

he has done, to save from an immortality of sin and woe this crowning work of his creation, this lofty being, *man*, to whom he has given such an exalted nature and destiny? It is only by denying what God is, what man is, what is the nature of the government which God exercises over man, and what is man's destiny under this government, that the objector to supernatural revelation can make any show of argument. Until he succeeds in establishing these denials, which he has never yet done, we have a right to treat his assumptions against the necessity and reasonableness of such a revelation as baseless prejudices.

ARTICLE IV.

THE IRISH MISSIONS IN THE EARLY AGES.

BY REV. RUFUS ANDERSON, D.D., LATE FOREIGN SECRETARY OF THE
A. B. C. F. M.

IN a religious point of view, Ireland of the present day is painfully contrasted with Ireland as it was a thousand years ago. Yet one would scarcely think so on reading what Hume says of it, previous to its conquest by Henry II., in the year 1172. "The Irish," he says, "from the beginning of time had been buried in the most profound barbarism and ignorance; and as they were never conquered, or even invaded, by the Romans, from whom all the Western world derived its civility, they continued still in the most rude state of society, and were distinguished by those vices alone to which human nature, not tamed by education or restrained by laws, is forever subject."¹

He adds, indeed, that "the Irish had, by precedent missions from the Britons, been imperfectly converted to Christianity; and, what the Pope regarded as the surest mark of their imperfect conversion, they followed the doctrines of their

¹ Hume's History of England, Vol. i. p. 328.

first teachers, and had never acknowledged any subjection to the See of Rome."

How remote the first of these extracts is from historic truth in respect to Ireland before its subjection to the Pope of Rome, will appear as we proceed.

The excellent Dr. D'Aubigne, moreover, in his *History of the Reformation in England*, misled by his authorities, has done much injustice to the ancient Irish Christians; and Irish authors very properly take exception to his statement concerning the propagation of the gospel on the continent of Europe.

"The missionary bishops of Britain," he says, "traversed the Low Countries, Gaul, Switzerland, Germany, and even Italy. . . . Columbanus (whom we must not confound with Columba), feeling in his heart the burning of the fire which the Lord had kindled upon earth, quitted Bangor in 590 with twelve other missionaries, and carried the gospel to the Burgundians, Franks, and Swiss. . . . Thus was Britain faithful in planting the standard of Christ in the heart of Europe." Again: "The British church, which at the beginning of the seventh century carried faith and civilization into Burgundy, the Vosges mountains, and Switzerland, might well have spread them both over Britain." Once more: "At that time there existed at Bangor, in North Wales, a large Christian society, amounting to nearly three thousand individuals, collected together to work with their own hands, to study, and to pray, and from whose bosom numerous missionaries (Columbanus was among the number) had from time to time gone forth."¹

It will be seen that the honor of one of the most protracted, influential, and noble missions subsequent to the apostolic age, which belonged chiefly to Ireland, is here given to Britain.

The Rev. Thomas McLauchlan, a recent historian of the church of Scotland, has fallen into a similar error. He assumes (what is to a certain extent true) that the ancient Scots, emigrating from Ireland, inhabited a part of Albania

¹ *History of the Reformation*, Vol. v. pp. 29, 34.

(the present Scotland) as well as Ireland. He also assumes that the monastery of Iona was a Scottish institution, and, calling the missions Scottish missions, and rarely if ever Irish, he leaves an impression very like to that of D'Aubigne. His unqualified use of the word "Scottish" is somewhat remarkable.¹ Mr. McLauchlan's error originated in no desire to gain authority for his own system of church polity; for he cordially acknowledges that it would be vain to look among the establishments in the early "Scottish church," for anything like what is called a Presbyterian organization.²

We shall not find it difficult to show that the historians above mentioned all wrote under a misapprehension.

D'Aubigne quotes the following from the celebrated Alcuin of the court of Charlemagne, in support of his first assertion. "Antiquo tempore doctissimi solebant magistri de Hibernia Britanniam, Galliam, Italiam venire, et multos per ecclesias Christi fecisse profectus." But the declaration here is, that the most learned teachers in ancient times were accustomed to come from Ireland (not Britain) to visit the churches in Britain, Gaul, and Italy. Nor was Columbanus from Bangor in Wales, as is asserted, but from the most renowned of the Irish monasteries at Bangor in Ireland; founded by the Abbot Comgall early in the sixth century, and embracing at one time a community numbering three thousand.³ In a life of Columbanus, still extant in the Latin language, written in the seventh century by Jonas, his contemporary and countryman, his birth is declared to have been in Hibernia. It is added that Ireland was then "inhabited by the Scots, who, though without the laws of other nations, yet in the worthiness of the Christian faith exceeded the piety of all other people."⁴ The venerable Bede, writing in the eighth

¹ The Irish biographer of Archbishop Usher charges the Scottish writers with claiming, without hesitation, for their country everything that is said of "Scotia," utterly disregarding the teaching of all the ancient historians. — Usher's Works, Vol. i. p. 144.

² Early Scottish Church, pp. 171, 172.

³ Neander's Memorials, p. 434.

⁴ Webb's Annotations on D'Aubigne, p. 41.

century, calls Hibernia by the name of Scotia, and the inhabitants he calls Scots. And Archbishop Usher affirms that no author, before the eleventh century, has described Albania under the name of Scotland, and that the name of Ireland until then was Scotia, and its inhabitants were called Scots.¹ The famous monastery of Iona was founded by a native of Ireland, and was claimed as an Irish institution by the Synod of Ulster, as late as the thirteenth century.² Neander, speaking of the fifth and sixth centuries, represents the wild parts of Ireland as covered with monasteries, that were distinguished for Christian discipline, industry, knowledge of the scriptures, and such general knowledge as could be obtained from Britain and France.³ Henry, Bishop of Auxerre, writing to Charles the Bald, about the middle of the ninth century, informs him that Ireland, notwithstanding the dangers of the sea, was sending crowds of philosophers to their shores. Under the successors of Charlemagne Hibernians were extensively engaged in the work of education throughout the empire, and were the chief biblical translators and commentators of Europe. Mosheim, writing concerning the ninth century, says: "The Irish were lovers of learning," and "distinguished themselves in those times of ignorance by the culture of the sciences beyond all other European nations." He adds, that "so early as the eighth century they illustrated the doctrines of religion by the principles of philosophy," and "were the first teachers of the scholastic theology in Europe."⁴ Neander, speaking of the theological teaching in the ninth century, declares the Irish monasteries to have been "the seat of science and art, whence, and for a long time afterwards, teachers in the sciences and useful arts scattered themselves in all directions." He says, moreover, that there issued from the Irish church "a more original and free development of theology than was elsewhere to be found, and was thence propagated to other lands."⁵

¹ Works, Vol. i. p. 144.

² Webb's Annotations, p. 35.

³ Neander's Memorials, p. 434.

⁴ Webb's Annotations, pp. 40, 141, 142, 143.

⁵ Quoted by Webb, p. 143.

These testimonies are applicable to Ireland for the space of about four centuries, from the fifth to the ninth, and present us with a very interesting view of the Irish people. Ireland then served, under divine Providence, as a convenient refuge for the Christian church, in a very disordered and dangerous period of the nominally Christian world; being the remotest of the European islands, and secure from the destructive inroads of Goths and Huns, and, for a long time, from those also of the sea-roving Northmen. For many ages it was a sanctuary for scriptural instruction and scholarship, in the intellectual night that followed the downfall of the Roman empire. It was also the source of gospel missions, which sowed the seeds of the great Reformation in Germany, England, and Scotland, that came as a blessing to the world eight or nine centuries afterwards.

The gospel was planted in Ireland by a single missionary, self-moved — or rather divinely moved — and self-supported. His historic name is Patrick, and the Roman Catholics (claiming him, without reason, as their own) call him St. Patrick. He was born about the year 410, but the place of his birth is uncertain. His parents were Christians and instructed him in the gospel. Augustine, Bishop of Hippo in Northern Africa, was his contemporary, but probably never heard the mention of his name. Patrick's first visit to the field of his future mission was in his youth as a captive of pirates, who carried him and many others away as prisoners. Patrick was sold to a chieftain, who placed him in charge of his cattle. His own statement is, that his heart was turned to the Lord during the hardships of his captivity. "I prayed many times a day," he says. "The fear of God and love to him were increasingly kindled in me. Faith grew in me, so that in one day I offered a hundred prayers, and at night almost as many; and when I passed the night in the woods or on the mountains I rose up to pray in the snow, ice, and rain before daybreak. Yet I felt no pain, there was no sluggishness in me, such as I now find in myself, for then the Spirit glowed within me."

Some years later he was again taken by the pirates, but soon regained his liberty and returned home. His parents urged him to remain with them; but he felt an irresistible call to carry the gospel to those among whom he had passed his youth as a bondsman. "Many opposed my going," he says in his "Confession," "and said, behind my back, 'Why does this man rush into danger among the heathen who do not know the Lord?' It was not badly intended on their part, but they could not comprehend the matter on account of my uncouth disposition." Again he says: "Where did I receive so great and blessed a gift, to know and love God, to leave native land and parents, although many gifts were offered me with tears if I would remain there? And against my wishes I was forced to offend my relations and many of my well-wishers. But according to God's guidance I did not yield to them all; not by my own power, but it was God who conquered in me and withstood them all, so that I went to the people of Ireland to publish the gospel to them, and suffered many insults from unbelievers, and many persecutions, even unto bonds, resigning my liberty for the good of others. And if I am found worthy, I am ready to give up my life with joy for his name's sake."¹

In such a spirit did this apostle to Ireland commence his mission, which he did about the year 440, not far from the time when Britain was finally evacuated by the Romans.

A papal legend makes Patrick to have visited Rome, and to have received his appointment as missionary from Pope Celestine. This, though apparently credited by Mosheim, is rejected by Neander as incredible. The oldest of what may be called the Lives of Patrick, is believed to have been written at least four hundred years after his time. The one by Joceline, in his *Acta Sanctorum*, dates as late as the twelfth century, and all are believed to be of very doubtful authority. What is commonly known as his "Confession" (already quoted) is almost universally received as authentic. It was written in his old age. The "Epistola ad Coroticum," and

¹ Neander's Memorials, pp. 426-428.

the hymn known as his "Lorica," are regarded as his. Of high authority, as claiming to be contemporary with him, or nearly so, is the "Hymn of Sechnal" or "Secundinus," and a biographical poem in his praise, called the "Hymn of Fiace," composed not more than eighty years after his death.¹

Patrick, being acquainted with the language and customs of the Irish people, gathered them about him in large assemblies at the beat of a kettle-drum, and told the story of Christ so as to move their hearts. Having taught them to read, he encouraged the importation of useful books from England and France. He established cloisters after the fashion of the times, which were missionary schools for educating the people in the knowledge of the gospel, and for training a native ministry and missionaries, and he claims to have baptized many thousands of the people.

It is perhaps needful to a just appreciation of the case that we quote the discriminating remarks of Dr. Todd, one of his ablest Protestant biographers. After stating that Patrick always addressed himself, in the first instance, to the kings or chieftains, Dr. Todd says: "The people may not have adopted the outward profession of Christianity, which was all that perhaps in the first instance they adopted, from any clear or intellectual appreciation of its superiority to their former religion; but to obtain from the people even an outward profession of Christianity, was an important step to ultimate success. It secured toleration, at least, for Christian institutions. It enabled Patrick to plant in every tribe his churches, schools, and monasteries. He was permitted, without opposition, to establish, among the half Pagan inhabitants of the country, societies of holy men, whose devotion, usefulness, and piety soon produced an effect upon the most barbarous and savage hearts.

"This was the secret of the rapid success attributed to St. Patrick's preaching in Ireland. The chieftains were at first the real converts. The baptism of the chieftain was imme-

¹ London Quarterly Review, April 1866, p. 252.

diately followed by the adhesion of the clan. The clansmen pressed eagerly around the missionary, who had baptized the chief, anxious to receive that mysterious initiation into the new faith, to which their chieftain and father had submitted. The requirements preparatory to baptism do not seem to have been very rigorous, and it is therefore by no means improbable that in Tirawley and other remote districts, where the spirit of clanship was strong, Patrick, as he tells us himself he did, may have baptized some thousands of men."

We cannot forbear also to quote a summary view, by his biographer, of the life and labors of the Irish apostle.

"On the whole, the biographers of St. Patrick, notwithstanding the admixture of much fable, have undoubtedly portrayed in his character the features of a great and judicious missionary. He seems to have made himself "all things," in accordance with the apostolic injunction, to the rude and barbarous tribes of Ireland. He dealt tenderly with their usages and prejudices. Although he sometimes felt it necessary to overturn their idols, and on some occasions risked his life, he was guilty of no offensive or unnecessary iconoclasm. A native himself of another country, he adopted the language of the Irish tribes, and conformed to their political institutions. By his judicious management the Christianity which he founded became self-supporting. It was endowed by the chieftains without any foreign aid. It was supplied with prelates [ecclesiastics (?)] by the people themselves; and its fruits were soon seen in that wonderful stream of zealous missionaries, the glory of the Irish church, who went forth in the sixth and seventh centuries to evangelize the barbarians of Central Europe."¹

When this zealous missionary died, about the year 493, his disciples, who seem all to have been natives of Ireland, continued his work in the same spirit. The monasteries became at length so numerous and famous that Ireland was called *Insula sanctorum*, the "Island of Saints."²

¹ Life of St. Patrick, pp. 499, 514.

² Neander's Church History, Vol. iii. p. 103; and Memorials, p. 434.

It gives a wrong idea of these institutions to call them monasteries, or their inmates monks. "They were schools of learning and abodes of piety, uniting the instruction of the college, the labors of the workshop, the charities of the hospital, and the worship of the church. They originated partly in a mistaken view of the Christian life, and partly out of the necessity of the case, which drove Christians to live together for mutual protection. The missionary spirit and consequent religious activity prevailing in the Irish monasteries, preserved them for a long time from the asceticism and mysticism incidental to the monastic life, and made them a source of blessing to the world."¹ The celibacy of the clergy was not enjoined in those times.² Married men were connected with the cloisters, living, however, in single houses. The scriptures were read, and ancient books were collected and studied. The monastery at Bangor, in Ireland, which was pre-eminently a missionary college, was destroyed by the Northmen in 821, when the abbot and as many as nine hundred monks are said to have been massacred.³

The missions which went forth from these institutions, as also those from England and Wales, are frequently called Culdee missions; but as that term is of uncertain import, and appears to add nothing to the significance of the history, but rather the contrary, it is not here used.

Neither have we deemed it necessary to discuss the ecclesiastical position and relations of Patrick and his three hundred and fifty Irish associates. Episcopal writers call them all bishops, but are naturally much perplexed by their number. In our apprehension, they have their counterpart in the foreign missionaries of these modern times; the one class (including the "Apostle of Ireland") being bishops neither more nor less than the other. In this manner we in great measure avoid the difficulty of accounting for the

¹ Walsh's *Christian Missions*, p. 74.

² Usher's *Works*, Vol. i. p. 137; Vol. iv. p. 294.

³ Brennan's *Eccelesiastical History of Ireland* (Dublin, 1864), p. 138.

acknowledged fact, of the very slight reference made to Patrick by the Irish missionaries of subsequent ages; and we find no reason in that fact for assuming, as some have done, that those missionaries were connected with the British and not with the Irish churches.

The names of Columba and Columbanus are familiar to the readers of ecclesiastical history. Both were Irish missionaries, and from the institution at Bangor.

Columba's mission was to the Picts of Scotland, and commenced at the age of forty-two, in the year 563. This was thirteen hundred years ago, and considerably less than a hundred years after the time of Patrick. He had been an active and successful minister, and was accompanied by twelve associates. He was the founder of the celebrated monastery on Iona, an island situated on the north of Scotland, now reckoned one of the Hebrides. This school of the prophets, which has had an enduring fame, became one of the chief lights of that age. Continuing under Columba's management thirty-five years, it attained high reputation for biblical studies and other sciences; and missionaries went from it to the northern and southern Picts of Scotland, and into England along the eastern coast to the Thames, and to the European continent.¹

Columbanus entered on his mission to the partially Christianized and the Pagan portions of Europe in the year 589, while Columba was still living. That he was an evangelical missionary may be confidently inferred from the tenor of his life, and from the records that have come down to us of his Christian experience.

He thus writes: "O Lord, give me, I beseech thee, in the name of Jesus Christ thy Son, my God, that love which can never cease, that will kindle my lamp, but not extinguish it, that it may burn in me and enlighten others. Do thou, O Christ, our dearest Saviour, thyself kindle our lamps, that they may evermore shine in thy temple; that they may re-

¹ Neander's Church History, Vol. iii. p. 10; McLauchlan's History of Church of Scotland, pp. 225, 226.

ceive unquenchable light from thee, that will enlighten our darkness, and lessen by us the darkness of the world. My Jesus, I pray thee, give thy light to my lamp, that in its light the most holy place may be revealed to me, in which thou dwellest as the Eternal Priest, that I may always behold thee, desire thee, look upon thee in love, and long after thee. It belongs to thee to show thyself to us thy suppliants, O Saviour full of love, that we may know thee, love thee alone, think of thee alone day and night, that thy love may fill our souls, and that this love, so great, may never more be quenched by the many waters of this earth."

Columbanus went first to France, and took with him twelve young men, as Columba had done, as co-laborers, who had been trained under his especial guidance. Here, as a consequence of continual wars, political disturbances, and the remissness of worldly-minded ecclesiastics, the greatest confusion and irregularity prevailed, and there was great degeneracy in the monastic orders. Columbanus preferred casting his lot among the Pagans of Burgundy, and chose for his settlement the ruins of an ancient castle in the midst of an immense wilderness at the foot of the Vosges.¹ There they often suffered hunger, until the wilderness had been in some measure subdued, and the earth had been brought under cultivation. The mission then became self-supporting, but we are not informed by what means the previous expenses were defrayed. Preaching was a part of their duty, though there is less said of this than of their efforts to impart the benefits of a Christian education to the children of the higher classes. The surrounding poor were taught gratuitously. All the pupils joined in tilling the fields; and such was their success in education, that the Frankish nobles were forward to place their sons under their care. It was the most famous school in Burgundy, and there was not room in the abbey for all who pressed to gain admittance; so that it became necessary to erect other convents, and to

¹ Neander's Memorials, p. 235.

bring a large number of teachers over from Ireland to meet the demand.

Here the eminent missionary pursued his labors for a score of years. As he represents himself to have buried as many as seventeen of his associates during twelve years, the number of his co-laborers must have been large. The discipline which Columbanus imposed on the monastic life was severe, but perhaps scarcely more so than was required by the rude spirit of the age, and he took pains to avoid making the essence of piety to consist in externals. The drift of his teaching was, that everything depended on the state of the heart. Both by precept and example he sought to combine the contemplative with the useful. At the same time he adhered, with a free and independent spirit, to the peculiar religious usages of his native land. He had consequently many enemies among the degenerate clergy of the Frankish church, who sought to drive him from the country. This they at length accomplished, with the aid of the reigning prince. Columbanus was ordered to return with his countrymen to Ireland. This he did not do, but repaired first to Germany, and next to Switzerland. He spent a year near the eastern extremity of the Lake Constance, laboring among the Suevi, a heathen people in that neighborhood. This territory coming at length under the dominion of his enemies, he crossed the Alps in the year 612, into Lombardy, and founded a monastery at Bobbio, near Pavia, and there this apostle to Franks, Swabians, Bavarians, and other nations of Germany, passed the remainder of his days, and breathed out his life on the twenty-first of November, 615, aged seventy-two years.¹

Gallus, a favorite pupil and follower of Columbanus, remained behind in consequence of illness, and became the apostle of Switzerland. He, also, was an Irishman, and was characterized, as was his master, by love for the sacred volume. In what was then a wilderness he founded a monastery, "which led to the clearing up of the forest,

¹ Webb's Annotations, p. 71.

and the conversion of the land into cultivable soil, and it afterwards became celebrated under his name, St. Gall." Here he labored for the salvation of the Swiss and Swabian population till his death in the year 640.¹ This monastery was pre-eminent for the number and beauty of the manuscripts prepared by its monks; many of which, and, among others, some fragments of a translation of the scriptures into the Allemani language about the year 700, are said to be preserved in the libraries of Germany.

There is no special advantage in going further at this time into the details of these missions. Neander is of the opinion that the number of missionaries who passed over from Ireland to the continent of Europe must have been great; though of very few is there any exact information. Wherever they went, cloisters were founded, and the wilderness soon gave place to cultivated fields. According to Ebrard, there were more than forty cloisters in the vicinity of the Loire and Rhone, that were governed according to the rules of Columbanus, and to which emigrants came from Ireland as late as the close of the seventh century. He also affirms that Germany was almost wholly heathen when that missionary entered it; that before the year 720 the gospel had been proclaimed by himself and his countrymen, from the mountains of Switzerland down to the islands in the delta of the Rhine, and eastward from that river to the river Inn, the Bohemian mountains, and the borders of Old Saxony, and still further on the sea-coast; and that all the really German tribes, with the single exception of Saxony, were at least nominally subjected to the Christian faith as taught by the Irish missionaries.² It was in 723 that the English Winfred, better known as Boniface, began his well-intentioned and successful labors to reduce the Germanic Irish church to the Roman rule.

Ebrard's earnest testimony to the evangelical nature of the Irish missions should not be wholly omitted. He declares

¹ Neander's History, Vol. iii. p. 36.

² Ebrard's Manual, Vol. i. p. 416, 460.

that they read the scriptures in the original text, translated them wherever they went, expounded them to the congregations, recommended the regular and diligent perusal of them, and held them to be the living word of Christ. The scriptures were their only rule of faith. They preached the inherited depravity of man; the atoning death of Christ; justification without the merit of works; regeneration as the life in him who died for us; and the sacraments as the tokens of Christ's love. They held to no transubstantiation; no purgatory; no prayers to saints; and their worship was in the native language. But though they used neither pictures nor images they seem to have been attached to the use of the simple cross; and Gallus, the distinguished companion of Columbanus, is said, when marking out a place on which to erect a monastery, to have done it by means of a cross, from which he had suspended a capsule of relics.¹ Complete exemption from superstition was perhaps among the impossibilities of that age.

The statement of evangelical truths in the ancient Irish church may be enlarged. The life of Columbanus by Jonas, his friend and successor, somehow escaped destruction under the papal interdict, and is our fullest record of individual Irish missionaries. We have also a statement of the doctrinal views of two distinguished missionaries from Ireland in the eighth century, named Clement and Virgilius; and of another still more distinguished, named Claude, in the ninth century, two hundred years after Columbanus. From these and other sources it is inferred that the early Irish church inculcated no adoration of relics and images; no pilgrimages; no auricular confessions, penances, or absolutions; no mass; no works of supererogation; no adoration of the Virgin Mary; no baptismal regeneration. And Mosheim declares the Irish divines to have been the only ones in the ninth century who refused to submit implicitly to the dictates of authority.

¹ Ebrard's *Mannal*, Vol. i. p. 396; Neander's *History*, Vol. iii. p. 36.

Yet there were defects in the Irish missions growing out of the times, and not easily avoided.

1. They did not fully recover the apostolic idea, which had been lost, of the local, self-governed church. Their churches, so to speak, were monasteries or colleges, held together by the authority of priest or abbot. Hence the perpetual pupilage of their missionary communities, and the protracted need in those communities of foreign culture and aid. In our own sense of the term, there appear to have been no local, self-governed churches. Nor was religious freedom of thought and action a current idea in those ages, even in the Irish cloisters.¹ Then the Irish missions were too protracted. Irish missionaries continued to follow each other into Germany for successive ages. And so it must be in missions where the church of the apostle Paul is not a primary element in the working of the mission.

2. The grand instrumentality employed by the Irish missionaries appears to have been education. Light and influence were thus diffused, and the education was an essential thing. But though the scriptures appear to have been freely used by the missionaries, so far as was possible in an age of costly manuscripts, and though there was preaching, and often no doubt much of it, yet schools would seem to have been the predominant agency. They were so in the monastery; and while they may have been essential to the life of such institutions as grew out of the Irish missions, they had not in themselves the renovating, life-giving power essential to the creation and preservation of the organized, self-propagating church. And the predominance of school instruction over preaching, if such were the fact, was a serious error.

3. Another defect in these missions was their want of intimate connection with the community at home. The missionaries appear not to have been sent forth by home churches acting in any capacity, nor even by the cloisters, nor to have derived their support from their native land.²

¹ Neander's *Memorials of Christian Life*, p. 438.

² McLauchlan believes there were contributions made in Ireland for the con-

We do not know how they met the expense of travelling into what must have been to them remote regions. But when once there they became associated in schools or cloisters and were self-supported. And having abundant occupation, and no strong motive for keeping their work before the attention of Christians at home, and there being few facilities for correspondence, the missionaries must have been soon forgotten. Hence Ireland in great measure lost an invaluable reaction from its missions; and hence, probably, one cause, along with the destructive invasions of the Northmen in the ninth and tenth centuries, of the apparent decline of vital Christianity in that island before the Norman and papal invasion.

The missionary institution at Iona, which began its career in the sixth century, held out against Rome until the eighth; and Ireland, though sadly ravaged by the Danes in the ninth century, maintained its religious independence three or four hundred years longer, until conquered by Henry the Norman. In that conquest, which was avowedly made in the interest of Rome, and for a long time afterwards, an exterminating war is said to have been waged against such of the old manuscripts of the Irish church as had escaped the ravages of the Northmen; and also against the schools, which for several hundred years had supplied Europe with her brightest examples of Christian life, and her most efficient literary teachers.¹

But the seed which had been sowed over central Europe, though long buried, sprang up in the Reformation of the sixteenth century. And it is an interesting fact that Luther, the great leader of the Reformation, came from the convent of Erfuth, one of those founded many ages before, by the Irish missionaries, and said to have been the very last of their German convents which survived.² He having been a monk of the order of St. Augustine, it may be said that the

tinental missions sent from Iona. But these contributions were probably made only in Ulster.

¹ Webb's Annotations, p. 177.

² Walsh's Christian Missions, p. 82.

two streams of theological influence, having their rise a thousand years before—the one from Augustine in Northern Africa, the other from Patrick in Ireland—were here united, to flow on together for ages, we know not how many.

It is a question deserving of more consideration than we have now the means of giving, how the truly Protestant, Christian, and missionary spirit of the Irish people came to such a melancholy end. The invasions of the Danes must have exerted a disastrous influence both upon the learning and the religion of the islands. The middle of the ninth century was specially distinguished for these, but they extended into the tenth. The Irish church retained its independence longer than the church of England, and its missionary light in consequence burned longer and brighter. But this spirit gradually declined, until her sons, while they continued to travel in numbers through foreign countries, went rather as teachers of the Frankish clergy than as preachers.¹ The bull of Pope Adrian IV., in the twelfth century, authorizing the invasion of Ireland, for the purpose of “extending the boundaries of the church,” shows that up to that time, Rome had no control on the island. The frightful desolations and carnage occasioned by these Norman invaders, and the stout opposition of the Irish clergy and people to the papal decrees, are admitted by papal historians.² But the unremitting efforts of the Romish church to subvert the ecclesiastical constitution of Ireland, were at length successful; and the Reformation of the sixteenth century, the seeds whereof had long before been planted by Irish missionaries, seems not to have exerted much influence in Ireland. President Edwards says, in his *History of Redemption*, that the papists, in the days of Charles I., rising at once all over the island, murdered more than two hundred thousand Protestants within a few days. We know not what authority he had for so large a number; but the Irish Jesuit, O’Mahony, confessed, in 1645, that his party had cut off one

¹ Walsh’s *Christian Missions*, p. 82.

² Brennan’s *Ecclesiastical History of Ireland*, pp. 232, 237, 238.

hundred and fifty thousand heretics in the space of four years.¹ The retribution by Cromwell, eight years after the massacre, was terrible. Forty thousand Irish soldiers were transported to Spain, France, and Poland, where they were drafted into the armies of those kingdoms, and the "Irish nation" was compelled to vacate ten of the most fertile counties, and crowd itself into the counties of Connaught and Clare. The whole island, excepting those counties, and also a part of Ulster, already occupied by Scotch settlers, was assigned to the English army and to English colonists. The Scotchmen of Ulster brought with them families, and had no difficulty in obtaining godly ministers from Scotland, who remained through the prelatie persecutions of aftertimes, and the good results there are still seen. The Cromwell settlers felt obliged to intermarry with the natives, and were thus absorbed, in a few generations, into the mass of the unenterprising, unimproving Roman Catholic population. It should be added that most of the one hundred and thirty Independent and Baptist ministers, who had been sent to look after the spiritual interests of this class of settlers, returned to England when their salaries were withdrawn at the Restoration, leaving their people without provision for their spiritual wants. The Episcopal establishment which took the place of these, though richly endowed, seems never to have exerted much religious influence.²

In a review of these missions in the early ages of the Christian church, we have been not a little interested in the reflections and inferences with which we close this Article.

It is a great wonder that the Irish missions continued in operation so long. For, unlike the papal missions, they had no strong central government to urge them forward and to lean upon. Indeed, the Irish missions had nothing of the kind. Just think of missions, with such defective agencies, and moved only by the voluntary principle, being prosecuted

¹ Edinburgh Review, October 1845, p. 264.

² See Edinburgh Review for October 1865, p. 270; and North British Review for December 1866.

continuously for centuries. There must have been a good degree of Christian principle back of all this. And whether we regard the missionary spirit as the normal condition of piety in the true church of God or not, we must admit that the missionary work, when once fairly entered upon by a large body of true Christians, is not likely to be of transient duration, and especially that it will not be so in our day. This seems to be a legitimate inference from the wonderfully protracted missions now under consideration, and it may well encourage us. Surely if the Irish missions of those early ages had so much of life and duration, we may expect the missions of our times, with their purer theology, their freer spirit, their great extent, and their numerous other advantages both in the church and the world, will have an enduring existence. If the Protestant nations which send them forth do not relapse into Popery — and the missionary enterprises of our times are a great defence against such a result — the Protestant missions may be expected to grow and extend, until their great work is accomplished.