

CHAPTER XVIII.

IRELAND (*continued*).

'*Glochauns*,' cells, and oratories—Origin of the Rectangular Church—Early Churches built of wood and turf—Early Ritual all *al-fresco*—Oratorium and Habitaculum originally identical—Traditional Churches of St. Patrick, St. Tassach, and St. Perran—Dolmens and Christianity—Similarity of Druidical and Christian Settlements—Christianisation of Pagan Monuments—Inismurray—Impossible Date alleged for Irish Stone Churches—Architecture a weak Point in Ireland—Earliest Churches called 'Houses'—Irish Names for the Structural Church—The Term 'Kil' is native Irish and signifies 'grave'—Christianity's Compromise with Paganism—The Wheeled Cross.

Patrick's formula for a monastery has been already quoted. The oldest¹ monastic settlements of Ireland—oldest, that is to say, in type—present certain uniform features: there is always an enclosing wall² of more or less circular plan, commonly built or faced with dry stone. Within this is gathered a varying number of buildings, some mortarless, others mortar-built, but all very small and almost wholly devoid of ornament. Some of these are oratories, others the dwellings of those who used these oratories. There may be several oratories within one enclosure, and in such cases the largest is commonly styled by some term equivalent to 'church,' or even 'cathedral,' but there is little difference even in point of size, and none are large. The earliest type is a single rectangular chamber, the length about twice the breadth. There is as yet neither nave nor chancel. At the one

¹ The stock examples are those at Inismurray, Ardoilean, Oilean Tsenaig, and Inisglora. It will be shewn that any attempt to date their existing remains is more than doubtful.

² The only exceptions are where, as at Skellig Michael, there is no room for such

a wall, or no need, because of the isolation and consequent security of the site; cf. the case of Eilean na Naoimh, Garveloch island, cited by Anderson, *Scotland in Early Christian Times*, p. 95. But even at Skellig Michael the burial-ground of the monastery shews the essential sub-circular (oval) form.

end is an altar and above it the solitary window-light; at the other end a single door; but there is little or no attempt at true orientation.¹ The other buildings are *clochauns* or bee-hive huts, dry-built, with one room only and one door. In the oldest examples there is externally scarcely any discernible difference between the oratory and the *clochaun*. The difference is internal, for whereas the chamber of the *clochaun* is as a rule circular, that of the oratory is uniformly rectangular.²

The cause of this rather curious distinction between the sacred building and the profane is reasonably clear. The *clochaun*, the immemorial round hut of the Celt, was so built even in Christian times, because it had always been so built; and as this was the only known fashion of building in stone, the oratory likewise, if built of stone at all, was originally of bee-hive plan *outside*. The rectangular chamber was due to foreign influence. To the earliest Irish and British a structural church was of rectangular plan because they had never known or heard of a structural church of any other plan.³ It is hardly necessary to seek for any more recondite explanation of the fact.

¹ For the distinction between church and oratory see Anderson, *Scotland in Early Christian Times*, p. 73, n. In the text the word 'church' is used much in its modern sense, i.e. to denote a building wherein a number of people may meet for worship; by 'oratory' is meant the building in which a holy man prayed, or sometimes dwelt and prayed.

² Wakeman (*Survey of Inismurray*, pp. 35-37) remarks that the *clochauns* there, while externally circular, internally are squarish like the oratories. They appear to be transitional between the circular plan and the rectangular which rapidly followed upon the introduction of the rectangular oratory. There is no question that the original type from which all were evolved was the primitive 'bee-hive,' circular within and without. Champneys (*Irish Eccles. Arch.* p. 19) also notices 'a cell rounded outside and square within' at Church Island, Lough Currane, Waterville.

³ Even in Rome early Christian *chapels* at any rate were square-ended, and the apsidal form did not come into vogue in *churches* until the fourth century. It is quite possible that Patrick had never seen an apsidal church; it is more likely that he purposely followed the plan which least

resembled any pagan form of building. The statement that he established 'four-cornered churches' in divers places, as Champneys remarks, 'certainly suggests that another shape was known in Ireland in his time,' (*Irish Eccles. Arch.* p. 23), another shape of *building*, that is to say, but not necessarily another shape of *church*. Such quadrangular buildings are mentioned in several places of the *Tripartite Life* (see Whitley Stokes' ed. i, 237; ii, 321), and hence 'it has been supposed . . . that Patrick usually built round churches. It is not improbable that Patrick introduced this custom (i.e. of circular churches) from Britain, and it has been suggested that the word *Côr* is a trace.' So writes Newell, *Hist. of the Celtic Church* (London, 1895), p. 23. It is extremely doubtful whether, Withorn excepted, there existed any such thing as a structural church of any kind in the Britain of Patrick's time, let alone a circular one. The only 'church' of the Britain of that era would seem to have been the cemetery, the circular Christian barrow; and circular barrows, though conceivably not Christian ones, were familiar things in Ireland long before the fifth century. If he built structural buildings at all, they would be oratories only, and of the humblest kind. Of any circular structural

But a very brief experience would tell the builders that to construct a building of more or less circular plan about a rectangular chamber involved a great waste of material, time and labour, while the gradual improvement in the art of building would lead to the same result.¹ The building gradually assumed the rectangular form externally: the side walls lost their original batter, and the roof, which had at first been made in bee-hive fashion by bringing each course of stones further inward than the last, was presently constructed with wooden rafters, and ultimately came to be a true vaulting with *voussoirs*. This again was the natural course of development from the bee-hive. There yet survive examples of oratories in which all four walls batter inwards to the ridge of the vault. Next come those in which the end walls rise vertically, while the side walls still shew a continuous batter from ground to roof. Thirdly we have those in which all four walls are vertical for a part only of their height. Latest of all is the oratory with vertical walls roofed with timber or vaulted with stone. This, however, was the slow evolution of centuries.

Possibly a few of even the very earliest oratories, in places where wood was scarce—and there are many such places in Ireland—were built of stone; but turf, wood, or wattle-and-daub,² were certainly the general rule, and timber lends itself more readily to rectangular forms.

'church' there is no trace in Britain until centuries after Patrick's time, and the apse is almost wholly unknown to Celtic architecture in the British Isles. Introduced by the Roman Church after 700, it utterly failed to make good even in non-Celtic parts of Britain, disappearing altogether in the thirteenth century.

¹ Orientation may have had something to do with it; one cannot well find the eastward position in a bee-hive building. But the early oratories rarely shew much regard for orientation. That of St. Bennan in Aran stands north and south, so did that of St. Cuthbert at Farne, and so apparently did that of St. Ethelburga's monastery at Barking (ch. xxiii). See on such 'transverse churches' (*ecclesiae sinistrales*) Todd, *St. Patrick*, p. 410. Jocelin (*Life of St. Patrick*) is authority for the assertion that the saint's first 'church' at Sabhall was so built. Walafrid Strabo remarks that little attention was paid to the orientation of

early churches. Very possibly the insistence upon the rectangular plan was in part due to the wish to get away from all association with paganism, of which circularity was the symbol. Excepting a possible case (St. Blane's church, Bute) in the Scottish isles mentioned by Anderson (*Scotl. in Early Christian Times*, p. 111, note) there is no known instance of an ancient circular church in the Celtic regions. The round church at Orphir in the Orkneys is mortar-built, probably the work of Earl Haakon in the twelfth century (Anderson, *op. cit.* p. 29, note) and modelled upon the church of the Holy Sepulchre; and the same crusading influence expressed itself in the few circular churches of England (the Temple church in London, and those at Northampton, Cambridge, and Ludlow). In Norway some of the eleventh-century 'stave churches' have a circular plan.

² Kilclief, co. Down, formerly Kilclith, means the 'kil of the hurdles.'

A church of turf would in a very few years come to present the appearance of a mere grass-grown mound of earth; and this is said to be exactly the description of one now existing at Micklibaer, as it was of many of the keeill churches of the Isle of Man. If it is recorded that, when St. Kieran built at Duleek in the fifth century a church of stone, 'stone-building was as yet unusual among the Irish,'¹ the statement is doubtless true.

If the 'churches' of the ascetics of Cyrene, in the Libyan desert, were made of materials as perishable and on a scale similarly exiguous, as Sulpicius Severus asserts,² this does not in the least imply that Ireland borrowed the thing and the fashion of it from the East. It proves nothing beyond a parallel evolution in East and West.

The smallness of these earliest oratories is remarkable; Patrick's rule required but 'seven feet within the oratory' (p. 29).³ This is usually taken as proof of the poverty of the early church, or of the low development of the art of building.⁴ But had neither of these factors been present, as they certainly both were, the earliest oratories would have been no bigger. To worship under a roof was entirely alien to the sentiment of the early peoples, and particularly to those of Celtic blood, and they did not require any building for congregational purposes; so that there was no need for larger edifices, even if we assume that the possible congregations were large. The original

¹ *Vita S. Mochuae* (Plummer, *Vitae SS. Hiberniae*, i, 187). Duleek is said to represent Da mleac, 'stone-house.' It is mentioned in *Annals of Ulster* under date 753 (Daimliacc). The very fact that a few really ancient buildings were so called is proof that they were the exceptions to the rule. The records mention the use of timber in the oratory of St. Moling and that of Rathain na Suanaigh (Rahen, nr. Tullamore, King's Co.). The latter is said to have required 1,000 boards, but we are not told of what size they were. See O'Curry, *Manners and Customs*, iii, 33; Champneys, *Irish Eccles. Arch.* pp. 26-27.

² They were *vilibus contexta virgultis* and no more ambitious than the ascetic's hut (*tabernaculum*), in which a man could not stand without stooping. See the passage quoted in Bingham, *Christian Antiqs.* bk. viii, i, 13. Here then, as in Ireland, we have hut and oratory, and apparently

nothing to differentiate the two. Sulpicius died in 425.

³ See Romilly Allen, *Mont. Hist. Brit. Church*, p. 92, where the dimensions of sixteen are given, ranging from 10 ft. by 6 ft. to 18 ft. 2 ins. by 10 ft. 4 ins. One of those at Skellig Michael is 8 ft. by 6 ft. At Inismurray a mortar-built 'church' is only 9 ft. by 8 ft.

⁴ Dr. Anderson (*Scotland in Early Christian Times*, p. 128) quotes with approval Petrie's view (*Eccles. Arch. Ireland*, p. 191) that the smallness, uniformity, and meanness of early Scottish and Irish churches was due 'less to poverty, lack of skill, or of originality, than to a purposed wish to preserve the tradition of the earliest Christian churches of the continent before the time of Constantine.' Had he written 'earliest cells of the Christian Irish' the sentence would have needed no emendation.

oratory was not a church as we understand it at all; it was the private residence as well as the chapel of the holy man who lived in it. Its development into all that a church now is was extremely slow. At first it contained a rude altar, a bench or seat, and occasionally a well, but nothing more. There was not often a font within the building, but invariably a well or spring near by. Church furniture, ornaments, treasures, there were at first none or very few. In early Ireland, and indeed throughout the British Isles where Celtic Christianity came, the 'church' was of the least importance. The only *ecclesia*, i.e. place of meeting, was the *locus consecratus*, the hallowed burial-ground under the open sky. Even mass was celebrated *al fresco*, and only this fact can explain such legends as that of St. Patrick's driving his chariot over an erstwhile friend of his who was celebrating mass.¹ It is probable that there did not exist in the Ireland of his time, nor for many centuries afterwards, any 'church' into which a chariot could have been driven. At Inismurray the altars are for the most part out of doors, and the first missionaries used portable altars 'to be laid upon unconsecrated altars when celebrating mass upon a journey, or when access to a consecrated altar was impossible.'² This is equally true of the Celtic Christianity of Wales and of England.³

¹ *Tripartite Life*, p. 235. The victim was St. Secundinus. The width of the doorway of the supposed oldest type of Irish ecclesiastical buildings is little more than 2 ft. At Walsingham, Norfolk, 'people never failed to go and see the "Gate of the Knight," a gate which had stretched itself so as to give miraculous shelter to a man on horseback, hard pursued by his enemies' (Jusserand, *English Wayfaring Life*, p. 153). This legend is an obvious attempt to bring the facts of one age into conformity with those of another and later age. A man on horseback, or even in a chariot, might easily have driven into the 'church' of older times, for the 'church' then was what we call the churchyard. The change of meaning had occurred long before the fourteenth century, and to explain the inexplicable was invented the legend of the church door which miraculously expanded.

² Wakeman, *Survey of Inismurray*, p. 60.

³ The fragments of what is believed to have been St. Cuthbert's portable altar are preserved at Durham—a small slab of

oak, 6 ins. by 5½ ins. and ½ in. thick, overlaid with a cover of silver. It is believed to have served the purpose of an altar before St. Cuthbert's time. The silver cover has a design incorporating the wheeled cross, and the form of the cross is the peculiar Early Irish crutched cross, the interspaces filled in with Celtic braid-patterns. Simeon of Durham says that something similar was found upon the breast of bishop Acca, when his tomb was opened (c. 1000). See Bp. Browne, *Theodore and Wilfrith*, p. 162; Howorth, *Golden Age of the English Church*, iii, 98. St. Cuthbert died 687; Acca was a contemporary of Wilfrid, and died 740. That these prelates used portable altars suggests that there were many places where there was as yet no consecrated altar, and therefore no structural church. In Seebohm's *Tribal Custom in A.-S. Law* (1902), p. 103, is a citation from *Lex Frisionum*, tit. xiv, which proves that there too the existence of altars where there was no church was frequent.

If, for whatever reason, a holy man decided to make his home upon a *locus consecratus*—and it would not occur in every instance—he naturally provided for himself a roof therein, but upon the humblest scale. This was in the first instance at once his house and his oratory. To separate the one from the other was a later development, and even then the two remained under one and the same roof.¹ To construct separate buildings for oratory and dwelling-house was the third stage in the evolution. If as time went on the special sanctity of the place or of its occupant drew to it other disciples, for these, as might be required, were built *clochauns*; and there grew up perhaps such a cluster of huts and oratories as one sees at Inismurray—a monastic settlement.

Upon the spot he had chosen, dwelling actually upon the grave-mound of one of the faithful, the holy man spent his life. Within his oratory he lived and prayed, and within it he hoped to be buried, as indeed often happened.² By his death and burial the place became doubly sacred. Should he pass away 'to fame unknown,' the little oratory might fall to decay and disappear even from memory, together with his own name; but the sanctity of the precinct could never pass, for its circular *limes* bespoke its holy ground, and others of the faithful would seek to be buried therein. If he left behind him a greater name for holiness and power, his place of burial became a *focus religionis* of a special kind, a place of pilgrimage: the oratory within which he had made his orisons, and the altar beneath which he was finally buried, would be carefully preserved from decay, repaired, re-built, perhaps enlarged, to continue through the centuries as his visible memorial. Thus says Marianus Scotus, himself an Irishman, as his name declares:

In the year 1043 died Amnuchadh the Irishman, an anchorite in the monastery at Fulda For ten years have I stood upon the spot where he lies, above the feet of him, and daily said the mass.³

¹ Proof that this was so in Wales, Scotland, and England will appear later. It was the rule wherever the Celtic type of Christianity went, and was one of the radical differences between that and its Roman rival. Champneys has an appendix upon the matter, *Early Irish Arch.* p. 230. This much of truth is to be found in S. O. Addy's *Church*

and Manor, where is collected a mass of evidence, that wherever Celtism penetrated the identity of church with dwelling-place persisted stubbornly.

² 'It was the rule for the anchorite to be buried in his cell' (Stokes, *Ireland and the Celtic Church*, p. 180).

³ Colgan, *Acta Sanctorum*, p. 205.

Marianus was therefore immured within the same chamber or cell in which had lived and died his predecessor Amnuchadh, and the latter was buried within the cell wherein he had died, his head beneath the altar, so that anyone standing there to officiate after him must literally stand 'above the feet of him.' Here is the Celtic oratory surviving complete at Fulda, Hesse-Nassau, in the eleventh century.

Two miles from St. Patrick's church of Saul (Sabhall), co. Down, at Raholp, are the ruins of the 'church' of St. Tassach. It is the usual rude rectangular building, 28 ft. by 16 ft. 8 ins. interior measure, built of unhewn stone set in clay without mortar; and it still has the characteristic single east light. Before it was 'improved' it had also a single west doorway. Its only furniture is the altar at the east end, and under this is the saint's grave, so placed that the dead man's head and shoulders lie actually beneath the altar, his feet beneath the pavement before it.¹

Precisely similar was the arrangement found when in 1835 the shifting of the sands revealed the long-lost oratory of St. Perran (Kieran) in Cornwall, save that here there were beneath the altar three graves of three several recluses who had here made their homes.

What befell the prime founder might equally befall any of the disciples whom he gathered about him: these too would die and find burial where they had prayed, and over the grave of any one of them might arise another 'church'; for it appears from Bede's account of Ethelburga's Scotie monastery of Barking (c. 676) that the inmates of such monasteries were up to that date at liberty to choose their own places of burial anywhere within the *limes*, and only later arose the practice of reserving a definite part of the area for use as a cemetery.² This fact may be the sufficient explanation of the occurrence of several 'churches' within one precinct, as at Inis-

¹ *Journal R.S.A.I.* (6th ser. vol. vi), 1916. St. Tassach was traditionally one of the three chief artificers of St. Patrick, a maker of bells and shrines. The large dimensions of his church prove that this is not the original building of the fifth century.

² *H.E.* iv, 7, § 275. So with St. Fechin's

foundation (664) in Ardoilean, off the coast of Connemara: 'Within the enclosure,' which has a mean diameter of 108 ft. only, 'there are a number of stone crosses and flags sculptured with memorial crosses, probably sepulchral monuments' (Anderson, *Scotland in Early Christian Times*, p. 86).

murray, Skellig Michael, and Clonmacnois, where there are ten. This is at any rate a more satisfying view than the suggestion that such multiple churches arose at a date when the builders were still unable to erect any single edifice of an assumed sufficient capacity. If, as there is good reason to believe, the buildings in question are of genuinely ancient foundation, they belong to an age which had not yet attained to the conception of a single collective structural place of worship.

In some cases, however, the saint was buried outside the oratory, as was St. Manachan at Teampulmanachan, Dingle, under 'a mound of a size fit for the burial of a giant,' at its head his ogam-stone bearing crosses on the east and west faces. In this case the grave is a barrow pure and simple. Welsh saints, as will be seen, usually hoped to be buried in the centre of their *llan*; and St. Cuthbert dug his own grave outside his oratory at Farne and apparently at the centre of the precinct.¹

What is the reason for this peculiar predilection for building 'churches'—nothing is said of other kinds of buildings—in timber rather than in stone²? So far as is known, the pagan Celt availed himself eagerly of stone in preference to wood wherever he could; and there is no doubt whatever that he made it a rule to employ stone, if it were to be obtained, for all his *religious* constructions. Is this possibly the sufficient reason why early Christianity expressly discountenanced the use of that material³? Certain facts seem to point in this direction, and assuredly there must have been some very forceful reason at work to prevent the use of the one material which lay ready to hand throughout the major part of the Celtic areas, in which conversely there is, and apparently always was, frequently a notable absence of timber.

Mention was made above (ch. xvii) of the indubitable construction of a dolmen in the latter half of the sixth century. The dolmen was a stone-built sepulchral

¹ Below, ch. xxii.

² Williams (*Eccles. Antiqs. of Cymry*, p. 187) tried to answer the question by a reference to *Isaiah*, lx, 13, or alternatively opined that it was 'perhaps the result of temporal circumstances.'

³ Does a similar feeling explain the

gradual disappearance of cist-burial and the substitution of firstly uncoffined burial, and thereafter burial in wooden coffins? In the same way the earliest graveyard crosses were made, not of stone, but of wood (below, ch. xxiii), at any rate in Saxon England.

chamber, and in Ireland at any rate it was commonly the central feature of a sepulchral *limes*. It was the scene of certain recurring acts of ritual in the nature of funeral feasts. Was it possibly in a sense the forerunner of the structural Christian church? Was the attitude of Christianity in discountenancing the building of stone 'churches' prompted by its desire to prevent any too close association of the oratory with the dolmen?

A famous dolmen near L'Ancrese in Guernsey was explored in 1837, and some account of the results was published in *Archaeologia*.¹ The chamber, one of the largest known, measured internally 45 ft. long. The western end was 15 ft. wide, and the chamber narrowed somewhat towards the east. The height of the roof above the original floor was 8 feet, and the roof was formed of five immense cap-stones set transversely, dividing the whole into as many sections. Lukis was of opinion that the chamber had originally been much smaller, that the western end was the original portion, and that it had been enlarged from time to time by the addition of further side-posts and capstones towards the east.² The whole was

¹ Vol. xxxv. (1853), pp. 254 *sqq.* The writer was F. C. Lukis. An earlier account had appeared (vol. xvii, 245), which Lukis very rightly called most unsatisfactory. His own account, however, leaves much to be desired in the way of accurate detail, measurements, etc.

² He believed the same thing to have been done in the case of the great dolmen of Déhus, also in Guernsey. Upon the *under* side of one of the capstones of this dolmen has been detected (1916) an extremely rude carving of a human face, and Lukis mentions (*Archaeol.* xxxv) other cases where occur carved stones so placed as to leave no doubt that they had subsequently been utilised for building the dolmen. In other words, the dolmens are later than the carvings, at least in some cases. French archaeologists believe the carvings to be of the Bronze (S. Reinach) or even of the Neolithic age (Déchelette), but it is doubtful whether the evidence is sufficient. A much later carved block was found under the chancel-entrance of the church of Sainte-Marie du Castel in Guernsey in 1878. Yet another 'dolmen idol' stands to-day in the churchyard of St. Martin, Guernsey. It was found beneath the church, which is thought to

occupy the site of a megalithic burial-chamber, and has a number of large boulders built into the lower part of its walls. These 'idols' cannot be compared with the gross phallic figures found in the fabric of the church of Old Llandrindod (p. 124) and elsewhere in Wales. The more elaborated examples found in south-east France are much less suggestive of idols than of memorial *cippi*. Those from Saint-Sernin in Aveyron, and from Les Maurels in Tarn, might well be rude effigies of priests in their robes, and those parts of the carving which are held to represent the legs of the idol are almost indubitably the pendant ends of stoles or girdles with their fringes. See Déchelette, *Manuel d'Archéologie*; S. Reinach, *La Sculpture en Europe avant les influences Greco-Romaines*. Lieut.-Col. T. W. M. de Guérin remarks (*Trans. Guernsey Soc. of Nat. Science*, 1919, p. 4) of the 'idol' of Sainte-Marie du Castel that it must have been 'an object of worship' so late as the sixth century, when Christianity was first introduced into Guernsey, for it was 'evidently' thrown down and buried at that date; but there is not the least reason to believe that it was thrown down until the church of Sainte-Marie was built, which would not be until many years later.

surrounded by the usual circular peristalith, shewing that it was a *locus consecratus*. The original floor was a rude pavement laid upon the natural surface, and in the soil which had accumulated over this were found human bones, coarse red and black urns, amulets and beads of stone and clay, and pins of bone. Over this stratum had subsequently been made a new floor, with 'many cart-loads of limpet-shells and a little yellow clay,' and in this again were found more bones and urns. The urns in all amounted to nearly 150. There was evidence that, in the process of making the second floor, many of those in the lower stratum had been disturbed, broken, or thrust aside into the interstices between the side-props of the dolmen. No metal whatever was found except 'a kind of armlet' made of 'a highly decomposable alloy of copper,' and no other relic whatever except an annular bracelet fashioned from a single piece of jet—these two objects were found together—bones of fishes, oxen, goats and boars, and burnt granite querns. Two remarkable observations were made: in the first place, 'in no instance had the urns been used to contain the ashes of the dead'; and in the second place, whereas the human bones in the lower stratum had been sometimes inhumated, sometimes incinerated, those upon the second and later floor showed no trace of burning. Upon the older floor they were found curiously disposed: the unburnt bones lay in jumbled heaps at either end of the dolmen, while the burnt bones, arranged in similar heaps, lay in the middle; each heap was made up of the bones of either sex and of all ages, and each heap was surrounded by a ring of round flat pebbles, the urns lying within these rings or near them.¹

Lukis evidently believed the whole to be of immense antiquity, but upon what grounds except the general preconception of his times is not clear. It is plain that the dolmen had been used as a mausoleum, but at what date remains wholly problematical. Those who buried their dead in the second and later stratum had clearly

¹ In the same volume of *Archaeologia* (xxxv) are some notes of the same writer upon the exploration of an *allée couverte* in Alderney. Under the floor, along one side of the chamber only, was found a series of box-like cists made of thin slabs of stone.

Each cist was about 1 ft. square, and contained a skull and various odd bones rudely thrown together. No pottery or trace of other relic was discoverable, though 'fragments of numerous urns lay in the primeval deposit around.'

discarded the practice of cremation,¹ but they had seemingly discarded little else of the earlier ritual. They still deposited urns with the dead, and seemingly for symbolical reasons only. The substitution of inhumation for cremation might be due to the influence of Christianity, and the almost total absence of grave furniture might have the same explanation. The use of the same mausoleum for so many interments in common points in the same direction. The quern stones suggest that the chamber had once been occupied as a residence, as do the bones of animals, but it is definitely stated that no trace of charcoal was discoverable. Nevertheless it might be possible to make out a very good case for the thesis that this dolmen at L'Ancrese represents the transition from paganism to Christianity, from the pagan dolmen as a mere burial-vault to the Christian oratory, at once vault and *habitaculum* and *oratorium*.² The very name of it points in this direction, for *Ancrese* means a female anchorite.³

Lukis remarked the fact that to some dolmens have been added off-sets 'intended to afford additional room,' of which he found several examples in the Channel Islands, but he further observed that 'there are, not uncommonly, certain recesses of large size communicating freely with the cromlech' (i.e. dolmen), as in a case in the parish of St. Clement's, Jersey, several cases in Brittany, and at Wayland Smith's cave on the Berkshire hills near Wantage. Where these occur, the entrance from the main dolmen is, he said, uniformly barred by a sort of lintel in the shape

¹ Bertrand, *La Gaule avant les Gaulois* (1891), p. 128. He cites from Closmadeuc *La Question des Dolmens*, two cases of undisturbed dolmens in Morbihan, one at Tumiach, where every corpse had been inhumated, the other at St. Michel of Carnac, where all had been cremated.

² The island was christianised from Brittany, by St. Sampson of Dol and St. Magloire, in the sixth century, but its material progress was small until the tenth century, when (962) monks from Mont-Saint-Michel founded the abbey of Vale. Of the various parish churches the oldest is said to date only from 1100. Up to that date the Christianity of the island must have been essentially Scotie. There is to-day small trace of the circular form in any of the churchyards, but a water-colour

(purporting to be by John Varley) dated 1814 shews that such was then the form of the churchyard of St. Sampson (pl. II, no. 1). It is a curious fact that of the nine dolmens still remaining in the island, all the finest are in the parish of Vale. Lukis (*loc. cit.*) remarked that all have a surrounding circle of stones, and the diameter of the circle is in all cases the same, viz. 60 ft. As the presence of the stone-circles points to a purpose primarily sepulchral, so their uniform diameter suggests that all are the work of the same people, and therefore of much the same age.

³ Local tradition confounds *ancrese* with *ancrage*, and says the place was so called as standing near what had once been a convenient anchorage or landing-place.

of a long transverse block of stone laid across the gorge, 'unless the division be otherwise evident.' As to the off-sets, there is no question that they were sepulchral, and that they were constructed that the dead therein laid might share something of the peculiar sanctity of the dolmen. The 'recesses' were, it would seem, likewise sepulchral, and their arrangement and disposition provide a curious analogy to the side-chapels and mortuary-chapels annexed to mediaeval churches,¹ and to those other features of an earlier time, of doubtful purpose, which are commonly spoken of as *exedrae* and were certainly used as burial-places.² Fergusson³ believed the dolmens to have been rather chapels than tombs, and W. C. Borlase took the same view: they were, he says, 'no mere tombs intended to be closed for ever, but sacred shrines in which the spirits of the dead were worshipped, and which were constructed with the view of being accessible'⁴ to the worshippers. The suggestion here advanced is one which brings into harmony all the various theories: it connects the dolmen with the sepulchral cist and the chambered barrow at the one end of time, at the other with the primitive Christian 'church.'⁵ It provides a reasonable explanation for the puzzling evidence both of immense antiquity and of relative modernity which various dolmens afford,⁶ accounts for the indisputable indications of a regular architectural development in the whole series, explains the close association of some of the number with undeniably Christian rites and cults, and—not its least merit—furnishes what has heretofore been wholly lacking, viz., something from which the structural church of stone may have taken its origin.

¹ cf. Gostling, *Bretons at Home* (1909), p. 223, on dolmens of cruciform plan foreshadowing the structural church, and on the use of dolmens as mortuary-chapels.

² Early canons prohibit burial within churches, 'except in the *porticus* and *exedrae*.' A very large number of Irish dolmens are placed east and west.

³ *Rude Stone Monuments*.

⁴ *Dolmens of Ireland*, p. viii.

⁵ cf. for example that in Llanhamllech, known as *Ty Illtyd*, 'St. Illtyd's House.'

⁶ The dolmens of N. Africa are to be counted by thousands, and yield relics in

copper and in iron. Each dolmen is, in some districts, surrounded by its own stone circle, and was built to be free-standing. See Orsi in *Bulletino di Paleologia Italiana*, xxiv. Sepulchral circles in the Deccan surround cists which are actually dolmens in miniature, constructed exactly as a child builds a house of cards, and contain implements of both copper and iron (*Hyderabad Journal of Archaeology*, 1916). There are some present-day archaeologists who are prepared to admit that British dolmens were the work of people who knew the use of metal, even of iron (W. J. Perry, *Manchester Memoirs*, 1920-1).

Near Plouaret in Côtes du Nord, mid-way between Guingamp and Morlaix, is a tumulus carrying a small church of the Seven Sleepers. The tumulus covers a spacious dolmen, which serves as crypt to the church: it contains an altar and a rude carving of the sleepers, and is lighted by a window pierced through the south wall of the chamber. Objects in stone and bronze have been found within the chamber; and *circa* 1702-4 was built the church above it. There are only two possible alternatives here: either the dolmen was pre-Christian or it was not. If it was pre-Christian, we have an incontrovertible case of the continuity of the *religio loci* in defiance of the changes of creed. If it was not pre-Christian, then this particular dolmen is very far from being prehistoric.

The case of Plouaret is by no means unique. The great tumulus of La Hougue Bie, mid-way between St. Heliers and Mont Orgueil in Jersey, covers a great dolmen and *allée couverte* measuring 70 ft. over all, and is itself crowned by the remains of a couple of chapels, the larger dating from the sixteenth century, the smaller possibly from the twelfth century. At Saint-Germain-sur-Vienne, five kilometres north of Confolens in Poitou, the uprights carrying the capstone (15 ft. by 12 ft.) of a fine dolmen have been replaced, apparently in the twelfth century, by pillars with bases, shafts and capitals complete, and about the whole was built a church to which the dolmen served as crypt. The church has disappeared, but there still remains an altar beneath the capstone. The church (tenth or eleventh century) of Cangas-de-Ones in Spain surmounts a cairn, within which is a circular dolmen approached by an *allée couverte*. The dolmen serves as crypt, and has yielded objects in stone and copper, which are of course set down as 'prehistoric.' A large dolmen half a league outside Poitiers was a place of pilgrimage until late in the middle ages.¹ In one of the Manx *keeills*

¹ An early print of it is reproduced in Bertrand, *La Gaule avant les Gaulois* (1891), p. 194. It is close to a great necropolis, which was apparently in unbroken use from pagan into Christian times. According to Jean Bouchet's *Ann. d'Aquitaine* (1535), p. 128, it was the scene of an ancient annual fair (*La Foire de la*

Pierre Levée); which is consistent with what is known of the scene and origin of most ancient fairs, the Irish *aenachs* not excepted. From this association of dolmens with buying and selling probably arose their local name of *Tables des marchands*, as at Locmariaquer.

the later 'church' appears to incorporate part of a pre-existing dolmen (p. 37), and the church of Stainton, Pembrokeshire, stands above two dolmens (ch. xx). It is surely easier to believe that in such cases the dolmen was actually reared to be the grave-chamber of Christian dead, than to believe that Christianity had merely usurped the grave-chambers of pagans. Such usurpation could only be possible if Christianity was more powerful than we have reason to believe, the *religio loci* of a pagan's grave much less persistent and forceful than we know it was.

The most and the largest of Welsh examples are to be found at Dyffryn Golwch, 'Valley of worship,' within a few miles of the traditional earliest Christian settlements in that country at Llanilid, Llancarfan, and Llantwit Major. The dolmen at Marcross bears the name of Illtyd's House; another in Gower, the 'Stone of Cetti,' bears the name of the saint who was likewise the eponym of the parish of Kilgetty in Pembrokeshire.¹ So in Cornwall, the finest dolmens, e.g. Lanyon Quoit and Mulfra Quoit, stand in the immediate vicinity of such remains as those at Chysauster and Bosporthenis, which can hardly be of other than Christian age. In the Channel Islands it is the same: the finest of the monuments of Guernsey are grouped in the parish of Vale, which was also the first Christian settlement upon the island.

Of the dolmens known as Les Déhusets, in the parish of Castel in Guernsey, is told the significant legend that this 'was the site first chosen for the erection of the Castel church, but every night the fairies, or goblins, carried away all that had been built by day and deposited it on the spot where the church now stands.'² The tale plainly implies that the use of the dolmen as a place of worship continued far into Christian times.

The prevalent view that these monuments are the handiwork of a supposed race of 'dolmen-builders,' who

¹ Richard Fenton repeatedly remarked upon the constant association of dolmens or similar 'relics of druidical worship' with Christian antiquities (*Tour through Pembrokeshire*, pp. 19, 136, 356).

² De Guerin in *Trans. Guernsey Soc. Natural Science* for 1921, citing *Folk-lore*, pp. 220-221. A possible explanation of this

and similar legends will be advanced later. The name of Les Déhusets or Les Tuzets, constantly applied to dolmens in the Channel Islands, is the Breton Duz or Duzik (the goblin that haunts dolmens), and both derive from the Gallic *Dusii* (*daemones quos dusios Galli nuncupant*), mentioned by Augustine (*De Civit. Dei*, iv, 23).

at some remote period made their way hither from the East by way of North Africa and the western shores of France, is based upon the single fact that along this line dolmens do occur, and frequently in immense numbers, whereas off this line they are unusual, or even unknown. Now the regions in which the dolmens are most numerous are Moab,¹ North Africa and Ireland, and it is curious that these three regions were also the scenes of most remarkable manifestations of early Christian zeal; while from North Africa, and necessarily by way of France, Christianity was carried into Ireland. Is it not possible that the dolmens were in many cases, perhaps even in most cases, the work of the earliest zealots? At any rate, while there is a considerable mass of evidence to connect the dolmen with Christianity, there is in reality very little to connect it with a very remote paganism.

Welsh legend asserts that Saint Brynach (fifth century), being refused hospitality at Cilymaenllwyd in Carmarthen-shire, slept under a *maen llwyd*. The legend can refer only to a dolmen,² and points to the use of such things as habitations. One of the finest of the Welsh dolmens is to be seen in Anglesey at Bryn Celiddu, which may just as well mean 'Culdees' Hill' as 'Black Hazel Hill,' the usual translation. In the parish of Bryncroes ('Hill of Cross') near Pwllheli was a dolmen, and the adjoining farmhouse is called Mynachdy, 'Monk's House.'

Irish folk-lore avers that the dolmens are the 'beds' of two historical persons, Dermot and Graine: Graine, who was a daughter of Cormac MacAirt, being betrothed to Fin MacCoul, ran away with her lover Dermot (Diarmid O'Duibhne), with whom she was a fugitive for a year and a day,³ and each night the pair built and slept in another dolmen. It is an odd coincidence that the 'churches' founded by St. Patrick, i.e. the traditional number of the traditionally earliest churches of Ireland, should also be as many as the days in the year.⁴ Be it remembered also that, as the father of Graine had foresworn the faith

¹ C. R. Conder, *Hetb and Moab* (1883). Merrill (*East of the Jordan*, p. 439) notices that they not seldom stand at commanding points on the line of Roman roads.

² There was a fine dolmen on Maen Hir farm in this parish (*Inventory Carmarthen-*

shire, no. 85), and there still remain others in the vicinity.

³ Wakeman, *Handbook of Irish Antiquities*, p. 51.

⁴ The tradition is at least as old as Nennius (§ 54).

of his fathers (above, p. 22), she was also herself possibly a convert to something resembling Christianity.

The cases in which two and three, or even four and five, dolmens are found grouped in one cluster may be compared with the familiar groups of multiple 'churches' clustered within one Christian precinct.

The earliest Christian monastic settlement in Ireland outwardly presented nothing new. A cluster of *clochauns* within and about a circular *rath* or *cashel*—this is the precise appearance of the remains of St. Fechin's settlement on Ardoilean off the coast of Galway¹—was in pre-Christian times a familiar sight all over Ireland, for this was also the exact appearance of the settlement where dwelt the Druid teacher with his retinue of disciples.² If it came into the mind of any Irish king to evict the Druid and his followers, and to hand over to some Christian missionary their settlement as it stood, there would be no outward sign to betray the change. The thing did happen, for Druidism was past praying for, whereas Christianity was a vigorous and assertive force. In literal truth, as Baring Gould puts it, 'Christianity crept into the empty shell of Druidism.'³ This helps to explain the presence of so many churches within *raths* and *cashels*, and in closest association with the remains of the older faith, megaliths, holy wells, and famous cemeteries. Doubtless as the old faith waned and the new grew ever bolder, it would seek to plant itself in or near all spots particularly associated

¹ See Petrie, *Ancient Architecture of Ireland*, p. 424. The wall of the *cashel*, 'nearly circular,' has a mean diameter of 108 ft.

² The Druid might have his own *dun*. In the *Leabhar-na-b'Uidri* a Druid builds a *dun* and his wife whitens it with lime. Their white-washed cottages and farmsteads are to this day a distinctive feature of the Celtic areas of the British Isles and of France. 'They beheld an island . . . and a *dun* therein, with a high white wall about it, as if it were all one stone of chalk . . . and outside these were large houses all round the *dun*, of the colour of white snow.' And again, 'The woman who was wife of Nuadat was Almu. . . . The Druid (Nuadat) built a *dun* . . . and she rubbed her hands to its walls until it was all lime-white.' See O'Curry, i, cccviii; Baring Gould in *Arch. Cambr.* 5th ser. xvii, 274. So there were

female Druids as well as male, an important fact as explaining the prominent place attaching *ab initio* to women in Celtic Christianity, e.g. St. Brigit, the particular friend of St. Patrick. An alleged canon of St. Patrick concerns the dress of the wives of priests, and the *Laws* of Howel Dda recognise them. Marriage of the clergy is one of the Celtic features which throughout the ages defied the Latin rule, and still distinguishes the Anglican from the Roman priesthood. See Willis Bund, *Celtic Church of Wales*, pp. 289 sqq. Clerical celibacy was enforced in Rome so early as 385.

³ *Arch. Cambr.* 5th ser. xvii, 275; O'Curry, i, ccciii: cp. *ibid.*, i, cccviii, where he remarks that the whole social system of pagan Ireland, centring in the *dun*, passed without change of constitution or of the law of succession into the new Christian system.

with any effect, in so small a place'; and he suggests that vespers were usually sung outside it, where there is a small level expanse of grass, the *trahan* serving for shelter in very severe weather.

All the 'churches' are built with mortar and cement, and most of the stones have been rudely dressed. That called *Teach Molaise*, 'St. Molaise's House,' measures internally 8 ft. 10½ ins. by 7 ft. 10 ins. The 'Church of the Fire' (*Teampull-na-Teinidh*) measures 17 ft. 4 ins. by 11 ft. 4 ins. The largest of all, 'The Men's Church' (*Teampull-na-Bfear*), otherwise 'The Monastery,' is as much as 25½ by 12 ft. All these have perpendicular walls.

'Molaise's House' has a stone roof, which is in part a reconstruction. The single east window is built with sloping jambs, its round head carved out of a single stone. The doorway (4 ft. 7 ins. high, and 1 ft. 9 ins. wide) has perpendicular jambs, and is presumably a reconstruction. The building contains an altar of uncemented stones, and a narrow bench of similar construction runs the length of the south wall both inside and out.

The 'Church of the Men' is a plain oblong room, with east light and west doorway. The roof (now gone) was not of stone. Window and door are seemingly original, but that the building is of later date than the *Teach Molaise* is shewn by the prolongation of the north and south walls to form *antae* at the east end.

The *Teampull-na-Teinidh* Wakeman pronounces to be the most modern of the three, 'not older than the fourteenth century—it may be even considerably later; but that it stands on the site of an earlier structure is extremely probable.' Within it is the hearth above described (p. 27).

The much re-modelled *Teampull-na-Mban* or 'Church of the Women,' outside the *cashel*, is a few feet larger than the last-named, measuring 28 ft. by 13 ft. Wakeman unhesitatingly attributes it to the later fourteenth or early fifteenth century, while allowing that parts of its walls must be referred to a very early age.

The 'sweat-house,' like the *clochaun*, is a stone-roofed mortarless structure, 5½ ft. by 4 ft. 2 ins. internally, and

about 5 ft. high. Its only feature is the entrance, a mere hole 2 ft. square, the jambs slightly sloping.¹

This group of buildings at Inismurray is universally cited as typical of the oldest Irish monastic settlements. It is certain that it represents the activities of many centuries, and Wakeman may very well be right in thinking that the *cashel*, and possibly the *clochauns* also, are pre-Christian.

It is at the same time clear that not one of the so-called churches is an original building. Only the *Teach Molaise* has even a possible claim to the immense antiquity generally attributed to such Irish buildings, and even this has been altered or re-constructed, perhaps more than once. This must be so if the record of the *Annals* speaks truth, and Inismurray was really 'burnt' by the Danes in 802. On the other hand there is no reason to doubt that St. Molaise settled here in the early half of the sixth century (520-540), and that he was associated with St. Columba and St. Odhrain, the latter's disciple.³ Two of the 'stations' on the island still bear the names of these saints.

Is it permissible to suggest that this was in fact a druidical foundation which Christianity usurped? It has been seen⁴ that such settlements were in no wise dissimilar; Druidism had a fondness for the seclusion of islands⁵; and the singular hearth in the *Teampull-na-Teinidh*, with the traditions thereto attaching, points in the same direction. Some early saint may well have come hither, finding the place deserted and partly ruined.⁶ On the

¹ For the use of these substitutes for Turkish baths by the Irish until quite recent times, see appendix to Wakeman's *Survey*. He quotes Prof. H. Hennessy for the statement that the latter had seen at Prague and Nuremberg in 1879 baths designated 'Römische-Irische Bäder.' This would seem to be an obvious survival of the influence of Celtic missionaries in the Danube lands, though Champneys pronounces it unlikely. The 'sweat-house' is a national institution in rural Russia still, but is never called by a name suggesting an Irish origin.

² In the same year they burnt the monastery of Iona. We know that that monastery's buildings were of wood for more than a century after Columba's time. We know that its church was of timber as late as the eleventh century. The probability is that the same was the case at Inismurray, and that the alleged burning of the monastery is the literal truth. If so there

can be little on the site, the *cashel* and 'stations' excepted, which is older than 802.

³ The island was known as Inis-muiredaich even in St. Molaise's time, which may mean that Molaise was not the first Christian to make it his home; for there was, it is said, a Muiredach, bishop of Killala, in St. Patrick's time. But the name was a common one, and the Muiredach here concerned may have been the builder of the *cashel* and a pagan, whether pirate king or Druid.

⁴ See the quotation cited above, p. 57, n. 2.

⁵ cp. the case of the Isle of the Priestesses (Sena), above, ch. xii.

⁶ Would any secular chief have selected for his *cashel* a site so barren, so straitened, and so often and so long cut off from the mainland by the weather? There is but one practicable landing-place on the island, and weeks may go by when this is unapproachable.

spot where now is 'St. Molaise's House' he may have reared the building which was at once his dwelling and his oratory. The very name of it, not less than the details of the building—its tiny size, and particularly the stone bench within, which is still called 'St. Molaise's Bed,' and the corresponding *stoep* without—all bespeak it originally a man's dwelling-place, and are doubtless original features preserved when the edifice was re-built with mortar and dressed stones. As time went on the place became a considerable settlement as such things went, and of very special sanctity, but perforce it was always on but a small scale. The Danes may have found 'holy books and bells and pastoral staves' here; they can have found but little else to plunder. And when the Dane was no longer an enemy the narrow limits of the island, with barely 130 acres of cultivable soil, must have prevented its ever becoming a rich or populous community. The altars, it is to be noticed, are for the most part in the open air, and the ambition of the monastery, even as late as the fourteenth century, did not rise to anything in the way of a church bigger than the *Teampull-na-Bfear*. The name of this building and of the *Teampull-na-Mban*, in conjunction with the cross-wall which divides the *cashel* into two portions, suggests that, like so many other early Celtic monasteries, this may at one period have been double, i.e. of both sexes.

All things considered, it is impossible not to doubt the reality, or at any rate the traditional details, of the 365 'churches' alleged to have been built by St. Patrick at least three-quarters of a century before St. Molaise's time. It is more than likely that when the *Life of St. Patrick* came to be written, there were 365 buildings which laid claim to be of his foundation, for one or both of two sufficient reasons: in the first place experience had taught the clerics of that age that there was great profit to be got of any connexion, whether real or fictitious, with St. Patrick; and in the second place, the Latin rule not recognising a church as such unless it had been consecrated by a bishop, a very great number of oratories would, in default of other proof of their episcopal consecration, be claimed as buildings of St. Patrick's own foundation, such a claim having the further recommendation that there was little or no possibility of refuting it.

There is in fact little ground for the popular view that the tiny 'churches' of Ireland, and their congeners of Scotland, actually go back to the dawn of Scotie Christianity. All authority declares that the earliest churches of Ireland were of materials other than stone, and if that was so, all trace of those original buildings must have vanished long ago, even had there been nothing in the way of human outrage to expedite their destruction. In Ireland such outrage was the rule: the liberty to plunder and burn churches, to murder priests and laymen indifferently, was an important part of the divine right of Irish kings. Cormac of Munster, himself not only a king but an abbat, if not also a bishop, did not scruple twice to sack Clonmacnois, and to burn the archbishop of Armagh out of his church¹; and when no danger threatened in that kind, the clergy, monks and bishops alike, levied formal war one upon another.² What the native spared the foreigner despoiled: Inismurray was looted in 802, and the even more inaccessible monastery of Skellig Michael in 823. Moreover Ireland had learnt nothing of the Roman art of building with cement and mortar; and if the Roman tradition failed, as it did fail, to perpetuate itself in Wales, where the earlier Roman Christianity was never wholly lost, there could be no chance of its making good in the sister isle. But a building of undressed dry stone, however carefully constructed, could not in such a climate survive for many centuries the stress of weather. On the other hand the primitive native fashion of building continued to be followed without interruption, as it is to this day.³ That the Irish did such brilliant things in illumination, in literature, in science and in missionary zeal, as early as the seventh and eighth centuries, is no proof that they did the like in architecture; and if the Christianity of the fourteenth century was content with a building so small and rude as for example

¹ Stokes, *Ireland and the Celtic Church*, p. 199 *sqq.*

² *ibid.* p. 109-110.

³ Petrie was at first prepared to claim a fifth-century date for cemented buildings; more recent authorities doubtfully put them as far back as the ninth century. The oratory of Gallarus shews a vast advance on

those of Inismurray, but this is no proof that the latter are really older; for one has to reckon with conservatism of style, traditional reverence for a primitive model, and local inequalities of culture. The most reasonable view is that which admits the immense antiquity of the sanctity of the spot, but gravely doubts that of the particular building upon it.

the *Teampull-na-Mban* at Inismurray, all allowance made for conservatism and sentiment, what must have been its capacity some seven centuries earlier? It is a plain fact that Ireland has never, from that day to this, distinguished itself in the matter of architecture, and the same is true of the Celt in general. The most that can be conceded is that remains like those of Inismurray and Skellig Michael probably preserve to some extent the plan and arrangement of the very earliest Christian constructions; but that for example the oratory of St. Gallarus¹ at Kilmalkedar is a veritable specimen of the building of the sixth century cannot be proved and is very unlikely. At the most it may stand upon the spot where had stood a sixth-century building. More accordant with the probabilities is the cautious attitude of Dr. Joseph Anderson, when speaking of those Scottish examples which are admittedly modelled upon the Irish plan, and are usually regarded as of the same date. 'It must be borne in mind,' he writes,² 'that the antiquity of the type is one thing, and the antiquity of the specimen is a totally different thing.' The type may well be as old as that of any Irish Christian building in stone, and very probably is so; the various specimens of the type may be of any age from that to the Reformation, and the probabilities are all against their dating from the *terminus a quo*. The *clochaun*, as has been said, has not ceased to be built even to-day. There is documentary evidence that in some cases the Christian settlement, as late as 1162, was exactly as we imagine it in the fifth century.³ There is similar evidence that St. Gormgall was living in 1017, with a few other 'holy men,' precisely the same life on Ardoilean, Connemara, as other saints had lived there in the days when that settlement was first founded by St. Fechin, abbat of Fore, in 664.⁴ As was the life, so we may suppose to have been much of the environment of these Celtic Christians; the one would

¹ Cited by Romilly Allen (*Mont. Hist.* p. 59) as the best example of the class of isolated (non-monastic) buildings 'without cells or enclosing walls.' The fact that the building has no defensive wall is proof that it belongs to a later time, when such walls were no longer essential to safety, while the style of the architecture proves

the same thing. Indeed the same writer cites it as an example of a great advance upon e.g. Skellig Michael (p. 59). Whether it be as old as he suggests—'perhaps a thousand years'—is still doubtful.

² *Scotland in Early Christian Times*, p. 101.

³ Above, p. 32.

⁴ Anderson, *op. cit.* p. 86, note.

change as little as the other, and a rigid conservatism, abetted by the national unprogressiveness, would rebuild the old cells and oratories and *cashels* in precisely the original way from century to century.¹ Even the names of the saints which attach to such buildings are of little value in fixing their dates: 'the date of foundation,' wrote James Parker, 'only proves that there was nothing earlier than that date, and says nothing as to the date of the existing fabric, which may have been rebuilt half a dozen times.'² It is doubtful whether there exists in any of our islands an ecclesiastical building which preserves intact its appearance as it was 1000 years ago.

The word 'church' has for long centuries carried with it certain suggestions of fashion and dignity which conceal the truth. It led Bede in the eighth century to speak as if England had had 'churches' in numbers long before his own time; it leads modern writers to commit the same anachronism with regard to Christendom in general. The first Christianity of Ireland had no structural churches because it had no use for them. A church as we understand it is a building in which a congregation meets for worship. In its earliest form in Western Christendom it was the common oratory in which met the members of a monastic community. But we have evidence that for many years before such a community thought of erecting a common oratory, its members had each his own; indeed in the first instance each *clochaun* was also an oratory. The feeling that God is more greatly glorified in a magnificent church is a later sentiment of Latin origin, directly opposed to the Celtic instinct that a tiny cell of the very barest kind was more consistent with a proper humility of mind in the devotee. Holy Writ bids one retire to one's closet to be alone with God; it says nothing at all about churches as we understand them. Therefore those early Christians who founded their practice rather upon Holy Writ than upon Latin tradition, saw no need to build great churches. At first, as St. Patrick's rule declares, the oratory—it measured 7 ft. only—was the least conspicuous thing in the

¹ See the case summarised in Champneys, *Irish Eccles. Arch.* ch. iii, with quotations from Sir J. Y. Simpson, Miss Stokes and Rolt Brash.

² *Gent.'s Mag.* 1864, p. 6.

monastery. The 'great house,' or refectory, was fifteen times as big, and the community evidently met for meat, but not for prayer. Even the provision of a *separate* oratory of whatever size was an advance upon the older way, in which *clochaun* and oratory were identical; and this older way persisted as long as there were recluses like St. Cuthbert.¹ It is quite possible that no church—not even a monastic church—was built until the eighth century.² Of the three rectangular buildings on Skellig Michael—two 'oratories' and one 'church'—the latter only is big enough to accommodate the whole of the small community, apparently only six monks, and 'by its technique' this building 'is proved to be of a later date.' Such was certainly the case in England,³ and while there is no reason why things should have moved more rapidly in Ireland, there are many reasons for supposing that they moved much more slowly. In view of the anarchic savagery of the country it is inconceivable that Christianity in the early centuries should have courted attack by erecting spacious and elaborate churches and filling these with valuables, when congregations other than monastic there were none, and paganism was yet a virile adversary. It is more than doubtful whether the Irish of those times could under any circumstances have raised a building such as that which legend alleges St. Patrick to have raised at Donoughmore, 60 ft. in length,⁴ and it is idle to cite in support of the legend the supposed foundations of the royal palace-buildings at Tara.⁵ We do not know to what date those foundations belong, and Patrick was not secular monarch of All Ireland with a whole nation to obey his behests. The *Annals of Ulster* mention the burning of 260 persons in a *wooden* church in 849, but it would require a very small building to hold 260 persons when taking refuge from danger therein, and at a date when there was no seating to cumber the space.⁶ The building

¹ See below, ch. xxii: cp. Wilde, *Lough Corrib*, p. 107: 'the domestic *cloughaun* and the wattled hut furnished the types from whence the stone oratory or monastic cell and the wooden *diurtbeach* were derived—partly church and partly dwelling-house for the officiating cleric.'

² Baldwin Brown, *Arts*, i, p. 197.

³ See on Abingdon monastery, ch. xxiii.

⁴ See above, ch. xvii, 31.

⁵ Stokes, *Ireland and the Celtic Church*, p. 70. The banqueting hall is said to have been 759 ft. long and 90 ft. wide. The site is said to have been abandoned in 583. No one thinks of citing as historical evidence the descriptions of royal palaces in the *Mabinogion* and the *Mort d'Artur*.

⁶ The 'Black Hole' of Calcutta, in which

of churches of wood certainly continued till the twelfth century.¹ The earliest stone church for which Champneys² can find 'definite authentic mention,' is one at Armagh in 789. It is said however that there exists a record that 'in 787 died Cronan of the stone church of Ferns.'³ The language shows that at that date a church of stone was still something very much out of the common.⁴ The first Christians of Ireland were content with the lowliest huts only. Far more important in their eyes was the holy ground, ground that was sanctified by the burial of one of the *fideles*—his barrow. It was necessarily circular, for such was the *mos gentilium*, whether it were merely a mound or one or other form of ring-barrow. This was the *kil*, 'grave(yard),' and on it or within it was built the tiny hut-oratory of a solitary, or the clustered huts of several devotees who formed a community. Very literally they 'dwelt amongst the tombs.' It is significant that many of the reputed oldest of such buildings in Ireland are called, not churches, but 'houses,' e.g. Teach Molaise, at Inismurray, and 'St. Flannan's House,' attached to the north side of the cathedral at Killaloe, co. Clare.⁵ Similarly in the Scottish Isles we have Tigh Beannachadh, 'The Blessed House,'⁶ on Gallon Head, Isle of Lewes.

If fortune willed it the spot grew in veneration and acquired a specific name. It might be called the *kil* of him who was first buried there, or the *kil* of the recluse who had made the spot his abiding-place. And if fortune still favoured, his original hut—of turves, or wattle, or timber—would be rebuilt in dry stone, still later perhaps with mortar, would become in fact a 'church.' But the name remained. *Kil* it was in the beginning, and *kil* it is still in hundreds of cases; and even when foreign

were packed 146 people, measured only 18 ft. square; yet anyone reading that no less than 146 people were assembled in one room, would naturally envisage a very handsome apartment. A church 34 ft. long and 17 ft. wide would hold 260 persons more comfortably than the 'Black Hole' held 146.

¹ *Vita S. Malachiae*, vi, 14.

² *Irish Eccles. Arch.* p. 36.

³ Grattan Flood, *Hist. Dioc. of Ferns* (Waterford, 1916). This diocese was founded in 598.

⁴ Skene (*Celtic Scotland*, ii, 291) suggests that the new fashion of building in stone rather than in wood was due to the peril of 'the firebrand of the Danes.'

⁵ 'It is impossible to say whether this building was a church or a dwelling-house; if tradition be right it was a house' (Addy, *Church and Manor*, p. 64; Petrie, *Eccles. Arch. Ireland*, p. 121).

⁶ Anderson, *Scotland in Early Christ. Times*, p. 120. Champneys (*Irish Eccles. Architecture*, p. 230) has an appendix on the 'Intermixture of church and dwelling.'

influence for a time introduced some other term—the Saxon ‘church,’ for example, in co. Down—the old name has almost always re-asserted itself to-day.¹ But that later generations, familiar with churches as we understand them, should have applied that term to these tiny oratories, however natural it may be, is very unfortunate.

The usual Irish word for the structural church is *teampull*² (Latin *templum*). *Dombnach*³ (Latin *dominica*), sometimes corrupted into *Donough*, is not uncommon. *Daimleac*, ‘church of stone,’ is also used. *Baslic* (Latin *basilica*) is found occasionally.⁴ The word *eaglais* (*ecclesia*) is uncommon, in place-names particularly, and is only occasionally used of the structural church.⁵ The Welsh *llan*, Cornish *lan*, is quite exceptional, e.g. Lanronan in Down, and Lambeg, ‘the little *llan*,’ in Antrim and Down. Excepting in names of obvious Norse or English importation, *kirk* and *church* are never found; *kirk*, as would be expected, belongs entirely to the north-east.⁶

In the traditional view the word *kil*, ubiquitous in Ireland⁷ and common in Wales and Scotland, is borrowed from the Latin *cella* in the sense of a ‘church.’ Yet it does not appear that the word *kil* is ever applied to the structural church, nor does Ducange give any instance

¹ Temple Fion, (‘white church’) was ‘White Kirk’ in 1437. Kilclief, a present-day parish (Cill Cleithe 1001, Cill Cleath 1034), was Kirkcleth in *Valor Eccles.* In Harris’s *County Down* (1744) appear also Kirkiel, Kerkstown (Kerkistown), and Kirkcassock, all absent from the *Gazetteer*. The modern Cardonell was formerly Kirkdonell (*ibid.* p. 73). Yet the Saxon word has occasionally made good on spots of ancient sanctity. Thus Church Island in Lough Currane, Waterville, was founded by St. Finan the Leper, in the sixth century; and Churchfield, a townland in Culfeightrin, co. Down, was anciently Magheratemple (Reeves, *Eccles. Antiqs. Down*, p. 282).

² This forms the first element in about ninety town-land names and fifty parish names of Ireland.

³ Monkish writers assert that this denotes a church founded by St. Patrick upon the *Dies dominicalis* (Sunday). It is in reality a corruption of *dominica* ‘the Lord’s House,’ and belongs to a time when Latin Christianity had prevailed and everything possible

was done to bring the Irish into conformity with the Roman *regula*. From this last word was even coined another Irish term, *regles*, meaning a church built according to the Roman rule (*regula*). The very existence of this name implies that the majority of Irish churches were *not* in accordance with the Roman rule.

⁴ It survives in the name of Baslick, Barony of Castlereagh, co. Roscommon, which is mentioned in *Annals of Ulster* as Baslec (763) and Baislic (845).

⁵ It is ‘usually applied to the body of church members,’ says Ian Hannah in *Arch. Journal*, lxxii (1915), p. 91.

⁶ Westropp (*Journ. R.S.A.I.* vol. xlvii, p. 4) mentions near Killone, co. Clare, a *cathair* named Cahir-na-kirka, which he explains to mean either ‘Fort of the Grouse’ (cf. the Irish Coolkirky), or ‘Fort of Oats.’ In the Irish part of Ireland there is no discoverable trace of the *kirk*-word in any form.

⁷ P. W. Joyce notes 3,400 place-names in Ireland commencing with this word.

of *cella* used in the sense of ‘church.’¹ *Kil* is apparently as Irish as anything in Ireland.²

Kil appears in Welsh as *cil*, in Cornish and Breton as *kil*, in Gaelic as *cul*, *cil*, *kil*, *cell*.³ It comes from a root signifying ‘concealment,’ which appears in all the important Indo-Germanic languages, e.g. Greek *καλύπτω* (hide), *κλέπτω* (steal); Latin *celo*, *occulo* (hide), *clam* (secretly); German *hüllen* (hide); Anglo-Saxon *belan* (hide); Icelandic *hel* (death); modern English ‘hell.’⁴ In Irish it gives *celim* (I conceal), *celgg* (deceit), and also *ceal*, *cel*, with inflexions *cill*, *cille*, meaning ‘death,’ or ‘grave,’ i.e. the place where the dead are hidden.⁵ The Gaelic *kil* also meant a ‘grave’: a parish and village in Perthshire bear the name of Killin (for Kil Fin), and ‘a spot near the village . . . has from time immemorial been pointed out as the grave of Fingal. This was once the site of the church and also of the churchyard.’⁶ In Galloway

¹ ‘The earliest sense of the word seems to be that of a monastery or nunnery, generally of small size, dependent on some larger house’ (*N.E.D.* s.v. CELL).

² So Rolt Brash (*Oghamic Monuments of the Gaedhil*, p. 91), citing the admission of Dr. Ledwich ‘that *kill* was a native term and signified grave.’

³ To be distinguished in all Celtic languages from another word, frequently identical in form, signifying a ‘wood,’ Irish *coille*, Welsh *coil*.

⁴ Chaucer, *Parson’s Tale*, § 10: ‘the cause why that Job clepeth Helle “the lond of derknesse,” understandeth that he clepeth it . . . *dirk*, for he that is in helle hath defeaute of light material, . . . covered with the derknesse of deeth.’ Bosworth quotes passages where A.-S. *hell* = *sepulcrum*. In *A.V.* the Hebr. *Sheol* is translated 31 times by ‘hell,’ 31 times by ‘grave’ (*N.E.D.*). In Lincolnshire and Derbyshire to ‘hell’ a stack or a house means to roof it; in Cornwall roofing slates are called ‘helling’; in the Midlands ‘helling’ means a coverlet; and in Sussex a building covered with Horsham slates is said to be ‘stone-heeled’: cf. to ‘heel up’ potatoes, i.e. to cover them with additional soil (Lincs.).

⁵ Kuno Meyer, *Contributions to Irish Lexicography*. See also Borlase, *Dolmens of Ireland*, pp. 787, foll.; *Ulster Journal Archaeol.* vi (1900), pp. 128-132. Mackay (*Gaelic Etymol. of the English Language*, London, 1877) hazarded another explanation: ‘*Ceil*, a cell, church, now written

kil. These churches were so called from being covered over, unlike the druidical circles, which were open to the sky.’ It is rather curious that the English ‘cell’ should have reverted occasionally to the same meaning as *kil*; e.g.

‘Each in his narrow cell for ever laid,
The rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep.’
(Gray’s *Elegy*.)

This usage probably comes direct from the Latin *cella*, but *cella*, excepting that it comes from the same Indo-Germanic root—a truth which Rolt Brash (*op. cit.*) definitely asserted—has nothing to do with *kil*. Borlase (*Dolmens of Ireland*, p. 768) says that ‘there are some reasons for thinking that . . . *kil*, independently altogether of the Latin loan-word, may once have been applied to dolmens and cists,’ as also (*ibid.* p. 791) to circles of standing stones. ‘The Irish *cille* was not the monastic site, nor was it the dwelling of the founder. It was synonymous with the . . . burial-place of the saint. Not however of saints alone.’ O’Donovan, in *Trans. Ossianic Soc.*, says, ‘there are numerous *cills* or places of burial which were never dedicated to Christian purposes at all’ (*ibid.* p. 787). ‘We may infer . . . that the primitive idea of the Irish *cille* was inseparably connected with that of sepulture’ (*ibid.* p. 789). ‘In the popular language,’ wrote Father Smiddy (*Essay on the Druids*, p. 175), ‘*Cill* means a grave-yard.’

⁶ Mackinlay *Pre-Reform. Church*, p. 80. The actual site of the so-called ‘Grave of Fingal’ is marked by a large stone.

kill seems to have meant any small place of shelter.¹ The Welsh *cil haul* means 'a place of hiding from the sun,' *cil golwchwyd* 'a place of retreat for worship.' In one form or other *kil* attaches almost universally to the old burial-places—the circular and oval *kils* and *killeens*—of Ireland, of which the number is so great as to have given names to no fewer than 3,000 town-lands.² Many of these are qualified in a fashion that suggests nothing Christian, e.g. Kilnamuck and Kilmacat.³ If we do not find them named after the great figures of pagan Irish story, it is perhaps because they were less often the burial-places of illustrious individuals than of the unconsidered rank and file. But possibly for that very reason the word *kil* has outlived all later names for a burial-place.

As the evidence shews, Christianity in Ireland made good by fastening upon the native reverence for the dead. Its first step was always to consecrate a burial-place, and this would naturally in many cases bear the name of him who made it. Hence perhaps some of the multitude of Kilpatricks, Kilbrides, and Kilcolmans.

Kil, says O'Brien,⁴ 'doth not properly mean a cell.' It does not; it meant the burial-place only. In hundreds of existing *kils* and *killeens* there is no discoverable trace of any cell or other building whatever. The name Kildomnach⁵ signifies merely the 'graveyard with the church,' in contradistinction from the vast number of *killeens* which had no building at all.

Christianity set an entirely new fashion in erecting buildings which were also dwelling-places of living men upon the spot where lay the faithful dead. The building

¹ D. McRitchie (*Anc. and Mod. Britons*, ii, p. 5), citing the word from the *Gallovidian Encyclopaedia*, glosses it 'an out-house.'

² *Ulster Journ. Archaeol.* loc. cit.

³ Respectively 'Pig's *Kil*' and 'Cat's *Kil*.' More famous are Kildare and Killarney, respectively the '*kil* of the Oak' (a sacred oak tree of St. Bridget) and '*kil* of the Sloes': cp. on the sacred fire at Kildare, above p. 27. Borlase (*Dolmens of Ireland*, p. 1115, citing *Windele's MSS.*, *Cork, West and N.-E.* p. 396), says that at Kilabban 'is neither church nor cell, but the remains are as pagan in their aspect and character as can well be conceived,' viz. a tumulus about 20 ft. in diameter,

three pillar-stones around it, and on the top a *bullán* (basin-stone): cp. *ibid.*, p. 421, the Dallon Crom-na-thittim (a small circle, diam. 9 ft. formed of 5 stones about 4 ft. high), near Knocknakilla, co. Cork, 'is itself called the *cill*'; *ibid.* p. 788, Killaracht = Kilarracht = '*kil* of the idol.' Other examples, *ibid.* pp. 790-792.

⁴ *Irish Dictionary* (1839). Malcolm MacFarlane's *School Gaelic Dict.* (1912) has '*cill*: church, cell, burying-ground,' and in T. O'Neill Lane's *English-Irish Dict.* (1904) *cill* is given as the equivalent of 'grave.'

⁵ Usually explained as *Cella dominica*.

was not a church as we understand it but an oratory, a tiny chapel wherein another of the faithful might watch and pray above the dead. It had no special name that is recorded, nor was it the essential thing. The essential thing was the burial-ground about it, or rather the burials themselves, the 'relics.' It was a natural development, furthered by the Irish predilection for retiring to 'deserts'¹ and leading the solitary life, that the building with its saintly inmate came presently to be regarded as of more importance, the more natural as the occupant not seldom made of his oratory his place of burial. In that way the barrow which had heretofore been merely one *kil* amongst other *kils*, might come to be known as the *kil* of that particular saint. Thus would be multiplied the number of the *kils* named after St. Patrick, St. Bride, St. Columba and others.² To give one instance only: St. Odhrain was actually buried at Iona, and the place of his burial was called *Reilic Orain*, St. Oran's Grave. Yet on Inismurray also is a *Reilic Odhrain*, an enclosure of very early date, walled with dry stone, and having in the centre an altar which forms one of the 'stations.'³ This may be a case of mere commemorative dedication, for St. Oran, from the peculiar circumstances of his death and burial, became as it were the tutelary of graveyards⁴; but quite possibly the altar was claimed or believed to cover some actual relic of the saint. In either case it illustrates the duplication of such names upon spots very far apart.

That the Irish word *kil*, 'a grave,' should come to be confounded with the Latin *cella* in the same sense of 'a hermit's cell,' was inevitable. Latin was the language of the Church, and *cella* was the obvious way to Latinise *kil*. As early as the fifth century Sidonius Apollinaris (*ob.* 488) uses *cellulanus* for 'hermit,' and *κέλλα* appears in a Greek life of St. Pelagia⁵ of the same century. As

¹ See Stokes, *Ireland and the Celtic Church*, p. 178. Disert or Desert is, he says, 'one of the commonest names of town lands and parishes' in Ireland. In *Annals of Ulster* the term is of constant occurrence, rendered always by Hennessy as 'hermitage.' It reappears alike in Wales and in Scotland, e.g. Dysart in Fifeshire. The church of Glenorchy—its garth is still almost circular—was anciently known as Clachan Disert.

² Ireland has 35 Kilbrides, 24 Kilcolmans. In Scotland the number of Columkilles is even greater.

³ Wakeman, *Survey of Inismurray*, pp. 149-153.

⁴ W. G. Collingwood in *Antiquary*, vol. xliii (1907) p. 175. He is speaking of Clodh Odhrain in Tiree. Tiree was closely associated with St. Columba.

⁵ Quoted by Stokes, *Ireland and the Celtic*

cella (= *celula*) meant originally merely a 'hiding-place' or 'hidden place,' the confusion might well be thought to be no confusion at all. It may be that the name of the Culdees (Keldei, Keledei, Colidei), 'that ascetic order who adopted a solitary service of God in an isolated cell,'¹ owes something to the same confusion of *kil* with another word or words (Lat. *cella*, Ir. *céle*). Certainly the Culdees were in a special sense 'dwellers among the tombs.'²

The occasional presence of a Christian church within what was originally to all appearance a pagan *killeen* is the obvious outcome of that same spirit of compromise which led Gregory to advise the conversion of pagan Saxon *templa* into Christian *ecclesiae*, and prompted Willibrord to gather relics in Rome to be introduced into Friesic cemeteries.³ Every *killeen* was a focus of ritual to the pagans about. Christianity dared not desecrate the spot. It could only hope to bring it to a new consecration, and the symbol thereof, perhaps the means thereto, was to erect within it a building under Christian dedication. The name of Kildomnach, 'the graveyard with a church,' could arise only when the multitude of *kils* had no distinctive buildings.

The earliest known form of the Christian symbol in Ireland is that called St. Patrick's cross, or the wheeled cross, a circle charged with a cross in the shape of four radials of equal length. In the usual view this symbol is derived from something precisely similar found upon Christian monuments in the East and Egypt.⁴ It would

Church, p. 180, n. The Irish family of Kirkpatrick originally bore the name of Kilpatrick, Latinised in early deeds as *de Cella Patricii*—so a distinguished member of the family has assured me.

¹ Skene, *Celtic Scotland*, ii, ch. 6. The accepted derivation is from O.I. *céle* 'associate, fellow, sometimes servant,' and *dé* 'god.' See *N.E.D.* The link with *kil* is provided by such a Gaelic form as *cuil* 'place of retreat,' which appears in Culbrandon, 'St. Brandon's Hermitage,' in the Garveloch Isles, and perhaps in Culross, Fife, the place of St. Kentigern's birth and training, Culmaile (the ancient name of Golspie, Sutherland), and Culmalin (1471 for Kilmallie, Lochaber) = Kil Moling (1296, Kilmalyn): cf. such Irish forms as Cullen = Killeen, Culkey = Kilkea, and Culmullin = Kilmoling.

² As long ago as 1668 John Spotswood (*Hist. of Church of Scotland*) wrote that the first Scotie missionaries to Scotland 'being solitary, were in such reputation for their holiness of life, as the cells wherein they lived were after their deaths turned into temples and churches. And of this it came that all the churches afterwards erected were called Cells, which word I hear is yet retained amongst the Irish Scots. The priests they termed Culdees . . . from their living in these cells, where people assembled to hear service.' He found confirmation of this view in the spelling of the name Kelidei, and Johnston (*Scottish Place Names*, p. xcvi) accepts it, interpreting it as 'men of the nook or recess.'

³ Bede, *H.E.* v, ii, § 1.

⁴ See Champneys, *Irish Eccles. Arch.* p. 75, and references there given. It is not

appear to have been of wide diffusion in pre-Christian times,¹ but nowhere did it become so general as in Ireland, or receive such artistic treatment. Among the pagan Celts the *Rothfail* ('wheel of destiny') appears to have been a solar symbol²; and its adaptation to the symbolism of Christianity merely required the reduction of the radials from eight or six to four only. That it owed its popularity and subsequent wide dissemination to Celtic Christianity is unquestionable; it followed the Irish missionaries into Wales and Cornwall, England,³ Strathclyde⁴ and Scotland.⁵ As the simple circle was the pagan symbol of death and the grave, there was a certain felicity in 'surcharging' this sign with the Christian symbol. It is a fact that the true wheeled cross seems to be found with few exceptions upon sepulchral monuments only; and Coffey remarks that amongst the rare cases where the cup-and-ring-mark is found on the continent, occurs one in the Eringerthal, Valais, Switzerland, where it is

by any means certain that 'the circle was originally a wreath,' though that seems to have been the origin of the circle surrounding the Chi-Rho monogram.

¹ It occurs for example, associated with non-Christian symbols, on the jambs and lintels of Spanish *despoblados* and Portuguese *citánias* (Marcel Dieulafoy, *Art in Spain and Portugal*, p. 50). Duplicated on either side of two parallel straight lines in wall-paintings at Almadén, Spain, it is explained as of 'true Bronze age' and representing a chariot (Burkitt, *Prehistory*, p. 296).

² See Rhys, *Lectures*. It is the characteristic decoration of the golden *lunulae*, or 'sun-discs,' which, though abundant in Ireland, are scarcely found elsewhere except in Denmark and the adjacent islands such as Zealand. A specimen was found in the Trundholm Moss, Zealand, in 1902. They are attributed to the Bronze age, but they more probably came to Ireland at a much later date with one or other of the invading Belgic tribes from the Baltic and Jutland. The same *motif* is freely used on Roman monuments found on the line of the Wall, most commonly on altars to Jupiter, Sol and Apollo, but a sepulchral stone from Cilurnum bears two perfect specimens of St. Patrick's cross. The *lunulae* appear to have been badges of rank (like brooches, which are a matter of legislation in the Brehon laws), and they would pass from paganism to Christianity with

other insignia. Warren (*Celtic Liturgy*, pp. 120-1) cites from Stuart (*Sculp. Stones of Scotland*, i, p. lxxxvii) a carved stone from Invergowrie, representing ecclesiastical figures wearing *lunulae*. See also Coffey, *Bronze Age in Ireland* (1913) p. 64.

³ It occurs upon Roman tiles found at Iwerne, Dorset (*Reliquary*, 1896, p. 112), and at Kingston-by-sea in Sussex, and in the Roman villa at Chedworth (Glos.), where it is associated with three examples of the six-rayed cross and with the *labarum*.

⁴ Thrice on one of the side-slabs of the Aspatria cist.

⁵ At Kirkmadrine, Wigtownshire, and at Whithorn, are pillar-stones bearing the Chi-Rho monogram, and in the example at Kirkmadrine the monogram is surrounded by a circle. These are commonly believed to be the oldest Christian monuments in Scotland. They have however nothing to do with the true Irish wheeled cross, and may very possibly go back to the days of Ninian, as Romilly Allen believed (*Mon. Hist. Brit. Church*, p. 83). Anderson (*Scot. in Early Christian Times*, 2nd series, p. 253) quotes a couplet from a tombstone at Milan whereon is carved the same symbol as at Kirkmadrine:—

'Circulus hic summi comprehendit nomina regis,

Quem sine principio et sine fine vides.

In other words, the circle was, in the symbolism of Latin Christianity, identical in meaning with Alpha and Omega.

associated with the symbol of St. Patrick's cross. In the proto-Christian barrow at Warren (Pemb.) the two symbols were found upon two separate stones within one grave.¹

But that the simple circle without further embellishment had no specifically Christian meaning in the symbolism of Western Christianity is conclusively proved by the single fact that, so late as the thirteenth century, it was the statutory brand of the Jew.² Its earlier associations, if any, must obviously have been anything but Christian.

It is hardly possible to doubt that in Ireland some at any rate of the older pagan sites were deliberately usurped by Christianity, as Patrick is said to have built his 'great church' of Donoughmore actually upon the site of Cruc Mag Slecht, the most sacred of all such spots in Ireland; and so closely does Celtic Christianity correspond with Celtic paganism in many of its beliefs and practices, that it is well-nigh impossible to say where the one ends and the other begins. Certainly the rites observed by the pilgrims to Croagh Patrick, as described by W. C. Borlase,³ are more pagan than Christian. It does not follow that the usurpation was immediate, and such a thing is unlikely. Some time would require to elapse before it could safely be attempted, and the attribution of such a policy to Patrick himself is of no value. That saint, it may be believed, was too clever to risk the consequences while paganism was still a power. The old gods were not to be so easily dethroned. There is much to support the view of those who maintain that early Christianity was merely 'Paganism veneered with Christianity,'⁴ and even the view of those who believe that Celtic paganism, finding the old gods losing favour, forthwith adopted first the Roman Apollo, then the

¹ Below, ch. xx.

² The *Rota Iudaeorum*, which all Jews were compelled to wear on the breast when they appeared in public. See Ducange, *Lexicon*, s.v. ROTA and CIRCULUS. He cites from *Concilium Arelatense*, *Statuta Ecclesiae Ruthenensis*, and *Statuta Ecclesiae Nemausensis*. The Council of Arles was in 1234. The Statutes of Rodez (Aveyron) belong to 1289. Those of Nîmes, as printed in Martène et Durand (*Thesaurus Novus Anecdotorum*,

Paris, 1717) are attributed to 1364, which appears from internal evidence to be an error for 1264. This correction I owe to Dom. H. Dumaine.

³ *Age of the Saints*, pp. 45-8.

⁴ St. Bernard (*Vita Malachiae*, c. 8) said much the same of the Irish Christianity of the twelfth century; cp. O'Donovan, *The Four Masters*, 'Nothing is clearer than that Patrick engrafted Christianity upon pagan superstition.'

Christian Christ; that Patrick was himself a 'Druid'; that his very name is not personal at all, but the name of an order in the pagan hierarchy; and that in effect Christianity took hold upon the Irish because it was offered to them in a form almost as much pagan as Christian.

The further question whether Christianity deliberately occupied the sites of pagan cemeteries is different, and unanswerable, for the dead cannot return to tell us in what faith they died. For the daughters of king Leoghaire was built a barrow in accordance with their dignity; but what became of the many lesser converts who died in the early time when as yet the provision for Christian burial was limited? They would presumably be buried in the local *killeens*, or if separately, at any rate with no such costly grave-mound as that of the king's daughters; and in the early days, when the Faith was still new and hesitant, it is certain that there would be little regard paid to the various provisos which were subsequently enforced—earth-to-earth burial, the east-and-west position, the exclusion of grave-furniture, and so on. Such restrictions could come into force only when paganism was becoming moribund, Christianity waxing powerful. It is a transparent probability that many an early Irish convert would be laid to his rest with accessories for the most part precisely like those which had accompanied his pagan forbears; and the evidence shews that, so far as concerned the circular barrow—the most important accessory of all—this was the fact. His burial-place might become a Christian grave-yard, or it might be wholly forgotten, and we have no means at all of knowing whether the nameless person buried under the church at Monasterboice was really a Christian by profession, or whether, on the strength of the poor polished celt which his friends laid with him, he should be condemned to Limbo or further.¹ All that can be said is that the subsequent building of a church on the spot raises a presumption that he may have been a Christian; but that there can be no certainty is proved by the parallel case at Carn Brea in Cornwall

¹ So C. H. Kains-Jackson (*Our Ancient Monuments*, p. 81), speaking of the relics found in Irish graves: 'These discoveries within certain barrows and chambered

tombs have been too generally taken as fixing the date of the original interments in purely pagan times.'

(p. 145). History knows no hard and fast dividing lines. The tradition of years unknown bade men bury their dead in barrows, and archaeology tells us that each successive age and race continued to make at least occasional, yet deliberate, use of the barrows of the men before it, certainly down to the days of St. Guthlac (ch. xxiv). Archaeology does not tell us that Christianity did not do the like ; rather it declares that Christianity did exactly the same. And prejudice and books apart, that is what one would expect, especially as primitive Christianity, like Celtic paganism, was fast-rooted in the cult of the dead.