

**THE ANCIENT IRISH
CHURCH:
WAS IT CATHOLIC
OR PROTESTANT?**

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The ancient Irish Church: was it Catholic or Protestant? by James Gaffney

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JAMES GAFFNEY

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CHURCH:
WAS IT CATHOLIC
OR PROTESTANT?**

THE
ANCIENT IRISH CHURCH:

Was it Catholic or Protestant?

BY THE REV. JAMES GAFFNEY, C.C.

"The universal aptness of a religious system for all ages of civilization, and for all sorts and conditions of men, well besit its claim of divine origin. She is of all nations, and of all times, that wonderful Church of Rome."—EOTHEM.

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TO
THE VERY REV. LAURENCE DUNNE,

Archdeacon of the Diocese of Dublin,

THESE FEW PAGES, WHICH DIMLY SHADOW FORTH
THE FAITH OF OUR FATHERS,

Are Dedicated,

WITH SINCERE AND GRATEFUL ESTEEM.

P R E F A C E .

THE matter contained in the pages of this little volume has formed the substance of a lecture recently delivered before the Catholic Young Men's Society in Dublin. I have aimed at nothing more than bringing together witnesses of learning and impartiality to testify to historical facts. Such attempts have been latterly made to obscure and pervert the truth, that it may not be amiss to direct attention to authentic documents, which set forth, plainly and simply, the dogmas of our Ancient Church. The authorities referred to are Irish manuscripts, dating back to the earliest period of our Christian history, and the writings of

our distinguished antiquaries—mostly Protestant—men of undoubted learning and unquestioned honor. Their testimony will assuredly outweigh with an enlightened public the confident declamations of Skinner's-alley.

Much more could be readily made of the subject I have endeavoured to epitomise. There is, however, so great an indisposition to study any period of Irish history, that one is quite afraid to enter too largely upon a theme, which may not prove as interesting to the general public, as it is to the clerical student.

Those who desire to examine fully the questions here barely touched upon, can easily find abundant stores of information in Lanigan's Ecclesiastical History, in the works issued by the Irish Archæological Society, and, above all, in O'Curry's MS. Materials of Irish History. Had the Catholic University no other claims upon our support than the publication of O'Curry's work, it has done enough to endear

it to every Irish Catholic. That volume contains a mine of richest lore, hitherto unworked ; and from every page, the precious metal sparkles, encouraging the earnest seeker after truth to pursue labours which will bring him most valuable results. To those who may not have money to spend upon expensive books, yet would willingly desire to soothe the day's hard labour by an hour's occasional reading about old Catholic Ireland, I would venture to recommend the penny Lives of the Irish Saints, published by Mr. Duffy. They are full of interesting facts, arranged by no unskilful hand, and have merits far beyond the unpretending form in which they are presented to the public.

J. G.

Malahide,

FEAST OF ST. GALL, 1863.