

In 429, German, Bishop of Auxerre, and others came over to assist in refuting the heresy, and finally it was banished from the British Church, which, thereafter, as Bede informs us, continued sound and orthodox.

The names of many celebrated missionaries to Britain are recorded. I can only allude briefly to one or two.

Whether or not S. Paul actually preached in Britain—and the writing of S. Clement of Rome, showing that the great Apostle of the Gentiles pursued his missionary labours “to the utmost bounds of the West,” seems to justify this statement—cannot with certainty be determined; still, we have recorded the names of apostles, saints, and martyrs connected with the Early British Church, which go far to show that Christianity had its roots firmly planted on British soil long before the Roman missionaries, under their great leader Augustine, set foot on this island. Amongst such missionaries were notably S. Ninian (A.D. 401), S. Patrick (A.D. 440), and S. Columba (A.D. 564).

S. NINIAN.

S. Ninian was the son of a British chieftain. He received his education in Gaul, at the hands of S. Germanus and S. Martin, Bishop of Tours. He was sent as missionary to the Scots, and settled in the south of Scotland, where for eight years he carried on his missionary work with much effect, until he was driven out of the country by advancing hordes of barbarians, and thenceforward for some time pursued his apostolic labours in Ireland.

From the Celtic Church of Ireland, and not from Rome, unquestionably, the Christian faith was diffused

throughout the greater part of England north of the Thames—namely, Northumbria, Mercia, the Middle Angles, and the East Saxons. Great efforts have been made to prove the ancient Church of Ireland to have been at least originally planted by Rome. If, it is argued, the missionaries who converted so much of England came originally out of Ireland, yet the Irish Church from which they issued sprang originally out of Rome.

“These disputes,” writes Canon Dixon, “about origins are very wretched, and would not be maintained, on one side at least, were it not for the arrogant claims which are built out of them by the other.” However, in this case, the victory can scarcely be said to lie with Rome. The first missionary who is known to have gone to Ireland was Palladius, who was ordained Bishop there by Pope Celestine about A.D. 429. He was sent, however, “ad Scotos in Christum credentes,” according to Prosper, the author who recorded his mission to the Irish, who were already Christians; so that there was Christianity there before his mission. This missionary Palladius had borne the name, it may be noticed, of Patricius. He had little success, and in a year or two he returned to Britain and died. Shortly after his death a north Briton, known as Patricius or Patrick, undertook the mission.

S. PATRICK.

S. Patrick, the patron Saint and Apostle of Ireland, was not of Irish extraction; the exact year of his birth none can tell, but that he died in A.D. 493 at an advanced age (some say at the age of 120) seems certain. His birthplace was Kilpatrick, in the county of Dumbarton;