



ST. MARTIN'S CHURCH, CANTERBURY.

of certainty, by whom the Christian Church was first planted in the British Isles. Gildas, the oldest native historian, who wrote about 560, tells us that the "Sun of Righteousness" arose in England about the time that Queen Boadicea was defeated by the Romans, which was about the year 162 or 163. He says that the father of Caractacus, who had been imprisoned at Rome, was liberated about this time, and brought back to England the knowledge of Christ, which he had acquired there. Some historians have been of opinion that to St. Paul himself the founding of the Christian Church in England is to be attributed. This opinion is based on these facts: (1) Clemens Romanus, the friend of St. Paul, in a well known passage in the epistle written by the Church of Rome to the Corinthians (circ. 69 or 70), speaking of St. Paul, says: "Having become a herald both in the east and in the west, he obtained the noble renown due to his faith, and having preached righteousness to the whole world, and having come to the *extremity of the west*, and having borne witness before rulers, he departed at length out of the world." By "the extremity of the west" or "utmost bounds of the west," as it is sometimes translated, it is supposed, though it cannot be confidently affirmed, that the British Isles were meant. (2) Justin Martyr (Phil.), A.D. 140, asserted that every country known to the Romans contained professors of the Christian faith. Britain was then in the possession of the Romans. (3) Irenæus, Bishop of Lyons, about A.D. 179, asserted that Christianity had been spread to the utmost bounds of the earth by the apostles and their disciples.

4. At the end of the second century, *i.e.*, about 190, Tertullian, a learned presbyter, speaks of British districts inaccessible to the Roman arms having been subdued by Christ.

5. Eusebius, bishop and historian, who flourished 307-340, says that some of the apostles passed over the ocean to the British Isles, and St. Jerome (Pt.), 345-420, says that St. Paul him-

self imitated the Sun of Righteousness in going from one ocean to the other, and that his evangelical labors extended to the *western parts*.

6. Later, Theodoret, bishop and historian 393-457, asserts that St. Paul brought salvation to the isles of the ocean, and mentions Britons among converts to the apostles.

7. In the sixth century Venantius Fortunatus, and in the seventh century Sophronius, Patriarch of Jerusalem, speak of St. Paul's mission to Britain.

It will thus be seen that the evidence on which the founding of the Christian Church in England is attributed to St. Paul is of a somewhat fragmentary and not of a very positive character. At the same time there is no reason to doubt that the early Christian writers I have cited, though they wrote many years after St. Paul, were, nevertheless, giving the tradition current in their day. That there should be no more positive information is not very surprising, considering the persecutions which the ancient Church from time to time suffered, and that during these persecutions the Christian books and records were sought out and destroyed, to say nothing of the constant internal commotion which prevailed in the British Isles both before and after the Saxon invasion, which must have been equally fatal to the preservation of records of the early history of the Church in England.

During one of the persecutions which took place in the reign of Diocletian, A.D. 303, the first British martyr, of which we have any record, suffered. This was St. Alban.

A few years after this event we have a further item of interest in English Church history. In 314 three bishops of the ancient British Church, *viz.*, the Bishops of York, London, and Lincoln (or Llanduff), also a priest and deacon were present at the Council of Bishops, held at Arles, in France. Other bishops of the British Church were present at the Council of Nicæa, in Asia, in 325, at Sardica, 347, and at Ariminum in 359. We thus learn that at this early day the Church in England was fully organized; but the subsequent withdrawal of the Romans about the beginning of the fifth century and the invasion of the country by the heathen Saxons brought trouble and disaster upon the British Church—the Christians were driven into Wales and Cornwall, the rest of the island being in the hands of the heathen invaders.

It may be well to pause here and to take a brief retrospect. The Church of Jesus Christ, founded in Jerusalem, was by the express commission of her Lord to be spread through all the world. "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature," said our