

despite her divine force and origin—despite the humble and zealous devotion of the Fathers and pontiffs to the decrepid majesty of the Cæsars—despite her men of genius and her saints—Christianity had not succeeded in transforming the ancient world. Had she succeeded in taking full possession, with the elements which then constituted it, she could only have made a kind of Christian China." The corrupt refinement that has been called civilization, had to be swept away in a deluge of blood. God sent this avenging deluge, and history calls it the invasion of the barbarians. The hardy and manly Huns, Goths, Vandals and Quadi replaced the enervated Romans. They were ignorant and ferocious races, but they were simple-minded and energetic. They were the material of which the Church was to form the sturdy European nations. The work of their regeneration was long and tedious, but the Church at last triumphed over their ignorance and barbarity.

The part that Ireland took in the holy work, remains to this day her brightest glory. During all this troubled period, Erin, that vast monastery which Providence had erected at the extremity of Europe, poured out over all lands, from England to Austria, a constant stream of learned scholars and zealous missionaries, apostolic men, who displayed surprising energy in their efforts to convert pagan nations, to rekindle the light of faith in minds in which it had become extinct, to extirpate abuses, to raise the drooping courage of the persecuted, to bring back the degenerate to their primitive fervor. Their passage was marked by the erection of monasteries, centres of faith, piety and knowledge, that perfected and perpetuated the work begun. Irish monks founded 13 monasteries in Scotland, 12 in England, 7 in France, 12 in Brittany, 7 in Lorraine, 10 in Alsace, 16 in Bavaria, 15 in Switzerland, many in Thuringia and along the left bank of the Lower Rhine, and 6 in Italy. A short sketch of their labors, will suffice to show to what extent Europe is indebted to the Island of Saints and Scholars, for its reception of christianity and its consequent civilization. Saint Columbanus and his numerous followers evangelized the ancient kingdoms Neustria, Austrasia and Burgundy, which occupied the part of France that is contained between Brittany and Germany, north and east of the river Loire,