

# GEORGE BROWNE

THE CHRISTIAN  
CHURCH IN THESE  
ISLANDS BEFORE THE  
COMING OF AUGUSTINE

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**The Christian Church**  
**in These Islands before**  
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*The Christian Church in These Islands before the Coming of Augustine Three  
Lectures Delivered at St. Paul's in January 1894:*

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# **George Forrest Browne The Christian Church in These Islands before the Coming of Augustine Three Lectures Delivered at St. Paul's in January 1894**

## **LECTURE I**

Importance of the anniversaries connected with the years 1894-1897. – Christianity in Kent immediately before Augustine. – Dates of Bishop Luidhard and Queen Bertha. – Romano-British Churches in Canterbury. – Who were the Britons. – Traditional origin of British Christianity. – St. Paul. – Joseph of Arimathea. – Glastonbury. – Roman references to Britain.

We are approaching an anniversary of the highest interest to all English people: to English Churchmen first, for it is the thirteen-hundredth anniversary of the planting of the Church of England; but also to all who are proud of English civilisation,

for the planting of a Christian Church is the surest means of civilisation, and English civilisation owes everything to the English Church. In 1897 those who are still here will celebrate the thirteen-hundredth anniversary of the conversion of Ethelbert, king of the Kentish people, by Augustine and the band of missionaries sent by our great benefactor Gregory, the sixty-fourth bishop of Rome. I am sorry that the limitation of my present subject prevents me from enlarging upon the merits of that great man, and upon our debt to him. Englishmen must always remember that it was Gregory who gave to the Italian Mission whatever force it had; it was Gregory who gave it courage, when the dangers of a journey through France were sufficient to keep it for months shivering with fear under the shadow of the Alps; it was Gregory who gave it such measure of wisdom and common sense as it had, qualities which its leader sadly lacked. Coming nearer to the present year, there will be in 1896 the final departure of Augustine from Rome to commemorate, on July 23, and his arrival here in the late autumn. In 1895 there will be to commemorate the first departure from Rome of Augustine and his Mission, by way of Lérins and Marseilles to Aix, and the return of Augustine to Rome, when his companions, in fear of the dangers of the way, refused to go further. An ill-omened beginning, prophetic and prolific of like results. The history of the Italian Mission is a history of failure to face danger. Mellitus fled from London, and got himself safe to Gaul; Justus fled from Rochester, and got himself safe to Gaul;

Laurentius was packed up to fly from Canterbury and follow them<sup>1</sup>; Paulinus fled from York. In 1894 we have, as I believe, to commemorate the final abandonment of earlier and independent plans for the conversion of the English in Kent, from which abandonment the Mission of Augustine came to be.

It is a very interesting fact that just when we are preparing to commemorate the thirteen-hundredth anniversary of the introduction of Christianity into England, and are drawing special attention to the fact that Christianity had existed in this island, among the Britons, for at least four hundred years before its introduction to the English, our neighbours in France are similarly engaged. They are preparing to celebrate in 1896 the fourteen-hundredth anniversary of “the introduction of Christianity into France,” as the newspapers put it. This means that in 496, Clovis, king of the Franks, became a Christian; as, in 597, Ethelbert, king of the Kentish-men, became a Christian<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Laurentius, Mellitus, and Justus agreed that it was better for them to go back to their own country, and there serve God with minds at rest, than to live fruitlessly among barbarians who had revolted from the faith (Bede, ii. 5). It was in pursuance of this resolution that Mellitus and Justus crossed the Channel, and Laurentius prepared to follow them.

<sup>2</sup> The last decade of the century usually played an important part in the period which our present consideration covers. From 190 to 200, Christianity made such progress in Britain as to justify the remark of Tertullian quoted on page 54. From 290 to 300, Constantius secured his position. From 390 to 400, the last great stand against the barbarian invaders on the north was made by the help of Roman arms. From 490 to 500, the great victory of the Britons under Ambrosius Aurelianus over the Saxons rolled back for many years the English advance. From 590 to 600, the Christianising of the English began to be a fact.

As we have to keep very clear in our minds the distinction between the introduction of Christianity among the English, from whom the country is called England, and its introduction long before into Britain; so our continental neighbours have to keep very clear the difference between the introduction of Christianity among the Franks, from whom the country is called France, and its introduction long before into Gaul. The Archbishop of Rheims, whose predecessor Remigius baptized Clovis in 496, is arranging a solemn celebration of their great anniversary; and the Pope has accorded a six months' jubilee in honour of the occasion. No doubt the Archbishop of Canterbury, whose predecessor Augustine baptized Ethelbert, will in like manner make arrangements for a solemn celebration of our great anniversary. It would be an interesting and fitting thing, to hold a thanksgiving service within the walls of Richborough, which is generally accepted as the scene of Augustine's first interview with King Ethelbert, and has now been secured and put into the hands of trustees<sup>3</sup>. The two commemorations, at Rheims and at Canterbury, are linked together in a special way by the fact that Clotilde, the Christian wife of Clovis, was the great-grandmother of Bertha, the Christian wife of Ethelbert.

In the year 594, two years before the arrival of Augustine, there was, and I believe had long been, a Christian queen in pagan Kent; there was, and I believe had long been, a Christian bishop in pagan Canterbury, sent there to minister to the Christian queen.

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<sup>3</sup> See page 96.

An excellent opening this for the conversion of the king and people, an opening intentionally created by those who made the marriage on the queen's side. But, however hopeful the opening, the immediate result was disappointing. If more of missionary help had been sent from Gaul, from whence this bishop came, the conversion of the king and people might have come in the natural way, by an inflow of Christianity from the neighbouring country. But such help, though pressingly asked for, was not given; and as I read such signs as there are, this year 594, of which we now inaugurate the thirteen-hundredth anniversary, was the year in which it came home to those chiefly concerned that the conversion was not to be effected by the means adopted. Beyond some very limited area of Christianity, only the queen and some few of her people, and the religious services maintained for them, the bishop's work was to be barren. The limited work which he did was that for which ostensibly he had come; but I think we are meant to understand that his Christian ambition was larger than this, his Christian hope higher. I shall make no apology for dwelling a little upon the circumstances of this Christian work, immediately before the coming of Augustine. It may seem a little discursive; but it forms, I think, a convenient introduction to our general subject.

Who Bishop Luidhard was, is a difficult question. That he came from Gaul is certain, but his name is clearly Teutonic; whence, perhaps, his acceptability as a visitor to the English. He has been described as Bishop of Soissons; but the lists of bishops

there make no mention of him, nor do the learned authors and compilers of *Gallia Christiana*. This assignment of Luidhard to the bishopric of Soissons may perhaps be explained by an interesting story.

The Bishop of Soissons, a full generation earlier than the time of which we are speaking, was Bandaridus. He was charged before King Clotaire, that one of the four sons of the first Clovis who succeeded to the kingdom called “of Soissons,” with many offences of many kinds; and he was banished. He crossed over to England – for so Britain is described in the old account – and there lived in a monastery for seven years, performing the humble functions of a kitchen-gardener. Whether the story is sufficiently historical to enable us to claim the continuance of Christian monasteries of the British among the barbarian Saxons so late as 540, I am not clear. There was a little Irish monastery at Bosham, among the pagan South-Saxons, a hundred and forty years later. It is easy, I think, to overrate the hostility of the early English to Christianity. Penda of Mercia has the character of being murderously hostile; but it was land, not creed, that he cared for. He was quite broad and undenominational in his slaughters.

About a. d. 545, a great plague raged at Soissons, and the people begged for the return of their bishop. He went back to his old charge, and there is no suggestion that he ever left it again. This legend of a Bishop of Soissons coming to our island, may well have given rise to the tradition that Bishop Luidhard,

who certainly was living in the time of Bandaridus, had been Bishop of Soissons. In any case, the incidental hint the story gives us of the skill of our neighbours on the continent in the cultivation of vegetables, even at that early time, makes the story worth reproduction. The Bishop of Soissons, at the time of which we are speaking, was Droctigisilus (variously spelled, as might perhaps be expected). Of him Gregory of Tours tells that he lost his senses through over-drinking. Gregory adds a moral reflection – if we can so describe it – which does not give us a very high idea of the practical Christianity of the times. It is this: – “Though he was a voracious eater, and drank immoderately, exceeding the bounds which priestly caution should impose, no one ever accused him of adultery<sup>4</sup>.” If we must choose a bishop of Soissons to be represented by Luidhard, we may fairly prefer the vegetable-gardener to the immoderate drinker.

We read, again, in fairly early times, that our first Christian bishop in England had been bishop of Senlis. The authors and compilers of *Gallia Christiana* insert the name of Lethardus, or Letaldus, among the bishops of Senlis, quoting Sprot and Thorn. He was said to have come over with Bertha as early as 566, and they insert him accordingly after a bishop who subscribed at the third Council of Paris in 557. Jacques du Perron, bishop of Angoulême, almoner to Queen Henrietta Maria, took this view of his predecessor, the almoner of Queen Bertha, that he had been Bishop of Senlis. The parallel which he drew between the

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<sup>4</sup> Ecclesiastical History of the Franks, ix. 37.

two cases of the first Christian queen and her almoner, and the first Romanist queen after the final rupture and her almoner, was much in point. "Gaul it was that sent to the English their first Christian queen. The clergy of Gaul it was that sent them their first bishop, her almoner." But the sacramentary of Senlis, the calendar of commemorations, and the list of bishops, all are silent as to this Bishop Lethardus. Let me note for future use that these places, Soissons and Senlis, were in Belgic Gaul, that part of the continent which was directly opposite to the south-eastern parts of Britain.

I have said more about the diocese to which Luidhard may have belonged than I think the question deserves. This is done out of respect to my predecessors in the enquiry. The idea that a bishop must have had a see is natural enough to us, but is not according to knowledge. A hundred and fifty years later than this, there were so many wandering bishops in Gaul, that a synod held in this very diocese of Soissons declared that wandering bishops must not ordain priests; but that if any priests thus ordained were good priests, they should be reordained. And a great Council of all the bishops of Gaul, held at Verneuil in 755, declared that wandering bishops, who had not dioceses, should be incapable of performing any function without permission of the diocesan bishop. There is no suggestion that these were foreign bishops; and it was before the time when the invasions of Ireland by the Danes drove into England and on to the continent a perfect plague of Irish ecclesiastics calling themselves bishops. I think

it is on the whole fair to say that the more you study the early history of episcopacy in these parts of Europe, the less need you feel to find a see for Bishop Luidhard.

There is one very interesting fact, which deserves to be noted in connection with this mysterious Gallican bishop. The Italian Mission paid very special honour to his memory and his remains. There is in the first volume of Dugdale's *Monasticon*<sup>5</sup> a copy of an ancient drawing of St. Augustine's, Canterbury. This is not, of course, the Cathedral Church, which was an old church of the British times restored by Augustine and dedicated to the Saviour; "Christ Church" it still remains. St. Augustine's was the church and monastery begun in Augustine's lifetime, and dedicated soon after his death to St. Peter and St. Paul, as Bede (i. 33) and various documents tell us precisely. This fact, that the church was dedicated to St. Peter and St. Paul, was represented last June, when "the renewal of the dedication of England to St. Mary and St. Peter" took place<sup>6</sup>, by the statement that "the first great abbey church of Canterbury was dedicated to St. Peter." In the preparatory pastoral, signed by Cardinal Vaughan and fourteen other Roman Catholic Bishops, dated May 20, 1893, the statement took this form<sup>7</sup>: – "The second monastery of Canterbury was dedicated to St. Peter himself." Not only is that not so, but I cannot find evidence that Augustine dedicated

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<sup>5</sup> Page 120.

<sup>6</sup> *Daily Chronicle*, June 30, 1893.

<sup>7</sup> *Standard*, May 30, 1893.

any church anywhere “to St. Peter himself.” Of the two Apostles, St. Peter and St. Paul, who were united in the earliest of all Saints’ days, and still are so united in the Calendar of the Roman Church, though we have given to them two separate days, of the two, if we must choose one of them, St. Paul, not St. Peter, was made by Augustine the Apostle of England. To St. Paul was dedicated the first church in England dedicated to either of the two “himself,” that is, alone; and that, too, this church, the first and cathedral church of the greater of the two places assigned by Gregory as the two Metropolitan sees of England, London and York.

The “dedication of England to St. Mary” has a similar difficulty to face. There is no evidence that Augustine assigned any dedication to the Blessed Virgin. The first church mentioned with that dedication was built by Laurentius and dedicated by Mellitus. But if twenty churches had been dedicated by Augustine to the Virgin and to St. Peter, England would have been the richer by twenty churches, and that would have been all.

The ancient drawing to which I am referring was made after 1325, when St. Ethelbert was added to the Apostles Peter and Paul and St. Augustine in the dedication of the high altar. It was copied for Sir William Dugdale’s purposes in 1652, at which time it had passed into the safe hands of one of the Cambridge Colleges, Trinity Hall. The altar is shewn as deeply recessed into a structural reredos. A large number of shrines are shewn, ranged in semi-circles behind the reredos. On either side of the altar

there is a door, as in our reredos at St. Paul's. They are marked "north door" and "south door," "to the bodies of the saints." On the shrines, shewn in the apse to which these doors lead, are written the names of those whose relics they contained, and the roll of names is illustrious. In the centre, at the extreme east, is Augustine, with Laurentius and Mellitus north and south of him: then, on the north, Justus, Deusdedit, Mildred, Nothelm, and Lambert; on the south, Honorius, Theodore, Abbat Hadrian, Berhtwald, and Tatwin. Besides these shrines in the apse, behind the reredos, there is shewn immediately above the altar itself a prominent shrine, marked Scs. Ethelbertus, the relics of the first Christian king. Then, behind that, a number of books – manuscripts, of course – with a Latin description stating that they are "books sent by Gregory to Augustine" – one or two of which are still in existence. Above these, on either side of a great vesica enclosing a representation of our Lord, are two shrines, one marked "Relics," the other, which stands on the side of greater honour, is marked Scs. Letald(us). Thus the Canterbury monks at St. Augustine's, the great treasure-house of early Canterbury saints, put in the places of highest honour the relics of Bertha's husband and of Bertha's Gallican bishop. It is a pleasant thought in these days of ecclesiastical jealousies – and when were there days, before Christ or since, without ecclesiastical jealousies? – it is a very pleasant thought that the successors of Augustine paid such honour to Augustine's Gallican precursor, whose work they might almost have been expected, considering the temper of the

times, to be inclined to ignore. The shrine with Luidhard's relics no doubt represents the golden chest in which – as we know – they used to carry his relics round Canterbury on Rogation Days.

It is not easy, indeed it is not possible, to make sure of the dates connected with Luidhard's work among the English at Canterbury – to give them the general name of "English." It is of some importance to make the attempt. The indications seem to me to point to a ministry of some considerable duration; but I am aware that among the many views expressed incidentally in the books, some names of great weight appear on the other side. When Ethelbert died in 616, Bede tells us that he had reigned gloriously for fifty-six years; that is, he began to reign in 560, a date earlier than that assigned by the Chronicle. Matthew of Westminster thinks Bede and the rest were wrong. With the Chronicle, he puts Ethelbert's accession later, as late as 566; but he keeps to Bede's fifty-six years' reign, and so makes him die in 622, much too late. If, as is said<sup>8</sup>, he was born in 552, he was eight years old at his accession – rather an early age for an English sovereign in those times – and sixty-four at his death. His wife Bertha, whose marriage dates the arrival of Luidhard, was the daughter of Charibert, king of that part of the domains of his grandfather Clovis which gave to its sovereign the title of King of Paris. Her mother was Ingoberga; and if the statement of Gregory of Tours, that king Charibert married Ingoberga, is to be taken strictly, i.e. if he married her after his accession, Bertha

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<sup>8</sup> *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (late Canterbury copy). Green, *Making of England*, p. 111.

was born about 561. But I much doubt whether Charibert had time for all his many marital wickednesses in his short reign, and I am inclined to think that he married a good deal earlier. He was the eldest son of his father Clotaire, who died in 561, and the known dates of Clovis make it probable that Charibert was of marriageable age a good many years before he succeeded his father.

So far as these considerations go, Bertha may have been of much the same age as her husband Ethelbert, and their marriage may have taken place about the year 575. I find nothing in the notices of Gregory of Tours inconsistent with this. Indeed, it may fairly be said that Gregory's facts indicate a date quite as early as that I have suggested. Ingoberga put herself under Gregory's own special charge. He describes her admirable manner of life in her widowhood, passed in a religious life, without any hint that her daughter was with her; and when she died in 589, Gregory guessed her age at seventy.

The chief reason for assigning a later date to the marriage is that King Edwin of Northumbria married Ethelberga, Bertha's daughter, in 625. Edwin was then a middle-aged widower, but that does not quite decide for us what sort of age he was likely to look for in a second wife. If Ethelberga was thirty when she married Edwin, Bertha would be about forty, or a little more, when her daughter was born.

There is one argument in favour of Bertha's marriage having been long before the coming of Augustine, which has, I think,

generally escaped notice. In the letter which Gregory sent from Rome to Bertha, congratulating her on the conversion of her husband, Gregory urges her, now that, the time is fit, to repair what has been neglected; he remarks that she ought some time ago, or long ago, to have bent her husband's mind in this direction; and he tells her that the Romans have earnestly prayed for her life. All this, especially the "some time ago," or "long ago," looks unlike a recent marriage. It is interesting to notice, in view of recent assertions and claims, that Gregory does not make reference to St. Peter in this letter, as Boniface did in writing to Bertha's daughter. In his letter to Ethelbert, Gregory remarks at the end that he is sending him some small presents, which will not be small to him, as they come from the benediction of the blessed Peter the Apostle. Boniface, his fifth successor, considerably developed the Petrine position. Writing to Edwin of Northumbria, curiously enough while he was still a pagan, he says: – "We have sent to you a benediction of your protector the blessed Peter, prince of the Apostles, that is to say, a chemise embroidered with gold, and a garment of Ancyra." Probably Boniface did not know how nearly related the Galatian workers of the garment of Ancyra were to the Gallo-Britons whom Edwin's ancestors had expelled. And his letter to Ethelberga ended in the same way: – "We have sent to you a blessing of your protector the blessed Peter, prince of the Apostles, that is to say, a silver mirror and an ivory comb inlaid with gold." It is a significant note on this difference of language, that in the

ordinary lists, where a distinction, more or less arbitrary, is made between bishops and popes, the break comes between Gregory and Boniface.

On the whole, then, I believe that Ethelbert and Bertha had been married many years when Augustine came, and, by consequence, that Luidhard had been living among the English many years. Though his work was in the end barren, there had been times when it was distinctly promising. His experiment had so far succeeded, that only more help was wanted to bring the heathen people to Christ. That help he had sought; perhaps especially when he felt old age coming upon him. Gregory distinctly states, in more than one of his letters, that the English people were very ready, were desirous, to be converted, and that applications for missionary help had been made, but made in vain, to the neighbouring priests. The tone and address of the letters imply that this meant the clergy of the neighbouring parts of Gaul. There certainly would be no response if they applied to the very nearest part they could reach by the ordinary route, namely, their landing-place, Boulogne. We Londoners are accustomed to say, no doubt with due contrition, but at the same time with some lurking sense of consequence, as having been actors in a striking episode, that after a few years of Christianity we went off into paganism again in a not undramatic manner, and from 616 to 654 repudiated Christianity. This fact is indicated by an eloquent void on our alabaster tablets of bishops of London in the south aisle of this church. At the time of which I am

speaking, 594 or thereabouts, the Gauls of Boulogne were having the experience which the English of London were so soon to have. In London we turned out our first Italian bishop, our first bishop, that is, of the second series of bishops of London, after the restoration of Christianity on this site. In Boulogne and Terouenne, where the first bishop they ever had was sent to them after the year 500, they relapsed into paganism in about fifty years' time, and in 594 they had been pagans for many years. Pagans they remained till 630, when Dagobert got St. Omer to win them back. St. Omer died in 667, the year after Cedd died, who won us back. It is clear, then, that the appeals from the English to the Gauls for conversion, at any date consistent with the facts, must have gone beyond Boulogne.

It has been thought that the appeal was made to the British priests, who had retired to the mountainous parts of the island, beyond the reach of the slaying Saxon; but there would be no point in Gregory's remarks to his Gallican correspondents if that were so. And how Gregory was to know that appeals had been made by the English to the Britons for instruction in Christianity, appeals most improbable from the nature of the case, no one can say. On the other hand, he was distinctly in a position to know of such application to the Gauls, for his presbyter Candidus had gone to Gaul, and there was to purchase some pagan English boys of seventeen or eighteen to be brought up in monasteries. This had taken place a very short time before the mission set out, as is clear from Gregory's letter to the Patrician of Gaul.

The facts suggest that Luidhard was now quite an old man, and had failed to get any Gallican bishop to take up the work he could no longer carry on. And accordingly, tradition makes him die a month or two after Augustine's arrival. If we look to the language of Bede, we shall see, I think, that Luidhard had become incapable of carrying on his work when Augustine and his companions arrived. For they at once entered upon the use of his church. "There was on the east side of the city a church erected of old in honour of St. Martin<sup>9</sup>, when the Romans were still inhabiting Britain, where the queen used to pray. In this church they met at first, to sing, pray, celebrate masses, preach, and baptise; till the king, on his conversion, gave them larger licence, to preach anywhere, and to build and restore churches."

Now, quite apart from Luidhard's long and faithful work, we have seen that there was in Canterbury the fabric of a Christian church remaining from the time before the English came; and that there was in Canterbury the fabric of another church, out of which they made their Cathedral church.

There was a church in existence at Canterbury when

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<sup>9</sup> There is a very interesting discussion in a recent book, *The History of St. Martin's Church, Canterbury*, by the Rev. C. F. Routledge, Honorary Canon of Canterbury, on the meaning of this statement (pages 120, &c.). It seems to me clear that Bede believed the church in question to have been dedicated to St. Martin while the Romans were still in the land. As Martin was living up to 397, and the Roman empire in Britain ended in 407, there is not much time for a dedication to this particular Martin. But our ideas of dedications are very different from those which guided the nomenclature of churches in the earliest centuries of Christianity here. If Martin himself ever lived at Canterbury, and had this church, the difficulty would disappear.

our bishop Mellitus was archbishop there, between 619 and 624, dedicated to the Four Crowned Martyrs of Diocletian's persecution, the Quattro Santi Incoronati, whose church is one of the most interesting in Rome. But this Canterbury church may have been built by the Italians.

Again, there is very unmistakable and interesting Roman work at St. Pancras, in Canterbury; and this was, according to tradition, the temple which Ethelbert had appropriated for the worship of his idols, and now gave for Christian purposes. The tradition further says that it had once been a Christian church, before the pagan English came; and the remains of the Roman building still visible are believed to point in that direction. The church of St. Pancras at Rome was built about 500. In connection with this idea of a pagan temple being used by the Christian clergy for a church, we may remember that the Pantheon at Rome was turned into a church seven or eight years after this, the dedication being changed from "all the Gods" to "St. Mary of the Martyrs," and this was the origin of the Festival of All Saints<sup>10</sup>. Bede adds an

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<sup>10</sup> The contradictory instructions given by Gregory on the question of using heathen temples for Christian worship are rather puzzling. They are found in a letter to Mellitus, dated June 15, 601, and in a letter to Augustine, dated June 22, 601. The surmise of Messrs. Haddan and Stubbs that the former date is wrong, and that the letter to Mellitus was later than that to Augustine, is reasonable, and solves the puzzle. On this view, Gregory wrote to Augustine, on June 22, 601, to the effect that the idol-temples must be destroyed. This letter, as we know, he gave to Mellitus, who was in Rome, to be brought by him to England. Then, a few days later, perhaps on June 27, he sent a short letter to Mellitus, to say that he had carefully considered the matter, and had decided that if an idol-temple was well built, it should be cleansed, and consecrated to

important fact, that Ethelbert gave the Italians a general licence to restore churches.

How did it come about that when the Italians came to heathen England, they found here these remains of Christian churches, needing only repair? Who built them? Was it an accidental colony of Christians, that had been settled in Canterbury, or had there been what we may call a British Church, a Christian church in Britain, long before the Saxons came, longer still by far before the Italians? The answer to those questions is not a short or a simple one, when we once get beyond the bare “yes” and “no.” Many other questions rise up on all sides, when we are looking for an answer to the original questions. It is my aim to take those who care to come with me over some parts of the field of inquiry; rather courting than avoiding incidental illustrations and digressions; for I think that in that informal way we pick up a good deal of interesting information, and get perhaps to feel more at home in a period than by pursuing a more formal and stilted course. Indeed a good deal of what I have said already has evidently been said with that object.

The first question I propose for our consideration is this: – Who were the people who built the churches? It is not a very explanatory answer, to say “The Britons.” There is a good deal

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the service of Christ. It is an interesting fact that the earliest historical testimony to the existence and martyrdom of St. George, who was recognised for so many centuries as the Patron of England, is found in an inscription in a church in southern Syria, dating from about the year 346, stating that the church had been a heathen temple, and was dedicated as a church in honour of the “great martyr” St. George.

left to the imagination in that answer, with most of us. With the help of the best qualified students, but without any hope that we could harmonise all the diverse views if we went far into detail, let us look into the matter a little. It may be well for all of us to remember in this enquiry that our foundations are not very solid, we are on thin ice. Nor is the way very smooth; it is easy to trip.

We need not go back to the time of the cavemen, interesting and indeed artistic as the evidence of their remains shews them to have been. Their reign was over before Britain became an island, before a channel separated it from the continent. It is enough for our present purpose to realise, that when the great geological changes had taken place which produced something like the present geographical arrangements, but still in prehistoric times, times long before the beginning of history so far as these islands are concerned, our islands were occupied by a race which existed also in the north-west and extreme west of Europe. Herodotus knew nothing of the existence of our islands; but he tells us that in his time the people furthest to the west, nearer to the setting sun than even the Celtae, were called Kynesii, or Kynetes. Archaeological investigations shew that, though he did not know it, his statement covered our islands. The people of whom he wrote were certainly here as well as on the western parts of the continent. As some of us may have some of their blood in our veins, we may leave others to discuss the question whether the names Kynesii, Kynetes, mean "dog-men," and if so, what that implies. St. Jerome in the course of his travels, say about

370 years after Christ, saw a body of savage soldiers in the Roman army, brought from a part of what is now Scotland – if an Englishman dare say such a thing; they were fed, he tells us, on human flesh. The locality from which they came indicates that they were possibly representatives of these earlier “dog-men,” if that is the meaning of Kynetes. Secular historians, long before Jerome, have an uncomfortable way of saying that the inhabitants of the interior of Britain were cannibals, and their matrimonial arrangements resembled those of herds of cattle. As we in London had relations with the centre of the country, we may argue – and I think rightly – that by “the interior” the historians did not mean what we call the Midlands, but meant the parts furthest removed from the ports of access in the south-east, that is, the far west and the far north.

Next, and again before the history of our islands begins, an immigration of Celts<sup>11</sup> took place, a people belonging – unlike the earlier race of whom I have spoken – to the same Indo-European family of nations to which the Latins, and the Teutons, and the Greeks, and the speakers of Sanskrit, belonged. Of their various cousin-nations, these Celts were nearest in language to the Latins, we are told, and, after the Latins, to the Teutons. They came to this island, it is understood, from the country which we call France.

Thirdly, the Gauls, who on the continent had both that name

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<sup>11</sup> Known as the Goidelic branch of the Celtic race.

and the name of the older Celts<sup>12</sup>, and must be regarded as the dominant sub-division of their race, impelled in their turn by pressure from the south and east, came over into these islands, and here were called Britons<sup>13</sup>. They squeezed out the earlier occupants from most part of the larger island, driving them north and west and south-west, as the Celtic inhabitants long before had driven the earlier race. When the Romans came, fifty years before Christ, these Britons occupied the land practically from the south coast to the further side of the Firth of Forth. There had been for some time before Caesar's arrival a steady inflow of Belgic Gauls, people from the eastward parts of what we call France; and these people, the most recent comers among the Britons, were found chiefly on the coasts, but in parts had extended to considerable distances inland. The Celts, to distinguish the preceding immigrants by that name, though in fact it does not properly convey the distinction, occupied Devon and Cornwall, South Wales, the north-west corner of North Wales, Cumberland, and the south-west of what we now call Scotland, that is, Wigton, Kirkcudbright, Dumfries, and part of Ayr. They occupied also a belt of Caledonia north of Stirling. They occupied at least the eastern parts of Ireland. Anglesey and Man were in their hands. The parts of Scotland north of

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<sup>12</sup> The names Galatae and Celtae are not improbably the same word, the latter name being pronounced with a short vowel between the *l* and the *t*, as though spelled Celātae or Celūtae. It is in fact so pronounced to this day in many parts of the island.

<sup>13</sup> Known as the Brythonic branch of the race.

Perthshire and Forfar may be regarded as the principal refuge of the remnant of the people whom we have described as the earlier race, before the Celts; and there were traces of them left in almost all the parts occupied by their immediate successors the Celts. The name by which we ought probably to call these latter, the Celts, in whatever part of the islands they might be, has been familiarly used in a sense so limited that it might cause confusion to use it now in its larger sense. I mean Gael, and Gaelic.

Now we gather from the records that before the Jutes and the Angles and the Saxons came, and in their turn drove the Britons north and west, the religion of Christ had spread to all parts of the territory occupied by the Britons, that is, to the towns in all parts. It may very well have been that in the country parts there were many pagans left even to the last, perhaps in towns too. Putting the commencement of the driving out of the Britons at about the year 450 after Christ, we know that less than a hundred years before that time the pagans were so numerous in Gaul, that when Martin became Bishop of Tours, the pagans were everywhere, and to work for their conversion would have been sufficient work for him. As for the towns in Gaul, Hilary, the Bishop of Poitiers, was a leading official in that town, and only became a Christian in the year 350, when he was about thirty-five years of age. Martin of Tours, too, was born a heathen. We may be sure that in Britain, so remote from the centres of influence, and so inaccessible by reason of its insular position, that state of things continued to prevail a good deal longer than in the civilised parts of Gaul.

We must not credit our British predecessors with anything like a universal knowledge and acceptance of Christianity.

It is not necessary to dwell on the familiar fact of the intermixture of the Romans and the Britons. In the more important towns there was much blending of the two races, and the luxurious arts of Rome produced their effect in softening the British spirit. The Briton gave up more than he gained in the mixed marriages, and it seems clear that the Romano-Britons who were left to face the barbarous Picts and Scots, and the hardy Angles and Saxons, were by comparison an enervated race. In the parts further remote from commercial and municipal centres, and from the military lines, it is probable that the invaders found much tougher work. It is only fair to the later Romano-Britons, to remember that all the flower of the youth of Britain had been carried away by one general and emperor after another, to fight the battles of Rome, or to support the claims of a usurper of the imperial purple, in Gaul and Spain and Italy; and when the imperial troops were finally withdrawn, the older men and the less hardy of the youths of Britain were left to cope with enemies who had baffled the Roman arms.

So much for the Britons. As for the Celts, we have sufficient evidence that the message of Christ was taken to them and welcomed by them in the later parts of the period ending with 450. During the years of the struggle between the Britons and their Teutonic invaders, say from 450 to 590, this Christianising went on among the Celts. About the end of that period it reached

even to the furthest parts of the north, the parts which, in the early times of the Roman occupation, were probably held by descendants of the earlier race, and it more or less covered Ireland.

Thus the knowledge of the Christian faith had, before the English came, extended over the whole of that part of this island which the English invaders in their furthest reach ever occupied. It had covered – and it continued to cover, and has never ceased to cover – very much that they never even touched. To convert the early English to Christ, which was the task undertaken by Augustine, a very small part of it being accomplished by him or his mission from first to last, was to restore Christianity to those parts from which the English had driven it out. It was to remove the barrier of heathendom which the English invaders had formed between the Church universal and the Celtic and British church or churches. It proved in the end that the undertaking was much beyond the powers of the Italian missionaries; and then the earlier church stepped in from its confines in the West and did the work. It was so that the great English province of Northumbria – meaning vastly more than Northumberland, even all the land from Humber to Forth – was evangelized. It was so that the great English province of Mercia – the whole of the middle of the island – received the message of Christ. It was so that Christianity was given back to Essex and to us in London, by the labours of our Bishop Cedd, consecrated, as the crown of his long and faithful labours among our heathen

predecessors, by the Celtic Bishop Finan of Lindisfarne. Cedd is an admirable example of the careful methods of the Celtic Church. He was not a Celt himself, he was an Angle. When the English branch of the Celtic Church, settled at Lindisfarne and evangelizing Northumbria, had succeeded in converting the son of the Mercian king, they sent him four priests as missionaries to his people, a people who were in large part Angles. Of these four priests, trained and sent by the Celtic Church for the conversion of the English, only one was a Celt; the other three, including Cedd, were themselves Angles. To send Anglian priests to convert Anglian people was indeed a wise and broad policy; and it was, as it deserved to be, eminently successful. It is a striking contradiction of the prevalent idea that the Celtic Church was isolated, narrow, bigoted; unable and unwilling to work with any but those of its own blood.

There are, then, these two main divisions before us, of the people who occupied these islands when the Romans came, and still occupied them when the English came, the Britons and the Celts<sup>14</sup>. We are not to suppose that this is nothing more than a mere dead piece of archaeology. It is a very living fact. A large proportion of those who are here to-day have to-day – possibly some of them not knowing it – kept alive the distinction between Briton and Celt. Every one who has spoken the name Mackenzie, or Macpherson, or any other Mac, has used the Celtic speech

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<sup>14</sup> As has been already remarked, they are now generally described as the Brythonic and Goidelic branches of the Celtic race.

in its most characteristic feature. Every one who has spoken the name Price, that is, ap Rhys, or any other name formed with ap<sup>15</sup>, has taken the Briton's side on this characteristic point. When you speak of Pen(maen)maur and the king Malcolm Ceanmor you are saying the same words; but in Penmaenmaur you take the Briton's side, in speaking of Ceanmor you take the Celt's. You will not find a better example than that which we owe to our dear Bede. The wall of Antonine abuts on the river Forth at Kinnell, a name which does not seem to have much to do with the end of a wall. But Bede tells us that the Picts of his day called it Penfahel, that is, head of the wall, "fahel" being only "wall" pronounced as some of our northern neighbours would pronounce it, the interesting people who say "fat" for "what." He adds that the English, his own people, called it Penel, cutting the Penfahel short. The Britons called it Pengual. The modern name Kinnell is the Celtic form of Penel.

Those being the people, and that the extent to which Christianity had in the end spread among them, how did Christianity find its way here?

The various suggestions that have from time to time been made, in the course of the early centuries, as to the introduction of Christianity to this island, were collected and commented on in a searching manner twenty-five years ago by two men of great learning and judgement. One of them was taken away from

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<sup>15</sup> Or with ab, as Bevan and Baddam, that is, ab Evan and ab Adam. Map and mab, ap and ab, stand for "son."

historical investigations, and from his canonry of St. Paul's, to the laborious and absorbing work of a bishop. The other was lost to historical study by death. I need scarcely name Dr. Stubbs and Mr. Haddan. Their work has made darkness almost light.

We cannot wonder that the marvellous apostolic journeys and missionary work of St. Paul so vividly impressed the minds of the early Christian writers, that they attributed to him even more than he actually performed. Clement of Rome, of whom I suppose the great majority of students of the Scripture and of Church History believe that he actually knew St. Paul, says that Paul preached both in the West and in the East, and taught the whole world, even to the limits of the West. Chrysostom says that from Illyricum Paul went to the very ends of the earth. These are the strongest statements which can be advanced by those who think that St. Paul himself may have visited Britain. He may have reached Spain. There does not appear to be any evidence that he ever reached Gaul; still less Britain. One of the Greek historians, Eusebius, writing about 315, appears to say that Britain was Christianised by some of the disciples; and another, Theodoret, about 423, names the Britons among those who were persuaded to receive the laws of the Crucified, by "our fishermen and publicans." This is evidence, and very interesting evidence, of the general belief that Britain was Christianised early in the history of Christianity, but it practically amounts to nothing more definite than that<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>16</sup> St. Peter is now being claimed as one of the Apostles of Britain; but it is impossible

But a very curious connection may be made out, between the Britons and the great apostle of the Gentiles.

In speaking of the relations, real or fairly imaginable, between Soissons or Senlis and the English in the parts of the island which lie opposite to that part of Gaul, I asked you to note that this was Belgic Gaul. We have seen that for some time before Julius Caesar's invasion a change had been going on in the population of those parts of Britain to which I now refer. The Belgae had been crossing the narrow sea and settling here, presumably driving away the inhabitants whom they found. They so specially occupied the parts where now Hampshire is, that the capital city, Went, was named from them by the Latins *Venta Belgarum*, Belgian *Venta*; to return in later times to its old name of *Caer Went*, this is, *Went Castle*, *Winchester*. Indeed, the Belgae are

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to deal seriously with such a proposition. A pamphlet with this view was issued in 1893, by the Reverend W. Fleming, M. R. Cardinal Baronius, holding the view that St. Peter lived long in Rome, felt the difficulty which any one with the historic sense must feel, that St. Paul in his Epistle to the Romans makes no mention of St. Peter as being then in Rome, nor does the history in the last chapters of the Acts. The explanation given is that St. Peter, though permanently resident in Rome, was away from home on these occasions. As there is no trace of him in any known country at the time, Britain is taken as the place of his sojourn during some of the later years of St. Paul, probably as the country where traces of his sojourn were least likely to be found on record. Mr. Fleming quotes a passage from a book written in 1609 by the second "Vicar Apostolic of England and Scotland," which is only too typical an example of a style of assertion and argument of which we might have hoped that we had seen the last. "I assure the indifferent reader, that St. Peter's preaching to the ancient Britons, on the one side is affirmed both by Latins and Greeks, by ancient and modern, by foreign and domestic, by Catholic writers... by Protestant antiquaries...; and on the other side, denied by no one ancient writer, Greek or Latin, foreign or domestic, Catholic or other."

credited with the occupation of territory up to the borders of Devon. The British tribe of the Atrebates, again, were the same people as the Gauls in the district of Arras; and they occupied a large tract of country stretching away from the immediate west of London. Caesar remarks on this fact that the immigrant Gauls retained the names of their continental districts and cities. The Parisii on the east coast, north of the Humber, afford another illustration.

Now when Jerome, about the year 367, was at Trèves, the capital of Gaul, situate in Belgic Gaul, he learned the native tongue of the Belgic Gauls; and when later in his life he travelled through Galatia, in Asia Minor, he found the people there speaking practically the same language as the Gauls about Trèves. Thus we are entitled to claim the Galatians as of kin to the Belgic division of the Gauls, and therefore as the same people with those who from before Caesar's time flowed steadily over from Belgic Gaul to Britain. That the Galatians were Gauls is of course a well-known fact in history; the point I wish to note is that they were Belgic Gauls. We may therefore see in St. Paul's epistle to the Galatian churches a description of the national character of the Britons of these parts of the island. Fickleness, superstition, and quarrelsomeness, are the characteristics on which he remarks. The very first words of the Epistle, after the preface, strike a clear and forcible note: – "I marvel that ye are so quickly moved to abandon the gospel of him that called you, for another gospel." Again, "O foolish Galatians, who

hath bewitched you!” “Ye were in bondage to them which are by nature no gods;... how turn ye back again to the weak and beggarly rudiments, whereunto ye desire to be in bondage over again!” “If ye bite and devour one another.” Without at all saying that these national characteristics are traceable in any parts of our islands now, it is evident that they are in close accord with what we hear of the early inhabitants. As also is another remark made in early times, “the Gauls begin their fights with more than the strength of men, they finish them with less than the strength of women.”

The line taken by a recent writer, Professor W. M. Ramsay, in his most interesting and able book, “The Church in the Roman Empire,” traverses this argument about the Galatian Epistle. In opposition to the great divine who for eight years spoke from this pulpit, and made this Epistle a special study for a great part of his life, Professor Ramsay maintains, by arguments drawn from geographical and epigraphical facts not known thirty years ago, when Dr. Lightfoot first wrote, that the Epistle was addressed to the people in the southern part of the Roman province called Galatia, who were not Galatians at all; and was not addressed to those in the northern part, who were Galatians proper, and occupied the whole of the country named from them Galatia. But I use the illustration, notwithstanding this. The controversy is not quite ended yet; and I do not feel sure that the difficulties of the Epistle itself, from Professor Ramsay’s point of view, are very much less considerable than those which Dr. Lightfoot’s view

undoubtedly has to face. In any case the Galatians proper were of close kin with the more civilised of our British predecessors – ancestors we may perhaps say – and this at least gives us a personal interest in what at first sight would seem to be a very far-off controversy.

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