

and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world and things which are despised hath God chosen; yea, and things which are not to bring to nought things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence. And of Him are we in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption, that, according as it is written, He that glorieth let him glory in the Lord!

WILLIAM SINCLAIR.

ART. II.—THE CHURCH OF IRELAND.

THE work of Mr. Olden in the series on the National Churches,<sup>1</sup> edited by Mr. Ditchfield, is not, like so many manuals of Irish Church History, a mere compilation, but in every sense an original work. Mr. Olden is the rector of a remote parish in the county of Cork, but he is a scholar of wide learning, especially in Irish literature, and he is well versed in the Irish language. In this respect he has the advantage of Dr. Stokes, Professor of Ecclesiastical History in the University of Dublin, whose most able works on the Celtic and Anglo-Norman Churches we reviewed in the *CHURCHMAN*, in the years 1886 and 1890. Mr. Olden had previously made his mark by valuable contributions to the Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy, by an interesting volume on "The Holy Scriptures in Ireland One Thousand Years Ago,"<sup>1</sup> and by important contributions to the "Dictionary of National Biography." He was invited to write the story of the fortunes of the Church of his native land, and the volume before us of 440 pp. is the result.

Mr. Olden has to traverse the ground so ably occupied within the last few years by Dr. Stokes, and he lies under a distinct disadvantage in being obliged to follow one endowed with such a talent for lucid presentation of obscure historical incidents. It is almost amusing to observe that Mr. Olden, although giving a list of forty-seven works on Irish history, never alludes to the works of Dr. Stokes, except once in order to point out that the latter gives a wrong date for the building of King Cormac's chapel at Cashel. We presume that he is resolved to keep well off Dr. Stokes' lines, and he has, in our opinion, done so. His book, therefore, is a fresh contribution to the history of the much-tried and much-calumniated Church of Ireland.

<sup>1</sup> *The National Churches: Ireland.* By Rev. THOMAS OLDEN, M.A., M.R.I.A. London: Wells, Gardner, Darton and Co. 1892.

Mr. Olden has a new theory of St. Patrick. He believes that Patrick came to Ireland before Palladius, the missionary sent by Pope Celestine, and not after him, as popularly supposed. He discusses this question in a learned Appendix, and maintains that Sen Patrick (Patrick, senior) of the native records came to Ireland about A.D. 397, instead of A.D. 432, that he laboured in Ireland until his death, A.D. 463, and that his really wonderful work of conversion was comparatively ignored by mediæval writers because it could not be connected with a Roman mission. About the ninth century, by the liberal employment of fiction, a supposed Patrick, a missionary of Celestine, Archbishop and Apostle of Ireland, and follower of Palladius, was developed. Sen Patrick, Mr. Olden says, was the author of the "Confession," the "Hymn of Patrick," and the "Epistle to Coroticus." He was a slave in Ireland, a pupil afterwards of St. Martin of Tours, and he received episcopal orders from Amator, Bishop of Auxerre.

To many readers it will appear a matter of comparatively trifling interest to settle the precise date of the real St. Patrick; but Mr. Olden's theory, contradicting previously received opinions, is worthy of all consideration. It will probably, by those who desire to refer to the Pope the mission of the great apostle, be sharply criticised. We do not understand the position, as it must have presented itself to Pope Celestine, if Mr. Olden's theory be true. He must have sent his Palladius to the "Scots in Ireland believing in Christ" (on the preaching of Sen Patrick), as a sort of papal legate.

The general course of Irish Church history has been traced in these pages in previous reviews, and probably the most acceptable way in which Mr. Olden's work may be commended to our readers will be that of presenting briefly some of the more or less novel contributions which his wide learning has enabled him to make to our knowledge of points of detail.

In St. Patrick's "Confession" he tells how after his term of slavery in Ireland he managed to escape on a vessel bound presumably for France, and relates how, on landing, he and his party had a journey of twenty-eight days through a desert during which they were nearly starved; but a herd of swine crossing their path, they killed some and were refreshed; and then occurs the curious passage: "and their dogs had their fill." Mr. Olden suggests that the cargo was one of Irish wolf-hounds, or hunting dogs, which were in great request in Rome and the East, that Patrick had "worked his passage" in the vessel by attending to these dogs, and that, arrived in France, he would be free to leave the party, on which he must have proceeded to Auxerre or Tours, where he studied, and was ultimately ordained.

The commonly accepted place of burial of the Apostle of Ireland is Downpatrick, in the county of Down. Mr. Olden unhesitatingly states that he was buried in *Armagh* (p. 30), and on a subsequent page observes that "the body of Sen Patrick was said to have been pointed out by an angel at *Glastonbury* in 1184" (p. 255); while by a daring imposition Earl de Courcy, in 1185, contrived that Malachy, Bishop of Down, should see St. Patrick thrusting his hand from his supposed grave in the cathedral of *Down*.

Singularly enough, this Norman myth (according to Mr. Olden) of the burial in Down has held its ground ever since, and, in fact, a tomb or monument is now about being erected over the supposed burial-place in Down.<sup>1</sup> But even these three burial-places of the great saint do not suffice, for in 1293 Nicholas mac Maclisa, a violent opponent of the Norman invaders, made a rival discovery, and found the remains of Patrick, Brigit, and Columkille not at Downpatrick, but at Saul, in another part of the county (p. 256).

One of these three patron saints of Ireland is St. Brigit. Mr. Olden's account of her is the most vivid we have seen. Her origin was not, as Lanigan avers, noble, but of a very humble sort; but natural genius and the Divine flame of piety combined to make her the most remarkable woman whose name the Church of Ireland records. The great event of her life was the foundation of the church of Kildare, which is still used as a parish church, and is overshadowed by one of the finest of the Irish round towers. But Mr. Olden's most interesting contribution to the story of St. Brigit is connected with the remarkable fact that in the early Irish Church she occupied nearly the same position which in later times is given to the Blessed Virgin Mary. She is entitled "the Mother of the Lord," or "one of the Mothers of the Lord," the "Queen of the true God," the "Queen of Queens" ("Liber Hymnorum," vol. i.). In the "Book of Leinster" a remarkable list of parallel saints of native and foreign Churches is given (p. 370, c, d, of facsimile), and in this "Brigita" stands among Irish saints as parallel to "Maria" among the saints of the foreign Churches. In the same list of pairs "Patricius" stands parallel with "Peter, Apostle," Columkille with Andrew, and Finnian of Clonard with Paul. "The explanation of this extravagance," says Mr. Olden, "is that it is due to the rivalry between the Irish Church and the propagandists of foreign views. Whatever they said of the Virgin Mary, the Irish would affirm of their native saint,

---

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Stokes accepts the death at Saul and the burial at Downpatrick as authentic ("Celtic Church," p. 95).

and, if possible, outdo it. If they had a Mary, the Irish would affirm that they also should have one, and so they said that Brigit was 'the Mary of the Gael.' . . . The exaltation of Brigit into which the Irish were forced, as it were, by the language of their opponents, was an episode in their struggle to assert the nationality of their Church, and to prevent its absorption into the Continental Church" (pp. 47, 48). Mr. Olden considers the story of Brigit's burial in Downpatrick to be mythical, in spite of the couplet given by Cambrensis (at least in some MSS., for it was absent from Ussher's):

Patrick, Columba, Brigit, rest in glorious Down,  
Lie in one tomb, and consecrate the town.

Mr. Olden has pointed out that there came a decided reaction against Christianity in Ireland after the passing away of her earliest saints. Like their Celtic kinsmen of Galatia, their fervour cooled down, and paganism threatened to reinvolve the Church in some places. This relapse was much exaggerated by the authoress of the "Life of Disibod," written on the Continent in the twelfth century. She speaks of "a huge schism and great scandals prevailing in all Ireland. Some rejected the Old and New Testaments and denied Christ, some embraced heresies, some relapsed into paganism," etc. This account is, however, too highly coloured. But that some serious tendency to relapse existed is only too certain. To restore once more the purity of religion, Ainmire, King of Ireland (A.D. 568-571), first cousin of St. Columba, is said, in the life of Gildas, to have sent for that saint to Britain, entreating him to come to Ireland and restore ecclesiastical order, for almost all the inhabitants of the island had abandoned the Catholic faith.

To the school of St. David of Wales the Irish Church owes a great revival at that time. From Whitherne also, in Galloway, a school under the influence of St. Martin of Tours, others resorted to Ireland, and henceforward constant ecclesiastical intercourse was kept up between the Irish Church and those of Wales and Scotland. Mr. Olden considers that in this revival there was an undue toleration of semi-pagan superstitions, and that the worship (for it is little short of worship) of holy wells still carried on in Ireland was a pagan custom winked at by the "second order" of Irish saints.<sup>1</sup> One result of this gentle treatment of native superstitions was that there

---

<sup>1</sup> A writer of the eighth century divides the saints of Ireland into three periods: 1, those who founded the Church; 2, those who revived and extended it; 3, those who dwelt in deserts in later times. The three orders are deemed sanctissimus, sanctior, and sanctus. See Ussher, vi. 477-479.

were no martyrs in Ireland. This is a serious charge brought by Giraldus Cambrensis against the Irish Church. Mr. Olden quotes an absurd flight of rhetoric from the work of Bishop Greith, an ecclesiastical writer (1867) of Germany. Both the fact and the illustration are singularly opposite to the truth: "As the hills of Ireland are planted with fruitful vines, so the Irish Church is illustrious with the red blood of her martyrs."

But this second period was famous for the establishment of great schools of learning in Ireland. To it we owe the labours in this kind of St. Finnian of Clonard (*cir.* 550), and St. Comgall of Bangor (*cir.* 559), while the missions to Northern Britain and to the Continent under Columba, Columbanus, St. Gall, and others, prove that with a revival of spiritual life there came, as is ever found in the history of the Church, an outburst of missionary zeal.

It has often been a matter of surprise that the clergy of the early Celtic Church were so numerous. Mr. Olden points out that it is a law of the Brehon code that every lawful first-born son belonged to the Church, and if any parents had ten sons the Church could claim another for her ministry. Rights like these were never claimed from the laity by the clergy of any other Christian Church. Energetic curses were launched against any youth who afterwards doubted his vocation, and sought freedom from this veritable conscription for the army of the Lord. This superabundance of clergy tended to swell the numbers both of Irish monasteries and of missionaries.

We must not linger over the record, to which our author does full justice, of the extraordinary successes of Irish missionaries in the conversion of Northumbria, Essex, Mercia, Sussex. Thirty glorious years, the brightest in the annals of the Irish Church, saw the conversion under her missionaries of the greater part of England. But then Rome pushed forward; the Celtic stiffness, in refusing to submit to Rome, turned the tide against the Irish mission, and when Colman weakly turned his back on Wilfrid at the Synod of Whitby, and retired to a wild monastery on the Atlantic, the days of Irish religious influence in England drew to a close (A.D. 634).

It is impossible to understand why Colman so readily threw up the case when Wilfrid brought his Roman interpretation forward of "Tu es Petrus." For Irish writers uniformly interpreted the Rock (as the main body of the Fathers did) of Christ, or the faith of Christ (see "*Liber Hymnorum*," part 1, p. 12, and so Dungal, master of the school of Pavia, who was termed *Præcipuus Scotorum*). But probably there was that in the temperaments of the two men which made the man who had the best reason on his side give way before him who had the most brazen front. And then there was standing by a

king, and his sympathies were with Wilfrid, and kings count for something in the adjustment of a balance of arguments.

But if Irishmen withdrew from England after the reverse at Whitby, there was a counter-emigration of Englishmen to Ireland. The life of St. Gerald of Mayo describes his coming with his brothers and a sister and many followers, who landed at the mouth of the Shannon and afterwards settled in the county of Mayo, where they erected "the Church of the Pilgrims." And still the district is known as Tech Saxon, or the Saxon's abode, and one of the prebends of the Cathedral of Tuam still bears the title, and witnesses to the truth of this strange pilgrimage of the ex-Abbot of Winchester and his 3,000 followers. One of Gerald's brothers settled in the county of Cork, where his tombstone still stands in the churchyard of Tullylease, and the place is called Tuath Saxon, in reference to the same facts. Lastly, a third brother settled near Kinsale in the same county, where the parish of Tisaxon still records the settlement, while the parish of Kilbrittain, near Bandon, once more recalls in its nomenclature this old-world migration, which seems to have been the result of the affection with which the Irish missionaries were held in some quarters in England.

Mr. Olden furnishes us with many little-known facts such as the above. Here is another. Columbanus attributed the dignity of Rome to the fact of its being the *burial-place* of SS. Peter and Paul. He places Rome *on this account* only second in dignity to Jerusalem, the place of the Lord's resurrection. The veneration of Rome was thus due, not to the theory of its being the Mistress of Churches, but from its mysterious sanctity as containing the tomb of the great Apostles. "A singular evidence of this remains in the old Irish language, where the word 'Rome' is found as a familiar term for any burial-place. The full expression is a 'Rome of burial' (*Rom admarcthi*), but generally simply 'a Rome.' In this sense Bardsey Island, off the coast of Carnarvon, was so named 'Roma Britannicæ.' . . . And so the two saints commemorated by Ængus on October 23 are said to have had Babylon for their *Rome* or burial-place" (p. 96).

The Irish Church later on revered Rome as the seat of the Apostles Peter and Paul, and a Pope of Rome is termed "the successor of Peter and Paul"—"*Comarba. Petair is Poil.*" Through them Rome was the "head" of the Churches of the world, and, as our author points out in a note, the term "head" is still in use among the peasantry to denote dignity, not jurisdiction, as, *e.g.*, "the head doctor" means the most eminent physician.

The independence of the Irish Church is shown in early

ages by many proofs besides the familiar ones of the differences about the tonsure and Easter. For example, the hereditary succession of the coarbs, or heads of the monasteries, was long maintained as an inviolable rule. The See of Armagh for fifteen generations, as St. Bernard says, was handed down in one tribe and family. The great monasteries seem to have been spiritual clans. And the coarb, or chief, need not be in episcopal orders; in fact, as has often been pointed out, the succession in such sees as Armagh is reckoned by the succession of the coarb, or head of the monastery, whether he were a bishop or only an abbot. And when we say "only" an abbot, we use modern language, for in early times the abbot was the real "lord," and the bishop was appointed, and supported, and directed by him to ordain and confirm. There was no real diocesan episcopacy till the twelfth century. And the bishops were usually monastic rather than territorial. The history of the See of Armagh, therefore, is really not so clearly, as some suppose, traceable through a succession of bishops. As Dr. Stokes says ("Celtic Church," p. 334): "The histories of the Abbey and of the See of Armagh are inextricably mixed up together, so that it is almost impossible to say whether any individual mentioned in our annals as the *Coarb* of St. Patrick was Abbot or Bishop of Armagh."

This irregularity of the Irish Church which placed the succession rather in the coarb than the bishop, and which gave no special dignity to metropolitans, was the reason why in A.D. 816 Irish clerics were prohibited from officiating in England. It is clear enough from this that Roman discipline had no currency in Ireland in the earlier part of the ninth century. It is in the eleventh century that the See of Armagh is first brought into the full light of day; and it is in the Act of Brian Boru in 1002, who acknowledged the superiority of Armagh over Munster as well as over Ulster, that the archiepiscopal dignity of Armagh, as having Primacy of all Ireland, is first publicly recognised. The English Church had serious doubts in the early Middle Ages of the validity of Irish episcopacy; see, *e.g.*, as one witness out of many, the letter (Ussher, iv. 524) from Anselm to Muriardachus, King of Ireland, A.D. 1100, where the two-fold objection to Irish episcopacy is urged by the Romanizing Primate: "Item dicitur episcopus in terra vestra passim eligi, et sine certo episcopatus loco constitui; atque ab uno episcopo episcopum, sicut quemlibet presbyterum, ordinari. Quod nimirum sacris canonibus omnino contrario est: qui eos qui taliter instituti sunt aut ordinati, cum suis ordinatibus ab episcopatus officio deponi præcipiunt."

We need not enter into the controversy as to the validity of such an episcopate; it is enough to point out, first, that it proves definitively that the Irish Church was not under Roman discipline, and, secondly, that, in spite of the irregularity, the Roman see acknowledged the validity of the succession and orders; for it did not insist on the reconsecration of such bishops when they came under canonical discipline. Their ordinations were accepted in spite of the irregularity complained of. And even Hildebrand could address his brief to "The king, the archbishops, bishops, abbots, nobles, and all Christians inhabiting Ireland." He, like all other notable Roman authorities, could not fail to acknowledge the validity of our orders, while lamenting the obstinacy which still kept the Church from accepting the Roman discipline.

Mr. Olden's chapter on the constitution of the early Irish Church (ch. vii.) is both original and interesting. He points out that the Church, as a living force, adapted itself to the civil polity in Ireland, as it did to the completely different civil polity of the Roman Empire, and that as, under the Brehon laws, the tribal constitution prevailed in Ireland, the Church took the same colour, and the absence of a central government in the country was reflected by the like defect in the Church. Each great monastery was, in fact, a spiritual clan, the head of which was the coarb, or heir, of the original founder. Thus for many generations the coarbs of St. Comgall of Bangor were the lineal descendants of the family from whom the endowment in land had been originally derived.

As bearing upon present controversies, it is interesting to note that from very early times Ireland was practically divided into North and South, the North (Leth Cuinn) occupying rather the larger portion of the island, and being separated from the South (Leth Mogha) by a line not at all comparable with existing provincial boundaries. A remarkable line of gravel hills, the result of oceanic currents in ages when the whole or part of the island was under the sea, extends from the neighbourhood of Dublin to Galway Bay.

This line of "Eskers," as they were called (and the name survives in that of a townland in the neighbourhood of Dublin), divided the whole island into North and South. And previous to the introduction of strictly diocesan episcopacy, the government of the Church was by synods of the representatives of the principal monasteries, bishops and presbyters alike, which were held quite separately in the northern and southern parts. There were no united assemblies of the whole Church. A divergence of sympathy naturally arose out of this division. The South, at a much earlier date than the North, was swayed by Roman influence. The North,



following Armagh, held out for over a century after the South had accepted the Roman Easter, and the influence of the Roman breviary on the Irish liturgies is traceable first in the South.

The origin of this partition is obscure. But it represented a real difference of character in the population, just as a real difference is observable to-day. This was centuries before the "Plantation of Ulster," and it attracted the attention of such a keen observer as Giraldus Cambrensis, who says: "The people of the North of Ireland were always warlike, while those of the South were crafty and subtle; the one coveted glory, the other was steeped in falsehood; the one trusted to their arms, the other to their arts; the one was full of courage, the other of deceit." How far Giraldus would have written in the same tone had he lived in 1892, let him who knows Ireland judge. Giraldus attributes some of these divergencies to the influence of climate, and probably he is not far wrong.

The absence of a formally preserved account of the succession of episcopacy in any bishopric, and the fact that the monasteries preserved the succession of coarbs rather than of bishops, has led the upholders of Presbyterianism to maintain that the early Irish Church had a Presbyterian form of government. But this is a rash and untenable opinion. The accusation of the enemies and critics of our orders was not that episcopal consecrations were invalid, but that the bishops were often consecrated by one bishop only. This custom, however, prevailed at times in different parts of the Church (Bingham, bk. ii., ch. xi., § 5), and was never held to invalidate orders. And episcopacy was absolutely primitive in Ireland. It is a distinctly diocesan episcopacy which was of later introduction.

Not only in the early Church, from St. Patrick and St. Columba down, is the episcopal order regarded as superior to that of the presbyter, but it is taken as combining in itself those of presbyter, deacon, sub-deacon, lector, exorcist, and ostiarius, or door-keeper.

The Brehon laws everywhere assume the existence of a *married* clergy, side by side with the celibate monks. A bishop who is married may recover his position if he has fallen into sin by performing penance within three days, but a celibate loses his position altogether. It is well known that St. Patrick was the son and grandson of clergymen. Abundant evidence is to hand of the prevalence in later times of a married clergy. The Bishop of Connor, in the time of Pope Gregory IX. (1227-1241), was the son of a priest and begotten in priesthood ("Filius sacerdotis, et sacerdotio genitum"). He was elected by the canons of the diocese, and

afterwards forced by the new Roman law to resign. The Roman Catholic writers, such as M. de Montalembert and Professor O'Curry, insist on the celibate character of the Irish saints. The latter describes, *e.g.*, "Conn of the Poor," as "a lay religious." "But," says Mr. Olden, "this eminent scholar must have known that Conn was Bishop of Clonmacnois, and that he was a married man. Not only was this bishop a married man, but his father, grandfather, and great grandfather, all of whom were in holy orders, were married men" (p. 124). The Brehon laws see nothing unfitting even in the marriage of a Pope, whom they call "the highest Bishop, the Bishop of Peter's Church."

The Irish Church, organized after its own national fashion, but retaining all the essentials of Catholic faith and order, was the solitary instance of a Church in the West outside the Empire. England was a province of the Empire, and therefore was constituted both in Church and State more nearly on the Continental model. The independence of Ireland of Roman secular influence was reflected in its independence in ecclesiastical organization, until the aggression of the twelfth century at once placed her under the power of England and of Rome. Such a free Church was a thorn for centuries in the side of all Romanizers, whether in England or on the Continent. It is absurd for Romanists now to claim Ireland as from earliest times a faithful daughter of the Roman Church. Had this been the case, we should not only have heard of none of those remarkable divergencies of order and liturgy, but we certainly should not have found Pope Adrian urging Henry II. to "*extend the borders of the Church*" to Ireland; or Pope Alexander III. entreating him to confer rights on the Church where it had none ("*Ubi nullum jus habet id debes sibi conferre*"). He is careful to conserve the rights of St. Peter to the Pope, and even if he has none there ("*si etiam ibi non habet*"), Henry is to appoint such rights and assign them to the Roman Church. These invasions of the ancient freedom of the Irish Church were most unpopular with a large part of the Irish hierarchy. We find a sullen silence on the subject of most of those synods by which the Roman yoke was imposed on the Church in so important an authority as the "*Annals of the Four Masters.*"

We have now given the reader some examples of the manner in which Mr. Olden treats his subject. His selection of topics is never commonplace, and his manner of treating his subject is never dull. He has made several new contributions to the store of knowledge available to the English reader. His familiarity with the great writers on Irish history enables him to cull many illustrations from sources not translated, to

brighten up his subject, and we shall be surprised if his work fails to find a wide circle of readers.

We purposely refrain from touching in the present article on the vexed question of the changes effected at the Reformation, and of the episcopal succession of the present Church of Ireland. It is not, we think, as fully and exhaustively treated by Mr. Olden as it might have been.<sup>1</sup> The darkest times of the Church of Ireland seem to us to have been those, not preceding, but those following the Reformation. The Reformed Church was handicapped in every possible way. It was English in tone and habit, and language and rule. How could it commend itself to the Irish spirit? Its canonical, legal position is unassailable as the true representative of the old Church, but in its presentation to the people it was purely English. The really foreign Church, that of Rome, with its new titular hierarchy, became the representative to the Irish heart of all that was national, while their own historical Church expressed, through the mismanagement and worldliness of its rulers, all that was of the conqueror. It is an old, sad story.

But we are not without hope that out of her countless trials and sorrows the Irish Church may yet emerge to be a centre of true spiritual life in the country. He would be a daring seer who should venture to forecast the future of Protestantism in Ireland should England in a fatal hour grant Home Rule on an extensive scale. The people are unfitted for self-government; the Romish hierarchy are unacquainted with the real meaning of toleration; the Protestant population in Munster is but *seven* per cent. of the whole;<sup>2</sup> and those who know the country best feel that the position of this minority, should a Home Rule Government be established, and priestly power prevail, will be one of very serious peril. And it would seem natural also that should Ulster resist a Home Rule government, reprisals would be taken against the loyal and Protestant minority in the more remote parts of the kingdom, which it is not agreeable to contemplate.

G. R. WYNNE.

---

<sup>1</sup> The controversy as to the episcopal succession of the present Irish Church from the ancient Church of Ireland was again revived by certain strangely unfriendly articles in the *Church Times* in the year 1891. Those who wish to see a calm and judicial statement of the evidence which remains on this important subject must consult the Right Hon. J. T. Ball's "Reformed Church of Ireland," ed. ii., 1890, pp. 70 *f.*, and Notes Q, R, S. It would be quite out of the question to enter on the discussion in this article.

<sup>2</sup> It is of Munster alone we speak. Taking the island as a whole, the Protestant population numbers nearly a third of the inhabitants.