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ST. PATRICK.

WHAT WAS HIS RELIGION?

In our last issue we showed that St. Patrick's *Confession* was not a set exposition of the Christian theological system. It was, as Dr. Todd acknowledges, a brief document, and, in the main, of a personal nature. And yet every statement of doctrine and discipline in it is in full harmony with Catholic teaching. The Apostle of Ireland, for instance, held with the Catholic Church—and against the belief of all Protestant denominations—that the books of *Tobias*, *Wisdom*, and *Ecclesiasticus*, are divinely inspired, and quoted them as such. The Jews did not. And thus he preferred the voice of the Church to that of the Jewish people, as his guide to the true canon of the Old Testament, and attached a greater importance to the traditions of the Church than most Protestant writers are anxious to acknowledge. He held by the monastic system, he made 'monks and virgins of Christ,' he believed in the priestly power of binding and loosing, in supernatural visions, in anointing with holy oils, he invoked the saints, he preached and practised fasting and works of bodily mortification. All this appears in his *Confession* and his letter to Coroticus, both of which are admitted to be his genuine writings. It is easy to decide to which religious system these forms of belief—casually mentioned by the Saint—belong.

THE ROMAN MISSION.

The Lawrence lecturer gives a weak echo to the statement of Dr. Todd that St. Patrick rests 'the authority of his mission altogether on dreams and visions.' The insistence of some Protestant authors on this point has its root in a desire to prove that the Saint in coming to Ireland received no sanction from Rome. They make the life of St. Patrick a polemical battle-ground, and in straining to establish their pet contention misrepresent the writings of the Saint, Catholic teaching, and the facts of history.

1. In the first place, St. Patrick does not, either in his *Confession* or elsewhere, base his mission solely on visions. He attached so much weight to the opinion of others, that, as he tells us in his *Confession*, 'he was strongly driven to fall away then and for ever.' Moreover, the *Book of Armagh* states that he received at his consecration the blessings in the usual manner (*secundum morem*). His visions and inspirations, says Malort, 'were subordinated to the voice of the Church, through her ministers, in reference to his mission.'

2. Again: Protestant writers misrepresent Catholic teaching and discipline in their endeavours to show that St. Patrick's mission to Ireland was independent of Rome. Some of them, for instance, imagine that his mission would be non-Roman or anti-Roman, or at least independent of Rome, unless St. Patrick were sent directly by the Pope or by special papal mandate. No well-informed person would hold such a supposition. The Popes had no idea of reserving exclusively to themselves the erection of new bishoprics or the evangelisation of pagan countries. Thus, a saint so strongly 'papal' as St. Athanasius sent St. Frumentius to convert the Nubians. St. Chrysostom sent the famous Bishop Willa to the infidel Goths. The same was done by Juvenal, Bishop of Jerusalem, and—pursuant to decree of the Council of Chalcedon—by the Archbishop of Constantinople. And Pope St. Gregory complained to Kings Theodoric and Theobert that the French bishops did not go and do likewise for the pagan Angles. St. Augustine—who was sent by Pope Gregory to convert the English—received faculties to establish bishoprics and even to appoint his own successor. Other instances in point are easily quoted. Even within comparatively recent times the first Catholic bishop in North America had the privilege of appointing his own successor. Briefly then, both before and after St. Patrick's time national apostles had no need of direct appointment from Rome, and whether with or without such appointment they usually had plenary powers as regarded the establishment of dioceses, etc. The need of spreading the Gospel was great, and communication with the Pope was a slow and difficult, and often perilous, undertaking. Hence the Churches of Gaul, Italy, Africa, and Spain, which received the faith from Roman missionaries, had generally the privilege, down to St. Patrick's day, of appointing their own archbishops and bishops. The discipline of the Church in St. Patrick's day neither required his presence nor his consecration in Rome. Still, the saint's mission may have had the direct sanction of the Holy See. It had at least an indirect Roman sanction. This is as certain as that the saint lived. And that sanction was as valid and legitimate as the

most direct one could be. No evidence in existence warrants us in believing that there was a departure from the usual discipline of the Church in St. Patrick's case. All the evidence points unmistakably to the Roman and papal character of the Church founded by him in 'green Eire of the streams.'

So much by way of explanation. It must not be forgotten that we are here dealing with the distant past, and with a period the contemporary documents of which were to a great extent utterly destroyed partly in internecine war, but chiefly in the ravages of the warfare with Danes, Anglo-Normans, and English. But enough remains to prove that all the distinctive features of the Roman Church were strongly impressed upon the early Irish, as upon all the Continental Churches. This evidence is partly direct, partly indirect. But its cumulative force is irresistible. The restricted space at our disposal this week precludes anything beyond the bald summary of the leading facts that bear upon the case.

The learned Protestant writer, Dr. Whitley Stokes, in his edition of *Tripertite Life of St. Patrick* (i., p. cxxxv) says of St. Patrick: 'He had a reverent affection for the Church of Rome, and there is no ground for disbelieving his desire to obtain Roman authority for his mission, or for questioning the authenticity of the decrees that difficult questions arising in Ireland should ultimately be referred to the Apostolic See.' Another Protestant authority, Wasserschleben, in his edition of the *Hibernensis* (or eighth century collection of Irish canons), distinctly states that the ancient Irish Church was in unison with Rome, and acknowledged the Pope as its head (p. xxxv.). The canon referred to by both these writers. The canon is ascribed by the *Book of Armagh* to Auxilius, Patrick, and Benignus—probably assembled in Synod. It runs as follows:—

'Whenever any cause that is very difficult and unknown unto all the judges of the Scottish [*i.e.*, Irish] nation shall arise, it is rightly to be referred to the see of the archbishop of the Irish [*i.e.*, of Armagh], and to the examination of the prelate thereof. But if there, by him and his wise men, a cause of this nature cannot be easily made up, we have decreed that it shall be sent to the Apostolic See—that is to say, to the chair of the Apostle Peter, which hath the authority of the city of Rome.' In the older manuscript of the *Hibernensis* the decree—of which St. Patrick is named as the author—has the following provision: 'If any questions arise in this island, let them be referred to the Apostolic See. Wasserschleben contends that the longer canon is the original. Others maintain that it is but a paraphrastic explanation of the shorter one, yet conveying its true meaning. But as Salmon points out: 'As far as the Papal supremacy is concerned, the point is of no importance. Both canons involve that doctrine. Both direct that disputes be carried to Rome. One provides for a preliminary reference to Armagh; the other does not. And this is the only difference, in substance, between them.'

OTHER POINTS.

Further important side-lights on this question will readily occur to any person who considers (1) where St. Patrick was educated for the Irish mission after leaving home, and (2) the subsequent faith of the people to whom he preached the Gospel.

(1) The supplemental leaves in the Brussels manuscript of the *Book of Armagh* expressly state that 'he fell in with Germanus, a most saintly bishop, a prince in the City of Auxerre, a chief blessing. Here he [St. Patrick] learned for no short period, as Paul at the feet of Gamaliel, etc. Now St. Germanus had studied the profession of the law in Rome. He was not only the most prominent figure in the Gaulish hierarchy, but we learn from Prosper's *Chronicle* that he was sent by Pope Celestine in A. D. 429 as his representative (*vice sua*) to Britain, with a view to saving it from the Pelagian heresy. In this he was completely successful. The earliest and best authenticated life of St. Patrick, written in the seventh century, and contained in the *Book of Armagh*, states that St. Germanus introduced him to the notice of the Pope, and that he was consecrated bishop close to Auxerre by Bishop-Abbot Amatus—perhaps, as Malone suggests, as coadjutor or successor to Palladius. It was while under the tuition of St. Germanus that (as we learn from the *Book of Armagh*) he received the angelic intimations that the time had come for entering upon the Irish mission. 'He set forth accordingly,' says Malone, 'and can we have any doubt as to the teaching which our saint received from the Roman legate Germanus?'

St. Patrick's canon regarding appeals to Rome was not alone known in the early Irish Church. It was acted upon. A conspicuous instance of this is given in the Paschal Epistle of St. Cumman to Segenus, Abbot of Hy, in 631, published by the Protestant Archbishop Usher. I referred to the controversy which agitated the Irish Church regarding the proper day for celebrating Easter. In that epistle of St. Cumman, Rome is referred to as 'the place which the Lord hath chosen,' 'the fountain of their baptism