St Moluag

The Clear and Brilliant,

The Sun of Lismore in Alba

Lam luac Glan geldai

Grian Lissmoir di Alba

Patron Saint of the Royal House of Lorne and, Rushen, the Isle of Man

Apostle of the Picts

£6.00

Revised June 2015

St John from the Book of Kells

St. Moluag

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FEAST DAY 25TH JUNE

The Apostle of the Picts, Patron Saint of Lorn

Niall, by the Grace of God, Coarb of St. Moluag, Abbot of Lismore, Baron of Bachuil.

Revised and Printed April 2015

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Summary

This booklet examines the history of the old Celtic Catholic Church with particular reference to St. Moluag.

For the first thousand years of her history the Christian Church was essentially one. By the sixth century five historic Patriarchal centres, Jerusalem, Antioch, Rome, Alexandria, and Constantinople, formed a cohesive whole and were in full communion with each other. Although there were occasional heretical or schismatic groups going their own way, for the greater part, the Church was unified until the 11th century.

The Celtic Catholic Church of Ireland, to which St. Moluag belonged, evolved from the Eastern Churches of Antioch, Jerusalem and Alexandria and was in Communion with the Eastern Churches and Rome. The Synod of Whitby in 664, where the Roman Catholic Church and Celtic Catholic Church debated the calculation of Easter, demonstrates that these churches were in communion at that time.

In an ancient manuscript written circa 700 the ancient Irish saints are distinguished into three 'Orders'. Those of 'The First Order of Catholic Saints' were all bishops, beginning with St. Patrick: they were 'most holy: shining like the sun.

In those early days their practises conformed with Rome and the other Patriarchs inasmuch as they had one tonsure (from ear to ear – if at all), one liturgy of the Mass, and celebrated one Easter. I believe that Saint Moluag, 'The Sun of Lismore in Alba' was of that order. Moluag (Mo-Luóc or Lugacius) is described as one of the six Irish priests whom Patrick prophesied would become bishops.

We can infer that he was born in the early sixth century. He was already an ordained priest in 530 when he travelled with St. Brendan on his famous voyage. He was a bishop when he ordained St. Comgal installing him as abbot of Bangor circa 552.

In 562 Saint Moluag left Ireland with twelve followers to found his great community on the Isle of Lismore. From Lismore, St. Moluag went on to found two other major centres in the land of the Picts at Rosemarkie and Mortlach (now called Dufftown). It is significant that all three were to become the seats of the Roman Catholic Sees of the Isles, Ross and Aberdeen.

By the time of his death in 592, five years before St. Augustine arrived at Canterbury, he had founded over 120 monasteries and converted the Picts of Alba. Saint Moluag's famous disciples included, Mael-ruba of Applecross, St. Mirran, first Abbot of Paisley, Moluag's kinsman St. Catan of Kingarth

on Bute and Catan's nephew St. Blaan. They had a major influence on the spread of Christianity in North Britain.

During the Second Order of Irish Saints in the latter part of the sixth century differences emerged, largely because Rome changed and Ireland did not. However by the end of the 8th century the Irish and Scottish Celtic churches were again almost completely conforming to Roman practices except for a few 'idiosyncrasies' such as still allowing priests to marry, and maintaining hereditary succession in ecclesiastical offices, especially that of coarb. The coarb of a Celtic abbot was heir of the abbot in his ecclesiastical functions and abbatical mensal territory.

In the year 1111 the Irish Church was reorganized to fit Roman concepts, shifting power from the abbots to the bishops and defining diocesan boundaries. Ireland's first papal legate was appointed in 1151 and in the following year Pope Eugenius III recognized Armagh, Cashel, Dublin and Tuam as archiepiscopal sees. The Archbishop of Armagh subsumed the ancient Celtic office of Coarb of St. Patrick.

The Church of St. Moluag, however, based on Lismore, in Argyll remained independent. In the 1100's, having survived the Viking deprivations, it was flourishing under the protection of Somerled. Records show that in 1150 Cuduilig was appointed Abbot of Lismore. The Abbey lands were extensive. Ten years later the Roman Catholic See of Lismore was founded with insufficient lands to sustain it properly.

The Coarbship of St. Moluag is the oldest office in the country: the Abbey of Lismore was founded in 562. In the Celtic tradition it remains an hereditary office. The Church of St. Moluag, although never a daughter of Rome, is an unreformed church of great antiquity and pre-dates the east-west schism of the twelfth century. It was in communion with Rome and the Orthodox Churches at its foundation and that communion continues to this day. The Scottish Episcopal Church claims to be the spiritual daughter of this church and the Coarbs of St. Moluag play a role, largely ceremonial, in the consecration of the Bishops of Argyll and the Isles. In the words of the preacher at the consecration of the Right Reverend Martin Shaw as Bishop of Argyll and the Isles, the Right Reverend Richard Lewis, Bishop of St. Edmondsbury and Ipswich 'to remind us of the convenient Celtic practice of placing bishops under monastic authority'.

It saddens me greatly that so many Christians today seem to focus on our differences rather than those essential tenets that we hold in common. As this ancient office of Coarb of St. Moluag predates the major schisms in Christ's Church I hope to be able to use this office to attempt reach out to people and, in small ways, to work towards one holy catholic and apostolic Church.

Chapter 1 Background

1.1 Christianity in the First Six Centuries

I have found it very difficult to cut through to the truth about the early history of the Church as there is so much bias in much of the writings. This booklet does not have space to rehearse all the arguments so I have tried to put together a neutral précis of the history to help understand how the situation would have appeared in the sixth century at the time of St. Moluag.

The first two centuries indicate a fairly flat church organisation with elders/presbyters/bishops governing autonomous local churches. A bishop's authority did not extend beyond the local church. These churches were predominantly in what we would now call the East as Christianity was suppressed in the Roman Empire at this time. Over the next century the office of elder/bishop was split into two separate offices and by about 200 the leading elder began to take on the exclusive title of bishop. From that time on a bishop's influence grew to extend beyond the local church. In the first few hundred years of the church, the term 'pope,' which simply means 'father,' was used for any important and respected bishop: the Bishop of Rome was one of several important bishops in Christendom

The Roman Emperor Constantine had a major impact on the spread of Christianity. In 313 his Edict of Milan ended the persecution of Christians, even going so far as to restore confiscated property. Constantine called the First Council of Nicaea in 325 - the first ecumenical council since the Council of Jerusalem in 50. Apparently about 1800 bishops were invited (about 1000 from the east and 800 from the west) although the numbers who actually attended may have been as few as 300. Most of the bishops were from the Roman Empire and, not suprisingly, the council mirrored the civil administrative practice of that empire by deciding that sees should be grouped to match the provincial boundaries and that a 'metropolitan', generally based in the principal city of the province, should oversee all the bishops of that province. For obvious political reasons this council noted the primacy of the See of Rome, followed by the Sees of Alexandria and Antioch. Constantine moved the capital of the Roman Empire to Byzantium, (later called Constantinople, and now Istanbul) in that year. During his life he exempted Christians from tax, and built many churches including St. Peter's Basilica in Rome.

Damasus I, Bishop of Rome, sent his legates to the Council of Constantinople in 381. Damasus did not agree with all the decisions, and was particularly against the ranking of the five major dioceses which resulted in the youngest, Constantinople, being placed above Antioch, Jerusalem and Alexandria. Damasus was the first to declare Rome as the 'Apostolic See.'

Nevertheless the Council ruled that:

> The bishops are not to go beyond their dioceses to churches lying outside of their bounds, nor bring confusion on the churches; but let the Bishop of Alexandria, according to the canons, alone administer the affairs of Egypt; and let the bishops of the East manage the East alone, the privileges of the Church in Antioch, which are mentioned in the canons of Nicaea, being preserved; and let the bishops of the Asian Diocese administer the Asian affairs only; and the Pontic bishops only Pontic matters; and the Thracian bishops only Thracian affairs.[1]

Of particular interest is that the Council also decided that the churches of God 'among the Barbarian people' (that is, beyond the bounds of the Roman Empire) 'shall be regulated by the customs of their fathers'. A point that was to be made forcibly by Columbanus, an Irish monk, to the Bishop of Rome ca. 600 as we shall see later.

In 445, Emperor Valentinian said the Bishop of Rome was the law for all so, armed with this authority, in 451 Pope Leo I convened the Council of Chalcedon. Hitherto only an Emperor had the authority to do so. This Council also ruled on disputes restricting the clergy to canon courts, and denying them access to secular courts, although interestingly the final court of appeal was to the 'throne of the Imperial City of Constantinople' [2].

The Council of Chalcedon downgraded the status of Alexandria, and enhanced the status of Constantinople recognising its authority over Pontus and Asia in addition to Thrace.[3] The rational behind this decision was based on the argument that First Council of Constantinople 'rightly granted privileges to the throne of old Rome, because it was the royal city' and that as Constantinople was the 'New Rome' she should rank next after Rome[4]. This was later rejected by Pope Leo I, whose delegates were absent when this resolution was passed, as it contravened the sixth canon of Nicaea and infringed the rights of Alexandria and Antioch.

In 531 the Emperor Justinian used the title of 'patriarch' to designate exclusively the bishops of Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem, setting the bishops of these five sees on a level superior to that of metropolitans. Eventually a council was considered to be ecumenical if all five patriarchs were represented.

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[1] Canon 2 of the Council of Constantinople in 381.
[2] Canon 9 of The Council of Chalcedon in 451.
[3] John H. Erickson *The Challenge of Our Past: Studies in Orthodox Canon Law and Church History*, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1991 p. 97.
[4] Canon 28 of The Council of Chalcedon in 451.

The five patriarchs vied for supremacy. It didn't take long for Constantinople to become the leading patriarch in the East and was numerically much stronger than Rome, which was the only patriarch in the west.

In 587, towards the end of St. Moluag's life, Emperor Maurice granted the title 'ecumenical patriarch' or 'universal bishop' to John the Faster, Patriarch of Constantinople. Gregory, Bishop/Patriarch of Rome, said no man should wear the title and went so far as to call the title 'the earmark of the anti-Christ'. This exchange still creates controversy and has been taken by some to suggest that Gregory, universally regarded as an outstanding figure in history, was not claiming to be in authority over the Patriarch of Constantinople. This suggestion is robustly denied by Roman Catholics.

Several years later, in 606 and fourteen years after St. Moluag rested in Christ, Boniface III, Bishop of Rome, was given the formal title of 'Universal Bishop' by Emperor Phocas.

Throughout this period we see frequent claims by one patriarch of authority over another. Such claims are invariably ignored or repudiated by the supposedly inferior patriarch. However, all patriarchs were subject to the emperor as the authority of the five patriarchs at that time was limited to the boundaries of the Roman Empire. Those 'barbarians' outwith the empire were authorised to continue in the manner their fathers had taught them.

The more extravagant claims of the bishops of Rome were made after St. Moluag had founded his monasteries and established his rule so had no impact on his life, lucky man. Indeed his monasteries were outwith the Roman Empire, therefore, as agreed at the Council of Constantinople in 381, should 'be regulated by the customs of their fathers' and were not under the authority of any of the five patriarchs.

As we shall see St. Moluag ranked as high as the most senior kings in Ireland and ruled as an independent prince.

1.2 Irish Origins, Tribal Politics and Early Dalriada

It is essential to understand the circumstances of the time to begin to understand the complex situation behind St. Moluag and his mission.

The Ulaid were once the most powerful tribal group in the north of Ireland and it is from them the province of Ulster derives its name. The Kings of the Ulidia had as their capital *Emain Macha* near modern day Armagh.

In the sixth century the main Ulaid tribes were the powerful Pictish (some would say Cruithne) *Dál nAraide, Dál Fiatach* and *Ui Echach Coba*[5] tribes who all spoke a P-Celtic language. Lesser tribal kingdoms included the *Dál Riata* or *Dál Riada,* a smaller subject tribe in the north, who spoke a Q-Celtic Gaelic.

The Kings of *Dál nAraide* resided at *Ráith Mór Muighe Line (*translated as the great rath/fort of Moylinny), east of Antrim, from the second century[6] until it was burned by Edward Bruce in 1315[7].

The *Dál Fiatach*, the 'true Ulaid', settled in Lecale and in the vicinity of Strangford Lough. Their capital at *Dun da Lethglas* (now Downpatrick) was to become an important ecclesiastical centre and the reputed burial place of St. Patrick

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[5] The *Ui Echach Coba* are named after Eochu Coba who descended from Fiachu Araide who founded the *Dál nAraide.*

[6] *Annals of Tigernach.*

[7] Rev. William Reeves, D.D, *Ecclesiastical Antiquities of Down, Connor, and Dromore*, p.280.

From the sixth to tenth centuries the *Dál Fiatach*, *Dál nAraide* and *Ui Echach Coba* shared the kingship of Ulaid. Later, however, the kingship was held by the *Dál Fiatach* alone.

From about 450 the tribes of the Ulaid were being displaced east by the invading *Ui Neill* Gaels (O'Neill). In 563, at the Battle of Moneymore (*Moin Dairi Lothair)*, the Ulaid suffered a massive defeat at the hands of the northern *Ui Neill*.

Much of the information available to us comes from the Irish Chronicles. These include, the Annals of Ulster (AU), Tigernach (AT), and the Four Masters (M) together with Chronicum Scotorum (CS). Tighernach was Abbot of Clonmacnoise. In 1150 Christian Malone, Abbot of Clonmacnoise, wrote the Chronicum Scotorum which is largely concerned with the Clonmacnoise and is closely related to the Annals of Tigernach. The Annals of the Four Masters is a compilation of other annals that were available in the seventeenth century. Of most use to us therefore are the Annals of Ulster (AU).

Dr. Kathleen Hughes is clear that the Annals of Ulster (AU) and Tigernach (AT) go back ultimately to the same version that she calls the '*Chronicle of Ireland*' and that it incorporated a '*Chronicle of Iona*'. She argues that 'entries about Iona, Scottish Dál Riada, and Pictland must have come from it.'[8] From about 740 instead of people 'going' to Ireland we have people 'coming' to Ireland, indicating the chroniclers moved from Iona to Ireland around that time. The annals very much reflect the partisanship of the time and the spin is no less than we see in politics today.

Skene points out the Church at that time was very tribal[9] and Mould writes that the divide between the tribes extended to the Church[10]. For obvious reasons there was little love lost between the Ulaid tribes and the O'Neill's. St. Finnian, St. Brendan, St. Moluag and St. Comgal were nobles of the *Dál nAraide* whereas Columba was an O'Neill.

The *Dál Riada*, under pressure from the *Ui Neill*, began to migrate across the Irish Sea to what is now known as Argyll. Fergus Mor son of Erc, King of *Dál Riata* moved his capital from Ulidia and, with his two brothers Loarn and Angus, established the ancient kingdom of Scots Dalriada. The three kindred groups each had their own *rí* (king) and territory. The *Cenél Óengusa* occupied Islay. The *Cenél nGabráin*, held Kintyre, Cowal, Bute and Arran. The *Cenél Loairn* held Colonsay and Lorn and looked on the northern march with the Picts.

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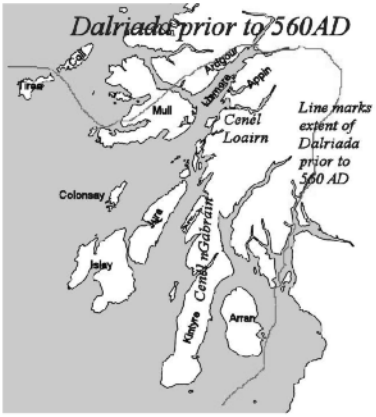
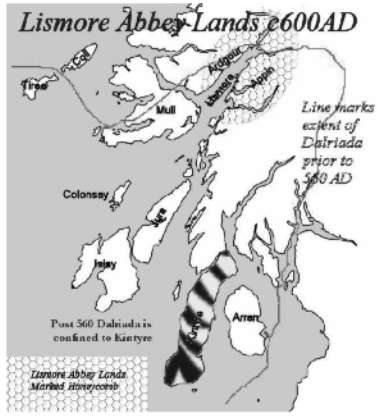
[8] Kathleen Hughes, *Early Christian Ireland, introduction to the sources,* Cornell University Press, 1972.
[9] W.S. Skene, *Celtic Scotland: a history of ancient Alban, Vol II*, 1886, p. 66.
[10] D.D.C.P. Mould, *Scotland of the Saints*, BT Batsford Ltd, 1952 p. 98.





In 560 King Brude of the Northern Picts decided that the *Dál Riada* expansion, which by then had reached as far as Fort William, was threatening his territory so attacked in full force. Brude gave King Gabhran of the Dalriads a drubbing pushing back the borders of the Dalriads to Kintyre[11].

It was into this territorial vacuum that St. Moluag arrived. Moluag would have been on friendly terms with both the Dalriads (as a noble the *Dál nAraide* who were closely allied to the *Dál Riada*) and the Picts of Alba (the *Dál nAraide* were Irish Picts). He was therefore in an excellent position to act as an ambassador and both sides would have seen the advantage of having Moluag act as a buffer between the two nations.

As discussed later St Moluag was senior to the Kings of Dalriada. The Abbey lands of Lismore and Appin were ruled by St Moluag and the subsequent Abbots of Lismore, his Coarbs, and were never part of Dalriada, or, as we shall see later, part of the Lordship of Lorn. St. Moluag provided the authority of the church to support the Kings of Dalriada and especially the Royal House of Lorn.

There was often conflict between the *Cenél nGabráin* and the *Cenél Loairn* as each struggled for ascendancy. The *Cenél nGabráin* enjoyed the overlordship of Dalriada for the sixth and much of the seventh century. However the *Cenél Loairn* eventually gained ascendancy, becoming kings of Dalriada, and even high kings of the united kingdoms of the Picts and the Scots.

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[11] Archibald B Scott, *The Pictish Nation: It's People and its Church*, Foulis, 1918, p. 141. *Annals of Tigernach*, T560.2 Bass Gabrain maic Domanguirt rig Alban.

1.3 Missions of Palladius and St. Patrick

It is difficult to say with certainty when Christianity first arrived in Ireland.

According to the rather unreliable Chronicle of Prosper of Aquitaine, in the year 431, Pope Celestine sent Palladius 'to the Scots believing in Christ, to be their first bishop': and Bede repeats the same statement. Many writers have forgotten that at that time 'Scots' meant Irish!

This mission was apparently on the recommendation of St. Germanus, bishop of Auxerre in Gaul. Many argue that this demonstrates that there were already Christians living in Ireland[12]. Others argue that the primary reason for this mission was to fight the Pelagian controversy of 'Free Will' which challenged Augustine's doctrine of 'Original Sin'. Pelagius was a Briton, and his teachings apparently went down well in his homeland. There was undoubtedly much coming and going between Britain and Ireland and it appears as though Germanus and Celestine were determined to eradicate what they saw as heresy.

Palladius arrived in the south of the island and was active in Leinster, particularly in the area around Clonard. According to the Life of St. Patrick 'Palladius was ordained and sent to convert this land lying under wintry cold, but God hindered him, for no man can receive anything from earth unless it be given to him from heaven; and neither did those fierce and cruel men receive his doctrine readily, nor did he himself wish to spend time in a strange land, but returned to him who sent him. On his return hence, however, having crossed the first sea and commenced his land journey, he died in the territory of the Britons.' Others say that Palladius died in the plain of Girgin in a place which is now called Fordun. Yet others that 'seeing that he could not do much good there, wishing to return to Rome, migrated to the Lord in the region of the Picts.'

Palladius' mission was not a great success and the following year St. Patrick arrived and concentrated his efforts in Ulidia. Once again it appears as though his sponsor was St. Germanus of Auxerre and it was apparently with the approval of Pope Celestine that he was sent on his mission.

Nora K. Chadwick argues in '*The Age of the Saints in the Early Celtic Church*' that in 432 Saint Patrick came to Ireland as a Roman Bishop to champion its episcopate order (anathema to Irish Culture) and to challenge the foundations of an already developing Celtic Church[13]. The eminent scholar Kathleen Hughes discusses Patrick's opponents view that he was unfit to hold orders and that his ordination as a bishop was invalid. She

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[12] John Lanigan, *An Ecclesiastical History of Ireland*, Dublin, Graisberry, 1822, p. 9.
[13] Nora K. Chadwick, *The Age of the Saints in the Early Celtic Church*, Oxford University Press, 1961, p. 34.

suggests that Patrick admits as much in a letter to Corocticus where he writes 'I. Patrick, a sinner, unlearned, resident in Ireland, declare myself to be a bishop. Most assuredly I believe that what I am I have received from God.'[14]

The Roman Diocesan system, being largely city based, did not sit well with the prevailing culture of the time in Ireland, which was rural, family based with tribal kingdoms jealously defending their rights and influence.

There is little firm evidence left to us and as far as I can make out there is a great deal of fiction and very little fact. So much so that some say that legend has confused Palladius and Patrick or even that he is the same person. Both were apparently sponsored by Germanus and sent on the same mission by Pope Celestine at much the same time. It makes you think, but it is not germane to this story and can be left for others to research.

Saint Patrick did not have any family or tribal connections in Ireland and was very much an outsider pressing an unpopular diocesan system that was incompatible with the local culture. He found life very difficult, endured many hardships and wrote, 'I daily expect either assassination or trickery or reduction to slavery'.

Thus the difficulties that Palladius and Patrick faced in their missions were not with Christianity as such but with the diocesan system that they tried to impose. What limited success Patrick had in this regard was short-lived as, shortly after Patrick's death, bishops were once again placed under the authority of the more territorial Irish abbots and abbesses. Even Armagh, Patrick's main foundation, succumbed to the rule of abbots.

There were very few martyrs amongst the early Christian missionaries to Ireland. This was partly explained by the similarities of the pagan beliefs in the area to Christianity. The pagans believed in One God, a Supreme Spirit, and the eternal soul.

1.4 Monasticism in Ireland

In Ireland the monastic system flourished as it fitted closely with the tribal culture of the people.

Monasticism had spread from Palestine to neighbouring Syria and Egypt.

St. Athanasios of Alexandria, the defender of Orthodoxy at Nicaea, in 325, had a deep knowledge of monastic life. He wrote his famous *Life of St. Anthony* which contributed to the development of monastic life in the West and was certainly read by St. Moluag and his disciples.

In about 360 St. Martin of Tours introduced monasticism to Gaul at Ligugé. In 370, he was consecrated Bishop of Tours but as he preferred the monastic

[14] Kathleen Hughes, *The Church in Early Irish Society*, Methuen, 1966, p. 34.

life he set up a monastery a few miles outside Tours which soon surpassed Ligugé in size. It became known as Marmoutier from the Latin '*Majus Monasterium'* – the 'Great Monastery' which translates into Gaelic as '*Lios mor'*.

The Eastern influence was very strong in the Celtic Church.

> There seemed to be a peculiar affinity between the tribal or clan system of the Celts and the monasticism of Egypt. The monasterium or collegium both in Egypt and in Celtic Ireland and Scotland consisted of a number of huts which were the dwellings of the clerical and lay monks and their families, for many of the latter were married…. The clergy of the Celtic Church were missionaries rather than theologians…. In this respect they were like the early apostles and disciples in the Churches of Asia Minor. [15]

Elements of eastern orthodoxy were merged into Irish Christianity, through connections with Gaul, by the Coptic and Eastern Church. An antiphony from the seventh century from the monks of Bangor, County Down, praise their monastery as 'the true vine transplanted out of Egypt.' It was common to name monasteries in Ireland 'deserts', since they wanted to emulate the desert fathers of Syria and Egypt.

Glanville writes 'Thus it came about that the Irish Church was monastic rather than diocesan. There were a few diocesan bishops, but the ruling dignitaries of the Celtic Church in Ireland were abbots who kept a bishop in their monastery ready for use at ordinations and consecrations……There were no deserts in Ireland, but it was the fashion to call the place where a monastery stood a desert, and so we find the term 'Disert' or 'Desert' in many Irish place-names, as Disertmartin, Disert in Westmeath, Killadysert in Clare, and many others….In spite of its remoteness the Celtic Church of Ireland retained direct contact with the monasteries of Egypt.' [16]

Kathleen Hughes, a leading historian of early Irish Christianity, has written:

> It was inevitable that, once established, the monastic *paruchiae* should gain a power greater than that of the territorial bishoprics. The old bishopric was limited to a narrow territorial area, almost certainly to the boundaries occupied by the population group in which the bishop was resident: the monastic *paruchiae*, on the other hand, might keep growing, for land might be offered to the patron saint (or his heirs) anywhere in the Celtic areas, and even in England and on the Continent. The abbot was thus overlord of a number of monasteries with their tenants, buildings and lands. The abbot of

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[15]Rev. John Stirton, B.D., F.S.A. (Scot.), *The Celtic Church and the Influence of the East,* 1923.
[16] S.R.K. Glanville, *The Legacy of Egypt*, 1942, p. p. 317-325.

> Iona visited Ireland at least four times during the last three decades of the seventh century. The *paruchiae* of Comgall of Bangor made new foundations across the Irish Sea… , and in 673 Mael-ruba of Bangor founded a church at Applecross, on the Scottish mainland opposite Skye, where he died in 722.[17]

1.5 Founding a Monastery

In Ireland, the foundation of a monastery or abbey normally commenced by a grant of land by a king to the founding saint. In most instances the granter of the land was of the same tribe as the founder. The two tribes involved are termed respectively the *Fine Grin*, or Tribe of the Land, that is the tribe to whom the land belonged; and the *Fine Erluma*, or Tribe of the Saint, that is the tribe to whom the patron saint, or founder, belonged.

> The church of this period must be viewed as consisting rather of different groups of monasteries, founded by the respective saints, either bishops or presbyters, of the second order, each group recognising the monastery over which the founder of the group personally presided, or which possessed his relics, as having jurisdiction over those which emanated from him and followed his rules. It was thus not one great ecclesiastical corporation, but an aggregate of separate communities in federal union. Secondly, that the abbots of each monastery, whether bishops or presbyters, were not elected by the brethren forming the community, but succeeded one another by a kind of inheritance assimilated to that of the tribe.[18]

Ludwig Bieler also writes that a monastery would have close links with its founder's family and with the tribal kingdom (*túath*) in which it was situated.'[19]

An Irish Abbey was headed by an abbot, or abbess, and included bishops, priests, monks, nuns and laymen. *Manaig* were married laymen, who in return for labour and taxes received many benefits and were entitled to 'the spiritual ministrations of the church and a clerical education for their first born sons and every tenth son thereafter.'[20] In the case of a crisis of succession, a *manaig* could even become an abbot.[21]

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[17] Kathleen Hughes, *The Church in Early Irish Society*, Methuen, 1966, p. 81.
[18] W.S. Skene, *Celtic Scotland : a history of ancient Alban (1886), Volume II, Church and Culture*, 1886, p. 66.
[19] Ludwig Bieler, *Ireland: The Harbinger of the Middle Ages,* Oxford University Press, 1963, p. 48.
[20] Kathleen Hughes, *Early Christian Ireland, introduction to the sources,* Cornell University Press, 1972, p. 94.
[21] Nora K. Chadwick, *The Age of the Saints in the Early Celtic Church*, Oxford University Press, 1961, p. 63.

Daughter houses of the abbey of the founding saint would be part of that saint's *paruchia*, a network of abbeys or monasteries attached to the main abbey of the founding saint, not necessarily his first abbey. All the abbots of the *paruchia* were under the authority of the abbot of the primary abbey – the coarb of the saint.

P. W. Joyce shows quite how significant these abbeys were.

> In the course of three or four centuries from the time of St. Patrick, Ireland became the most learned country in Europe: and it came to be known by the name now so familiar to us--*Insula sanctorum et doctorum*, the Island of saints and scholars.
>
> The greatest number of the schools were in monasteries; in these the teaching was not exclusively ecclesiastical; and young persons attended them to get a good general education. Some few schools were purely lay and professional:--for Law, Medicine, Poetry, or Literature. These were taught by laymen.
>
> The highest degree of scholarship was that of Ollave or Doctor: there were Ollaves of the several professions: just as we have doctors of Law, Medicine, Philosophy, Literature, etc. The full course for an Ollave was twelve years: the subordinate degrees had shorter periods.
>
> Men of learning were held in great estimation. They had many valuable allowances and privileges; and an Ollave sat at table next to the king or chief.[22]

When a monastery was said to have consisted of 3,000 monks, the tribe itself appears to have merged in the Church, thus becoming independent of the king that originally granted the land.[23]

1.6 Status and Honour Price of Kings, Bishops and Abbots

In Ireland in the sixth century your honour price was very important and known to all as it defined your social status. You could not enter a contract greater than your honour price. It governed the fines or penalties awarded in court as an offence against a person of higher rank entailed a greater penalty than the same offence against a person of lower rank. The oath of a person of higher rank automatically prevailed against that of a person of lower rank.[24]

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[22] P.W. Joyce, *A Concise History of Ireland*, Longmans, Green, and co., 1903 p. 34. http://www.libraryireland.com/JoyceHistory/Contents.php.
[23] W.S. Skene, *Celtic Scotland: a history of ancient Alban, Volume II,* 1886, p. 66.
[24] Fergus Kelly, *A Guide to Early Irish Law*. Early Irish Law Series 3, Dublin Institute of Advanced Studies 1988 (2nd reprint 1995). p. 7.

Kathleen Hughes refers to the Ancient Laws when she notes "The *Crith Gablach*, drawn up in the early eighth century, asks: 'Which is more illustrious, king or bishop?" and the answer is that the bishop has the higher dignity.' [25]

'According to the classical law tracts, there were three distinct grades of king: *ri* or *ri túathe*, the "king" of the local *túath* or petty tribal kingdom; *ruiri* or "great king" who, in addition to being king of his own *túath*, was the personal overlord of a number of other tribal kings; and lastly, *ri ruirech* or "king of overkings", who is identified with the king of a province. No higher grade of king, "high king" or king of Ireland is known to the classical law tracts.' [26]

Thus we have in ascending order:

1. ***Ri* or *Ri túathe***, - in effect the equivalent to a clan chief
2. ***Ruiri*** – a king over kings e.g. the Kings of *Dál nAraide*, *Dál Riata*, or *Dál Fiatach*
3. ***Ri Ruirech*** - a king of overkings - a king of a Province e.g. the King of Ulidia

Hughes, again writes that,

> [The] *Uraicecht Becc,* probably drawn up in the seventh or early eighth century, gives an honour price (*dire*) to the ecclesiastical orders comparable to those it grants to the secular nobility, ranging from seven sets for the lector in the lowest grade to an honour price of three and a half *cumals* for a priest, equal to that of a petty king, while the bishop had the honour price of an over-king [eight *cumals*]. The most important bishops were the equals of the highest grade of king, with an honour-price of fourteen *cumals.* [27] [One *cumal* was equivalent to 3 milking cows.]

In a footnote she adds that the manuscript reads *ri ruirech,* the 'king of over-kings'..

In Irish law the value of a man's eye-witness testimony (*fiadnaise*) depended on his rank, and that of a king and bishop was of equal value….The honour price of a chief bishop (*uasa-episcop*), like the bishop of Emly or Cork, two great churches of Munster, was equal to that of the king of Munster, the overlord of the Southern Half of Ireland [28]

St. Moluag, the founder of over 120 monasteries would have had well in excess of the required 3,000 monks. Bangor and Lismore alone had 11,000!

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[25] Kathleen Hughes, *The Church in Early Irish Society*, Methuen, 1966, p. 80.
[26] Donnchadh O'Corrain, *Ireland Before the Norman's*, Gill and MacMillan 1972 p. 28.
[27] Kathleen Hughes, *The Church in Early Irish Society*, Methuen, 1966, p. 135.
[28] The Church in Early Irish History p80 quotes Law of Distress A.L.I. i.78 and Small Primer, A.L.I. v. 110-12.

St. Moluag was the head of a great monastic *paruchia* (a ***ri ruirech***), 'acknowledging no earthly authority or hierarchy'[29] and will have ranked above the King of Dalriada, a 'king over kings' or Somerled, Lord of the Isles another 'king over kings'.

1.7 Coarbs

The coarb of a Celtic abbot was the heir of the abbot in his ecclesiastical functions and abbatical mensal territory. Although it is an assumption, it seems likely that St. Moluag would have brought with him the laws of his homeland, now known as Brehon law. Knowledge of this law is very helpful in understanding the inter relationships between kings and abbots and in the hereditary aspect of the office of abbot and the appointment of successors.

Skene argues, 'By the law of Tanistic succession in Ireland, the right of hereditary succession was not in the individual, but in the family to which he belonged. That is, it was hereditary in the family, elective in the individual….The Church of the Tribe of the Saint, that is the tribe of the Saint, shall succeed in the Church as long as there shall be a person fit to be an abbot (*Damna Apaidh*), of the tribe of the saint, even though there should be but a psalm-singer of these, it is he that will obtain the abbacy'.[30]

On his deathbed an abbot would nominate his successor from the *derbhine*, within the rules of Tanistic succession, passing to him his crozier as the symbol of authority. As has been discussed the land, the main wealth of the church, was in the hands of the founding abbots and their successors or coarbs. Coarbs were unique to Celtic Churches and their ownership of the land explain the abbots' substantial authority and other peculiarities such as why the abbacy was attainable to the *manaig*.[31]

It should be noted that Coarbs could be female. In Kildare they were all female and they were even some female Coarbs of St Patrick.[32]

The term coarb in Ireland has evolved and latterly comorba or coarb was applied to the inheritor of a bishopric or other ecclesiastical dignity. In her work on Irish History, Maxwell states:

> 'For the name of Coarb... I collect by that which they tell me, that he was a prior or a resident of a collegiate church; for, he did not only possess a good quantity of glebe lands, the tenants and occupiers thereof were called termon men, and had the privilege of clergy, but

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[29] Lord Lyon, Sir Thomas Innes of Learney, *Scots Law Times*, December 29 1951.
[30] W.S. Skene *Celtic Scotland: A History of Ancient Alban, Vol 2,* 1887, p. 66.
[31] Nora K. Chadwick, *The Age of the Saints in the Early Celtic Church,* Oxford University Press, 1961, p. 34.
[32] Leslie Hardinge, *The Celtic Church In Britain*, 1972, p. 179. (Teach Services, Inc.; 95th edition 1995)

> he had also some rectories appropriate, whereof he had that portion of tithes, which belonged to the parson, and had withal the presentation of the vicarages. He had always his place or seat in a mother church, where he had a certain number of priests serving with him; in the cathedral church he had a stall in the choir and a voice in the chapter: and this coarbship is named a dignity in the register at Rome...lastly, this coarbship was in a manner hereditary; for though the Coarb were ever in orders, yet was he in this Irish country usually married...and after his death, if any of his sons were qualified with learning, he was chosen by the dean and chapter to be Coarb...'[33].

We can see how the office has changed from the all-powerful Celtic office to one that fits in with the Roman system.

1.8 The Three Orders of Irish Saints

Joyce writes:

> In an old Catalogue, written in Latin by some unknown author, not later than 750 (possibly in 700), the ancient Irish saints are distinguished into three 'Orders'; and much information is given regarding them. The following are the main points of this valuable old document.
>
> Those of 'The First Order of Catholic Saints' were all bishops, beginning with St. Patrick: they were '**most holy: shining like the sun**.' They were 350 in number, all founders of churches. 'All these bishops'—the Catalogue goes on to say—'were sprung from the Romans, and Franks, and Britons, and Scots'; that is, they consisted of St. Patrick, with the numerous foreign missionaries who accompanied or followed him, and of the Britons and native Scots, or Irish, ordained by him and his successors. This order continued for something more than a century.
>
> Those of 'The Second Order were priests,' numbering 300, of whom a few were bishops. These were 'very holy,' and 'they shone like the moon.' They lasted for a little more than half a century.
>
> The Third Order consisted of priests and a few bishops; these were 'holy,' and 'shone like the stars.' They continued for a little less than three quarters of a century.[34]

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[33] Constantia Elizabeth Maxwell, *Irish History from Contemporary Sources 1509 - 1610*, George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., London, 1923, p. 324.
[34] P.W. Joyce, *A Smaller Social History of Ancient Ireland*, Dublin, 1906, p. 38.

Joyce opines that the first order were patrician clergy who 'laboured from A.D. 432 to about 559'. They were all bishops, founders of churches, who worshipped one head, Christ, had one tonsure (from ear to ear) and one liturgy of the Mass, and celebrated one Easter (that is, after the spring equinox). What was excluded from the communion of one church, all excluded. They did not reject the government and the company of women because, since their foundation was the rock, Christ, they did not fear the wind of temptation. Others suggest the dates of the three Orders were First 432-543, Second 543-599 and Third 599-666.

Skene offers this insight:

> Assuming that the three orders of the saints pictured the leading characteristics of three periods of the Irish Church, there can he no question that the great feature of the second period was its monastic character.' He then identifies the principal points of difference between the first two orders and observes 'In the first 'they observed one mass, one celebration'; in the second 'they celebrated different masses, and had different rules'.[35]

I cannot find any definitive list of the three orders but what lists remain all include St. Finnian, St. Brendan and St. Comgal in the Second Order which makes sense as they were apparently not bishops. Evidence suggests that St. Moluag was in the First Order and as we have seen they observed one mass.

The truly great monasteries of the Celtic Church were founded in the sixth century and thereafter 'multiplied exceedingly'. There were over 40 significant abbeys many of which had long histories.

One of the earliest, St. Finnian's Abbey of Clonard, grew to about 3,000 monks and Bangor Abbey was reputed to have up to 8,000 monks!

Various estimates suggest that out of a total Irish population of 250,000 at least 40,000 were in monasteries. Clergy had to be literate and these figures alone justify the expression 'the land of Saints and Scholars'.

1.9 Saint Finnian

St. Finnian, was known as 'Tutor of the Saints of Ireland.' He supposedly was of the *Clanna Rudhraidhe*[36] who were related to the *Dál Fiatach* and held the kingship of Ulidia for a time.

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[35] W.S. Skene, *Celtic Scotland: a history of ancient Alban, Vol II*, 1886, p. 41,

[36] O'Halloran, Sylvester, *A General History of Ireland, from the earliest accounts to the close of the twelfth century*, London A. Hamilton, 1778 "Dal Araidhe a considerable territory in Ulster, including almost the entire county of Down, and a considerable part of the county of Antrim. It was the territory of the *Clana Ruighruidhe*, or line of Ir, after the ruin of Emania (*Emain Macha* the original Capital near Armagh), and so called from Fiacha Araidhe." This is the country of the *Mac Duinnsleibhe*.

Clonard was founded in 520 in the area that Bishop Palladius attempted his largely unsuccessful mission one hundred years earlier. There are widely conflicting accounts of St. Finnian of Clonard and St. Finnian of Molville, often confusing the two and as you will see below they could well be the same man.

Saint Finnian of Moville was born in the latter part of the fifth century, at Myshal in County Carlow, on the slopes of Mount Leinster. His father was Rudraigh (his namesake of Clonard is described as of the *Clanna Rudhraidhe)*, a noble of the *Dál Fiatach*[37], then one of the most powerful families in Ulster and allied to the *Dál nAraide* of St. Moluag. He is considered by some to have been the Principal Saint of the Ulaid[38].

His education included studying under St. Colman of Dromore (Co. Down) and under St. Mochai at Nendrum (Mahee Island). His studies also included a period at Whithorn, the school founded by St. Ninian in the latter part of the 4th century. He then travelled to Rome 'learning the Apostolic customs and the Ecclesiastical Laws'.

He returned to Ireland with a highly prized manuscript of the Vulgate, which had been corrected by St. Jerome. This work was greatly admired and was often referred to in the ecclesiastical history of the times. It greatly contributed to the prestige of his establishment of Moville, at the head of Strangford Lough, which he founded in 540.

Typically he chose a site that was already considered sacred, and had been venerated in pagan times. This school became highly respected attracting many scholars. Amongst these was an arrogant boy from Donegal called Grimthann (Griffan). This child was allowed to go into town once a week to play with other boys of his age. Even at this time he was rather impetuous and hot tempered. With a humour that still exists in those parts today, the local boys gave him the sarcastic nickname of the 'Dove of the Church'. St. Finnian, hoping that this nickname would teach the child humility ordained that this should become the name that he was known by – Colmcille, now known as Columba.

As in the case of St. Moluag of Lismore, where many have confused St. Molua of Killaloe with him, so there is growing doubt about the legends of St. Finnian. In the Spring 2001 issue of The Innes Review, Thomas Owen Clancy opines that Saint Ninian of Whithorn, Saint Finnian of Moville, Saint Finnian of Clonard and even Saint Finbarr of Cork are one and the same. This may or may not be the case but from a Lismore perspective this does not materially affect the impact of the legends associated with St. Finnian.

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[37] *The Annals of Ulster* U579.1 Repose of bishop *Finnian moccu Fiatach.*

[38] Padraig Ó Riain, *Corpus genealogiarum sanctorum Hiberniae*, Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1985,

1.10 Saint Comgall

St. Comgall, was a Pict of the *Dál nAraide,* and a cousin of St. Moluag, both being descended from *Fiacha Araidhe,* the founder of the *Dál nAraide.*[39] He was born at Magheramorne, near Larne, co. Antrim[40], between 516 and 520. He was ordained by St. Moluag (Latinised as Bishop Lugidius in somew accounts) who helped him to establish the Abbey of Bangor between 552 and 558[41].

He had intended to go to Britain, but instead was persuaded by his mentor Lugidius (St. Moluag) to stay in Ireland and establish what was to become one of the greatest of all Irish monastic houses. Many writers suggest that this Bishop Lugidius was St. Molua of Clonfert. This is clearly not the case as in 559 Molua was a disciple of Saint Comgall of Bangor.

He seems to have served as a soldier and later studied at Clonard Abbey under its founder and abbot, St. Finnian. He later studied under Saint Ciaran, Abbot of Clonmacnoise. This abbey was founded by Saint Ciaran circa 545.

We know Saint Comgall spent some time living an austere life on island in Lough Erne. In fact the regime was so austere that no less than seven companions died of cold and hunger.

According to Plummers' Latin Life, so great a number of monks came to Saint Comgall at Bangor that there was not room for them; 'he therefore founded very many cells and many monasteries, not only in the district of Ulaid, but throughout the other provinces of Ireland.'

Bede speaks of 'the monastery of Bangor, in which, it is said, there was so great a number of monks, that the monastery being divided into seven parts, with a superior set over each, none of those parts contained less than three hundred men, who all lived by the labour of their hands.' [42]

Bangor became one of the greatest schools in Europe sending missions far afield. Famous students such as St. Columbanus and St. Gall spent many years in present-day France, Germany, Austria and Italy establishing monasteries throughout Europe. Tomas Cardinal O'Fiaich said 'Before his death much of Western Europe was dotted with monasteries founded by Columbanus' disciples.'

According to Scott in 686 Riaghuil, Abbot of Bangor fled for safety to Pictland because the *Ui Neill* had invaded Ulidia and wasted the Pictish

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[39] H. J. Lawlor, *St. Bernard of Clairvaux's Life of St. Malachy of Armagh,* London, SPCK, 1920 footnote reference to *Leabhar Breac*, Royal Irish Academy MS. (Facsimile ed. 1876.) 15 c, e.
[40] Rev. William Reeves, D.D, *Ecclesiastical Antiquities of Down, Connor, and Dromore* p. 269
[41] *Annals of Ulster,* U555.3 Eclesia Bennchuir fundata est.
[42] Cuthbert Bede. *Ecclesiastical History of England: The History of Christianity in England, Book II.*

kingdoms with fire and sword. 'Apparently the clerics of Bangor and the other religious houses of St. Comgall took flight for a time to the daughter churches of Bangor in Pictland of Alba'.[43] Scott also points out that in the Breviary of Aberdeen St. Mirran, first Abbot of Paisley, was trained at Bangor by St. Comgall.[44] These so-called daughter churches of Bangor are in fact the *paruchia* of St Moluag.

St. Catan, was a member of the great *Clann Rudhraighe* of the Ulster Picts. He was consequently related to St. Comgall and to St. Moluag. He founded his abbey at Kingarth on the Isle of Bute. He sent his nephew St. Blaan to study at Bangor. St. Catan also founded churches on the islands of Gigha, Colonsay, Luing, and at Stornoway in Lewis. St. Catan's foundations on the mainland were at Kilchattan, Southend, Cantyre ; Ardchattan in Lorn ; and Aber Ruthven.[45]

MacDonald points out that the separate *Mac Duinnsleibhe* kings of the Ulaid and *Dál nAraide* appear as patrons of Bangor Abbey in the twelfth century.[46]

The Irish Annals also tell us that Saint Comgall of Bangor travelled with St. Moluag to King Brude of the Northern Picts at Inverness. Lawlor notes that 'there is reason to doubt that Comgall was the leader of the band, as his Life implies'.[47] As we have seen St Moluag ordained St Comgal and he would certainly have been the leader.

St. Comgall is said to have been the friend of St. Brendan, St. Cormac, St. Cainnech, and Finnian of Moville. After intense suffering he received the Eucharist from St. Fiacre, and expired in the monastery at Bangor c. 602.

St. Moluag and St. Comgall were an outstanding team and between them and their disciples they founded hundreds of missionary foundations throughout much of Scotland and even many in Europe. The divine commission they gave their priests was:

> Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and, lo, I am with you alway, unto the end of the world.[48]

Saint Comgall 's feast day is on May 10.

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[43] Archibald B Scott, *The Pictish Nation: It's People and its Church*, Foulis, 1918, p. 61.
[44] Ibid p. 243.
[45] Ibid pp. 292-295.
[46] Iain G MacDonald, *Clerics and Clansmen, The Diocese of Argyll between the Twelfth and Sixteenth Centuries*, Brill, 2013, p. 34.
[47] H. J. Lawlor, *St. Bernard of Clairvaux's Life of St. Malachy of Armagh,* London, SPCK, 1920 footnote P. 291.
[48] Archibald B Scott, *The Pictish Nation: It's People and its Church*, Foulis, 1918 p. 544.

1.11 Tribal Connections of the Saints

As we have seen both Saint Finnian's were nobles of the *Dál Fiatach*, part of the Ulaid. Saints Moluag and Comgal were closely related, both being nobles of the *Dál nAraide* who descended from *Fiacha Araidhe* the 37th King of Ulidia (Ulster).

1.12 The Church in Ireland

As already noted Joyce considered that from 432 to about 559 the First Order of Saints 'worshipped one head, Christ, had one tonsure (from ear to ear) and one liturgy of the Mass, and celebrated one Easter (that is, after the spring equinox). What was excluded from the communion of one church, all excluded. They did not reject the government and the company of women because, since their foundation was the rock, Christ, they did not fear the wind of temptation.'[49] This then was the situation when Moluag became a bishop. There was considerable travel between Alexandria, Jerusalem, Antioch and Rome during this period and it appears as though there was a degree of consensus.

In the first part of the sixth century, when Moluag was ordained a bishop, the canon laws of the ecumenical councils clearly limited the territorial authority of bishops, whether these were diocesan bishops, metropolitans or patriarchs. No bishop had universal authority and none had even claimed it at that time.

Skene notes that 'Protestant church historians are unreasonably jealous of admitting any connection between the early British or Irish Church and Rome; but the Rome of the fourth and fifth centuries was not the Rome of the middle ages. It was the church of St. Jerome and St. Augustine. There was no question then about supremacy and the bishop of Rome was simply regarded with deference and respect as the acknowledged ***head of the Christian Church within the western provinces of the empire of which Rome was the capital***. Questions of ecclesiastical supremacy did not emerge till the empire was broken up.'[50]

Remember that it was not until 587, towards the end of St. Moluag's life, Emperor Maurice granted the title 'universal bishop' to John the Faster, Patriarch of Constantinople. A title repudiated by Gregory, Bishop/Patriarch of Rome. It was not until 606, fourteen years after St. Moluag rested in Christ, that Boniface III, Bishop of Rome, was given the formal title of 'Universal Bishop' by Emperor Phocas.

Skene refers to St. Columbanus, a missionary trained at Bangor Abbey in Ireland, who wrote to Pope Boniface at the end of the sixth century pointing

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[49] P.W. Joyce, *A Smaller Social History of Ancient Ireland*, Dublin, 1906 p. 38.
[50] W.S. Skene, *Celtic Scotland: a history of ancient Alban, Vol II*, 1886, p. 6.

out that, at the second ecumenical council held at Constantinople in the year 381, it was agreed that:

- the bishops belonging to each diocese shall not interfere with churches beyond its bounds,
- the jurisdiction of the great patriarchates was limited,
- and the churches of God 'among the Barbarian people' (that is, beyond the bounds of the Roman empire) shall be regulated by the customs of their fathers.

In other words 'your predecessors have agreed that the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Rome does not extend beyond the limits of the Roman Empire and that Irish monks have the right to follow the customs of their own church handed down by their fathers!'

Ireland was never part of the Roman Empire, and as we shall examine later, it was a rural or tribal based society and completely alien to the roman city based empire. The 'Roman Church' was modelled on the Roman Empire in its territorial structure. Most authors now accept that the church in Ireland grew out of the monastic traditions of the East. Clearly this is what St. Moluag believed as can be seen in this seventh-century Antiphonary of the Irish monastery of Bangor, which was founded by him and St. Comgal: *'This house, full of delight, is built on the* ***rock*** *and indeed the true vine transplanted out of Egypt.'*

Celts and Britons often travelled to the holy sites of Palestine, Alexandria and the 'Desert Fathers' in Egypt. Many early saints visited Rome. The old Irish litany of Saints mentions seven Egyptian monks who were buried in Dysert Ulaidh in Ireland.

St. Moluag and his contemporaries in Ireland did not consider themselves under the authority of the Patriarch of Rome. They were transplanted out of Egypt, but not under the authority of the Patriarch of Alexandria whose authority did not extend to Ireland.

Yet, as we have seen, they (the different churches) observed one mass and the whole Church of Christ was in communion. It should be so today.

Chapter 2 St. Moluag

Saint Lughaidh, better known by his pet name of Moluag, was an Irish noble of the *Dál nAraide* (one of the main tribes of the Ulaid in what we now call Ulster).

There are various Irish forms of the name, such as *Lughaidh* (or *Lugaid*), *Luoc* and *Lua*. Latinized they become *Lugidus, Lugidius, Lugadius, Lugacius* and *Luanus*. The name, as it has come down the centuries, Moluag or Moluoc, is made up of the honorific mo, plus the original name *Lughaidh*, pronounced Lua, plus the endearing suffix –oc. Other variants include *Lugdach, Malew, Molonachus, Moloc or Molucus.*

St. Moluag, the founder of over a hundred monasteries, was a bishop active during the period of the First Order of Celtic Saints and known as 'The Clear and Brilliant, The Sun of Lismore in Alba'[51]. The First Order were 'most holy: shining like the sun'. This is a clear reference to his membership of the First Order.

MacDonald suggests that there must have been a *Vitae* of St. Moluag that is lost because of his prominent appearance in St. Bernard's *Life of Malachy*. He writes 'Further support for this occurs in the Life of Patrick by the Cistercian monk Jocelin of Furness written in circa 1185, where Mo-Luóc ("Lugacius") is described as one of the six Irish priest whom Patrick prophesied would become bishops'. In a footnote he adds that the five other priests were Columbanus (Cólman), Meldanus (Mellán), Lugadius (Mo Lua), Cassanus (Cassán) and Creanus (Ciarán).[52]

St. Moluag was born between 500 and 520. We know that he was a bishop in about 552 and that he ordained St. Comgal, his close kinsman, initially as a deacon then as a priest. Moluag persuaded St. Comgal to found Bangor Abbey, in modern day Ulster.

Having helped St. Comgal set up this abbey, perhaps the greatest of all abbeys of its time, he took the road of red martyrdom[53] and left with twelve followers to lead the life of a missionary. In 562 he founded his great community on the large island of the Lyn of Lorn in Argyll now called the Isle of Lismore (*Lios mor* is ancient Gaelic for 'great monastery').

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[51] Pádraig Óriain, *The Matryrology of Óengus*: the transmission of the text, Studia Hibernica.
[52] Iain G MacDonald, *Clerics and Clansmen, The Diocese of Argyll between the Twelfth and Sixteenth Centuries*, Brill, 2013, p. 35.
[53] There were three "degrees" of commitment for a Celtc peregrini - the Green, White and Red Martyrdom. Those who chose Green (*Glas* in Gaelic and sometimes translated as Blue) would find a retreat within his own land. The white path involved leaving home but going to a Christian land. The red route involved missionary work amongst pagans and a high risk of death.

This had been the sacred island of the Western Picts whose capital was at Beregonium, across the water at Benderloch. Their kings were cremated on the ancient man made 'burial mound' of *Cnoc Aingeil* (Gaelic for 'Hill of Fire') at Bachuil, about three miles from the north of the island, near to the site that St. Moluag chose for his first centre.

Lismore was the most important religious spot to the pagan kings of the area. It was therefore the most desirable site for a missionary. Irish missionaries had learnt to focus heavily on the similarity and continuity between early Christianity and Paganism rather than the differences between them. The conversion process was therefore one of gradual education rather than outright confrontation and there were remarkably few martyrs in the area.

Moluag's ancestry has been given as follows -

Fiacha Araidhe a quo Dalaraidhe
Fodan
Lucht
Moluoc or Molucus

Fiacha Araidhe was 37th King of Ulidia (Ulster). When Moluag died in 592[54] he was described as an old man. His birth may have occurred somewhere between 500 and 520.

The Irish Annals also tell us that Saint Comgall of Bangor accompanied St. Moluag to King Brude of the Northern Picts, whose capitol was at Inverness, to obtain authority for Moluag's mission within Brude's kingdom. It is doubtful, however, that Brude could have actually granted St. Moluag land in the kingdom of the Western Picts as not only was it outwith his domain but it had been partially occupied by the Dalriads until Brude evicted them in 560. Nevertheless, as a Pict, Brude welcomed Moluag (who spoke the same language) and he was given considerable freedom to operate in Brude's kingdom.[55]

St. Moluag died on the 25 June 592 at Rosemarkie and his body was brought back to Lismore.

In the early Middle Ages the term Saint simply meant a Christian, hence the term Communion of Saints. Nevertheless the feast day of Saint Moluag (June 25[56]) was restored in 1898 by Pope Leo XIII.[57]

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[54] U592.1 Death of Lugaid of Les Mór. Annals of Ulster.
T592.1 Obitus Lugdach Liss Móir .i. Mo Luóc. Annals of Tigernach
[55] D.D.C.P. Mould, *Scotland of the Saints*, Batsford, 1952 p. 98.
[56] David Hugh Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992. ISBN 0-19-283069-4 p. 343.
[57] Michael Barrett, *A Calendar of Scottish Saints*. The Abbey Press, Fort Augustus, 1919.

Saint Moluag is invoked against insanity and his intercession sought to heal wounds. At *Teampull Moluaidh*, the Church of St. Moluag on the Isle of Lewis, the afflicted person was taken to the temple at dusk and made to 'walk around the temple seven times 'sunwise' - '*deiseil*' - and to drink water from the 'holy well of the *Teampull*', and was then freely besprinkled with the same water; but unless the patient slept after the treatment there could be no cure.'

2.1 Patron Saint and Apostle of the Picts

St. Moluag truly evangelised the Picts. From Lismore, St. Moluag went on to found two other great centres in the land of the Picts at Rosemarkie and Mortlach (now known as Dufftown). These were his three centres of teaching (we would now call them universities), and it is significant that all three were to become the seats of the Roman Catholic Sees of the Isles, Ross and Aberdeen. Rosemarkie was clearly a major establishment during Adomnan's time and Smyth points out that Curetan of Rosemarkie was on of the main supporters of the Law of Innocents that was promulgated at the Synod of Birr in 697.[58]

In 2014 The Very Revd Dr Alexander Emsley Nimmo, Dean of Aberdeen and Orkney organised a pilgrimage from Aberdeen to Lismore via Inverness reversing the steps of St Moluag. As part of this pilgrimage I was invited to make a Coarbial visit to Inverness and Aberdeen.

My visit, as the Coarb of St Moluag, generated great excitement as the Bachuil Mor had not been in those parts for a very long time. At both Cathedrals the Bishop and Chapter greeted us at the West door with great ceremony with the choir and congregation singing a welcome on behalf of a litany of local saints. Both dioceses owe their foundation to St Moluag. I understood that I was being granted this extraordinary honour not for anything I had done but in praise of Christ's servant, the Blessed St. Moluag, Abbot of Lismore, the Apostle of the Picts. I really do owe Fr Emsley, The Right Revd Mark Strange, Bishop of Moray, Ross and Caithness, and The Right Revd Dr Robert (Bob) Gillies, Bishop of Aberdeen and Orkney, together with all the others involved, my heartfelt thanks as they did a great deal to bring St Moluag back into the public eye.

MacDonald describes Lismore as being 'hugely important, being closely tied with one of the earliest and most important Christian Saints in Northern Britain: Mo Luóc, or Moluag.'[59]

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[58] Alfred P Smyth, *Warlords and Holy Men*, Edinburgh University Press, 1984, p. 127.
[59] Iain G MacDonald, *Clerics and Clansmen, The Diocese of Argyll between the Twelfth and Sixteenth Centuries*, Brill, 2013, p. 21.

As St. Bernard testifies[60], St. Moluag is also credited with founding over one hundred monasteries. Most of these, such as Clova and Alyth, were in Pict territory. He used Tiree to grow corn with a farm on the north west of the island[61]. Mould suggests that Moluag also founded two churches in Kintyre on his route to Lismore.[62]

The Churches dependent on Lismore, still traceable, are the famous Teampul Mór in Lewis; the Church of Pabay, Cill Moluag in Raasay; Teampull Mholuig at Europie in Ness; Cill Moluag in Skye; Cill Moluag in Tiree; Cill Moluag in Mull; Kilmalu in Morvern, Kilmalu of Inverary; and Cill Moluag at Ballagan, Inverfarigaig.[63]

Many of the churches founded from his centre at Rosemarkie were afterwards, in the Roman Catholic period, dedicated to Roman saints. Still identifiable are Davoch-Moluag in Strathpeffer, and the Church of Cromarty.

Dependant upon Mortlach are Clova or Cloveth near Lumsden village, *Maol-Moluag's*, now New Machar, at Clatt in the Garioch and at Migvie and Tarland. Others of St. Moluag's known foundations include Auchtertaw near Fort Augustus, Inverfarig in Glen Urquhart, Chapel Park near Lynchat, Essie and Alyth in Perthshire.[64] Bishop Nechtan transferred the see from Mortlach to Aberdeen in April 1132, during the reign of King David I of Scotland.

There is evidence of close co-operation between Moluag's clergy and other Britonic and Pictish clergy working in the North East of Scotland. It appears that the only problems were between Moluag's monks and Columban clergy in Dalriada, now Argyll.[65]

St. Moluag became the patron saint of the Royal House of Lorne and was acknowledged as such by, Somerled, King of Argyll and the Isles, and the later Lords of Lorn and the Earls (now Dukes) of Argyll. From a 1544 charter it can be seen that The Earl of Argyll, having inherited the MacDougall Lordship of Lorn, refers to St. Moluag as his family's patron saint '*in honour of God Omnipotent, the blessed Virgin, and Saint Moloc, our patron*'.

The House of Lorne became the Kings of Dalriada and eventually united with the Picts to become the Kings of Scots. Moluag was Patron Saint of the Kings of Dalriada, was the Apostle of the Picts so is highly likely to have been the first Patron Saint of Scotland.

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[60] H. J. Lawlor, D.D., Litt.D, St. *Bernard of Clairvaux's Life of St. Malachy of Armagh,* Macmillans, 1920.
[61] D.D.C.P. Mould, *Scotland of the Saints*, Batsford, 1952, p. 131.
[62] Ibid, p. 103.
[63] Archibald B Scott, *The Pictish Nation: It's People and its Church*, Foulis, 1918 p. 237.
[64] D.D.C.P. Mould, *Scotland of the Saints*, Batsford, 1952, p. 103.
[65] Archibald B Scott, *The Pictish Nation: It's People and its Church*, Foulis, 1918, p. 238.

St. Moluag was probably also patron saint of Rushen, in the Isle of Man, and, according to Lismore tradition, the whole island. This is plausible as Somerled, a supporter of St. Moluag, married Raghnild, daughter of Olaf, King of Man. Moluag was also the original dedicatee of the Manx monastery of Rushen founded in 1134[66]. In the 12th century, the Isle of Man was united with Sodor or the Sudreys, as the Norse called the 'southern isles' of the Hebrides, in the Diocese of Sodor and Man. A very ancient inscription on a paten found at Kirk-Malew (Malew is a corruption of Moluag[67]), preserves the invocation of the patron saint, '*S. Maloua, ora pro nobi* '[68]: St. Moluag, pray for us. Malew is the largest parish in Rushen and includes Castletown, the ancient capitol of the Island. There are tentative plans fo me to make a Coarbial visit to the Isle of Man in June 2015.

As an aside, legend has it that his favourite flower is that of the Grass of Parnassus which is found on Lismore.

Remarkably, at a time when the Annals refer constantly to the curses of Celtic Abbots, I can find no evidence that St. Moluag cursed anyone. He was, however, proficient at turning them aside.

2.2 Arrival on Lismore

There are some lovely stories relating to St. Moluag's arrival on Lismore. One relates to his departure from Ireland. Apparently, when he reached the shore and was preparing to embark, he was obstructed by some enemies. He struck the rock upon which he was standing with his Crozier (The Bachuil Mor) and commanded it to set sail – which it promptly did to the consternation of his pursuers.[69]

Another improbable story relates how he beat Columba to the Isle of Lismore. Sailing to the island in their respective coracles St. Moluag spotted Columba heading for the island. Seeing that Columba was likely to reach the island first St. Moluag picked up an axe at his feet and used it to sever his little finger from his hand. Throwing it high up on the shingle he declared 'My flesh and blood have first possession of this island and I bless it in the name of the Lord'. Columba took this badly and cursed the island saying 'May you have alder for your firewood.' To which St. Moluag replied 'The Lord will make it burn pleasantly'. Columba again cursed 'May the edge of the rock be upwards' to which St. Moluag responded 'May their venom be underneath.' It is held today that alder burns on Lismore better than

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[66] Atkinson 1886–1919: II, pp. 708–9.

[67] http://www.isle-of-man.com/manxnotebook/fulltext/pn1925/mw.htm and Iain G MacDonald, *Clerics and Clansmen, The Diocese of Argyll between the Twelfth and Sixteenth Centuries*, Brill, 2013, p. 35.

[68] http://www.isle-of-man.com/manxnotebook/fulltext/wa1903/text.htm

[69] Rev Ian Carmichael, DSO, MC, *Lismore In Alba*, p. 38

anywhere else, but we are also blessed with an abundance of ash which grows wild on the island – and ash is the best firewood of all![70]

One reason that this story is so improbable is that not only was there a massive difference in their status, bishop versus penitent, there is no reason to suggest that one abbot ever claimed an island exclusively. There is evidence of Columban missions squabbling with St. Moluag's (sub) abbots in places such as Tiree.[71]

2.3 Lismore Abbey

As we have seen, when St. Moluag settled on Lismore, it was into a territory which had no overlord and there was, therefore, unlikely to have been a grant from any king. The foundations Moluag created in the northern Pictish kingdom would have been different, as there was a strong king and grants would have been needed.

It was the practice of the Irish missionaries of the time to surround their wattle and daub buildings[72] with a vallum and thorns, much in the manner of the ancient hill forts. It is believed that Moluag's *Lios* was no different[73]. There are many instances of these valla on record, more especially in Ireland. The Gaelic word *lis*, literally means an enclosure and was normally used to denote a fortified place or monastery. This is why the island has its name, *Lios mor*, the 'great monastery'. This is the real meaning of Lismore and not the 'great garden' as is so often given. The monks lived in beehive cells, worshipped together in an oratory and ate in a communal refectory.

The Cathedral Church of St. Moluag probably occupies the site of St. Moluag's *Lios*. The field boundaries to the north, east and south from a rough circle, of about 240 metres in diameter which may indicate the original line of the vallum that enclosed the early monastic site. [74] MacDonald notes that is was 'perhaps' larger than Dornoch Cathedral in Caithness and Fortrose Cathedral in Ross[75], adjacent to St. Moluag's foundation at Rosemarkie.

Appin literally means 'the jurisdiction of, and hence territory owned or ruled by, an ab or abbot, chief dignitary of a monastic community'.[76]

The Lismore Abbey lands were once very extensive and included the ancient parish of Lismore which embraced Appin (the Abbey Lands), Eilean Mund

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[70] Ibid p 39
[71] Archibald B Scott, *The Pictish Nation: It's People and its Church*, Foulis, 1918 p238
[72] C Manning. *Early Irish Monasteries*, Country House, Dublin 1995
[73] Alexander Carmichael LL.D., *The Barons of Bachuill*, *The Celtic Review*, April 15 1909, pp. 356-375.
[74] http://canmore.rcahms.gov.uk/en/site/23100/details/lismore+st+moluags+cathedral/
[75] Iain G MacDonald, Clerics and Clansmen, Brill, 2013, p. 40.
[76] Professor GWS Barrow, *Kingship and Unity*, Edinburgh University Press, 1981 p.44.

and Kingairloch and Morvern districts. It was not until 1891 that the Boundary Commission transferred the Kingairloch and Morvern part of the parish of Lismore to that of Kilmallie. The parish of Eilean Mund covered a large section of Inverness-shire, including Onich, Mamore, and seven merklands and a half of the lands of Glennevis.[77]

The lordship of Lorn extended to 700 merks of land. Lismore itself comprises 80 merks. Taking into account the lands around Loch Etive, it looks as though the abbey had a very substantial portion of the lands of Lorn – well in excess of a third. When the See of Lismore was created it was endowed with only 25 merks of land.

Many lands were lost in the reformation and the greater part of the Abbey lands of Lismore were grabbed by the Campbell's. MacDonald notes that 'Considerable doubt also surrounds the precise status of Lismore during this period [c. 1338]. It is notable by its absence from royal grants of lands to *Clann Dòmhnaill* and *Clann Chaimeul* following the forfeiture of *Clann Dubhghaill* and therefore appears to have remained, officially at least, in royal hands'.[78] MacDonald gives no reason why they should have been in royal hands, but I think by this he assumes that land in Scotland that had no grant from the crown remained with the crown. This assumes that all land was held of the crown which is not the case with the abbey lands of Lismore which are held by the Grace of God. In the sixth century they had no secular overlord.

My understanding is that these lands were never part of the territory claimed by the *Cenél Loairn,* or the Kingdom of Dalriada. They were never part of the Lordship of Lorn.

The Scottish parliament was careful, in 1556, to remind the Crown and nation that the title King of Scots denoted that the sovereign was essentially, and at common law, a personal Ard-Righ, not territorially King of Scotland. He could not give away that which he did not own. This is further demonstrated by the fact that the great religious centres were considered Lordships of Regality, as discussed below in section 3.8, and outwith the jurisdiction of the King's Officers, whether Sheriff, Earl or Lord.

In the sixteenth century barony lands and lordships were not necessarily contiguous. The lands could be widely scattered with parcels here and there. Appin literally means 'the jurisdiction of, and hence territory owned or ruled by, an ab or abbot, chief dignitary of a monastic community in the pre-twelfth century Celtic Church' [79].

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[77] James E. Scott, *Transactions of The Gaelic Society of Inverness* VOL. XLVIII (1972 - 74).
[78] Iain G MacDonald, Clerics and Clansmen, Brill, 2013, p. 48.
[79] Professor GWS Barrow, *Kingship and Unity*, Edinburgh University Press, 1981 p. 44.

There is a very curious Charter of Confirmation from Archibald, the son of Archibald, Earl of Argyll, on 9th April, 1544, confirming the grant of lands 'as freely as the father, grandfather and great-grandfather and other predecessors of the said John, held the lands of our predecessors, Lords of Lorn'. There are several issues here: the first is that this phrase was often used to indicate from time immemorial, but the four generations referred to would account for at least 120 years – so on the most conservative estimate the lands had been held since c. 1420. It claims that the lands were held from the Lords of Lorn, not the Earls of Argyll. The earldom of Argyll was only created in 1457. Of particular significance, as pointed out by the Lord Lyon in 1951, is the fact that there was no resignation in the 1544 charter to the then Coarb. If Argyll had been feudal superior, the lands would have been resigned to him and then re-granted.

2.4 The Coarbs of St. Moluag

The Coarb of St. Moluag was the Abbot of Lismore and the abbots of the 100 or so monasteries which emanated from St. Moluag followed the rule of the Coarb. The Coarbs of St. Moluag provided the authority of the church to support the Kings of Dalriada and the Lords of Lorn, allegedly carrying the *Bachuil Mor* of St. Moluag as a totem before their hosts.

In 1951 The Lord Lyon King of Arms recognised Alastair Livingstone of Bachuil, by the grace of God, Baron of the Bachuil, as Coarb of St. Moluag. Lyon found that the 'The Coarbs of St. Moluag have come down through the centuries … 'acknowledging no earthly authority or hierarchy'. In my view … the Baron of the Bachuil at first, like certain old French barons, was in the nature of a "baron *par la Grâce de Dieu*" '.[80] He also found in fact, *inter alia*: 'That the co-arb of a Celtic abbot was heir of the abbot in his ecclesiastical functions and abbatical mensal territory.'

In the Middle Ages *An Gorm Mor*, as Coarb of St. Moluag, fought and killed a bull that was terrorising the population of Morvern and preventing them attending church. He was eventually buried in *Leac a Ghuirm Mhoir* (the lair of 'the big blue') in Lismore graveyard and where the elaborately carved gravestone still lies.[81] The carving on it is that of the Middle Ages and greatly weathered. On the upper half of the stone is the figure of a man in the kilt, much as the dress is worn now, and holding a long staff in his right hand, probably the staff of Saint Moluag.[82]

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[80] *Scots Law Times*, December 29 1951.
[81] Rev Ian Carmichael DSO, MC, *Lismore In Alba*, p. 178.
[82] Alexander Carmichael Ll.D., *The Barons of Bachuill*, The Celtic Review April 15 1909, pp. 356-375.

'In the centre of the burying-ground, and adjoining the foundation of this early church, is the lair of the Barons of Bachuill.[83] ....The place is called Plod nam Baran, Plod na Bachuill, Plod Chlann-an-leigh, the lair of the Barons, the lair of Bachuill, the lair of the Livingstones. ....The Barons are buried by themselves, no member of their family being buried with them. There is only one known instance of a member of his family being buried with a Baron - a wife who, when dying, appealed to be buried in death beside him whom she loved in life. The grave of the Barons is situated by itself, and is known as An Uaigh Mhor - the great grave, Uaigh nam Baran - the grave of the Barons, and Uaigh na Bachuill - the grave of Bachuill, and other names.'

It can be seen that the Coarbs are traditionally buried in the holiest ground of the old site. No more, alas, as Health and Safety rules demanded that a new grave was opened for my late father.

It was the custom in recent centuries for the Coarb to invite his relatives to Bachuil on Hogmanay. He would stir a large vessel full of spring water with the staff, blessing it in the name of St. Moluag. He would then distribute the holy water to the relatives present. This ceremony ended when one of the relatives went on first-footing. Towards dawn, as he left a house where he had been particularly well entertained, he blessed the cattle with the holy water. The family name was McCaig and they prospered from then on. One of them, John Stuart McCaig, a successful banker and philanthropist built the prominent tower in Oban that bears his name. He was born at Clachan, Isle of Lismore, on 11 July 1823 and baptised at St. Moluag's Cathedral, Lismore. The Coarb took a dim view of this use of the holy water and the practise ceased thereafter. The present Coarb has revived this custom although moving the event to Epiphany.

As we saw above the abbey lands were not granted by any king. Lord Lyon Sir Thomas Innes of Learney took the view that the Coarbs had no superior.

> Now the essence of the character of a Coarb, demonstrated by Professor Coulton and by the subsequent history of both the Quigerich and the Bachuil, is that these successors, the 'heirs' or Coarb of St. Moluag and St. Fillan have themselves come down through the centuries also 'acknowledging no earthly authority or hierarchy'. That, in my view, is why the Bachuil lands had no feudal superior in the Middle Ages. And the Baron of the Bachuil, at first like certain old French barons, was in the nature of a '*baron par la grâce de Dieu*'. No evidence is adduced that the Bachuil and Bachuil-land were ever held 'of or under ' the Bishop of Lismore, and I do not believe that this was the case. In my

[83] Ibid

> view it would have been incompatible with the fundamental nature of the thing, and of being the Coarb of the Saint. The same evidently applies to the Quigerich of St. Fillan : it was indeed declared independent.

In the mid seventeenth century the family started to use the name Livingstone.[84]

> Coming to Him as unto a **living stone**, disallowed indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, ye also as **living stones** are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.[85]

2.5 Early Abbots of Lismore

Extracts from the Annals of Ulster give information on the main events relating to Lismore. Difficulties arise, however, as confusion is made between Les Mór Mo-luóc (Lismore of Moluag) and the later monastery of Les Mór Mo-Chutu in Ireland although generally the later is referred to as Les Mór Mo-Chutu. In U856.7 reference to an anchorite would suggest this refers to Les Mór Mo-Chutu although it is not specified.

U592.1	Death of Lugaid of Les Mór.
U635.7	Echuid of Les Mór died.
U700.3	The falling asleep of Iarnlach, abbot of Les Mór.
U703.3	Colmán son of Finnbarr, abbot of Les Mór, dies.
U718.4	Crónán grandson of Eóán, abbot of Les Mór, dies.
U753.2	The falling asleep of Mac Oiged, abbot of Les Mór.
U757.4	Death of Finnchú, abbot of Les Mór.
U768.3	Aedán abbot of Les Mór died.
U774.5	Suairlech grandson of Cú Chiaráin, abbot of Les Mór, died.
U776.10	Eógan son of Rónchenn, abbot of Les Mór, died.
U781.3	Órach, abbot of Les Mór; and Fergus son of Eochu, king of *Dál Riata*—died.
	From here on it **appears** that all references are to *Les Mór Mo-Chutu*
U825.13	Flann son of Fairchellach, abbot of Les Mór, fell asleep.
U833.10	The burning of ***Les Mór Mo-Chutu***
U851.8	Tipraite grandson of Baíthenach, abbot of Les Mór, fell asleep.
U856.7	Suibne .. ***anchorite and abbot of Les Mór***, fell asleep in peace.
U912.2	Mael Brigte son of Mael Domnaig, superior of Les Mór, rested in Christ.
U953.4	Diarmait son of Torpaid, ***superior of Les Mór Mo-Chutu***, died.
U959.4	Maenach son of Cormac, superior of Les Mór, died.
U960.5	(Cathmug, superior of Les Mór, rested.)

84 *Highland Papers Vol. II*, Scottish History Society, p. 258.
85 1 Peter 2 v 4&5.

James Earle Fraser commenting on the Iona Chronicle writes:

> Interest in the abbots of Lismore appears to have resumed only when the kings of Lorn were dominant in Argyll, with records of the deaths of Iarnlaigh in 700 or 701, Colman son of Findbarr in 704 and Cronan ua Eoain in 718. There was no attempt to insert the names of Lismore abbots from the sixty-three years between the deaths of Eochaid in 637 and Iarnlaigh. Similarly, the deaths of only two bishops of Kingarth in the Firth of Clyde are recorded, those of Daniel in 659 or 660 and Iolan in 688, during whose episcopates kings of Cowal (in whose kingdom Kingarth lay) were prominent. These patterns are surely indicative of relationships, acknowledged at Iona, between the kings of Cowal and the church of Kingarth, and between the kings of Lorn and the church of Lismore.[86]

In a foot note he adds that 'Mac Luiged (AT751.1), Findchu (AU 757.4, AT757.4), Conait (AU 760.7, AT 760.3), Ėogan (.A U 776.10) and Orach (A U 781.3), are likely to have been abbots at Lismore Mo-luóc.'

2.6 The Stowe Missal

Written c. 792-803 in Latin, The Lorrha (Stowe) Missal is a Mass-book of the early Irish Church and named Stowe because it was once part of a collection of manuscripts in the library of the Duke of Buckingham. In 1883 it was purchased by the British Government and deposited in the Royal Irish Academy.

The Lorrha Missal is thought to have been written about two hundred years after the death of St. Moluag and he is included amongst the 48 Saints as Lua of Lismore. It is significant that Adamnan makes no mention of St. Moluag in his Life of St. Columba which shows very clearly this is a highly partisan work of propaganda.

As can be seen there is a clear distinction made between Lismore in Scotland and the younger foundation in Ireland.

Saint Lua of Lismore	Pray for us.
Saint Carthage of Rahan and Lismore	Pray for us.

2.7 Miracle at Mortlach

In 1010 King Malcolm II had taken to the field against the Danes. In an impetuous attack the Scots lost three of their leaders (Kenneth, Thane of the Isles, the Thane of Laudian and the Thane of Strathearn) and were forced to give ground. Just before this turned into a route Malcolm fell on his knees

[86] James E. Fraser, *From Caledonia to Pictland: Scotland to 795*, New Edinburgh History of Scotland, 2009.

facing St. Moluag's small chapel at Mortlach and prayed for victory. In return the King vowed to build a cathedral church dedicated to St. Moluag on the site of the chapel to testify that with God's support, Scotland had been defended. The Scots attacked again and routed the Vikings, pursuing them up towards Balvenie Castle with great slaughter! . King Malcolm even managed to unhorse the Danish general Enetus and strangle him. In fact Malcolm, to be certain of keeping his oath, made the chapel three spear lengths longer (a spear length is four metres).

2.8 The Last King of Ulidia

Ruaidhri Mac Duinnsleibhe was the last king of Ulidia, dying at the end of the twelfth century. He is described as 'its 54th king since the advent of St. Patrick to Ireland.' We have seen how the *Ui Echach Coba* and the *Dál nAraide* descend from *Fiacha Araide*, St. Moluag's ancestor.

From 1137 the Ulaid *rigdamnai* (persons eligible to be king) alone used the name *Mac Duinnshleibhe*.

> So for instance when after 1137 the *Dal Fiatach* kingship was confined to the descendants of *Donn Sleibe Mac Eochada* (slain in 1091), the *rigdamnai* set themselves apart from the rest of the family by using the name *Mac Duinnshleibhe*.[87]

In Irish Pedigrees – The Stem of the Dunlevy family, Princes of Ulidia, O'Hart[88] says

> Tuirmach Teamrach, the 81st Monarch of Ireland had a son named Fiach Fear mara, who was ancestor of the Kings of Argyle and Dalriada[89], in Scotland: this Fiach was also the ancestor of *MacDunshleibe* .., anglicised … Livingstone. ….'
>
> According to Dr O'Donovan, descendants of this family (of Cu-Uladh, the son of the last *MacDunshleibe* King of Ulidia), soon after the English invasion of Ireland, passed into Scotland, where they changed their name.

As already discussed the *Mac Duinnsleibhe* kings appear as patrons of St. Comgall's Bangor Abbey in the twelfth century.[90] Many writers have been misled into thinking that St. Moluag was a disciple of St. Comgall whereas it was the other way around. There were obviously close connections and frequent contact between the two abbeys of Bangor and Lismore. As we

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[87] Francis J. Byrne, *Irish Kings and High Kings*, B.T. Batsford, London 1973, p. 127ff.
[88] John O'Hart, *Irish Pedigrees; or, the Origin and Stem of the Irish Nation*, Fifth Edition, 1892.
[89] This is confirmed by both Genealogies from Rawlinson B 502 and The O'Clery Book of Genealogies, Analecta Hibernica #18, R.I.A. MS. 23 D 17
[90] Iain G MacDonald, *Clerics and Clansmen, The Diocese of Argyll between the Twelfth and Sixteenth Centuries*, Brill, 2013, p. 34.

have seen the Coarbs of St. Moluag had the same status and honour price as the Kings of Ulidia so it is not surprising that when *Ruaidhri Mac Duinnsleibhe* was defeated by the Normans in the twelfth century his heirs moved to Lismore to join their cousins, the *familia* of St. Moluag displacing the temporary Maclean Abbot, Cuduilig, as Coarb of St. Moluag. As already discussed, according to the laws of the time, the tribe of the Saint, shall succeed in the Church as long as there shall be a person fit to be an abbot (*Damna Apaidh*), of the tribe of the saint, even though there should be but a psalm singer.[91] From that time the Coarbs of St. Moluag are believed to have used the name *Mac Duinnsleibhe*. The name *Mac Duinnshleibhe* sounds like *Mac 'on Lea* as the *'D'* disappears through euphonistic elision in Gaelic and *h* indicates that *shleibhe* lenites to sound like Lea or Lay.

The Chiefs of MacLea, are the current *rigdamnai* of Ulidia.

2.9 Heraldry

St. Moluag's legacy carries on in many strange ways, not least heraldic. The cross crosslet fitchée is the totem of St. Moluag. It obviously appears in the arms of the Coarbs of St. Moluag, Barons of Bachuil.

Achievement of the Barons of Bachuil

It also appears in the arms of the MacLean chiefs as Cuduilig (the Hound of Leaves), the founder of the Macleans of Duart and Morvern, was an Abbot of Lismore *circa* 1150. This was why the clan were first able to settle on Abbey lands in Morvern.

Maclean of Duart

On Somerled's death, his descendants, the MacDougalls and MacDonalds, both took as their crest an armoured hand holding the cross crosslet fitchée, thereby representing their temporal role as defenders of the church of St. Moluag.

[91] W.S. Skene *Celtic Scotland: A History of Ancient Alban, Vol 2,* 1887, p. 66.

The arms of the Episcopal Diocese of Argyll are blazoned 'Azure, two crosiers in saltire and in chief a mitre, or.' These arms can be seen in the Episcopal Cathedral in Oban behind the choir stalls. The two crosiers in the shield do not represent the crosiers of the diocesan bishop but the crosier of St. Moluag, the *Bachuil Mor*.

Lyon has this comment on the heraldry of the Episcopal Church.

> In the case of Argyll the sainted Bishop, whom we may assume to be St. Moluag, appears on the seal or on one of the seals of every medieval Bishop whose seals have come down to us. The first is that of Bishop Alan; there is represented St. Moluag; and in the base, the Bishop adoring his patron. Later Bishops also bore their paternal arms.[92]

It is not surprising to find that a representation of a sainted Bishop (i.e., with a halo) is the prevailing device on the seals of the mediaeval Bishops: and it is not difficult to identify the figure with the patron, St. Moluag.

There is another carving of great interest in the cathedral. There is a crowned figure seated and holding a cross crosslet fitchée that gazes down from the choir stalls. This is clearly St. Moluag as, in his day, bishops were crowned and not mitred in the modern manner.

[92] Rev. W. T. Lyon. M.A.. F.S.A. (Scot.) *The Arms of The Scottish Bishoprics,* Selkirk: The Scottish Chronicle Offices. 1917. p. 73.

2.10 The Bachuil Mor or Great Crozier of St. Moluag

The *Bachuil Mor* of St. Moluag was treated with veneration akin to awe by the people. This drawing is from Dr John Dowden's book 'The Celtic Church In Scotland'[93]. Like the staff of St. Patrick of Armagh, the famous *Bachull Isu* or 'Staff of Jesus', (burned by the Englishman George Browne, Archbishop of Dublin in 1536) the staff of Moluag possessed, in the simple faith of the times, miraculous powers. It ensured safety at sea, truth on land, secured man from plague, woman from death, and cattle from murrain.

The duty of the Coarbs to protect it is onerous and, in the words of old commissions, they shall fail to do so at their peril. The crozier was removed to Inverary by John, 9th Duke of Argyll under strange circumstances. A small remnant of this old curse remains – and it seems to have been effective.

Black was the day for Lismore,
When the Yellow Staff left it,
But worse 't was in Inverary,
When *MacCailein Mor* took it there,
Though glorious he, he shall be
Without blessing, his house going desolate,
So long as he keeps to himself
The *Bachuil Mor* of St. Moluag

John married HRH Princess Louise in 1871 but died without an heir in 1914. He was succeeded by his nephew Neil, the 10th Duke who died in 1949. He was succeeded by his cousin once removed, Ian, the 11th Duke. In 1951, Ian agreed to return the staff to my late father thus ending the curse. My father was working in the Middle East at the time so it stayed at Inverary until 1970. It was then returned to Bachuil by his son Ian, the 12th Duke, with much ceremony and rejoicing. His wife Iona and son Torquil, now the 13th Duke, and the Bishop of Argyll and the Isles were amongst those present.

There has been much discussion over the years about the style of the crozier. Dr Griffin Murray, a post doctoral research fellow at Cork University is

[93] Dr John Dowden, Bishop of Edinburgh. *The Celtic Church In Scotland*, SPCK 1894 p. 313.

engaged on a project to examine the remaining Celtic Croziers. There are apparently 60, although many are just fragments. In May 2013 he stayed at Bachuil to examine the *Bachuil Mor*. His initial thoughts are that it is of the size of early croziers and is pretty well intact although it has lost its decoration. He told me it was the only one still in the possession of the coarb.

On the inside back cover are photos of four croziers from which it is possible to speculate about the history of the ornamentation. From the illustration of St. John from the Book of Kells and the stained glass window depicting St. Patrick and other sources it is reasonably clear that croziers of that period were not the full length crozier that is used today by Roman Catholic or Anglican Bishops but much shorter – more like a Field Marshall's baton.

The *Bachuil Mor* is the one of the oldest surviving croziers of a Celtic saint. There are examples of other croziers some of which are discussed below. These are of great interest as it is clear that the *Bachuil Mor* was once ornamented. There are still fragments of metal attached to the staff and traces of carvings which are very similar to other carvings of the 11th-12th Centuries. It is highly likely that it would have conformed to the pattern of the Lismore Crozier as discussed below.

St. Moluag's abbatial bell was in existence until the sixteenth century when it disappeared during the Reformation.

This bell shrine was found in 1814 at Glassary one of the rural deaneries of Lismore. It 'contains a small iron bell, probably that of St. Moluag of Lismore, which he made miraculously … with a bundle of rushes for fuel, the smith having declined to make him a bell because he had no coals..... (it) has a round hole pierced in the bottom, sufficient to allow of the insertion of a finger to touch the bell, an indication that the relic had been used, by many others, to swear oaths upon...' [94]

Relics associated with the early Celtic saints were believed to hold miraculous powers and were much revered, foremost was the crozier but second came the bell. Oaths were sworn upon them and terrifying curses were cast using them.

[94] Joseph Anderson, *Architecturally-shaped Shrines and other Reliquaries of the Early Celtic Church in Scotland and Ireland*, Proc Soc Antiq Scot, 44 (1909-10), p. 275.

Chapter 3 The Celtic Church from the Seventh Century

3.1 The Celtic Church

Today there is a massive controversy as to whether there ever was a Celtic Church. One Roman Catholic priest writes "Anglicans of all stripes cling to the notion of their independent Celtic Christian origins because it seems to ratify their continued independence from Rome: If the ancient British church was independent, then they have a right to continue that tradition. Unfortunately, all the evidence shows that the first Christians in Britain were Roman." I deeply regret this propaganda which is so typical of those seeking to deny history.
I accept that the word Celtic could be a problem as it might suggest that this included Irish, Scots, Welsh and other Celts such as in Brittany.
So let us examine what is meant by a Church. Two definitions are the whole body of Christian believers (ie Christendom) or any major division of this body; a Christian denomination. If one argues that a priest can give the Holy Sacrament to any member of the Church then the first definition falls which is a matter of deep regret and, I believe, would make Jesus Christ weep. How can a priest who declares that "I believe in one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church" as decided at the Council of Nicea refuse to communicate with any other Christian who professes the same? .

Therefore I will say that a Church is a group of Christians, of the same denomination, that are in communion, and that are under some earthly authority. Skene points out that the Irish Scottish Church was unified and that "what was excommunicated by one church all excommunicated"[95]. This Church was not under the authority of Rome but governed by a Synod of Senior Abbots. We shall examine this further later.

Detractors suggest that, as in the Roman Catholic Church there has to be a supreme leader. Why? Our leader is Jesus Christ and we are His servants.

3.2 The Early Pictish Church

William F. Skene, wrote:

> The church of the northern Picts and northern Scots….emanated from the church of Gaul, a church always opposed to that of Rome, and claiming a descent from the church of Ephesus, and its founder, St. John the Evangelis.'[96]

[95] W.S. Skene, *Celtic Scotland: a history of ancient Alban, Vol II*, 1886, p. 16.
[96] W. S. Skene, *The Highlanders of Scotland*, 1902, E. Mackay, Stirling

Skene was the Historiographer Royal for Scotland so is a respected authority. Nevertheless many argue that The Celtic Church is older than the Continental Churches:

> The churches of France and Spain, must yield in point of antiquity and precedence to that of Britain, as the latter Church was founded by Joseph of Arimathea immediately after the Passion of Christ.[97]

Some distinctive features of Irish Christianity such as the frontal tonsure, hand bells, and wheeled cross may have been derived from eastern traditions, not to mention one of the most amazing of all achievements of Irish monasticism - the illuminated manuscripts. The earliest of these, The Book of Durrow (675), contains religious portraits almost identical to the icons on the pages of earlier eastern gospel manuscripts. The most famous is the magnificent Book of Kells (800). These ancient treasures display a breathtakingly beautiful blend of intricately woven art that seems to be a combination of the patterns familiarly found in eastern carpets and the fantastically coiling spirals of La Tene art.

3.3 Liturgy, Celibacy and Tonsure

The best book on this matter that I have found is Warren's Liturgy and Ritual of the Celtic Church[98]. In the introduction he writes 'By the term "Celtic Church" is meant the Church that existed in Great Britain and Ireland before the mission of St. Augustine, and to a varying extent after that event, until by absorption or submission the various parts of it were at different dates incorporated within the Church of the Anglo-Saxons.'

Warren opines that 'There are no grounds for impugning the orthodoxy of the Celtic Church. On the contrary there is unimpeachable evidence the other way.'[99] He then goes on to agree with Montalembert's assertion that it was 'profoundly and unchangeably catholic in doctrine, but separated from Rome in various points of discipline and liturgy'.[100]

Skene argues 'We find it in close connection with the Gallican Church, and regarding the Patriarch of Rome as the head of the Western Church and the source of ecclesiastical authority and mission; and, with the exception of the temporary prevalence of the Pelagian heresy in Britain, we can discover no trace of any divergence between them in doctrine or practice.' Warren disagrees with this statement but on examination I think that he is rather splitting hairs. For instance amongst the variances he describes are:

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[97] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Celtic_Christianity
[98] F.E. Warren, BD, *Liturgy and Ritual of the Celtic Church*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1881
[99] Ibid p. 26.
[100] Charles Forbes, Comte de Montalembert, *The Monks of The West : from St. Benedict to St. Bernard*, Blackwood , Edinburgh, 1861, III p. 79.

- The Episcopal benediction immediately preceding the communion of the people, and sometimes bestowed in the Eastern fashion;
- The veiling of women at the reception of the Eucharist;
- The use of unleavened bread.[101]

As already noted Joyce considered that there was only one liturgy of the Mass[102]. The differences were minor and entirely acceptable to the early church ecumenical councils that decided that the churches of God 'among the Barbarian people' (that is, beyond the bounds of the Roman Empire) 'shall be regulated by the customs of their fathers'.

Judaism has generally not advocated celibacy, seeing marriage as important for the fulfilment of procreation as commanded in Genesis 1: 28. The High Priest in Temple times had to be married[103]. This cultural background is important and influenced the early church. There are many references to married priests in the bible. Even St. Paul writes

> A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach.[104]

The Orthodox Church does not require priests to be celibate but, for pastoral reasons rather than theological, prefers to choose bishops from the ranks of the celibate priesthood. The early Roman Catholic Church had married priests. At the Council of Nicea in 325 when a Spanish bishop proposed that celibacy should be compulsory he was opposed by the celibate Egyptian bishop Paphnutius, who not only thought the idea imprudent but objected to the removal of personal choice. In the eighth century there was a sustained effort to enshrine best practise into church law. The Irish '*Collectio Canonum Hibernensis'*, one of the most detailed written at this time assumes that clerics marry. There is clearly increasing concern about the practise of married priests leaving church property to their wives. It appears to be this aspect that resulted in the First Lateran Council making celibacy the rule for Catholic priests in 1123.

Historically the tonsure was not in use in the primitive Church during the age of persecution. Later, even circa 400 St. Jerome disapproved of clerics shaving their heads quoting Ezekiel Chapter 44 v20.[105]

The Roman or Petrine Tonsure is supposed to resemble Christ's Crown of Thorns and is the shaved circle at the back of the head. It varied in size and hence its conspicuity.

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[101] Ibid p. 55.
[102] P.W. Joyce, *A Smaller Social History of Ancient Ireland*, Dublin, 1906 p. 38.
[103] Leviticus 21: 13.
[104] 1 Timothy Chapter 3 v2.
[105] Neither shall they shave their heads; See also Leviticus 21:5 'Priests must not shave their heads'.

The Celtic Tonsure was apparently derived from St. John and was from ear to ear although there is little agreement thereafter. I favour the view that the hair swept forward to the forehead in an arc resulting in the fairly common appearance of a widow's peak. Others suggest that it came forward in a point so that, if surveyed by an angel flying overhead, the hair would form an arrow facing forward. Yet others take the extreme view that the whole forehead was shaved forward of the ears.

Joyce maintains that during the First Order of Saints there was only one tonsure in the early Irish Church: from ear to ear[106].

Once again this is not a subject covered in the scriptures yet was used as another artificial division of Christ's followers.

3.4 Monastic Rule

Although it is clear that the monasteries of the sixth century had rules there is no clear evidence that any survive from that time. We do know that the seventh century Antiphonary of Bangor claimed that Comgall was 'strict, holy and constant'.[107] There are two rules surviving from St. Columbanus, who trained at Bangor, dating from the end of the sixth century; the *Regula Monachorum* or Rule of the Monks and the *Regula Coenobialis* or Community Rule.

The *Regula Monachorum* extols the virtues of obedience, poverty, chastity, and silence in the monastery but, unlike the Rule of Benedict, is not a list of detailed regulations concerning daily life. Laporte has suggested that the early chapters are a summary of a work composed in Bangor by Comgall.

The Rule is strict in its demands but its tone is balanced and tolerant throughout. With the exception of one long chapter laying down regulations for the recitation of the Divine Office and some prescriptions regarding food and drink, the Rule is exclusively concerned with the interior dispositions of the soul. In this, Columban's Rule differed enormously from the detailed regulations laid down in the Rule of St. Benedict.

A sample of the *Regula Monachorum* is the chapter which deals with the meals of the monks:

> The food of the monks should be poor and confined to the evening; let it be such as to avoid gorging, and their drink such as to avoid drunkenness, so that it may sustain them but do them no harm: vegetables, beans, flour mixed with water, along with a small loaf of bread, lest the stomach be strained and the mind stifled. For those

[106] P.W. Joyce, *A Smaller Social History of Ancient Ireland*, Dublin, 1906, p. 38.
[107] David Hugh Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints* (4 ed.). Oxford University Press, 1997, pp. 112-113.

> who seek eternal rewards should only take account of a thing's usefulness and use. Use of life must be kept under control, just as work must be kept under control. This is true discretion, so that the possibility of spiritual progress may be maintained with an abstinence that scourges the flesh. For if abstinence goes too far, it will be a vice, not a virtue. A virtue tolerates and embraces many material things. Therefore we must fast daily, just as we must feed daily. While we must eat daily, we must regale the body rather poorly and sparingly. The reason we must eat daily is because we must advance daily, pray daily, toil daily, and read daily.

Only one meal a day, at 3 o'clock p.m., was allowed, except on Sundays and Feast days. Wednesdays and Fridays were fast days, except the interval between Easter and Whit Sunday. Lent and Advent were fast seasons. The food allowed for days not fast was barley bread, milk, fish, and eggs. Flesh meat was not allowed except on great feasts. Milk, butter, and flesh were prohibited on fast days. The daily routine of monastic life was prayer, study, and manual labour.

3.5 Calculation of Easter

According to the Gospel of John[108] Jesus was crucified in Jerusalem on the day of the 'preparation of the passover'. The Paschal lamb was slaughtered at Passover, which was the 14th day of the Jewish lunar First Month, Nisan. However, this produced some strange results and could even lead to Easter falling before the Spring Equinox. In an effort to bring uniformity, the Council of Nicaea in 325 determined that Easter should be celebrated on the same day throughout Christianity. It was agreed that Easter should always be the first Sunday after the first full moon (known as the Paschal Moon) following the Spring Equinox. Simple in theory, but in practise differences arose in determining both the equinox and the full moon. On occasions the resulting calculations from the two main centres of Rome and Alexandria produced differing results. In 444 and 455 these differences were so great that Pope Leo asked Hilarus, his archdeacon to produce a solution. Hilarus chose the Mathematician Victorius who published his tables in 457. These were based on the Roman year starting on January 1 and had a cycle of 532 years. Their simplicity made them very attractive but they were seriously flawed. In 529 Pope John I commissioned Dionysius Exiguus to produce a new set of tables which he did for 532 to 626 based on the correct Alexandrian principles. Despite this the Victorius tables were used for some centuries and were even made the official tables for the Gallican church in 541!

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[108] John 19:14.

It is not clear to me what tables they used in Ireland during the First Order of Saints, but whichever they were they seemed to have conformed to Rome. However by the end of the sixth century divergences seem to have crept in.

Having studied at Bangor in Ireland St. Columbanus travelled to Gaul in 590 and was dismayed to find that they were using the faulty tables. Gaul had been a province of Rome so he wrote to Pope Gregory in the following terms 'For know that by our masters and the Irish ancients, who were philosophers and most wise computists in constructing calculations, Victorius was not received, but held rather worthy of ridicule or of excuse than as carrying authority[109]'. Columbanus also wrote that his fellow countrymen used an 84-year Easter table and a related tract '*De ratione paschali*' attributed to Anatolius, Bishop of Laodicea, in modern Syria. All churches in Ireland and Scotland apparently used the table at that time. Joyce considered that the Irish Churches all celebrated one Easter after the spring equinox.[110]

There is of course nothing in the scriptures about the date of Easter and the Pope did not even reply to Columbanus. At that time any differences were considered unimportant.

Only much later this issue used as an excuse to create divisions in Christs Church. The Paschal controversy was the greatest issue at the Synod of Whitby. It has still not been completely resolved to this day.

3.6 Irish Church assimilated

By the end of the 8th century the [*Scots/*]Irish church began feeling the effects of the Viking raids, beginning in 793 when the monastery at Lindisfarne was brutally raided. By this time, Irish churches were almost completely conforming to Roman rules except for a few 'idiosyncrasies' such as still allowing priests to marry, and maintaining hereditary succession in ecclesiastical offices. Unlike other Christian regions, a whole monastery could be owned by one family in Ireland. And of course in keeping with Irish traditions, women continued to play important roles in the church. Divorce was recognized and cousins could marry, in distinct defiance of Roman Canon Law.

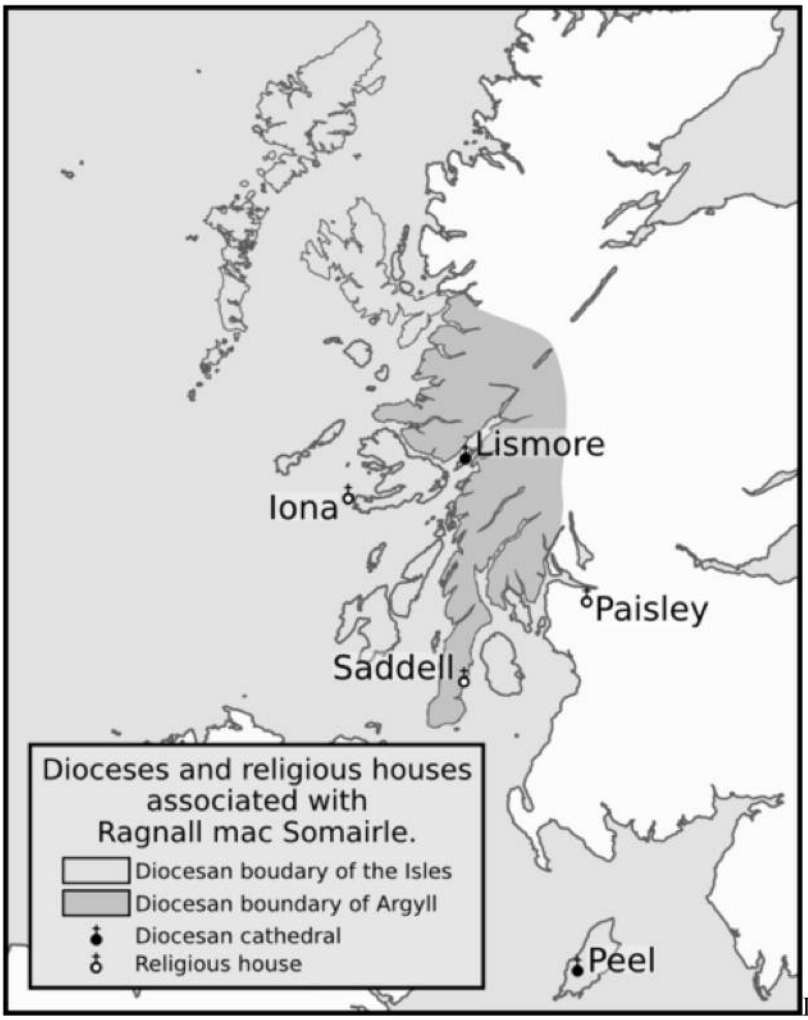
In the year 1111 the Irish Church was reorganized to fit Roman standards, shifting power from the abbots to the bishops and defining diocese boundaries. Ireland's first papal legate was appointed in 1151 and in the following year Pope Eugenius III recognized Armagh, Cashel, Dublin and Tuam as archiepiscopal sees. Under successive popes, the Irish Church was eventually Romanized and Anglicized until by the end of the 12th century

[109] Registrum Epistolarum (Gregory the Great), Book IX, Letter 127.
[110] P.W. Joyce, *A Smaller Social History of Ancient Ireland*, Dublin, 1906, p. 38.

many of its unique practices had been absorbed into conformity. Christianity in Ireland today, however, still holds a strong connection with the land and the ancient past that shaped its history.'

The East-West Schism is conventionally dated to 1054, when the Patriarch of Constantinople and the Papal Legate Humbert of Mourmoutiers (today considered a most arrogant and unsuitable ambassador) issued mutual excommunications that were then later revoked. In spite of that event, both Churches strived for many years to maintain friendly relations. However, estrangement continued to grow. In 1204 the sack of Constantinople by the participants in the Fourth Crusade was seen as the West's ultimate outrage and entrenched the schism.

3.7 The Independence of the Celtic Church in Scotland



In the West of Scotland the old Celtic Church remained independent. In the early 1100's Somerled drove out the Vikings and acquired the Kingdom of Argyll (technically a regulus or sub-kingdom under the very nominal paramountcy of the Kings of Scots) and took the Kingdom of the Isles (under the nominal paramountcy of the King of Norway).

Somerled was a supporter of the Celtic Church and worked to counter the influence of Queen Margaret (Queen Consort of Malcolm III of Scotland), who was an opponent, introducing Roman clergy. Somerled did his best to persuade the Coarb of St. Columba to return to Iona but the Coarb of St. Patrick and the king of Ireland, Ua Lochlainn prevented him. [111] This map[112] is of interest as it purports to show the diocesan boundaries in existence at that time – but we know that the Diocese of Argyll was not established until later (see 4.2) so this map reflects the extent of the temporal authority of Somerled and the spiritual authority of the Coarbs of St. Moluag.

Despite the Synod of Whitby the Celtic Church survived in Scotland and, in parts, continued to flourish until the 11th century, when Queen Margaret sponsored the Roman Catholic Church.

In 1150 Somerled supported the installation of Domlig or Cuduilig (the Hound of Leaves) as Abbot of Lismore. Cuduilig was able to appanage his heirs, Clan MacLean, in Morvern part of the Abbey lands which at that time were vast.

The Celtic Church in Argyll flourished under Somerled's protection and was not absorbed by Rome.

In 1164 on Somerled's death his kingdom was divided in the Norse fashion amongst his three sons who continued to support the Celtic Church. Dougall, the eldest son succeeded to the Kingdom of Argyll and was styled King in the Isles, Lord of Argyll and Lorn.

3.8 The Status of Celtic Abbots in Scotland

Earlier we examined the status of kings, priests, bishops and abbots in the sixth century. The status of a priest was equal to that of a minor king and a senior bishop had the status of the highest grade of king. Over the next six hundred years the hereditary abbots had maintained their high status. The status of Celtic Abbots in Scotland in the Middle Ages was demonstrably still very high as may be seen from these examples:

1. Sir Farquhar Mac an t-Sagairt or Farquhar MacTaggart (son of the priest), hereditary Abbot of Applecross, was knighted in 1215 by King Alexander II for military services. He had a claim to the lapsed Celtic Earldom of Ross and was recognised as such in about 1225. Applecross was founded by St. Maelrubha in the seventh century.

2. The progenitor of the MacNab clan is traditionally the Abbot of Glendochart and Strathearn, a younger son of King Kenneth MacAlpin.

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[111] *Annals of Ulster* 1164.2

[112] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Dioceses_of_Argyll_and_the_Isles_(Ranald,_son_of_Somerled).png.

Clan Macgregor claim descent from this Abbot, hence their motto 'Royal is my race'.

3. King Malcolm II's daughter Bethoc married Crinan, Abbot of Dunkeld, thus incorporating the hereditary Celtic office into the Royal family. Dunkeld was a Court of Regality

4. King Malcolm III's son Aedh was created Earl of Fife and Abbot of Abernethy. Abernethy, too, was a Court of Regality.

6. A branch of the MacKinnon chiefly family became Abbots of Iona. The last hereditary Abbot was John MacKinnon, the 9th chief, who was also Bishop of the Isles. He died around 1500.

In feudal times administration was devolved to the barons' courts which dealt with all civil and criminal justice except for the four pleas of the crown which were reserved to the king's sheriff courts. Some courts had more extensive powers and were known as Courts of Regality as they had powers co-equal with the crown: the king's officers held no jurisdiction unless the charge was one of treason.

The great religious centres of Abernethy, Dunfermline, Dunkeld, Iona (Icolumkill), Kinloss, Lindores (Lindoirs), Melrose, Pluscarden, St. Andrews, and Urquhart were all Courts of Regality.

My hypothesis is that when feudalism was introduced the independence of the rulers of these great abbeys was recognised by giving their courts powers of regality.

Chapter 4 Rome and The Reformation

4.1 The Celtic Church displaced by Rome

King David the first of Scotland, to all intents a Norman, was the son of Queen Margaret and Malcolm III of Scotland. He purchased the reputation of sanctity, by founding, and liberally endowing, not only the monastery of Melrose, but those of Kelso, Jedburgh, and many others, which led to the well-known observation of his Stewart successor, that he was a sore saint for the crown.

However he frequently gave to these new foundations lands that were not his to give – many of them belonging to the old Celtic Abbeys. For instance David moved the 'bishopric' of Mortlach, in reality a monastery under its abbot who followed the rule of the Coarbs of St. Moluag, east to his new burgh of Aberdeen. In a charter of 1150[113] David granted to the 'canons of St. Andrews the island of Loch Leven in order that they may found an order of canons there; and the culdees who may be found there, if they are willing to live according to a rule, shall remain in peace with them and under them, but if any of them wish to resist this, I will command that he be expelled from the island.' He does the same to the culdees (servants of God or old Celtic Church monks) of St. Andrews and many others.

David built up the Roman Church by devastating the Celtic Church.

4.2 The Roman Catholic See of Lismore

In 1200 John Scotus, Bishop of Dunkeld made application to the Pope to have his See divided into two, detaching that part of it which lay in Argyll. The Pope granted the bishop's request and appointed Harald as the first bishop of the new See.

It is worthwhile setting this in the context of other great events happening at the time. In 1093 Magnus Barefoot had re-established the suzerainty of Norway over the Isles, and entered into an agreement with the Malcolm, King of Scots, whereby his overlordship was acknowledged over all the islands between which and the mainland a helm-carrying ship could pass. Magnus even managed to include Kintyre in this operation.

Allegedly initially based at Muckairn, in 1236 the seat was moved to Lismore even though at this time the islands were technically in Norway. This rather begs the question as to whether Lismore, under the rule of the Coarbs, was ever Scottish or Norwegian. This Roman Catholic Diocese was poorly

[113] E.S.C. No. ccxxxii

endowed with only 25 merks whereas the Lismore Abbey lands will have extended to over 200 merks.

In 1263 Ewan of Argyll, 3rd chief of the MacDougalls, (who owed fealty to the Kings of Scots for the mainland possessions and to Norway for the islands) declined to join King Haakon of Norway in a raid against the Scots and resigned his island territories. Haakon was defeated at the battle of Largs in 1263. In 1266, at the Treaty of Perth, Norway ceded the isles to Scotland, although I was told by Dr Iain Macdonald that Lismore is not mentioned.

The MacDougalls, having fallen out with Robert the Bruce, were forfeit in 1308 and it is notable that, in all the lists of redistributed lands of the lordship of the MacDougalls, Lismore is never once mentioned.[114] This confirms the view that these lands were not part of the Lordship of Lorn.

In 1289 Pope Nicholas IV wrote to Laurence, Bishop of Lismore, saying that Iona Abbey was immediately under Rome and outwith the See of Lismore.

In 1462 Pope Pius II agreed that the Cathedral Church of Dunoon should be granted to the Bishop of Lismore and Argyll for his support, nevertheless by 1512 the Cathedral of Lismore was said to be ruinous and deserted.

Father Hay (Sacra Scotica) furnishes the following account of the dress worn by the canons of Lismore. 'Their usual habit reached to the ankles. At divine service in the church they wore a rochet with an amice placed upon the shoulders, and a surplice with open sleeves, from Easter Eve to the Feast of All Saints; and from Hallow Eve (31st October) to Holy Saturday they wore a linen surplice reaching to the ankles, and, by a peculiar privilege and custom, violet coloured capes, as appears from the *Iconice Canonicorum Imagines*, printed in 1400, which was to be seen in the choir. They afterwards wore black capes, open in front, and under the cape, which was lined with red cloth of silk or silk and wool, a linen tunic without sleeves. On the head they wore an amice of grey fur, and above it a hood which covered the shoulders, with a collar of ermine attached. To the cape was attached behind a train of the same material and colour, which they carried on the left arm. This change was introduced *pro tempore* by Pope Nicolas III. By a decree of the Council of Narbonne (1043) purple vestments were strictly forbidden to clerical persons, lest they should make a boast of worldly pomp. Yet the dignitaries of this cathedral church were distinguished by the purple, that the memory of the blood shed by them for the Gospel of Christ might not perish.'[115]

There were four Deaneries attached to the See: Kintyre inc Knapdale; Glassary, (or Glasrod) including all the parishes in Mid-Argyle, along with

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[114]Dennis Turner, *The Bishops of Argyll and the Castle of Achanduin, Lismore, ADll80-1343.* Proc Soc Antiq Scot, 128 (1998), p. 6512.

[115] James E. Scott, *Transactions of The Gaelic Society of Inverness* Vol. xlviii (1972 - 74).

the collegiate church of Kilmun on the Holy Loch, founded in 1442 for a provost and seven prebendaries; Lorn with all its parishes; Morvern with its parishes of Eilean Finan, Arasaig, Glenelg, Kilmallie, Kilmalen(?), Kilcolmkill, Killintag, Ardnamurchan, and Knoydart.

This account shows how the Coarbs of St. Moluag managed to survive this period

> Besides being the keeper of the crozier, the Baron [of Bachuil] was almoner of the cathedral, dispensing the bounty of the bishop to the poor of the parish. In this capacity he was called 'An Deor'-the almoner.
>
> The Baron of Bachuil … was also chancellor of the cathedral, and as such had to visit the landowners throughout the diocese to receive the tithes and all other dues accruing to the church. On these occasions the Baron carried the crozier of the bishop at sight of which all men were bound to pay him homage.[116]

4.3 The Reformation

Martin Luther, an Augustinian monk and professor at the university of Wittenberg, called in 1517 for a reopening of the debate on the sale of indulgences. Henry VIII used this for his own ends leading to the English Reformation beginning in 1529 and completed in 1536.

Avaricious nobles in Scotland were quick to see the opportunity to acquire Church lands and the Campbells were not slow off the mark acquiring much of the Abbey lands of Lismore.

In 1560, the Scottish Parliament abolished papal jurisdiction and approved Calvin's Confession of Faith, but did not accept many of the principles laid out in Knox's First Book of Discipline, which argued, amongst other things, that all of the assets of the old church should pass to the new. Many of the assets stayed in the hands of powerful nobles.

4.4 The Scottish Episcopal Church

In 1582 the Church of Scotland finally rejected Episcopal government (by bishops), adopting instead full Presbyterian government by elders and reformed theology. Scottish monarchs made repeated efforts to introduce bishops, and two church traditions began. The Scottish Episcopal Church was born.

This Church has always been proudly independent of both Canterbury and York, believing itself the spiritual daughter of the old Celtic Church which had its origins, not in Rome, but the East.

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[116] Alexander Carmichael Ll.D., *The Barons of Bachuill*, The Celtic Review April 15 1909, pp. 356-375.

The Liturgy of St. James was the obvious model for the Liturgy of the Scottish Episcopal Church and one can see its influence very clearly in the 1764, 1912 and 1929 recensions.

The Coarbs of St. Moluag, as Abbots of Lismore, used to rule with absolute authority. Normally ordained priests, they used to have bishops serving them. To continue this historic link The Coarb of St. Moluag takes a largely ceremonial role in the Consecration and Enthronement of Bishops of Argyll and the Isles as shown below.

The Cathedral Community On Our Travels: Part I - To Oban[117]

> As is the custom of the Scottish Episcopalian Church, the Right Reverend Martin Shaw, .. was elected Bishop by the Electoral College of the Diocese of Argyll and the Isles…..
>
> Ashley Manhire and David Grumett joined Dean Emeritus Richard Eyre and Anne in attending the Consecration and Enthronement of Bishop Martin on 8th June…
>
> The Sovereign was represented by Mr Kenneth McKinnon, Lord Lieutenant for Argyll and Bute. ***In the procession, Baron Alastair Livingstone, Chief of the Clan MacLea, bore the Bachuil Mor of St. Moluag of Lismore. This ancient pastoral staff of blackthorn in gilded copper dates from 562 and is in the possession of the Livingstones as Coarbs of the Irish saint, a monk. It reminded us of the convenient Celtic practice of placing bishops under monastic authority***.
>
> The Preacher was the Right Reverend Richard Lewis, Bishop of St. Edmondsbury and Ipswich.

[117] http://www.exeter-cathedral.org.uk/CNews/News79.html

Chapter 5 The Three Patron Saints of Ireland

Ireland has three patron saints: Patrick, Brigid and Columba.

5.1 St. Patrick

It is probably fair to say that, if St. Patrick's mission was indeed to impose a Roman diocesan on Ireland as argued by Nora K. Chadwick and others, then it must be considered a failure. The monastic system prevailed until the twelfth century when the Roman system was finally established. This, however, has not prevented him from being venerated throughout the world by Irishmen of every Christian denomination. Whatever the realities of the situation, the legend commands respect.

5.2 St. Brigid

St. Brigid is highly venerated but there are few firm foundations upon which we can reconstruct her life story. We do know that her oratory at *Cill Dara* (Kildare) became a centre of religion and learning, and developed into a cathedral city. Legend has it that Saint Mel of Ardagh, who took her vows, also gave her the authority of an abbot and some say a bishop. She ruled over a double monastery, one for men and the other for women. For centuries Kildare was ruled by a double line of abbot-bishops and of abbesses. Some sources say that the Abbess of Kildare was regarded as superior general of the monasteries in Ireland. Now the Roman Catholics have a problem with a female bishop and the Celtic Church would have a problem with the concept of a "Superior General" and there are difficulties separating fact from fiction. Legend maintains that Brigid was buried in Kildare Cathedral, but then, about the year 878, because of the Viking raids, her relics were taken to Downpatrick, where she was buried alongside Saint Patrick and Saint Columba. Whatever the realities of this mythical figure there is no doubt that the legend as we now understand it is inspirational.

5.3 Columba

The facts about Saints Patrick and Brigid are veiled by the mists of antiquity and legend and to an extent this is true of Columba. There are many problems trying to establish a true picture of this man as today it is acknowledged by many scholars including James E Fraser[118] that much that has been written about Columba is simply false. Many of his alleged achievements rightfully belong to others, in particular St. Moluag.

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[118] James E. Fraser, *From Caledonia to Pictland: Scotland to 795,* New Edinburgh History of Scotland, 2009, p. 6.

As far as I am able to ascertain the following account represents the true situation as we see it today. We believe that Crimthann (anglicised as Fox), who was later given the name Columba by his abbot, St. Finnian, was born in 521 in Donegal, Ireland, in the heart of the territory of the aggressively expansionist *Ui Neill* Gaels (O'Neill). A decidedly controversial figure Columba was the great grandson of a minor king and reputedly the great-great grandson of Niall of the Nine Hostages, the king of the Northern *Ui Neill*. Even this is questioned as in many cases O'Neill propaganda has rewritten history.

Dr Brian Lacey took a first class honours from University College Dublin and obtained a D Phil from the University of Ulster in 2000 for interdisciplinary work relating to St. Colum Cille. He writes:

> Colum Cille's father, Fedelmid, was said to be a grandson of the legendary Conall who gave rise to the celebrated Donegal *Cenél Conaill* dynasty, as also to Tír Chonaill - the name in Irish for the greater part of Donegal. … The *Cenél Conaill* remained extremely influential for over a thousand years. Conall and what were said to have been his many brothers were reputed - probably falsely - to have been sons of the legendary powerful king, *Niall Noígiallach* or Niall of the Nine Hostages, from whom were, allegedly, descended most of the politically important families of early medieval Ireland.[119]

We understand that as a child he was despatched to the monastic school at *Maghbile* (Moville Abbey) where he studied under the famous St. Finnian, although as we have already seen there is considerable confusion about Finnian. Moville was in Ulidia in the territory of the *Dál nAraide* who were deadly enemies of the *Ui Neill*.

In *The History of Ireland* compiled by Rev. Keating in 17th century Ireland there is an account as to how Columba acquired his name. Apparently he was allowed out of the monastery to play with the local children. This would obviously have been tense as the local children would have been of the *Dál nAraide* and would have had little love for the child of their enemies. He had a feisty temperament and the local lads gave him the rather ironic nickname of the 'Dove of the Church'. When St. Finnian heard this he instructed that this should be the child's name *Colum-Chille or Columba*[120] although this explanation is ridiculed by Lanigan[121]

Saint Finnian of Moville eventually ordained him a deacon. Sources disagree as to the date but the most probable date was about 551. Lanigan points out

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[119] http://www.colmcille.org/colmcille/birth-early-life/

[120] Geoffrey Keating, *The History of Ireland*, Irish texts society by D. Nutt, 1908, p. 41.

[121] John Lanigan, *An Ecclesiastical History of Ireland*, Dublin, Graisberry, 1822, p. 116.

that sources that suggest that he was a deacon in 546 are improbable due to the widespread custom of not appointing anyone to the diaconate until they were 25 years old.[122]

At about that time he is supposed to have established his first monastery in Derry. He also founded the great monastery of *Dair-Magh*, now called Durrogh or Durrow, which original name signifies Field of Oaks, and Sord, or Swords, about six miles from Dublin. Richard Sharpe, a professor of history at Wadham College, Oxford, has studied and analysed the *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae*. He is of the opinion that Durrow was founded more than twenty years after Iona and that Derry too was founded after Columba had settled in Iona.[123] This supports Smyth's view as he writes that 'Adomnan makes the remarkable statement that Columba founded Durrow in Co. Offaly during the Abbacy of Alither of Clanmacnoise. Alither ruled Clanmacnoise from 585 to 599 and so we must conclude that Columba founded Durrow at a very late period, long after he had settled in Iona.'[124] This analysis has a great deal of credibility, as I don't see that Columba would have had the stature to found a monastery as a mere deacon.

Columba later studied under St. Finnian of Clonard known as the Tutor of the Saints of Ireland. He coveted Finnian's Psalter and asked permission to copy it. This was denied so, furtively, he set about making a copy. Having made the copy he could not resist showing it off. Saint Finnian told him to give the copy to him as it diminished his own book but Columba refused. For a novice to refuse his Abbot's order was a very serious crime. Columba compounded this by appealing over his Abbot's head. Now St. Finnian would have acknowledged no earthly authority or hierarchy but Columba went to Diarmait, the High King. This was incredibly rash as in those days there were parallel and entirely separate jurisdictions between church and state as decided at in the Council of Chalcedon in 451 [125]. Abbot's of St. Finnian's stature did not follow the orders of any king although it has to be admitted that the Council of Chalcedon did allow for the eventual appeal from the Patriarch to the Emperor of Rome, reflecting Roman Law. Nevertheless the Council of Constantinople had already decided that the churches of God 'among the Barbarian people shall be regulated by the customs of their fathers' so Columba could not invoke canon law to justify his actions. Hughes confirms this view when she writes 'The canonists

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[122] Ibid p119

[123] Richard Sharpe *Medieval Irish Saints' Lives: An Introduction to Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae,* Clarendon Press 1991 p. 29.

[124] Alfred P Smyth, *Warlords and Holy Men*, Edinburgh University Press, 1984, p. 90.

[125] Canon 9 of The Council of Chalcedon in 451

require Christians to avoid the secular courts and bring their disputes to the church for settlement'.[126]

When the High King pronounced his famous judgement 'To every calf its cow, to every book its copy' Columba's fury knew no bounds. He persuaded his relatives, the Northern O'Neills, to rise up in rebellion. This led to the Battle of *Cúl Dreimhne* in 561, during which 3,000 men were killed.

Other accounts suggest that the actual underlying cause of the confrontation was due to the confrontation between Druidism and Christianity in Ireland represented by the followers of the supposedly pagan High King Diarmait and the Christian Northern O'Neills. This doesn't stand up to scrutiny as apparently most of the dead were on the High King's side and Columba was exiled for the 'shedding of Christian blood'. Another tale says the excommunication was supposedly sparked off in a hot game of hurley or shinty. At the *aenach* (fair) held near Tara in 561, Prince Curnan, son of Connaught's King Aed, accidentally struck and killed an opposing player with a hurley stick. He apparently fled to Columba and was granted the 'sanctuary of the church' but was torn from Colum-Cille's hands and murdered. [127] The more reliable Annals of Tigernach say it is <u>one</u> of the causes[128]. Significantly nothing is mentioned in the Annals of Ulster[129] but this annal was probably based on writings by the highly partisan monks at Iona.

Whatever the actual cause of the battle, responsibility for the deaths of the 3,000 slain was laid firmly at Columba's door. As a result of his many crimes Columba was excommunicated.

> But soon a terrible punishment was to fall upon Columba for this dread violence. He, an anointed priest of the Most High, a minister of the Prince of Peace, had made himself the cause of the inciter of a civil war, which had bathed the land in blood--the blood of Christian men--the blood of kindred! … "His excitable and vindictive character," we are told, "and above all his passionate attachment to his relatives, and the violent part which he took in their domestic disputes and their continually recurring rivalries, had engaged him in other struggles, the date of which is perhaps later than that of his first departure from Ireland,

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[126] Kathleen Hughes, *The Church in Early Irish Society*, Methuen, 1966, p. 45.

[127] M554.4 Curnan, son of Aedh, son of Eochaidh Tirmcharna, i. e. the son of the King of Connaught, was put to death by Diarmaid, son of Cearbhall, in violation of the guarantee and protection of Colum Cille, having been forcibly torn from his hands, which was the cause of the battle of Cul Dreimhne.

[128] T559.4 The death of Curnán son of Aodh son of Eochaidh Tirmcarna, by Diarmaid son of Cearball while under Columcill's protection, and that is one of the causes of the battle of Cúil Dremne.

[129] U560.3 The battle of Cúil Dreimne.

but the responsibility of which is formally imputed to him by various authorities, and which also ended in bloody battles." At all events, immediately after the battle of Cool-Drewny, 'he was accused by a synod, convoked in the centre of the royal domain at Tailte, of having occasioned the shedding of Christian blood. The synod seems to have acted with very uncanonical precipitancy; for it judged the cause without waiting for the defense - though, in sooth, the facts, beyond the power of any defense to remove, were ample and notorious. However, the decision was announced - sentence of excommunication was pronounced against him![130]

This was a severe but just sentence as it meant that no Christian could converse with him or even offer him a glass of water.

Adamnán writes that Columba was excommunicated 'for some trivial and excusable offenses,' but is not specific about the reason and states that the synod was in error in applying excommunication. Smyth describes this simply as 'nonsense' and later notes that Columba himself was hard-liner when it came to doling out penance.[131] This may indicate acknowledgement of the seriousness of his crimes and true repentance.

Sharpe gives this explanation as too why the sentence was lifted: as Columba arrives at a synod 'convoked against him' St. Brendan of Birr sees him and rises to warmly greet him. The others rebuke Brendan for welcoming an excommunicate. Brendan relied:

> If you … had seen what the Lord deigned to disclose to me today, concerning this chosen one whom you refuse to honour, you would never have excommunicated him. For in no sense does God excommunicate him in accordance with your wrong judgement, but rather glorifies him more and more.[132]

When challenged St. Brendan he explains he had a heavenly vision, and 'the elders dropped their charge, for they dared not continue with their excommunication.'

Interestingly Sharpe considers that 'setting aside the unknown quantity of Columba's role in the battle of *Cul Dreimhne* and the events that followed, he plays no known part in Irish history until after he left Ireland and established his monastery at Iona.'[133]

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[130] AM Sullivan, *Story of Ireland, Being a Complete and Authentic History of Ireland from the Earliest Ages to 1867*. From the Atlas and Cyclopedia of Ireland 1900.
[131] Alfred P Smyth, *Warlords and Holy Men*, Edinburgh University Press, 1984, p. 92.
[132] Richard Sharpe *Medieval Irish Saints' Lives: An Introduction to Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae,* Clarendon Press, 1991, p. 207.
[133] Ibid p26

Legend suggests that it was St. Molaise who imposed this penance of two parts. The first was that he was to be exiled from Ireland, never to set eyes on it again, and the second that he should work as a missionary to bring as many souls to Christ as had been killed in the battle. Whereas most of the early saints who were sent off on a mission were bishops (*viz* St. Moluag) Columba was not – he was simply made a priest so that he could serve the sacraments and baptise converts. Other mission leaders were made bishops so that they could ordain priests and set up a series of establishments subject to the rule of the 'mother house'. It is clear that Columba personally was to bring the 3,000 souls to Christ. His apologists say that there was a mix up in the ceremony and that he should have been made a bishop. This has no credibility as in those days, as in many churches today, it was necessary to be ordained a priest before one could be ordained a bishop. Dr Reeves, who translated Adamnan's *Life of S Columba*, considers that the legend that St. Finnian wished Columba to be consecrated bishop, but through a mistake only priest's orders were conferred, is regarded by competent authorities as the invention of a later age.[134]

Legend recounts how, when he reached the islands of the west of Scotland, he would send a companion to the highest point and ask if he could see Ireland. If the answer was yes they moved on, lest he break his terms of exile and set eyes on Ireland.

Of great interest to this story is that St. Moluag was a great friend of St. Brendan's and a bishop who had persuaded his cousin St. Comgall, whom St. Moluag himself had ordained, to found Bangor Abbey. St. Brendan obviously knew about St. Moluag's planned mission to the Picts of Alba. It is my view that he had discussed the lifting of Columba's excommunication with St. Moluag and had obtained St. Moluag's agreement to include Columba in his party. In the sixth century there were few places an exiled person could go from Ireland apart from mainland Britain.

We do not know with any certainty if Columba left Ireland in the Company of SS Moluag and Comgal but we do know that St. Moluag, a bishop, travelled with St. Comgall, Abbot of Bangor, to obtain sanction for his missions in the land of the Northern Picts from King Brude at Inverness, and that Columba, a penitent, was in this party.

Dr Reeves, writes that 'The Life of St. Comgall represents St. Columba as only one of the agents on this occasion', contradicting Adamnan's claim that Columba was the leader of the mission.[135] Once again we can see how the differing versions reflect the partisan views of the authors.

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[134] Rev. William Reeves, D.D, *Vita S. Comgalli, p.* 226.
[135] Rev. William Reeves, D.D, *Vita S. Comgalli,* cap.44 and
Archibald B Scott, *The Pictish Nation: It's People and its Church*, Foulis, 1918 p. 235.

Columba eventually arrived at Iona. Now comes one of his most dastardly deeds. Columba was a harsh man, and one of his companions, St. Oran, had been irritating him enormously as he was more compassionate and argued that Christ was a gentle and merciful God. Columba decided that his new abbey on Iona required a human sacrifice and St. Oran was buried alive. He was dug up after three days and found to be still alive and saying he had seen both Heaven and Hell and that 'Hell was not how you think it is' infuriating Columba so they reburied him. Still in the Western Isles if someone says something outrageous they say 'throw mud in the mouth of St. Oran' for 'shut up.'

There is no evidence to show that Columba ever succeeded in bringing 3,000 souls to Christ. Columba could not, or did not deign to, speak the same language as the Picts and could only converse with the Gaelic speaking Scots of *Dál Riada* and his travels away from this area were few and infrequent.

Ian Bradley writes 'It certainly seems on the best available evidence we now have that Columba does not deserve the accolade of apostle to the Picts. His forays into Pictish territory seem to have been few and far between and it is highly doubtful that he felt any evangelistic impulse to particular people to Christianity.'[136] This supports Smyth's view that Columba was a saint of the *Cenél Loairn* and that he rarely ventured out of their territory.[137] As we know St. Moluag was the Patron Saint of the *Cenél Loairn.*

We do know he returned to Ireland, initially blindfolded so as not to break the teems of his penance, to defend the rights of poets. The privileges and immunities claimed by the bards had become so abused that they had become a millstone around the country's neck. King Hugh had, with widespread public support, decided to completely abolish their privileges. This was to be decided on at great Convention of Drumceat in 573, although Sharpe believes it was around 590[138]. Columba, himself a member of that order, returned and argued successfully for their powers to be curbed rather than abolished.

William Reeves, in his edition of the Life was able to list nearly forty churches in Ireland belonging to the community, but this list is no guide to how many churches were founded by Columba. This list is likely to reflect the extension of the community under his successors; it may include churches associated with his kindred that were not necessarily integrated into the Columban familia.

Columba was fairly free with his curses as evidenced by this account by Adamnan

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[136] Ian Bradley, *Columba: Pilgrim and Penitent,* Wild Goose Publications, 1996, p. 42
[137] Alfred P Smyth, *Warlords and Holy Men*, Edinburgh University Press, 1984, p. 103
[138] Richard Sharpe *Medieval Irish Saints' Lives: An Introduction to Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae,* Clarendon Press 1991 p. 27.

> Aedh, surnamed the Black, descended of a royal family, and a Cruthinian by race. Aedh wore the clerical habit, and came with the purpose of residing with him in the monastery for some years. Now this Aedh the Black had been a very bloodthirsty man, and cruelly murdered many persons … This same Aedh … was irregularly ordained priest by a bishop invited for the purpose... The bishop, however, would not venture to lay a hand upon his head unless Findchan … should first place his right hand on his head as a mark of approval. When such an ordination afterwards became known to the saint, he was deeply grieved, and in consequence forthwith pronounced this fearful sentence on the ill-fated Findchan and Aedh... And Aedh, thus irregularly ordained, shall return as a dog to his vomit, and be again a bloody murderer, until at length, pierced in the neck with a spear, he shall fall from a tree into the water and be drowned... But Aedh the Black, a priest only in name, betaking himself again to his former evil doings, and being treacherously wounded with a spear, fell from the prow of a boat into a lake and was drowned. [139]

Bradley, whose book was published by the Iona Community and so must be considered sympathetic to Columba, has some interesting conclusions.

> Columba had two very different sides to his personality. ... He never lost the attributes of this upbringing and retained to the end of his life an autocratic imperiousness, a hasty temper, a fierce pride and a lingering attachment to the "fascinating rattle of a complicated battle". Yet he could also be gentle, humble and overflowing with Christian charity…. He was no plaster saint, but an intensely human figure with faults and weaknesses as well as extraordinary depths of gentleness and humility.[140]

Bradley continues 'Medieval sources claim that he set up some 300 monasteries in Ireland before his departure for Iona, but this is generally dismissed by historians as without any historical basis…. In my book, I argue - and I think the evidence for this is really irrefutable - that he was certainly not what he is sometimes portrayed as - the evangelist of Scotland who converted the native Picts who occupied most of the northern, eastern and central mainland.' He also points out that' Many of those who visited Iona came as penitents, seeking to atone for some crime or to come to terms with feelings of guilt or remorse.'

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[139] Rev. William Reeves, D.D, *Vita S. Comgalli*, p. 26.

[140] A summary of the paper given by Ian Bradley at the CA Lindisfarne Conference 1997.

Columba was a hard-liner when it came to doling out penance[141] which indicates to me that he was sincerely penitent as he did not trivialise the crimes he himself had committed.

However, Columba never lost the attributes of his upbringing and retained to the end of his life an autocratic imperiousness, a hasty temper, and a fierce pride. He demanded obedience and punished transgressors harshly, once again suggesting remorse at his own earlier youthful disobedience to his abbot.

In the Roman Catholic Church once a penitent sinner has confessed and is given absolution, that absolution is immediate. Although they do stress that the mere 'telling of one's sins' does not suffice to obtain forgiveness. Without sincere sorrow and purpose of amendment, confession avails nothing, the pronouncement of absolution is of no effect, and the guilt of the sinner is greater than before. In the Celtic Church the absolution is only effective once the penance prescribed has been completed.

Today, scholars, even Columba's supporters, agree that he carried out little or no missionary work. There is no shred of evidence to suggest that he brought three thousand souls to Christ so died a penitent on Sunday 9 June 597.

Whatever his faults he inspired great devotion amongst his followers and after his death they established several influential daughter houses – the most significant in missionary terms being Lindisfarne. Adamnan, 9th Abbot, wrote his Life of Columba to counter Iona's diminishing influence occasioned by the decline of the Lords of Cowal. This inspiring account has created a legend that does not fit with the facts. Yet this legend has become a force for good, motivating many Christians today.

Yet the Westminster Catechism states "No man is able, either of himself, or by any grace received in this life, perfectly to keep the commandments of God; but doth daily break them in thought, word, and deed." So let him who is without sin cast the first stone. St. Moluag allowed him to accompany him on his journey to Inverness and was kind to him. We must do likewise.

[141] Ian Bradley, *Columba: Pilgrim and Penitent,* Wild Goose Publications, 1996, p. 92.

Chapter 6 Religious Structure and the Way Ahead

Power corrupts. I can discern little in the way of power struggles until the advent of Constantine in the early fourth century. From then the power struggles between Rome and Constantinople continued until the great East-West schism in 1054 divided the Catholic and Orthodox Churches.

The early ecumenical councils, convened under Roman Emperors, gave Rome a special status as it was 'The Royal City' and Constantinople as it was the 'New Rome'. This is not based on any biblical authority but the political realities of the Roman Empire.

Christ was born a Jew. There is no 'formal' structure of Judaism: it has no centralized leadership structure at all.

Shortly after St. Moluag's death we see the rise of Islam. As with Judaism there is no formal clergy and no hierarchy. The relationship between the individual and God is a direct one: no one can bless another. Long ago it was agreed that it would be wrong to question the sincerity of another Muslim's belief thereby strengthening Islam, despite the actions of intolerant extremists. Islam is growing whilst Christianity is declining, largely due to doctrinal arguments alienating clergy and laity.

Whilst there are undoubted advantages to a formal structure with strong leadership it also has major disadvantages. This is especially so when a leader is constrained by the actions of his predecessors, which may have been valid at the time but are now an embarrassment. In the USA over twenty thousand priests have left the Roman Church to get married creating a major shortage. Yet the Bible says a bishop shall have only one wife.[142]

Columbanus believed in the tolerance of religious diversity[143] and Hughes cites the views 'ably expressed by Fintan Munnu … "Therefore let each of us do what he believes, and as seems to him right."[144]

The structure of the Celtic Church of St. Moluag had much going for it. Many priests have told me that they feel that a major step forwards would be to move away from the diocesan system and revert to the Celtic system where parallel jurisdictions existed under the different monastic *paruchia*.

'In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.'[145] There is room for all of us.

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[142] The First Epistle of Paul to Timothy Chapter 3 v2
[143] Kathleen Hughes, *The Church in Early Irish Society, Methuen, 1966, p. 108 quoting Walker, G.S.M. Sancti Columbani Opera. Scriptores Latini Hiberniae*, ii Dublin, 1957, p. 16.
[144] Kathleen Hughes, *The Church in Early Irish Society, Methuen, 1966, p. 108 quoting Acta SS. Hib. ex Cod. Sal.*, col 411 Synod of *Mag Ailbe.*
[145] Book of John, Chapter 14 v2.

Chapter 7 Other Croziers

'The quigrich', the pastoral staff, of St. Fillan is one of the best preserved and documented. Seen here enclosed in its outer casing of gilt silver. Only the head of the quigrich remains (silver-gilt with a smaller crozier of bronze inclosed within it).

St. Fillan and arrived at Glendochart around 730 from Ireland. Unusually his relics were entrusted to the custody of laymen (hence deòradh Gaelic for stranger) in Glendochart rather than the monks of the priory.

The Clonmacnoise crozier is possibly the Staff of St. Ciaran. The animal ornamentation on the sides is a version of the mid-eleventh century Scandinavian Ringerike-style which was popularised in Ireland by the Vikings. Although the ornamentation is probably 11th century it is believed the staff is much older and may even have been the Staff of St. Ciaran who was born c. 512 and became a pupil of the legendary St. Finnian. Dr Griffin Murray disagrees with this view. [146]

St. Ciaran founded what was to be become one of Ireland's most flourishing religious communities which survived until 1552 at Clonmacnoise, on the River Shannon in County Meath.

Ciaran died in about 545, when the community was only one year old. Unusually the succession to the abbacy at Clonmacnoise was not hereditary - possibly beacuse of his humble origins. Like many Irish saints, Ciaran's life is associated with animals. He told his followers to leave his body on a hilltop 'like a stag', as he had little concern for relics and remains. His wish was not fulfilled and his shrine was a place of pilgrimage for centuries.

The Lismore Crozier was found hidden in the walls of Lismore Castle in 1814. The inscription states that it was made for Niall Mac Mic Aeducan, Bishop of Lismore, 1090-1113, by Nechtan the artist. This certainly ties in with the period of the ornamentation of other croziers of this type. Most of the ornaments are richly gilt, interspersed with others of silver and niello, and bosses of coloured enamels. However it is quite possible that the ornamentation covers the original crozier of St. Carthage. Once again Dr Murray disagrees. He wrote to me 'It is unlikely that this is the case. The idea of the staffs being enshrined in the metal mounts is an idea that came about in the 19th century. In the examples I have examined where the wooden core is visible, including your own crosier, the metal mounts and the wooden core appear to be contemporary. I see the crosiers, no matter what

[146] He wrote to me saying 'This is not the case, but the ornament and techniques on this crosier do hark back to an earlier time. To me it appears that this late eleventh-century crosier is a copy/replacement of a ninth-century example.'

century they were made in, as being representative of the founding saint's power. So while not relics in the strict archaeological sense - they were regarded as such by their medieval and later communities.' He will soon be publishing a book with the results of his research.

St. Carthage the Younger, Abbot (also known as Carthach, Mochuda) founded a monastery, known in the Irish Annals as Lismore Mochuda, c635. He was a contemporary of St. Moluag even training at Bangor under Saint Comgall - like Moluag - but about thirty years later. Carthage settled for a time at Rahan in Offaly, and in 595 founded a substantial monastery there and ruling over 800 monks.

Lismore Mochuda was to become one of the most famous of all Irish monastic schools. One of its students was Saint Cathal, who was elected bishop of Taranto, Italy, during his return from the Holy Land.

The Lismore Crozier is a treasured item of Irish art - now residing in the National Museum at Dublin.

The Kells Crozier was found without explanation in a solicitor's office in 1850, and was owned by Cardinal Wiseman before purchase by The British Museum in 1859.

The appearance of the crozier today is the result of at least two periods of ornamentation. The core is a staff of yew wood, now cut in two. This was first encased in bronze in the late ninth or tenth century when the staff was decorated with cast knobs (or 'knops') and cross-shaped strips. Raised borders divide the knops into panels filled with animal interlace, once covered with bright silver foil. The original bronze casing to the curved crook had a diamond pattern grid and animal ornament.

In the eleventh century the crook was given an outer casing of silver sheet and a new crest in gilded openwork of linked birds. A new knop decorated with black niello and silver inlay in the Scandinavian Ringerike style replaced an earlier one at the top of the shaft. The straight end of the crook is a feature of early Irish croziers.[147]

Enshrining items which had belonged to holy men or their communities was an important feature of religious life in early medieval Ireland. Many of these shrines, like St. Cuileán's bell, were preserved into modern times by the families of keepers who inherited this duty.

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[147] Dr Griffin Murray, University of Cork, wrote to me saying 'The idea of the drop being a container for relics is one that has found general acceptance. However, there is only one crosier that contained relics in the drop - that from Lismore, Co. Waterford - and it would appear that they were put in place in the 16th or 17th century. I am therefore, not convinced that this was the purpose of the drop, although it of course remains a possibility.'

Croziers of Scots/Irish Celtic Saints

The Crozier of St Fillan
8th Century

Clonmacnoise Crozier c 6th Century
Image © The National Museum of Ireland.

The Lismore Crozier
Image © The National Museum of Ireland.

The Kells Crozier - 9th-11th Century
Image © British Museum

St Moluag

Icon painted by The Revd. Catherine S. Gibson