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HOLD FAST THE FORM OF SOUND WORDS—Paul.

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The End.

The course the weariest river
Ends in a great gray sea;
The acorn, forever and ever,
Strives upward to the tree.
The rainbow, the sky adorning,
Shines promise through the storm;
The glimmer of coming morning
Through midnight gloom will form,
By time all knots are riven,
Complex although they be,
And peace will at last be given,
Dear, both to you and to me.
Then, though the path may be dreary,
Look onward to the goal;
Though the heart and head be weary,
Let faith inspire the soul;
Seek the right though the wrong be
tempting,
Speak the truth at any cost;
Vain is all the weak exempting
When once the gem is lost.
Let strong hand and keen eye be ready
For plain and ambushed foes;
Thought earnest and fancy steady
Bear best unto the close.
The heavy clouds may be raining,
But with evening comes the light;
Though the dark low winds are complain-
ing,
Yet the sunrise gilds the height;
And love has his hidden treasure
For the patient and the pure;
And time gives his fullest measure
To the workers who endure;
And the Word that no law has shaken
Has the future pledge supplied;
For we know that when we "awaken"
We shall be satisfied.
—Tinsley's Magazine.

For the Visitor.
The Introduction of Christianity into Britain.

The Christian student delights to peruse the records relating to the early growth and extension of the Church of Christ. In the Acts of the Apostles he finds a brief but inspired account of the spread of gospel doctrines and the planting of churches in many lands during the lives of the Apostles. From that period onward for many centuries he finds numerous difficulties in keeping the thread of ecclesiastical history, entangled as it often seems to be with the myths and errors of uninspired historians. Still the student is anxious to ascertain as correctly as he can the history of that wondrous institution, which, under the blessing of God, has been so mighty an instrumentality in purifying society; in promoting righteousness, and in advancing the best interests of the human race.

He eagerly scans the writings of the early "fathers," as they are termed, and passes by no source from which it is possible to derive any information, however doubtful or unimportant, relative to this great subject. In this way it has come to pass that diligent and learned investigations like Mosheim, Neander, Hase and Guericke, have been able to place us in possession of a tolerably reliable history of the Christian church from the days of the Apostles to our own times.

One of the interesting questions which naturally arises in the mind of a British subject is, At what date was Christianity first introduced into our own mother country, and by whom was the truth proclaimed? It is in this that the historical obscurity of that early period, the rudeness of the primitive inhabitants of Britain, together with the gross corruptions which came had, even at that date, imported into the church, take away much of the interest we might otherwise feel in so important a subject. To this must be added the serious difficulty encountered in endeavoring to gain any reliable information respecting the matter.

We are informed by Gildas that even in the sixth century, the period in which he himself lived, there were not to be found any reliable ecclesiastical records regarding the progress of Christianity in Britain during previous centuries. Upon the venerable Bede we depend almost entirely for our information. This great and good man lived about a century later than Gildas—673—735—and his *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis*

Anglorum, or ecclesiastical history of the English people, was made up of materials obtained partly from Roman writers, but chiefly from native chronicles and biographies, records and public documents, and oral and written communications from his contemporaries. On that account his statements are not always to be accepted as correct, and the student of church history feels that he is, during this period at least, constantly wrapped in a mist of uncertainty.

It has been claimed by some writers that the New Testament afford us indirect information with relation to the introduction of Christianity into Britain. It is stated in the Acts of the Apostles, that "devout men of every nation under heaven" were present at Jerusalem during the great Pentecostal revival; and it is assumed by some that among these strangers at the Jewish capital were representatives of Britain, which at that time had been more than three-quarters of a century under the dominion of the Roman Empire. These British strangers converted under the powerful preaching of Peter, it is presumed, returned to their island home to tell their friends "what great things the Lord had done for their souls." But all this assumption is so entirely improbable that we can regard the passage quoted as affording no clear testimony on the question.

Still stranger evidence is supposed to be given by Paul in his letter to the Romans, in which he states, regarding those who were sent to preach the gospel, that "their sound went into all the earth, and their words into the ends of the world." Again, in his letter to the church at Colosse, he affirms that "the word of the truth of the gospel had come unto them as it had done to all the world, being preached to every creature which is under heaven." Strong and comprehensive as these quotations appear to be, a careful and legitimate exegesis does not demand the concession that the gospel had necessarily been preached in Britain previous to the writing of Paul's letters. They merely state with the common Hebraic emphasis that already the gospel had been proclaimed to both Jews and Gentiles, and that no class of human beings had been excluded from its privileges. On the other hand, it must be at once granted that it is quite possible that representatives from Britain were present at the Pentecost, and that some of those who were "scattered abroad" in Apostolic times, and who went everywhere preaching the word, may have found their way to that far-off isle of the sea which was but little known even to educated Romans, but which now exerts a mightier influence in the world than ever Rome did, even in her palmy days.

The testimony of some of the early Roman writers respecting the dawn of Christianity in Britain is much more definite and direct than anything we can find on the same subject in the New Testament. Most of these writers were, however, enemies to the religion of Jesus Christ, and it was but natural that they should feel disposed to misrepresent the promulgators as well as the progress of Christianity in the different sections of the Roman Empire. Here and there we find a Christian historian whose statements can be accepted with some degree of confidence. Thus we may fairly credit the assertion of Theodoret, the learned bishop of Antioch, who flourished in the 5th century, when he states that "our fishermen, publicans and tent-makers persuaded the Romans and their subjects as well as the Scythians, Indians, Persians, Hyrcanians, Britons, Cimmerians and Germans to embrace the religion of Him whom they had crucified." The well-known historian Eusebius, who lived nearly a century

earlier than Theodoret, states in his ecclesiastical history that the Apostles had preached the gospel "to the Romans, Indians, Scythians and to those inhabiting what are called the British Isles." But the most remarkable uninspired information on this question is afforded by Tertullian, one of the earliest historians of the Church, who lived in the second century, according to the best authorities. He states positively in his history of the Church, that "those parts of Britain into which the Roman arms had never penetrated had become subject to Christ." To this testimony may be added that of Gildas, who fixes the introduction of the gospel into England at a date prior to the great revolt and defeat of the Britons under the brave leadership of their queen, Boadicea, A.D. 61. And these statements will not seem improbable when we take into consideration the state of the Roman Empire at that period, the progress of civilization, and the almost constant intercourse between Britain and Rome. Claudius established a Roman Province in the southeastern part of Britain, A.D. 43. Camalodunum was soon afterwards founded. London and St. Albans had already become flourishing cities, and many Roman citizens resorted thither either from a spirit of curiosity or a desire to become residents of a new country. Now it is known that in the reign of Claudius, Christianity was rapidly spreading among the Roman people. It was agitating the minds of the masses, and was receiving the attention even of government officers. It is quite evident, therefore, that the intercourse which we have mentioned as existing between the Roman and British peoples, would naturally introduce the subject of Christianity among the Britons, for whatever occupied the attention of the public mind, and especially of the former, was not long in spreading to the utmost limits of the empire.

With regard to the person by whom the gospel was first proclaimed on British soil, very lengthy, unsatisfactory and even foolish discussions have arisen. Dr. Burgess, bishop of Salisbury, in an elaborate treatise on the "Origin and Independence of the British Church," maintains that Paul preached among the Britons, and established a form of church government for their guidance, appointing Aristobulus, who is mentioned in Rom. 16: 10, to be the first bishop of Britain. Dr. Wm. Hales, in a work written in reply, combats the learned prelate's train of reasoning, and arrives at a totally different conclusion. Others, among whom is Cardinal Baronius, contend that Peter was the first British missionary. But none of these writers can furnish us with one particle of reliable evidence on the question, and we are compelled to give up, for the present at least, all hope of ascertaining definitely by whom the standard of the cross was first raised in Great Britain.

Little is known in regard to the British Christians during the first three centuries. They lived in comparative peace and tranquility, to which their distant situation greatly contributed. In the reign of Diocletian, however, their peace was disturbed by a terrible persecution. Gildas affirms that this persecution continued nine years in other countries, but only two in Britain. Of the leading circumstances connected with Diocletian's persecution we know but little, and that little is derived from the unreliable writings of Romish writers. Culling what seems to be nearest the truth from these writers, it appears that the British Christians were persecuted about the beginning of the fourth century, and that Albanus, a native, and probably an elder in the church at Verulamium (now St. Albans),

suffered martyrdom, thus having the honor of being the first British martyr. A period of tranquility succeeded this persecution. From the beginning of the fifth century, however, until the arrival of the Saxons—an interval of about half a century—the Britons were involved in a succession of national calamities which seemed to threaten their total ruin and extirpation. War, famine and pestilence combined to desolate the country. Nor was this all. They were distracted and torn in pieces by religious contentions. These contentions arose from the peculiar opinions set forth by Pelagius, an abbot of the famous monastery at Bangor. The discussions between the clergy and the Pelagians were so long and bitter, that they ended in the entire banishment of the latter from the country.

About the middle of the sixth century, Columba, a Christian missionary from Ireland, established a seminary at Iona, in Scotland. His followers were called Culdees. They founded institutions in various parts of Scotland and also found their way into England. They vigorously opposed the principles and practices of the Catholic Church as established by Augustine, who, in company with forty monks, visited Britain in 596 A.D., for the purpose of establishing the Romish faith. The policy of Rome ultimately triumphed. Henceforward Britain recognized Roman Catholicism as the national religion until the period of the grand Reformation in the reign of Henry VIII., since which a far better but still imperfect system has prevailed in Great Britain. Such is a brief outline of the historical records regarding the inception of Christianity in the land of our fathers.

"Praying Always."

What is meant by this? What is it to be "praying always?"

The anecdote is told of a young minister of high promise, who died at an early age, that one day a friend, on entering his room to get a book found him on his knees in prayer, and when he apologized for having disturbed him, the other quietly replied:

"It doesn't matter at all; for prayer is so much a part of one's life, that a little interruption, like this, makes no difference." And his friend and biographer says: "His life seems to have been a great continued prayer, his thoughts always going up to heaven in silent supplication, from a heart abiding in the will of God."

What a blessed spirit, flowing out and going forth, like a living stream, in the heavenly channel of a holy habit! Is not this the true spirit of real prayer; what the apostle meant by "praying without ceasing," "continuing instant in prayer," and "praying always, with all prayer and supplication," and what the blessed Saviour meant by saying, that "men ought always to pray, and not to faint?" If we enter into the true and full spirit of prayer, should not our thoughts, at all times, be going forth in communion with God, in acknowledging his greatness and excellence, in thanking him for his ceaseless mercies in asking blessings for ourselves and others, in committing ourselves every hour to his guidance, and in praying for the extension of his kingdom to the ends of the earth? A week of prayer, or any special season of supplication may, indeed, animate and quicken the spirit. But is not prayer—the living spirit of prayer—the very breath of the renewed soul? And, like the breathing of the body through the lungs, does it not, with the spiritual Christian, go on almost unconsciously and in all circumstances of life, rising not merely from the retirement of the closet, but in

the meditation of the night watches, in the intervals of business, and on the walk by the way? Are there not only at times "groanings that cannot be uttered," but sweet and joyous communings with God which are uttered only in the thoughts that wing them to heaven?

"Prayer," says one, "is quite as much aspiration as verbal petition." And another says: "It has full right to the word ineffable; for there are outpourings of the soul that words cannot express—an interior speech of the heart which utters no sound, but speeds the more swiftly to the throne of God." And good old John Bunyan tells us of "the heart praying without words," when it is most full of real prayer. And "in the precept to pray *always*," says Archbishop Trench, "there is nothing of exaggeration, nothing commanded that may not be fulfilled, when we understand prayer to be the continual desire of the soul after God; having, indeed, its times of intensity—seasons of an intense concentration of the spiritual life—but not confined to those times, since the whole life of the faithful Christian should be, in the beautiful words of Origen, 'One great connected prayer.'" And so good old Dr. Donne tells us "that the soul that is accustomed to direct itself to God on every occasion, and which, as a flower at sunrise, conceives a sense of God in every beam of his, and spreads itself in thankfulness for every blessing he sheds upon it—that soul prays sometimes when it does not know that it prays." And in the same spirit Augustine says, that "longing desire prays always, even though the tongue be silent," and that "if we are ever longing, we are ever praying."

We read of an excellent woman in humble life, who, when spoken to by her pastor on the subject of prayer, meekly replied, that with all her incessant toil and labor, she found but little time for the closet; but she added: "If I am washing, I pray in thought, that my soul may be washed from sin by the blood of Christ; if sweeping the floor, that my heart may be cleansed by the Holy Spirit; if eating my plain meal, that I may be fed by the Word of God; if weary, that I may find rest in Jesus; if diligent with my daily toil, that I may be diligent and faithful in the divine life; if trying to provide for the wants of my family, that all my wants, both temporal and spiritual, may be provided for by my own covenant-keeping God and Redeemer, and that he will receive me at last to the blessed family of heaven."

In this spirit one may be *always* praying; not only as Cecil says, "by finding parentheses for prayer even in the busiest hours," but by associating every form of business or pleasure, or daily vocation of any kind, with the upgoing of the soul in prayer and communion with God, asking his presence and guidance and blessing at every step of our way. And if this be our spirit, then we may truly say:

"Though once I sought a time and place
For solitude and prayer,
Yet now, where'er I find thy face,
I find a closet there!"

Holding fast thus to prayer, we hold fast to Christ; and holding fast to him we are forever safe and blessed. "He that knows thus to pray," says William Jay, "has the secret of safety in prosperity and of support in trouble; the art of overcoming every enemy, and of turning every enemy, and of turning every loss into a gain; the power of soothing every care, of subduing every passion, and of adding relish to every enjoyment. The merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof, than fine gold."

Not till life is over will the whole answer to such prayer be given, or its whole strength be understood, or

the full safety and blessedness it has brought us be fully known and felt, as it then will be in the perfect blessedness of heaven!—*Independent*.

Selections.

No great characters are formed in his world without suffering and self-denial.—*Matthew Henry*.

We judge ourselves by what we feel capable of doing, whilst others judge us by what we have already done.—*Longfellow*.

Every man who strikes blows for power, for influence, for institutions, for the right,—must be as good an anvil as he is a hammer.

Personal character should always be a resultant of true action, instituted for unselfish purposes. It is a great meanness to make reputation a pursuit.

He only is advancing in life whose heart is getting softer, whose blood warmer, whose brain quicker, whose spirit is entering into living peace.—*Ruskin*.

Mind the paint. Don't touch pitch. Go the other side of the road rather than shake hands with one who may draw you along with him in the path of evil.—*G. Everard*.

A sacred burden in this life ye bear;
Look on it, lift it, bear it solemnly,
Stand up and walk beneath it, steadfastly.
Fail not for sorrow, falter not for sin,
But onward, upward, till the goal ye win.
—*Frances Kemble*.

Missions are no longer a side issue! They have become the main question of Nineteenth Century Christianity. The conviction is growing that on this issue the church must stand or fall.—*Christian at Work*.

"Sow and look onward, upward,
Where the starry light appears,
Where in spite of coward's doubting,
Or your own heart's guilty fears,
You shall reap in joy the harvest
You have sown to-day in tears."

Religion is a necessary, an indispensable element in any great human character. There is no living without it. It is the tie that connects man with his Creator, and holds him to his throne.—*Daniel Webster*.

It is a shame for a rich Christian man to be like a Christmas-box that receives all, and nothing can be got out till it is broken in pieces; or like unto a drowning man's hand that holds whatsoever it gets.—*Dr. John Hall*.

It is said that the trees that are most in the sun bear the sweetest fruit. And those persons who are most influenced for good beneath the rays of the Sun of Righteousness will bring forth much fruit to life everlasting.

Every Christian is, or may be a Bible of illuminating and saving power. He lives usefully, however, only as he lives in the Spirit. His should be the inscription on the French dial. *Sine sole silco*. "I am silent without the sun."

If sorrow could enter heaven, if a sigh could be heard there, or a tear roll down the cheek of a saint in light, it would be for lost opportunities, for the time spent in neglect of God which might have been spent for his glory.—*Payson*.

Don't be a cynic and disconsolate preacher. Don't bewail and bemoan. Omit the negative propositions. Nerve us with incessant affirmatives. Don't waste yourself in refection, nor bark against the bad, but chant the beauty of the good.—*Emerson*.

James Freeman Clark says: "We waste our time doing too many things, reading too many books, seeing too many people, talking too much. Therefore we do nothing well, read nothing thoroughly, know no one really, say nothing that is worth hearing."