

SAINT PATRICK AND IRELAND
440-493 AD
By Pastor Ron McMurray

The early history of Ireland, called Hibernia, is buried in obscurity. The ancient Hibernians were a mixed race, but prevailingly Keltic (Celtic). The Kelts were composed of the Gauls (French), old Britons, the Picts and Scots, the Welsh and Irish. They were part of the vast Aryan immigration from the bowels of Asia.

The mental characteristics of the Kelts remained unchanged for two thousand years. They were quick witted, fluent in speech, vivacious, brave, daring, loyal to their chief and clan, excellent soldiers, but also were fickle, quarrelsome, had no capacity for self-government, and made poor citizens.

The Christianization of the Kelts, Teutons, and Slavonians is divided into two sections: the Keltic and the Anglo-Saxon periods. The Kelts of Ireland, Britain, Scotland and Gaul were half-naked, painted barbarians, quarrelsome, divided into small clans, revengeful, all of which made them easy to conquer. They worshipped the gods of the Greeks and Romans as well as having a Druid priesthood in Ireland. They worshipped the Genii of rivers, woods, and mountains. On their alters they offered fruits of the earth, spoils of war and human sacrifices. They lived in huts and caves in the gloom of the forests. Their Druid priests claimed special knowledge of astrology, divination, medicine, and divine wisdom. The famous Druid temple, “Stonehedge” on Salisbury plain, and at Stennis in the Orkney Islands, were places of rituals and burial.

There are at least ten theories of how Christianity came to Ireland but they are not substantiated by evidence. The writings of the church father, Tertullian, in 208 AD did state that “places in Britain not yet visited by Romans were subject to Christ.” The first

“Christian” emperor Constantine (300 AD) was born in Britain. In the Council of Arles, 314 AD there were three British bishops; so from this and other things considered, such as the principle of God-consciousness and Gospel hearing, we conclude the gospel of Christ was available to the Britons.

The first traces of Christianity in Ireland were found at the end of the fourth century and beginning of the fifth century. During this time lived a man called by history Saint Patrick. He was born the son of a deacon, grandson of a Presbyter. His father’s name was Calpornus. He was born in Banaven of Tabernia (Scotland), or Kilpatrick, Britain, and some even believe he may have been born in Gaul (France). At the age of sixteen he was taken captive to Ireland and made to work as a slave shepherding sheep for six years. He escaped and returned home but was given a vision concerning the people of Ireland. He began studying the Bible and fourteen years later he returned to Ireland, after his ordination.

He taught the gospel of Jesus Christ to the people of Ireland and never instituted any Roman Catholic doctrine, ritual or tradition upon the people there! He was not appreciated, and is, in fact, completely ignored by Columba and Roman Catholic writers. He was not even recognized by Roman Catholicism until the 8th to 12th centuries when they “Romanized” his work to fit into their church tradition. However, Patrick would not appreciate this move on their part since he had nothing to do with them when he was alive.

The Catholic Church supports their “claim to fame” by using spurious documents and vague traditions about Patrick, such as the claim that he visited Rome and was told by the Pope to go to Ireland. This is Roman hogwash, at best, for Patrick does not allude to the Pope, Rome, or any Roman tradition or ritual, even once in his “Confession” or his writings. He was clearly a born again Christian with the filling of the Spirit for he stated,

“I am greatly a debtor to God, who has bestowed His grace so largely upon me, that multitudes were born again to God through me”.

“The Irish, who never had the knowledge of God and worshipped only idols and unclean things, have lately become the people of the Lord, and are called “the sons of God.” The center of his missionary activity in Ireland was Armagh. From this city he ministered for 53 years to the Irish, leading thousands to Christ and founding some 365 (plus) churches which promoted the gospel of Jesus Christ in the land.

Patrick wrote a hymn when he was about to lead the chief monarch of Ireland to Christianity. It is a prayer for special help from God and contains the principle doctrines of Christianity and showing his distaste for the magic and superstition among some of the tribes. He never mentions Mary nor any of the saints, as most Roman Catholic prayers do, which indicates his complete separation from them.

Patrick ministered from 440 to 493 A.D. He died in 493 A.D, March 17, still teaching God’s Word to the people he loved so much. There are many foolish attempts to distort his work for Christ. Stories about him ridding Ireland of all the frogs, healing the blind, raising nine persons from the dead, and ridding Ireland of snakes, are all superstitious nonsense which clouds the true issue that Ireland came to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ through a missionary named Patrick.

It is Christ that receives the glory, not Patrick. Like Patrick, we are the servants of Christ with the same responsibility to our fellow man. Therefore, on St. Patrick’s Day let us be reminded of God our Father, Christ the Son, and the Holy Spirit. We worship them as the One True God. Remember the Shamrock for this small three leafed plant, native to Ireland, is what Patrick used to teach the Irish the principle of the Trinity.

