

MISCELLANEOUS.

(Selected for the Church Magazine).

INTRODUCTION OF CHRISTIANITY INTO BRITAIN.

Partisan writers of the present day are fond of attributing the introduction of Christianity into Britain to the preaching of Augustine, or Austin, as he is often called, who came over from Rome in the time of the Anglo-Saxons, at the instigation of Pope Gregory I. But the fact is, Christianity was planted in Britain almost as early as in Rome itself; and there are the strongest reasons for believing that St. Paul was the messenger by whom it was introduced. In the 15th chapter of his epistle to the Romans, he mentions his intended journey into Spain; and as, according to the testimony of all the fathers, he passed the interval of eight years between his first imprisonment at Rome and his second arrest and martyrdom "in going up and down *through* and preaching *in* the western parts," it would be difficult to suppose that such journey was not taken.

Theodoret, an eminent writer and accurate Church historian of the fifth century, assures us that St. Paul did visit Spain; and, calling at "*the islands that lie in the ocean.*" * he "*persuaded even the Britons to receive the laws of the crucified Lord.*"

Gildas, a native of Britain, who flourished in the sixth century, writing of the wars between the Romans and the native British Sovereigns, states that in the interval between the defeat of King Caractacus, in the year 51, and that of Queen Boadicea, ten years after, "*the cheering beams of the Sun of Righteousness had shone upon this frozen isle.*"

Venantius, who was Bishop of Poitiers in the fifth century, states that "Paul crossed the ocean, and preached in the countries which the Britons inhabit." Eusebius, who wrote at the close of the third, and during the early part of the fourth century, and whose accuracy as an ecclesiastical historian is universally admitted, enumerates the *British Isles* as among the countries where the Gospel had been preached by the Apostles; and Jerome, the most learned of the Latin fathers, translator of the version of the Bible, called the *Fulgata*, avers that "St. Paul preached the Gospel in the *western parts*, and took his course from ocean to ocean."

In the ancient records called the "British Triads" it is related that Bran, the father of Caractacus, having, with other members of his family, been taken to Rome as hostages for his son, while there embraced Christianity, and returning home after, "seven years captivity, brought the gospel to the Cumbrians." Now, when it is remembered that the discharge of St. Paul from prison happened nearly at the same time with that of Bran and his family: taking into consideration the great probability that the new converts would be most anxious for the Apostle to visit their benighted country, and that he was induced to do so at their earnest solicitation, we have in the absence of other testimony, fair grounds for assuming that, not only was the Gospel promulgated in Britain previous to the year 51, but also that its promulgator was St. Paul himself. There is however, (as has already been shewn), no lack of other authorities on the subject, and the testimony which may surely be regarded as placing the matter beyond doubt, is that of Clement, the personal friend and fellow-labourer of the apostle, referred to in the Epistle to the Philippians.

* The ancients knew nothing of any country west of the British Isles, hence it was their practice to speak of them as "the Isles of the ocean", "the Isles of the west"; "the utmost bounds of the west", "the utmost Britons," &c. &c.