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BEDE

*The Ecclesiastical History  
of the English People  
The Greater Chronicle  
Bede's Letter to Egbert*

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*Edited with an Introduction and Notes by*

JUDITH McCLURE

*and*

ROGER COLLINS

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The England of Bede, c. 731. Place-names from *The Ecclesiastical History*.  
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THE ECCLESIASTICAL  
HISTORY OF  
THE ENGLISH PEOPLE

## PREFACE

To the most glorious King Ceolwulf,\* Bede, servant of Christ and priest.

Your Majesty has asked to see the *History of the English Church and Nation*\* which I have lately published.\* It was with pleasure, sire, that I submitted it for your perusal and criticism on a former occasion; and with pleasure I now send it once again, for copying and fuller study, as time may permit. I gladly acknowledge the unfeigned enthusiasm with which, not content merely to lend an attentive ear to hear the words of Holy Scripture, you devote yourself to learn the sayings and doings of the men of old, and more especially the famous men of our own race. Should history tell of good men\* and their good estate, the thoughtful listener is spurred on to imitate the good; should it record the evil ends of wicked men, no less effectually the devout and earnest listener or reader is kindled to eschew what is harmful and perverse, and himself with greater care pursue those things which he has learned to be good and pleasing in the sight of God. This you perceive, clear-sighted as you are; and therefore, in your zeal for the spiritual well-being of us all, you wish to see my *History* more widely known, for the instruction of yourself and those over whom divine authority has appointed you to rule. Now, in order to remove all occasions of doubt about those things I have written, either in your mind or in the minds of any others who listen to or read this history, I will make it my business to state briefly from what sources\* I have gained my information.

My principal authority and helper in this modest work has been the revered Abbot Albinus,\* a man of universal learning who was educated in the Kentish Church by Archbishop Theodore\* and Abbot Hadrian\* of blessed memory, both venerable and learned men. There he carefully ascertained, from written records or from the old traditions,\* all that the disciples of St Gregory\* had done in the kingdom of Kent or in the neighbouring kingdoms. He passed on to me whatever

seemed worth remembering through Nothhelm, a godly priest of the Church in London, either in writing or by word of mouth. Afterwards Nothhelm\* went to Rome and got permission from the present Pope Gregory\* to search through the archives of the holy Roman church and there found some letters of St Gregory and of other popes. On the advice of Father Albinus he brought them to us on his return to be included in our *History*.

So, from the period at which this volume begins to the time when the English race accepted the faith of Christ, I have obtained my material from here and there, chiefly from the writings of earlier writers.\* From then to the present time I have learned what the disciples of St Gregory or their successors did in the Kentish church and under what kings these events happened, through the efforts of Abbot Albinus, Nothhelm, as I said, acting as intermediary. Some of my information about the East and West Saxons, as well as East Anglia and Northumbria, was provided by them, especially under what bishops and in whose reigns they received the grace of the gospel. In short, it was chiefly through the encouragement of Albinus that I ventured to undertake this work. Daniel,\* the esteemed bishop of the West Saxons who still survives, communicated to me in writing something of the history of the church of his own kingdom, as well as of the neighbouring kingdoms of Sussex and the Isle of Wight. Further I learned from the brethren of the monastery known as Lastingham\* which was founded by Cedd and Chad\* how, through the ministry of these devoted priests of Christ, the kingdom of Mercia achieved the faith of Christ which it had never known, and how the kingdom of Essex recovered the faith which it had formerly rejected. I also learned from the monks of Lastingham about the life and death of these two fathers. Further, I learned the history of the church of East Anglia, partly from the writings or the traditions of men of the past, and partly from the account of the esteemed Abbot Esi.\* As to the kingdom of Lindsey, I learned of the growth of their faith in Christ and of the succession of bishops, either through a letter from the reverend Bishop Cyneberht\* or from the lips of other trustworthy men. But what happened in the church

in the various parts of the kingdom of Northumbria, from the time when they received the faith of Christ up to the present, apart from those matters of which I had personal knowledge, I have learned not from any one source but from the faithful testimony of innumerable witnesses, who either knew or remembered these things. In this respect it is to be noted that what I have written about the most holy father Bishop Cuthbert,\* either in this volume or in his biography, I took partly from what I had previously found written about him by the brethren of the church at Lindisfarne, accepting the story I read in simple faith; but in part I also made it my business to add with care what I was able to learn myself from the trustworthy testimony of reliable witnesses. So I humbly beg the reader, if he finds anything other than the truth set down in what I have written, not to impute it to me. For, in accordance with the principles of true history,\* I have simply sought to commit to writing what I have collected from common report, for the instruction of posterity.

Furthermore I humbly beseech all who either read this history of our nation or hear it read, that they will not forget frequently to ask for God's mercy upon my weaknesses both of mind and body; and that in their various kingdoms they will repay me with good measure. Since I have diligently sought to put on record concerning each of the kingdoms and the more important places, those events which I believe to be worthy of remembrance and likely to be welcome to the inhabitants, let me reap among them all, the harvest of their charitable intercessions.

END OF PREFACE BEGINNING OF CHAPTER HEADINGS

- Gregory about what had been done in Britain, at the same time asking questions and receiving replies on important matters.
28. How Pope Gregory sent a letter to the bishop of Arles asking him to give Augustine help in the work of God.
  29. How the pope sent Augustine a pallium with a letter, and also sent several more ministers of the Word.
  30. A copy of the letter which Pope Gregory sent to Abbot Mellitus who was on his way to Britain.
  31. How he urged Augustine, in a letter, not to glory in the miracles he was performing.
  32. How he sent letters and gifts to King Æthelberht.
  33. How Augustine repaired the church of the Saviour and built the monastery of the Apostle St Peter; and about Peter its first abbot.
  34. How Æthelfrith, king of Northumbria, vanquished the Irish race in battle and drove them from English territories.

END OF CHAPTER HEADINGS BEGINNING OF BOOK I

## CHAPTER 1

BRITAIN,\* once called Albion, is an island of the ocean and lies to the north-west, being opposite Germany, Gaul, and Spain, which form the greater part of Europe, though at a considerable distance from them. It extends 800 miles to the north, and is 200 miles broad, save only where several promontories stretch out further and, counting these, the whole circuit of the coastline covers 4,875 miles.\* To the south lies Belgic Gaul, from which the city called *Rutubi Portus* (which the English now corruptly call *Reptacastir* (Richborough)) is the nearest port for travellers. Between this and the closest point in the land of the Morini, *Gessoriacum* (Boulogne), is a crossing of fifty miles or, as some writers have it, 450 *stadia*. Behind the island, where it lies open to the boundless ocean, are the Orkney islands. The island is rich in crops and in trees, and has good pasturage for cattle and beasts of burden. It also produces vines in certain districts, and has plenty of both land- and waterfowl of various kinds. It is remarkable too for its rivers, which abound in fish, particularly salmon and eels, and for copious springs. Seals as well as dolphins are frequently captured and even whales; besides these there are various kinds of shellfish, among which are mussels, and enclosed in these there are often found excellent pearls of every colour, red and purple, violet and green, but mostly white. There is also a great abundance of whelks, from which a scarlet-coloured dye is made, a most beautiful red which neither fades through the heat of the sun nor exposure to the rain; indeed the older it is the more beautiful it becomes. The land possesses salt springs and warm springs and from them flow rivers which supply hot baths, suitable for all ages and both sexes, in separate places and adapted to the needs of each. For water, as St Basil\* says, acquires the quality of heat when it passes through certain metals, so that it not only becomes warm but even scalding hot. The land also has rich veins of metal, copper, iron, lead, and silver. It produces a great deal of excellent jet, which is glossy black and burns

when put into the fire and, when kindled, it drives away serpents; when it is warmed by rubbing it attracts whatever is applied to it, just as amber does. The country was once famous for its twenty-eight noble cities as well as innumerable fortified places equally well guarded by the strongest of walls and towers, gates and locks. Because Britain lies almost under the North Pole, it has short nights in summer, so that often at midnight it is hard for those who are watching to say whether it is evening twilight which still lingers, or whether morning dawn has come, since the sun at night returns to the east through the regions towards the north without passing far below the horizon. For this reason the summer days are extremely long. On the other hand the winter nights are also of great length, namely eighteen hours, doubtless because the sun has then departed to the region of Africa. In summer too the nights are extremely short; so are the days in winter, each consisting of six standard equinoctial hours, while in Armenia, Macedonia, Italy, and other countries in the same latitude the longest day or night consists of fifteen hours and the shortest of nine.

At the present time, there are five languages\* in Britain, just as the divine law is written in five books, all devoted to seeking out and setting forth one and the same kind of wisdom, namely the knowledge of sublime truth and of true sublimity. These are the English, British, Irish, Pictish, as well as the Latin languages; through the study of the scriptures, Latin is in general use among them all. To begin with, the inhabitants of the island were all Britons,\* from whom it receives its name; they sailed to Britain, so it is said, from the land of Armorica,\* and appropriated to themselves the southern part of it. After they had got possession of the greater part of the island, beginning from the south, it is related that the Pictish race\* from Scythia sailed out into the ocean in a few warships and were carried by the wind beyond the furthest bounds of Britain, reaching Ireland\* and landing on its northern shores. There they found the Irish race and asked permission to settle among them but their request was refused. Now Ireland is the largest island of all next to Britain, and lies to the west of it. But though it is shorter than Britain to the north, yet in the

south it extends far beyond the limits of that island and as far as the level of North Spain, though a great expanse of sea divides them. The Picts then came to this island, as we have said, by sea and asked for the grant of a place to settle in. The Irish answered that the island would not hold them both; 'but', said they, 'we can give you some good advice as to what to do. We know of another island not far from our own, in an easterly direction, which we often see in the distance on clear days. If you will go there, you can make a settlement for yourselves; but if any one resists you, make use of our help.' And so the Picts went to Britain and proceeded to occupy the northern parts of the island, because the Britons had seized the southern regions. As the Picts had no wives, they asked the Irish for some; the latter consented to give them women, only on condition that, in all cases of doubt, they should elect their kings from the female royal line rather than the male; and it is well known that the custom has been observed among the Picts to this day. In course of time Britain received a third tribe in addition to the Britons and the Picts, namely the Irish. These came from Ireland under their leader Reuda, and won lands among the Picts either by friendly treaty or by the sword. These they still possess. They are still called Dalreudini\* after this leader, *Dal* in their language signifying a part.

Ireland\* is broader than Britain, is healthier and has a much milder climate, so that snow rarely lasts there for more than three days. Hay is never cut in summer for winter use nor are stables built for their beasts. No reptile is found there nor could a serpent survive; for although serpents have often been brought from Britain, as soon as the ship approaches land they are affected by the scent of the air and quickly perish. In fact almost everything that the island produces is efficacious against poison. For instance we have seen how, in the case of people suffering from snake-bite, the leaves of manuscripts from Ireland were scraped, and the scrapings put in water and given to the sufferer to drink. These scrapings at once absorbed the whole violence of the spreading poison and assuaged the swelling. The island abounds in milk and honey, nor does it lack vines, fish, and birds. It is also noted for the



hunting of stags and roe-deer. It is properly the native land of the Irish; they emigrated from it as we have described and so formed the third nation in Britain in addition to the Britons and the Picts. There is a very wide arm of the sea which originally divided the Britons from the Picts. It runs far into the land from the west. Here there is to this day a very strongly fortified British town called Alcluith (Dumbarton). The Irish whom we have mentioned settled to the north of this arm of the sea and made their home there.

## CHAPTER 2

Now Britain\* had never been visited by the Romans and was unknown to them until the time of Gaius Julius Caesar who, in the year of Rome 693,\* that is, in the year 60 before our Lord, was consul with Lucius Bibulus. When he was waging war against the Germans and the Gauls, who were divided only by the river Rhine, he came to the Morini, from whose land is the nearest and shortest crossing to Britain. He prepared about eighty transport ships and light vessels and sailed across to Britain, where first of all he was roughly handled in a severe battle and then caught by a contrary gale, so that he lost a great part of his fleet and no small number of his soldiers, including almost all his cavalry. He returned to Gaul, sent the legions into winter quarters, and then gave orders for the construction of 600 ships of both types. With these he sailed to Britain again in early spring. But while he was marching against the enemy with his army, the ships riding at anchor were caught by a storm and either dashed against each other or cast up on the sands and broken up. Forty of them were lost and the rest were only repaired with great difficulty. At the first encounter Caesar's cavalry were defeated by the Britons and there the tribune Labienus was killed. In the second battle, though his men incurred heavy risks, he conquered the Britons and put them to flight. Thence he marched to the river Thames. An immense multitude of the enemy was established on the further bank under the leadership of Cassobellaunus (Cassivelaunus). The bank of the river

and almost all the ford beneath the water had been blocked with sharp stakes. The traces of these stakes are visible even today; each of them, on inspection, is seen to be about the thickness of a man's thigh encased in lead and fixed immovably in the river bed. The Romans saw and avoided these, so the barbarians, being unable to resist the charge of the legions, hid themselves in the woods, from which they made constant sallies and frequently did the Romans great damage. Meanwhile the strongest city of the Trinovantes with its leader Androgeus surrendered to Caesar and gave him forty hostages. Several other towns followed their example and made terms with the Romans. With their guidance Caesar, at length, after heavy fighting, captured the town of Cassivelaunus, which was situated between two marshes and further fortified by a belt of woodland and provided with ample stores of every kind. After this Caesar returned from Britain to Gaul, but no sooner had he sent his legions to their winter quarters than he was surrounded and assailed on every hand by sudden wars and tumults.

## CHAPTER 3

IN the year of Rome\* 798 the Emperor Claudius, fourth after\* Augustus, wishing to prove that he was a benefactor to the State, sought to make war everywhere and to gain victories on every hand. So he made an expedition to Britain, which had apparently been roused to rebellion because of the refusal of the Romans to give up some deserters. He crossed to the island which no one either before or after Julius Caesar had dared to invade until then, and without any fighting or bloodshed he received the surrender of the greater part of the island within a very few days. He even annexed to the Roman empire the Orkneys, some islands which lie in the Ocean beyond Britain. He returned to Rome only six months after he had set out and gave his son the title of Britannicus. He brought the war to an end in the fourth year\* of his reign, that is in the year of our Lord 46, the year in which occurred the very severe famine throughout Syria, which, as is recorded

more readily as he prays for you. But if, which God forbid, you neglect his words, how can Almighty God listen to him when he speaks on your behalf, seeing that you fail to listen to him when he speaks on God's behalf? So ally yourself to him with all your heart in fervent faith and aid his efforts with that vigour which God has bestowed on you, so that He may make you share in His kingdom, if you cause His faith to be accepted in your kingdom.

Besides, we would wish your Majesty to know that the end of the world is at hand, as we learn from the words of Almighty God in the holy scriptures; and the kingdom of the saints which knows no end is near. As the end of the world approaches,\* many things threaten which have never happened before; these are changes in the sky and terrors from the heavens, unseasonable tempests, wars, famine, pestilence, and earthquakes in divers places. Not all these things will come about in our days, but they will all follow after our days. So if you see any of these things happening in your land, do not be troubled in mind; for these signs of the end of the world are sent in advance to make us heedful about our souls, watching for the hour of death, so that when the Judge comes we may, through our good works, be found prepared. I have said these things briefly, my distinguished son, but when the Christian faith increases in your kingdom, our discourses to you will become more abundant and we shall be ready to speak more fully in proportion as the joys of our heart are multiplied by the complete conversion of your race.

I am sending you some small gifts which will not be small to you, because you will receive them with the blessing of St Peter the Apostle. And may Almighty God fulfil the grace which He has begun in you and prolong your life here for many years, and in due time receive you into the fellowship of the heavenly country. May the grace of God keep your excellency in safety, my lord and son.

Given the 22 June, in the nineteenth year of the reign of our most religious emperor, Maurice Tiberius Augustus, the eighteenth year after his consulship and in the fourth indiction.

## CHAPTER 33

AFTER Augustine had, as we said before, received his episcopal see in the royal city, he with the help of the king restored a church\* in it, which, as he was informed, had been built in ancient times by the hands of Roman believers. He dedicated it in the name of the holy Saviour, our Lord and

God, Jesus Christ; and there he established a dwelling for himself and all his successors. He also founded a monastery\* not far from the city, to the east, in which Æthelberht, encouraged by him, built from its foundations the church of the Apostles St Peter and St Paul and endowed it with various gifts, so that the bodies of Augustine himself and all the bishops of Canterbury and the kings of Kent might be placed in it. The church was consecrated, not by Augustine but by his successor Laurence.

The first abbot of this monastery was the priest Peter, who was sent on a mission to Gaul and was drowned in a bay of the sea known as *Amflea* (Ambleteuse). He was given an unworthy burial by the inhabitants of the place but, in order that Almighty God might show how worthy a man he was, a heavenly light appeared every night above his grave until at last the people of the neighbourhood noticed it. They saw that it was a saint who had been buried there; so, after making inquiries as to who he was and whence he came, they removed his body and put it in a church in Boulogne with all the honour due to so great a man.

## CHAPTER 34

AT this time Æthelfrith,\* a very brave king and most eager for glory, was ruling over the kingdom of Northumbria. He ravaged the Britons more extensively than any other English ruler. He might indeed be compared with Saul who was once king of Israel, but with this exception, that Æthelfrith was ignorant of the divine religion. For no ruler or king had subjected more land to the English race or settled it, having first either exterminated or conquered the natives. To him, in the character of Saul, could fittingly be applied the words which the patriarch said when he was blessing his son, 'Benjamin shall ravin as a wolf; in the morning he shall devour the prey and at night shall divide the spoil.\*' For this reason Aedan,\* king of the Irish living in Britain, aroused by his successes, marched against him with an immensely strong army; but he was defeated and fled with few survivors. In-

deed, almost all his army was cut to pieces in a very famous place called *Degsastan*, that is the stone of Degsa.\* In this fight Theobald,\* Æthelfrith's brother, was killed together with all his army. Æthelfrith brought this war to an end in the year of our Lord 603, and the eleventh year of his reign, which lasted for twenty-four years. It was also the first year of the reign of Phocas\* who was then Roman emperor. From that time no Irish king in Britain has dared to make war on the English race to this day.

## BOOK II

Here are the contents of the second book of the history of the Church of the English people.

1. Concerning the death of the blessed Pope Gregory.
2. How Augustine gave warning to the British bishops on the subject of catholic peace and also performed a miracle in their presence; and the vengeance which overtook them because they despised him.
3. How he consecrated Mellitus and Justus bishops; and about his death.
4. How Laurence and his fellow bishops warned the Irish about preserving the unity of the holy Church, especially in the matter of keeping Easter; and how Mellitus went to Rome.
5. How, on the deaths of Æthelberht and Sæberht, their successors restored idolatry; for which reason Mellitus and Justus left Britain.
6. How Laurence was reproved by the apostle Peter and converted King Badbald to Christ; and how the king recalled Mellitus and Justus.
7. How Bishop Mellitus, when his city was on fire, extinguished the flames by his prayers.
8. How Pope Boniface sent the pallium and a letter to Justus, the successor of Mellitus.
9. About Edwin's reign and how Paulinus came to preach the gospel to him; how he first administered the sacraments of the Christian faith to Edwin's daughter as well as to others.
10. How Pope Boniface sent a letter urging the king to embrace the faith.
11. How he sent a letter to Edwin's wife urging her to use her best endeavours for his salvation.
12. How Edwin was encouraged to believe by a vision which he had once seen when in exile.
13. How he took counsel with his chief men about receiving the faith of Christ; and how their chief priest profaned his own altars.

again in glory together with the other pastors of the Church. His epitaph written on his tomb runs as follows:

Earth, take this corse—'tis dust of thine own dust:  
 When God shall give new life, restore thy trust.  
 Star-bound his soul: for Death's writ does not run  
 Where grave's but gateway to life new-begun.  
 A great high-priest this sepulchre inherits,  
 Who lives for ever by uncounted merits;  
 Hunger with meat, winter with clothes he ended,  
 Souls with sound learning from the foe defended;  
 Whate'er he taught, himself fulfilled in act—  
 Mystic his words, but his example fact.  
 Anglia to Christ at piety's dictation  
 He turned, won thousands from an unknown nation.  
 Thus that great shepherd laboured, thus he wrought;  
 To increase his Master's flock was all his thought.  
 Take thy reward in triumph and in joy,  
 Who in God's council sit'st eternally!

We must not fail to relate the story about St Gregory which has come down to us as a tradition of our forefathers. It explains the reason why he showed such earnest solicitude for the salvation of our race. It is said that one day, soon after some merchants had arrived in Rome, a quantity of merchandise was exposed for sale in the market-place. Crowds came to buy and Gregory too amongst them. As well as other merchandise he saw some boys put up for sale, with fair complexions, handsome faces, and lovely hair. On seeing them he asked, so it is said, from what region or land they had been brought. He was told that they came from the island of Britain, whose inhabitants were like that in appearance. He asked again whether those islanders were Christians or still entangled in the errors of heathenism. He was told that they were heathen. Then with a deep-drawn sigh he said, 'Alas that the author of darkness should have men so bright of face in his grip, and that minds devoid of inward grace should bear so graceful an outward form.' Again he asked for the name of the race. He was told that they were called *Angli*. 'Good', he said, 'they have the face of angels, and such men should be fellow-heirs of the angels in heaven'. 'What is the name', he

asked, 'of the kingdom from which they have been brought?' He was told that the men of the kingdom were called *Deiri*. 'Deiri', he replied, '*De ira!* good! snatched from the wrath of Christ and called to his mercy. And what is the name of the king of the land?' He was told that it was *Ælle*\*, and playing on the name, he said, 'Alleluia! the praise of God the Creator must be sung in those parts.' So he went to the bishop of Rome and of the apostolic see, for he himself had not yet been made pope, and asked him to send some ministers of the word to the race of the Angles in Britain to convert them to Christ. He added that he himself was prepared to carry out the task with the help of the Lord provided that the pope was willing. But he was unable to perform this mission, because although the pope was willing to grant his request, the citizens of Rome could not permit him to go so far away from the city. Soon after he had become pope, he fulfilled the task which he had long desired. It is true that he sent other preachers, but he himself helped their preaching to bear fruit by his encouragement and prayers. I have thought it proper to insert this story\* into this *Church History*, based as it is on the tradition which we have received from our ancestors.

## CHAPTER 2

MEANWHILE Augustine, making use of the help of King Æthelberht, summoned the bishops and teachers of the neighbouring British kingdom to a conference at a place which is still called in English *Augustinæ Ac*, that is Augustine's oak, on the borders of the Hwicce\* and the West Saxons. He proceeded to urge them with brotherly admonitions, that they should preserve catholic peace with him and undertake the joint labour of evangelizing the heathen for the Lord's sake. They did not keep Easter Sunday\* at the proper time, but from the fourteenth to the twentieth day of the lunar month; this reckoning is based on an 84-year cycle. They did other things too which were not in keeping with the unity of the Church. After a long dispute they were unwilling, in spite of the prayers, exhortations, and rebukes of Augustine and his

companions to give their assent, preferring their own traditions to those in which all the churches throughout the world agree in Christ. The holy father Augustine brought the long and wearisome struggle to an end by saying, 'Let us pray God who makes men to be of one mind in his Father's house to vouchsafe to show us by heavenly signs which tradition is to be followed and by what paths we must hasten to enter his kingdom. Let some sick man be brought, and let the faith and practice of him by whose prayers he is healed be considered as in accordance with God's will and proper for us all to follow.' His adversaries agreed unwillingly and a man of English race was brought forward who was blind. He was presented to the British bishops, but no healing or benefit was obtained from their ministry. Then Augustine, compelled by genuine necessity, prayed, bowing his knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that he would restore his lost sight to the blind man and, through the bodily enlightenment of one man, would bring the grace of spiritual light to the hearts of many believers. At once the blind man's sight was restored and all acknowledged Augustine to be a true herald of the heavenly light. Then the Britons confessed that they realized that it was the true way of righteousness which Augustine preached but that they could not disown their former customs without the consent and approval of their own people. They therefore asked that a conference should be held for a second time and that more should attend.

When this had been decided upon, it is related that seven British bishops and many learned men came, chiefly from their most famous monastery which the English call *Bancornaburg*\* (Bangor Iscoed). At that time it is said to have been ruled over by Abbot Dinoot. As they were about to set out for the conference, they went first to a certain holy and prudent man who lived as a hermit among them to consult him as to whether they ought to forsake their own traditions at the bidding of Augustine. He answered, 'If he is a man of God, follow him.' They replied, 'But how can we tell?' He answered, 'The Lord said: Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart. If this Augustine is meek and lowly of heart, it is to be supposed that he himself

bears the yoke of Christ and is offering it to you to bear; but if he is harsh and proud, it follows that he is not from God and we have no need to regard his words.' Once more they said, 'But how can we know even this?' He said, 'Contrive that he and his followers arrive first at the meeting place and, if he rises on your approach, you will know that he is a servant of Christ and will listen to him obediently; but if he despises you and is not willing to rise in your presence, even though your numbers are greater, you should despise him in return.' They did as he had said. Now it happened that Augustine remained seated while they were coming in; when they saw this, they forthwith became enraged and, setting him down as a proud man, strove to contradict everything he said. Then he said to them, 'You do many things which are contrary to our customs or rather to the customs of the universal Church; nevertheless, if you are willing to submit to me in three points, we will gladly tolerate all else that you do, even though it is contrary to our customs. The three points are: to keep Easter at the proper time; to perform the sacrament of baptism, whereby we are born again to God, according to the rites of the holy Roman and apostolic Church; and to preach the word of the Lord to the English people in fellowship with us.' They answered that they would do none of these things nor would they accept him as their archbishop, saying between themselves that if he was even unwilling to rise at their approach now, he would despise them much more if they were to begin to give way to him. It is said that Augustine, the man of God, warned them with threats that, if they refused to accept peace from their brethren, they would have to accept war from their enemies; and if they would not preach the way of life to the English nation, they would one day suffer the vengeance of death at their hands. This, through the workings of divine judgement, came to pass in every particular as he had foretold.

For later on, that very powerful king of the English, Æthelfrith, whom we have already spoken of, collected a great army against the city of the legions which is called *Legacæstir* by the English and more correctly *Caerlegion* (Chester) by the Britons, and made a great slaughter of that nation of heretics.

When he was about to give battle and saw their priests, who had assembled to pray to God on behalf of the soldiers taking part in the fight, standing apart in a safer place, he asked who they were and for what purpose they had gathered there. Most of them were from the monastery of Bangor, where there was said to be so great a number of monks that, when it was divided into seven parts with superiors over each, no division had less than 300 men, all of whom were accustomed to live by the labour of their hands. After a three days' fast, most of these had come to the battle in order to pray with the others. They had a guard named Brocmail, whose duty it was to protect them against the barbarians' swords while they were praying. When Æthelfrith heard why they had come he said, 'If they are praying to their God against us, then, even if they do not bear arms, they are fighting against us, assailing us as they do with prayers for our defeat.' So he ordered them to be attacked first and then he destroyed the remainder of their wicked host, though not without heavy losses. It is said that in this battle about twelve hundred men were slain who had come to pray and only fifty escaped by flight. Brocmail and his men at the first enemy attack turned their backs on those whom they should have defended, leaving them unarmed and helpless before the swords of their foes. Thus the prophecy of the holy Bishop Augustine was fulfilled, although he had long been translated to the heavenly kingdom, namely that those heretics would also suffer the vengeance of temporal death because they had despised the offer of everlasting salvation.

## CHAPTER 3

IN the year of our Lord 604 Augustine, archbishop of Britain, consecrated two bishops, namely Mellitus and Justus. He consecrated Mellitus to preach in the province of the East Saxons, which is divided from Kent by the river Thames and borders on the sea to the east. Its chief city is London, which is on the banks of that river and is an emporium\* for many nations who come to it by land and sea. At that time Sæberht, nephew of Æthelberht and son of his sister Ricule, ruled over the nation although he was under the dominion of

Æthelberht's who, as already said, held sway over all the English nations as far as the Humber. After this race had accepted the word of truth through the preaching of Mellitus, King Æthelberht built the church of the apostle St Paul in the city of London, in which Mellitus and his successors were to have their episcopal seat. Augustine consecrated Justus in Kent itself, in the city of *Dorubrevis* which the English call *Hrofæscæstræ* (Rochester), after one of their former chiefs whose name was Hrof. It is about twenty-four miles west of Canterbury and in it King Æthelberht built the church of the apostle St Andrew;\* he later bestowed many gifts on the bishops of each of these churches and that of Canterbury; and he also added both lands and possessions for the maintenance of the bishops' retinues.

On the death\* of our father Augustine, a man beloved of God, his body was buried outside but close to the church of the apostles St Peter and St Paul mentioned already, for it was not yet either finished or consecrated. But as soon as it was consecrated, the body was carried inside and honourably buried in the chapel on the north side. In it the bodies of all succeeding archbishops have been buried with the exception of two, Theodore and Berhtwald, whose bodies were placed in the church itself because there was no more room in the chapel. Almost in the middle of the chapel is an altar dedicated in honour of the pope St Gregory, at which a priest of that place celebrates a solemn mass in their memory every Saturday. This is the epitaph inscribed on Augustine's tomb: 'Here lies the most reverend Augustine, first archbishop of Canterbury, who was formerly sent hither by St Gregory, bishop of Rome; being supported by God in the working of miracles, he led King Æthelberht and his nation from the worship of idols to faith in Christ and ended the days of his office in peace; he died on the twenty-sixth day of May during the reign of the same king.'

## CHAPTER 4

AUGUSTINE was succeeded in the episcopate by Laurence, whom he had consecrated during his lifetime\* lest, when he

mind of your illustrious husband but of all the nation that is subject to you.

We have been informed by those who came to tell us of the happy conversion of our illustrious son King Eadbald, that your Majesty, who had also accepted the wondrous mystery of the Christian faith, continually shines in pious works pleasing to God and diligently avoids the worship of idols and the enticements of shrines and soothsaying; that, with unimpaired devotion, you occupy yourself so much with the love of your Redeemer that you never cease from lending your aid in spreading the Christian faith. But when, in our fatherly love, we inquired earnestly about your illustrious husband, we learned that he was still serving abominable idols and hesitated to hear and obey the words of the preachers. This caused us no small grief, that he who is one flesh with you should remain a stranger to the knowledge of the supreme and undivided Trinity. Therefore we do not hesitate, in accordance with our fatherly duty, to send a warning to your Christian Highness; we urge you that, being imbued with the Holy Spirit, you should not hesitate, in season and out of season, to labour so that, through the power of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, he may be added to the number of the Christians, so that you may thereby enjoy the rights of marriage in undefiled union. For it is written, 'They twain shall be one flesh': how then can it be said that there is unity between you if he continues a stranger to your shining faith, seeing that the darkness of detestable error remains between you?

So, applying yourself continually to prayer, do not cease to pray to God to grant him, in His long-suffering mercy, the benefits of His illumination: so that those who have been united by the bonds of earthly marriage may also, when this life has passed, be for ever united in the bonds of faith. Therefore, my illustrious daughter, persevere with all your might to soften his hard heart as soon as possible, by piously teaching him God's commandments. Pour into his mind a knowledge of the greatness of the mystery in which you have believed and the wonder of the reward which, by the new birth, you have been accounted worthy to receive. In flame his cold heart by teaching him about the Holy Spirit, so that he may lose that numbness which an evil religion produces and so that the warmth of divine faith may, through your frequent exhortations, kindle his understanding. Then the testimony of holy scripture will be clearly and abundantly fulfilled in you: 'The unbelieving husband shall be saved by the believing wife.' For this reason you have obtained the mercy of the Lord, in order that you might restore to your Redeemer an abundant harvest of faith in return for the benefits bestowed upon

you. We never cease to pray that, with God's merciful help, you may fulfil this task. We have mentioned these matters, prompted by our duty and our fatherly love for you: now we urge you that as soon as a messenger is available you should, with all speed, comfort us with the good news of the wonders which the Almighty has seen fit to work through you, in the conversion of your husband and of the peoples subject to him; so that our anxiety for the salvation of the souls of you all may be set at rest by your letter. Then, as we see the enlightenment of God's redemption more widely spread among you, we may give our abundant thanks, as is right, in joyful acknowledgement to God the giver of all good things and to St Peter, chief of the apostles.

As well as the blessing of St Peter, chief of the apostles and your protector, we send a silver mirror and an ivory comb adorned with gold. We beseech your Majesty to accept it in the same kindly spirit as that in which it is sent.

## CHAPTER 12

SUCH was the letter Pope Boniface wrote concerning the salvation of King Edwin and his race. But a heavenly vision which God in His mercy had deigned to reveal to Edwin when he was once in exile at the court of Rædwald, king of the Angles, helped him in no small measure to understand and accept in his heart the counsels of salvation. Paulinus saw how difficult it was for the king's proud mind to turn humbly to the way of salvation and accept the mystery of the life-giving cross; yet he continued to labour for the salvation of the king and also the people he ruled, uttering words of exhortation to men as well as words of prayer to the merciful Lord. At length, as seems most probable, he was shown in spirit the nature of the vision which God had once revealed to the king. Nor did he lose any time in warning the king to fulfil the vows which, when he saw the vision, he had undertaken to perform if he should be delivered from the trouble he was then in and should ascend the royal throne.

This was his vision: when he was being persecuted by his predecessor Æthelfrith,\* he wandered secretly as a fugitive for many years through many places and kingdoms, until at last

he came to Rædwald and asked him for protection against the plots of his powerful persecutor. Rædwald received him gladly, promising to do what he asked. But when Æthelfrith learned that he had been seen in that kingdom and was living on intimate terms with the king among his retainers, he sent messengers offering Rædwald large sums of money to put Edwin to death. But it had no effect. He sent a second and third time, offering even larger gifts of silver and further threatening to make war on him if Rædwald despised his offer. The king, being either weakened by his threats or corrupted by his bribes, yielded to his request and promised either to slay Edwin or to give him up to the messengers. A very faithful friend of Edwin's found this out and entered his room where he was preparing to sleep, for it was the first hour of the night. He called him outside and told him what the king had promised to do with him, adding, 'If you are willing I will take you from this kingdom this very hour and guide you to a place where neither Rædwald nor Æthelfrith will ever be able to find you.' Edwin answered, 'I thank you for your goodwill, but I cannot do what you say, as I should have to be the first to break the compact which I made with this great king; he has done me no wrong nor shown any enmity towards me so far. If I am to die, let me rather die by his hand than at the hands of some meaner person. Whither am I now to fly seeing that I have been wandering for long years throughout all the kingdoms of Britain, trying to avoid the snares of my enemies?' So his friend went away, but Edwin remained alone outside, sitting sadly in front of the palace with his mind in a tumult, not knowing what to do or which way to turn.

He remained long in silent anguish of spirit and 'consumed with inward fire', when suddenly at dead of night, he saw a man silently approach him whose face and attire were strange to him. When he saw this unexpected stranger, he was not a little alarmed. But the stranger approached and greeted him, asking why he was sitting so sadly upon a stone, watchful and alone, when everyone else was resting and fast asleep. Edwin asked in return what concern it was of his, whether he passed the night indoors or out. The stranger replied, 'Do not think I am unaware of the cause of your sorrow and sleeplessness

and why you sit alone outside, for I know quite well who you are and why you grieve and the ills which you fear will soon come upon you. But tell me what reward you are willing to give to anyone who would free you from these troubles and persuade Rædwald not to do you any wrong himself nor give you over to your enemies to perish.' Edwin answered that he would give such a person all that he was able in return for such a service. 'And what', said the stranger, 'if he assured you that your enemies would be destroyed and that you would be a king who surpassed in power not only all your ancestors, but also all who have reigned before you over the English?' Edwin, encouraged by his questions, did not hesitate to promise that he would be suitably grateful to anyone who offered him such benefits. Then he asked him a third time, 'If the one who truly foretold all these great and wonderful benefits could also give you better and more useful counsel as to your salvation and your way of life than any of your parents and kinsmen ever heard, would you consent to obey him and to accept his saving advice?' Edwin did not hesitate to promise at once that he would follow in every particular the teaching of that one who could rescue him from so many troubles and raise him to the throne. Upon this answer the one who was speaking to him immediately laid his right hand on Edwin's head and said, 'When this sign shall come to you, remember this occasion and our conversation, and do not hesitate to fulfil what you are now promising.' On these words it is related\* that he suddenly disappeared so that Edwin might realise that it was not a man but a spirit who had appeared to him.

The young prince continued to sit there alone, rejoicing in the consolation he had received but much concerned and anxiously wondering who the person might be who had conversed with him and whence he came. Meanwhile his friend already mentioned returned, joyfully greeted him, and said, 'Rise and come inside; put away your anxieties and let both your mind and your body rest in peace. The king has changed his mind and intends to do you no wrong but to keep faith with you. When he secretly revealed to the queen the plan I told you of, she dissuaded him from it, warning him



that it was in no way fitting for so great a king to sell his best friend for gold when he was in such trouble, still less to sacrifice his own honour, which is more precious than any ornament, for the love of money.' To be brief, the king did as he had said and not only did he not betray the exile to the enemy messengers but he even assisted Edwin to gain the throne. As soon as the messengers had returned home, he raised a large army to overthrow Æthelfrith. Not giving him time to summon and assemble his whole army, Rædwald met him with a much greater force and slew him on the Mercian border on the east bank of the river Idle.\* In this battle Rædwald's son, Regenhere, was killed. Thus Edwin, in accordance with the vision he had received, not only avoided the snares of the king his enemy but after he was killed succeeded him on the throne.

King Edwin hesitated to accept the word of God which Paulinus preached but, as we have said, used to sit alone for hours at a time, earnestly debating within himself what he ought to do and what religion he should follow. One day Paulinus came to him and, placing his right hand on the king's head, asked him if he recognized this sign. The king began to tremble and would have thrown himself at the bishop's feet but Paulinus raised him up and said in a voice that seemed familiar, 'First you have escaped with God's help from the hands of the foes you feared; secondly you have acquired by His gift the kingdom you desired; now, in the third place, remember your own promise; do not delay in fulfilling it but receive the faith and keep the commandments of Him who rescued you from your earthly foes and raised you to the honour of an earthly kingdom. If from henceforth you are willing to follow His will which is made known to you through me, He will also rescue you from the everlasting torments of the wicked and make you a partaker with Him of His eternal kingdom in heaven.'

### CHAPTER 13

WHEN the king had heard his words, he answered that he was both willing and bound to accept the faith which Paulinus

taught. He said, however, that he would confer about this with his loyal chief men and his counsellors so that, if they agreed with him, they might all be consecrated together in the waters of life. Paulinus agreed and the king did as he had said. A meeting of his council\* was held and each one was asked in turn what he thought of this doctrine hitherto unknown to them and this new worship of God which was being proclaimed.

Coifi, the chief of the priests, answered at once, 'Notice carefully, King, this doctrine which is now being expounded to us. I frankly admit that, for my part, I have found that the religion which we have hitherto held has no virtue nor profit in it. None of your followers has devoted himself more earnestly than I have to the worship of our gods, but nevertheless there are many who receive greater benefits and greater honour from you than I do and are more successful in all their undertakings. If the gods had any power they would have helped me more readily, seeing that I have always served them with greater zeal. So it follows that if, on examination, these new doctrines which have now been explained to us are found to be better and more effectual, let us accept them at once without any delay.'

Another of the king's chief men agreed with this advice and with these wise words and then added, 'This is how the present life of man on earth, King, appears to me in comparison with that time which is unknown to us. You are sitting feasting with your ealdormen and thegns in winter time; the fire is burning on the hearth in the middle of the hall and all inside is warm, while outside the wintry storms of rain and snow are raging; and a sparrow flies swiftly through the hall. It enters in at one door and quickly flies out through the other. For the few moments it is inside, the storm and wintry tempest cannot touch it, but after the briefest moment of calm, it flits from your sight, out of the wintry storm and into it again. So this life of man appears but for a moment; what follows or indeed what went before, we know not at all. If this new doctrine brings us more certain information, it seems right that we should accept it.' Other elders and counsellors of the king

continued in the same manner, being divinely prompted to do so.

Coifi added that he would like to listen still more carefully to what Paulinus himself had to say about God. The king ordered Paulinus to speak, and when he had said his say, Coifi exclaimed, 'For a long time now I have realized that our religion is worthless; for the more diligently I sought the truth in our cult, the less I found it. Now I confess openly that the truth shines out clearly in this teaching which can bestow on us the gift of life, salvation, and eternal happiness. Therefore I advise your Majesty that we should promptly abandon and commit to the flames the temples and the altars which we have held sacred without reaping any benefit.' Why need I say more? The king publicly accepted the gospel which Paulinus preached, renounced idolatry, and confessed his faith in Christ. When he asked the high priest of their religion which of them should be the first to profane the altars and the shrines of the idols, together with their precincts, Coifi answered, 'I will; for through the wisdom the true God has given me no one can more suitably destroy those things which I once foolishly worshipped, and so set an example to all.' And at once, casting aside his vain superstitions, he asked the king to provide him with arms and a stallion; and mounting it he set out to destroy the idols. Now a high priest of their religion was not allowed to carry arms or to ride except on a mare. So, girded with a sword, he took a spear in his hand and mounting the king's stallion he set off to where the idols were. The common people who saw him thought he was mad. But as soon as he approached the shrine, without any hesitation he profaned it by casting the spear which he held into it; and greatly rejoicing in the knowledge of the worship of the true God, he ordered his companions to destroy and set fire to the shrine and all the enclosures. The place where the idols once stood is still shown, not far from York, to the east, over the river Derwent. Today it is called Goodmanham,\* the place where the high priest, through the inspiration of the true God, profaned and destroyed the altars which he himself had consecrated.

## CHAPTER 14

So King Edwin, with all the nobles of his race and a vast number of the common people, received the faith and regeneration by holy baptism\* in the eleventh year of his reign, that is in the year of our Lord 627 and about 180 years after the coming of the English to Britain. He was baptized at York on Easter Day, 12 April, in the church of St Peter the Apostle, which he had hastily built of wood while he was a catechumen and under instruction before he received baptism. He established an episcopal see for Paulinus, his instructor and bishop, in the same city. Very soon after his baptism, he set about building a greater and more magnificent church of stone,\* under the instructions of Paulinus, in the midst of which the chapel which he had first built was to be enclosed. The foundations were laid and he began to build this square church surrounding the former chapel. But before the walls were raised to their full height, the king was slain by a cruel death and the work left for his successor Oswald to finish. Paulinus continued to preach the word of the Lord in that kingdom for six years, that is, until the end of the king's reign, with his consent and favour. As many as were foreordained to eternal life believed and were baptized, among whom were Osfrith and Eadfrith, sons of King Edwin, their mother being Cwenburh, daughter of Ceorl,\* king of the Mercians; they were born while he was in exile.

Other children of his by Queen Æthelburh were baptized later on, namely Æthelhun and a daughter Æthelthryth and a second son Uscfrea; the first two were snatched from this life while they were still wearing the chrisom\* and are buried in the church at York. Yffi, son of Osfrith, was also baptized and not a few others of noble and royal stock. So great is said to have been the fervour of the faith of the Northumbrians and their longing for the washing of salvation, that once when Paulinus came to the king and queen in their royal palace at Yeavering,\* he spent thirty-six days there occupied in the task of catechizing and baptizing. During these days, from morning till evening, he did nothing else but instruct the

crowds who flocked to him from every village and district in the teaching of Christ. When they had received instruction he washed them in the waters of regeneration in the river Glen, which was close at hand. This palace was left deserted in the time of the kings who followed Edwin, and another was built instead in a place called *Maelmin*.

All this happened in the kingdom of Bernicia; but also in the kingdom of Deira where he used to stay very frequently with the king, he baptized in the river Swale which flows beside the town of Catterick. For they were not yet able to build chapels or baptistries there in the earliest days of the church. Nevertheless in *Cambodonum* where there was also a royal dwelling, he built a church which was afterwards burnt down, together with the whole of the buildings, by the heathen who slew King Edwin. In its place, later kings built a dwelling for themselves in the region known as *Loidis*. The altar escaped from the fire because it was of stone, and is still preserved in the monastery of the most reverend abbot and priest Thrythwulf, which is in the forest of Elmet.\*

## CHAPTER 15

So great was Edwin's devotion to the true worship, that he also persuaded Eorpwald,\* son of Rædwald\* and king of the East Angles, to abandon his idolatrous superstitions and, together with his kingdom, to accept the Christian faith and sacraments. Indeed his father Rædwald had long before been initiated into the mysteries of the Christian faith in Kent, but in vain; for on his return home, he was seduced by his wife and by certain evil teachers and perverted from the sincerity of his faith, so that his last state was worse than his first. After the manner of the ancient Samaritans, he seemed to be serving both Christ and the gods whom he had previously served; in the same temple he had one altar for the Christian sacrifice and another small altar on which to offer victims to devils. Ealdwulf, who was ruler of the kingdom up to our time, used to declare that the temple lasted until his time and that he saw it when he was a boy. Rædwald, who was noble by birth

though ignoble in his deeds, was the son of Tytil, whose father was Wuffa, from whom the kings of the East Angles are called Wuffings.\*

Eorpwold was killed not long after he had accepted the faith, by a heathen called Ricberht. Thereupon the kingdom remained in error for three years, until Eorpwold's brother Sigebert\* came to the throne. The latter was a devout Christian and a very learned man in all respects; while his brother was alive he had been in exile in Gaul, where he had been initiated into the mysteries of the Christian faith. As soon as he began to reign he made it his business to see that the whole kingdom shared his faith. Bishop Felix\* most nobly supported his efforts. This bishop, who had been born and consecrated in Burgundy, came to Archbishop Honorius, to whom he expressed his longings; so the archbishop sent him to preach the word of life to this nation of the Angles. Nor were his wishes in vain, for the devoted husbandman reaped an abundant harvest of believers in this spiritual field. Indeed, as his name signified, he freed the whole of this kingdom from long-lasting evil and unhappiness, brought it to the faith and to the works of righteousness and bestowed on it the gift of everlasting felicity. He received the seat of his bishopric in the city of *Domnoc* (Dunwich);\* and when he had ruled over the kingdom as bishop for seventeen years, he ended his life there in peace.

## CHAPTER 16

Now Paulinus also preached the word in the kingdom of Lindsey,\* the first land on the south bank of the river Humber, bordering on the sea. His first convert was the reeve of the city of Lincoln called Blæcca,\* he and his household. In this city he built a stone church\* of remarkable workmanship; its roof has now fallen either through long neglect or by the hand of the enemy, but its walls are still standing and every year miracles of healing are performed in this place, for the benefit of those who seek them in faith. After Justus had departed to Christ, in his place Paulinus consecrated

## CHAPTER 1

AFTER Edwin had been killed in battle, the kingdom of the Deiri, the cradle of his race and the foundation of his royal power, passed to a son of his uncle Ælfric whose name was Osric; he had received the mysteries of the faith through the preaching of Paulinus. But the Northumbrian race was originally divided into two portions,\* and the other kingdom, that of the Bernicians, went to a son of Æthelfrith named Eanfrith, who derived from it both his lineage and his claim to the throne. During the whole of Edwin's reign the sons of King Æthelfrith his predecessor, together with many young nobles, were living in exile among the Irish or the Picts where they were instructed in the faith as the Irish taught it and were regenerated by the grace of baptism. On the death of their enemy King Edwin they were allowed to return to their own land, and the eldest of them, Eanfrith, as we have said, became king of the Bernicians. But no sooner had these two kings gained the sceptres of their earthly kingdom than they abjured and betrayed the mysteries of the heavenly kingdom to which they had been admitted and reverted to the filth of their former idolatry, thereby to be polluted and destroyed.

Very soon\* afterwards, Cædwalla, the king of the Britons, killed them both, executing a just vengeance upon them, though with unrighteous violence. First, in the following summer he killed Osric, who had rashly besieged him in a fortified town; he broke out suddenly with all his forces, took Osric by surprise, and destroyed him and all his army. After this he occupied the Northumbrian kingdoms for a whole year, not ruling them like a victorious king but ravaging them like a savage tyrant, tearing them to pieces with fearful bloodshed. Finally when Eanfrith\* came to him unadvisedly to make peace, accompanied only by twelve chosen thegns, he destroyed him as well. To this day that year is still held to have been ill-omened and hateful to all good men, not only on account of the apostasy of the English kings who cast aside the mysteries of their faith, but also because of the outrageous

tyranny of the British king. So all those who compute the dates of kings have decided to abolish the memory of those perfidious kings and to assign this year to their successor Oswald, a man beloved of God. After his brother Eanfrith was killed, Oswald came with an army, small in numbers but strengthened by their faith in Christ, and destroyed the abominable leader of the Britons together with the immense force which he boasted was irresistible, at a place which is called in the English tongue, *Denisesburn*,\* that is the brook of the *Denise*.

## CHAPTER 2

THE place is still shown today and is held in great veneration\* where Oswald, when he was about to engage in battle, set up the sign of the holy cross and, on bended knees, prayed God to send heavenly aid to His worshippers in their dire need. In fact it is related that when a cross had been hastily made and the hole dug in which it was to stand, he seized the cross himself in the ardour of his faith, placed it in the hole, and held it upright with both hands until the soldiers had heaped up the earth and fixed it in position. Thereupon he raised his voice and called out to the whole army, 'Let us all kneel together and pray the almighty, everliving, and true God to defend us in His mercy from the proud and fierce enemy; for He knows that we are fighting in a just cause\* for the preservation of our whole race.' They all did as he commanded, advanced against the enemy just as dawn was breaking, and gained the victory that their faith merited. Innumerable miracles of healing are known to have been wrought in the place where they prayed, doubtless as a token and memorial of the king's faith. And even to this day many people are in the habit of cutting splinters from the wood of this holy cross and putting them in water which they then give to sick men or beasts to drink or else they sprinkle them with it; and they are quickly restored to health.

This place is called in English Heavenfield,\* and in Latin *Caelestis campus*, a name which it certainly received in days of

old as an omen of future happenings; it signified that a heavenly sign was to be erected there, a heavenly victory won, and that heavenly miracles were to take place there continuing to this day. The place, on its north side, is close to the wall with which the Romans once girded the whole of Britain from sea to sea, to keep off the attacks of the barbarians as already described. To this place the brethren of the church at Hexham, not far away, have long made it their custom to come every year, on the day before\* that on which King Oswald was killed, to keep vigil there for the benefit of his soul, to sing many psalms of praise, and, next morning, to offer up the holy sacrifice and oblation on his behalf. And since that good custom has spread, a church has lately been built there so that the place has become still more sacred and worthy of honour in the eyes of all. And rightly so: for, as far as we know, no symbol of the Christian faith, no church, and no altar had been erected in the whole of Bernicia before that new leader of the host, inspired by his devotion to the faith, set up the standard of the holy cross when he was about to fight his most savage enemy. It is not irrelevant to narrate one of the many miracles which have taken place at the cross.

One of the brothers of the church of Hexham who is still living, named Bothelm, a few years ago was walking incautiously on the ice by night when he suddenly fell and broke his arm. He suffered such anguish from the fractured limb that he could not raise his hand to his mouth because of the pain. Hearing one morning that one of the brothers was proposing to go up to the site of the holy cross, he asked him to bring him back some part of the revered wood, saying he believed that the Lord would grant him healing by its means. The brother did as he was asked, returning that evening when all the others were seated at table. He gave the sick man some of the ancient moss with which the surface of the wood was covered. Bothelm was sitting at the table and, as he had nowhere at hand to keep the proffered gift in safety, he placed it in his bosom. When he went to bed he forgot to take it out and allowed it to remain where it was. At midnight he awoke feeling something cold close to his side and, putting his hand

down to find out what it was, he discovered that his arm and hand were as sound as if they had never pained him.

## CHAPTER 3

OSWALD, as soon as he had come to the throne, was anxious that the whole race under his rule should be filled with the grace of the Christian faith of which he had had so wonderful an experience in overcoming the barbarians. So he sent to the Irish elders\* among whom he and his thegns had received the sacrament of baptism when he was an exile. He requested them to send a bishop by whose teaching and ministry the English race over whom he ruled might learn the privileges of faith in our Lord and receive the sacraments. His request was granted without delay. They sent him Bishop Aidan,\* a man of outstanding gentleness, devotion, and moderation, who had a zeal for God though not entirely according to knowledge. For after the manner of his race, as we have very often mentioned, he was accustomed to celebrate Easter Sunday between the fourteenth and the twentieth day of the moon. The northern province of the Irish and the whole nation of the Picts were still celebrating Easter Sunday according to this rule right up to that time, thinking that in this observance they were following the writings of the esteemed and holy father, Anatolius.\* Every instructed person can very easily judge whether this is true or not. But the Irish peoples who lived in the southern part of Ireland had long before learned to observe Easter according to canonical custom, through the teaching of the pope.

On the bishop's arrival, the king gave him a place for his episcopal see on the island of Lindisfarne, in accordance with his wishes. As the tide ebbs and flows, this place is surrounded twice daily by the waves of the sea like an island and twice, when the shore is left dry, it becomes again attached to the mainland. The king humbly and gladly listened to the bishop's admonitions in all matters, diligently seeking to build up and extend the Church of Christ in his kingdom. It was indeed a beautiful sight when the bishop was preaching the

gospel, to see the king acting as interpreter of the heavenly word for his ealdormen\* and thegns, for the bishop was not completely at home in the English tongue, while the king had gained a perfect knowledge of Irish during the long period of his exile.

From that time, as the days went by, many came from the country of the Irish\* into Britain and to those English kingdoms over which Oswald reigned, preaching the word of faith with great devotion. Those of them who held the rank of priest administered the grace of baptism to those who believed. Churches were built in various places and the people flocked together with joy to hear the Word; lands and property of other kinds were given by royal bounty to establish monasteries, and English children, as well as their elders, were instructed by Irish teachers in advanced studies and in the observance of the discipline of a Rule.

Indeed they were mostly monks who came to preach. Bishop Aidan was himself a monk; he was sent from the island known as Iona, whose monastery was for a very long time chief among all the monasteries of the northern Irish and the Picts, exercising supervision over their communities. The island itself belongs to Britain and is separated from the mainland by a narrow strait, but the Picts who inhabit those parts of Britain gave it to the Irish monks long ago, because they had received the faith of Christ through the monks' preaching.

#### CHAPTER 4

IN the year of our Lord 565, when Justin the second\* took over the control of the Roman Empire after Justinian, there came from Ireland to Britain a priest and abbot named Columba,\* a true monk in life no less than habit; he came to Britain to preach the word of God to the kingdoms of the northern Picts\* which are separated from the southern part of their land by steep and rugged mountains. The southern Picts who live on this side of the mountains had, so it is said, long ago given up the errors of idolatry and received the true faith

through the preaching of the Word by that reverend and holy man Bishop Ninian,\* a Briton who had received orthodox instruction at Rome in the faith and the mysteries of the truth. His episcopal see is celebrated for its church, dedicated to St Martin\* where his body rests, together with those of many other saints. The see is now under English rule. This place which is in the kingdom of Bernicia is commonly called Whithorn,\* the White House, because Ninian built a church of stone there, using a method unusual among the Britons.

Columba came to Britain when Bridius the son of Malcolm,\* a most powerful king, had been ruling over the Picts for over eight years. Columba turned them to the faith of Christ by his words and example and so received the island of Iona from them in order to establish a monastery there. It is not a large island, being only about five hides in English reckoning. His successors hold it to this day and he himself was buried there at the age of seventy-seven, about thirty-two years after he came to Britain to preach. Before this he had founded a famous monastery in Ireland called Dearthach (Dunrobin), the Field of the Oaks, on account of the great number of oaks there. From both of these sprang very many monasteries which were established by his disciples in Britain and Ireland, over all of which the island monastery in which his body lies held pre-eminence.

This island always has an abbot for its ruler who is a priest, to whose authority the whole kingdom, including even bishops,\* have to be subject. This unusual arrangement follows the example of their first teacher, who was not a bishop but a priest and monk. Some written records of his life and teachings are said to have been preserved by his disciples. Whatever he was himself, we know this for certain about him, that he left successors distinguished for their great abstinence, their love of God, and their observance of the Rule. It is true that they used tables of doubtful accuracy in fixing the date of the chief festival, since they were so far away at the ends of the earth that there was none to bring them the decrees of the synods concerning the observance of Easter; but they diligently practised such works of religion and chastity as they were able to learn from the words of the prophets, the evan-

gelists, and the apostles. This reckoning of Easter persisted among them for a very long time, no less than 150 years, up to the year of our Lord 715.

At that time the greatly revered and holy father and priest Egbert,\* an Englishman, came to them. He had long lived in exile in Ireland for the sake of Christ and was most learned in the scriptures, being famous for his long and holy life; he set them right and brought them to observe the true and canonical Easter Day. They did not always observe it on the fourteenth day of the moon, with the Jews, as some believe,\* but they celebrated it always on the Sunday, though not in the proper week. Being Christians they knew that the resurrection of our Lord, which happened on the first day after the sabbath, must always be celebrated on that day; but, rude barbarians as they were, they had never learned when that particular first day after the sabbath, which we now call the Lord's Day, should come. But because they were not lacking in grace and fervent love, they were accounted worthy to gain full knowledge on this subject also, even as the apostle had promised, saying, 'And if in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal it unto you.' But we must speak more fully about this matter later on in its proper place.

## CHAPTER 5

SUCH was the island, such the community, from which Aidan was sent to give the English people instruction in Christ after he had been consecrated bishop during the abbacy of the priest Ségéne.\* Aidan taught the clergy many lessons about the conduct of their lives but above all he left them a most salutary example of abstinence and self-control; and the best recommendation of his teaching to all was that he taught them no other way of life than that which he himself practised among his fellows. For he neither sought after nor cared for worldly possessions but he rejoiced to hand over at once, to any poor man he met, the gifts which he had received from kings or rich men of the world. He used to travel everywhere, in town and country, not on horseback but on foot, unless

compelled by urgent necessity to do otherwise, in order that, as he walked along, whenever he saw people whether rich or poor, he might at once approach them and, if they were unbelievers, invite them to accept the mystery of the faith; or, if they were believers, that he might strengthen them in the faith, urging them by word and deed to practise almsgiving and good works.

Aidan's life was in great contrast to our modern slothfulness;\* all who accompanied him, whether tonsured or laymen, had to engage in some form of study, that is to say, to occupy themselves either with reading the scriptures or learning the psalms. This was the daily task of Aidan himself and of all who were with him, wherever they went. And if it happened, as it rarely did, that he was summoned to feast with the king, he went with one or two of his clergy, and, after taking a little food, he hurried away either to read with his people or to pray. At that time a number of men and women, instructed by his example, formed the habit of prolonging their fast on Wednesdays and Fridays throughout the year, until the ninth hour, with the exception of the period between Easter and Pentecost. Neither respect nor fear made him keep silence about the sins of the rich, but he would correct them with a stern rebuke. He would never give money to powerful men of the world, but only food on such occasions as he entertained them; on the contrary he distributed gifts of money which he received from the rich, either, as we have said, for the use of the poor or for the redemption of those who had been unjustly sold into slavery.\* In fact, many of those whom he redeemed for a sum of money he afterwards made his disciples and, when he had trained and instructed them, he ordained them priests.

The story goes that when King Oswald asked the Irish for a bishop to minister the word of faith to him and his people, another man of harsher disposition was first sent. But he preached to the English for some time unsuccessfully and seeing that the people were unwilling to listen to him, he returned to his own land. At a meeting of the elders he reported that he had made no headway in the instruction of the people to whom he had been sent, because they were

intractable, obstinate, and uncivilized. It is related that there was a long discussion at the conference as to what ought to be done; for they were anxious to give that people the help it asked for and regretted that the preacher they had sent had not been accepted. Then Aidan, who was present at the conference, said to the priest in question, 'It seems to me, brother, that you have been unreasonably harsh upon your ignorant hearers: you did not first offer them the milk of simpler teaching, as the apostle recommends, until little by little, as they grew strong on the food of God's word, they were capable of receiving more elaborate instruction and of carrying out the more transcendent commandments of God.' All eyes were turned on Aidan when they heard these words and all present carefully considered what he had said. They agreed that he was worthy to be made a bishop and that he was the man to send to instruct those ignorant unbelievers, since he had proved himself to be pre-eminently endowed with the grace of discretion, which is the mother of all virtues.\* So he was consecrated and sent to preach to them. As time went on he proved himself to be remarkable not only for the moderation and good sense which they had first observed in him, but for many other virtues as well.

#### CHAPTER 6

WITH such a man as bishop to instruct them, King Oswald, together with the people over which he ruled, learned to hope for those heavenly realms which were unknown to their forefathers; and also Oswald gained from the one God who made heaven and earth greater earthly realms than any of his ancestors had possessed. In fact he held under his sway all the peoples\* and kingdoms of Britain, divided among the speakers of four different languages, British, Pictish, Irish, and English.

Though he wielded supreme power over the whole land, he was always wonderfully humble, kind, and generous to the poor and to strangers. For example, the story is told that on

a certain occasion, one Easter Day, when he had sat down to dinner with Bishop Aidan, a silver dish was placed on the table before him full of rich foods. They had just raised their hands to ask a blessing on the bread when there came in an officer of the king, whose duty it was to relieve the needy, telling him that a very great multitude of poor people from every district were sitting in the precincts and asking alms of the king. He at once ordered the dainties which had been set in front of him to be carried to the poor, the dish to be broken up, and the pieces divided amongst them. The bishop, who was sitting by, was delighted with this pious act, grasped him by the right hand, and said, 'May this hand never decay.' His blessing and his prayer were fulfilled in this way: when Oswald was killed in battle, his hand and arm were cut off from the rest of his body, and they have remained uncorrupt until this present time; they are in fact preserved in a silver shrine in St Peter's church, in the royal city which is called after Queen Bebba\* (Bamburgh) and are venerated with fitting respect by all.

By the efforts of this king the kingdoms of Deira and Bernicia, which had up to this time been at strife with one another, were peacefully united and became one people. Now Oswald was the nephew of Edwin through his sister Acha,\* and it was fitting that so great a predecessor should have so worthy a kinsman to inherit both his religion and his kingdom.

#### CHAPTER 7

ABOUT this time the West Saxons, who in early days were called the Gewisse, received the faith of Christ during the reign of Cynegisl\* through the preaching of Bishop Birinus.\* The latter had come to Britain on the advice of Pope Honorius, having promised in the pope's presence that he would scatter the seeds of the holy faith in the remotest regions of England, where no teacher had been before. For this reason he was consecrated bishop at the pope's command by Asterius, bishop of Genoa. So he came to Britain and



visited the race of the Gewisse first of all; finding that they were all completely heathen, he decided that it would be more useful to preach the word there rather than go further seeking for others to evangelize.

While he was preaching the gospel in this kingdom, the king himself, after receiving instruction, was cleansed from his sins in the waters of baptism together with all his people. It so happened\* that at the time Oswald, the saintly and victorious king of the Northumbrians, was present and stood godfather for him. Lovely indeed and well-pleasing to God was their relationship; that same man whose daughter\* Oswald was later to receive as his wife, that day, after his new birth and dedication to God, was received by Oswald as his son. The two kings gave the bishop a city called Dorchester\* in which to establish his episcopal see. After he had built and dedicated churches and brought many to the Lord by his pious labours, he went to be with the Lord and was buried in the same city. Many years afterwards, when Hædde\* was bishop, his body was translated thence to the city of Winchester and was deposited in the church of the apostles St Peter and St Paul.

On the death of Cynegisl, his son Cenwealh\* came to the throne. He refused to receive the faith and the mysteries of the heavenly kingdom and not long afterwards lost his earthly kingdom also. Now he had repudiated his wife who was sister of Penda, king of the Mercians, and had married another woman; for this he was attacked by Penda and deprived of his kingdom, retiring to the court of the East Anglian king, whose name was Anna. During his three years of exile he acknowledged and accepted the true faith, for the king with whom he lived in exile was a good man and blessed with a good and saintly family as we shall learn later.

When Cenwealh had been restored to his kingdom there came to his land from Ireland a bishop named Agilbert,\* a Gaul by birth, who had spent a long time in Ireland for the purpose of studying the Scriptures. He now attached himself to the king and voluntarily undertook the task of preaching. When the king saw his learning and industry, he asked him to accept an episcopal see in that place and to remain as bishop

of his people. Agilbert complied with his request and presided over the nation as bishop for a number of years. But at last the king, who knew only the Saxon language, grew tired of his barbarous speech\* and foisted upon the kingdom a bishop named Wine\* who had also been consecrated in Gaul but who spoke the king's own tongue. He divided his kingdom into two dioceses and gave Wine an episcopal seat in the city of *Venta* which the Saxons call *Wintancæstir* (Winchester). Agilbert was deeply offended because the king had done this without consulting him and returned to Gaul, where he accepted the bishopric of Paris and there died 'being old and full of days'. Not many years after his departure from Britain, Wine was also expelled from the bishopric by the king; he took refuge with Wulfhere, king of Mercia, and bought the see of the city of London from him for a sum of money, remaining its bishop to the end of his life. So for a considerable time the kingdom of the West Saxons remained without a bishop.

Meanwhile King Cenwealh, who was continually suffering heavy losses in his kingdom at the hands of his enemies, at length called to mind that it was unbelief that had once driven him from his kingdom and his acknowledgement of faith in Christ which had restored him; he realized equally that a kingdom which was without a bishop was, at the same time, justly deprived of divine protection. So he sent messengers to Agilbert in Gaul, offering to make amends and praying him to return again to the diocese. But Agilbert excused himself, declaring that he could not come because he was pledged to the bishopric of his own city and diocese. However, rather than refuse to give any help when the king sought it so eagerly, he sent his nephew, the priest Leuthere,\* in his place to be consecrated bishop if the king were willing, adding that he considered him worthy of a bishopric. Leuthere was honourably received by the king and the people, and they asked Theodore who was then archbishop of Canterbury to consecrate him bishop. He was accordingly consecrated at Canterbury and for many years governed the whole see of the Gewisse with industry and moderation, ruling alone by the authority of the council.

world on 31 August and received from the Lord the eternal reward of his labours.

### CHAPTER 15

HE who judges the heart showed by signs and miracles what Aidan's merits were, and of these miracles it will be enough to set down three, which deserve to be remembered. There was a certain priest named Utta,\* a man of great worth and sincerity and accordingly honoured by all, including the secular rulers; he was sent to Kent to bring back Eanflæd\* to be Oswiu's queen. She was the daughter of Edwin and had been taken away there when her father was killed. Utta intended to travel to Kent by land but to return with the maiden by sea; so he went to Bishop Aidan and begged him to pray to the Lord for himself and those who were to make the long journey with him. Aidan blessed them, commended them to the Lord, and gave them some holy oil, saying, 'I know that when you board your ship, you will meet storms and contrary winds; but remember to pour the oil I have given you on to the sea; the winds will drop at once, the sea will become calm and serene and will bring you home the way you wish.' All this happened just as the bishop had foretold; at first the sea was stormy and the sailors attempted to hold the ship by throwing out the anchor, but all to no purpose. The waves swept over the ship from all sides; the vessel began to fill and they all realized that death was imminent and that their last hour had come, when the priest, remembering the bishop's words, took out the flask and poured some of the oil into the sea. At once, as Aidan had predicted, the sea calmed down. So it came to pass that the man of God foretold the tempest by the spirit of prophecy, and, by virtue of the same spirit, calmed it when it had arisen, although he was absent in body. I heard the story of this miracle from no dubious source, but from a most trustworthy priest of our church named Cynemund, who declared that he had heard it from the priest Utta on whom and through whom the miracle was wrought.

### CHAPTER 16

ANOTHER memorable miracle is related about Aidan by many who were in a position to know. During the time of his episcopate a hostile Mercian army, under the leadership of Penda, which had been cruelly devastating the kingdom of Northumbria far and wide, reached the royal city\* called after a former queen Bebba (Bamburgh). As he could not capture it by assault or siege, he attempted to set it on fire. He pulled down all the steadings which he found in the neighbourhood of the town and brought thither a vast heap of beams, rafters, walls of wattles, and thatched roofs, and built them up to an immense height around that side of the city which faced the land; then when a favourable wind arose, he set it on fire in an attempt to burn the town. At that time the reverend Bishop Aidan was staying on Farne Island, which is less than two miles from the city. He often used to retire there to pray in solitude and silence; in fact the site of his solitary habitation is shown on the island to this day. When he saw the tongues of flame and the smoke being carried by the winds right above the city walls, the story goes that he raised his eyes and hands towards heaven and said with tears, 'Oh Lord, see how much evil Penda is doing.' As soon as he had uttered these words, the winds veered away from the city and carried the flames in the direction of those who had kindled them, so that, as some of them were hurt and all of them terrified, they ceased to make any further attempt on the city, realizing that it was divinely protected.

### CHAPTER 17

AT the time when death came upon him, after completing seventeen years as bishop, Aidan was on a royal estate, not far away from the city of which we have been speaking. Here he had a church and a cell where he often used to go and stay, travelling about in the neighbourhood to preach. He did the same on the other royal estates; for he had no possessions of

his own except the church and a small piece of land around it. They erected a tent for him during his illness, at the west end of the church, the tent itself being attached to the church wall. So it happened that he breathed his last, leaning against the buttress which supported the church on the outside. He died on 31 August, in the seventeenth year of his episcopate. His body was shortly afterwards translated to the island of Lindisfarne and buried in the cemetery of the brothers. Some time afterwards, when a larger church had been built there and dedicated in honour of the most blessed chief of the apostles, his bones were translated to it and buried on the right side of the altar, with the honour due to so great a bishop.

Finan,\* who had also been sent from the Irish island monastery of Iona, succeeded him in the bishopric, and remained bishop for no short time. Now it happened a few years afterwards that Penda, king of Mercia, came with a hostile army to these parts destroying everything he could with fire and sword; and the village in which the bishop had died, together with the church just mentioned, was burnt down. But it was astonishing that the buttress alone, against which the bishop had been leaning when he died, could not be devoured by the flames though they destroyed everything around it. When the fame of the miracle spread, the church was speedily restored in the same place and the buttress was placed outside as before to strengthen the walls. Shortly afterwards it happened that the same village and church were again burned down, this time through culpable carelessness. But on this occasion too the flames could not touch the buttress. The miracle was such that, though the flames had entered the very nail holes by which it was attached to the building, yet they could not injure the buttress itself. So when the church was rebuilt for the third time, they put the buttress, not outside as before to support the structure, but inside the church itself as a memorial of the miracle, so that people entering the church could kneel there and ask for God's mercy. Since that time many are known to have obtained the grace of healing at this place; and by cutting splinters from the buttress and putting them into water, they have

found the means of curing the sicknesses of themselves and their friends.

I have written these things about the character and work of Aidan, not by any means commending or praising his lack of knowledge in the matter of the observance of Easter; indeed I heartily detest it, as I have clearly shown in the book which I wrote called *De Temporibus*,\* but, as a truthful historian, I have described in a straightforward manner those things which were done by him or through him, praising such of his qualities as are worthy of praise and preserving their memory for the benefit of my readers. Such were his love of peace and charity, temperance and humility; his soul which triumphed over anger and greed and at the same time despised pride and vainglory; his industry in carrying out and teaching the divine commandments, his diligence in study and keeping vigil, his authority, such as became a priest, in reproving the proud and the mighty, and his tenderness in comforting the weak, in relieving and protecting the poor. To put it briefly, so far as one can learn from those who knew him, he made it his business to omit none of the commands of the evangelists, the apostles, and the prophets, but he set himself to carry them out in his deeds, so far as he was able. All these things I greatly admire and love in this bishop and I have no doubt that all this was pleasing to God. But I neither praise nor approve of him in so far as he did not observe Easter at the proper time, either because he was ignorant of the canonical time or because, if he knew it, he was compelled by the force of public opinion not to follow it. But, nevertheless, I do approve of this, that in his celebration of Easter he had no other thought in his heart, he revered and preached no other doctrine than we do, namely the redemption of the human race by the passion, resurrection, and ascension into heaven of the one mediator between God and men, even the man Christ Jesus. And therefore he always kept Easter, not as some falsely believe, on the fourteenth day of the moon, like the Jews, no matter what the day of the week was, but on the Lord's Day which fell between the fourteenth and the twentieth day of the moon. He did this because of his belief that the resurrection of our Lord took place on the first day of the week and also in

hope of our resurrection which he, together with holy Church, believed would undoubtedly happen on this same first day of the week now called the Lord's Day.

## CHAPTER 18

ABOUT this time, Sigebert\* came to the throne of East Anglia after the death of his brother Eorpwald,\* who was Rædwald's successor. Sigebert was a good and religious man and had long been in exile in Gaul, while he was fleeing from the enmity of Rædwald.\* It was here that he received baptism and, when he returned to his own land to become king, he at once sought to imitate some of the excellent institutions which he had seen in Gaul, and established a school where boys could be taught letters, with the help of Bishop Felix, who had come to him from Kent and who provided him with masters and teachers as in the Kentish school. So greatly did he love the kingdom of heaven that at last he resigned his kingly office and entrusted it to his kinsman Ecgric,\* who had previously ruled over part of the kingdom. He thereupon entered a monastery which he himself had founded. He received the tonsure and made it his business to fight instead for the heavenly kingdom. When he had been in the monastery for some considerable time, it happened that the East Anglians were attacked by the Mercians under their King Penda. As the East Anglians realized that they were no match for their enemies, they asked Sigebert to go into the fight with them in order to inspire the army with confidence. He was unwilling and refused, so they dragged him to the fight from the monastery, in the hope that the soldiers would be less afraid and less ready to flee if they had with them one who was once their most vigorous and distinguished leader. But remembering his profession and surrounded though he was by a splendid army, he refused to carry anything but a staff in his hand. He was killed together with King Ecgric, and the whole army was either slain or scattered by the heathen attacks.

Their successor on the throne was Anna, son of Eni,\* an excellent man of royal descent and the father of a distinguished family, whom we must speak of again in the proper place; he also was slain later on, like his predecessors, by the heathen Mercian leader.

## CHAPTER 19

WHILE Sigebert was still ruling, there came a holy man from Ireland called Fursa,\* he was renowned in word and deed and remarkable for his singular virtues. He was anxious to live the life of a pilgrim\* for the Lord's sake, wherever opportunity offered. When he came to the kingdom of the East Angles, he was honourably received by the king and followed his usual task of preaching the gospel. Thus he converted many both by the example of his virtues and the persuasiveness of his teaching, turning unbelievers to Christ and confirming believers in His faith and love.

Once when he was suffering from an illness, he was counted worthy to enjoy a vision of angels, in which he was directed to maintain diligently the task that he had undertaken of ministering the Word, and to continue to watch and pray and not be weary, because death was certain but the hour of death uncertain, as the Lord said, 'Watch, therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour.' After he had been strengthened by the vision, he set himself with all speed to build a monastery on a site which he had received from King Sigebert and to establish there the observance of a Rule. Now the monastery was pleasantly situated close to the woods and the sea, in a Roman camp which is called in English *Cnobheresburg*, that is the city of Cnobhere\* (Burgh Castle). The king of that realm, Anna, and his nobles afterwards endowed it with still finer buildings and gifts.

He was a man of very noble Irish race, but still nobler in spirit than by birth. From his boyhood's days he had devoted all his energy to the study of sacred books and to the monastic discipline; furthermore, as a saint should, he earnestly sought

As he was returning to his own land, not long after he had crossed the Ocean, he was attacked by illness and died. Because of his great affection for St Martin over whose monastery he presided, his body was taken by his friends to Tours and honourably buried there. He had been hospitably entertained by the church in that place on his way to Britain and had been earnestly asked by the brothers to take that road on his return to Rome and to stay at the same church. In fact they provided him with men to accompany him on his journey and to assist him in his appointed task. Though he died on the way, nevertheless the testimony of the English to the catholic faith was carried to Rome and most gladly received by the pope and by all those who heard it or read it.

## CHAPTER 19 (17)

KING ECGFRITH married a wife named Æthelthryth, the daughter of Anna, king of the East Angles, who has often been referred to, a very religious man and noble both in mind and deed. She had previously been married to an ealdorman\* of the South Gyrwe, named Tondberht. But he died shortly after the marriage and on his death she was given to King Ecgfrith. Though she lived with him for twelve years she still preserved the glory of perfect virginity. When I asked Bishop Wilfrid of blessed memory whether this was true, because certain people doubted it, he told me that he had the most perfect proof of her virginity; in fact Ecgfrith had promised to give him estates and money if he could persuade the queen to consummate their marriage, because he knew that there was none whom she loved more than Wilfrid himself. Nor need we doubt that this which often happened in days gone by, as we learn from trustworthy accounts, could happen in our time too through the help of the Lord, who has promised to be with us even to the end of the age. And the divine miracle whereby her flesh would not corrupt after she was buried was token and proof that she had remained uncorrupted by contact with any man.

For a long time she had been asking the king to allow her to relinquish the affairs of this world and to serve Christ, the only true King, in a monastery; when at length and with difficulty she gained his permission, she entered the monastery of the Abbess Æbbe,\* Ecgfrith's aunt, which is situated in a place called Coldingham, receiving the veil and habit of a nun from Bishop Wilfrid. A year afterwards she was herself appointed abbess in the district called Ely,\* where she built a monastery and became, by the example of her heavenly life and teaching, the virgin mother of many virgins dedicated to God. It is related of her that, from the time she entered the monastery, she would never wear linen but only woollen garments and would seldom take a hot bath except just before the greater feasts, such as Easter, Pentecost, and Epiphany, and then last of all, after the other handmaidens of Christ who were present had washed themselves, assisted by herself and her attendants. She rarely ate more than once a day except at the greater festivals or because of urgent necessity; she always remained in the church at prayer from the time of the office of matins until dawn, unless prevented by serious illness. There are indeed some who say that, by the spirit of prophecy, she not only foretold the plague that was to be the cause of her death but also openly declared, in the presence of all, the number of those of the monastery who were to be taken from the world by the same pestilence. She was taken to the Lord in the midst of her people, after holding the rank of abbess for seven years. When she died she was buried by her own command in a wooden coffin, in the ranks of the other nuns, as her turn came.

She was succeeded in the office of abbess by her sister Seaxburh, who had been the wife of Eorcenberht, king of Kent. After Æthelthryth had been buried for sixteen years, the abbess decided that her bones should be raised and placed in the church in a new coffin; she therefore ordered some of the brothers to look for some blocks of stone from which to make a coffin for this purpose. So they got into a boat (for the district of Ely is surrounded on all sides by waters and marshes and has no large stones) and came to a small deserted fortress not far away which is called *Grantacæstir*

(Grantchester) in English, and near the walls of the fortress they soon found a coffin beautifully made of white marble, with a close-fitting lid of the same stone. Realizing that the Lord had prospered their journey, they brought it back to the monastery.

When the tomb of the sacred virgin and bride of Christ was opened and the body brought to light, it was found to be as uncorrupt as if she had died and been buried that very day. Bishop Wilfrid and many others who knew about it testify to this; but more certain proof is given by a doctor named Cynefrith, who was present at her deathbed and at her elevation from the tomb. He used to relate how, during her illness, she had a very large tumour beneath her jaw. 'I was ordered', he said, 'to cut this tumour so as to drain out the poisonous matter within it. After I had done this she seemed to be easier for about two days and many thought that she would recover from her sickness. But on the third day she was attacked by her former pains and was soon taken from the world, exchanging pain and death for everlasting health and life. When, some years later, her bones were to be taken out of the sepulchre, a tent was erected over it and the whole congregation stood round singing, the brothers on one side and the sisters on the other. The abbess herself had gone inside with a few others, for the purpose of raising and washing the bones, when we suddenly heard the abbess cry out from within in a loud voice, "Glory be to the name of the Lord!" Shortly afterwards they called me in, lifting the entrance to the tent; then I saw the body of God's holy virgin raised from the tomb and laid on a bed like one asleep. They drew back the cloth which covered her face and showed me the wound I had made by my incision, now healed, so that instead of the open gaping wound which she had when she was buried, there now appeared, marvellous to relate, only the slightest traces of a scar. Besides this, all the linen clothes in which her body was wrapped appeared as whole and fresh as on the very day when they had been put around her chaste limbs.' It is also related that when she was afflicted with this tumour and by the pain in her neck and jaw, she gladly welcomed this sort of pain and used to say, 'I know well

enough that I deserve to bear the weight of this affliction in my neck, for I remember that when I was a young girl I used to wear an unnecessary weight of necklaces; I believe that God in His goodness would have me endure this pain in my neck in order that I may thus be absolved from the guilt of my needless vanity. So, instead of gold and pearls, a fiery red tumour now stands out upon my neck.' It happened also that, by the touch of the linen clothes, devils were expelled from the bodies of those who were possessed by them, and other diseases were healed from time to time. The coffin also in which she was first buried is said to have healed some who suffered from eye troubles; after they had prayed with their heads resting on the coffin, they were quickly relieved of the pain and dimness of their eyes. So the maidens washed her body, wrapped it in new robes, carried it into the church, and placed it in the sarcophagus which they had brought, where it is held in great veneration to this day. This sarcophagus was found to fit the virgin's body in a wonderful way, as if it had been specially prepared for her; and the place for the head, which was cut out separately, seemed to be exactly shaped to its size.

Ely is a district of about 600 hides in the kingdom of the East Angles and, as has already been said, resembles an island in that it is surrounded by marshes or by water. It derives its name from the large number of eels which are caught in the marshes. This servant of Christ wished to have her monastery here because, as has also been said, she sprang from the race of the East Angles.

## CHAPTER 20 (18)

IT seems fitting to insert in this history a hymn on the subject of virginity which I composed many years ago in elegiac metre in honour of this queen and bride of Christ, and therefore truly a queen because the bride of Christ; imitating the method of holy Scripture in which many songs are inserted into the history and, as is well known, these are composed in metre and verse.

I had so clear an account of the incident, I thought that it should undoubtedly be inserted into this *History*.

## CHAPTER 23 (21)

IN the following year, that is, the year of our Lord 680, Hild\* who, as previously stated, was abbess at the monastery called Whitby and a most devoted servant of Christ, departed on 17 November, after having done many heavenly deeds on earth, to receive the rewards of the heavenly life, at the age of sixty-six. Her career falls into two equal parts, for she spent her first thirty-three years very nobly in the secular habit, while she dedicated an equal number of years still more nobly to the Lord, in the monastic life. She was of noble birth, being the daughter of Hereric, King Edwin's nephew. It was in company with Edwin that she received the faith and the mysteries of Christ through the teaching of Paulinus of blessed memory, the first bishop of the Northumbrians, and she preserved that faith inviolate until she was counted worthy to behold Him.

When she had decided to give up the secular habit and serve the Lord alone, she withdrew to the kingdom of the East Angles, for she was a relation of a king of that land. It was her wish, if possible, to cross over to Gaul, leaving her home and all that she had, to live as a stranger for the Lord's sake in the monastery of Chelles,\* so that she might the more easily attain to her eternal home in heaven. Her sister Hereswith,\* mother of Ealdwulf, king of the East Angles, was at that time living in the monastery under the discipline of the Rule and awaiting her heavenly crown. Inspired by her sister's example, Hild continued a whole year in the kingdom of the East Angles with the intention of going abroad; but then Bishop Aidan called her home and she received a hide\* of land on the north side of the river Wear, where, for another year, she lived the monastic life with a small band of companions.

After this she was made abbess in the monastery called *Heruteu* (Hartlepool) which had been founded not long before

by Heiu, a devoted handmaid of Christ, who is said to have been the first woman in the Northumbrian kingdom to take the vows and habit of a nun, having been ordained by Bishop Aidan. But soon after she founded the monastery, she retired to the town of *Calcaria* which the English call *Kælcacæstir* (Tadcaster?)\* and there she made her dwelling. Hild, the handmaiden of Christ, was appointed to rule the monastery and at once set about establishing there a Rule of life in all respects like that which she had been taught by many learned men; for Bishop Aidan and other devout men who knew her visited her frequently, instructed her assiduously, and loved her heartily for her innate wisdom and her devotion to the service of God.

When she had ruled over the monastery for some years,\* wholly occupied in establishing a Rule of life there, it happened that she undertook either to found or to set in order a monastery at a place called *Streanæshalch* (Whitby), a task imposed upon her which she carried out with great industry. She established the same Rule of life as in the other monastery, teaching them to observe strictly the virtues of justice, devotion, and chastity and other virtues too, but above all things to continue in peace and charity. After the example of the primitive church, no one was rich, no one was in need, for they had all things in common and none had any private property. So great was her prudence that not only ordinary people but also kings and princes sometimes sought and received her counsel when in difficulties. She compelled those under her direction to devote so much time to the study of the holy Scriptures and so much time to the performance of good works, that there might be no difficulty in finding many there who were fitted for holy orders, that is, for the service of the altar.

We have in fact seen five from this monastery who afterwards became bishops, all of them men of singular merit and holiness; their names are Bosa,\* Ætla,\* Oñfor,\* John,\* and Wilfrid.\* The first, as already related, was consecrated bishop of York: of the second it may be briefly stated that he was consecrated bishop of Dorchester: of the last two it will later be told that John became bishop of Hexham and Wilfrid,

bishop of York. Of Oftfor it may be said that after he had devoted himself to the reading and observance of the Scriptures in both of Hild's monasteries, being anxious to reach still greater heights, he went to Kent to join Archbishop Theodore of blessed memory. After he had spent some further time in sacred studies there, he decided to go to Rome too, which in those days was considered to be an act of great merit. After his return to Britain he went to the kingdom of the Hwicce of which Osric was then king; there he remained for a long time, preaching the word of faith and setting an example of holy life to all who saw and heard him. At that time the bishop of the kingdom, whose name was Bosel,\* was greatly troubled by ill-health so that he could not carry out his episcopal duties himself; so Oftfor was appointed bishop in his place with universal approval and was consecrated at Æthelred's command by Bishop Wilfrid of blessed memory, who was at that time acting as bishop of the Middle Angles; for Archbishop Theodore was now dead\* and no one had been appointed bishop in his place. Shortly before Bosel became bishop, a most energetic and learned man of great ability named Tatfrith, who was also from Hild's monastery, had been appointed to the see; but he was carried off before his consecration by an untimely death.

All who knew Hild, the handmaiden of Christ and abbess, used to call her mother because of her outstanding devotion and grace. She was not only an example of holy life to all who were in the monastery but she also provided an opportunity for salvation and repentance to many who lived far away and who heard the happy story of her industry and virtue. This was bound to happen in fulfilment of the dream which her mother Breguswith had during the child's infancy. While her husband Hereric was living in exile under the British king Cerdic,\* where he was poisoned, Breguswith had a dream that he was suddenly taken away, and though she searched most earnestly for him, no trace of him could be found anywhere. But suddenly, in the midst of her search, she found a most precious necklace under her garment and, as she gazed closely at it, it seemed to spread such a blaze of light that it

filled all Britain with its gracious splendour. This dream was truly fulfilled in her daughter Hild; for her life was an example of the works of light, blessed not only to herself but to many who desired to live uprightly.

After she had presided over the monastery for many years, it pleased the blessed Author of our salvation to subject her holy soul to the trial of a long bodily sickness so that, like the apostle, her strength might be made perfect in weakness. She was attacked by a fever which tortured her with its burning heat, and for six years the sickness afflicted her continually; yet during all this time she never ceased to give thanks to her Maker and to instruct the flock committed to her charge both in public and private. Taught by her own experience she warned them all, when health of body was granted to them, to serve the Lord dutifully and, when in adversity or sickness, always to return thanks to the Lord faithfully. In the seventh year of her illness she began to suffer internal pain and her last day came. About cockcrow she received the viaticum of the most holy communion and, summoning the handmaidens of Christ who were in the monastery, she urged them to preserve the gospel peace among themselves and towards all others; even while she was still exhorting them, she joyfully saw death approach or rather, to use the words of the Lord, she 'passed from death into life'.

One the same night it pleased Almighty God by a vision to reveal her death in another monastery some distance away called Hackness,\* which she had built that very year. In this monastery there was a nun named Begu who for thirty or more years had been dedicated to the Lord in virginity and had served Him in the monastic life. As she was resting in the sisters' dormitory, she suddenly heard in the air the well-known sound of the bell with which they used to be aroused to their prayers or called together when one of them had been summoned from the world. On opening her eyes she seemed to see the roof of the house rolled back, while a light which poured in from above filled the whole place. As she watched the light intently, she saw the soul of the handmaiden of the Lord being borne to Heaven in the midst of that light, attended and guided by angels. Then awaking and seeing the



other sisters lying around her, she realized that what she had seen had been revealed to her either in a dream or in a vision. Greatly afraid, she rose at once and ran to the maiden named Frigyth, who was then presiding over the monastery in place of the abbess. With many tears and lamentations and sighing deeply, she announced that the Abbess Hild, mother of them all, had departed from this world and that she had seen her ascend in the midst of a great light and escorted by angels to the abode of eternal light, to join the company of the citizens of heaven. When Frigyth heard this, she aroused all the sisters, called them to church and ordered them to devote themselves to prayer and psalm-singing on behalf of the soul of their mother. This they did diligently for the rest of the night and, at early dawn, there came brothers from the place where she had died to announce her death. The maidens answered that they already knew of it and, when they explained in detail how and when they had heard of it, it was found that her death had been revealed to them in a vision at the very hour at which the brothers said that she had died. By a beautiful harmony of events, it was divinely ordained that while some of them watched her departure from this life, others watched her entrance into the everlasting life of the spirit. Now these two monasteries are nearly thirteen miles apart.

It is also related that, on the same night and in the same monastery in which this servant of God died, her death was seen in a vision by one of the devoted virgins of God, who had been deeply attached to her. She saw Hild's soul ascend to heaven in the company of angels. She related this openly to the servants of Christ who were with her at the very hour it happened and aroused them to pray for her soul, and this before the rest of the congregation knew of her death, for it was only made known to them as soon as they met next morning. This nun was at the time with some other handmaidens of Christ in the remotest part of the monastery, where the women who had lately entered the monastic life used to spend their time of probation until they were fully instructed and admitted into the fellowship of the community.

## CHAPTER 24 (22)

IN the monastery of this abbess there was a certain brother who was specially marked out by the grace of God, so that he used to compose godly and religious songs; thus, whatever he learned from the holy Scriptures by means of interpreters, he quickly turned into extremely delightful and moving poetry, in English, which was his own tongue. By his songs the minds of many were often inspired to despise the world and to long for the heavenly life. It is true that after him other Englishmen attempted to compose religious poems, but none could compare with him. For he did not learn the art of poetry from men nor through a man but he received the gift of song freely by the grace of God. Hence he could never compose any foolish or trivial poem but only those which were concerned with devotion and so were fitting for his devout tongue to utter. He had lived in the secular habit until he was well advanced in years and had never learned any songs. Hence sometimes at a feast, when for the sake of providing entertainment, it had been decided that they should all sing in turn, when he saw the harp approaching him, he would rise up in the middle of the feasting, go out, and return home.

On one such occasion when he did so, he left the place of feasting and went to the cattle byre, as it was his turn to take charge of them that night. In due time he stretched himself out and went to sleep, whereupon he dreamt that someone stood by him, saluted him, and called him by name: 'Cædmon,' he said, 'sing me something.' Cædmon answered, 'I cannot sing; that is why I left the feast and came here because I could not sing.' Once again the speaker said, 'Nevertheless you must sing to me.' 'What must I sing?' said Cædmon. 'Sing', he said, 'about the beginning of created things.' Thereupon Cædmon began to sing verses which he had never heard before in praise of God the Creator, of which this is the general sense: 'Now we must praise\* the Maker of the heavenly kingdom, the power of the Creator and his counsel, the deeds of the Father of glory and how He, since he

is the eternal God, was the Author of all marvels and first created the heavens as a roof for the children of men and then, the almighty Guardian of the human race, created the earth.' This is the sense but not the order of the words which he sang as he slept. For it is not possible to translate verse, however well composed, literally from one language to another without some loss of beauty and dignity. When he awoke, he remembered all that he had sung while asleep and soon added more verses in the same manner, praising God in fitting style.

In the morning he went to the reeve who was his master, telling him of the gift he had received, and the reeve took him to the abbess. He was then bidden to describe his dream in the presence of a number of the more learned men and also to recite his song so that they might all examine him and decide upon the nature and origin of the gift of which he spoke; and it seemed clear to all of them that the Lord had granted him heavenly grace. They then read to him a passage of sacred history or doctrine, bidding him make a song out of it, if he could, in metrical form. He undertook the task and went away; on returning next morning he repeated the passage he had been given, which he had put into excellent verse. The abbess, who recognized the grace of God which the man had received, instructed him to renounce his secular habit and to take monastic vows. She and all her people received him into the community of the brothers and ordered that he should be instructed in the whole course of sacred history. He learned all he could by listening to them and then, memorizing it and ruminating over it, like some clean animal chewing the cud, he turned it into the most melodious verse: and it sounded so sweet as he recited it that his teachers became in turn his audience. He sang about the creation of the world, the origin of the human race, and the whole history of Genesis, of the departure of Israel from Egypt and the entry into the promised land and of many other of the stories taken from the sacred Scriptures: of the incarnation, passion, and resurrection of the Lord, of His ascension into heaven, of the coming of the Holy Spirit and the teaching of the apostles. He also made songs about the terrors of future judgement, the horrors of the pains of hell, and the joys of the heavenly

kingdom. In addition he composed many other songs about the divine mercies and judgements, in all of which he sought to turn his hearers away from delight in sin and arouse in them the love and practice of good works. He was a most religious man, humbly submitting himself to the discipline of the Rule; and he opposed all those who wished to act otherwise with a flaming and fervent zeal. It was for this reason that his life had a beautiful ending.

When the hour of his departure drew near he was afflicted, fourteen days before, by bodily weakness, yet so slight that he was able to walk about and talk the whole time. There was close by a building to which they used to take those who were infirm or who seemed to be at the point of death. On the night on which he was to die, as evening fell, he asked his attendant to prepare a place in this building where he could rest. The attendant did as Cædmon said though he wondered why he asked, for he did not seem to be by any means at the point of death. They had settled down in the house and were talking and joking cheerfully with each of those who were already there and it was past midnight, when he asked whether they had the Eucharist in the house. They answered, 'What need have you of the Eucharist? You are not likely to die, since you are talking as cheerfully with us as if you were in perfect health.' 'Nevertheless,' he repeated, 'bring me the Eucharist.' When he had taken it in his hand he asked if they were all charitably disposed towards him and had no complaint nor any quarrel nor grudge against him. They answered that they were all in charity with him and without the slightest feeling of anger; then they asked him in turn whether he was charitably disposed towards them. He answered at once, 'My sons, I am in charity with all the servants of God.' So, fortifying himself with the heavenly viaticum, he prepared for his entrance into the next life. Thereupon he asked them how near it was to the time when the brothers had to awake to sing their nightly praises to God. They answered, 'It will not be long.' And he answered, 'Good, let us wait until then.' And so, signing himself with the sign of the holy cross, he laid his head on the pillow, fell asleep for a little while, and so ended his life quietly. Thus it came about that, as he had served the Lord

with a simple and pure mind and with quiet devotion, so he departed into His presence and left the world by a quiet death; and his tongue which had uttered so many good words in praise of the Creator also uttered its last words in His praise, as he signed himself with the sign of the cross and commended his spirit into God's hands; and from what has been said, it would seem that he had foreknowledge of his death.

## CHAPTER 25 (23)

ABOUT this time, the monastery of virgins at Coldingham, which has previously been mentioned, was burned down through carelessness. However, all who knew the truth were easily able to judge that it happened because of the wickedness of those who dwelt there and especially of those who were supposed to be its leaders. But God in His mercy did not fail to give warning of approaching punishment so that they might have been led to amend their ways and, by fasting, tears, and prayers, to have averted the wrath of the just Judge from themselves as did the people of Nineveh.

Now in this monastery there was an Irishman named Adamnan who led a life so devoted to God in austerity and prayer that he never took food or drink except on Sundays and Thursdays and often spent whole nights in vigils and prayers. He had first adopted this strict and austere way of life because of the necessity of atoning for the evil he had committed, but in course of time what he was once compelled to do as a penance became a habit.

In his youth he had been guilty of a certain sin but when he came to his senses he was utterly horrified and feared that he would be punished for it by the righteous Judge. So he went to a priest who, he hoped, could show him the way of salvation. He confessed his guilt and asked for advice as to how he could flee from the wrath to come. When the priest heard his offence he said, 'A severe wound calls for an even more severe remedy: so give yourself up to fastings, psalmody, and prayer to the utmost of your ability, so that, when you come

before the presence of the Lord with your confession, you may deserve to find mercy.' But as he was in great grief because of his guilty conscience, and because he longed to get free as quickly as possible from the inward bonds of sin which weighed him down, he said, 'I am still young in years and strong in body; so I can easily endure whatever penance you place upon me, if only I may be saved in the day of the Lord, even though you bid me remain standing in prayer all night or fast for a whole week.' The priest said, 'It is too much to endure a whole week without food;\* it is enough to fast for two or three days. Do this until I return to you in a short time, when I will show you more fully what you must do and how long you must persevere in your penance.' So with these words the priest went away, having prescribed the measure of his penance, and for some reason he suddenly went to Ireland, which was his native country, and did not come back again to keep his appointment. The man who remembered his injunction as well as his own promise, gave himself up entirely to penitential tears and holy vigils and austerity. So, as has been said, he ate only on Thursdays and Sundays and remained fasting all the rest of the week. When he heard that the priest had gone to Ireland and had died there, he ever afterwards, in accordance with his promise, maintained this same standard of austerity; and though he had begun this way of life in the fear of God and in penitence for his guilt, he now continued it unweariedly for the love of God and because he delighted in its rewards.

When he had practised this diligently for a long time he happened to go one day on a journey of some distance from the monastery, accompanied by one of the brothers. On the return journey, as they approached the monastery and beheld its lofty buildings, the man of God burst into tears, while his face betrayed the sorrow of his heart. When his companion saw this, he asked Adamnan the reason and he replied, 'All these buildings which you now see, both communal and private, will shortly be burnt to ashes.' Thereupon the other monk made it his business, as soon as they entered the monastery, to tell Æbbe,\* the mother of the congregation. She was naturally disturbed by this prophecy, summoned

Adamnan to her, and carefully questioned him about this matter and how he came to know of it. He answered, 'I was recently occupied in vigils and singing psalms when I suddenly saw someone standing by me whom I did not recognize. I was greatly startled at his presence, but he told me not to be afraid and added in a friendly kind of manner, "You do well to choose to employ the night hours of rest in vigil and prayer instead of indulging in sleep." I answered, "I know that I have great need to employ my time in salutary vigils and in praying earnestly to the Lord to pardon my sins." "You speak truly," he replied, "but many besides yourself need to atone for their sins by good works and, by setting themselves free from worldly occupations, to labour more eagerly to cultivate a desire for their eternal welfare; yet there are very few who do this. I have just visited every part of this monastery in turn: I have examined their cells and their beds, and I have found no one except you concerned with his soul's welfare; but all of them, men and women alike, are sunk in slothful slumbers or else they remain awake for the purposes of sin. And the cells that were built for praying and for reading have become haunts of feasting, drinking, gossip, and other delights; even the virgins who are dedicated to God put aside all respect for their profession and, whenever they have leisure, spend their time weaving elaborate garments with which to adorn themselves as if they were brides, so imperilling their virginity, or else to make friends with strange men. So it is only right that a heavy vengeance from heaven should be preparing for this place and for its inhabitants in the form of raging fire.'" The abbess said, 'Why were you unwilling to reveal these facts to me earlier?' He answered, 'I was afraid to do so out of respect for you, fearing you would be too greatly perturbed; nevertheless you may have this consolation that the calamity will not happen in your time.' When this vision became known, those who lived in the monastery were somewhat afraid for a few days and began to give up their sins and do penance. But after the death of the abbess, they returned to their old defilement and committed even worse crimes; and when they said 'peace and safety', suddenly the predicted punishment and vengeance fell upon them.

It was my revered fellow priest Eadgisl, who then lived in the monastery, who told me of all these happenings. After most of the inhabitants had left Coldingham because it was in ruins, he lived a long time in our monastery and died here. It seemed desirable to include this story in our *History* so as to warn the reader about the workings of the Lord and how terrible He is in His dealings with the children of men, in order that we should not at any time indulge in fleshly delights nor pay so little heed to the judgement of God that His wrath should come suddenly upon us and He should in His righteous anger afflict us with temporal loss or, it may be, judge us still more sternly and bear us away to everlasting perdition.

## CHAPTER 26 (24)

IN the year of our Lord 684 Ecgfrith, king of Northumbria, sent an army to Ireland\* under his ealdorman Berht, who wretchedly devastated a harmless race that had always been most friendly to the English, and his hostile bands spared neither churches nor monasteries. The islanders resisted force by force so far as they were able, imploring the merciful aid of God and invoking His vengeance with unceasing imprecations. And although those who curse cannot inherit the kingdom of God, yet one may believe that those who were justly cursed for their wickedness quickly suffered the penalty of their guilt at the avenging hand of God. Indeed the very next year the king rashly took an army to ravage the kingdom of the Picts, against the urgent advice of his friends and particularly of Cuthbert,\* of blessed memory, who had recently been made bishop. The enemy feigned flight and lured the king into some narrow passes in the midst of inaccessible mountains; there he was killed\* with the greater part of the forces he had taken with him, on 20 May, in the fortieth year of his age and the fifteenth of his reign. As I have said, his friends urged him not to undertake this campaign; but in the previous year he had refused to listen to the holy father Egbert, who had urged him not to attack the Irish who had done him no harm; and the punishment for his sin was that he

would not now listen to those who sought to save him from his own destruction.

From this time the hopes and strength of the English kingdom began to 'ebb and fall away'.\* For the Picts recovered their own land which the English had formerly held, while the Irish who lived in Britain and some part of the British nation recovered their independence, which they have now enjoyed for about forty-six years. Many of the English were either slain by the sword or enslaved or escaped by flight from Pictish territory; among these latter was Trumwine, a reverend man of God who had been made bishop over them and who retired with his companions from the monastery of Abercorn, which was in English territory but close to the firth which divides the lands of the English from that of the Picts. He commended his own people to his friends in such monasteries as he could find and chose his own place of retirement in the monastery, so often mentioned, of the servants and handmaidens of God which is called Whitby. There, with a few of his own people, he lived for many years a life of austerity in the monastery to the benefit of many others besides himself. When he died he was buried in the church of the blessed Apostle Peter, with the honours due to his life and rank. At that time the royal virgin Ælfflæd\* presided over the monastery with her mother Eanflæd, both of whom have been mentioned before. But when the bishop came, that devout teacher Ælfflæd found him a very great help in the government of the monastery as well as a comfort in her own life. Aldfrith\* succeeded Ecgfrith on the throne; he was a man most learned in the Scriptures, who was said to be the brother of Ecgfrith and son of King Oswiu. He ably restored the shattered state of the kingdom although within narrower bounds.

On 6 February in this year of our Lord 685 Hlothhere, king of Kent, died after a reign of twelve years, having succeeded his brother Egbert, who had reigned nine years. He was wounded in battle with the South Saxons whom Eadric, son of Egbert, had raised against him. He died while his wounds were being attended to. Eadric ruled for a year and a half after Hlothhere and, when Eadric died, various usurpers or foreign

kings\* plundered the kingdom for a certain space of time until the rightful king, Wihtred,\* son of Egbert, established himself on the throne and freed the nation from foreign invasion by his devotion and zeal.

## CHAPTER 27 (25)

KING ECGFRITH, in the year that he died, caused the holy and venerable Cuthbert\* to be consecrated bishop of Lindisfarne as we have said. Cuthbert had for many years been living a solitary life, in great austerity of mind and body, on a small island called Farne which is in the Ocean, about nine miles away from the church of Lindisfarne. From his earliest years he had always longed for life under a Rule, and it was as a young man that he assumed both the name and the habit of a monk. He first of all entered the monastery of Melrose which is on the banks of the Tweed and was then ruled over by the Abbot Eata, the gentlest and simplest of men who, as has already been mentioned, was afterwards made bishop of Hexham or rather of Lindisfarne. The prior at that time was Boisil, a priest of great virtue and endowed with a spirit of prophecy. Cuthbert humbly submitted himself to Boisil's instruction and received from him a knowledge of the Scriptures and the example of a life of good works.

After Boisil died, Cuthbert was made prior of the monastery and trained many in life under a Rule, both in his capacity as teacher and by his own example. Not only did he teach those in the monastery how to live under the Rule and show them an example of it at the same time, but he also sought to convert the neighbouring people far and wide from a life of foolish customs to a love of heavenly joys. For many of them profaned the creed they held by wicked deeds and some of them too, in times of plague, would forget the sacred mysteries of the faith into which they had been initiated and take to the false remedies of idolatry, as though they could ward off a blow inflicted by God the Creator by means of incantations or amulets or any other mysteries of devilish art. So he frequently went forth from the monastery to correct the

successor who had crossed the sea to be consecrated, had not yet returned to his episcopal see.

When Swithberht had received the rank of bishop and had returned from Britain, he left soon afterwards to go to the nation of the *Boruhtware* (Bructeri) and led many of them into the way of truth by his teaching. But soon afterwards the *Boruhtware* were defeated by the Old Saxons and those who had accepted the Word were scattered here and there. So the bishop and certain others went to Pippin who, at the request of his wife Bliththryth (Plectrudis), gave him a dwelling-place on an island in the Rhine which in their language is called 'On the Shore' (Kaiserswerth). Here he built a monastery which his heirs still occupy, in which he dwelt for a time, living a life of great austerity; and there he died.

When those who had come from Britain had spent some time in Frisia teaching, Pippin, with the consent of them all, sent the venerable Willibrord to Rome while Sergius was still pope, asking for him to be consecrated archbishop of the Frisians. This was duly performed as Pippin requested, in the year of our Lord 696.\* He was consecrated in the church of the holy martyr Cecilia, on the day of her festival, and the pope gave him the name of Clement. He was sent back to the bishopric fourteen days after his arrival in the city.

Pippin gave him\* a place for his episcopal see in his famous fortress which, in the ancient language of the people, is called *Wiltaburg*, that is the town of the Wilti, but in the Gallic tongue is called *Traiectum* (Utrecht). The reverend bishop built a church here and preached the word of faith far and wide, recalling many from their errors. He also built a number of churches throughout those districts and established several monasteries. Not long afterwards he appointed in those parts a number of bishops from among the brothers who had come with him or had followed him there for the purpose of preaching. Some of these have now fallen asleep in the Lord, but Willibrord himself, surnamed Clement,\* is still alive and honoured for his great age, having been thirty-six years a bishop. After fighting many a battle in the heavenly warfare, he now longs with all his heart for the prize of a heavenly reward.

## CHAPTER 12

ABOUT this time a memorable miracle occurred in Britain like those of ancient times. In order to arouse the living from spiritual death, a certain man already dead came back to life and related many memorable things that he had seen, and I think that some of them ought to be briefly mentioned here. There was a man, the father of a family, who lived a religious life together with his household in a district of Northumbria which is called *Incuneningum* (Cunningham).\* He was stricken down by an illness which grew worse from day to day until he reached his end and died in the early hours of the night. But at dawn he came to life again and suddenly sat up, so that all who were sitting mourning round his corpse were terrified beyond measure and fled, except his wife, who loved him dearly and remained with him, though trembling with fear. The man comforted her, saying, 'Do not be afraid, for I have indeed risen from death which held me in its bonds, and I have been permitted to live again amongst mankind; nevertheless after this I must not live as I used to, but in a very different way.' He rose and went to the oratory in the village and continued in prayer until daylight came. He thereupon divided everything he possessed into three parts; he gave one part to his wife, another to his sons, and the third part he reserved for himself but immediately distributed it to the poor. Soon afterwards he freed himself from the cares of this world and went to the monastery at Melrose, which is almost encircled by a bend in the river Tweed. He received the tonsure and retired to a secret retreat provided by the abbot. There, until the day of his death, he lived a life of such penance of mind and body that even if he had kept silence, his life would have declared that he had seen many things to be dreaded or desired which had been hidden from other men.

He described what he had seen in this way: 'I was guided by a man of shining countenance and wearing bright robes. We went in silence in what appeared to me to be the direction of the rising of the sun at the summer solstice. As we walked we came to a very deep and broad valley of infinite length. It lay

on our left and one side of it was exceedingly terrible with raging fire, while the other was no less intolerable on account of the violent hail and icy snow which was drifting and blowing everywhere. Both sides were full of the souls of men which were apparently tossed from one side to the other in turn, as if by the fury of the tempest. When the wretched souls could no longer endure the fierceness of the terrific heat, they leapt into the midst of the deadly cold; and when they could find no respite there, they jumped back only to burn once again in the midst of the unquenchable flames. Since a countless multitude of misshapen spirits, far and wide, was being tortured in this alternation of misery as far as I could see, and without any interval of respite, I began to think that this might be hell, of whose intolerable torments I had often heard tell. But my guide who went before me answered my thoughts, "Do not believe it," he said, "this is not hell as you think."

'When he had gradually led me further on, utterly terrified by this awful spectacle, I suddenly saw that the places in front of us began to grow dimmer until darkness covered everything. As we entered this darkness, it quickly grew so thick that I could see nothing else except the shape and the garment of my guide. As we went on "through the shades in the lone night",\* there suddenly appeared before us masses of noisome flame, constantly rising up as if from a great pit and falling into it again. When my guide had brought me to this place, he suddenly disappeared and left me alone in the midst of the darkness and of the horrible scene. I saw, as the globes of fire now shot up and now fell back again ceaselessly into the bottom of the pit, that the tips of the flames as they ascended, were full of human souls which, like sparks flying upward with the smoke, were now tossed on high and now, as the vaporous flames fell back, were sucked down into the depths. Furthermore, an indescribable stench which rose up with these vapours filled all these abodes of darkness. When I had stood there a long time in great terror, uncertain what to do or where to turn or what end awaited me, I suddenly heard behind my back the sound of wild and desperate lamentation, accompanied by harsh laughter as though a rude mob were insulting their captured foes. As the noise grew clearer and

finally reached me, I beheld a crowd of evil spirits, amid jeers and laughter, dragging five human souls, wailing and shrieking, into the midst of the darkness. I could see\* that one was tonsured like a clerk, one a layman, and one a woman. The evil spirits dragged them down into the midst of the burning pit; and it came about that, as they descended deeper, I was unable to discern clearly between human lamentations and devilish laughter, but there was a confused noise in my ears. Meanwhile some of the gloomy spirits rose from the flaming abyss and rushed at me, surrounding me with burning eyes and tormenting me with the noisome flame which issued from their mouths and nostrils. They also threatened to seize me with the fiery tongs which they held in their hands, but although they ventured to terrify me, they did not dare to touch me. Being thus surrounded on all sides by foes and black darkness, I cast my eyes in every direction to see if there was any help or way of escape anywhere; and then there appeared behind me, on the road by which I had come, something like a bright star glimmering in the darkness which gradually grew and came rapidly towards me. On its approach all the hostile spirits who were seeking to seize me with their tongs scattered and fled.

'It was the one who had guided me before, whose coming put them to flight; turning to the right he began to lead me in the direction of the rising of the winter sun and quickly brought me out of the darkness into a serene and bright atmosphere. As he led me on in open light, I saw a very great wall in front of us which seemed to be endlessly long and endlessly high everywhere. I began to wonder why we were approaching this wall, since I could nowhere see any gate or window or steps to it. When we had reached the wall we suddenly found ourselves on top of it, by what means I know not. There was a very broad and pleasant plain, full of such a fragrance of growing flowers that the marvellous sweetness of the scent quickly dispelled the foul stench of the gloomy furnace which had hung around me. So great was the light that flooded all this place that it seemed to be clearer than the brightness of daylight or the rays of the noontide sun. In this meadow there were innumerable bands of men in white

robes, and many companies of happy people sat around; as he led me through the midst of the troops of joyful inhabitants, I began to think that this might perhaps be the kingdom of heaven of which I had often heard tell. But he answered my thoughts: "No," he said, "this is not the kingdom of heaven as you imagine."

"When we had passed through these abodes of the blessed spirits, I saw in front of us a much more gracious light than before; and amidst it I heard the sweetest sound of people singing. So wonderful was the fragrance which spread from this place that the scent which I had thought superlative before, when I savoured it, now seemed to me a very ordinary fragrance; and the wondrous light which shone over the flowery field, in comparison with the light which now appeared, seemed feeble and weak. When I began to hope that we should enter this delightful place, my guide suddenly stood still; and turning round immediately, he led me back by the way we had come.

"When we had reached the joyful mansions of the white-robed spirits, he said to me, "Do you know what all these things are,\* which you have seen?" I answered. "No!" Then he said, "The valley that you saw, with its awful flaming fire and freezing cold, is the place in which those souls have to be tried and chastened who delayed to confess and make restitution for the sins they had committed until they were on the point of death; and so they died. But because they did repent and confess, even though on their deathbed, they will all come to the kingdom of heaven on judgement day; and the prayers of those who are still alive, their alms and fastings and specially the celebration of masses, help many of them to get free even before the day of judgement. Furthermore, the fiery noisome pit which you saw is the very mouth of hell, into which whoever once falls will never be released from it through all eternity. This flowery place in which you see a fair and youthful company, so joyous and bright, is where the souls are received of those who depart from the body practising good works; but they are not in such a state of perfection that they deserve to be received immediately into the kingdom of heaven; nevertheless all of them at the day of judgement

will enter into the presence of Christ and the joys of the heavenly kingdom. But any who are perfect in every word and deed and thought, as soon as they leave the body, come to the kingdom of heaven. This kingdom is near the place where you heard the sound of sweet singing, amid delightful fragrance and glorious light. You must now return to the body and live among men again; but if you seek to watch your actions with greater care and keep your ways and words righteous in singleness of heart, you yourself will receive a place after your death among the joyous band of the blessed spirits whom you see. When I left you for a time, I did so in order to find out what your future would be." When he had finished speaking I returned to the body with much distaste, for I was greatly delighted with the sweetness and grace of the place I had seen and with the company of those whom I saw in it. I did not dare to ask any questions of my guide; but meanwhile I suddenly found myself, by what means I know not, alive and in the world of men.'

The man of God was unwilling to relate these and other things he had seen to any who were living a slothful or a careless life, but only to those who were terrified by fear of the torments or delighted with the hope of eternal joys and were ready to make his words a means of spiritual advancement. For instance, in the neighbourhood of his cell there lived a monk named Hæmgisl,\* who was an eminent priest and whose good works were worthy of his rank. He is still alive, living in solitude in Ireland and supporting his declining years on a scanty supply of bread and cold water. He would often visit this man and learn from him, by repeated questionings, what sort of things he saw when he was out of the body; it is from his account that these particulars which we have briefly described came to our knowledge. He also told his visions to King Aldfrith, a most learned man in all respects, who listened to them gladly and attentively; at the king's request he was admitted to the monastery already mentioned and was crowned with the monastic tonsure. Whenever the king visited that region, he often went to listen to his story. At that time the abbot and priest Æthelwold, a man of pious and sober life, ruled over the monastery. Now he rules over the



episcopal see of Lindisfarne and his deeds are worthy of his rank.

The man was given a more secret retreat in the monastery where he could freely devote himself to the service of his Maker in constant prayer, and as his retreat was on the banks of the river, he often used to enter it in his great longing to chastise his body, frequently immersing himself beneath the water; he would remain thus motionless, reciting prayers and psalms for as long as he could endure it, while the water of the river came up to his loins and sometimes up to his neck. When he came out of the water, he would never trouble to take off his cold, wet garments until the warmth of his body had dried them. When in wintertime the broken pieces of ice were floating round him, which he himself had had to break in order to find a place to stand in the river or immerse himself, those who saw him would say, 'Brother Drythelm,'—for that was his name—'however can you bear such bitter cold?' He answered them simply, for he was a man of simple wit and few words, 'I have known it colder.' And when they said, 'It is marvellous that you are willing to endure such a hard and austere life', he replied, 'I have seen it harder.' And so until the day he was called away, in his unwearied longing for heavenly bliss, he subdued his aged body with daily fasts and led many to salvation by his words and life.

### CHAPTER 13

ON the other hand, there was a man in the Mercian kingdom whose visions and words, but not his way of life, profited many but not himself. He lived in the time of Cenred,\* Æthelred's successor, and was a layman, holding military rank; but however much he pleased the king by his outward industry, he displeased him by his inward negligence. The king warned him constantly to make confession, mend his ways, and give up his sins, before sudden death robbed him of all opportunity of repentance and amendment. But though he was frequently warned, he spurned this salutary advice,

always promising that he would repent at some future time. Meanwhile he fell sick and took to his bed, suffering cruel pains. The king who loved him greatly went in to him and urged him to repent of his wickedness even then, before he died. He answered that he did not wish to confess his sins then, but only when he had recovered from his illness, lest his companions should accuse him of doing, for fear of death, something which he would not do when he was in good health; he imagined that he was speaking brave words but, as was afterwards apparent, he had been miserably deceived by the wiles of the devil.

As his disease grew worse, the king came again to see him and reason with him. But he called out at once in wretched tones, 'What do you want now? Why have you come? You can do nothing to help or save me now.' The king answered, 'Do not talk like that; behave like a sane man.' 'I am not mad,' he said, 'but I know the worst and I have seen it clearly.' 'And what is that?' the king asked. 'A short time ago,' he said, 'two most handsome youths came into my home and sat down near me, one at my head and one at my feet. One of them drew out a very beautiful but exceedingly small book and gave it me to read. On looking into it, I found all the good deeds I had ever done written down, but they were very few and trifling. They took the volume back but said nothing to me. Then suddenly there appeared an army of evil spirits with horrible faces; they surrounded the outside of the house, also filling almost the whole of the interior, and they too sat down. Then the one who seemed to be chief among them, judging by his dark and gloomy face and by the fact that he occupied the chief seat, took a volume of enormous size and almost unbearable weight, horrible to behold, and ordered one of his followers to bring it to me to read. On reading it I found all my sins written down very clearly but in hideous handwriting: not only my sins of word and deed but even my slightest thoughts. He said to the glorious white-robed men who sat by me, "Why do you sit here since you know that this man is certainly ours?" They said, "You speak the truth; take him away to help make up the number of the damned." With these words they immediately disappeared. Then two very wicked

reverend father, being assured of their conversion, rejoiced to see the day of the Lord; he saw it and was glad.

### CHAPTER 23

IN the year of our Lord 725, being the seventh year of Osric,\* king of Northumbria, who was successor to Cenred, Wihtried,\* king of Kent, died on 23 April. He was the son of Egbert and left his three sons, Æthelberht, Eadberht, and Alric, heirs of the kingdom which he had governed for thirty-four and a half years. In the following year Tobias, bishop of the church at Rochester, died, a most learned man, as has already been said. He had been a disciple of two masters of blessed memory, Archbishop Theodore and Abbot Hadrian. Besides having a knowledge of both ecclesiastical and general literature, he is also said to have learned Latin and Greek so thoroughly that they were as well known and as familiar to him as his native tongue. He was buried in the chapel of St Paul the Apostle which he had built within the church of St Andrew as his own burial place. Ealdwulf succeeded him as bishop having been consecrated by Archbishop Berhtwald.

In the year of our Lord 729 two comets\* appeared around the sun, striking great terror into all beholders. One of them preceded the sun as it rose in the morning and the other followed it as it set at night, seeming to portend dire disaster to east and west alike. One comet was the forerunner of the day and the other of the night, to indicate that mankind was threatened by calamities both by day and by night. They had fiery torch-like trains which faced northwards as if poised to start a fire. They appeared in the month of January and remained for almost a fortnight. At this time\* a terrible plague of Saracens ravaged Gaul with cruel bloodshed and not long afterwards\* they received the due reward of their treachery\* in the same kingdom. In the same year the holy man of God, Egbert, went to be with the Lord on Easter Day as has already been described; and soon after Easter, on 9 May, Osric, king of the Northumbrians, departed this life when he had reigned eleven years, after appointing Ceolwulf,\* brother of his pre-

decessor Cenred, as his successor. Both the beginning and the course of his reign have been filled with so many and such serious commotions and setbacks that it is as yet impossible to know what to say about them or to guess what the outcome will be.

In the year of our Lord 731 Archbishop Berhtwald died of old age on 13 January,\* having held the see for thirty-seven years, six months, and fourteen days. In the same year Tatwine\* was made archbishop in his place. He was from the kingdom of Mercia and had been a priest in the monastery of Breedon. He was consecrated in Canterbury by the venerable bishops Daniel of Winchester, Ingwold\* of London, Ealdwine of Lichfield, and Ealdwulf of Rochester on Sunday, 10 June. He was a man renowned for his devotion and wisdom and excellently instructed in the Scriptures.

At the present time Tatwine and Ealdwulf preside over the churches of Kent as bishops; Ingwold is bishop in the kingdom of Essex; Ealdberht and Hathulac are bishops of the East Angles; Daniel and Forthhere are bishops of the West Saxons; Ealdwine is bishop of the Mercian kingdom and Wealhstod is bishop of the people who dwell west of the river Severn; Wilfrid is bishop of the kingdom of the Hwicce and Cyneberht is bishop of the kingdom of Lindsey. The bishopric of the Isle of Wight belongs to Daniel, bishop of Winchester. The kingdom of the South Saxons, having been for several years without a bishop, receives episcopal ministrations from the bishop of the West Saxons. All these kingdoms and the other southern kingdoms which reach right up to the Humber, together with their various kings, are subject to Æthelbald,\* king of Mercia. At the present time there are four bishops in the kingdom of Northumbria, over which Ceolwulf rules; Wilfrid\* in the church of York, Æthelwold\* at Lindisfarne, Acca\* at Hexham, Pehthelm\* in the place called Whithorn, where the number of believers has so increased that it has lately become an episcopal see with Pehthelm as its first bishop.

The Picts now have a treaty of peace with the English and rejoice to share in the catholic peace and truth of the Church universal. The Irish who live in Britain are content with their

own territories and devise no plots or treachery against the English. Though, for the most part, the Britons oppose the English through their inbred hatred, and the whole state of the catholic Church by their incorrect Easter and their evil customs, yet being opposed by the power of God and man alike, they cannot obtain what they want in either respect. For although they are partly their own masters, yet they have also been brought partly under the rule of the English.

In these favourable times of peace and prosperity, many of the Northumbrian race, both noble and simple, have laid aside their weapons and taken the tonsure, preferring that they and their children should take monastic vows rather than train themselves in the art of war. What the result will be, a later generation will discover.

This is the state of the whole of Britain at the present time, about 285 years after the coming of the English to Britain, in the year of our Lord 731. Let the earth rejoice in His perpetual kingdom and let Britain rejoice in His faith and let the multitude of isles be glad and give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness.

## CHAPTER 24

In order to assist the memory, I have thought it well briefly to recapitulate\* events already dealt with, each under its particular date.

In the sixtieth year before the incarnation of the Lord, Gaius Julius Caesar was the first Roman to make war on Britain. He was victorious but was unable to obtain control of it.

In the year of our Lord 46 Claudius, the second Roman to come to Britain, brought most of it under his sway and also added the Orkney Islands to the Roman Empire.

167. Eleutherius became bishop of Rome and ruled the church gloriously for fifteen years. Lucius, a king of Britain, sent him a letter, asking to be made a Christian, and gained his request.

189. Severus became emperor and reigned seventeen years. He fortified Britain with a wall from sea to sea.

381. Maximus was made emperor in Britain. He crossed to Gaul and killed Gratianus.

409. Rome was stormed by the Goths, after which the Roman rule in Britain ceased.

430. Palladius was sent by Pope Celestinus to be the first bishop of the Irish Christians.

449. Marcianus and Valentinianus ruled as co-emperors for seven years. In their time the English came to Britain on the invitation of the Britons.

538.\* There was an eclipse of the sun on 16 February from six to eight in the morning.

540.\* There was an eclipse of the sun on 20 June and the stars appeared at nine in the morning for nearly half an hour.

547. Ida\* began to reign, from whom the Northumbrian royal family trace their origin. He reigned for twelve years.

565. The priest Columba came from Ireland to Britain to teach the Picts and established a monastery on Iona.

596. Pope Gregory sent Augustine and some monks to Britain to preach the word of God to the English.

597. These teachers arrived in Britain, roughly 150 years after the coming of the English.

601. Pope Gregory sent the pallium to Britain for Augustine, who had already been consecrated bishop. He also sent several ministers of the Word, among whom was Paulinus.

603. The battle at *Degsastan*.

604. The East Saxons, under King Sæberht, accepted the Christian faith through Bishop Mellitus.

605. Gregory died.

616. Æthelberht, king of Kent, died.

625. Paulinus was consecrated bishop of the Northumbrians by Archbishop Justus.

626. Eanflæd, daughter of King Edwin, was baptized with twelve others on the eve of Whitsunday.

627. King Edwin and his people were baptized on Easter Day.

633. King Edwin was killed and Paulinus returned to Kent.