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XXIV.—*Observations on the Story of Lucius, the first Christian King of Britain.*  
*By HENRY HALLAM, Esq. V.P.*

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Read March 21, and April 11, 1850.

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THE ecclesiastical history of Britain is generally made to commence, after some conjectural hypotheses as to the original preaching of Christianity, with the celebrated conversion of a king named Lucius, in the latter part of the second century. The two writers on our ecclesiastical antiquities who have most claim to deference for learning, as one of them has for critical judgment, Usher and Stillingfleet, as well as those of a secondary, yet respectable character, such as Collier, unite in receiving this as an authentic fact. Yet some have always been found to doubt, among whom we may place Whitaker and Henry, as rather more peremptory than the rest; the former being certainly not over sceptical in matters of historical tradition. But Dr. Lingard and many others of our contemporaries, though under the necessity of moulding the story into a less questionable shape than it has come down to us, have not ventured to reject the whole as a fable, or to deny that a certain king during the reigns of the Antonines was the means of spreading the light of the Gospel over a part at least of our island, after having sought and received instruction at the hands of the Bishop of Rome.

It may therefore be reckoned by zealous antiquaries, especially if they happen to have Celtic blood in their veins, an unreasonable piece of scepticism, when I confess myself unable to attain the slightest degree of belief as to the entire story, taking it as recounted in the usual authorities. The Society will permit me to lay before them the reasons which have led me, first to doubt, and finally to reject, the conversion of Lucius, except, as will hereafter appear, in a form altogether different from that in which it stands in our histories. And I must begin by requesting them not to expect any new discovery, nor any evidence which is not already published to the world, it being my only province to discuss what has been produced.

Every one who has attended in the least to this subject must know that the leading authority for the existence of Lucius, and his conversion to Christianity, is found in the Ecclesiastical History of Bede, lib. i. c. 4. It is not mentioned by any extant writer of earlier date. This chapter it will be necessary to give at length.

“Anno ab incarnatione Domini centesimo quinquagesimo sexto, Marcus Antoninus

Verus decimus quartus ab Augusto regnum cum Aurelio Commodo fratre suscepit." This sentence is copied from Orosius, a writer to whom Bede is chiefly indebted, and whom he has generally transcribed, in this Roman portion of British history. But he proceeds with the following passage: "Quorum temporibus cum Eleutherus vir sanctus pontificatui Romanæ ecclesiæ præesset, misit ad eum Lucius Britanniarum rex epistolam, obsecrans ut per ejus mandatum Christianus efficeretur, et mox effectum piæ postulationis consecutus est; susceptamque fidem Britanni usque in tempora Diocletiani principis inviolatam integramque quietam in pace servabant." In the sixth chapter Bede relates the persecution of the Christians under Diocletian (A.D. 304), and in the seventh the martyrdom of St. Alban, probably from a legend making mention also of some others by name, "urbis Legionum cives," citizens of Caerleon on the Usk, who suffered death on the same account. These names, and probably the fact, he has taken from Gildas.

The chronicle of Bede, which is a very brief epitome of civil and ecclesiastical history, compiled from various sources, has a sentence about Lucius, which I will not detach from the context: Defuncto Commodo fratre Antoninus Commodum filium suum consortem regni fecit. Antonino imperatori Melito Asianus Sardensis episcopus apologeticum pro Christianis tradidit. Lucius Britanniae rex missâ ad Eleutherium Romæ episcopum epistolâ ut Christianus efficiatur impetrat. Apollinaris Asianus Hieropoli, et Dionysius Corinthi, clari habentur episcopi." This short and unconnected epitome adds nothing by way of evidence to the former passage of the same author. Eleutherus (not Eleutherius) was Bishop of Rome from A.D. 177 to 193; Marcus Aurelius died in A.D. 180. Bede only refers the embassy of Lucius in general words to the age of the two Antonines, *quorum temporibus*. That the elder, who became emperor, as he tells us from Orosius, in A.D. 156, was dead some years before the date assigned to the conversion of Lucius, scarcely can be said to render the expression inaccurate. These are very trifling embarrassments in comparison with the general improbability of the story; yet Usher labours through some pages to reconcile incongruous dates.

The great difficulty that occurs in the passages from Bede which we have just extracted is, that more than half a century after the island, as far as the Firth of Forth, if not beyond, had been reduced into a Roman province, we find Lucius roundly called Britanniarum rex; the very style of our gracious Sovereign at this day. Could such a title belong to a prince of Caledonia? or of Wales, if we suppose, as some have done by arbitrary conjecture, that a few counties of that principality enjoyed a wild independence after the subjugation of the more open country? They could not have included the whole of Wales, since one of the Itinera runs to Neath, and another to Carnarvon.

It has, however, been suggested by Stillingfleet, and was, perhaps, still the favourite theory of our antiquaries in the last century, that Lucius reigned over a very different part of the island; namely, the old seat of the Regni, or the counties of Surrey and Sussex. And to support this it was presumed that he was the successor of Cogidunus, to whom, in the reign of Claudius, some cities or districts, *quædam civitates*, were granted by the Romans, with the royal title. (Tacitus, *Vita Agricolæ*, c. 14.) This petty dominion, though Tacitus does not intimate its locality, has, in consequence of an inscription found at Chichester with the name "Tiberius Claudius Cogidunus rex, legatus Augustus," been very reasonably placed on that coast. We are not concerned, however, with Cogidunus, but with Lucius, a century later. Against mere hypothesis, where no proof is pretended, it is waste of time to contend; for the succession of Lucius to Cogidunus we have not the smallest particle of testimony. It rests on a mere conjecture, and one untenable as such. For, notwithstanding the assertion of Camden, which many have echoed, it must appear more than doubtful whether it was consistent with the policy of the empire, and the analogy of its constitution, to permit the continuance of a line of native princes, especially in the heart of the country, after Britain had been fully reduced into the form of a province, which took place, as is well known, in the reign of Domitian. Camden speaks of the ancient practice of the Romans to have kings in their provinces as the instruments of slavery. Not, I conceive, *in* their provinces, though sometimes near them; and the passage which he quotes from Julius Capitolinus rather proves the contrary of what he alleges it to mean. Lucius Verus, that historian says, after some victories by his lieutenants in the East, "*regna regibus, provincias comitibus suis regendas dedit.*"<sup>a</sup> Here the two are clearly distinguished. We find several instances where particular kings, after becoming effectively subject to Rome, have retained a dependent power with their title, analogous to that of some princes at this moment in British India; but we find also that after no long time, in consequence of rebellion or misgovernment, their dominion was absorbed in the provincial government; exactly as has happened, and may do so again, in the parallel case. Such were the house of Herod in Judea, that of Ariarathes in Cappadocia, and Cotys in the Piedmontese Alps; and such was Cogidunus himself. This would render the succession of Lucius to Cogidunus improbable, were it less destitute of anything like presumptive evidence than it is.

We are, of course, not warranted to set aside historical evidence which bears on a fact otherwise authenticated, or probable in itself, because some of the language,

<sup>a</sup> Gibson translates, *comitibus suis*, by "their counts." But I doubt whether this sense of the word is so ancient. The context of the passage leads me to think it should be rendered, "by his own companions," those of Verus himself, to whose manner of life the historian had been just alluding.

wherein we find it recorded, asserts what is untrue. But when we read such a palpable misrepresentation as *Britanniarum rex*, when the words can by possibility only relate to some very insignificant tributary of Rome, it is natural to consider a little the value of the authority. And this assumption of royalty over Britain for the unknown Lucius does not stop here; since the Britons, the nation itself, *Britanni*, are represented to us as brought to the Christian faith by the missionaries of Eleutherus, and retaining it until the reign of Diocletian, more than a century later. That Britain contained many Christians long before the time of Diocletian, or perhaps before that of the supposed Lucius, may well be granted; but the words used by Bede seem to imply a much more general conversion than we have any reason to believe. We have very scanty evidence of British churches in the third century; and in fact we know that they were not numerous in the northern regions of Gaul till the latter part of that age. For this we may refer to Mosheim, "De Rebus Christianorum ante Constantinum," p. 449.

The embassy of a British prince to Rome, his own conversion, and that of his subjects, or, if we please, his compatriots living under the imperial government, are events remarkable enough, one might suppose, to have found a place in the Ecclesiastical History of Eusebius, if not to have been mentioned by the Christian writers of the second and third centuries. This, however, is not the case; no corroboration has been found for the passage in Bede throughout the mass of patristic literature. Tertullian, indeed, and this passage has often been quoted, boasting of the progress of the faith, talks of *Britanniæ inaccessa Romanis loca, Christo autem subdita*. But the style of Tertullian is proverbially rhetorical. The only truth that probably lies beneath his exaggeration may be, that in the great diffusion of Christianity about the beginning of the third century it had been preached to some even in remote parts of Britain. That many professed our religion, whether with regular churches and dioceses or not, among the provincial Romans or native inhabitants, has been already admitted. But this really does not bear on the received story of Lucius. The constant intercourse of Italy and Gaul with Britain is sufficient to explain it.

But the silence of foreign writers is hardly so suspicious as that of Gildas. We have in him a British Christian of the sixth century, a priest himself, and writing with the peculiar regard to ecclesiastical events which we always find in those ages. He affirms that Christianity was introduced among the Britons in the time of Tiberius, or, as some interpret the passage, in order to avoid so glaring a misrepresentation, about that of Nero; the words being hardly reducible to any distinct meaning. He then proceeds: "Quæ (præcepta Christi) licet ab incolis

tepidè suscepta sunt, apud quosdam tamen integrè, et apud alios minus, usque ad persecutionem Diocletiani tyranni novennem. (Hist. Gild. i. 9.) Not a word here of Lucius and his mission to Rome; a fact worthy, one would think, of being recorded in the briefest history. He proceeds to the martyrdom of St. Alban, and those in South Wales, which Bede has also mentioned.

This omission had such an effect on Stillingfleet, by much the highest authority for critical judgment among those who have maintained the general truth of the current story, that he makes this strong observation: "If a negative argument will hold any where, it is where a person hath as much reason to know as any that follow him, and as great occasion to discover what he knows; both which will hold in the case of Gildas compared with Bede and later writers." (Origines Britanniae, p. 67.) It is hardly possible to put the argument on my side, and against his own, more pointedly than this great antiquary and critic has here done. Perhaps, considering the looseness of Gildas as an historical witness, his silence is not quite conclusive as a negative argument; but it has considerable weight in corroboration of other presumptions.

It may naturally excite some curiosity, how Stillingfleet, after drawing so unfavourable a conclusion from the silence of Gildas, has yet pronounced on the whole, that the existence of Lucius ought to be believed, though he does not vouch for every part of the story. "That there was such a person who was a king and a Christian," he says, "is proved, besides the concurrence of so many authors from Bede's time, from the two coins mentioned by Archbishop Usher, one silver, and the other gold, having an image of a king on them with a cross, and the letters LUC. as far as they could be discerned." (p. 62.) Strange, surely, that with his remarkable acuteness and experience in historical criticism, Stillingfleet should have mentioned the concurrence of so many authors after Bede, as adding any corroboration to the evidence, when there is so little likelihood that they had any other authority than Bede himself. His Ecclesiastical History was the main source from which early writers drew their knowledge of the ancient history of our island. It cannot of course be wonderful that so memorable a circumstance as its first conversion to the Christian faith, having received the seal of his great authority, passed without hesitation into every history. Even in later times, as I have already observed, many have related it as certain, and few have gone further than to reduce the language of our venerable historian into some compass of credibility. The accumulation of obscure and modern testimony which we find in Usher's long disquisition on the tale of Lucius is a curious specimen of omnivorous and misplaced erudition. A single grain of critical good sense is worth all this chaos of chaff, so frequent in the

learned men of the sixteenth and first part of the seventeenth centuries. But the assent of Stillingfleet to this second-hand evidence is the more remarkable, because he had a few pages before observed, "It is an excellent rule of Baronius in such cases, that no testimonies of later authors are to be regarded concerning things of remote antiquity which are not supported by the testimony of ancient writers." (p. 35.) Now, though we may think the expressions here rather too strong and unlimited, seeing they would make such havoc with historical tradition as to leave none standing, it is still in the main a very useful rule, especially where contemporaneous writings have been preserved, and the best safeguard against a credulous reception of precarious evidence.

We are not left, however, by Stillingfleet to this echo of secondary authorities. He lays stress, as will have been observed in the passage above quoted, on two coins reported by Usher to have been found, "bearing the image of a king with a cross, and the letters LUC, as far as they could be discovered." But he has not translated the words of the Archbishop quite literally. They run as follows: "Nec hic prætereundum repertos esse in Anglia duos antiquissimos nummos (argenteum unum, quem habuit M. Josephus Hollandus, aureum alterum, quem inter D. Roberti Cottoni *κειμήλια* vidimus), Christiani regis, uti ex signo crucis appposito colligitur, imagine, et literis obscurioribus, quæ LUC denotare videbantur, insignitos." *Britannic. Eccles. Antiquitates*, c. 3, p. 58 (edit. Elrington).

The words *literis obscurioribus* would of themselves throw considerable doubt upon the application of these coins to King Lucius. I do not think that in the rigorous scrutiny of evidence which our own age demands, any one, not strongly prepossessed, would pay much regard to these supposed coins, if neither of them had ever been seen since the days of Usher, considering the very indecisive manner in which his description is expressed. But fortunately we now know something more, and can altogether put out of court an evidence which even Stillingfleet seems to have thought so important. In Speed's *History of Britain*, published in 1618, we have a coin engraved as a sort of head-piece to his translation of a manifestly spurious letter from the Pope Eleutherus to Lucius; yet, what is a little remarkable, he takes no notice of it in his text, probably because he felt himself unable to risk an assertion of its relation to that monarch, though wishing to suggest such an inference to the reader. This coin has a head surrounded by something like a string of pearls, as some have thought, or a chain, as seems more probable, and with two cross lines on the obverse; and on the reverse a horse with a human head, and part of a human figure beneath it. On each side of this figure is a scrawl, one a little like the letter L, the other a little like a C; there is no

appearance of a U, and probably these scrawls were not meant for alphabetical characters at all. The work of Usher on the Ecclesiastical Antiquities of Britain was not published till 1639, twenty-five years after the gold of Lucius had thus been tacitly put in circulation by Speed, though very much in the manner of one who is conscious of passing bad money.

In Gibson's edition of Camden we have some "Conjectures upon the British coins added to those of Camden," by a Mr. Walker. These he says are "partly taken from Speed, partly from other friends." The coin in question (No 27 in his plate) was certainly copied from Speed. Mr. Walker in his description of it does not allude to Lucius, but says it has been conjectured to denote Arviragus, a British chief in the reign of Domitian; an hypothesis which he rejects because there is no evidence that he was a Christian. Gough, in his edition of Camden, treats the coin with too much contempt to engrave it; and says, "Mr. Speed and Mr. Walker have discovered several names on these coins, among others Lucius, whose existence is very problematical." (p. 67.) This is, as I have just observed, inaccurate, especially as to Walker. Gough, however, though here sceptical as to Lucius, shows sufficient credulity in a former note (p. 51) about the conversion of Britain by St. Paul, and even speaks more favourably of Lucius himself.

This gold coin is now in the British Museum; the delineations in Speed and Camden are very accurate. No one, I should conceive, looking at the coin itself, any more than at those delineations, would fancy, like Usher, that it contains the letters LUC, even *litteris obscurioribus*. It is uncertain by what means it came into the Museum; but, as Usher states himself to have seen it in Sir Robert Cotton's possession, it was probably derived from that great source of the treasures of our national collection. And this renders the conjecture, if it should be started, that Usher had seen some other coin, too precarious to be entertained.

The coin itself, far from being of the mint of our unknown Lucius, appears not to be even British. In the Numismatic Chronicle, No. 42, we have an engraving of it among some Gaulish coins closely resembling in their reverse. The learned editor observes:—"This type is engraved by Ruding, plate 2, fig. 26, and is the same which honest Speed proposed to give to Lucius, the first Christian British king, he having recognised the symbol of our faith in the ornament before the head." (p. 153.) These Gaulish coins are supposed by the editor to have been struck while the country was still free. As to the supposed cross, it seems hard to say what it may have meant; but it is surely strange to conclude, as we find several writers on other occasions prone to do, that every intersection of two straight lines must typify the Christian mystery. As to the silver coin mentioned by Usher, nothing,



I believe, is known about it; but it cannot hope to survive the defeat of the more precious metal. Usher does not say that he had seen it.

The history of this coin is a curious illustration of the readiness with which the authority of men enjoying a high reputation is received. A piece of gold money is found, which the numismatic learning of the age cannot trace to any certain source; an hypothesis is started, floating loose for a time among antiquaries, but congenial to some national prejudices, and appearing to corroborate a precarious piece of favourite history; a man of vast learning and high station takes it up, and gives it a sanction from ocular observation, but in ambiguous terms, and such as a critical inquirer should be slow to admit as evidence. Another eminent man in the next age translates the passage, makes it rather less indecisive, lends it his own authority, and leads the reader, especially one willing to believe, into an opinion that the former witness had actually seen what he had only inferred. The importance of accuracy, and the errors into which we may fall by taking for granted that great writers always preserve it, may be seen in the phrase of Usher, *literis obscurioribus*. This assumes the characters to be real letters of the alphabet; after which conjecture, being limited, becomes reasonable. But the characters on the coin in the Museum are not properly *obscuriores*, being perfectly distinct; the objection is that they have no manifest resemblance to any Roman letters at all. I ought to take notice that my knowledge of the existence of this coin in the British Museum was derived from a note in Mr. Pantin's edition of Stillingfleet's *Origines*; and that I was guided to the further information above given by the gentlemen in the medal room.

The English writers, whether mediæval or modern, have, as I have observed, uniformly copied Bede. But we have one very early, and, as I conceive, independent authority, next to Bede himself in antiquity of those who have made mention of Lucius, to whom our attention should be particularly drawn.

It is unnecessary to enter into the controversy about the age or authority of the history which bears the name of Nennius, because the result of all critical inquiry has been to leave the question in uncertainty. It appears however that, from whatever sources compiled, the present work of the supposed Nennius cannot be earlier than Bede, or later than the tenth century, to which one manuscript is referred by the last editor. Now in Nennius we have, first of all, a fabulous story of the original settlement of Britain by Brute the son of Ascanius; next, a brief account of the Roman invasions by Cæsar and Claudius, the latter of whom he strangely asserts to have released the island from paying tribute, which was thenceforth paid to the emperors of Britain, *Britannicis imperatoribus*. This ridiculous

falsehood seems intended to countenance the next sentence but one which follows : "Post centum et sexaginta septem annos post adventum Christi, Lucius Britannicus rex, cum omnibus regulis totius Britannicæ gentis, baptismum suscepit, missâ legatione ab imperatoribus Romanorum et a papa Romano Eucharisto."

A question of course arises whether the supposed Nennius took this sentence from Bede. He declares himself in his prologue to have compiled his History of Britain from various sources. I transcribe the longer of the two prologues which appear in different manuscripts, the other being probably turned by some one into the purer Latin of the twelfth century : "Partim majorum traditionibus, partim scriptis, partim etiam monumentis veterum Britannicæ incolarum, partim et de annalibus Romanorum, insuper et de chronicis sanctorum patrum. Isidori scilicet, Hieronymi, Prosperi, Eusebii, nec non et de historiis Scottorum Saxonumque, licet inimicorum, non ut volui, sed ut potui, meorum obtemperans jussionibus seniorum, unam hanc historiunculam undecunque collectam balbutiendo coacervavi." The history of Bede might certainly be included here under those of the Saxons. But, on comparing the two writers, I do not discover the least trace of resemblance either in words or in substance. Nennius rarely touches even the same facts of history as Bede, and, when he does so, relates nothing in the same way. It appears, therefore, by no means antecedently probable that he copied from him the account of Lucius.

In this story, as given by Nennius, the most enormous errors are glaring. In the year of our Lord 167, not Eucharistus, or more properly Evaristus, was Bishop of Rome, he having died in A.D. 109, just fifty-eight years before, nor even Eleutherus, but Anicetus. By supposing, however, an error in the manuscript, we might read septuaginta, which would answer to the first year of Eleutherus, under whose pontificate, though without mentioning any single year, Bede has placed the embassy of Lucius. This potentate indeed is not styled by Nennius king of the Britanic isles, but *Britannicus rex*, which might be more loosely construed ; in return, however, we find him accompanied in his baptism by a whole heap of British chieftains, *cum omnibus regulis Britannicæ gentis*, in utter forgetfulness of the Roman sovereignty. But the crowning piece of ignorance is shewn in the embassy of the heathen emperors, conjointly with the pope, to confer the rite of baptism on these British princes.

It appears to me improbable that Nennius took a matter of history from Bede, which he has in so blundering a manner distorted. Nothing, so far as I see, could have led him thus to deviate from recorded facts, if they were before him in a writer of high authority. He has evidently given us a different, and, as I suspect, a more ancient, form of the story. But it seems credible enough that Bede, having found

this original tradition in some British writer, would insert it with such alterations as his superior acquaintance with antiquity showed to be indispensable. He would reject the absurd fiction of an embassy from the Roman emperors, and would know that Evaristus was not Bishop of Rome in the age ascribed to Lucius. But if, on the other hand, we suppose that Bede copied literally an earlier writer, it will still appear probable that Nennius took a different tradition, or a different document, for his own authority. The two forms of the Lucian story will be independent.

The original authority in both cases must have been British, not Saxon. Hardly anything in Nennius can be traced to the latter source; while Bede, besides the credit we may give to his general learning and research, was indebted to Gildas for several particulars which he has mentioned in his Ecclesiastical History. If therefore a book existed in the Latin language, written by a Briton, and containing the story of Lucius as Nennius has copied it, we shall not go too far in conjecturing that Bede would think it worthy of insertion, with alterations of circumstance which he perceived to be necessary, though leaving a great deal which could not be strictly true. But when did this story originate? If there is no foundation for it, we may be induced by the silence of Gildas to place it below his time. And it has occurred to my mind that a motive for the fabrication may be found in the pretensions of the rising Anglo-Saxon church in the seventh century, to treat that of the Britons as almost schismatical, on the score of her own immediate derivation from the Holy See. If there had been a prince of Britain in very early times, who had sought instruction in the faith from Rome herself, and had received baptism by the commission of a pope far more ancient than Gregory, the boast of priority was no longer due to the Saxon invaders. Britain was not only of earlier Christianity, which of course could not be disputed, but of earlier connexion with the great patriarch of the West. Nor would such a supposition contradict the primitive independence of the British churches, for which our antiquaries so zealously, and, as it seems, so successfully, contend. This indeed can only be a question of time, and of time incapable of ascertainment. We know that Hoel Dda made a journey to Rome early in the tenth century to obtain a confirmation of his laws from the Pope; nor have we, as I apprehend, sufficient knowledge as to the Welsh Church for the three preceding centuries to determine that, even in the latter part of the seventh, it rejected an authority which had become almost universally, probably with the exception of Ireland, accepted by the Western Church. But authority, strictly speaking, is not implied in the story of Lucius; it implies a Catholic union with Rome and a filial derivation. Those who, from the mode of keeping Easter and other peculiarities, think an Eastern origin of the British Church more probable than a Roman, have

an additional reason for rejecting the mission to Eleutherus. I am only suggesting a source of the story; and I cannot think it improbable at least that some British clergy might be glad to use the story of King Lucius in controversy with the Saxons, and to take off from their pride. I think this more likely than the hypothesis of Mosheim, that the Saxon monks invented the story, in order to persuade the Britons into an acknowledgment of the papal supremacy. It turns upon the question, whether the Welsh writers copied Bede, or Bede derived his information from them; and the latter appears, as Stillingfleet also thought, the more tenable conjecture. It can be given of course merely as such; but the manifest errors in civil and ecclesiastical history which the Nennian tale displays, could have arisen in none but a very ignorant age.

Another form of the story of Lucius is found in the *Liber Landavensis*, which appears to have been compiled, partly from earlier sources, in the twelfth century. This contains a passage of which the following is a literal translation. "In the year of our Lord 156, Lucius King of the Britons sent his ambassadors, namely, Elvan and Medwin, to Eleutherius 12th Pope of the apostolic see, imploring, according to his (Lucius's) direction, that he might be made a Christian, which he obtained. For thanking God that a nation which from the time of the first inhabitant of the region, Brute, had been heathen, so ardently hastened to embrace the faith of Christ, by the advice of the presbyters (*seniorum*) of the Roman city, he (the Pope) thought fit that the said ambassadors should be baptized, and, having been instructed in the Christian faith, be ordained, Elvan as a bishop, Medwin as a doctor. And these preachers, eloquent and learned in the Holy Scriptures, returned to Lucius into Britain, through whose preaching Lucius and the chiefs of all Britain were baptized, and, according to the command of Pope Eleutherius, he established the ecclesiastical hierarchy, caused bishops to be ordained, and taught the rules of a good life." (p. 65.)

The whole *Liber Landavensis* has been lately published, but this passage was quoted by Stillingfleet, Dugdale, and Wharton. It is less inconsistent with known truth than that in Nennius, though placing the embassy of Lucius in A.D. 156, long before Eleutherius, or rather Eleutherus, became Bishop of Rome;<sup>a</sup> and it is more copious than Bede, adding to the old tradition the names of two persons, deputed by the king, one of whom became the root of the British episcopacy. But as no such person is mentioned in authentic history, we cannot pay such regard to

<sup>a</sup> The coincidence of this date with that mentioned by Bede for the accession of Antoninus Pius, with which he commences the chapter wherein he proceeds to relate the conversion of Lucius, renders it probable that the compilers of the *Liber Landavensis* took this from the *Ecclesiastical History*, mixing up what they found there with their own Welch records or traditions.

Celtic tradition as to receive this Elvan ; and the lateness of date in the *Liber Landavensis*, after the story of Lucius had been accepted for so many centuries, renders its testimony of little corroborative weight.

Thus we find, as it appears to me, the ground giving way beneath us, when we examine the current story of Lucius. By the current story I mean his sovereignty over some part at least of Britain, and his mission to the Pope in order to bring himself and his subjects into the Christian church. There is, however, another form less pretending, but more consonant to probability, in which it has been lately presented. The Rev. Rice Rees, in his *Essay on the Welsh Saints*, 1836, after admitting that "the history of Lucius is involved in uncertainty, and that even the Welsh accounts must be received with caution," inclines to reject the mission to the Pope, as well as the royalty of Lucius, but thinks the tradition recorded in one of the triads not incredible, that Lleufer Mawr, a British chieftain, though subject to Rome, erected a church at Llandaff, which was the first in the isle of Britain (pp. 82, 83). It is remarkable that Mosheim had already hit on a similar solution, except that he took Lucius for a Roman. (*De Rebus Christianorum lib. Sæculum, ii. sect 3.*)<sup>a</sup> The introduction of Christianity within the second century, so far as that Romans professing it may have come into Britain, cannot be thought improbable by the most sceptical person ; and, though we have no distinct evidence in ecclesiastical history that these scattered believers had crystallised, if I may be allowed the expression, so early into episcopal churches, yet, this being the natural form in which they must, when sufficiently numerous, have appeared, we cannot avoid supposing that it took place in no great length of time. That the Britons themselves might in many cases embrace the same faith is not at all unlikely ; and the expression of Tertullian, "*Britanniæ inaccessa Romanis loca, Christo autem subdita*," though losing a little of its trust-worthiness by the tendency of that father to rhetorical hyperbole, may be thought not unreasonably to indicate South Wales ; which, though in a certain sense subject to Rome, and included in the province, did not probably contain many except native Britons in its hilly districts. No reasonable person, however, will suppose that Llandaff was independent, the Roman road to Neath running almost past it ; so that if Lleufer, as seems probable from the story, lived immediately near the place, and founded the see, he could only have been a subject of Rome. That at least could not have been among the *inaccessa Romanis loca*.

<sup>a</sup> "Lucium ejusmodi extitisse non dubito ; verum nec Britannum, nec Britannorum regem fuisse puto. Ipsum nomen, quod Romanum est, declarat potentem fuisse ex Romanis, qui tum in Britannia regnabant, virum."

The Welsh triads are not referred, in their present form, even by their most strenuous advocates, to an earlier date than the seventh century ; indeed most of those whom they celebrate belonged only to the preceding age. But of course they may have incorporated many traditional or even written memorials. The first conversion of a Silurian chief, the first erection of a cathedral church, were events which, in either way, might naturally be known to the bards of the seventh century. But, as I believe the false story, with all its exaggerations, to have originated about that time, the modest truth would sooner or later give way before it. It appears from the Ecclesiastical History of the Cymri by Archdeacon Williams (1844), that some of the Welsh poems confirm, as far as they go, the general story of a certain Llewrrwg, as a British king, and his immediate communication with the Bishop of Rome. No small degree of nationality is required before we admit it on testimony so late and so improbable. But by adopting the simple account of the triad as given by Mr. Rees, we get rid of an hypothesis, which we are generally rather loth, if possible, to admit, that of an absolutely baseless and deliberate falsehood. Such falsehoods are by no means rare in ancient tradition ; yet we observe every day in mankind a much greater readiness to misrepresent a story, and to overcharge it with additions, than to create it, as it were, by wilful forgery. Every objection to the conversion of Lucius, using that name as the appellation of a certain British noble, will disappear, but at the expense of almost all that historians have related. The real Arthur of the sixth century is more like the fabulous hero of Geoffrey of Monmouth, than the British gentleman, Lleufer, even with Mawr tacked to his name by the piety of later ages, is to the king of Britain, Lucius, receiving baptism, with all his tributary princes, at the hands of missionaries sent by the Roman emperors and the Pope, as he appears in the magnificent fiction of Nennius. How much may be taken from an historic tradition without destroying what may be called its personal identity, how many elements of truth must remain in divesting it of the incrustations of falsehood, before we can positively set it aside, is a question of some interest in the logic of evidence, but which has not always been duly considered by antiquaries. It seems hardly sufficient to warrant our assertion of the truth of any alleged history, that there is some foundation for it ; else a name, or an event, however distorted, would serve the turn as a basis for the most enormous superstructure. There seems to be in every historical narrative a principle of individuation, something like a primary germ, round which a redundant variety of accessory circumstances may be clustered, and removed by us, according to our notions of their probability ; but which cannot itself be taken away, without destroying the intrinsic reality of the whole, and rendering it improper and

incorrect in language to ascribe to it the character of truth. Thus it is reasonable to say that we believe the historical truth of the Trojan war, though we may doubt the rape of Helen, and the duration of the siege. But if we deny a general confederacy of the Greeks, and suppose only a partial expedition at some time or other against a city of Phrygia, we should properly be said to disbelieve in the Trojan war, because the *punctum vitæ*, the individualizing principle of that history, consists in the tradition of a general league comprehending most of the Grecian states. Nor would it be accurate to say that the Niebelungen Lied has even a foundation in history, merely because we find in it an Attila king of the Huns, a Theodoric born at Verona, and a Gunther on the Rhine.

If we apply this to the particular story of Lucius, I must incline to say that it is not true, provided its truth be no other than what I have admitted to be by no means improbable. This indeed may be reckoned by some rather a question as to propriety of language than one that affects our historical assent. But in historical, as in other reasoning, it cannot be unimportant to acquire and retain precise ideas, whether for our own apprehension of truth, or for our imparting it to others. This, however, every one must determine according to his own use of words; and I shall merely proceed to state, as the result of the whole inquiry, what I take to be the real case as to the Lucian problem.

It appears then that, according to a tradition prevailing in Wales about the seventh century, and not improbably sustained at that time by writings of an earlier date which have not come down to us, a considerable British nobleman, but subject to Rome, and settled in the Silurian country, embraced the Christian faith towards the latter part of the second century, and, as the tradition proceeds, founded the see of Llandaff, the earliest that existed in Britain. This tradition is in itself sufficiently credible, and no objection from the silence of ecclesiastical or other authors is of much weight against it; it receives some countenance on the other hand from a loosely-worded passage in Tertullian soon after the time. Yet it is not so well supported by testimony as to be taken into history for an admitted fact. This, however, being generally believed among the Welsh, a story was ingrafted upon it in the seventh century, a time of great ignorance, the aim of which was at once to magnify the importance of this British chief, by metamorphosing him into a sovereign, and to establish an early connexion of the church founded by him with the see of Rome, whose authority had recently been lent to a hostile line of bishops, by whom the British churches were treated as schismatical. The story thus fabricated is that which we read in Nennius, affecting a regard to chronological and historical exactness, but grossly deficient in both. Bede met with the same story in some

British writer, and inserted it in his Ecclesiastical History, with such alterations as took off somewhat from its manifest inconsistency with known history, though still leaving it in a shape which we must absolutely refuse to admit. Having once been received into so considerable a work, it was copied as a matter of course by our writers of the Anglo-Saxon and later periods, none of whom had any other information than what had thus been furnished to them. The clergy before the Reformation rejoiced to produce an evidence of the paternal care of Rome; while the English of every persuasion saw in it a proof of the early preaching of the Gospel in this island, which according to the common prejudices of mankind seemed to flatter our national pride.

We cannot, indeed, wonder that so splendid a story as the conversion of Britain under the fostering care of Lucius, coming as it did with the sanction of so many centuries of unhesitating belief, would not readily be given up, when we find, even in this age of acuter criticism, the slightest presumption, or in fact no presumption at all, taken hold of to establish a very early date for the reception of the Gospel in this island. Thus, not to dwell on Joseph of Arimathea and his Glastonbury thorn, or Bran, the father of Caractacus, or St. Peter and St. Simon, who at various times have been conjectured or asserted to have first preached it in Britain, we have had several within a few years, and among others a late prelate of considerable learning, but a little apt to take the wrong side in critical questions, who have brought St. Paul from Italy, without resting by the way, in order to evangelize the natives. Such an hypothesis is intrinsically rather improbable, both because the tenor of St. Paul's preaching was far more adapted to the learned and reasoning Greeks or Romans than to barbarians; and because so very distant a journey hardly leaves sufficient time between his release from imprisonment and his death, for that later sojourn in Greece and Asia which the Epistles to Timothy and Titus compel us to believe that he made. Nor does it rest on any testimony before that of Theodoret in the fifth century, which itself is not explicit. For, though there is very early mention of this apostle's having gone into the furthest regions of the West, it is much more natural to construe this of Spain than of Britain, which, though Catullus once calls it a western island, would at Rome be rather counted in the north. And to Spain we know from himself he once intended to go.

I may here, perhaps, be indulged, though with some deviation from the principal subject of this paper, in adverting to another supposition, not unconnected with early British Christianity, which, besides finding a place in almost every book that bears on ecclesiastical history, has within a few years been maintained in a pamphlet by the Rev. William Bowles. This hypothesis identifies the Claudia whose saluta-



tion St. Paul, in almost his last written words, transmits to Timothy, with a British lady of that name, whom Martial has celebrated in two epigrams. This conjecture I believe to be wholly without foundation. It rests solely on the fact that while St. Paul names Pudens at the same time with Claudia and two others, as members of the Roman Church, we read in Martial the marriage of two persons bearing those names. "There is some reason to believe," says Southey in the Book of the Church, after alluding with too much respect to the Welsh tradition about Bran the father of Caractacus, "that Claudia, who is spoken of together with Pudens by the Apostle Paul, was a British lady of this illustrious household, because a British woman of that name is known to have been the wife of Pudens at that time" (p. 12.) In such a mode of stating the proposition, there certainly would be fair reason to think it not improbable; but that the Pudens of St. Paul was identical with the Pudens who espoused a British lady is exactly the question, and Southey has merely begged it by his mode of expression. It is still more negligent to say that a British woman of that name is known to have been the wife of Pudens *at that time*. The very contrary is distinctly known. The second epistle to Timothy cannot be referred to a later year than A.D. 67; that of the death of Nero, under whom St. Paul suffered martyrdom. The epigrams of Martial appear, with probably few exceptions, to have been written in the reign of Domitian, extending from A.D. 81 to 96. In one of these he mentions the marriage of Pudens to Claudia as then taking place.

Claudia, Rufe, meo nubit peregrina Pudenti;  
Maecte esto tædis, o Hymenæe, tuis.

It is true that in some editions we find *nupsit*; but the sense, as is manifest from the context, will be the same; the event is spoken of as having just occurred. Now, as we can hardly suppose the Claudia of St. Paul, whose salutation, together with that of Pudens, he sends to Timothy, as from friends known to him during his former residence at Rome, which was some years before, to have been very young, there seems a tolerable presumption against her marriage so many years afterwards to the same Pudens; and the presumption, at least, from their names being mentioned together, that they were actually married, falls to the ground. Pudens, though Mr. Bowles, with a precipitancy inexcusable in a scholar, has taken from Speed the ridiculous supposition that he received the name "on account of his modesty, and virtues, and gentleness," was evidently the *cognomen* of a family.<sup>a</sup> The name Claudia may excite more curiosity, as it belonged to the imperial house in the time

<sup>a</sup> Roman names no more express personal qualities than our sur-names do at present; each may have done so in past ages, when they were first given.

of St. Paul. But the great Claudian house ended, I believe, with Nero; the second emperor of that name, the conqueror of the Goths, though much more worthy of so high a lineage than the first, was, according to Gibbon, of an obscure, and not a Roman family. It cannot derogate from the convert of St. Paul, that we may suppose her to have been a freed-woman of the household of Cæsar, to some Christians among whom the Apostle alludes in his Epistle to the Philippians. In this case, according to the Roman custom, she would bear, as a *libertina*, the name of the *gens* by one of which she, or her father, had been enfranchised. Martial mentions a Claudian in another epigram, v. 78, who seems to have been a low woman, probably a *libertina*; the line, however, is rather obscure. But the British Claudia, the highly accomplished lady who spoke Latin and Greek like a native of those countries, the wife of Pudens, was evidently in a higher station. And, that I may not seem so universally sceptical as to favour no conjecture, I will admit myself inclined to think it fairly probable that she was descended from the great Caractacus. That hero, we read in Tacitus, was brought to Rome with his family, among whom a daughter is mentioned; and, after the noble speech before the imperial tribunal which the historian ascribes to him, received pardon for himself and them: “*Veniam Cæsar ipsi et conjugi, et filiis tribuit.*” (Tac. Annal. xii. 36.) It would be consonant to Roman usage that, thus naturalized in Italy, the family of the British prince would receive, as by adoption, the name of the emperor, by whom probably they were maintained in a manner befitting their birth, and the admiration which, as we read in Tacitus, the bravery of Caractacus had excited at Rome. We find at least with certainty that in the course of perhaps about thirty years, a lady of British extraction, and celebrated for her own beauty and accomplishments, was married into a Roman family. We can hardly suppose that there were many at Rome. And we thus account for the name Claudia, which could not have been her British patronymic. In some manner she was connected with a person named Rufus, who frequently occurs in Martial’s Epigrams. It has been fancied that here also we have the Rufus once mentioned by St. Paul; but the name was very common. I do not think that either Claudia or her husband Pudens can with any colour of probability be claimed as a Christian. Certainly nothing in the character of their friend Martial, or in the thoroughly pagan language of his Epithalamium, will countenance this hypothesis. It may be added, that if the husband of Claudia was the same Pudens who appears in other epigrams, lib. v. 48; i. 32, his morals were not such as we justly attribute to the early converts of the apostles.

This little episode, however, into which I have been led, has no other connexion

with the story of Lucius than as a similar spirit of grasping too credulously at hypotheses fancied to be of national interest seems to have been at the bottom of both. We do truth a service by discarding her counterfeits ; we act as reasonable beings in not mistaking possibilities for presumptions, or presumptions for certainties. No one ought to say that he believes a fact unless he would lay considerable odds, were the wager determinable, on its truth. This is rather a familiar way of stating the case ; yet it is strictly logical, since all probability is in its nature as much subject to numerical valuation, though for the most part unassignable by us, as the throws of a pair of dice. In the course of a critical investigation we may observe, if we keep our minds free from prejudice, the odds perpetually varying, as more extensive information, or more determinate reasoning, present them to the reflective faculties. For my own part, I began the more attentive consideration that I have now given to the account of Lucius in Bede with only a preponderance of disposition towards incredulity ; but this has been so much enhanced during the progress of inquiry, that I now think the improbability insurmountable, unless on the very arbitrary hypothesis that much evidence of real importance has not been brought to light. It is just possible that some illustrations of the British tradition may yet be detected in Wales : in the Latin language, after all the researches of the learned, it is scarcely conceivable.