

tion, and to a certain extent were successful in diffusing it; to a greater, indeed, than they had ventured to anticipate. Though many of the converts, perhaps the majority, were nominal only in their profession of the true faith, following externally the example of their chiefs, yet many of them gave satisfactory evidence that they had received "the grace of God in truth."

Augustine applied to Gregory for farther assistance; additional missionaries were sent—some of them persons of superior rank and talent, who were appointed to the higher offices in the newly-formed church, while Augustine himself was made the first Archbishop of Canterbury. Thus was formed that connection between England and the church of Rome, which, however beneficial it might have been at the time, involved the nation in the increasing corruption of that church in the following ages, until it was broken off at the period of the Reformation, when the abuses in the English Church were partially corrected.

Gregory ordered the idols to be destroyed throughout the land, and the temples to be converted into churches for the worship of God according to the gospel. Augustine, at the same time, from an excessive desire of uniformity, invited the Welsh bishops, who were independent of Rome, to a conference, in which he urged them to unite with him, both in ecclesiastical order, and in efforts to evangelize the pagans. The conference proving fruitless, another was called, which was attended by seven British bishops, and many of their learned men, belonging to the famous monastery of Bangor. This was followed by no better success, chiefly owing to the pride and haughtiness of Augustine, whose authority the Britons refused to acknowledge. Asserting their liberty, and acting upon it, they remained

distinct from the Romish community. Many of them were, not long after, massacred by the heathens of Northumberland during an invasion which many circumstances render it too probable was encouraged, if not suggested, by Augustine and his Romish companions.

Gregory departed this life in the year 604. He appears to have been a man of sincere and active piety, seeking high attainments in religion, and desirous of extending its blessings; not free from the faults of his age, among which a tendency to credulity and superstition is observable; yet exempt from that carnality and rapaciousness of spirit which distinguished so many of his successors in the Romish see. Augustine died soon after him, in possession of the see of Canterbury. He and his companions seem to have been actuated by a desire to promote the gospel of Christ, though on some occasions they manifested very unchristian principles and conduct. Yet they were probably free from selfish and interested motives, and were unquestionably the instruments of much spiritual good to our native land. Ethelbert also, and his Queen Bertha, loving the truth and living under its influence, were very earnest in diffusing it through their dominions.

Such is a small portion of the early religious history of the English nation. It teaches us, among other lessons, the vast importance of missionary labours. What would our country have been without them? At whatever period, the gospel must have been carried thither from those regions in which it had previously been planted. That it was an early period, there can be no doubt, whoever may have been the honoured messenger entrusted with it. Tertullian in the second century rejoices that the gospel had subdued the tribes unconquered by the Romans: and when religion had sunk, much of its