nor the office of archbishop had ever existed in Ireland".[79]

If one would understand the government of the Celtic Church, one must bear in mind that the Celts were a mission-minded church. They sought the type of organization which would best further their mission endeavors, and therefore quite naturally resolved themselves into a monastery-centered Church, for it was the monastery which trained future missionaries. It would be an erroneous conception to imagine that all these monasteries were in any way unified under one head. Their's was a democratic system of monasteries, each being independent of the other, the

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77. Cf. mss., 42, 43.
78. Godkin, op. cit., p. 41
79. Ussher, Works, vol. IV, p. 329, found in De Vinne, op. cit., p. 78.

only unifying factors being their common origin, their mission-mindedness, their similar teachings, and their common opposition to Rome.

Concerning the independence of the individual bishop during the fourth century, Mosheim has the following to say, "Each individual bishop according to his own views, and as the circumstances of times, places, and persons suggested, prescribed to his own flock, such a form of public worship as he judged best".[80] The conclusion arrived at by De Vinne concerning the election of bishops, would certainly seem to indicate anything but a hierarchical organization. He states, "The Irish bishops appear to have been elected by the people, or by the rest of the clergy, with the advice and approbation of the Irish kings and chiefs".[81]

However, this much of organization there was: at the head of each monastery there was an abbot (not necessarily a bishop).[82] The abbot of the monastery usually established the rules by which the individual monks should live. Then too, there was the organization of missionary parties. The Celts followed the example set by the Savior in this, that whenever a missionary went out to begin work in a territory, he took with him twelve followers who may be considered as being subservient, in a fashion, to the leader of the expedition. Nevertheless, one must stress the fact of the independence of the various churches from each

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80. Mosheim, Ecclesiastical History, vol. 1, Book II, Chap. IV, p. 278.
81. De Vinne, op. cit., p. 83
82. "The abbot who presided (at Iona) was always to be a presbyter"-De Vinne; op. cit., p. 121.

other of which Godkin speaks when he says, "The monastic institutions, or clan churches, were mutually independent and perfectly free from external authority, although they made repeated attempts to establish common rules of discipline".[83] This mutual independence is of more importance than may at first glance seem to be the case, for it seems that one may well say that herein lies one of the important contributing causes for the comparative purity of the Celtic Church. Under this system there exists the least possibility of any false doctrine or incorrect practice being forced upon the Church from above. Where there is no central authority, there can be no central usurpation of power or dictatorial direction of the way which the members of the Church shall take. With the Celts, as with all democratically organized bodies, each bishop (pastor), together with those of his church who are capable of judging in such matters, had the right and privilege of weighing any new idea which might be forthcoming, and of determining for themselves whether they should accept or reject that new idea.[84] This, as has been shown, was done by many Celtic churchmen concerning the Easter question and other points of difference with Rome; many of them accepted Rome's views, but there still remained the pure element of the Celtic Church, the believers who decided in opposition to Rome, and there was no central authority to force them into submission. It would be interesting to conjecture about what might have

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83. Godkin, op. cit., p. 46
84. Cf. quotation from Mosheim, footnote 80.

been the results for Christendom had Rome not been successful in forcing the Celts into submission.

D. The Monastic System of the Celts.

Because of the fact that the monasteries played such an important role in the Celtic Church since they constituted all that existed of ecclesiastical organization, it is fitting that they receive special consideration. The purpose here will be to describe, to a certain extent, life as it was lived in a Celtic monastery.

Due to the tremendous number of monasteries which grew up within the Celtic Church, and the limited scope of this treatment of the Celtic Church, it will not be possible to enter into a discussion of, or even mention nearly all of them. In fact, those treated will be limited to monasteries found in the British Isles, and not even all of these are listed. However, since the purpose here is not to compile a list of monasteries, but rather to describe Celtic monastic life, the outstanding ones here mentioned can well serve as models for a discussion of Celtic monastic life.

The cradle of Celtic Christianity seems to be as good a starting place as any for a consideration of Celtic monasteries.[85] The monastery of Armagh, which was established ca. 458 by

85. Much of the material concerning the brief summaries of these Irish monasteries is based on an account by De Vinne, op. cit., p. 101.

St. Patrick, was the first monastery in Ireland. De Vinne says concerning this monastery that, "during the Dark Ages it was the most celebrated seat of learning in Western Europe, and taught and accommodated at one time, seven thousand students".[86] Clonard Abbey, founded about 500 by St. Finnian through the efforts of the Monarch Dermidh, was situated on the heights of the river Boyne. Its greatest claim to fame lay in the eloquence of its founder. People came from far and near to hear him preach. Another important Celtic monastery in Ireland was that of Clomacnois. This monastery was situated on an island in the river Shannon which had formerly been a retreat of Druidic priests. However, the island was converted to an establishment for Christian clergy about 528 by Kiaran and his associates, and served for many years especially as a school for the sons of the notables. The monastery at Banchor is also prominent in the history of the Celtic Church, because it was from here that both St. Gallus and Columbanus set out on their continental missionary undertakings. Founded about the year 550, Banchor was noted for many years as a training school for missionaries and scholars. Another monastery which was prominent because of its founder was the monastery of Derry. This monastery was founded by St. Columba, ca. 550, before he set out for the Isle of Iona. The final one of the well known Irish monasteries which will here be mentioned, is the monastery of Glendolough, founded about 618. A rather striking feature of this monastery

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86. Ibid.

was that it had seven churches merely to accommodate its students. However, the reason for its having become better known, is its connection with the legend of Cathleen and St. Kiven which has long been a favourite with poets.

The Celtic monasteries served a three-fold purpose for they were the schools (including the seminaries), the missionary centers, and above all, because of the scarcity of churches, they served also as the church for many of the territories surrounding them. Unfortunately for truth's sake, but maybe it is because of the lofty purpose which they served, when one thinks of these monasteries, one thinks of noble structures of Gothic design surrounded by high stone walls. Schaff presents an ideal-shattering, but nevertheless accurate picture of a Celtic monastery in the following description:

> "By a primitive Keltic (sic) monastery we must not understand an elaborate stone structure, but a rude village of wooden huts or bothies (botha) on a river, with a church (ecclais), a common eating hall, a mill, a hospice, the whole surrounded by a wall of earth or stone.".[87]

Hunt gives a similar description of the monastery at Iona; he writes,

> "It was enclosed by a rampart of earth, or earth and stone; the church and refectory, and other buildings for common use were, in Columba's time, constructed of wood, and each monk had his own cell, either a wattle hut, or a circular building of rough stones so set as to give a beehive or domical shape. These cells stood in a little court. Columba, himself, had a cell made of planks on the highest part of the ground, and there he spent his time when at the monastery for the most part in writing".[88]

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87. Schaff, op. cit., p. 56.
88. Hunt, op. cit., p. 9.

So much then for the physical side of the monasteries, and now, how about the inhabitants of the monasteries?

The family of the monastery was made up of monks, presided over by an abbot. The only distinction among the monks, even though 'bishops' were present among them, was one of seniority. The younger monks did more of the manual labor about the monastery, while the older monks devoted practically all their time to teaching, studying or copying. Columba's monastery at Iona again provides the basis as Hunt describes the monastic government.

> "It was ruled by a priest-abbot," (a presbyter), "to whom implicit obedience was paid, and who was assisted in matters of government by a council of senior monks. The abbacy generally remained in the family of the founder-abbot; nine of the first eleven successors of Columba at Iona were members of his house, and the Columbite abbot was reverenced as the co-arb, or heir of the founder".[89]

The abbot of the monastery usually governed his establishment on the basis of a rule, drawn up either by the founder of the monastery, or by the abbot then in control, or simply adopted by the members of the monastic community. However, this does not seem to have been the case at Iona, for Hunt records that, "Life in Iona was ordered in accordance with general monastic discipline, not by any distinct rule".[90] But the rules which did exist for various monasteries, served this same purpose; they specified very exactly the life which the monks were to

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89. Ibid.
90. Ibid.

live. Joyce points out that a rule was,"a set of regulations as to devotions, food, time for retiring and rising, occupations, and so forth, which were strictly followed in daily life".[91]

In the lives of the monks, all property was common, and as Joyce reports, "the great anxiety of the communities was to support themselves by the work of their hands, so as to depend as little as possible on the charity of others".[92] To this end, the monks who had completed their elementary training, but were still comparatively young, spent a great amount of time in raising food for the monastery. They raised grain on monastery lands, cared for cattle, did their own baking and cooking in a common kitchen, milled their own flour, made wine and brewed beer. Fitzpatrick, writing about the monastery at Luxeuil on the Continent says, "the monks fasted a great deal, and often their fasting was involuntary, for there were occasions when the food was not sufficient to go around".[93] However, fasting seems to have been a common practice, being a part of the ascetic lives which they led.

Concerning the ascetic spirit in which the monks of Iona lived, Hunt has the following to say,

> "Chastity and humility were cultivated with a zeal equal to that of the Fathers of the Egyptian deserts. Before strangers the monks spoke little, though they

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91. Joyce, op. cit., p. 326.
92. Ibid.
93. Fitzpatrick, Benedict, Ireland and the Foundations of Europe, p. 52.

> talked freely amongst themselves; they held almsgiving of much account; their hospitality was ungrudging".[94]

However, this note of respect for the Celts is sounded not only by those who are favorably inclined towards them, but also the venerable Bede speaks along the same lines. He wrote, "he (Columba) left successors renowned for their continency, their love of God, and observance of monastic rules...".[95] Just one more citation on this point before continuing into the next aspect of Celtic monastic life; an Italian of Susa, writing in the Apennines in the seventh century, describes the state of monastic life at Iona as follows,

> "Such piety and love dwelt in them all, that for them there was only one will and one renunciation. Modesty and moderation, meekness and mildness adorned them all in equal measure. The evils of sloth and dissension were banished. Pride and haughtiness were expiated by severe punishments. Scorn and envy were driven out by faithful diligence. So great was the might of their patience, love and mildness, that no one could doubt that the God of mercy dwelt among them...".[96]

Neither can anyone doubt the earnestness of spirit which motivated the Celtic monks in their ascetism. So great was their devotion to living this type of Christian life that one might expect them to have been intolerant of anyone outside their midst who did not conform to their rules of living. And yet, this was not the case! De Vinne, when remarking about the great amount of asceticism to which Columba himself was given, states,

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94. Hunt, op. cit., p. 10.
95. Bede, Hist. Eccl., III., 4, p. 131.
96. Found in Fitzpatrick, op. cit., pp. 48-49.

> "Although for some years he slept upon a bed of stone, and was, no doubt, tinctured with the asceticism that was then sweeping over Western Christendom, there was nothing in him that was morose or morbid; he was never censorious of those who did not conform to his rules of living".[97]

Here again is an evidence of a difference in spirit from that of Rome. What a difference there might have been in the history of the Church had Rome possessed more of this toleration which is evident in Celtic Christianity! Again it is possible that one might trace the difference back to the differing philosophies and organizations of the two churches. Rome was hierarchical, dictatorial, and where is there a dictator who can afford to be tolerant of other powers? On the other hand, the Celtic Church was under no central authority, its churches were 'mutually independent', and under this organization it is imperative that one respect the rights of ~~the~~ another.

However, within the individual monastery there was central authority. But this was no tendency toward hierarchy, it was simply this, that if a group of people wish to live together in an institution, they must have rules and regulations; these regulations were administered by the abbot of the monastery.

In Protestant circles, the word 'monastery' leaves a rather unpleasant taste, mainly, no doubt, because of the depths to which life in Roman monasteries sank during the Dark Ages. One need not refer particularly to immoralities, but just to

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97. De Vinne, op. cit., p. 119.

general slothfulness on the part of the monks who entered the monasteries, merely to have an assured source of support for the rest of their lives, with the least possible expenditure of effort on their part. This charge of slothfulness, however, cannot be applied to the Celtic monasteries, for they were veritable beehives of activity. Naturally, as one may expect, devotion and prayer held the first place of importance in the monasteries. Hunt, in his description of Iona, states, "Every day, psalms were sung at the canonical hours, the recitation of the psalter, which they learnt by heart, being a leading feature of their devotions".[98] Naturally, then, there was prayer in connection with meals; also, much time was spent in reading of the Holy Scriptures and other religious works.[99]

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98. Hunt, op. cit., p. 10

99. There is an interesting question in connection with the devotion of the monks of the Celtic Church which still seems to be open to conclusion. It centers around this: Did the Celtic monks celebrate the sacrifice of the mass in the Roman sense of the mass? Ellis asks this question and answers it in the following way, "But did not St. Patrick celebrate the sacrifice of the mass? Certainly not; he evidently trusted in, and taught the people to rely upon the once offered sacrifice of Christ on Calvary. This is easy of proof. It is well known that a Papish priest can only offer his so-called sacrifice of the mass on a stone altar... as long as the Irish Church continues independent of Rome, wooden altars alone were used" - Ellis, op. cit., p. 13. But the Roman refutation to this argument is made by Lanigan and is found in Joyce, op. cit., pp. 371-372, and runs along the following lines: "Granted that the Romans used stone altars only, and that the Celts used wooden altars; but this arose through the fact that the Celts were a missionary group and couldn't carry stone altars with them, whereas they could find wood to make an altar practically anywhere. So it was that the Celts carried with them stone altar-flags, "duly consecrated" which they placed under the communion vessels on the wooden altars. As proof, Joyce offers a sketch of a small, stone, circular disk, many of which have been found in Ireland. As has been stated, the question cannot be settled here, but lest one think Lanigan's word is the final on the

Their's was a busy life. When they were not in devotion, or reading Scriptures, then they were occupied either with providing for their daily need, or else in teaching or studying. As Ellis well puts it, "The study of the Bible, as well as the teaching and preaching of the truths as it is in Jesus, both within and without the walls, were the high and holy purpose for which they (the monasteries) were established".[100] But there is still another phase of monastic activity of this period of which there is a reminder by Montalembert, when he writes, "in Ireland, more than anywhere else, each monastery was a school, and each school a workshop of transcription of new copies of Holy Scriptures and the apostolic fathers, which were dispersed throughout Europe".[101] Through this latter occupation, the copying of books, an occupation to which older monks gave themselves almost exclusively, the Celts did much to aid in the preservation of learning, especially spiritual learning, throughout Europe. However, more of this phase of their work will be mentioned under Celtic Education and Culture. Concerning the ability of the Celtic monks in Scriptural study, Schaff states, "Some Irish clergymen could read the Greek New Testament at a time when Pope

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subject, one might ask, Why then did not the Celts use stone altars once they had become established in a locality; as, for ex., in their monastery churches? Then, too, this much is certain; whether the Celts observed the sacrifice of the mass or not, they must have laid greater stress on preaching, for it was by preaching of the Word of God and not by means of any performance of ritual that they converted so many heathen.

100. Ellis, op. cit., p. 16.

101. Montalembert, Monks of the West, as found in De Vinne, op. cit., pp. 100 & 101.

Gregory I was ignorant of Greek".[102]

There are many more details concerning the Celtic monasteries, and the lives which were led within the walls of these monasteries which might well be mentioned, but enough has been said to give the reader an over-all view of Celtic monastic life, and to show that in the Celtic monastic system, although there was some asceticism present, the spirit was different from the spirit of Rome at that time; especially were the conditions much different from those which the outsider commonly associates with a Roman monastery.

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102. Schaff, op. cit., p. 57.

E. Celtic Education and Culture

With this chapter, as with the previous one, it is not so much a matter of subject matter causing the division, as it is the amount of material which makes it preferable that a division be made. After all, it is impossible to speak of Celtic education and culture without recognizing these as a division of the Celtic monastic system, but they are separate phases of monastic life, and as such, deserve individual treatment.

Craik, in his Pictorial History of England, states that,

> "the chief seat of learning in Europe was Ireland and the most distinguished scholars in other countries were either Irishmen, or those who had received their education in Irish schools".[103]

In his statement, Craik has reference to the time between the eighth and tenth centuries. But long before the tenth century, the roots of the Celtic educational system took a lease on life in the soil of Ireland. Already in the sixth century the three great schools of Banchor in Down, Clonard in Meath, and Clonmacnois on the Shannon began their work of education.[104] Another great school of this early period was Lismore, founded in 603 by St. Carthagh. Testimony to their greatness has been given by more than one scholar, or as Godkin puts it, "Guizot, Hallam, Muratori, Brucker, and Mosheim have all spoken of these institutions as most important agencies in advancing civilization and revelation".[105] Further attestation to the greatness

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103. Craik, Pictorial History of Eng., I:278, found in De Vinne, op. cit., p. 100.
104. Cf. pp. 41-42.
105. Godkin, op. cit., p. 11.

of the reputation which the Irish institutions of learning and their products attained throughout the world is given by Godkin who states that,

> "Camden says, 'No men came up to the Irish monks in Ireland for sanctity and learning; and they sent forth swarms of holy men all over Europe; to whom the monasteries of Luxueil in Burgundy, Pavia in Italy, Wurtburgh in Franconia, St. Gall in Switzerland, etc., etc., owe their origin'".[106]

Another indication of the esteem in which the Celtic schools were held was this that many princes from the Continent travelled to Ireland in order to receive their education. Indeed, the Celtic schools must have been widely known and highly regarded. Alfred, King of Northumberland, was one of the members of royalty who attended an Irish Celtic institution of learning.

Among all the Celtic schools, the University of Armagh seems to have been the chief. Joyce states,

> "it is worthy of remark that, as far as theology and sacred learning in general were concerned, the University of Armagh seems to have been regarded as the head of all the other schools and colleges".[107]

Incidentally, here one has the keynote to the first subject on the curricula of all the universities, that is, the study of the Holy Scriptures. Other subjects also were taught, but one must always bear in mind that the first purpose of Celtic universities was to instruct men to become missionaries in the Church, and it was toward this goal that their educational pro-

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106. Godkin, op. cit., p. 9.
107. Joyce, op. cit., p. 412.

gram was directed.

Concerning the number of Celtic schools, and the influence which these schools attained, Fitzpatrick has the following note,

> "While the few schools in England and on the Continent rose and fell almost in a night; while outside of Ireland there was hardly a school that lasted fifty years, the great Irish seminaries - Armagh, Clonard, Clonmacnois, Banchor and others - poured out missionaries and preceptors on Europe for five, six, and seven hundred years".108

This is indeed a tribute to the Celts as educators. Ellis draws an interesting picture of the island of Ireland at this time when he states,

> "so numerous were the schools, colleges, and other seminaries of learning that the country was a kind of university in itself, to which the students flocked in great numbers from all parts, in order to enjoy the superior instruction, especially in theology, which Ireland afforded".109

Ellis holds that there were two main contributing causes for the extreme popularity of the Celtic institutions of learning. The first of these was the superior type of discipline which was maintained in these schools, and the second was the outstanding reputation of the Celtic scholars.[110] Lest one think that these writers may have been too enthusiastic in their estimate of the extent of learning among the Irish, and the number of universities which they had, there is a list of thirty universities given in the note[111] which does not even include the well-known lay or professional schools. Nor were these

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108. Fitzpatrick, op., cit., Preface xi, xii.
109. Ellis, op. cit., p. 19.
110. Ibid.
111. "The principal Irish schools were: Armagh, Kildare, Noendrum, Louth, Emly, St. Ibar, Cluaninfois, all founded in

small schools with only a few students. As an example of the number of students which attended one of these schools, take the student body of the University of Armagh. Granted that it was practically the outstanding university of the times, nevertheless, its student body was such as to be the envy of many of our modern universities today, for, according to De Vinne and other sources, the University of Armagh, "taught and accommodated at one time, seven thousand students".[112] But the influence of Irish learning was not confined to the British Isles, for Fitzpatrick points out that,

> "from the work of Columbanus, and that same company, and the immediate generation of spiritual sons that acknowledged them as fathers, sprang more than a hundred monasteries and seminaries in France, Germany, and Italy".[113]

What has been said thus far concerning the institutions of learning of the Irish, referred to these schools more specifically as schools of theology. While, as has been stated, the teaching of theology was their main purpose, they did not neglect the other branches of learning. In fact, when first founded, these schools were more along the lines of parish schools[114] with a general educational purpose in mind in order

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the fifth century; St. Enda, Banchor, Clonenagh, Glendalough, Tuam, founded in the sixth century; and Lismore, Cork, Ross, Inisfallen, Mungret, Iniscaltra, Birr, Roscrea, Inisboffin, Mayo of the Saxons founded in the seventh century - all functioning simultaneously in the centuries that followed.... Some of these schools had as many as three thousand students..." Fitzpatrick, op. cit., p. 28.

112. De Vinne, op. cit., p. 101.

113. Fitzpatrick, op. cit., p. 16.

114. These schools "were at first not modelled abong the lines of monastic education, but were more on the nature of parish schools, where students, young and old, married, or single, lay or clerical were made welcome" - Kretzman, op. cit., p. 638.

to make it possible for people to become more familiar with Scriptures. Concerning the subjects taught in these universities, Joyce has the following to say,

> "In these schools, secular as well as ecclesiastical learning was carefully attended to: for besides divinity, the study of the Scriptures and classics, for those intended for the church, the students were instructed...in general literature and science".[115]

As an example of the learning attained outside the field of theology, consider some accomplishments of Celtic scholars,

> "Cummian, who read over the Greek, Hebrew, and other foreign writings in reference to the cycles; Dungall, who was consulted by Charlemagne of France in regard to eclipses; Fargil, or Virgilius, who asserted the sphericity of the earth six hundred years before Copernicus or Galileo were born;"[116]

and there were many others, all of whom had been educated in Ireland. But, the study of Greek, Hebrew, Latin, other foreign languages, and astronomy, by no means exhaust the extra-theological activities in the field of cultural attainments on the part of the Celts. Poetry and music also had a prominent position in Celtic culture. Their poetic structure was not as ours today, but those who have been able to master the Celtic language, in which much of it was written, give assurance of the beauty of quality,nevertheless. Naturally, too, much of their poetry was in Latin. There are extant several beautiful poems

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115. Joyce, op. cit., p. 409.
116. De Vinne, op. cit., p. 56.

ascribed to St. Patrick. Columba, too, was one of the Celtic poets. One poem ascribed to him is a nature poem, describing the beauties of his chosen island, Iona. As for music, the favorite Irish musical instrument seems to have been the harp, which was used at an early period by bards and minstrels.

One of the high points in the artistic attainments of the Celts was their illumination of portions of Scripture. Their tasteful use of color, and their exact execution of the most detailed miniature work is really astounding. Joyce, in his work which has been frequently cited, page 547, has a facsimile of the beginning of the Gospel according to St. Mark, exactly as it was illuminated by an Irish monk about the year 850; it is really a beautiful piece of work! In line with this type of work, the Celts are also noted for some of the remarkable miniature paintings which they did.

Metal-work, both artistic and utilitarian, was another field in which the Celts were highly proficient. Ireland must have been a land of bells; priests carried bells, churches had bells, cattle were belled, and even pet animals had bells about their necks. From all accounts of those who have made a study of the early Irish bells which are extant, the Celts had advanced far in their knowledge of this art.[117] They utilized their ability in metal-work also to make crosiers, crosses and brooches of

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117. For a detailed account of the work of the Celts in making bells, cf. Joyce, op. cit., pp. 372-378.

great variety of design.

A final point to be noted concerning Celtic education and culture is this, that under the Celts, education was not confined to men. As is known, St. Hilda was abbess of a Celtic monastery at the time of the Council of Whitby. Further evidence is brought by Joyce who states,

> "In the sixth century, King Branduff's mother had a writing style (delg graiph), so that she must have practised writing on waxed tablets; and this is spoken of in the old record as a matter of common occurrence among ladies".[118]

Here again is an evidence of how far the Celts had progressed beyond their time. The Celts were, indeed, a cultural light which burned brightly in Europe for many years, but like other cultures which preceded them, and like other cultures which have succeeded them, they, too, were forced out of existence by forces which at the time had nothing to replace them.

F. Conclusion

After having reviewed a church body such as the Celtic Church, one just cannot help but draw conclusions. The outstanding attribute of the Celts, as has been shown, was their missionary zeal. They were an active church. Motivated by love for Christ, they had but one main purpose in life, and that was the conversion of heathen. Due to this missionary zeal, their influence was felt on the Continent long after the Celtic Church had ceased to

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118. Joyce, op. cit., p. 410, here bases his expression on Zeitschr. fuer Celt. Phil., II., 137.

exist as an independent church body; and because of the zealousness of their work, and the greatness of their attainments, their influence is felt in Ireland to this day.

In addition, the Celts were a scholarly group. In their study of Scriptures, they were not satisfied with secondary sources, but mastered the Hebrew and the Greek languages so that they might study the originals of the Scriptures. Besides this, they were, doctrinally, as pure a form of Christianity as was to be found in the world in that day. This was due, no doubt, in a large measure, to the staunch position which they took, namely, of basing their teaching on the Scripture alone.

The Celts were also a democratic organization. That is, there was no central authority in the Celtic Church; instead, the individual monasteries and churches were mutually independent. One ought to stop and think what that might have meant for the future of Chrisianity had the Celts been permitted to continue along the way which they were going.

In cultural attainments, the Celts also ranked high. What is more, they sought to spread learning and culture; theirs was not the spirit of selfishly retaining all knowledge for the benefit of their own particular group, at the cost of ignorance for the rest of the world.

But above all, the Celts were an independent Church. As

long as they were able to maintain this position, they were a real benefit to mankind, a benefit which has been all too little recognized in the present day. However, the Council of Whitby broke the aggressiveness of the Celtic Church, and from that time on, although they continued in existence for centuries afterward, and continued in spirit and in opposition to the Roman Church from within the Roman Church, up until the twelfth century, nevertheless, decay had set in. A spirit of indolence began to prevail, and finally, the glories which were Ireland's because of the Celtic Church, passed into history.

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