



# HISTORY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

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But these legends cannot be traced beyond the sixth century, and are therefore destitute of all historic value. A visit of St. Paul to Britain between A. D. 63 and 67 is indeed in itself not impossible (on the assumption of a second Roman captivity), and has been advocated even by such scholars as Ussher and Stillingfleet, but is intrinsically improbable, and destitute of all evidence.<sup>1</sup>

The conversion of King Lucius in the second century through correspondence with the Roman bishop Eleutherus (176 to 190), is related by Bede, in connection with several errors, and is a legend rather than an established fact.<sup>2</sup> Irenæus of Lyons, who enumerates all the churches one by one, knows of none in Britain. Yet the connection of Britain with Rome and with Gaul must

ocean to the isles called British;" but the passage is rhetorical and indefinite. In his *Church History* he omits Britain from the apostolic mission-field.

<sup>1</sup> It is merely an inference from the well-known passage of Clement of Rome, *Ep. ad Corinth.* c. 5, that Paul carried the gospel "to the end of the West" (*ἐπὶ τὸ ἔσχατος τῆς οὐρανοῦ*). But this is far more naturally understood of a visit to Spain which Paul intended (*Rom.* xv. 28), and which seems confirmed by a passage in the Muratorian Fragment about 170 ("*Professionem Pauli ab urbe ad Spaniam proficiscentis*"); while there is no trace whatever of an intended or actual visit to Britain. Canon Bright calls this merely a "pious fancy" (p. 1), and Bishop Lightfoot remarks: "For the patriotic belief of some English writers, who have included Britain in the Apostle's travels, there is neither evidence nor probability" (*St. Clement of Rome*, p. 50). It is barely possible, however, that some Galatian converts of Paul, visiting the far West to barter the hair-cloths of their native land for the useful metal of Britain, may have first made known the gospel to the Britons in their kindred Keltic tongue. See Lightfoot, *Com. on Gal.*, p. 246.

<sup>2</sup> Book I., ch. 4: "Lucius, king of the Britons, sent a letter to Eleutherus, entreating that by his command he might be made a Christian. He soon obtained his pious request, and the Britons preserved the faith, which they had received, uncorrupted and entire, in peace and tranquillity, until the time of the Emperor Diocletian." Comp. the foot-note of Giles *in loc.* Haddan says (I. 25): "The story of Lucius rests solely upon the later form of the *Catalogus Pontificum Romanorum* which was written c. A. D. 530, and which adds to the *Vita Eleutheri* (A. D. 171-186) that '*Hic (Eleutherus) accepit epistolam a Lucio Britannia Rege, ut Christianus efficeretur par ejus mandatum.*' But these words are not in the original *Catalogus*, written shortly after A. D. 353." Bede copies the Roman account. Gildas knows nothing of Lucius. According to other accounts, Lucius (Lever Maur, or the Great Light) sent Fagan and Dervan to Rome, who were ordained by Evaristus or Eleutherus, and on their return established the British church. See Lingard, *History of England*, I. 46.

have brought it early into contact with Christianity. About A. D. 208 Tertullian exultingly declared "that places in Britain not yet visited by Romans were subject to Christ."<sup>1</sup> St. Alban, probably a Roman soldier, died as the British proto-martyr in the Diocletian persecution (303), and left the impress of his name on English history.<sup>2</sup> Constantine, the first Christian emperor, was born in Britain, and his mother, St. Helena, was probably a native of the country. In the Council of Arles, A. D. 314, which condemned the Donatists, we meet with three British bishops, Eborius of York (Eboracum), Restitutus of London (Londinum), and Adelfius of Lincoln (Colonia Londinensium), or Cærlleon in Wales, besides a presbyter and deacon.<sup>3</sup> In the Arian controversy the British churches sided with Athanasius and the Nicene Creed, though hesitating about the term *homoousios*.<sup>4</sup> A notorious heretic, Pelagius (Morgan), was from the same island; his abler, though less influential associate, Celestius, was probably an Irishman; but their doctrines were condemned (429), and the Catholic faith reestablished with the assistance of two Gallic bishops.<sup>5</sup>

Monumental remains of the British church during the Roman period are recorded or still exist at Canterbury (St. Martin's), Cærlleon, Bangor, Glastonbury, Dover, Richborough (Kent), Reculver, Lyminge, Brixworth, and other places.<sup>6</sup>

The Roman dominion in Britain ceased about A. D. 410; the

<sup>1</sup> *Adv. Judæos* 7: "*Britannorum inaccessa Romanis loca, Christo vero subdita.*" Bishop Kaye (*Tertull.*, p. 94) understands this passage as referring to the farthest extremities of Britain. So Burton (II. 207): "Parts of the island which had not been visited by the Romans." See Bright, p. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Bede I. 7. The story of St. Alban is first narrated by Gildas in the sixth century. Milman and Bright (p. 6) admit his historic reality.

<sup>3</sup> Wiltch, *Handbuch der kirchl. Geogr. und Statistik* I. 42 and 238, Mansi, *Conc.* II. 467, Haddan and Stubbs, *l. c.*, I. 7. Haddan identifies Colonia Londinensium with Col. Legionensium, i. e. Cærlleon-on-Usk.

<sup>4</sup> See Haddan and Stubbs, I. 7-10.

<sup>5</sup> Bede I. 21 ascribes the triumph of the Catholic faith over the Pelagian heresy to the miraculous healing of a lame youth by Germanus (St. Germain), Bishop of Auxerre. Comp. also Haddan and Stubbs, I. 15-17.

<sup>6</sup> See Haddan and Stubbs, I. 36-40.