

# **BEDE'S ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY OF ENGLAND**



## **Book One**

**A REVISED TRANSLATION**

**By**

**A. M. SELLAR**

**1907**

**BEDE'S  
ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY  
OF ENGLAND**

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**WITH INTRODUCTION, LIFE,  
AND NOTES BY**

**A. M. SELLAR**

**LATE VICE-PRINCIPAL  
OF  
LADY MARGARET HALL,  
OXFORD**

## EDITOR'S PREFACE

**T**HE English version of the "Ecclesiastical History" in the following pages is a revision of the translation of Dr. Giles, which is itself a revision of the earlier rendering of Stevens. In the present edition very considerable alterations have been made, but the work of Dr. Giles remains the basis of the translation. The Latin text used throughout is Mr. Plummer's. Since the edition of Dr. Giles appeared in 1842, so much fresh work on the subject has been done, and recent research has brought so many new facts to light, that it has been found necessary to rewrite the notes almost entirely, and to add a new introduction. After the appearance of Mr. Plummer's edition of the Historical Works of Bede, it might seem superfluous, for the present at least, to write any notes at all on the "Ecclesiastical History." The present volume, however, is intended to fulfil a different and much humbler function. There has been no attempt at any original work, and no new theories are advanced. The object of the book is merely to present in a short and convenient form the substance of the views held by trustworthy authorities, and it is hoped that it may be found useful by those students who have either no time or no inclination to deal with more important works.

Among the books of which most use has been made, are Mr. Plummer's edition of the Ecclesiastical History, Messrs' Mayor and Lumby's edition of Books III and IV, Dr. Bright's "Early English Church History," and Dr. Hunt's "History of the English Church from its foundation to the Norman Conquest." Many of the articles in the "Dictionary of Christian Biography" and the "Dictionary of Christian Antiquities," Dr. Mason's "Mission of St. Augustine," Dr. Rhys's "Celtic Britain," and a number of other books, mentioned in the notes, have been consulted.

For help received in different ways I wish to express my gratitude to various correspondents and friends. I am particularly indebted to Mr. Edward Bell, who has kindly revised my proofs and made many valuable suggestions. For information on certain points I have to thank the Rev. Charles Plummer, Fellow of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, Professor Lindsay of St. Andrews University, Miss Wordsworth, Principal, and Miss Lodge, Vice-Principal of Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford; and in a very special sense I wish to acknowledge my obligations to Miss Paterson, Assistant Librarian at the University Library, St. Andrews, whose unfailing kindness in verifying references, and supplying me with books, has greatly lightened my labours.

## INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

**T**HERE are, it has been estimated, in England and on the Continent, in all about 140 manuscripts of the "Ecclesiastical History." Of these, four date from the eighth century: the Moore MS. (Cambridge), so called, because, after being sold by auction in the reign of William III, it came into the possession of Bishop Moore, who bequeathed it to the University of Cambridge; Cotton, Tiberius A, xiv; Cotton, Tiberius C, ii; and the Namur MS. A detailed account of these, as well as of a great number of other manuscripts, will be found in Mr. Plummer's Introduction to his edition of Bede's Historical Works. He has been the first to collate the four oldest MSS., besides examining numerous others and collating them in certain passages. He has pointed out that two of the MSS. dating from the eighth century (the century in which Bede died), the Moore MS. and Cotton, Tiberius A, xiv, point to a common original which cannot be far removed from Bede's autograph. We are thus brought very near to our author, and may have more than in most cases the assurance that we have before us what he actually meant to say.

The earliest editions were printed on the Continent; the "editio princeps" is believed to date from 1475. A number of editions followed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; the first in

England was published by Abraham Whelock at Cambridge in 1643-4. Smith's edition in 1722 marked a new era in the history of the book. It was the first critical edition, the text being based on the Moore MS. collated with three others, of which two were eighth century MSS.; and succeeding editors, Stevenson (1841), Giles (1842), Hussey (1846), the editor in the "Monumenta Historica Britannica" (1848), Moberly (1869), Holder (1882), base their work mainly on Smith's. Mr. Mayor and Mr. Lumby together edited Books III and IV with excellent notes in 1878. Their text "reproduces exactly the Moore MS." which they collated with some other Cambridge MSS. (cf. Mayor and Lumby, Excursus II). In 1896 the Rev. C. Plummer published his edition of Bede's Historical Works, the first critical edition since Smith's, and "the very first which exhibits in an apparatus criticus the various readings of the MSS. on which the text is based." For the student of Bede this admirable book is of the highest value, and the labours of all succeeding editors are made comparatively light. Besides the most minute and accurate work on the text, it contains a copious and interesting commentary and the fullest references to the various sources upon which the editor has drawn.

The first translation of the "Ecclesiastical History" is the Anglo-Saxon version, executed either by Alfred himself or under his immediate supervision. Of this version Dr. Hodgkin says: "As this book had become a kind of classic among churchmen, Alfred allowed himself here less liberty than in some of his other translations. Some letters, epitaphs, and similar documents are omitted, and there is an almost complete erasure of the chapters relating to the wearisome Paschal controversy. In other respects the king's translation seems to be a fairly accurate reproduction of the original work." Mr. Plummer, however, finds it "very rarely available for the settlement of minute differences of reading."

The first modern English translation is Thomas Stapleton's (1565), published at Antwerp. It is a controversial work, intended to point out to Queen Elizabeth "in how many and weighty pointes the pretended refoormers of the Church . . . have departed from the patern of that sounde and Catholike faith planted first among Englishmen by holy S. Augustine, our Apostle, and his vertuous company, described truly and sincerely by Venerable Bede, so called in all Christendom for his passing vertues and rare lerning, the Author of this History." To save Elizabeth's time "in espying out the particulars," the translator has "gathered out of the whole History a number of diversities between the pretended religion of Protestants and the primitive faith of the English Church." If charm and appropriateness of style were the only qualities to be aimed at in a translation, we might well content ourselves with this rendering, which fills with despair the translator of to-day, debarred by his date from writing Elizabethan English.

The work was again translated by John Stevens (1723), and a third time (with some omissions) by W. Hurst in 1814. In 1840 Dr. Giles published a new edition of Stevens's translation with certain alterations; and a second edition of the same volume was published in 1842, and incorporated in the collected works of Bede, edited by Dr. Giles. In 1870 a literal translation by the Rev. L. Gidley was published. The present volume is a revision of the translation of Dr. Giles.

A brief analysis of the work may be of some use to the student in keeping distinct the different threads of the narrative, as owing to the variety of subjects introduced, and the want of strict chronological order, it is difficult to grasp the sequence of events as a coherent whole.

The sources from which Bede draws his material are briefly indicated in the dedication to King Ceolwulf which forms the Preface, and in it he acknowledges his obligations to the friends and correspondents who have helped and encouraged him. For the greater part of Book I (cc. 1-22), which forms the introduction to his real subject, he depends on earlier authors. Here he does not specify his sources, but indicates them generally as *priorum scripta*. These authors are mainly Pliny, Solinus, Orosius, Eutropius, and the British historian Gildas. In the story of Germanus and Lupus he follows closely the Life of Germanus by Constantius of Lyons. Prosper of Aquitaine also supplies him with some materials. When he comes to his main subject, the History of the English Church, he appears to rely but little upon books. Only a very few are referred to here and there, e.g., The Life of St. Fursa, The Life of St. Ethelburg, Adamnan's work

on the Holy Places, and the Anonymous Life of St. Cuthbert. That some form of annalistic records existed before his time, and that these were consulted by him, we may infer from some of his chronological references (cf. iii, I, 9). Local information with regard to provinces other than Northumbria he obtains from his correspondents in various parts of England, and these are expressly mentioned in the Preface.

For the history of the Roman mission and of Kent generally, as well as some particulars with regard to the conversion of other provinces, his chief source is the Church of Canterbury, which apparently possessed, besides oral tradition, written documents relating to the first beginnings of the Church. Moreover, Nothelm, who was the bearer of much important material, had been to Rome and had permission to search the papal archives. But it is in dealing with the history of Northumbria, as is natural, that Bede's information is most varied and copious. Much of it is apparently obtained directly from eye-witnesses of the events, much would doubtless be preserved in the records of the Church of Lindisfarne, to which he had access, perhaps also in his own monastery. We know that the monasteries kept calendars in which the death-days of saints and others were entered, and other records of similar nature (cf. iv, 14), and that these were used as materials for history.

Passing to the history itself, we may trace a division of subjects or periods roughly analogous to the division into books. Book I contains the long introduction, the sending of the Roman mission, and the foundation of the Church; Books II and III, the period of missionary activity and the establishment of Christianity throughout the land. Book IV may be said to describe the period of organization. In Book V the English Church itself becomes a missionary centre, planting the faith in Germany, and drawing the Celtic Churches into conformity with Rome.

**BOOK I.**— In Book I, cc. 1-22, Bede sketches the early history of Britain, describing the country and giving some account of the various races by whom it was inhabited. The story of the Roman occupation is narrated at some length, the invasions of the Picts and Scots and consequent miseries of the Britons, their appeals for help to the Romans, the final departure of their protectors, and the coming of the Saxons are described. We have some shadowy outlines of British Church History in the legendary account of the conversion of King Lucius, in the story of St. Alban, affording evidence of a great persecution of Christians during the Roman occupation, in the allusions to the Arian and Pelagian heresies, and in the mission of Germanus and Lupus. A brief allusion to the mission of Palladius is all that we hear of the Irish Church at this period.

These chapters are introductory to the main subject, the History of the English Church, which begins in Chapter 23 with the mission of St. Augustine in 597 AD. The reception of the Christian faith in the kingdom of Kent and the foundation of a national Church occupy the remaining chapters of the book. Various letters of Pope Gregory relating to the mission and his answers to the questions of Augustine are given at length; and the Book concludes with a piece of Northumbrian history, Ethelfrid's conquests of the Britons and the defeat of Aedan, king of the Dalriadic Scots, at Degsastan in 603 A.D.

**BOOK II.**— Book II opens with a biographical sketch of Gregory the Great, the founder of the Mission. This is followed by an account of Augustine's negotiations with the leaders of the British Church with regard to the Paschal question and some other matters, his failure to win them over (a failure apparently largely due to his own want of tact in dealing with the susceptible Celtic temperament), his alleged prophecy of disaster and its fulfilment some time after at the battle of Chester. Then we have the consecration of Mellitus to London, as Bishop of the East Saxons, and Justus to Rochester (604 A.D.); the evangelization of the East Saxons by Mellitus; the death of Augustine and succession of Laurentius as Archbishop (no date is given; it may have been in 605); fresh attempts at union with the Celtic Churches, in which again we can perceive a failure of courtesy on the one side met by an obstinate pride on the other. The death of Ethelbert in Kent (616 A.D.) and that of Sabert in Essex, soon after, lead to a pagan reaction in both provinces; Mellitus and Justus take refuge on the Continent; Laurentius, intending to

follow them, is stopped by a vision which leads to the conversion of King Eadbald and the recovery of Kent for Christianity. Essex, however, continues to be pagan. On the death of Laurentius (619 A.D.), Mellitus succeeds to Canterbury and is himself succeeded by Justus (in 624). In Chapter 9 we enter upon a new development of the highest importance in the work of the mission. The marriage of Edwin, king of Northumbria, and the Kentish princess, Ethelberg, brings about the conversion of Northumbria through the preaching of Paulinus. The story is told in detail. Letters from Pope Boniface to Edwin and his consort are quoted at length, Edwin's early history with its bearing on the great crisis of his life is related; finally we have the decisive debate in the Witenagemot at Goodmanham and the baptism of the king at Easter, 627 A.D. Through the influence of Edwin on Earpwald, king of East Anglia, that province is next converted, but on the death of Earpwald the people lapse into paganism for three years, till Christianity is finally established by the labours of Bishop Felix, under the enlightened King Sigbert, who had himself been drawn to the faith in Gaul.

Meanwhile, peace and prosperity reign in Northumbria, and Paulinus extends his preaching to Lindsey. He receives the pall from Pope Honorius, in accordance with the original intention of Gregory that the Bishop of York should rank as a metropolitan. At Canterbury, Justus is succeeded by Archbishop Honorius. Parenthetically we have extracts from letters, probably of the year 640 A.D., addressed by the Roman see to the Irish clergy on the Paschal question and the Pelagian heresy.

In Chapter 20 we have a dramatic climax to the book in the overthrow and death of Edwin at the battle of Hatfield in 633 A.D.; the devastation of Northumbria by the British king, Caedwalla, and Penda of Mercia; and the flight of Paulinus, taking with him Ethelberg and Eanfled to Kent, where he ends his life in charge of the Church of Rochester. His work in Northumbria seems for the time, at least, wholly overthrown. Only James the Deacon remains heroically at his post to keep alive the smouldering embers of the faith.

**BOOK III.**—Book III opens with the story of the apostasy of the Northumbrian kings and the miseries of the "Hateful Year," terminated by the victory of Oswald at Heavenfield in 634 A.D. Christianity is brought again to Northumbria (635 A.D.) by the Celtic Mission, sent from Iona at the request of Oswald, who nobly cooperates with Aidan in the work of evangelization. Aidan fixes his see at Lindisfarne. The mention of Iona leads to a short account of the mission of St. Columba to the Northern Picts in 565 A.D., and incidentally of St. Ninian's mission to the Southern Picts "long before the grant of Iona to St. Columba, and its constitution, the character of its monks and their error with regard to Easter. The characters of Aidan and Oswald are described; and the union of Deira and Bernicia under Oswald is briefly mentioned.

In Chapter 7 we pass to a fresh missionary enterprise. Birinus, sent to Britain by Pope Honorius, converts the West Saxons. Their king, Cynegils, is baptized, and a see is established at Dorchester, in Oxfordshire. Under Coinwalch, the successor of Cynegils, the province passes through various vicissitudes, political and ecclesiastical, and finally the West Saxon see is fixed at Winchester.

In Kent, Earconbert succeeds Eadbald in 640 A.D., and takes vigorous measures for the suppression of idolatry. His daughter, Earcongota, and many other high-born English ladies enter the religious life in Gaul, for convents are still scarce in England.

In Chapter 9, reverting to the history of Northumbria, Bede tells us of the death of Oswald at Maserfelth in 642, and relates at length various miracles wrought by his relics. Oswald is succeeded by Oswy in Bernicia and in Deira by Oswin. The latter is treacherously murdered by Oswy; his character is described. The death of Aidan (in 651) immediately follows that of his beloved king; Aidan's miracles are related, and a warm tribute is paid to his character, in spite of the inevitable error with regard to Easter, which is severely condemned.

In Chapter 18, passing again to East Anglian history, we hear of King Sigbert's services to education, and of his retirement to a monastery from which he was forcibly drawn to fall in battle against the Mercians. (The chronology is here very vague.) A vision of the Irish St. Fursa, who founded the monastery of Cnobheresburg in East Anglia is told in detail. Changes in the episcopate in East Anglia and elsewhere are mentioned. Deusdedit succeeds Honorius as Archbishop of Canterbury in 654.

Again, a Northumbrian prince gives a fresh impulse to the spread of Christianity. In 653 the Middle Angles (who occupied a part of Mercia) are converted, their prince, Peada, being persuaded chiefly by his brother-in-law, Alchfrid, a son of Oswy. Four priests are sent to them to preach and baptize, Cedd, Adda, Betti, and Diuma, and Diuma becomes bishop of the Middle Angles and Mercians. Similarly, at this time, King Sigbert of Essex listens to the exhortations of his friend, King Oswy, and, at the preaching of Cedd, the East Saxons receive the faith a second time. Cedd becomes their bishop. Sigbert's tragic death is related. His successor, Suidhelm, receives baptism at the hands of Cedd. The foundation of Lastingham by Ethelwald of Deira and its consecration by Cedd are described. Cedd dies of the plague of 664.

Meanwhile, important political changes have taken place in the north: the defeat and death of Penda at the Winwaed in 655 are followed by Oswy's rule, which established Christianity in Mercia, in spite of a successful rebellion after three years, when the Mercians threw off the yoke of Northumbria and set up Penda's son, Wuifhere, as their king.

In Chapter 25 we come to the Synod of Whitby (664 A.D.), which settled the Easter question for the English Church. Wilfrid comes to the front as a champion of the Catholic rules. The opposing party either retire or conform. The self-denial and devotion of the Celtic missionaries are highly praised, and some account of the life led by English students in Ireland follows, with the story of the self-dedication of Egbert, who is destined to play a prominent part afterwards in the history of the Church.

The consecration of both Wilfrid and Ceadda (664 A.D.), as bishops of Northumbria leads to complications in the episcopate. An important step towards the unity of the English nation in ecclesiastical matters is taken when Wighard is sent to Rome by the kings Oswy and Egbert, acting in concert, to be consecrated as Archbishop of Canterbury (667 A.D.). Wighard dies there, and Pope Vitalian undertakes to find an archbishop for the English Church.

The book ends with a fresh apostasy in Essex during the miseries of the great plague of 664. Mercia, so lately itself evangelized, becomes a new missionary centre, King Wulfhere sending Bishop Jaruman to recall the East Saxons to the faith.

**BOOK IV.**—In all but one of the kingdoms of England Christianity is now, at least in name, established, and the Church settles down to the work of organization. The man for this task is found in Theodore of Tarsus, consecrated Archbishop of the English in 668. He arrives at Canterbury in 669. We hear at once of the vigorous impulse given by him and Abbot Hadrian to the various departments of education there. Finding an irregularity in Ceadda's orders, he completes his ordination and makes him Bishop of the Mercians (probably in 669), with his see at Lichfield. Ceadda's death (672 A.D.), his character, and the miracles and visions connected with him are described. Parenthetically we get an account of Colman's activity in Ireland after his retirement, in consequence of the decision at Whitby. The most important political events at this time are the death of Oswy and succession of Egfrid in Northumbria in 670 or 671, and the death of Egbert and succession. of Hlothere in Kent in 673.

In the same year the Council of Hertford, the first English provincial council, is held, and marks the strength and independence of the Church. Theodore proceeds with his reforms in the episcopate. Various events of ecclesiastical importance follow; the East Anglian diocese is divided about this time, and other changes are effected.

Essex, so long prone to lapses into paganism, becomes at this time a centre of religious life under its Bishop Earconwald and its king Sebbi. Earconwald, whose holiness is attested by many miraculous circumstances, was the founder of the monasteries of Chertsey and Barking, the latter of which was ruled by his sister, the saintly Ethelburg. Various miracles are related in connection with her and her monastery. The king of the East Saxons, Sebbi, is a man of unusual piety who resigns his kingdom and receives the tonsure.

After a brief allusion to West Saxon history, the devastation of Kent by Ethelred of Mercia in 676, and certain changes in the episcopate, we come to an important step in the organization of the Church taken by Theodore. In pursuance of his policy of increasing the number of bishops, he subdivides the great Northumbrian diocese. Wilfrid is expelled (678 A.D.). From these events we pass summarily to the evangelization of the South Saxons by Wilfrid, who extends his labours to the Isle of Wight, and thus the last of the English provinces is won for the faith.

In the Council of Hatfield (680 A.D.) the English Church asserts its orthodoxy and unites with the continental Churches in repudiating the heresy of the Monothelites. Turning to Northumbrian history, we have the story of Egfrid's queen, Ethelthryth, and a hymn composed in her honour by Bede. The war between Mercia and Northumbria in 679 is ended by the mediation of Theodore, and a miracle in connection with the battle of the Trent is related.

The remainder of the book is occupied mainly with Northumbrian history, the life and death of Hilda, Abbess of Whitby, the story of the poet Caedmon, the destruction of Coldingham, prophesied by the monk Adamnan, Egfrid's invasion of Ireland (684 A.D.) and of the country of the Picts (685 A.D.), his defeat and death in that year, the decline of Northumbria, the flight of Bishop Trumwine from Abercorn, and the succession of Aldfrid to the kingdom. The death of Hlothere of Kent (685 A.D.) is followed by anarchy in that province, till Wictred succeeds and restores peace.

In Chapters 27-32 we have an account of the life of St. Cuthbert and stories of the miracles wrought by his relics.

**Book V.**—Book V opens with the story of the holy Ethelwald, who succeeded Cuthbert as anchorite at Fame, and a miracle wrought through his intercession. This is followed (cc. 2-6) by an account of John of Beverley, Bishop of Hexham, and the miracles attributed to him. In Chapter 7 we have a piece of West Saxon history: Caedwalla, King of Wessex, after a life of war and bloodshed, goes to Rome to receive baptism there, and dies immediately after his admission into the Church (689 A.D.). He is succeeded by Ini, who in 725 likewise ended his days at Rome.

In 690 Theodore dies, after an episcopate of twenty-two years. Bertwald succeeds him at Canterbury in 693.

At this time Englishmen begin to extend their missionary enterprise abroad. Various missions are undertaken by men who have lived long in Ireland and caught the Celtic zeal for the work of evangelization. The story is told of the attempted mission of Egbert to Germany and the unsuccessful venture of Witbert. Wilbrord (in 690) and others plant the faith among the German tribes.

The vision of Drytheim is inserted here, probably on chronological grounds ("his temporibus"), and other visions of the future world follow.

Apparently about the same time a change is effected in the attitude of the greater part of the Celtic Church towards the Paschal question. The Northern Irish are converted to the Roman usages by Adamnan, Abbot of Iona, whose book on the "Holy Places" is here described.

The death of Aldfrid and succession of Osred in Northumbria in 705 are the next events narrated.



About this time the division of the West Saxon diocese is carried out, Aldhelm being appointed to Sherborne and Daniel to Winchester; the South Saxons receive a bishop of their own for the first time. In 709 A.D. Coenred of Mercia and Offa of Essex receive the tonsure at Rome, and in the same year Bishop Wilfrid dies. The story of his life is told.

Not long after, Hadrian dies and is succeeded by Albinus as Abbot of St. Augustine's. Bede's friend, Acca, succeeds Wilfrid as Bishop of Hexham. His services to the Church are enumerated.

An important step is taken at this time by the Northern Picts in the acceptance of the Roman rules with regard to Easter and the tonsure. The letter of Abbot Ceolfrid of Wearmouth and Jarrow to the Pictish king Naiton on this subject is quoted at length. Soon after, Iona yields to the preaching of Egbert, and receives the Catholic usages. Egbert dies in 729. In Chapter 23 a number of events are briefly mentioned; the death of Wictred of Kent in 725, and the succession of his sons, the death of the learned Tobias, Bishop of Rochester, in 726, the appearance of two comets in 729, followed by the devastation of Gaul by the Saracens, the death of the Northumbrian king Osric, and succession of Ceolwulf in 729; finally, the death of Archbishop Bertwald in 731 and the succession of Tatwine. Then follows an account of the state of the English episcopate in 731, the year in which Bede finished the History. The relations of the English with Picts, Scots, and Britons are described, and some allusion is made to the growth of monasticism in this time of external peace.

The book closes in Chapter 24 with a chronological summary of the whole work, an autobiographical sketch of the author, and a list of his works.

## LIFE OF BEDE

**F**EW lives afford less material for the biographer than Bede's; few seem to possess a more irresistible fascination. Often as the simple story has been told, the desire to tell it afresh appears to be perennial. And yet it is perhaps as wholly devoid of incident as any life could be. The short autobiographical sketch at the end of the "Ecclesiastical History" tells us practically all: that he was born in the territory of the twin monastery of Wearmouth and Jarrow; that at the age of seven he was sent by his kinsfolk to be brought up, first under the Abbot Benedict, afterwards under Ceolfrid; that in his nineteenth year (the canonical age was twenty-five) he was admitted to the diaconate, and received priest's orders in his thirtieth year, in both instances at the hands of John, Bishop of Hexham, and by order of the Abbot Ceolfrid; that he spent his whole life in the monastery in learning, in teaching, and in writing, and in the observance of the monastic rule and attendance at the daily services of the Church. Of his family we know nothing; the name Beda appears to have been not uncommon. The fact that he was handed over by kinsmen ("cura propinquorum") to Abbot Benedict would seem to imply that he was an orphan when he entered the monastery at the age of seven, but it was not unusual for parents to dedicate their infant children to the religious life, in many cases even at an earlier age than Bede's. We may compare the story of the little boy, Aesica, at Barking, related by Bede, and of Elfied, the daughter of Oswy, dedicated by her father before she was a year old.

The epithet "Venerable," commonly attached to his name, has given rise to more than one legend. It was apparently first applied to him in the ninth century, and is said to have been an appellation of priests. The best known of these legends is Fuller's story of a certain "dunce monk" who set about writing Bede's epitaph, and being unable to complete the verse, "Hic sunt in fossa Bedae . . . ossa," went to bed with his task unfinished. Returning to it in the morning, he found that an angel had filled the gap with the word "venerabilis." Another account tells how Bede, in his old age, when his eyes were dim, was induced by certain "mockers" to preach, under the mistaken belief that the people were assembled to hear him. As he ended his sermon with a solemn invocation of the Trinity, the angels (in one version it is the stones of a rocky valley) responded "Amen, very venerable Bede."

The land on which Bede was born was granted by Egfrid to Benedict Biscop for the foundation of the monasteries a short time after the birth of Bede. Wearmouth was founded in 674, Jarrow

in 681 or 682. Bede was among those members of the community who were transferred to Jarrow under Abbot Ceolfrid, and under his rule and that of his successor, Huaetbert, he passed his life. With regard to the chief dates, the authorities differ, Simeon of Durham and others placing his birth as late as 677. Bede himself tells us that he was in his fifty-ninth year when he wrote the short autobiography at the end of the History. That work was finished in 731, and there seems to be no good reason to suppose that the autobiographical sketch was written at a later time. We may infer then that he was born in 673, that he was ordained deacon in 691 and priest in 702. For his death, 735, the date given in the "Continuation," seems to be supported by the evidence of the letter of Cuthbert to Cuthwin (v. infra). From this it appears that he died on a Wednesday, which nevertheless is called Ascension Day, implying, doubtless, that his death occurred on the eve, after the festival had begun, according to ecclesiastical reckoning. It is further explained that Ascension Day was on the 26th of May ("VII Kal. Junii") which was actually the case in the year 735.

Beyond the testimony borne to his exceptional diligence as a student in a letter from Alcuin to the monks of Wearmouth and Jarrow, we hear nothing of his childhood and early youth. One anecdote in the Anonymous History of the Abbots may perhaps refer to him, though no name is given. It tells how, when the plague of 686 devastated the monastery, the Abbot Ceolfrid, for lack of fit persons to assist at the daily offices, decided to recite the psalms without antiphons, except at vespers and matins. But after a week's trial, unable to bear it any longer, he restored the antiphons to their proper place, and with the help of one little boy carried on the services in the usual manner. This little boy is described as being, at the time the History was written, a priest of that monastery who "duly, both by his words and writings, commends the Abbot's praiseworthy deeds to all who seek to know them," and he has generally been supposed to be Bede.

In the "Ecclesiastical History" (IV, 3) there is an allusion to Bede's teachers, one of whom, Trumbert, educated at Lastingham under Ceadda, is mentioned by name. The monastery of Wearmouth and Jarrow must have offered exceptional facilities for study. Benedict had enriched it with many treasures which he brought with him from his travels. Chief among these was the famous library which he founded and which was enlarged by Abbot Ceolfrid. Here Bede acquired that wide and varied learning revealed in his historical, scientific, and theological works. He studied with particular care and reverence the patristic writings; his theological treatises were, as he says, "compiled out of the works of the venerable Fathers." He must have had a considerable knowledge of Greek, probably he knew some Hebrew. Though he is not wholly free from the mediaeval churchman's distrust of pagan authors, he constantly betrays his acquaintance with them, and the sense of form which must unconsciously influence the student of classical literature has passed into his own writings and preserved him from the barbarism of monkish Latin. His style is singularly clear, simple, and fluent, as free from obscurity as from affectation and bombast.

Thus was the foundation laid of that sound learning upon which his widespread influence both as a teacher and writer was reared. "I always took delight," he tells us, "in learning, or teaching, or writing." Probably his writing was, as is so often the case, the outcome of his teaching; his object in both is to meet "the needs of the brethren." One of his pupils was Archbishop Egbert, the founder of the school of York, which gave a fresh impulse to learning, not only in England, but through Alcuin in France, at a time when a revival was most to be desired.

It was to Egbert that he paid one of the only two visits which he records. In the "Epistola ad Ecgbertum" he alludes to a short stay he had made with him the year before, and declines, on account of the illness which proved to be his last, an invitation to visit him again. He visited Lindisfarne in connection with his task of writing the life of Cuthbert. Otherwise we have no authentic record of any absence from the monastery. The story that he went to Rome at the request of Pope Sergius, founded on a statement of William of Malmesbury, is now regarded as highly improbable. The oldest MS. of the letter of Sergius, requesting Ceolfrid to send one of his monks to Rome, has no mention of the name of Bede. If such an event had ever disturbed

his accustomed course of life, it is inconceivable that he should nowhere allude to it. Still less is the assertion that he lived and taught at Cambridge one which need be seriously debated by the present generation. We may fairly assume that, except for a few short absences such as the visits to York and Lindisfarne, his whole life was spent in the monastery. It must have been a life of unremitting toil. His writings, numerous, as they are, covering a wide range of subjects and involving the severest study, can only have been a part of his work; he had, besides, his duties as priest, teacher, and member of a religious community to fulfil. Even the manual labour of his literary work must have been considerable. He did not employ an amanuensis, and he had not the advantages with regard to copyists which a member of one of the larger monasteries might have had. "Ipse mihi dictator simul notarius (=shorthand writer) et librarius (=copyist)," he writes. Yet he never flags. Through all the outward monotony of his days his own interest remains fresh. He "takes delight" ("dulce habui") in it all. It is a life full of eager activity in intellectual things, of a keen and patriotic interest in the wider life beyond the monastery walls, which shows itself sadly enough in his reflections on the evils of the times, of the ardent charity which spends itself in labour for the brethren, and, pervading the whole, that spirit of quiet obedience and devotion which his own simple words describe as "the observance of monastic rule and the daily charge of singing in the Church." We can picture him, at the appointed hours, breaking off his absorbing occupations to take his place at the daily offices, lest, as he believed, he should fail to meet the angels there. Alcuin records a saying of his, "I know that angels visit the canonical hours and the congregations of the brethren. What if they do not find me among the brethren? May they not say, 'Where is Bede?'"

It is probably here, in this harmony of work and devotion, that we may find the secret of the fascination in the record of his uneventful days. It reconciles the sharp antithesis between the active and the contemplative life. It seems to attain to that ideal of "toil unsever'd from tranquillity" which haunts us all, but which we have, almost ceased to associate with the life of man under present conditions. Balance, moderation, or rather, that rare quality which has been well called "the sanity of saintliness," these give a unity to the life of Bede and preserve him from the exaggerations of the conventual ideal. With all his admiration for the ascetic life, he recognizes human limitations. It is cheering to find that even he felt the need of a holiday. "Having completed," he writes, "the third book of the Commentary on Samuel, I thought I would rest awhile, and, after recovering in that way my delight in study and writing, proceed to take in hand the fourth." Intellectual power commands his homage, but his mind is open to the appreciation of all forms of excellence. It is the unlearned brother, unfit for study and occupied in manual labour, to whom, in his story, it is vouchsafed to hear the singing of the angels who came to summon Ceadda to his rest. The life of devotion ranks highest in his estimation, but he records with approval how St. Cuthbert thought "that to afford the weak brethren the help of his exhortation stood in the stead of prayer, knowing that He Who said 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God,' said likewise, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.'" He tells us how St. Gregory bewailed his own loss in being forced by his office to be entangled in worldly affairs. "But," adds the human-hearted biographer, "it behoves us to believe that he lost nothing of his monastic perfection by reason of his pastoral charge, but rather that he gained greater profit through the labour of converting many, than by the former calm of his private life." Yet he holds that this immunity from the evil influence of the world was chiefly due to Gregory's care in organizing his house like a monastery and safeguarding the opportunities for prayer and devotional study, even while he was immersed in affairs at the court of Constantinople, and afterwards, when he held the most onerous office in the Church.

This quality of sanity shows itself again in an unusual degree of fairness to opponents. The Paschal error, indeed, moves his indignation in a manner which is incomprehensible and distasteful to the modern reader, but even in the perverse and erring Celts he can recognize "a zeal of God, though not according to knowledge." Aidan's holiness of life wins from him a warm tribute of admiration. In the monks of Iona, the stronghold of the Celtic system, he can perceive the fruit of good works and find an excuse for their error in their isolated situation. In the British Church it is the lack of missionary zeal, rather than their attitude towards the Easter question, which calls forth his strongest condemnation.

A characteristic akin to this is his love of truth. As a historian, it shows itself in his scrupulous care in investigating evidence and in acknowledging the sources from which he draws. Nowhere is his intellectual honesty more apparent than in dealing with what he believes to be the miraculous element in his history. In whatever way we may regard these anecdotes, there can be no doubt that Bede took the utmost pains to assure himself of their authenticity. He is careful to acquire, if possible, first-hand evidence; where this cannot be obtained, he scrupulously mentions the lack of it. He admits only the testimony of witnesses of high character and generally quotes them by name.

These are but a few of the glimpses afforded us of the personality of Bede, a personality never obtruded, but everywhere unconsciously revealed in his work. Everywhere we find the impress of a mind of wide intellectual grasp, a character of the highest saintliness, and a gentle refinement of thought and feeling. The lofty spirituality of Bede, his great learning and scholarly attainment are the more striking when we reflect how recently his nation had emerged from barbarism and received Christianity and the culture which it brought with it to these shores.

The letter in which he declines Egbert's invitation on the plea of illness is dated November, 734. If we may assume that his death took place on the eve of Ascension Day in 735, no long period of enfeebled health clouded the close of his life, and weakness never interrupted his work. His death has been described by his pupil, Cuthbert, who afterwards became Abbot of Wearmouth and Jarrow in succession to Huaetbert, in the letter quoted below. He was first buried at Jarrow but, according to Simeon of Durham, his relics were stolen by the priest, Elfred, and carried to Durham. In 1104, when the bones of Cuthbert were translated to the new Cathedral, those of Bede were found with them. Not long after, Hugh de Puisac erected a shrine of gold and silver, adorned with jewels, in which he placed them, along with the relics of many other saints. The shrine disappeared at the Reformation, and only the stone on which it rested remains.

### **Letter of Cuthbert to Cuthwin.**

"To his fellow-lector, Cuthwin, beloved in Christ, Cuthbert, his fellow-student, greeting and salvation for ever in the Lord. I have very gladly received the gift which thou sentest to me, and with much joy have read thy devout and learned letter, wherein I found that which I greatly desired, to wit, that masses and holy prayers are diligently offered by you for our father and master Bede, beloved of God. Wherefore I rejoice, rather for love of him than from confidence in my own power, to relate in few words after what manner he departed out of this world, understanding also that thou hast desired and asked this of me. He was troubled with weakness and chiefly with difficulty in breathing, yet almost without pain, for about a fortnight before the day of our Lord's Resurrection; and thus he afterwards passed his time, cheerful and rejoicing, giving thanks to Almighty God every day and night, nay, every hour, till the day of our Lord's Ascension, to wit, the twenty-sixth day of May, and daily gave lessons to us, his disciples; and whatsoever remained of the day he spent in singing psalms, as far as he was able; he also strove to pass all the night joyfully in prayer and thanksgiving to God, save only when a short sleep prevented it; and then he no sooner awoke than he straightway began again to repeat the well-known sacred songs, and ceased not to give thanks to God with uplifted hands. I declare with truth that I have never seen with my eyes, or heard with my ears, any man so earnest in giving thanks to the living God. O truly blessed man! He repeated the words of St. Paul the Apostle, 'It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God,' and much more out of Holy Scripture; wherein also he admonished us to think of our last hour, and to arise out of the sleep of the soul; and being learned in our native poetry, he said also in our tongue, concerning the dread parting of souls from the body:

**Fore then neidfaerae**

**naenig uiuurthit**

**thonc suotturra**

**than him tharf sie**

**to ymb hycggannae**

**aer his hin iongae**

**huaet his gastae**

**godaes aeththa yflaes**

**aefter deothdaege**

**doemid uueorthae.**

Which being interpreted is: 'Before the inevitable journey hence, no man is wiser than is needful that he may consider, ere the soul departs, what good or evil it hath done and how it shall be judged after its departure.'

"He also sang antiphons for our comfort and his own. One of these is, 'O King of Glory, Lord of all power, Who, triumphing this day, didst ascend above all the heavens, leave us not comfortless, but send to us the promise of the Father, even the Spirit of Truth—Hallelujah.' And when he came to the words, 'leave us not comfortless,' he burst into tears and wept much. And an hour after, he fell to repeating what he had begun. And this he did the whole day, and we, hearing it, mourned with him and wept. Now we read and now we lamented, nay, we wept even as we read. In such rapture we passed the fifty days' festival till the aforesaid day; and he rejoiced greatly and gave God thanks, because he had been accounted worthy to suffer such weakness. And he often said, 'God scourgeth every son whom He receiveth; and the words of St. Ambrose, 'I have not so lived as to be ashamed to live among you; but neither do I fear to die, because we have a merciful Lord.' And during those days, besides the lessons we had daily from him, and the singing of the Psalms, there were two memorable works, which he strove to finish; to wit, his translation of the Gospel of St. John, from the beginning, as far as the words, 'But what are they among so many?' into our own tongue, for the benefit of the Church of God; and some selections from the books of Bishop Isidore, saying, 'I would not have my boys read a lie, nor labour herein without profit after my death.'

"When the Tuesday before the Ascension of our Lord came, he began to suffer still more in his breathing, and there was some swelling in his feet. But he went on teaching all that day and dictating cheerfully, and now and then said among other things, 'Learn quickly, I know not how long I shall endure, and whether my Maker will not soon take me away.' But to us it seemed that haply he 'knew well the time of his departure; and so he spent the night, awake, in giving of thanks. And when the mornino dawned, that is, on the Wednesday, he bade us write with all speed what we had begun. And this we did until the third hour. And from the third hour we walked in procession with the relics of the saints, according to the custom of that day.<sup>1</sup> And there was one of us with him who said to him, 'There is still one chapter wanting of the book which thou hast been dictating, but I deem it burdensome for thee to be questioned any further.' He answered, 'Nay, it is light, take thy pen and make ready, and write quickly.' And this was done. But at the ninth hour he said to me, 'I have certain treasures in my coffer, some spices, napkins and incense; run quickly and bring the priests of our monastery to me; that I may distribute among them the gifts which God has bestowed on me.' And this I did trembling, and when they were come, he spoke to every one of them, admonishing and entreating them that they should diligently offer masses and prayers for him, and they promised readily. But they all mourned and wept, sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, because they thought that they should see his face no long time in this world. But they rejoiced for that he said, 'It is time for me, if it be my Maker's will, to be set free from the flesh, and come to Him Who, when as yet I was not, formed me out of nothing. I have lived long; and well has my pitiful judge disposed my life for me; the time of my release is at hand; for my soul longs to see Christ my King in His beauty.' Having said this and much more for our profit and edification, he passed his last day in gladness till the evening; and the aforesaid boy, whose name was Wilbert, still

said, 'Dear master, there is yet one sentence not written.' He answered, 'It is well, write it.' Soon after, the boy said, 'Now it is written.' And he said, 'It is well, thou hast said truly, it is finished. Take my head in thy hands, for I rejoice greatly to sit facing my holy place where I was wont to pray, that I too, sitting there, may call upon my Father.' And thus on the pavement of his little cell, chanting 'Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost,' and the rest, he breathed his last.

"And without doubt we must believe that inasmuch as he had always been devout and earnest on earth in the praise of God, his soul was carried by angels to the joys of Heaven which he desired. And all who heard him or beheld the death of our father Bede, said that they had never seen any other end his life in so great devotion and peace. For, as thou hast heard, so long as the soul abode in the body, he chanted the 'Gloria Patri' and other words to the glory of God, and with outstretched hands ceased not to give thanks to God.

"But know this, that much could be told and written concerning him, but my want of learning cuts short my words. Nevertheless, with the help of God, I purpose at leisure to write more fully concerning him, of those things which I saw with my own eyes and heard with my own ears."

## BOOK I

### CHAPTER. I.

#### Of the Situation of Britain and Ireland, and of their ancient inhabitants

**B**RITAIN, an island in the Atlantic, formerly called Albion, lies to the north-west, facing, though at a considerable distance, the coasts of Germany, France, and Spain, which form the greatest part of Europe. It extends 800 miles in length towards the north, and is 200 miles in breadth, except where several promontories extend further in breadth, by which its compass is made to be 4,875 miles. To the south lies Belgic Gaul. To its nearest shore there is an easy passage from the city of Rutubi Portus, by the English now corrupted into Reptacaestir. The distance from here across the sea to Gessoriacum, the nearest shore in the territory of the Morini, is fifty miles, or as some writers say, 450 furlongs. On the other side of the island, where it opens upon the boundless ocean, it has the islands called Orcades. Britain is rich in grain and trees, and is well adapted for feeding cattle and beasts of burden. It also produces vines in some places, and has plenty of land and water fowl of divers sorts; it is remarkable also for rivers abounding in fish, and plentiful springs. It has the greatest plenty of salmon and eels; seals are also frequently taken, and dolphins, as also whales; besides many sorts of shell-fish, such as mussels, in which are often found excellent pearls of all colours, red, purple, violet and green, but chiefly white. There is also a great abundance of snails, of which the scarlet dye is made, a most beautiful red, which never fades with the heat of the sun or exposure to rain, but the older it is, the more beautiful it becomes. It has both salt and hot springs, and from them flow rivers which furnish hot baths proper for all ages and both sexes, in separate places, according to their requirements. For water, as St. Basil says, receives the quality of heat, when it runs along certain metals, and becomes not only hot but scalding. Britain is rich also in veins of metals, as copper, iron, lead, and silver; it produces a great deal of excellent jet, which is black and sparkling, and burns when put to the fire, and when set on fire, drives away serpents; being warmed with rubbing, it attracts whatever is applied to it, like amber. The island was formerly distinguished by twenty-eight famous cities, besides innumerable forts, which were all strongly secured with walls, towers, gates, and bars. And, because it lies almost under the North Pole, the nights are light in summer, so that at midnight the beholders are often in doubt whether the evening twilight still continues, or that of the morning has come; since the sun at night returns to the east in the northern regions without passing far beneath the earth. For this reason the days are of a great length in summer, and on the other hand, the nights in winter are eighteen hours long, for the sun then withdraws into southern parts. In like manner the nights are very short in summer,

and the days in winter, that is, only six equinoctial hours. Whereas, in Armenia, Macedonia, Italy, and other countries of the same latitude, the longest day or night extends but to fifteen hours, and the shortest to nine.

There are in the island at present, following the number of the books in which the Divine Law was written, five languages of different nations employed in the study and confession of the one self-same knowledge, which is of highest truth and true sublimity, to wit, English, British, Scottish, Pictish, and Latin, the last having become common to all by the study of the Scriptures. But at first this island had no other inhabitants but the Britons, from whom it derived its name, and who, coming over into Britain, as is reported, from Armorica, [Editor's note: In Caesar's time, the whole district lying along the northwestern coast of Gaul, afterwards narrowed down to the modern Brittany. That the Britons (or Brythons) came from Gaul is doubtless a fact. Another branch of the Celtic race, the Goidels or Gaels, appears to have been in possession in Britain before them. They possessed themselves of the southern parts thereof. Starting from the south, they had occupied the greater part of the island, when it happened, that the nation of the Picts, putting to sea from Scythia, as is reported, in a few ships of war, and being driven by the winds beyond the bounds of Britain, came to Ireland and landed on its northern shores. [Editors note: By Scythia Bede means Scandinavia. He only mentions this account as a tradition. The problem of the Picts has not been solved yet. According to one view, they belonged to the pre-Aryan inhabitants of Britain, pushed westward and northward by the Celtic invaders. In Scotland they held their own for a considerable time in a wide tract of country, and they may have to some extent amalgamated with the Celts who dispossessed them (Rhys). Others regard them as Celts of the same branch as Welsh, Cornish, and Britons, being probably nearest to Cornish. The absence of all but the scantiest remains of their language makes the question of their origin one of great difficulty.] There, finding the nation of the Scots, they begged to be allowed to settle among them, but could not succeed in obtaining their request. Ireland is the largest island next to Britain, and lies to the west of it; but as it is shorter than Britain to the north, so, on the other hand, it runs out far beyond it to the south, over against the northern part of Spain, though a wide sea lies between them. The Picts then, as has been said, arriving in this island by sea, desired to have a place granted them in which they might settle. The Scots answered that the island could not contain them both; but "We can give you good counsel," said they, "whereby you may know what to do; we know there is another island, not far from ours, to the eastward, which we often see at a distance, when the days are clear. If you will go thither, you can obtain settlements; or, if any should oppose you, we will help you." The Picts, accordingly, sailing over into Britain, began to inhabit the northern parts thereof, for the Britons had possessed themselves of the southern. Now the Picts had no wives, and asked them of the Scots; who would not consent to grant them upon any other terms, than that when any question should arise, they should choose a king from the female royal race rather than from the male: which custom, as is well known, has been observed among the Picts to this day. In process of time, Britain, besides the Britons and the Picts, received a third nation, the Scots, who, migrating from Ireland under their leader, Reuda, either by fair means, or by force of arms, secured to themselves those settlements among the Picts which they still possess. From the name of their commander, they are to this day called Dalreudini; for, in their language, Dal signifies a part.

Ireland is broader than Britain and has a much healthier and milder climate; for the snow scarcely ever lies there above three days: no man makes hay in the summer for winter's provision, or builds stables for his beasts of burden. No reptiles are found there, and no snake can live there; for, though snakes are often carried thither out of Britain, as soon as the ship comes near the shore, and the scent of the air reaches them, they die. On the contrary, almost all things in the island are efficacious against poison. In truth, we have known that when men have been bitten by serpents, the scrapings of leaves of books that were brought out of Ireland, being put into water, and given them to drink, have immediately absorbed the spreading poison, and assuaged the swelling. The island abounds in milk and honey, nor is there any lack of vines, fish, or fowl; and it is noted for the hunting of stags and roe-deer. It is properly the country of the Scots, who, migrating from thence, as has been said, formed the third nation in Britain in addition to the Britons and the Picts.

There is a very large gulf of the sea, which formerly divided the nation of the Britons from the Picts; it runs from the west far into the land, where, to this day, stands a strong city of the Britons, called Alcluith. The Scots, arriving on the north side of this bay, settled themselves there.

## **CHAP. II.**

### **How Caius Julius Caesar was the first Roman that came into Britain.**

**[54 AD]**

**N**OW Britain had never been visited by the Romans, and was entirely unknown to them before the time of Caius Julius Caesar, who, in the year 693 after the foundation of Rome, but the sixtieth year before the Incarnation of our Lord, was consul with Lucius Bibulus. While he was making war upon the Germans and the Gauls, who were divided only by the river Rhine, he came into the province of the Morini, whence is the nearest and shortest passage into Britain. Here, having provided about eighty ships of burden and fast-sailing vessels, he sailed over into Britain; where, being first roughly handled in a battle, and then caught in a storm, he lost a considerable part of his fleet, no small number of foot-soldiers, and almost all his cavalry. Returning into Gaul, he put his legions into winter-quarters, and gave orders for building six hundred sail of both sorts. With these he again crossed over early in spring into Britain, but, whilst he was marching with the army against the enemy, the ships, riding at anchor, were caught in a storm and either dashed one against another, or driven upon the sands and wrecked. Forty of them were lost, the rest were, with much difficulty, repaired. Caesar's cavalry was, at the first encounter, defeated by the Britons, and there Labienus, the tribune, was slain. In the second engagement, with great hazard to his men, he defeated the Britons and put them to flight. Thence he proceeded to the river Thames, where a great multitude of the enemy had posted themselves on the farther side of the river, under the command of Cassobellaunus, and fenced the bank of the river and almost all the ford under water with sharp stakes: the remains of these are to be seen to this day, apparently about the thickness of a man's thigh, cased with lead, and fixed immovably in the bottom of the river. This being perceived and avoided by the Romans, the barbarians, not able to stand the charge of the legions, hid themselves in the woods, whence they grievously harassed the Romans with repeated sallies. In the meantime, the strong state of the Trinovantes, with their commander Androgius, surrendered to Caesar, giving him forty hostages. Many other cities, following their example, made a treaty with the Romans. Guided by them, Caesar at length, after severe fighting, took the town of Cassobellaunus, situated between two marshes, fortified by sheltering woods, and plentifully furnished with all necessaries. After this, Caesar returned from Britain into Gaul, but he had no sooner put his legions into winter quarters, than he was suddenly beset and distracted with wars and sudden risings on every side.

## **CHAP. III.**

### **How Claudius, the second of the Romans who came into Britain, brought the islands Orcades into subjection to the Roman empire; and Vespasian, sent by hint, reduced the Isle of Wight under the dominion of the Romans.**

**[44 AD]**

**I**N the year of Rome 798, Claudius, fourth emperor from Augustus, being desirous to approve himself a prince beneficial to the republic, and eagerly bent upon war and conquest on every side, undertook an expedition into Britain, which as it appeared, was roused to rebellion by the refusal of the Romans to give up certain deserters. No one before or after Julius



Caesar had dared to land upon the island. Claudius crossed over to it, and within a very few days, without any fighting or bloodshed, the greater part of the island was surrendered into his hands. He also added to the Roman empire the Orcades, which lie in the ocean beyond Britain, and, returning to Rome in the sixth month after his departure, he gave his son the title of Britannicus. This war he concluded in the fourth year of his reign, which is the forty-sixth from the Incarnation of our Lord. In which year there came to pass a most grievous famine in Syria, which is recorded in the Acts of the Apostles to have been foretold by the prophet Agabus.

Vespasian, who was emperor after Nero, being sent into Britain by the same Claudius, brought also under the Roman dominion the Isle of Wight, which is close to Britain on the south, and is about thirty miles in length from east to west, and twelve from north to south; being six miles distant from the southern coast of Britain at the east end, and three at the west. Nero, succeeding Claudius in the empire, undertook no wars at all; and, therefore, among countless other disasters brought by him upon the Roman state, he almost lost Britain; for in his time two most notable towns were there taken and destroyed.

#### CHAP. IV.

##### **How Lucius, king of Britain, writing to Pope Eleutherus, desired to be made a Christian.**

**I**N the year of our Lord 156, Marcus Antoninus Verus, the fourteenth from Augustus, was made emperor, together with his brother, Aurelius Commodus. [Editor's note: Marcus Antoninus Verus, commonly called Marcus Aurelius, succeeded in 161 A.D. His colleague in the empire was his adopted brother, Lucius Verus, whose full adoptive name was Lucius Aurelius Antoninus Verus Commodus. He died in 169. Eleutherus became Pope between 171 and 177. Bede's chronology is therefore wrong.] In their time, whilst the holy Eleutherus presided over the Roman Church, Lucius, king of Britain, sent a letter to him, entreating that by a mandate from him he might be made a Christian. He soon obtained his pious request, and the Britons preserved the faith, which they had received, uncorrupted and entire, in peace and tranquillity until the time of the Emperor Diocletian.

#### CHAP. V.

##### **How the Emperor Severus divided from the rest by a rampart that part of Britain which had been recovered.**

**I**N the year of our Lord 189, Severus, an African, born at Leptis, in the province of Tripolis, became emperor. He was the seventeenth from Augustus; and reigned seventeen years. Being naturally of a harsh disposition, and engaged in many wars, he governed the state vigorously, but with much trouble. Having been victorious in all the grievous civil wars which happened in his time, he was drawn into Britain by the revolt of almost all the confederated tribes; and, after many great and severe battles, he thought fit to divide that part of the island, which he had recovered, from the other unconquered nations, not with a wall, as some imagine, but with a rampart. For a wall is made of stones, but a rampart, with which camps are fortified to repel the assaults of enemies, is made of sods, cut out of the earth, and raised high above the ground, like a wall, having in front of it the trench whence the sods were taken, with strong stakes of wood fixed above it. Thus Severus drew a great trench and strong rampart, fortified with several towers, from sea to sea. And there, at York, he fell sick afterwards and died, leaving two sons, Bassianus and Geta; of whom Geta died, adjudged an enemy of the State; but Bassianus, having taken the surname of Antonius, obtained the empire.

**CHAP. VI.****Of the reign of Diocletian, and how he persecuted the Christians. [286 AD]**

**I**N the year of our Lord 286, Diocletian, the thirty-third from Augustus, and chosen emperor by the army, reigned twenty years, and created Maximian, surnamed Herculius, his colleague in the empire. In their time, one Carausius, of very mean birth, but a man of great ability and energy, being appointed to guard the sea-coasts, then infested by the Franks and Saxons, acted more to the prejudice than to the advantage of the commonwealth, by not restoring to its owners any of the booty taken from the robbers, but keeping all to himself; thus giving rise to the suspicion that by intentional neglect he suffered the enemy to infest the frontiers. When, therefore, an order was sent by Maximian that he should be put to death, he took upon him the imperial purple, and possessed himself of Britain, and having most valiantly conquered and held it for the space of seven years, he was at length put to death by the treachery of his associate Allectus. The usurper, having thus got the island from Carausius, held it three years, and was then vanquished by Asclepiodotus, the captain of the Praetorian guards, who thus at the end of ten years restored Britain to the Roman empire.

Meanwhile, Diocletian in the east, and Maximian Herculius in the west, commanded the churches to be destroyed, and the Christians to be persecuted and slain. This persecution was the tenth since the reign of Nero, and was more lasting and cruel than almost any before it; for it was carried on incessantly for the space of ten years, with burning of churches, proscription of innocent persons, and the slaughter of martyrs. Finally, Britain also attained to the great glory of bearing faithful witness to God.

**CHAP. VIII.****How, when the persecution ceased, the Church in Britain enjoyed peace till the time of the Arian heresy. [325 AD]**

**W**HEN the storm of persecution ceased, the faithful Christians, who, during the time of danger, had hidden themselves in woods and deserts and secret caves, came forth and rebuilt the churches which had been levelled to the ground; founded, erected, and finished the cathedrals raised in honour of the holy martyrs, and, as if displaying their conquering standards in all places, celebrated festivals and performed their sacred rites with pure hearts and lips. This peace continued in the Christian churches of Britain until the time of the Arian madness, which, having corrupted the whole world, infected this island also, so far removed from the rest of the world, with the poison of its error; and when once a way was opened across the sea for that plague, straightway all the taint of every heresy fell upon the island, ever desirous to hear some new thing, and never holding firm to any sure belief.

At this time Constantius, who, whilst Diocletian was alive, governed Gaul and Spain, a man of great clemency and urbanity, died in Britain. This man left his son Constantine [Constantine the Great] born of Helena, his concubine, emperor of the Gauls. Eutropius writes that Constantine, being created emperor in Britain, succeeded his father in the sovereignty. In his time the Arian heresy broke out, and although it was exposed and condemned in the Council of Nicaea, nevertheless, the deadly poison of its evil spread, as has been said, to the Churches in the islands, as well as to those of the rest of the world.

**CHAP. IX.****How during the reign of Gratian, Maximus, being created Emperor in Britain, returned into Gaul with a mighty army. [377 AD]**

**I**N the year of our Lord 377, Gratian, the fortieth from Augustus, held the empire for six years after the death of Valens; though he had long before reigned with his uncle Valens, and his brother Valentinian. Finding the condition of the commonwealth much impaired, and almost gone to ruin, and impelled by the necessity of restoring it, he invested the Spaniard, Theodosius, with the purple at Sirmium, and made him emperor of Thrace and the Eastern provinces. At that time, Maximus, a man of energy and probity, and worthy of the title of Augustus, if he had not broken his oath of allegiance, was made emperor by the army somewhat against his will, passed over into Gaul, and there by treachery slew the Emperor Gratian, who in consternation at his sudden invasion, was attempting to escape into Italy. His brother, the Emperor Valentinian, expelled from Italy, fled into the East, where he was entertained by Theodosius with fatherly affection, and soon restored to the empire, for Maximus the tyrant, being shut up in Aquileia, was there taken by them and put to death.

**CHAP. X.****How, in the reign of Arcadius, Pelagius, a Briton, insolently impugned the Grace of God. [395 AD]**

**I**N the year of our Lord 394, Arcadius, the son of Theodosius, the forty-third from Augustus, succeeding to the empire, with his brother Honorius, held it thirteen years. In his time, Pelagius, [Pelagius, the founder of the heresy known as Pelagianism, was probably born in 370 A.D., and is said to have been a Briton. His great opponent, St. Augustine, speaks of him as a good and holy man; later slanders are to be attributed to Jerome's abusive language. The cardinal point in his doctrine is his denial of original sin, involving a too great reliance on the human will in achieving holiness, and a limitation of the action of the grace of God] a Briton, spread far and near the infection of his perfidious doctrine, denying the assistance of the Divine grace, being seconded therein by his associate Julianus of Campania, who was impelled by an uncontrolled desire to recover his bishopric, of which he had been deprived. St. Augustine, and the other orthodox fathers, quoted many thousand catholic authorities against them, but failed to amend their folly; nay, more, their madness being rebuked was rather increased by contradiction than suffered by them to be purified through adherence to the truth; which Prosper, the rhetorician, has beautifully expressed thus in heroic" verse :—

"They tell that one, erewhile consumed with gnawing spite, snake-like attacked Augustine in his writings. Who urged the wretched viper to raise from the ground his head, howsoever hidden in dens of darkness? Either the sea-girt Britons reared him with the fruit of their soil, or fed on Campanian pastures his heart swells with pride."

**CHAP. XI.****How during the reign of Honorius, Gratian and Constantine were created tyrants in Britain; and soon after the former was slain in Britain, and the latter in Gaul. [407 A.D.]**

**I**N the year of our Lord 407, Honorius, the younger son of Theodosius, and the forty-fourth from Augustus, being emperor, two years before the invasion of Rome by Alaric, king of the Goths, when the nations of the Alani, Suevi, Vandals, and many others with them, having defeated the Franks and passed the Rhine, ravaged all Gaul, Gratianus, a citizen of the country, was set up as tyrant in Britain and killed. In his place, Constantine, one of the meanest soldiers, only for the hope afforded by his name, and without any worth to recommend him, was chosen emperor. As soon as he had taken upon him the command, he crossed over into Gaul, where being often imposed upon by the barbarians with untrustworthy treaties, he did more harm than good to the Commonwealth. Whereupon Count Constantius, by the command of Honorius, marching into Gaul with an army, besieged him in the city of Arles, took him prisoner, and put him to death. His son Constans, a monk, whom he had created Caesar, was also put to death by his own follower Count Gerontius, at Vienne.

Rome was taken by the Goths, in the year from its foundation, 1164. Then the Romans ceased to rule in Britain, almost 470 years after Caius Julius Caesar came to the island. They dwelt within the rampart, which, as we have mentioned, Severus made across the island, on the south side of it, as the cities, watch-towers, bridges, and paved roads there made testify to this day; but they had a right of dominion over the farther parts of Britain, as also over the islands that are beyond Britain.

## CHAP. XII.

**How the Britons, being ravaged by the Scots and Picts, sought succour from the Romans, who coming a second time, built a wall across the island; but when this was broken down at once by the aforesaid enemies, they were reduced to greater distress than before. [410-420 AD]**

**F**ROM that time, the British part of Britain, destitute of armed soldiers, of all military stores, and of the whole flower of its active youth, who had been led away by the rashness of the tyrants never to return, was wholly exposed to rapine, the people being altogether ignorant of the use of weapons. Whereupon they suffered many years from the sudden invasions of two very savage nations from beyond the sea, the Scots from the west, and the Picts from the north. We call these nations from beyond the sea, not on account of their being seated out of Britain, but because they were separated from that part of it which was possessed by the Britons, two broad and long inlets of the sea lying between them, one of which runs into the interior of Britain, from the Eastern Sea, and the other from the Western, though they do not reach so far as to touch one another. The eastern has in the midst of it the city Giudi. On the Western Sea, that is, on its right shore, stands the city of Alcluith, which in their language signifies the Rock Cluith, for it is close by the river of that name.

On account of the attacks of these nations, the Britons sent messengers to Rome with letters piteously praying for succour, and promising perpetual subjection, provided that the impending enemy should be driven away. An armed legion was immediately sent them, which, arriving in the island, and engaging the enemy, slew a great multitude of them, drove the rest out of the territories of their allies, and having in the meanwhile delivered them from their worst distress, advised them to build a wall between the two seas across the island, that it might secure them by keeping off the enemy. So they returned home with great triumph. But the islanders building the wall which they had been told to raise, not of stone, since they had no workmen capable of such a work, but of sods, made it of no use. Nevertheless, they carried it for many miles between the two bays or inlets of the sea of which we have spoken; to the end that where the protection of the water was wanting, they might use the rampart to defend their borders from the irruptions of the enemies. Of the work there erected, that is, of a rampart of great breadth and height, there are evident remains to be seen at this day. It begins at about two miles distance from the monastery of Aebbercurnig, west of it, at a place called in the Pictish language Peanfahel, but in the English tongue, Penneltun, and running westward, ends near the city of Aicluth.

But the former enemies, when they perceived that the Roman soldiers were gone, immediately coming by sea, broke into the borders, trampled and overran all places, and like men mowing ripe corn, bore down all before them. Hereupon messengers were again sent to Rome miserably imploring aid, lest their wretched country should be utterly blotted out, and the name of a Roman province, so long renowned among them, overthrown by the cruelties of foreign races, might become utterly contemptible. A legion was accordingly sent again, and, arriving unexpectedly in autumn, made great slaughter of the enemy, obliging all those that could escape, to flee beyond the sea; whereas before, they were wont yearly to carry off their booty without any opposition. Then the Romans declared to the Britons, that they could not for the future undertake such troublesome expeditions for their sake, and advised them rather to take up arms and make an effort to engage their enemies, who could not prove too powerful for them, unless they themselves were enervated by cowardice. Moreover, thinking that it might be some help to the allies, whom they were forced to abandon, they constructed a strong stone wall from sea to sea, in a straight line between the towns that had been there built for fear of the enemy, where Severus also had formerly built a rampart. This famous wall, which is still to be seen, was raised at public and private expense, the Britons also lending their assistance. It is eight feet in breadth, and twelve in height, in a straight line from east to west, as is still evident to beholders. This being presently finished, they gave the dispirited people good advice, and showed them how to furnish themselves with arms. Besides, they built towers to command a view of the sea, at intervals, on the southern coast, where their ships lay, because there also the invasions of the barbarians were apprehended, and so took leave of their allies, never to return again.

After their departure to their own country, the Scots and Picts, understanding that they had refused to return, at once came back, and growing more confident than they had been before, occupied all the northern and farthest part of the island, driving out the natives, as far as the wall. Hereupon a timorous guard was placed upon the fortification, where, dazed with fear, they became ever more dispirited day by day. On the other side, the enemy constantly attacked them with barbed weapons, by which the cowardly defenders were dragged in piteous fashion from the wall, and dashed against the ground. At last, the Britons, forsaking their cities and wall, took to flight and were scattered. The enemy pursued, and forthwith followed a massacre more grievous than ever before; for the wretched natives were torn in pieces by their enemies, as lambs are torn by wild beasts. Thus, being expelled from their dwellings and lands, they saved themselves from the immediate danger of starvation by robbing and plundering one another, adding to the calamities inflicted by the enemy their own domestic broils, till the whole country was left destitute of food except such as could be procured in the chase.

### CHAP. XIII.

**How in the reign of Theodosius the younger, in whose time Palladius was sent to the Scots that believed in Christ, the Britons begging assistance of Aetius, the consul, could not obtain it. [446 A.D.]**

**I**N the year of our Lord 423, Theodosius, the younger, the forty-fifth from Augustus, succeeded Honorius and governed the Roman empire twenty-six years. In the eighth year of his reign, Palladius was sent by Celestinus, the Roman pontiff, to the Scots that believed in Christ, to be their first bishop. In the twenty-third year of his reign, Aetius, a man of note and a patrician, discharged his third consulship with Symmachus for his colleague. To him the wretched remnant of the Britons sent a letter, which began thus :—"To Aetius, thrice Consul, the groans of the Britons." And in the sequel of the letter they thus unfolded their woes:—"The barbarians drive us to the sea; the sea drives us back to the barbarians: between them we are exposed to two sorts of death; we are either slaughtered or drowned." Yet, for all this, they could not obtain any help from him, as he was then engaged in most serious wars with Bledla and Attila, kings of the Huns. And though the year before this Bledla had been murdered by the treachery of his own brother Attila, yet Attila himself remained so intolerable an enemy to the Republic, that he ravaged almost all Europe, attacking and destroying cities and castles. At the

same time there was a famine at Constantinople, and soon after a plague followed; moreover, a great part of the wall of that city, with fifty-seven towers, fell to the ground. Many cities also went to ruin, and the famine and pestilential state of the air destroyed thousands of men and cattle.

#### CHAP. XIV.

**How the Britons, compelled by the great famine, drove the barbarians out of the their territories, and soon after there ensued, along with abundance of corn, decay of morals, pestilence, and the downfall of the nation.**

**I**N the meantime, the aforesaid famine distressing the Britons more and more, and leaving to posterity a lasting memory of its mischievous effects, obliged many of them to submit themselves to the depredators; though others still held out, putting their trust in God, when human help failed. These continually made raids from the mountains, caves, and woods, and, at length, began to inflict severe losses on their enemies, who had been for so many years plundering the country. The bold Irish robbers thereupon returned home, intending' to come again before long. The Picts then settled down in the farthest part of the island and afterwards remained there; but they did not fail to plunder and harass the Britons from time to time.

Now, when the ravages of the enemy at length abated, the island began to abound with such plenty of grain as had never been known in any age before; along with plenty, evil living increased, and this was immediately attended by the taint of all manner of crime; in particular, cruelty, hatred of truth, and love of falsehood; insomuch, that if any one among them happened to be milder than the rest, and more inclined to truth, all the rest abhorred and persecuted him unrestrainedly, as if he had been the enemy of Britain. Nor were the laity only guilty of these things, but even our Lord's own flock, with its shepherds, casting off the easy yoke of Christ, gave themselves up to drunkenness, enmity, quarrels, strife, envy, and other such sins. In the meantime, on a sudden, a grievous plague fell upon that corrupt generation, which soon destroyed such numbers of them, that the living scarcely availed to bury the dead: yet, those that survived, could not be recalled from the spiritual death, which they had incurred' through their sins, either by the death of their friends, or the fear of death. Whereupon, not long after, a more severe vengeance for their fearful crimes fell upon the sinful nation. They held a council to determine what was to be done, and where they should seek help to prevent or repel the cruel and frequent incursions of the northern nations; and in concert with their King Vortigern, it was unanimously decided to call the Saxons to their aid from beyond the sea, which, as the event plainly showed, was brought about by the Lord's will, that evil might fall upon them for their wicked deeds.

#### CHAP. XV.

**How the Angles, being invited into Britain, at first drove off the enemy; but not long after, making a league with them, turned their weapons against their allies.**

**I**N the year of our Lord 449, Marcian, the forty-sixth from Augustus, being made emperor with Valentinian, ruled the empire seven years. Then the nation of the Angles, or Saxons, being invited by the aforesaid king, arrived in Britain with three ships of war and had a place in which to settle assigned to them by the same king, in the eastern part of the island, on the pretext of fighting in defence of their country, whilst their real intentions were to conquer it. Accordingly they engaged with the enemy, who were come from the north to give battle, and the Saxons obtained the victory. When the news of their success and of the fertility of the country, and the cowardice of the Britons, reached their own home, a more considerable fleet was quickly sent over, bringing a greater number of men, and these, being added to the former army, made up an invincible force. The newcomers received of the Britons a place to inhabit

among them, upon condition that they should wage war against their enemies for the peace and security of the country, whilst the Britons agreed to furnish them with pay. Those who came over were of the three most powerful nations of Germany—Saxons, Angles, and Jutes. From the Jutes are descended the people, of Kent, and of the Isle of Wight, including those in the province of the West-Saxons who are to this day called Jutes, seated opposite to the Isle of Wight. From the Saxons, that is, the country which is now called Old Saxony, came the East-Saxons, the South-Saxons, and the West Saxons. From the Angles, that is, the country which is called Angulus, and which is said, from that time, to have remained desert to this day, between the provinces of the Jutes and the Saxons, are descended the East-Angles, the Midland-Angles, the Mercians, all the race of the Northumbrians, that is, of those nations that dwell on the north side of the river Humber, and the other nations of the Angles. The first commanders are said to have been the two brothers Hengist and Horsa. Of these Horsa was afterwards slain in battle by the Britons, and a monument, bearing his name, is still in existence in the eastern parts of Kent. They were the sons of Victgilsus, whose father was Vitta, son of Vecta, son of Woden; from whose stock the royal race of many provinces trace their descent. In a short time, swarms of the aforesaid nations came over into the island, and the foreigners began to increase so much, that they became a source of terror to the natives themselves who had invited them. Then, having on a sudden entered into league with the Picts, whom they had by this time repelled by force of arms, they began to turn their weapons against their allies. At first, they obliged them to furnish a greater quantity of provisions; and, seeking an occasion of quarrel, protested, that unless more plentiful supplies were brought them, they would break the league, and ravage all the island; nor were they backward in putting their threats into execution. In short, the fire kindled by the hands of the pagans, proved God's just vengeance for the crimes of the people; not unlike that which, being of old lighted by the Chaldeans, consumed the walls and all the buildings of Jerusalem. For here, too, through the agency of the pitiless conqueror, yet by the disposal of the just Judge, it ravaged all the neighbouring cities and country, spread the conflagration from the eastern to the western sea, without any opposition, and overran the whole face of the doomed island. Public as well as private buildings were overturned; the priests were everywhere slain before the altars; no respect was shown for office, the prelates with the people were destroyed with fire and sword; nor were there any left to bury those who had been thus cruelly slaughtered. Some of the miserable remnant, being taken in the mountains, were butchered in heaps. Others, spent with hunger, came forth and submitted themselves to the enemy, to undergo for the sake of food perpetual servitude, if they were not killed upon the spot. Some, with sorrowful hearts, fled beyond the seas. Others, remaining in their own country, led a miserable life of terror and anxiety of mind among the mountains, woods and crags.

## CHAP. XVI.

### **How the Britons obtained their first victory over the Angles, under the command of Ambrosius, a Roman. [456 A.D.]**

**W**HEN the army of the enemy, having destroyed and dispersed the natives, had returned home to their own settlements, the Britons began by degrees to take heart, and gather strength, sallying out of the lurking places where they had concealed themselves, and with one accord imploring the Divine help, that they might not utterly be destroyed. They had at that time for their leader, Ambrosius Aurelianus, a man of worth, who alone, by chance, of the Roman nation had survived the storm, in which his parents, who were of the royal race, had perished. Under him the Britons revived, and offering battle to the victors, by the help of God, gained the victory. From that day, sometimes the natives, and sometimes their enemies, prevailed, till the year of the siege of Badon-hill, when they made no small slaughter of those enemies, about forty-four years after their arrival in England. But of this hereafter.

**CHAP. XVII.****How Germanus the Bishop, sailing into Britain with Lupus, first quelled the tempest of the sea, and afterwards that of the Pelagians, by Divine power.****[429 A.D.]**

**S**OME few years before their arrival, the Pelagian heresy, brought over by Agricola, the son of Severianus, a Pelagian bishop, had corrupted with its foul taint the faith of the Britons. But whereas they absolutely refused to embrace that perverse doctrine, and blaspheme the grace of Christ, yet were not able of themselves to confute the subtilty of the unholy belief by force of argument, they bethought them of wholesome counsels and determined to crave aid of the Gallican prelates in that spiritual warfare. Hereupon, these, having assembled a great synod, consulted together to determine what persons should be sent thither to sustain the faith, and by unanimous consent, choice was made of the apostolic prelates, Germanus, Bishop of Auxerre, and Lupus of Troyes, to go into Britain to confirm the people's faith in the grace of God. With ready zeal they complied with the request and commands of the Holy Church, and put to sea. The ship sped safely with favouring winds till they were halfway between the coast of Gaul and Britain. There on a sudden they were obstructed by the malevolence of demons, who were jealous that men of such eminence and piety should be sent to bring back the people to salvation. They raised storms, and darkened the sky with clouds. The sails could not support the fury of the winds, the sailors' skill was forced to give way, the ship was sustained by prayer, not by strength, and as it happened, their spiritual leader and bishop, being spent with weariness, had fallen asleep. Then, as if because resistance flagged, the tempest gathered strength, and the ship, overwhelmed by the waves, was ready to sink. Then the blessed Lupus and all the rest, greatly troubled, awakened their elder, that he might oppose the raging elements. He, showing himself the more resolute in proportion to the greatness of the danger, called upon Christ, and having, in the name of the Holy Trinity, taken and sprinkled a little water, quelled the raging waves, admonished his companion, encouraged all, and all with one consent uplifted their voices in prayer. Divine help was granted, the enemies were put to flight, a cloudless calm ensued, the winds veering about set themselves again to forward their voyage, the sea was soon traversed, and they reached the quiet of the wished-for shore. A multitude flocking thither from all parts, received the bishops, whose coming had been foretold by the predictions even of their adversaries. For the evil spirits declared their fear, and when the bishops expelled them from the bodies of the possessed, they made known the nature of the tempest, and the dangers they had occasioned, and confessed that they had been overcome by the merits and authority of these men.

In the meantime the bishops speedily filled the island of Britain with the fame of their preaching and miracles; and the Word of God was by them daily preached, not only in the churches, but even in the streets and fields, so that the faithful and Catholic were everywhere confirmed, and those who had been perverted accepted the way of amendment. Like the Apostles, they acquired honour and authority through a good conscience, learning through the study of letters, and the power of working miracles through their merits. Thus the whole country readily came over to their way of thinking; the authors of the erroneous belief kept themselves in hiding, and, like evil spirits, grieved for the loss of the people that were rescued from them. At length, after long deliberation, they had the boldness to enter the lists. They came forward in all the splendour of their wealth, with gorgeous apparel, and supported by a numerous following; choosing rather to hazard the contest, than to undergo among the people whom they had led astray, the reproach of having been silenced, lest they should seem by saying nothing to condemn themselves. An immense multitude had been attracted thither with their wives and children. The people were present as spectators and judges; the two parties stood there in very different case; on the one side was Divine faith, on the other human presumption; on the one side piety, on the other pride; on the one side Pelagius, the founder of their faith, on the other Christ. The blessed bishops



permitted their adversaries to speak first, and their empty speech long took up the time and filled the ears with meaningless words. Then the venerable prelates poured forth the torrent of their eloquence and showered upon them the words of Apostles and Evangelists, mingling the Scriptures with their own discourse and supporting their strongest assertions by the testimony of the written Word. Vainglory was vanquished and unbelief refuted; and the heretics, at every argument put before them, not being able to reply, confessed their errors. The people, giving judgement, could scarce refrain from violence, and signified their verdict by their acclamations.

## CHAP. XVIII.

**How the same holy man gave sight to the blind daughter of a tribune, and then coming to St. Alban, there received of his relics, and left other relics of the blessed Apostles and other martyrs. [429 A.D.]**

**A**FTER this, a certain man, who held the office of tribune, came forward with his wife, and brought his blind daughter, a child of ten years of age, to be healed of the bishops. They ordered her to be brought to their adversaries, who, being rebuked by their own conscience, joined their entreaties to those of the child's parents, and besought the bishops that she might be healed. They, therefore, perceiving their adversaries to yield, poured forth a short prayer, and then Germanus, full of the Holy Ghost, invoking the Trinity, at once drew from his side a casket which hung about his neck, containing relics of the saints, and, taking it in his hands, applied it in the sight of all to the girl's eyes, which were immediately delivered from darkness and filled with the light of truth. The parents rejoiced, and the people were filled with awe at the miracle; and after that day, the heretical beliefs were so fully obliterated from the minds of all, that they thirsted for and sought after the doctrine of the bishops.

This damnable heresy being thus suppressed, and the authors thereof confuted, and all the people settled in the purity of the faith, the bishops went to the tomb of the martyr, the blessed Alban, to give thanks to God through him. There Germanus, having with him relics of all the Apostles, and of divers martyrs, after offering up his prayers, commanded the tomb to be opened, that he might lay therein the precious gifts; judging it fitting, that the limbs of saints brought together from divers countries, as their equal merits had procured them admission into heaven, should find shelter in one tomb. These being honourably bestowed, and laid together, he took up a handful of dust from the place where the blessed martyr's blood had been shed, to carry away with him. In this dust the blood had been preserved, showing that the slaughter of the martyrs was red, though the persecutor was pale in death.' In consequence of these things, an innumerable multitude of people was that day converted to the Lord.

## CHAP. XIX.

**How the same holy man, being detained there by sickness, by his prayers quenched a fire that had broken out among the houses, and was himself cured of his infirmity by a vision. [429 A.D.]**

**A**S they were returning thence, the treacherous enemy, having, as it chanced, prepared a snare, caused Germanus to bruise his foot by a fall, not knowing that, as it was with the blessed Job, his merits would be but increased by bodily affliction. Whilst he was thus detained some time in the same place by his infirmity, a fire broke out in a cottage neighbouring to that in which he was; and having burned down the other houses which were thatched with reed, fanned by the wind, was carried on to the dwelling in which he lay. The people all flocked to the prelate, entreating that they might lift him in their arms, and save him from the impending

danger. But he rebuked them, and in the assurance of his faith, would not suffer himself to be removed. The whole multitude, in terror and despair, ran to oppose the conflagration; but, for the greater manifestation of the Divine power, whatsoever the crowd endeavoured to save, was destroyed; and what the sick and helpless man defended, the flame avoided and passed by, though the house that sheltered the holy man lay open to it, and while the fire raged on every side, the place in which he lay appeared untouched, amid the general conflagration. The multitude rejoiced at the miracle, and was gladly vanquished by the power of God. A great crowd of people watched day and night before the humble cottage; some to have their souls healed, and some their bodies. All that Christ wrought in the person of his servant, all the wonders the sick man performed cannot be told. Moreover, he would suffer no medicines to be applied to his infirmity; but one night he saw one clad in garments as white as snow, standing by him, who reaching out his hand, seemed to raise him up, and ordered him to stand firm upon his feet; from which time his pain ceased, and he was so perfectly restored, that when the day came, with good courage he set forth upon his journey.

## **CHAP. XX.**

### **How the same Bishops brought help from Heaven to the Britons in a battle, and then returned home. [430 A.D.]**

**I**N the meantime, the Saxons and Picts, with their united forces, made war upon the Britons, who in these straits were compelled to take up arms. In their terror thinking themselves unequal to their enemies, they implored the assistance of the holy bishops; who, hastening to them as they had promised, inspired so much confidence into these fearful people, that one would have thought they had been joined by a mighty army. Thus, by these apostolic leaders, Christ Himself commanded in their camp. The holy days of Lent were also at hand, and were rendered more sacred by the presence of the bishops, insomuch that the people being instructed by daily sermons, came together eagerly to receive the grace of baptism. For a great multitude of the army desired admission to the saving waters, and a wattled church was constructed for the Feast of the Resurrection of our Lord, and so fitted up for the army in the field as if it were in a city. Still wet with the baptismal water the troops set forth; the faith of the people was fired; and where arms had been deemed of no avail, they looked to the help of God. News reached the enemy of the manner and method of their purification, who, assured of success, as if they had to deal with an unarmed host, hastened forward with renewed eagerness. But their approach was made known by scouts. When, after the celebration of Easter, the greater part of the army, fresh from the font, began to take up arms and prepare for war, Germanus offered to be their leader. He picked out the most active, explored the country round about, and observed, in the way by which the enemy was expected, a valley encompassed by hills of moderate height. In that place he drew up his untried troops, himself acting as their general. And now a formidable host of foes drew near, visible, as they approached, to his men lying in ambush. Then, on a sudden, Germanus, bearing the standard, exhorted his men, and bade them all in a loud voice repeat his words. As the enemy advanced in all security, thinking to take them by surprise, the bishops three times cried, "Hallelujah." A universal shout of the same word followed, and the echoes from the surrounding hills gave back the cry on all sides, the enemy was panic-stricken, fearing, not only the neighbouring rocks, but even the very frame of heaven above them; and such was their terror, that their feet were not swift enough to save them. They fled in disorder, casting away their arms, and well satisfied if, even with unprotected bodies, they could escape the danger; many of them, flying headlong in their fear, were engulfed by the river which they had crossed. The Britons, without a blow, inactive spectators of the victory they had gained, beheld their vengeance complete. The scattered spoils were gathered up, and the devout soldiers rejoiced in the success which Heaven had granted them. The prelates thus triumphed over the enemy without bloodshed, and gained a victory by faith, without the aid of human force. Thus, having settled the affairs of the island, and restored tranquillity by the defeat of the invisible foes, as well as of enemies in the flesh, they prepared to return home. Their own merits, and the

intercession of the blessed martyr Alban, obtained for them a calm passage, and the happy vessel restored them in peace to the desires of their people.

## CHAP. XXI.

**How, when the Pelagian heresy began to spring up afresh, Germanus, returning to Britain with Severus, first restored bodily strength to a lame youth, then spiritual health to the people of God, having condemned or converted the Heretics [447 A.D.]**

**N**OT long after, news was brought from the same island, that certain persons were again attempting to teach and spread abroad the Pelagian heresy, and again the holy Germanus was entreated by all the priests, that he would defend the cause of God, which he had before maintained. He speedily complied with their request; and taking with him Severus, a man of singular sanctity, who was disciple to the blessed father, Lupus, bishop of Troyes, and at that time, having been ordained bishop of the Treveri, was preaching the Word of God to the tribes of Upper Germany, put to sea, and with favouring winds and calm waters sailed to Britain.

In the meantime, the evil spirits, speeding through the whole island, were constrained against their will to foretell that Germanus was coming, insomuch, that one Elafius, a chief of that region, without tidings from any visible messenger, hastened to meet the holy men, carrying with him his son, who in the very flower of his youth laboured under a grievous infirmity; for the sinews of the knee were wasted and shrunk, so that the withered limb was denied the power to walk. All the country followed this Elafius. The bishops arrived, and were met by the ignorant multitude, whom they blessed, and preached the Word of God to them. They found the people constant in the faith as they had left them; and learning that but few had gone astray, they sought out the authors of the evil and condemned them. Then suddenly Elafius cast himself at the feet of the bishops, presenting his son, whose distress was visible and needed no words to express it. All were grieved, but especially the bishops, who, filled with pity, invoked the mercy of God; and straightway the blessed Germanus, causing the youth to sit down, touched the bent and feeble knee and passed his healing hand over all the diseased part. At once health was restored by the power of his touch, the withered limb regained its vigour, the sinews resumed their task, and the youth was, in the presence of all the people, delivered whole to his father. The multitude was amazed at the miracle, and the Catholic faith was firmly established in the hearts of all; after which, they were, in a sermon, exhorted to amend their error. By the judgement of all, the exponents of the heresy, who had been banished from the island, were brought before the bishops, to be conveyed into the continent, that the country might be rid of them, and they corrected of their errors. So it came to pass that the faith in those parts continued long after pure and untainted. Thus when they had settled all things, the blessed prelates returned home as prosperously as they had come.

But Germanus, after this, went to Ravenna to intercede for the tranquillity of the Armoricans, where, after being very honourably received by Valentinian and his mother, Placidia, he departed hence to Christ; his body was conveyed to his own city with a splendid retinue, and mighty works attended his passage to the grave. Not long after, Valentinian was murdered by the followers of Aetius, the patrician, whom he had put to death, in the sixth year of the reign of Marcian, and with him ended the empire of the West.

## CHAP. XXII.

**How the Britons, being for a time at rest from foreign invasions, wore themselves out by civil wars, and at the same time gave themselves up to more heinous crimes.**

IN the meantime, in Britain, there was some respite from foreign, but not from civil war. The cities destroyed by the enemy and abandoned remained in ruins; and the natives, who had escaped the enemy, now fought against each other. Nevertheless, the kings, priests, private men, and the nobility, still remembering the late calamities and slaughters, in some measure kept within bounds; but when these died, and another generation succeeded, which knew nothing of those times, and was only acquainted with the existing peaceable state of things, all the bonds of truth and justice were so entirely broken, that there was not only no trace of them 'remaining, but only very few persons seemed to retain any memory of them at all. To other crimes beyond description, which their own historian, Gildas, mournfully relates, they added this—that they never preached the faith to the Saxons, or English, who dwelt amongst them. Nevertheless, the goodness of God did not forsake his people, whom he foreknew, but sent to the aforesaid nation much more worthy heralds of the truth, to bring it to the faith.

### CHAP. XXIII.

#### **How the holy Pope Gregory sent Augustine, with other monks, to preach to the English nation, and encouraged them by a letter of exhortation, not to desist from their labour. [596 A. D.]**

**I**N the year of our Lord 582, Maurice, the fifty-fourth from Augustus, ascended the throne, and reigned twenty one years. In the tenth year of his reign, Gregory, a man eminent in learning and the conduct of affairs, was promoted to the Apostolic see of Rome, and presided over it thirteen years, six months and ten days. He, being moved by Divine inspiration, in the fourteenth year of the same emperor, and about the one hundred and fiftieth after the coming of the English into Britain, sent the servant of God, Augustine, and with him divers other monks, who feared the Lord, to preach the Word of God to the English nation. They having, in obedience to the pope's commands, undertaken that work, when they had gone but a little way on their journey, were seized with craven terror, and began to think of returning home, rather than proceed to a barbarous, fierce, and unbelieving nation, to whose very language they were strangers; and by common consent they decided that this was the safer course. At once Augustine, who had been appointed to be consecrated bishop, if they should be received by the English, was sent back, that he might, by humble entreaty, obtain of the blessed Gregory, that they should not be compelled to undertake so dangerous, toilsome, and uncertain a journey. The pope, in reply, sent them a letter of exhortation, persuading them to set forth to the work of the Divine Word, and rely on the help of God. The purport of which letter was as follows:

"Gregory, the servant of the servants of God, to the servants of our Lord. Forasmuch as it had been better not to begin a good work, than to think of desisting from one which has been begun, it behoves you, my beloved sons, to fulfil with all diligence the good work, which, by the help of the Lord, you have undertaken. Let not, therefore, the toil of the journey, nor the tongues of evil-speaking men, discourage you; but with all earnestness and zeal perform, by God's guidance, that which you have set about; being assured, that great labour is followed by the greater glory of an eternal reward. When Augustine, your Superior, returns, whom we also constitute your abbot, humbly obey him in all things; knowing, that whatsoever you shall do by his direction, will, in all respects, be profitable to your souls. Almighty God protect you with His grace, and grant that I may, in the heavenly country, see the fruits of your labour, inasmuch as, though I cannot labour with you, I shall partake in the joy of the reward, because I am willing to labour. God keep you in safety, my most beloved sons. Given the 23rd of July, in the fourteenth year of the reign of our most religious lord, Mauritius Tiberius Augustus, the thirteenth year after the consulship of our lord aforesaid, and the fourteenth indiction."

**CHAP. XXIV.****How he wrote to the bishop of Arles to entertain them. [596 A.D.]**

**T**HE same venerable pope also sent at the same time a letter to Aetherius, archbishop of Arles,' exhorting him to give favourable entertainment to Augustine on his way to Britain; which letter was in these words:

'To his most reverend and holy brother and fellow bishop Aetherius, Gregory, the servant of the servants of God. Although religious men stand in need of no recommendation with priests who have the charity which is pleasing to God; yet because an opportunity of writing has occurred, we have thought fit to send this letter to you, Brother, to inform you, that with the help of God we have directed thither, for the good of souls, the bearer of these presents, Augustine, the servant of God, of whose zeal we are assured, with other servants of God, whom it is requisite that your Holiness readily assist with priestly zeal, affording him all the comfort in your power. And to the end that you may be the more ready in your help, we have enjoined him to inform you particularly of the occasion of his coming; knowing, that when you are acquainted with it, you will, as the matter requires, for the sake of God, dutifully dispose yourself to give him comfort. We also in all things recommend to your charity, Candidus, the priest, our common son, whom we have transferred to the administration of a small patrimony in our Church. God keep you in safety, most reverend brother. Given the 23rd day of July, in the fourteenth year of the reign of our most religious lord, Mauritius Tiberius Augustus, the thirteenth year after the consulship of our lord aforesaid, and the fourteenth indiction."

**CHAP. XXV.****How Augustine, coming into Britain, first preached in the Isle of Thanet to the King of Kent, and having obtained licence from him, went into Kent, in order to preach therein. [597 A. D.]**

**A**UGUSTINE, thus strengthened by the encouragement of the blessed Father Gregory, returned to the work of the Word of God, with the servants of Christ who were with him, and arrived in Britain. The powerful Ethelbert was at that time king of Kent; he had extended his dominions as far as the boundary formed by the great river Humber, by which the Southern Saxons are divided from the Northern. On the east of Kent is the large Isle of Thanet, containing, according to the English way of reckoning, 600 families, divided from the mainland by the river Wantsum, which is about three furlongs in breadth, and which can be crossed only in two places; for at both ends it runs into the sea. On this island landed the servant of the Lord, Augustine, and his companions, being, as is reported, nearly forty men. They had obtained, by order of the blessed Pope Gregory, interpreters of the nation of the Franks, and sending to Ethelbert, signified that they were come from Rome, and brought a joyful message, which most undoubtedly assured to those that hearkened to it everlasting joys in heaven, and a kingdom that would never end, with the living and true God. The king hearing this, gave orders that they, should stay in the island where they had landed, and be furnished with necessaries, till he should consider what to do with them. For he had before heard of the Christian religion, having a Christian wife of the royal family of the Franks, called Bertha; whom he had received from her parents, upon condition that she should be permitted to preserve inviolate the rites of her religion with the Bishop Liudhard, who was sent with her to support her in the faith. Some days after, the king came into the island, and sitting in the open air, ordered Augustine and his companions to come and hold a conference with him. For he had taken precaution that they should not come to him in any house, lest, by so coming, according to an ancient superstition, if they practised any magical arts, they might impose upon him, and so get the better of him. But they came endued with Divine, not with magic power, bearing a silver cross for their banner, and the image of our Lord and Saviour painted on a board; and chanting litanies, they offered up their prayers

to the Lord for the eternal salvation both of themselves and of those to whom and for whom they had come. When they had sat down, in obedience to the king's commands, and preached to him and his attendants there present the Word of life, the king answered thus: "Your words and promises are fair, but because they are new to us, and of uncertain import, I cannot consent to them so far as to forsake that which I have so long observed with the whole English nation. But because you are come from far as strangers into my kingdom, and, as I conceive, are desirous to impart to us those things which you believe to be true, and most beneficial, we desire not to harm you, but will give you favourable entertainment, and take care to supply you with all things necessary to your sustenance; nor do we forbid you to preach and gain as many as you can to your religion." Accordingly he gave them an abode in the city of Canterbury, which was the metropolis of all his dominions, and, as he had promised, besides supplying them with sustenance, did not refuse them liberty to preach. It is told that, as they drew near to the city, after their manner, with the holy cross, and the image of our sovereign Lord and King, Jesus Christ, they sang in concert this litany: "We beseech thee, Lord, for Thy great mercy, that Thy wrath and anger be turned away from this city, and from Thy holy house, for we have sinned. Hallelujah."

## CHAP. XXVI.

### **How St. Augustine in Kent followed the doctrine and manner of life of the primitive Church, and settled his episcopal see in the royal city. [597 A. D.]**

**A**S soon as they entered the dwelling-place assigned to them, they began to imitate the Apostolic manner of life in the primitive Church; applying themselves to constant prayer, watchings, and fastings; preaching the Word of life to as many as they could; despising all worldly things, as in nowise concerning them; receiving only their necessary food from those they taught; living themselves in all respects conformably to what they taught, and being always ready to suffer any adversity, and even to die for that truth which they preached. In brief, some believed and were baptized, admiring the simplicity of their blameless life, and the sweetness of their heavenly doctrine. There was on the east side of the city, a church dedicated of old to the honour of St. Martin, (Note: St. Martin was regarded with special reverence in Britain and Ireland. Possibly some of the earliest missionaries may have been his disciples, e.g., St. Ninian and, St. Patrick. The Roman church of St. Martin at Canterbury has been frequently altered and partly rebuilt, so that "small portions only of the Roman walls remain. Roman bricks are used as old materials in the parts rebuilt") built whilst the Romans were still in the island, wherein the queen, who, as has been said before, was a Christian, was wont to pray. In this they also first began to come together, to chant the Psalms, to pray, to celebrate Mass, to preach, and to baptize, till when the king had been converted to the faith, they obtained greater liberty to preach everywhere and build or repair churches.

When he, among the rest, believed and was baptized, attracted by the pure life of these holy men and their gracious promises, the truth of which they established by many miracles, greater numbers began daily to flock together to hear the Word, and, forsaking their heathen rites, to have fellowship, through faith, in the unity of Christ's Holy Church. It is told that the king, while he rejoiced at their conversion and their faith, yet compelled none to embrace Christianity, but only showed more affection to the believers, as to his fellow citizens in the kingdom of Heaven. For he had learned from those who had instructed him and guided him to salvation, that the service of Christ ought to be voluntary, not by compulsion. Nor was it long before he gave his teachers a settled residence suited to their degree in his metropolis of Canterbury, with such possessions of divers sorts as were necessary for them.

**CHAP. XXVII.****How St. Augustine, being made a bishop, sent to acquaint Pope Gregory with what had been done in Britain, and asked and received replies, of which he stood in need. [597-601 A.D.]**

**I**N the meantime, Augustine, the man of God, went to Aries, and, according to the orders received from the holy Father Gregory, was ordained archbishop of the English nation, (Note: Augustine was not consecrated as archbishop either of London or Canterbury, but by the general title of "Archbishop of the English." According to Gregory's original scheme, London, not Canterbury, was to have been the seat of the primacy of southern England. London and York being doubtless the most important cities of south and north known to him from their history during the Roman occupation. But Christianity was not permanently established in London till it was too late to remove the see from Canterbury, which would obviously commend itself to Augustine as the most suitable place to be the metropolitan city) by Aetherius, archbishop of that city. Then returning into Britain, he sent Laurentius the priest and Peter the monk to Rome, to acquaint Pope Gregory, that the English nation had received the faith of Christ, and that he was himself made their bishop. At the same time, he desired his solution of some doubts which seemed urgent to him. He soon received fitting answers to his questions, which we have also thought meet to insert in this our history:

The First Question of the blessed Augustine, Bishop of the Church of Canterbury.—Concerning bishops, what should be their manner of conversation towards their clergy? or into how many portions the offerings of the faithful at the altar are to be divided? and how the bishop is to act in the Church?

Gregory, Pope of the City of Rome, answers.—Holy Scripture, in which we doubt not you are well versed, testifies to this, and in particular the Epistles of the Blessed Paul to Timothy, wherein he endeavours to show him what should be his manner of conversation in the house of God; but it is the custom of the Apostolic see to prescribe these rules to bishops when they are ordained: that all emoluments which accrue, are to be divided into four portions ;—one for the bishop and his household, for hospitality and entertainment of guests; another for the clergy; a third for the poor; and the fourth for the repair of churches. But in that you, my brother, having been instructed in monastic rules, must not live apart from your clergy in the Church of the English, which has been lately, by the will of God, converted to the faith, you must establish the manner of conversation of our fathers in the primitive Church, among whom, none said that aught of the things which they possessed was his own, but they had all things common.

But if there are any clerks not received into holy orders, who cannot live continent, they are to take wives, and receive their stipends outside of the community; because we know that it is written concerning the same fathers of whom we have spoken that a distribution was made unto every man according as he had need. Care is also to be taken of their stipends, and provision to be made, and they are to be kept under ecclesiastical rule, that they may live orderly, and attend to singing of psalms, and, by the help of God, preserve their hearts and tongues and bodies from all that is unlawful. But as for those that live in common, there is no need to say anything of assigning portions, or dispensing hospitality and showing mercy; inasmuch as all that they have over is to be spent in pious and religious works, according to the teaching of Him who is the Lord and Master of all, "Give alms of such things as ye have over, and behold all things are clean unto you."

Augustine's Second Question—Whereas the faith is one and the same, are there different customs in different Churches? and is one custom of Masses observed in the holy Roman Church, and another in the Church of Gaul?

Pope Gregory answers.—You know, my brother, the custom of the Roman Church in which you remember that you were bred up. But my will is, that if you have found anything, either in the

Roman, or the Gallican, or any other Church, which may be more acceptable to Almighty God, you should carefully make choice of the same, and sedulously teach the Church of the English, which as yet is new in the faith, whatsoever you can gather from the several Churches. For things are not to be loved for the sake of places, but places for the sake of good things. Choose, therefore, from every Church those things that are pious, religious, and right, and when you have, as it were, made them up into one bundle, let the minds of the English be accustomed thereto.

Augustine's Third Question.—I beseech you, what punishment must be inflicted on one who steals anything from a church?

Gregory answers.—You may judge, my brother, by the condition of the thief, in what manner he is to be corrected. For there are some, who, having substance, commit theft; and there are others, who transgress in this matter through want. Wherefore it is requisite, that some be punished with fines, others with stripes; some with more severity, and some more mildly. And when the severity is greater, it is to proceed from charity, not from anger; because this is done for the sake of him who is corrected, that he may not be delivered up to the fires of Hell. For it behoves us to maintain discipline among the faithful, as good parents do with their children according to the flesh, whom they punish with stripes for their faults, and yet they design to make those whom they chastise their heirs, and preserve their possessions for those whom they seem to visit in wrath. This charity is, therefore, to be kept in mind, and it dictates the measure of the punishment, so that the mind may do nothing beyond the rule prescribed by reason. You will add to this, how men are to restore those things which they have stolen from the church. But let not the Church take more than it has lost of its worldly possessions, or seek gain from vanities.

Augustine's Fourth Question. — Whether two full brothers may marry two sisters, who are of a family far removed from them?

Gregory answers.—Most assuredly this may lawfully be done; for nothing is found in Holy Writ on this matter that seems to contradict it.

Augustine's Fifth Question.—To what degree may the faithful marry with their kindred? and is it lawful to marry a stepmother or a brother's wife?

Gregory answers.—A certain secular law in the Roman commonwealth allows, that the son and daughter of a brother and sister, or of two full brothers, or two sisters, may be joined in matrimony; but we have found, by experience, that the offspring of such wedlock cannot grow up; and the Divine law forbids a man to "uncover the nakedness of his kindred." Hence of necessity it must be the third or fourth generation of the faithful, that can be lawfully joined in matrimony; for the second, which we have mentioned, must altogether abstain from one another. To marry with one's stepmother is a heinous crime, because it is written in the Law, "Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy father:" now the son, indeed, cannot uncover his father's nakedness; but in regard that it is written, "They twain shall be one flesh," he that presumes to uncover the nakedness of his stepmother, who was one flesh with his father, certainly uncovers the nakedness of his father. It is also prohibited to marry with a sister-in-law, because by the former union she is become the brother's flesh. For which thing also John the Baptist was beheaded, and obtained the crown of holy martyrdom. For, though he was not ordered to deny Christ, and it was not for confessing Christ that he was killed, yet inasmuch as the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, said, "I am the Truth," because John was killed for the truth, he also shed his blood for Christ.

But forasmuch as there are many of the English, who, whilst they were still heathens, are said to have been joined in this unholy union, when they attain to the faith they are to be admonished to abstain, and be made to know that this is a grievous sin. Let them fear the dread judgement of God, lest, for the gratification of their carnal desires, they incur the torments of eternal punishment. Yet they are not on this account to be deprived of the Communion of the Body and Blood of Christ, lest they should seem to be punished for those things which they did through



ignorance before they had received Baptism. For in these times the Holy Church chastises some things with zeal, and tolerates some in mercy, and is blind to some in her wisdom, and so, by forbearance and blindness often suppresses the evil that stands in her way. But all that come to the faith are to be admonished not to presume to do such things. And if any shall be guilty of them, they are to be excluded from the Communion of the Body and Blood of Christ. For as the offence is, in some measure, to be tolerated in those who did it through ignorance, so it is to be rigorously punished in those who do not fear to sin knowingly.

Augustine's Sixth Question.—Whether a bishop may be consecrated without other bishops being present, if there be so great a distance between them, that they cannot easily come together?

Gregory answers.—In the Church of England, of which you are as yet the only bishop, you cannot otherwise ordain a bishop than in the absence of other bishops. For when do bishops come over from Gaul, that they may be present as witnesses to you in ordaining a bishop? But we would have you, my brother, to ordain bishops in such a manner, that the said bishops may not be far asunder, to the end that there be no lack, but that at the ordination of a bishop other pastors also, whose pretence is of great benefit, should easily come together. Thus, when, by the help of God, bishops shall have been ordained in places near to one another, no ordination of a bishop is to take place without assembling three or four bishops. For, even in spiritual affairs, we may take example by the temporal, that they may be wisely and discreetly conducted. For surely, when marriages are celebrated in the world, some married persons are assembled, that those who went before in the way of matrimony, may also partake in the joy of the new union. Why, then, at this spiritual ordinance, wherein, by means of the sacred ministry, man is joined to God, should not such persons be assembled, as may either rejoice in the advancement of the new bishop, or jointly pour forth their prayers to Almighty God for his preservation?

Augustine's Seventh Question.—How are we to deal with the bishops of Gaul and Britain?

Gregory answers.—We give you no authority over the bishops of Gaul, because the bishop of Aries received the pall in the old times of my predecessors, and we must by no means deprive him of the authority he has received. If it shall therefore happen, my brother, that you go over into the province of Gaul, you are to concert with the said bishop of Aries, how, if there be any faults among the bishops, they may be amended. And if he shall be lukewarm in keeping up discipline, he is to be fired by your zeal; to whom we have also written, that aided by the presence of your Holiness in Gaul, he should exert himself to the utmost, and put away from the behaviour of the bishops all that is opposed to the command of our Creator. But you shall not have power to go beyond your own authority and judge the bishops of Gaul, but by persuading, and winning them, and showing good works for them to imitate, you shall recall the perverted to the pursuit of holiness; for it is written in the Law, "When thou comest into the standing corn of thy neighbour, then thou mayest bruise the ears with thine hand and eat; but thou shalt not move a sickle unto thy neighbours' standing corn." For thou mayest not apply the sickle of judgement in that harvest which thou seest to have been committed to another; but by the influence of good works thou shalt clear the Lord's wheat of the chaff of its vices, and convert it by exhortation and persuasion in the body of the Church, as it were, by eating. But whatsoever is to be done by authority, must be transacted with the aforesaid bishop of Aries, lest that should be omitted, which the ancient institution of the fathers has appointed. But as for all the bishops of Britain, we commit them to your care, that the unlearned may be taught, the weak strengthened by persuasion, and the perverse corrected by authority.

Augustine's Eighth Question.—Whether a woman with child ought to be baptized? Or when she has brought forth, after what time she may come into the church? As also, after how many days the infant born may be baptized, lest he be prevented by death? Or how long after her husband may have carnal knowledge of her? Or whether it is lawful for her to come into the church when she has her courses, or to receive the Sacrament of Holy Communion? Or whether a man, under certain circumstances, may come into the church before he has washed with water? Or approach

to receive the Mystery of the Holy Communion? All which things are requisite to be known by the ignorant nation of the English.

Gregory answers.—I do not doubt but that these questions have been put to you, my brother, and I think I have already answered you therein. But I believe you would wish the opinion which you yourself might give and hold to be confirmed by my reply also. Why should not a woman with child be baptized, since the fruitfulness of the flesh is no offence in the eyes of Almighty God? For when our first parents sinned in Paradise, they forfeited the immortality which they had received, by the just judgement of God. Because, therefore, Almighty God would not for their fault wholly destroy the human race, he both deprived man of immortality for his sin, and, at the same time, of his great goodness and loving-kindness, reserved to him the power of propagating his race after him. On what ground, then, can that which is preserved to human nature by the free gift of Almighty God, be excluded from the privilege of Holy Baptism? For it is very foolish to imagine that the gift can be opposed to grace in that Mystery in which all sin is blotted out. When a woman is delivered, after how many days she may come into the church, you have learnt from the teaching of the Old Testament, to wit, that she is to abstain for a male child thirty-three days, and sixty-six for a female. Now you must know that this is to be received in a mystery; for if she enters the church the very hour that she is delivered, to return thanks, she is not guilty of any sin; because the pleasure of the flesh is a fault, and not the pain; but the pleasure is in the copulation of the flesh, whereas there is pain in bringing forth the child. Wherefore it is said to the first mother of all, "In sorrow thou shalt bring forth children." If, therefore, we forbid a woman that has brought forth, to enter the church, we make a crime of her very punishment. To baptize either a woman who has brought forth, if there be danger of death, even the very hour that she brings forth, or that which she has brought forth the very hour it is born, is in no way prohibited, because, as the grace of the Holy Mystery is to be with much discretion provided for those who are in full life and capable of understanding, so is it to be without any delay administered to the dying; lest, while a further time is sought to confer the Mystery of redemption, if a small delay intervene, the person that is to be redeemed be dead and gone. Her husband is not to approach her, till the infant born be weaned. An evil custom is sprung up in the lives of married people, in that women disdain to suckle the children whom they bring forth, and give them to other women to suckle; which seems to have been invented on no other account but incontineny; because, as they will not be continent, they will not suckle the children whom they bear. Those women, therefore, who, from evil custom, give their children to others to bring up, must not approach their husbands till the time of purification is past. For even when there has been no child-birth, women are forbidden to do so, whilst they have their courses, insomuch that the Law condemns to death any man that shall approach unto a woman during her uncleanness. Yet the woman, nevertheless, must not be forbidden to come into the church whilst she has her courses; because the superfluity of nature cannot be imputed to her as a crime; and it is not just that she should be refused admittance into the church, for that which she suffers against her will. For we know, that the woman who had the issue of blood, humbly approaching behind our Lord's back, touched the hem of his garment, and her infirmity immediately departed from her. If, therefore, she that had an issue of blood might commendably touch the garment of our Lord, why may not she, who has her courses, lawfully enter into the church of God? But you may say, Her infirmity compelled her, whereas these we speak of are bound by custom. Consider, then, most dear brother, that all we suffer in this mortal flesh, through the infirmity of our nature, is ordained by the just judgement of God after the fall; for to hunger, to thirst, to be hot, to be cold, to be weary, is from the infirmity of our nature; and what else is it to seek food against hunger, drink against thirst, air against heat, clothes against cold, rest against weariness, than to procure a remedy against distempers? Thus to a woman her courses are a distemper. If, therefore, it was a commendable boldness in her, who in her disease touched our Lord's garment, why may not that which is allowed to one infirm person, be granted to all women, who, through the fault of their nature, are rendered infirm?

She must not, therefore, be forbidden to receive the Mystery of the Holy Communion during those days. But if any one out of profound respect does not presume to do it, she is to be commended; yet if she receives it, she is not to be judged. For it is the part of noble minds in

some manner to acknowledge their faults, even when there is no fault; because very often that is done without a fault, which, nevertheless, proceeded from a fault. Thus, when we are hungry, it is no sin to eat; yet our being hungry proceeds from the sin of the first man. The courses are no sin in women, because they happen naturally; yet, because our nature itself is so depraved, that it appears to be defiled even without the concurrence of the will, a defect arises from sin, and thereby human nature may itself know what it is become by judgement. And let man, who wilfully committed the offence, bear the guilt of that offence against his will. And, therefore, let women consider with themselves, and if they do not presume, during their courses, to approach the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of our Lord, they are to be commended for their praiseworthy consideration; but when they are carried away with love of the same Mystery to receive it according to the custom of the religious life, they are not to be restrained, as we said before. For as in the Old Testament the outward works are observed, so in the New Testament, that which is outwardly done, is not so diligently regarded as that which is inwardly thought, that the punishment may be with discernment. For whereas the Law forbids the eating of many things as unclean, yet our Lord says in the Gospel, "Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man." And afterwards he added, expounding the same, "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts." Where it is abundantly shown, that that is declared by Almighty God to be polluted in deed, which springs from the root of a polluted thought. Whence also Paul the Apostle says, "Unto the pure all things are pure, but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure." And presently, declaring the cause of that defilement, he adds, "For even their mind and conscience is defiled." If, therefore, meat is not unclean to him whose mind is not unclean, why shall that which a woman suffers according to nature, with a clean mind, be imputed to her as uncleanness?

A man who has approached his own wife is not to enter the church unless washed with water, nor is he to enter immediately although washed. The Law prescribed to the ancient people, that a man in such cases should be washed with water, and not enter into the church before the setting of the sun. Which, nevertheless, may be understood spiritually, because a man acts so when the mind is led by the imagination to unlawful concupiscence; for unless the fire of concupiscence be first driven from his mind, he is not to think himself worthy of the congregation of the brethren, while he sees himself burdened by the iniquity of a perverted will. For though divers nations have divers opinions concerning this affair, and seem to observe different rules, it was always the custom, of the Romans, from ancient times, for such an one to seek to be cleansed by washing, and for some time reverently to forbear entering the church. Nor do we, in so saying, assign matrimony to be a fault; but forasmuch as lawful intercourse cannot be had without the pleasure of the flesh, it is proper to forbear entering the holy place, because the pleasure itself cannot be without a fault. For he was not born of adultery or fornication, but of lawful marriage, who said, "Behold I was conceived in iniquity, and in sin my mother brought me forth." For he who knew himself to have been conceived in iniquity, lamented that he was born from sin, because he bears the defect, as a tree bears in its bough the sap it drew from the root. In which words, however, he does not call the union of the married couple iniquity, but the will itself. For there are many things which are lawful and permitted, and yet we are somewhat defiled in doing them. As very often by being angry we correct faults, and at the same time disturb our own peace of mind; and though that which we do is right, yet it is not to be approved that our mind should be disturbed. For he who said, "My eye was disturbed with anger," had been angry at the vices of sinners. Now, seeing that only a calm mind can rest in the light of contemplation, he grieved that his eye was disturbed with anger; because, whilst he was correcting evil actions below, he was obliged to be confused and disturbed with regard to the contemplation of the highest things. Anger against vice is, therefore, commendable, and yet painful to a man, because he thinks that by his mind being agitated, he has incurred some guilt. Lawful commerce, therefore, must be for the sake of children, not of pleasure; and must be to procure offspring, not to satisfy vices. But if any man is led not by the desire of pleasure, but only for the sake of getting children, such a man is certainly to be left to his own judgement, either as to entering the church, or as to receiving the Mystery of the Body and Blood of our Lord, which he, who being placed in the fire cannot burn, is not to be forbidden by us to receive.

But when, not the love of getting children, but of pleasure prevails, the pair have cause to lament their deed. For this the holy preaching concedes to them, and yet fills the mind with dread of the very concession. For when Paul the Apostle said, "Let him that cannot contain have his own wife;" he presently took care to subjoin, "But this I say by way of permission, not of commandment." For that is not granted by way of permission which is lawful, because it is just; land, therefore, that which he said he permitted, he showed to be an offence.

It is seriously to be considered, that when God was about to speak to the people on Mount Sinai, He first commanded them to abstain from women. And if purity of body was there so carefully required, where God spoke to the people by the means of a creature as His representative, that those who were to hear the words of God should abstain; how much more ought women, who receive the Body of Almighty God, to preserve themselves in purity of flesh, lest they be burdened with the very greatness of that inestimable Mystery? For this reason also, it was said to David, concerning his men, by the priest, that if they were clean in this particular, they should receive the shewbread, which they would not have received at all, had not David first declared them to be clean. Then the man, who, afterwards, has been washed with water, is also capable of receiving the Mystery of the Holy Communion, when it is lawful for him, according to what has been before declared, to enter the church.

Augustine's Ninth Question—Whether after an illusion, such as is wont to happen in a dream, any man may receive the Body of our Lord, or if he be a priest, celebrate the Divine Mysteries?

Gregory answers.—The Testament of the Old Law, as has been said already in the article above, calls such a man polluted, and allows him not to enter into the church till the evening, after being washed with water. Which, nevertheless, a spiritual people, taking in another sense, will understand in the same manner as above; because he is imposed upon as it were in a dream, who, being tempted with uncleanness, is defiled by real representations in thought, and he is to be washed with water, that he may cleanse away the sins of thought with tears; and unless the fire of temptation depart before, may know himself to be in a manner guilty until the evening. But a distinction is very necessary in that illusion, and one must carefully consider what causes it to arise 'in the mind of the person sleeping; for sometimes it proceeds from excess of eating or drinking; sometimes from the superfluity or infirmity of nature, and sometimes from the thoughts. And when it happens either through superfluity or infirmity of nature, such an illusion is not to be feared at all, because it is to be lamented, that the mind of the person, who knew nothing of it, suffers the same, rather than that he occasioned it. But when the appetite of gluttony commits excess in food, and thereupon the receptacles of the humours are oppressed, the mind thence contracts some guilt; yet not so much as to hinder the receiving of the Holy Mystery, or celebrating Mass, when a holy day requires it, or necessity obliges the Mystery to be shown forth, because there is no other priest in the place; for if there be others who can perform the ministry, the illusion proceeding from over-eating ought not to exclude a man from receiving the sacred Mystery; but I am of opinion he ought humbly to abstain from offering the sacrifice of the Mystery, but not from receiving it, unless the mind of the person sleeping has been disturbed with some foul imagination. For there are some, who for the most part so suffer the illusion, that their mind, even during the sleep of the body, is not defiled with filthy thoughts. In which case, one thing is evident, that the mind is guilty, not being acquitted even in its own judgement; for though it does not remember to have seen anything whilst the body was sleeping, yet it calls to mind that, when the body was awake, it fell into gluttony. But if the illusion of the sleeper proceeds from evil thoughts when he was awake, then its guilt is manifest to the mind; for the man perceives from what root that defilement sprang, because what he had consciously thought of, that he afterwards unconsciously endured. But it is to be considered, whether that thought was no more than a suggestion, or proceeded to delight, or, what is worse, consented to sin. For all sin is committed in three ways, viz., by suggestion, by delight, and by consent. Suggestion comes from the Devil, delight from the flesh, and consent from the spirit. For the serpent suggested the first offence, and Eve, as flesh, took delight in it, but Adam, as the spirit, consented. And when the mind sits in judgement on itself, it must clearly distinguish between suggestion and delight, and between delight and consent. For when the evil spirit suggests a sin

to the mind, if there ensue no delight in the sin, the sin is in no way committed; but when the flesh begins to take delight in it, then sin begins to arise. But if it deliberately consents, then the sin is known to be full-grown. The seed, therefore, of sin is in the suggestion, the nourishment of it in delight, its maturity in the consent. And it often happens that what the evil spirit sows in the thought, in that the flesh begins to find delight, and yet the soul does not consent to that delight. And whereas the flesh cannot be delighted without the mind, yet the mind struggling against the pleasures of the flesh, is after a manner unwillingly bound by the carnal delight, so that through reason it opposes it, and does not consent, yet being bound by delight, it grievously laments being so bound. Wherefore that great soldier of our Lord's host, groaned and said, "I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members." Now if he was a captive, he did not fight; but he did fight; wherefore he was a captive and at the same time therefore fought against the law of the mind, which the law that is in the members opposed; but if he fought, he was no captive. Thus, then, man is, as I may say, a captive and yet free. Free on account of justice, which he loves, a captive by the delight which he unwillingly bears within him.

### CHAP. XXVIII.

#### How Pope Gregory wrote to the bishop of Aries to help Augustine in the work of God. [601 A.D.]

**T**HUS far the answers of the holy Pope Gregory, to the questions of the most reverend prelate, Augustine. Now the letter, which he says he had written to the bishop of Aries, was directed to Vergilius, successor to Aetherius, and was in the following words:

"To his most reverend and holy brother and fellow bishop, Vergilius; Gregory, servant of the servants of God. With how much kindness brethren, coming of their own accord, are to be entertained, is shown by this, that they are for the most part invited for the sake of brotherly love. Therefore, if our common brother, Bishop Augustine, shall happen to come to you, let your love, as is becoming, receive him with so great kindness and affection, that it may refresh him by the benefit of its consolation and show to others how brotherly charity is to be cultivated. And, since it often happens that those who are at a distance first learn from others the things that need correction, if he bring before you, my brother, any sins of bishops or others, do you, in conjunction with him, carefully inquire into the same, and show yourself so strict and earnest with regard to those things which offend God and provoke His wrath, that for the amendment of others, the punishment may fall upon the guilty, and the innocent may not suffer under false report. God keep you in safety, most reverend brother. Given the 22nd day of June, in the nineteenth year of the reign of our most religious lord, Mauritius Tiberius Augustus, the eighteenth year after the consulship of our said lord, and the fourth indiction."

### CHAP. XXIX.

#### How the same Pope sent to Augustine the Pall and a letter, along with several ministers of the Word. [601 A.D.]

**M**OREOVER, the same Pope Gregory, hearing from Bishop Augustine, that the harvest which he had was great and the labourers but few, sent to him, together with his aforesaid envoys, certain fellow labourers and ministers of the Word, of whom the chief and foremost were Mellitus, Justus, Paulinus, and Rufinianus, and by them all things in general that were necessary for the worship and service of the Church, to wit, sacred vessels and altar-cloths, also church-furniture, and vestments for the bishops and clerks, as likewise relics of the holy Apostles and martyrs; besides many manuscripts. He also sent a letter, wherein he signified that he had despatched the pall to him, and at the same time directed how he should constitute bishops in Britain. The letter was in these words:

"To his most reverend and holy brother and fellow bishop, Augustine, Gregory, the servant of the servants of God. Though it be certain, that the unspeakable rewards of the eternal kingdom are reserved for those who labour for Almighty God, yet it is requisite that we bestow on them the benefit of honours, to the end that they may by this recompense be encouraged the more vigorously to apply themselves to the care of their spiritual work. And, seeing that the new Church of the English is, through the bounty of the Lord, and your labours, brought to the grace of God, we grant you the use of the pall in the same, only for the celebration of the solemn service of the Mass; that so you may ordain twelve bishops in different places, who shall be subject to your jurisdiction. But the bishop of London shall, for the future, be always consecrated by his own synod, and receive the pall, which is the token of his office, from this holy and Apostolic see, which I, by the grace of God, now serve. But we would have you send to the city of York such a bishop as you shall think fit to ordain; yet so, that if that city, with the places adjoining, shall receive the Word of God, that bishop shall also ordain twelve bishops, and enjoy the honour of a metropolitan; for we design, if we live, by the help of God, to bestow on him also the pall; and yet we would have him to be subject to your authority, my brother; but after your decease, he shall so preside over the bishops he shall have ordained, as to be in no way subject to the jurisdiction of the bishop of London. But for the future let there be this distinction as regards honour between the bishops of the cities of London and York, that he who has been first ordained have the precedence. But let them take counsel and act in concert and with one mind dispose whatsoever is to be done for zeal of Christ; let them judge rightly, and carry out their judgement without dissension.

"But to you, my brother, shall, by the authority of our God and Lord Jesus Christ, be subject not only those bishops whom you shall ordain, and those that shall be ordained by the bishop of York, but also all the prelates in Britain; to the end that from the words and manner of life of your Holiness they may learn the rule of a right belief and a good life, and fulfilling their office in faith and righteousness, they may, when it shall please the Lord, attain to the kingdom of Heaven. God preserve you in safety, most reverend brother.

"Given the 22nd of June, in the nineteenth year of the reign of our most religious lord, Mauritius Tiberius Augustus, the eighteenth year after the consulship of our said lord, and the fourth indiction."

### **CHAP. XXX.**

#### **A copy of the letter which Pope Gregory sent to the Abbot Mellitus, then going into Britain. [601 A.D.]**

**T**HE aforesaid envoys having departed, the blessed Father Gregory sent after them a letter worthy to be recorded, wherein he plainly shows how carefully he watched over the salvation of our country. The letter was as follows:

"To his most beloved son, the Abbot Mellitus; Gregory, the servant of the servants of God. We have been much concerned, since the departure of our people that are with you, because we have received no account of the success of your journey. Howbeit, when Almighty God has led, you to the most reverend Bishop Augustine, our brother, tell him what I have long been considering in my own mind concerning the matter of the English people; to wit, that the temples of the idols in that nation ought not to be destroyed; but let the idols that are in them be destroyed; let water be consecrated and sprinkled in the said temples, let altars be erected, and relics placed there. For if those temples are well built, it is requisite that they be converted from the worship of devils to the service of the true God; that the nation, seeing that their temples are not destroyed, may remove error from their hearts, and knowing and adoring the true God, may the more freely resort to the places to which they have been accustomed. And because they are used to slaughter many oxen in sacrifice to devils, some solemnity must be given them in exchange for this, as that on the day of the dedication, or the natiivities of the holy martyrs, whose relics are there deposited, they should build themselves huts of the boughs of trees about those churches which

have been turned to that use from being temples, and celebrate the solemnity with religious feasting, and no more offer animals to the Devil, but kill cattle and glorify God in their feast, and return thanks to the Giver of all things for their abundance; to the end that, whilst some outward gratifications are retained, they may the more easily consent to the inward joys. For there is no doubt that it is impossible to cut off every thing at once from their rude natures; because he who endeavours to ascend to the highest place rises by degrees or steps, and not by leaps. Thus the Lord made Himself known to the people of Israel in Egypt; and yet He allowed them the use, in His own worship, of the sacrifices which they were wont to offer to the Devil, commanding them in His sacrifice to kill animals, to the end that, with changed hearts, they might lay aside one part of the sacrifice, whilst they retained another; and although the animals were the same as those which they were wont to offer, they should offer them to the true God, and not to idols; and thus they would no longer be the same sacrifices. This then, dearly beloved, it behoves you to communicate to our aforesaid brother, that he, being placed where he is at present, may consider how he is to order all things. God preserve you in safety, most beloved son.

"Given the 17th of June, in the nineteenth year of the reign of our most religious lord, Mauritius Tiberius Augustus, the eighteenth year after the consulship of our said lord, and the fourth indiction."

## CHAP. XXXI.

### How Pope Gregory, by letter, exhorted Augustine not to glory in his miracles. [601 A.D.]

**A**T which time he also sent Augustine a letter concerning the miracles that he had heard had been wrought by him; wherein he admonishes him not to incur the danger of being puffed up by the number of them. The letter was in these words:

"I know, dearly beloved brother, that Almighty God, by means of you, shows forth great miracles to the nation which it was His will to choose. Wherefore you must needs rejoice with fear, and fear with joy concerning that heavenly gift; for you will rejoice because the souls of the English are by outward miracles drawn to inward grace; but you will fear, lest, amidst the wonders that are wrought, the weak mind may be puffed up with self-esteem, and that whereby it is outwardly raised to honour cause it inwardly to fall through vain-glory. For we must call to mind, that when the disciples returned with joy from preaching, and said to their Heavenly Master, 'Lord, even the devils are subject to us through Thy Name;' forthwith they received the reply, 'In this rejoice not; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.' For their minds were set on private and temporal joys, when they rejoiced in miracles; but they are recalled from the private to the common joy, and from the temporal to the eternal, when it is said to them, 'Rejoice in this, because your names are written in heaven.' For all the elect do not work miracles, and yet the names of all are written in heaven. For those who are disciples of the truth ought not to rejoice, save for that good thing which all men enjoy as well as they, and in which their joy shall be without end.

"It remains, therefore, most dear brother, that amidst those outward actions, which you perform through the power of the Lord, you should always carefully judge yourself in your heart, and carefully understand both what you are yourself, and how much grace is bestowed upon that same nation, for the conversion of which you have received even the gift of working miracles. And if you remember that you have at any time sinned against our Creator, either by word or deed, always call it to mind, to the end that the remembrance of your guilt may crush the vanity which rises in your heart. And whatsoever gift of working miracles you either shall receive, or have received, consider the same, not as conferred on you, but on those for whose salvation it has been given you."

**CHAP. XXXII.****How Pope Gregory sent letters and gifts to King Ethelbert. [601 A.D.]**

**T**HE same blessed Pope Gregory, at the same time, sent a letter to King Ethelbert, with many gifts of divers sorts; being desirous to glorify the king with temporal honours, at the same time that he rejoiced that through his own labour and zeal he had attained to the knowledge of heavenly glory. The copy of the said letter is as follows:

"To the most glorious lord, and his most excellent son, Ethelbert, king of the English, Bishop Gregory. Almighty God advances good men to the government of nations, that He may by their means bestow the gifts of His lovingkindness on those over whom they are placed. This we know to have come to pass in the English nation, over whom your Highness was placed, to the end, that by means of the blessings which are granted to you, heavenly benefits might also be conferred on your subjects. Therefore, my illustrious son, do you carefully guard the grace which you have received from the Divine goodness, and be eager to spread the Christian faith among the people under your rule; in all uprightness increase your zeal for their conversion; suppress the worship of idols; overthrow the structures of the temples; establish the manners of your subjects by much cleanness of life, exhorting, terrifying, winning, correcting, and showing forth an example of good works, that you may obtain your reward in Heaven from Him, Whose Name and the knowledge of Whom you have spread abroad upon earth. For He, Whose honour you seek and maintain among the nations, will also render your Majesty's name more glorious even to posterity.

"For even so the most pious emperor, Constantine, of old, recovering the Roman commonwealth from the false worship of idols, brought it with himself into subjection to Almighty God, our Lord Jesus Christ, and turned to Him with his whole mind, together with the nations under his rule. Whence it followed, that his praises transcended the fame of former princes; and he excelled his predecessors in renown as much as in good works. Now, therefore, let your Highness hasten to impart to the kings and peoples that are subject to you, the knowledge of one God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; that you may surpass the ancient kings of your nation in praise and merit, and while you cause the sins of others among your own subjects to be blotted out, become the more free from anxiety with regard to your own sins before the dread judgement of Almighty God.

"Willingly hear, devoutly perform, and studiously retain in your memory, whatsoever counsel shall be given you by our most reverend brother, Bishop Augustine, who is trained up in the monastic rule, full of the knowledge of Holy Scripture, and, by the help of God, endued with good works; for if you give ear to him when he speaks on behalf of Almighty God, the sooner will Almighty God hear his prayers for you. But if (which God forbid!) you slight his words, how shall Almighty God hear him on your behalf, when you neglect to hear him on behalf of God? Unite yourself, therefore, to him with all your mind, in the fervour of faith, and further his endeavours, by that virtue which God has given you, that He may make you partaker of His kingdom, Whose faith you cause to be received and maintained in your own.

"Besides, we would have your Highness know that, as we find in Holy Scripture from the words of the Almighty Lord, the end of this present world, and the kingdom of the saints, which will never come to an end, is at hand. But as the end of the world draws near, many things are about to come upon us which were not before, to wit, changes in the air, and terrors from heaven, and tempests out of the order of the seasons, wars, famines, pestilences, earthquakes in divers places; which things will not, nevertheless, all happen in our days, but will all follow after our days. If, therefore, you perceive that any of these things come to pass in your country, let not your mind be in any way disturbed; for these signs of the end of the world are sent before, for this reason, that we may take heed to our souls, and be watchful for the hour of death, and may be found prepared with good works to meet our Judge. Thus much, my illustrious son, I have said in few words, with intent-that when the Christian faith is spread abroad in your kingdom, our discourse



to you may also be more copious, and we may desire to say the more, as joy for the full conversion of your nation is increased in our mind.

"I have sent you some small gifts, which will not appear small to you, when received by you with the blessing of the blessed Apostle, Peter. May Almighty God, therefore, perfect in you His grace which He has begun, and prolong your life here through a course of many years, and in the fulness of time receive you into the congregation of the heavenly country. May the grace of God preserve you in safety, my most excellent lord and son.

"Given the 22nd day of June, in the nineteenth year of the reign of our most religious lord, Mauritius Tiberius Augustus, in the eighteenth year after his consulship, and the fourth induction

### **CHAP. XXXIII.**

**How Augustine repaired the church of our Saviour, and built the monastery of the blessed Peter the Apostle; and concerning Peter the first abbot of the same.**

**A**UGUSTINE having had his episcopal see granted him in the royal city, as has been said, recovered therein, with the support of the king, a church, which he was informed had been built of old by the faithful among the Romans, and consecrated it in the name of the Holy Saviour, our Divine Lord Jesus Christ, and there established a residence for himself and all his successors.' He also built a monastery not far from the city to the eastward, in which, by his advice, Ethelbert erected from the foundation the church of the blessed Apostles, Peter and Paul, and enriched it with divers gifts; wherein the bodies of the same Augustine, and of all the bishops of Canterbury, and of the kings of Kent, might be buried. Nevertheless, it was not Augustine himself who consecrated that church, but Laurentius, his successor.

The first abbot of that monastery was the priest Peter, who, being sent on a mission into Gaul, was drowned in a bay of the sea, which is called Amflea, and committed to a humble tomb by the inhabitants of the place; but since it was the will of Almighty God to reveal his merits, a light, from Heaven was seen over his grave every night; till the neighbouring people who saw it, perceiving that he had been a holy man that was buried there, and inquiring who and whence he was, carried away the body, and interred it in the church, in the city of Boulogne, with the honour due to so great a person.

### **CHAP. XXXIV.**

**How Ethelfrid, king of the Northumbrians, having vanquished the nations of the Scots, expelled them from the territories of the English. [603 A. D.]**

**A**T this time, the brave and ambitious king, Ethelfrid, governed the kingdom of the Northumbrians, and ravaged the Britons more than all the chiefs of the English, insomuch that he might be compared to Saul of old, king of the Israelites, save only in this, that he was ignorant of Divine religion. For he conquered more territories from the Britons than any other chieftain or king, either subduing the inhabitants and making them tributary, or driving them out and planting the English in their places. To him might justly be applied the saying of the patriarch blessing his son in the person of Saul, "Benjamin shall ravin as a wolf; in the morning he shall devour the prey, and at night he shall divide the spoil." Hereupon, Aedan, king of the Scots that dwell in Britain, being alarmed by his success, came against him with a great and mighty army, but was defeated and fled with a few followers; for almost all his army was cut to pieces at a famous place, called Degsastan, that is, Degsa Stone. In which battle

also Theodbald, brother to Ethelfrid, was killed, with almost all the forces he commanded. This war Ethelfrid brought to an end in the year of our Lord 603, the eleventh of his own reign, which lasted twenty-four years, and the first year of the reign of Phocas, who then was at the head of the Roman empire. From that time, no king of the Scots durst come into Britain to make war on the English to this day.

## The End of Book One



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