

ardor and the burning zeal of the early converts, such as were Irish, on their return to their native land, would not remain silent on a subject so important as that of eternal life, without imparting a knowledge of the true God to those whom kindred and country endeared the more, as charity, the brightest jewel of the Gospel, would have prompted. Uncertain as is the date, it is indubitable that at a very early period the glad tidings of the Gospel were conveyed to Ireland, as appears from an incident in the mission of St. Patrick. In a part of the country, whither Palladius or his fellow-laborers had not penetrated, the sacred vessels of the altar were discovered immediately after St. Patrick commenced his apostolic labors. (*See Colgan, Trias Thaumaturga, &c.*) Hence it appears, that the Christian religion was partially known in the Island before our national Apostle engaged in the conversion of the people. St. Prosper, speaking of the mission of Palladius, asserts, that he was sent to the "Scots believing in Christ; but though the Gospel had been professed before the arrival of either Palladius or St. Patrick, the testimony of the latter clearly evinces the fewness of its professors." The Irish, says the saint, who till this time had not the knowledge of God, and worshipped idols and unclean things, are now become the people of the Lord, and are called the sons of God.—*Conf. St. Patrick*, p. 16.

According to St. Prosper, the first bishop sent to the Scots was Palladius. If, then, the number of converts had been large, their spiritual necessities would demand the exercise of those sacred functions, which are exclusively attached to the episcopal order; and, moreover, in conformity with the usage of ecclesiastical antiquity, had there been a numerous congregation of Irish Christians, it should have been confided to the care of a bishop. We can then safely aver, that the seed of the Gospel had borne but little fruit previously to the mission of Palladius; though some maintain the existence of bishops before the arrival of Palladius, and though they profess to be able to produce the names of some who administered episcopal functions, still the candid inquirer will perceive the difficulty of reconciling such an opinion with the narrative of St. Prosper, who distinctly states, that Palladius having received episcopal consecration from St. Celestine, Pope, was the first bishop sent to the Scots who believed in Christ.—*Chron. Pros., A. D. 431.*

And again, speaking of the exertions of St. Celestine to extirpate the heresy of Pelagius from Britain, St. Prosper confirms the accuracy of this opinion; and the pastoral zeal of this holy Pontiff, St. Prosper commends, as he had ordained a bishop for the Scots, and accomplished their conversion, as well as preserved the integrity of faith in Britain.

If, then, the Irish Church had been placed under the jurisdiction of bishops, the zeal of St. Celestine would have but little claim to peculiar