

The most prominent of the Celtic missionaries, in the age succeeding that of St. Patrick, was Columba, born among the wildest of the Donegal mountains, at Gartain, in the year 521. He belonged to one of the royal families of Ireland. He founded various monasteries, but these were very different in their character from the monastic institutions of a later period. The description of the celebrated one on the island of Iona, in Scotland, which became the centre of his operations, shows the simplicity and self-denial which he maintained. "It included a chapel, a dwelling-house for the abbot and monks, another for the entertainment of strangers, a refectory and kitchen; and outside the trench a rampart, a byre for the cows, a barn and store-house for the grain, and other outbuildings. All these were constructed of timber, or wattles." His appearance is thus described:—"Tall of stature, of a vigorous and athletic frame, of a ruddy and joyous countenance, which, as Adamnan (his biographer) has it, made all who saw him glad, he attracted the hearts of all. He was celebrated also for the powers of his voice, which could be heard, according to his biographers, at an amazing distance, and for a practical turn, which enabled him to render aid when required in any emergency. He could bail the boat, grind the corn in the quern, or hand-mill, administer medicine to the sick, and superintend the labours of the farm." Thus with the spirit and characteristics of the true missionary, and establishing himself in his island fortress, he sent forth his agents through the Western Highlands of Scotland, and eventually across the whole country, and became the means of converting the barbarous tribes of the Picts to Christianity. After a life of constant labour, and many perils, in crossing, in the frail vessels of the period, the stormy seas which roll in between the west of Scotland and the north of Ireland, he died, honoured and beloved, in his seventy-seventh year. Between the periods of St. Patrick and St. Columba the superstitious and monastic elements had made considerable progress, even in the British, or Celtic Church, and we may trace in the work of the latter many of those corruptions which afterwards destroyed the kernel of that living faith which undoubtedly inspired the mind of this devoted evangelist.

About the time of Columba's death, St. Augustine, commissioned by Pope Gregory the Great to seek the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons, landed on the Isle of Thanet—then a real island—and sent messengers to Ethelbert, King of Kent, to announce that they had come from Rome, that they were the bearers of joyful tidings, and could promise him "glory in heaven and a never-ending kingdom with the living and true God." The way had been partly prepared by Ethelbert having married a Christian princess. The king came to visit the monk and his followers—to hear, by word of mouth, what message they had to bear. In the reception given him we see the departure from primitive simplicity and admixture of that worldly element which at length undermined the life Christendom to its foundation. Augustine "advanced in a solemn procession to meet Ethelbert, preceded by a vergers carrying a silver cross: then followed one bearing aloft, on a board, painted and gilded, a representation of the Saviour. Then came the rest of the brethren and the choir, headed by Lawrence and the deacon Peter, who chanted a solemn litany for their own, as also for the eternal welfare of the people among whom they had come. The missionary explained the meaning of the picture which was borne aloft, and told the king how the merciful One, there depicted, had left His throne in heaven, died for the sins of a guilty world, and opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers." On admission afterwards to "the rude wooden city of Canterbury, then embowed in thickets, they chanted as they went along one of the solemn litanies which they had learnt from Gregory." Notwithstanding such admixtures of that worldly pomp and ostentation, so opposed to apostolic example, there can be no doubt that Augustine and his followers were sincere, self-denying, and in many respects, enlightened bearers of the Christian message. Augustine himself spoke with great eloquence of the character and the history of our Lord, and of the wondrous works wrought by His hand. "They gave themselves up Bede tells us, "to prayer and fasting, and recommended the Word by their