

Impious hate, could extinguish this sacred fire in the breast of the minister of God, the blighting touch of time has been equally impotent in allaying its holy ardor, through the countless generations that have successively passed away. The same divine voice that gave the command to evangelize the nations of the earth, breathed into his church, which was to be the instrument of this great revolution, a spirit of heroism and charity, which has never recoiled from any undertaking, however difficult of accomplishment, when it might result in the salvation of a soul redeemed by the blood of Christ. Hence the history of the church is but the history of her glorious triumphs, over the different kingdoms and tribes which are scattered over the surface of the globe, and which have been added, one after the other, to her ranks, in proportion as her pastors could bear to them the joyful tidings of the gospel.

No sooner had the Spirit of truth and of power descended upon the apostles, than they entered upon the grand project, which would have been deemed madness by any but a heaven-born spirit, of converting the world. The sacred light is first seen in Jerusalem, and thence diffuses itself over the surrounding nations. St. Peter addressed himself particularly to the Jews, and St. Paul laboured more extensively among the gentiles. It is believed, on the strength of a respectable tradition, that St. Thomas penetrated as far as the Indies. The other apostles evangelised different countries, and so astonishing was the progress of religion that, ere they were called to their reward, St. Paul spoke of the Christian faith as having been announced throughout the whole world, and applied to the preaching of the apostles those words of the psalmist: "Their sound hath gone forth unto all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world:"(1)

In the first century churches were founded in Judæa, Samaria, Asia Minor, Armenia, Scythia, Persia, India, Greece, Egypt, Ethiopia, Italy, Spain and Gaul. In the following age, the faith of Christ was still more widely spread in various parts of the Roman empire, and was introduced into Britain. In the third century, we find it penetrating into Arabia, the Belgic provinces, and many districts of Gaul, which were almost wholly converted. Immense numbers now flocked from the east and the west, to sit down in peace under the shadow of the cross; and such were the vast accessions to the church that contemporary writers mention its conquests even in countries which the Roman eagle had never beheld. "We are but of yesterday," says Tertullian, addressing the senate; "and we have overspread your empire. Your cities, your islands, your forts, towns, and

assemblies, your very armies, wards, companions, tribes, palaces, senate and forum, swarm with Christians."(2) During the fourth century, innumerable conversions were witnessed throughout the Roman empire, where a new impulse had been given to the progress of religion by the conversion of Constantine. Iberia and Abyssinia were also added to the faith, while it was advancing in Armenia. The fifth century saw the Irish nation converted by the labors of St. Patrick, the Scots by those of St. Palladius, the Picts by St. Ninianus, and the Franks, with King Clovis and three thousand officers of his army, by St. Remigius. In 565, St. Columkill visited Scotland, and converted the king of the northern Picts. At a later period, missionaries were sent by St. Gregory into England to instruct the Anglo-Saxons in the faith of Christ. Historians relate that St. Austin and his companions baptised no less than ten thousand persons at Canterbury on one day. "In the seventh century, St. Kilian, sent by Pope Conon, preached the gospel in Franconia; St. Swibert and others evangelised Friesland, Brabant, Holland, and Lower Germany; and St. Rupert became the apostle of Bohemia. In the eighth century, St. Boniface, sent by Pope Gregory II, 719, converted the Hessians, Thuringians, and Bavarians, and suffered martyrdom at length in Friesland, in 753, with fifty-two of his companions. In the ninth century, St. Adalbert converted Prussia; and St. Ludger became the apostle of Saxony and Westphalia; and died bishop of Munster. In the same age, St. Anscarius, archbishop of Hamburg and Bremen, preached the gospel to the Danes, and planted Christianity in Sweden, about the year 830. About the same period, the two brothers, SS. Methodius and Cyril, with the sanction of Pope John VIII. converted the Slavonians, the Russians, and the Moravians, and also Michael, king of the Bulgarians. In the tenth century, the faith was extended into Muscovy, Denmark, Gothland, Sweden and Poland. The Normans with their duke, Rollo, were converted in 912; and the Hungarians, with their king, St. Stephen, embraced Christianity about the year 1002."(3) In the twelfth century the church was increased by the conversion of the Norwegians and Livonians, chiefly through the labors of a missionary, who subsequently became pope under the name of Adrian IV. Courland was added to the faith of St. Memon, and even the distant inhabitants of Iceland bowed to the yoke of Christ. Innumerable conversions also took place in the following age, by the labours of St. Hyacinth of Poland, and of the Franciscan missionaries whom the pope sent

(2) Apol. c. xxxvii.

(3) Dr. Spalding's Review of D'Aubigné, p. 366. Milner, End of Controv. octavo-edit. p. 168, &c.

(1) Psalm xviii.