
The Making of the Medieval Papacy: The Gregorian Mission to Kent

Jack Morato

In the midst of the Western Roman Empire's collapse, Pope Leo I (r. 440-461) made the monumental assertion that the bishop of Rome was the true head of the Christian Church because Christ had designated Peter, Rome's first bishop, as the "foundation" of his earthly Church and the "doorkeeper" of his heavenly kingdom.¹ Leo's reasoning became known as the Petrine Doctrine, an idea that developed into the basis of papal power throughout the Middle Ages and the theological justification for papal hegemony over all bishops and patriarchs of Christendom—both in the Greek East and in the Latin West. In the mid-fifth century, however, the western portion of the Roman Empire had suffered an unrecoverable collapse, and Roman Christianity was supplanted in the provinces with either the pagan animism of the Anglo-Saxons and Franks or the heretical Arianism of the Goths and Vandals. Leo's bold proclamation of papal and Roman Catholic leadership did not coincide with social and political realities; he was writing at a time when the Roman Church held influence in Italy but little elsewhere. Establishing the authority of the Roman See in the Germanic kingdoms that occupied approximately what is now France, Spain, and Britain required the sustained efforts of successive popes and the churchmen who worked under their auspices. A key part of this long-range effort to translate the Petrine Doctrine from abstraction to reality included the late sixth-century mission to the Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Kent in Britain that Pope Gregory the Great (r. 590-604) organized. The Gregorian mission resulted in the conversion of the pagan Kentish kingdom and the establishment of the Episcopal Church at Canterbury, the first Latin Church in Britain since Roman times. More importantly, the Gregorian mission planted the seed of Latin Christianity in Britain and culminated in the conversion of the whole island less than a century later under the leadership of the pope in Rome.

Pope Leo and Pope Gregory were visionaries who foresaw a universal church that would bring Latin Christianity to the new Germanic kingdoms of Western Europe. In the late sixth century, however, their vision was exactly that and nothing more. The prestige and authority of the Latin Church can be counted among the victims of the Germanic invasions of the fifth century. That the Latin Church was still extant in Gregory's time was no small miracle in itself. Throughout late antiquity and the early Middle Ages the Church had no army of its own to enforce its

will or guard its interests; it was dependent upon secular authority for protection, the suppression of heresy, and the granting of economic and legal concessions.

The years between 400 and 600 were a transitory period for the Church, even more so perhaps than for Western European society in general. It was a time of tremendous flux in church-state relations that saw the Church in search of secular authorities stable and powerful enough to nurture its interests and protect it from those who would do it harm both physically and spiritually. The Roman Empire had filled this role during the last years of its existence. Emperor Constantine's conversion in the early fourth century inaugurated the remarkable transformation of Christianity from a persecuted, underground religion of beggars to the state-sanctioned religion of the Caesars.² Theodosius I (r. 379-395), the last emperor of any great consequence, vigorously proscribed both Roman paganism and Arian Christianity—the most important spiritual rivals of Latin Christianity. To these gifts were added a number of fiscal and judicial privileges that allowed the Church to develop the independence it later relied upon to withstand the Roman collapse. Members of the clergy were granted substantial tax exemptions, and the Church was allowed to develop its own canon law and hold its own tribunals that effectively meant the Roman state surrendered jurisdiction over members of the clergy.³ The emperors of the Christian Roman Empire thus ensured the continuity of the nascent Church, and at the end of the Roman era the Latin Church found itself in the unenviable position of being the only institution capable of ameliorating the unsettled society of post-invasion Europe.

The disordered condition of early medieval Europe prevented the popes from exercising any real leadership in the two hundred years following the Roman collapse. Indeed, Leo and Gregory were two anomalies in an otherwise steady decline in papal influence. Most of the fifth and sixth century popes did nothing to advance Pope Leo's grand vision of papal authority and ecclesiastical leadership. Survival, preservation, and adjustment occupied the intellectual energies of churchmen during this tumultuous period.

Pope Gregory came to the papal throne in the late sixth century at the nadir of papal and Church influence. Gregory was painfully aware of the desperate condition of the Church and the monumental task that stood before him. In a pessimistic letter written shortly after his accession, Gregory compared the Church to an "old and grievously shattered ship," constantly taking on water and "battered by a daily and violent storm."⁴

With enemies threatening on all sides, the position of the pope in Italy was precarious at best. The Ostrogoths and their leader Theodoric were defeated during the Gothic War (535-554) and replaced by the Byzantines who, under the direction of Emperor Justinian I (r. 527-565), had sought to reclaim their "authority over the

remaining countries which the ancient Romans possessed . . . [and were] . . . lost by subsequent neglect.”⁵ Byzantine rule did not last in Italy, its power weakened with the invasion of the Lombards, a particularly barbaric tribe of Germans who invaded northern Italy in 568. The Lombards in Gregory’s day held the whole of Cisalpine Gaul up to the Alpine passes through which Hannibal had trekked some eight hundred years before. They also held Beneventum, Spoletum, and parts of Tuscany in the south. The Byzantines meanwhile retained Ravenna, Istria, Venetia, and Naples in addition to the islands of Sardinia, Corsica, and Sicily. As pope, Gregory maintained possession of the *Patrimonium Sancti Petri* consisting mainly of lands in the vicinity of Rome, Dalmatia, southern Gaul, and Sicily.

The violence and instability of his surroundings distressed Gregory. He spoke of the terrible “suffering from the swords of the Lombards in the daily plundering and mangling and slaying of our citizens”⁶ and complained of the danger he faced and the “confusion of the tribulations which we suffer in this land.”⁷ Unlike his ineffectual predecessors, however, Gregory was not one to sit idle. The pope worked through the Christian Lombard Queen Theodelinda to soften the behavior of the Lombards.⁸ His efforts eventually paid off. Theodelinda’s son Adaloaldus was baptized a Christian and succeeded his father as king in 616.⁹ The Byzantines retained control of North Africa and substantial portions of Italy, but no harmony developed between Rome and Constantinople. The caesaro-papist ideology of the Byzantine emperors meant that both the pope and the Byzantine emperor competed for absolute supremacy in ecclesiastical affairs. Gregory was cordial towards the Byzantine emperor, but in doing so, his aim was not conciliation but placation. The pope was simply buying time while he carried out his important work in Western Europe.

Most of Western Europe had fallen away from the Latin Church. The Visigoths controlled the Iberian Peninsula—what is now Spain and Portugal. They were a primitive tribe that had been among the first to invade Roman territory. They initially subscribed to Arian Christianity, a heretical interpretation of the nature of Christ that orthodox Christians condemned. The Arian heresy had spread virulently throughout the eastern provinces of the Roman Empire before Theodosius’s vigorous persecutions crushed it in 383 and 384. Official persecution, however, came too late to prevent the spread of Arianism beyond the Danube frontier where it contaminated the Goths shortly before their romp through Roman Gaul and Hispania.¹⁰ King Reccared I (r. 586–601) of the Visigoths converted in 587 “from the error of Arian heresy to the firmness of a right faith”—that is, Latin Christianity—shortly before Gregory assumed the Throne of Peter.¹¹ The conversion of the Visigoths was a cause to celebrate, but it did little for the Latin Church for two reasons. First, the Visigothic kings were singularly inept in the arts of government and administration. The

orthodox Spanish population detested them for this reason and because the kings clung to tribal Arianism for two hundred years after arriving in Spain. The Visigoths, through their incompetence and their alien faith, failed to win the loyalty of the locals. Deprived of support, the Visigothic kingdom eventually succumbed to the Moslem invasion of Iberia in the early eighth century. Second, there is not enough evidence to suggest that Gregory was able to exert any influence over the direction of the Spanish Church or the conduct of the Visigothic kings. Gregory's letter to Reccared drips of adulation and sermon, and it clearly shows the pontiff's intent on Christianizing that kingdom and ameliorating the savage behavior of its kings.¹² Gregory also dispatched a letter to a man named Claudius who appears to have been influential in the court of the Gothic king, but the correspondence is vague and refers neither to the good deeds that provoked Gregory's praise nor to the precise station of Claudius.¹³ These two dispatches represent the extent of Gregory's activism in Spain.

The religious situation in Merovingian France was more optimistic, but even there the condition of the Church was feeble at best. The Salian Franks came into Gaul as pagans, but they converted to Latin Christianity during the reign of Clovis I (r. 481-509). Though Gregory of Tours lauded Clovis as "another Constantine,"¹⁴ the conversion of the Franks ultimately did little to restore papal influence in Gaul. The Franks, like their Germanic cousins elsewhere in Europe, were a primitive and violent people who came to Gaul with unsophisticated legal and political systems and almost no concept of statehood. They possessed a deep-seated hatred for Roman civilization. The political organization of the Germanic tribes at the time of the Roman collapse centered on the war-band, what the medieval historian Norman Cantor called an "irresponsible type of kingship resting . . . upon military prestige."¹⁵ War chiefs exercised societal leadership by commanding what was essentially an armed gang. Loyalty rested on the leader's ability to provide opportunities for plunder. Religious conversion could not dilute the primitivism of the Frankish rulers, and the sixth-century Merovingian kings quite literally ran their country into the ground. They did nothing to ameliorate society, and they spent their energies satisfying their base desires and fighting over the throne. The Frankish contempt of Roman institutions meant that they preserved nothing of the Roman administrative structure. As in Spain, the ineptitude of the royal house caused the locals to hate them. Political and economic power began to decentralize in the early sixth century as the Gallo-Roman and Frankish nobility began carving up large, hereditary estates for themselves at the expense of the Merovingian royal family.¹⁶ Preoccupied with their infighting, the ruling house did nothing to stop this process.

The bishops of Gaul initially placed a tremendous amount of faith in their alliance with the Merovingian royal house. They thought it possible to resurrect that happy congruence of secular and ecclesiastical authority that had proved so

beneficial to the Church during the last century of Roman rule. Frankish barbarism precluded such a union, and the Gallic churchmen soon turned away from the Merovingian kings in disgust. Their disappointment is reflected in the unmistakable narrowing of vision among the higher clergy. Deprived of a conscientious secular authority that could bring about a Christian society, the French bishops resigned themselves to building up their own private estates in the manner of the secular Frankish nobility.¹⁷ The bishop and historian Gregory of Tours's *History of the Franks* is representative of the disillusionment and pessimism of the late sixth century French bishops. The work is peppered with disgust at the destructive behavior of the Merovingian kings and the generally savage conditions that prevailed.¹⁸

The situation in Spain, Gaul, and Italy imparted a dreary backdrop to Pope Gregory's chosen task of establishing papal authority throughout Western Europe. The pope's leaky ship was in need of repair, and he chose Britain as a starting point. The situation in Britain had been perhaps bleakest of all. Christianity had arrived in Britain some two centuries before the Roman collapse,¹⁹ but the coming of the Anglo-Saxons in the mid-fifth century dealt a serious blow to the faith. The Angles, Jutes, and Saxons who arrived in Britain were almost entirely untouched by Roman civilization,²⁰ and like the other Germanic tribes who came across the frontier, their socio-political and legal systems were rudimentary at best. They were ruled by a warrior chieftain whose hold on power depended upon the size of his army and his abilities as a warrior.²¹ No aristocracy or nobility existed to speak of; most people belonged to a large class of free peasant farmers.²² The Anglo-Saxons were illiterate, and they harbored a special hatred of urban life. They held few qualms over burning libraries, levelling what remained of the Roman cities, and enslaving the Romano-Celtic inhabitants. "Peace," according to Tacitus, "is repulsive to the race."²³ The late British historian Jasper Ridley agreed, calling them "the most destructive immigrants who have ever come to Britain."²⁴ The native Britons were poor fighters, and their inability to unite amongst themselves meant that they could not match the aggression of the Germanic invaders.²⁵ The regions that now approximate Scotland, Wales, and Cornwall were all that remained of British territory by the end of the sixth century. Elmet, Rheged, Gododdin, and several other smaller British kingdoms to the west and north of Northumbria fared better than their southern counterparts, but they soon lost their independence to Anglo-Saxon expansionism throughout the seventh century.²⁶

The process of conquest spurred changes in Anglo-Saxon society. A more stable form of semi-hereditary kingship developed in which a male of the royal line succeeded the king. An armed retinue of warrior nobles drawn from prominent families attended the king. By the time Gregory's missionaries arrived in 597,²⁷

Britain south of the River Tyne was a pagan land comprised of more than a dozen independent kingdoms, each governed by its own royal house. The overriding objective of these kingdoms from their formation beginning in the mid-fifth century was to acquire and maintain power at the expense of their neighbors.²⁸ The result was a period of unabated internecine warfare five centuries long. Nothing, not even the arrival of Christianity, could temper Anglo-Saxon destructiveness.²⁹

The British Isles were not devoid of Christianity when Gregory's mission arrived in Kent under the leadership of his chosen emissary, the Benedictine monk Augustine. It persisted in Ireland, an island so wild that the Romans had never tried to conquer it, yet it became the great preserver of the Christian tradition in the British Isles. Irish monks meticulously copied and preserved great libraries of classical works in their dimly lit monasteries.³⁰ From these bases at the edge of the world, the sixth-century Irish monks set about converting the Scots, Picts, and English who resided in the wild territories of northern Britain.

Christianity had first come to Ireland in the fifth century through Patricius, a Roman Briton known today as Saint Patrick, the Apostle of Ireland. Abducted at the age of sixteen by Irish raiders, Patrick spent six miserable years as the slave of a pagan Irish chieftain.³¹ The traumatic experience of incessant hunger and exposure had a profound effect on him. Like many in such desperate circumstances, he turned to God and developed an intense spirituality and sense of mission.³² Patrick escaped and eventually found his way back to Britain, but he could not sit still knowing that the Irish remained pagans. He returned and worked tirelessly to convert his former captors until most Irish were Christians by the time of his death around the middle of the fifth century.³³ From the beginning, the rough nature of Ireland's apostle set Irish Christianity on an independent course. Patrick spent his entire life at the periphery of civilization and, unlike his counterparts elsewhere in the Romanized world, he was not a scholar. His education was cut short by his abduction,³⁴ a fact revealed in his simplistic use of Latin rife with grammatical errors.³⁵ Patrick's isolated upbringing, coupled with his deficient classical education, ensured the Christianity he brought to the Irish was unencumbered by the legacy of the Greco-Roman world.

Ireland was an illiterate country devoid of urbanization when Patrick arrived, a veritable *tabula rasa*. While the early Church had emerged within the Roman state and was shaped by it, the reverse held in Ireland. Unlike elsewhere in the Roman world, there was no preexisting infrastructure in Ireland—either political or physical—for Christianity to graft itself upon when it arrived in the fifth century. Therefore, Christianity helped to shape Irish civilization to a much greater extent than in the rest of the former Roman Empire. As the first monks formed monastic communities dedicated to learning and the preservation of classical texts, their religious houses drew thousands of students and converts hoping to benefit from

what the monks had to offer. Unsurprisingly, the nuclei of Ireland's first urban centers sprang from the monastic repositories of classical learning and holy Wisdom.

Ireland's isolation shielded it from the tumult unfolding in Britain and gave its Christianity time to crystallize. From their sanctuary at the fringe of civilization, Irish monks spread further afield into Scotland, northern Britain, and continental Europe. Some one hundred years after Patrick's death, Irish missionaries under the leadership of the unstoppable monk Columba (521-597) arrived in Pictland (Scotland) and succeeded in converting both the Scots and the northern Picts.³⁶ Columba founded the religious community on the island of Iona in 564, a place that soon became an important center of learning and piety. Columba, along with his intrepid brothers from Iona, then went on to found dozens of monasteries throughout Scotland.³⁷ Iona became an important base for new missions into Pictland and northern England, and it became a nexus of Celtic Christianity for the next two centuries. Irish monks from Iona were also active in the powerful Northumbrian kingdom in the early seventh century.³⁸ Among them was Aidan, an Irish monk known as the Apostle of Northumbria for his spectacular success there under the patronage of the Bernician king Oswald (604-641).³⁹ Significantly, Aidan, an Irishman, was Northumbria's first bishop. He established his see on the island of Lindisfarne, a place that would later play an important role in ecclesiastical history.⁴⁰

The intellectual and missionary work of the Irish monks would have ordinarily been encouraging for Gregory. However, Celtic Christianity—sometimes called Insular Christianity—differed in a number of ways from the Latin Christianity of the Roman Church. These differences were largely superficial, for both Latin and Celtic Christians agreed on all the major theological points.⁴¹ Still, the peculiar habits of the Insular Christians troubled orthodox adherents of the Roman Church. The ecclesiastical organization of the Celtic Church was unique in that the monastery and not the cathedral dominated the ecclesiastical landscape, and abbots, not bishops, exercised authority.⁴² Indeed, there were no dioceses and diocesan clergy at all.⁴³ Bishops had been sources of stability and leadership since the Roman era, and for many Latin churchmen a hierarchy without bishops was both untenable and unholy.⁴⁴ The nature of Insular monasticism was unique as well, based on the loose cenobitic type more commonly found in the eastern Mediterranean in which the abbot enjoyed only a loose control over the individual brothers. Insular monks were also known for their singular knowledge of Greek and their possession of a number of important Greek texts, most of which could not be found anywhere else in early medieval Europe.⁴⁵ The two most important points of divergence, judging from their frequent mentions in the *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum* (*Ecclesiastical History of the English People*) written in the eighth century by the Northumbrian monk Bede (c. 672-735), were the shape of the tonsure

and the reckoning of the date of Easter. Celtic churchmen *looked* different from their Latin counterparts, and this reinforced their “otherness” in the eyes of the Roman churchmen who took issue with it ostensibly because of its association with the biblical heretic Simon Magus.⁴⁶ The more important dispute was the different calculation for the date of Easter.⁴⁷ Despite incessant appeals from Roman churchmen, Insular Christians persisted in their Celtic interpretation of Easter for over a century after Latin Christianity took hold in Kent.⁴⁸

If the unorthodox practices of Insular Christians were not enough to concern Gregory, the swaggering behavior of the missionary Columbanus (543- 615) certainly was. Columbanus was a rough Irish monk with a profound sense of duty much like Saint Columba before him. Columbanus became Irish Christianity’s continental representative, making it his mission to proselytize to the pagans of Europe. His chosen theatre was Gaul, to which he went around 590 to establish as many monastic communities as he could. Columbanus was very successful; his monasteries in Gaul and Lombardy attracted many new adherents to the faith. Soon, however, the Latin bishops of Gaul took issue with his activities within their jurisdiction. The Gallic bishops were a proud and petty lot, much more interested in building up their worldly estates than spreading the Gospel. These men never left the comfort of their dioceses, unwilling to subject themselves to worldly hardships for the sake of preaching to the Frankish masses. The bishops summoned Columbanus to a synod, presumably to assert their authority over him and to correct his erroneous interpretation of Easter, but Columbanus had no intention of appearing before them. Instead, he sent a defiant letter in which he castigated the bishops for their myopic worldliness and lectured them in the virtues of pious humility and clerical poverty.⁴⁹

Intending to plead the case for the Celtic date of Easter, Columbanus wrote to Pope Gregory around the time of his quarrel with the Gallic bishops. His letter was couched in respectful pleasantries, but it clearly revealed that Columbanus had no intention of submitting to the Pope’s authority. He addressed Gregory not as the supreme head of Christendom but as a colleague, urging him to accept the Insular interpretation of Easter. Further, Columbanus prodded the pope to correct the erroneous interpretations of his predecessors and poked fun at Pope Leo’s name in the process. “Better by far is a living dog,” wrote Columbanus, “in this problem than a dead lion.”⁵⁰ Gregory’s response is not extant. The pope may have opted for pontifical silence in the face of such insolence, or his reply may have been lost in transit. The source of Columbanus’s boldness is also difficult to ascertain. Perhaps it was, as scholar Thomas Cahill asserted, a consequence of his “Irishness,” his innate playfulness, and honesty.⁵¹ More likely, however, the secular behavior of the Gallic bishops disgusted Columbanus. In any event, Columbanus’s rebellious tone could have only heightened Gregory’s fear of losing control of Britain to the Irish monks

who were spreading in all directions from their monasteries in Scotland.

His alarm over an impending rift between the two churches aside, Gregory may have been genuinely concerned for the souls of the pagan English. This hypothesis is derived from the well-known tale in Bede's *Historia* of Gregory's encounter with some Deiran slave children. According to Bede,

He inquired whether those islanders were Christians, or still involved in the errors of paganism, and was informed that they were pagans. Then fetching a deep sigh from the bottom of his heart, "Alas! what pity," said he, "that the author of darkness should own men of such fair countenances; and that with such grace of outward form, their minds should be void of inward grace." He therefore again asked, what was the name of that nation? and was answered, that they were called Angles. "Right," said he, "for they have an angelic face, and it is meet that such should be co-heirs with the Angels in heaven."⁵²

The episode, which had occurred before Gregory attained the Throne of Peter, made the pontiff aware of English paganism, and spurred his resolve to bring Christianity to Britain. Evidence suggests that Gregory never forgot those English children he met at the Roman marketplace. In 595, after he became pope, Gregory directed his agent Candidus to use some of the proceeds of the papal estates in Gaul to purchase English slaves there so they could be sent to a monastery for their salvation.⁵³

Whether motivated by genuine compassion, power, or both, Gregory understood that he needed to act quickly lest the Irish monks succeed at converting the Anglo-Saxons to their unorthodox version of Christianity. Between the Roman and Irish monks sat pagan England, a prize waiting for whoever could get to the pagan kings first. One of Gregory's few flaws was his small-minded perspective towards the Celtic monks. Like his contemporaries, he perceived them as rivals instead of allies and the conversion of England as a contest between Rome and Iona. A race for the souls of the English began as soon as Augustine landed in Kent.

Gregory took decisive action, marshaling all the resources at his disposal to ensure the success of his missionaries. He dispatched Augustine together with a small band of forty Benedictine monks in 596 to that "barbarous, fierce, and unbelieving nation" of Kent in southeast Britain.⁵⁴ The pope's many letters to Augustine and others reveal that he was personally invested in the direction of the mission and its outcome. Gregory sent letters urging the bishops and nobility of Gaul, the territory through which Augustine and his brethren needed to travel on their way to Kent, urging them to grant the monks safe passage and whatever

assistance they could give.⁵⁵ Gregory's entreaties paid off; the Frankish king and clergy welcomed the mission.⁵⁶ The Benedictine monks landed on the Isle of Thanet in the following year and immediately made contact with the Kentish ruler Ethelbert. The king ordered them to remain where they were and supplied them with necessities while he decided what to do with them.⁵⁷ Ethelbert soon visited, and Augustine seized the opportunity to preach the "word of life" to him.⁵⁸ The king was swayed but did not convert immediately. He did, however, give the monks permission to evangelize in his kingdom and allowed them to settle in Canterbury, the main town in Kent.⁵⁹ The monks began practicing their simple way of life according to the Rule of Benedict, attracting numerous converts.⁶⁰ King Ethelbert was baptized soon after, prompting the Kentish nobility and a large proportion of the population to convert as well.⁶¹ Bede mentioned that the king did not compel his subjects to convert but that they did so out of their own free will.⁶² In a jubilant letter dated 597 to Eulogius, the Bishop of Alexandria, Gregory informed him of the conversion of ten thousand English.⁶³ Gregory made Augustine "archbishop of the English nation" in that same year.⁶⁴

Interestingly, the pagan authorities of Kent received Gregory's missionaries better than the British churchmen did. Augustine's early interactions with Celtic churchmen established in southern Britain reinforced Gregory's suspicions of an inevitable schism. The initial meeting between the Latin monks and the Celtic churchmen was unproductive and peppered with animosity. The Insular monks proved uncooperative and unwilling to preserve "the unity of the church," according to Bede.⁶⁵ They "preferred their own traditions" and "could not depart from their ancient customs," namely, the Celtic date of Easter.⁶⁶ Moreover, Augustine's inflated perception of his own importance as the representative of the one universal Church caused him to be tactless and arrogant. He failed to rise from his seat at the Celts' approach, angering them and convincing them that one so pompous could not possibly be the bearer of God's truth.⁶⁷ Failing to reason with them, Augustine subsequently threatened them with divine vengeance, which, predictably, had little effect.⁶⁸

The rivalry between the Insular and Roman Churches is prominently displayed in Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica*. Bede was an Englishman who spent his entire life working in the Northumbrian monastery at Jarrow, a Latin religious house. To a degree, the purpose of his *Historia* was to highlight God's workings in the world, and in this way it conformed to the eschatological and linear concept of history prevalent in Christianity since apostolic times. Significantly, however, Bede sought to emphasize the victory of *Latin Christianity* in Britain and the achievements of Anglo-Saxon Church unity under the leadership of Canterbury—the first and most important Latin Church in Britain. This bias affected his treatment of events. For

example, he downplayed the interactions between the Northumbrian and Celtic kingdoms and overstated Northumbrian interactions with the English kingdoms to the south.⁶⁹ He also discounted the contributions of the Irish monks in the conversion of England.⁷⁰

Bede's coverage of the early seventh-century conflict between the Anglo-Saxon kings Penda of Mercia and Edwin of Deira is a case in point. Edwin converted to Latin Christianity in 627, and his baptism by the Roman monk Paulinus prompted mass conversions of the Northumbrian people.⁷¹ Penda, the pagan king of the aggressive Mercian kingdom in central England, entered into an alliance of convenience with the Welsh prince Cadwallon of Gwynedd, a Celtic Christian. Together, the two defeated and killed Edwin, then proceeded to massacre the newly-baptized inhabitants of Northumbria. Predictably, this inaugurated a period of apostasy as converts renounced their new faith to avoid persecution.⁷² Though both Penda and Cadwallon shared guilt for their atrocities, Bede's ireful pen lashed Cadwallon the hardest:

[O]ne of the chiefs, by whom it was carried on, was a pagan, and the other a barbarian, more cruel than a pagan; for Penda, with all the nation of the Mercians, was an idolater, and a stranger to the name of Christ; but Caedwalla, though he professed and called himself a Christian, was so barbarous in his disposition and manner of living.⁷³

Cadwallon—that “unrighteous instrument of rightful vengeance,” as Bede called him⁷⁴—was cast as the ultimate villain, a Christian who had betrayed his brothers in Christ by siding with the pagan warlord Penda. The fact that Cadwallon was a Celtic Christian only served Bede's purpose in casting Celtic Christianity as inferior to Latin Christianity.

Bede's hostility to Celtic Christianity is also displayed in his coverage of the earlier slaughter of British monks at Chester in 616. Ethelfrith, the Bernician king of Northumbria, embarked on a punitive expedition to Wales to enforce his overlordship there. When he arrived at Chester, he found approximately two thousand Celtic monks from the monastery at Bangor gathered in prayer against him. They chanted prayers and sang psalms for the victory of the Welsh. Ethelfrith slaughtered almost twelve hundred of them along with the entire Welsh army. Bede's mention of this failure of Christian prayer highlights that the monks were Celtic rather than Latin Christians. Their death at the hands of a pagan lord was punishment for their earlier failure to submit to the direction of Augustine and the Roman Church.⁷⁵ Bede also addressed the animosity between the Celtic and Latin

churchmen directly, noting that even in his own day, some 130 years after the arrival of Roman Christianity, it was “the custom of the Britons to despise the faith and religion of the English, and to have no part with them in anything any more than with pagans.”⁷⁶

Gregory continued to communicate with his missionaries long after their arrival in Kent. Through frequent correspondences, he directed their efforts, provided encouragement, and answered questions. Gregory sent a shipment of supplies to Augustine in 601 consisting of “vessels and altar-cloths . . . church furniture, and vestments for the bishops and clerks.”⁷⁷ He also sent instructions for the episcopal organization of Britain. Telling of his great insight, moderation, and practical wisdom, Gregory directed Augustine to be flexible in administering his see. Gregory understood that the English church was in its infancy and that strict adherence to the minutia of orthodoxy might be counterproductive.⁷⁸ Gregory’s sensibility and practicality was also on display in his softening of the harsh Augustinian (of Hippo) stance on the nature of free will and salvation. The early Christian theologian and philosopher St. Augustine (354-430) taught that salvation was a consequence of divine grace and that humans could do nothing to earn that grace. This stance would have severely hindered the early medieval church’s effort to convert the pagan masses: if good works did nothing to assure salvation, people would have no incentive to act in accordance with God’s will. The ultimate evangelist, Gregory, took a much more moderate approach. He posited that individuals did not need to worry about salvation as long as they received the sacraments and lived according to the moral teachings of the Church. This was in violation of St. Augustine of Hippo’s position but necessary if the Church was to be successful at converting the Germanic masses.

The conversion of Kent was only the beginning. Gregory praised King Ethelbert for his piety, but he also urged him to “make haste to extend the Christian faith among the peoples under thy sway [and] redouble the zeal of thy rectitude in their conversion. . . . make haste to infuse into the kings and peoples subject to you the knowledge of God.” The pope implored the Kentish king to “build up the manners of thy subjects in great purity of life by exhorting, by terrifying, by enticing, by correcting, by shewing examples of well-doing.”⁷⁹ Gregory clearly had grand designs for his new Constantine in Britain, and Ethelbert did not disappoint. The Kentish king set about bringing Christianity to those kingdoms over which he enjoyed influence. King Sabert of Essex converted in 604 due to Ethelbert’s intervention. Ethelbert also built and endowed the original St. Paul’s Church in London according to Gregory’s plan.⁸⁰ Further, Ethelbert attempted to convert the East Anglian king Raedwald. Though Raedwald refused and died a pagan, he did erect a Christian altar in his kingdom.⁸¹ The kingdoms of Mercia and Wessex were

slower to accept Christianity owing to their independence from Kentish influence. King Penda of Mercia clung stubbornly to paganism, but he later allowed his son and daughter to marry the Christian children of the Bernician royal house for political purposes. Penda's children turned Mercia into a Christian kingdom after his death in the Battle of the River Winwaed in 654.⁸² Christianity took hold slowest in Wessex. A Frankish bishop named Birinus came to Wessex with the sanction of Pope Honorius I to preach there, and he was successful at winning the conversion of the first West Saxon ruler Cynegils in 635.⁸³ Cynegils's son and successor Coinwalch refused to convert initially, but he did later due to the influence of King Anna of the East Angles in whose court he spent a period of exile.⁸⁴

The ecclesiastical history of Northumbria (comprised of Bernicia and Deira in the early seventh century) is second in importance only to that of Kent, as the kings of Northumbria ultimately chose to side with the Latin churchmen of Canterbury at the Synod of Whitby in 664. Latin Christianity came to Northumbria through the conversion of Edwin of Deira (r. 616-633). In 604, the pagan king of Bernicia, Ethelfrith, invaded Deira and slew the Deiran king Ethelric, prompting Edwin, Ethelric's kinsman, to flee for his life. Edwin spent many years in exile among the southern English where he was drawn into the orbit of Latin Christianity. In 625, Edwin married Ethelbert's daughter, the Christian Kentish princess Ethelburh. Edwin did not immediately convert, but a condition of the marriage contract required Edwin to provide tolerance of Christians within his kingdom.⁸⁵ A Roman monk from Canterbury named Paulinus accompanied Ethelburh to Northumbria, ostensibly to serve as her holy advisor. In reality, however, Paulinus dreamed of converting the Northumbrian king and his people.⁸⁶ In this effort, Pope Boniface V assisted Paulinus. The pope sent a letter to King Edwin, urging him to accept Christianity without further delay. He also corresponded with Queen Ethelburh, imploring her to persuade her husband to convert.⁸⁷ These efforts eventually bore fruit, and Edwin was baptized by Paulinus on Easter in 627.⁸⁸

The conversion of Northumbria was consistent with the typical *modus operandi* of the Church in its efforts to convert the Germanic rulers of Western Europe. The Church found it easier to convert the queen of a pagan ruler, then recruit her help in converting her husband. The letter Pope Boniface V wrote to Edwin's queen Ethelburh, reflected this method:

Persist, therefore, illustrious daughter, and to the utmost of your power endeavour to soften the hardness of his heart by carefully making known to him the Divine precepts; pouring into his mind a knowledge of the greatness of that mystery which you have received by faith, and of the marvellous reward which, by the new

birth, you have been made worthy to obtain...Strive, both in season and out of season, that with the co-operating power of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, your husband also may be added to the number of Christians.⁸⁹

Bertha, the Merovingian Christian queen of Ethelbert, received a similar letter from Pope Gregory in which he urged her to “strengthen by continual hortation the mind of your glorious husband in love of the Christian faith; let your solicitude infuse into him increase of love for God.”⁹⁰ The technique is also revealed in Gregory’s letters to the Christian Lombard queen Theodelinda.⁹¹ Paul the Deacon in his *Historia Langobardorum* claimed that the Lombard king Agilulf’s wife persuaded him to accept Christianity.⁹² Even the Christian queen Clotilda persuaded her husband, Clovis I, the first Christian king of the Franks, to abandon his paganism.⁹³ The church leveraged the influence wives had, and continued to have, over their husbands.

As mentioned previously, King Edwin of Diera in Northumbria was later defeated and killed in a conflict with Penda and Cadwallon. This prompted Northumbria to enter a period of apostasy due to abuses the victors inflicted on Christians. Christianity was restored under Oswald (r. 634-642), a son of Ethelrith of Bernicia who, unlike his father, was a devout Christian. Bede called Oswald “the most Christian king” for his role in reintroducing Christianity to the Northumbrian kingdom and establishing the important religious center at Lindisfarne.⁹⁴ Oswald differed from his predecessor in two ways. Coming from the Bernician royal house, he was heavily exposed to Insular Christianity. While Edwin had fled south, Oswald and his brother Oswiu fled to Ireland and Scotland where they were introduced to Celtic Christianity.⁹⁵ Oswiu (r. 642-670) succeeded his brother after Penda killed the latter in 642. Oswiu made the monumental decision to orient his kingdom towards Latin Christianity at the Synod of Whitby in 664.⁹⁶ Oswiu called on the conference to settle, once and for all, the dispute between the Celtic and Latin Churches over the dating of Easter. The Northumbrian bishop Colman argued for the Insular side while Wilfrid, a Northumbrian priest educated in Rome, spoke for the Latin side. After hearing the arguments, Oswiu asked Colman whether it was true that God had given Peter the keys to heaven. Colman could not deny the verse in Matthew 16:18—the foundation of the Petrine doctrine which Pope Leo had forcefully posited some two centuries before. Oswiu ruled in favor of the Latin Church with the following reasoning:

I also say unto you, that he is the door-keeper, and I will not gainsay him, but I desire, as far as I know and am able, in all

things to obey his laws, lest haply when I come to the gates of the kingdom of Heaven, there should be none to open them, he being my adversary who is proved to have the keys.⁹⁷

Oswiu's decision to favor Canterbury over Iona is interesting as most of the evidence suggests he favored Insular Christianity. Oswiu had deep ties with the Scots and was fluent in Gaelic. He was baptized by a Celtic churchman, and he was "instructed according to the doctrine of the Scots."⁹⁸ Evidence also suggests he spent some of his exile in Ireland as well.⁹⁹ A Scottish bishop sat at Lindisfarne at the time of the synod, and Northumbria was geographically closer to the Celtic regions of the north than to the Latin regions of the south. The Northumbrians enjoyed an above-average level of cultural, political, and social interaction with the Celtic populations on their western and northern borders.¹⁰⁰ Evidence demonstrates, for example, a diffusion of architectural forms between the Celts and the Northumbrians as well as similarities between the organization of Welsh and Northumbrian estates.¹⁰¹ Oswiu's sister-in-law was a Pictish princess, and Oswiu himself took a British princess for one of his brides.¹⁰² Moreover, ties between Northumbria and its Celtic neighbors ran deeper than the royal level. Native Britons integrated into Northumbrian society through their membership in several Northumbrian religious houses, and a large segment of the total Northumbrian population was of Celtic provenance.¹⁰³

Political considerations may have affected Oswiu's decision more than any other factor. He was astute enough to see that the future rested with Latin Christianity and the pope in Rome, although the influence of his Latin Christian wife Eanflaed and the fresh memories of Cadwallon's atrocities could not have helped Bishop Colman's arguments at Whitby. The Synod marked the beginning of the end for Celtic Christianity in Britain. Thereafter, the Latin churchmen worked steadily to eradicate the unique practices of Insular Christianity from religious life.

Pope Gregory's mission to Kent turned out to be a resounding success. Latin Christianity was everywhere victorious less than a century and a half after Augustine and his fellow monks landed on the Isle of Thanet. The final bastion of paganism fell when the South Saxons converted in 681.¹⁰⁴ In 716, a Northumbrian priest named Egbert persuaded the monks of Iona to adopt the Roman date of Easter and the Roman style of tonsure.¹⁰⁵ The transition from paganism to Christianity was not an uninterrupted process. Most of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms went through periods of apostasy depending on the current disposition of their rulers. However, Anglo-Saxon England, and indeed Britain as a whole, marched steadily towards the Roman Church after the conversion of Kent.

The author originally published this article in volume 4 issue 3 of the *Saber and Scroll Journal* in cooperation with APUS e-Press. The original version is available at this website https://apus.libguides.com/ld.php?content_id=41321964

Notes

1. Leo the Great, "Sermon on His Birthday III: Delivered on the Anniversary of his Elevation to the Pontificate," in *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. Charles Lett Feltoe (New York, NY: The Christian Literature Company, 1895), 117.

2. Eusebius Pamphilus, "The Church History of Eusebius," in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. Arthur Cushman McGiffert, Church Fathers from the Fourth to the Eighth Century 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: W.M.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1890), 1:1179-85.

3. Norman F. Cantor, *The Civilization of the Middle Ages* (New York, NY: Harper-Perennial, 1994), 58-62.

4. Gregory the Great, "Letter to John, Bishop of Constantinople," in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. James Barmby, Church Fathers from the Fourth to the Eighth Century 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: W.M.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1890), 12:730.

5. Justinian I, *Novella Constitutio* (n.p.: 536), 30.11, quoted in John Bagnell Bury, *History of the Later Roman Empire* (1923; repr., Mineola, NY: Dover, 1958), 2:26.

6. Gregory the Great, "Letter to Phocas, Emperor," in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. James Barmby, Church Fathers from the Fourth to the Eighth Century 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: W.M.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1890), 13:239; Gregory the Great, "Letter to Constantina Augusta," in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. James Barmby, Church Fathers from the Fourth to the Eighth Century 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: W.M.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1890), 12:967; Gregory the Great, "Letter to Eulogius, Bishop of Alexandria," in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. James Barmby, Church Fathers from the Fourth to the Eighth Century 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: W.M.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1890), 12:1054.

7. Gregory the Great, "Letter to John, Bishop of Constantinople," in *A Select Library of the Nicene*, 12:730.

8. Gregory the Great, "Letter to Theodelinda, Queen of the Lombards," in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. James Barmby, Church Fathers from the Fourth to the Eighth Century 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: W.M.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1890), 13:44.

9. Paul the Deacon, *Historia Langobardorum*, trans. William Dudley Foulke (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1907), 4.41.

10. Cantor, *The Civilization of the Middle Ages*, 58.

11. Gregory the Great, "Letter to Recharred, King of the Visigoths," in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. James Barmby, Church Fathers from the Fourth to the Eighth Century 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: W.M.B. Eerdmans

Publishing Company, 1890), 13:93.

12. Ibid., 13:95-6.

13. Gregory the Great, "Letter to Claudius in Spain," in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. James Barmby, Church Fathers from the Fourth to the Eighth Century 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: W.M.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1890), 13:90.

14. Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*, trans. Ernest Brehaut (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1916), 41.

15. Cantor, *The Civilization of the Middle Ages*, 94.

16. Ibid., 114-115.

17. Ibid., 116.

18. Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*, 105-6.

19. Gildas claimed that Christianity came in the first century during the reign of the Roman Emperor Tiberius, while Bede assigned the coming of Christianity to the second century. Bede claimed that the inhabitants of Britain preserved the Christian faith continuously until the persecutions of Diocletian. Dorothy Watts, whose *Religion in Late Roman Britain* was heavily informed by archaeological research, contends that Christianity was established in the second or early third century. The precise date of Christianity's arrival may be impossible to determine with absolute precision, but the presence of Christianity in Gaul by the second century meant that it was only a matter of time before the underground religion was smuggled over to Britain. Gildas, "De Excidio Et Conquestu Britanniae," in *Six Old English Chronicles*, 8; Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum* [Ecclesiastical History of the English People], trans. John Allen Giles (London, GBR: Henry G. Bohn, 1859), 10; Dorothy Watts, *Religion in Late Roman Britain: Forces of Change* (London, GBR: Routledge, 2002), 2, 12-13.

20. Cantor, *The Civilization of the Middle Ages*, 93-4.

21. Tacitus, "Germania," in *Tacitus: The Agricola and Germania*, trans. R. B. Townshend (London, GBR: Methuen & Co., 1894), 65-68.

22. Jasper Ridley, *The History of England* (London, GBR: Routledge-Kegan Paul, 1981), 3.

23. Tacitus's account was probably colored by the traditional Roman contempt of the "wild other" across the frontiers, but it is the most contemporary one available. His insights into Germanic society are particularly valuable. The Germans, according to Tacitus, regarded it a "dull and stupid thing to painfully accumulate by sweat of the brow what might be won by a little blood." Given the emphasis which the Romans placed on the virtues of honest agriculture, it is easy to see why they detested the Germans as hopeless savages. Tacitus, "Germania," in *Tacitus: The Agricola and Germania*, 67-8.

24. Ridley, *The History of England*, 2.

25. Both Gildas and Bede levelled harsh criticisms against the Britons of the early-fifth century. Gildas scolded the Britons for being "neither brave in war nor in peace faithful," and Bede noted that the "cowardice of the Britons" only encouraged further Anglo-Saxon invasions. Gildas, "De Excidio Et Conquestu Britanniae," in *Six Old English Chronicles*, 6; Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*, 1.15.

26. Barbara Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms of Early Anglo-Saxon England* (London, GBR: Routledge-Taylor & Francis, 2003), 83.

27. This date is derived from Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*, 1.25.

28. An overall trend of political consolidation prevailed throughout the Anglo-Saxon period as smaller states were accreted into the orbit of larger ones, and by the early ninth century there stood only four large kingdoms: Wessex, Mercia, Northumbria, and East Anglia. The decentralized political structure

of Anglo-Saxon Britain was finally destroyed by the Danish invasion of the mid-ninth century. For a chronology of the Danish invasion, see J. A. Giles, trans., *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (London, GBR: Henry G. Bohn, 1859), 341-52.

29. More moderate interpretations of the Anglo-Saxon invasion have been floated in recent years. Barbara Yorke downplays the impact of the Anglo-Saxon invasions on the economy and society of Roman Britain, contending that the physical, social, and religious deterioration of the island was already well underway before the Anglo-Saxons arrived. She blames the simplification of Romano-British society in the years leading up to the Roman collapse on the complex problems of the declining Roman Empire. Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, 1-9. Similarly, Dorothy Watts claimed that Christianity failed to become fully established in Britain owing to a resurgence of Celtic paganism, the pre-Roman religion of the island, after the apostasy of the Emperor Julian. She contends that British resistance to Romanization throughout the centuries of occupation reinforced this development. If this is true, the impact of the Anglo-Saxon invasion on Christianity may not have been as dramatic as it is often portrayed to be. Watts, *Religion in Late Roman Britain*, 24-95.

30. Thomas Cahill said it best when he wrote, “While Rome and its ancient empire faded from memory and a new, illiterate Europe rose on its ruins, a vibrant, literary culture was blooming in secret along its Celtic fringe.” Thomas Cahill, *How the Irish Saved Civilization* (New York, NY: Anchor Books, 1995), 183.

31. Patrick called the place “the end of the earth, where now my littleness is seen.” Saint Patrick, “Confessio,” in *The Writings of St. Patrick, the Apostle of Ireland*, 3rd ed., trans. Charles H. H. Wright (London, GBR: Religious Tract Society, 1894), 47, 53; J. B. Bury, *The Life of Saint Patrick and His Place in History* (London, GBR: Macmillan, 1905), 26-28.

32. On this Patrick wrote, “I prayed frequently during the day; love of God and the fear of Him increased more and more, and faith became stronger. . . . In one day I said about a hundred prayers, and in the night nearly the same.” Saint Patrick, “Confessio,” in *The Writings of St. Patrick*, 53.

33. J. B. Bury places the date of his death at 461. Bury, *The Life of Saint Patrick*, 206; Ridley, *The History of England*, 6.

34. Patrick himself admits his lack of education. Saint Patrick, “Confessio,” in *The Writings of St. Patrick*, 49, 67.

35. Charles H. H. Wright, *The Writings of St. Patrick, the Apostle of Ireland*, 3rd ed. (London, GBR: Religious Tract Society, 1894), 23-25.

36. The Scots themselves were Irish immigrants who had come to south-west Pictland in Patrick’s time. Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*, 3.4.

37. The Ionan monks had established no less than sixty monastic communities in Columba’s name by the time of his death in the late-sixth century. Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*, 3.4; Cahill, *How the Irish Saved Civilization*, 184-5.

38. Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*, 3.3.

39. *Ibid.*, 3.3, 3.5.

40. *Ibid.*

41. It is telling that Bede, a fierce partisan of Latin Christianity, lavished praise on the Irish churchmen for their “continence, love of God, and observance of monastic rules” and their “piety and chastity” in spite of the fact that they “employed doubtful cycles in fixing the time of the great festival [of Easter].” He excuses their unorthodoxy, asserting that their remoteness prevented anyone from bringing them the “synodal decrees for the observance of Easter.” Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*, 3.4.

42. *Ibid.*, 3.4.

43. Cantor, *The Civilization of the Middle Ages*, 163. The conspicuous absence of dioceses reflects the isolated development of Irish Christianity. Dioceses initially followed the provincial outlines

of the Roman Empire, but Rome had never exercised control in Ireland. Therefore, the Irish Church had no territorial framework to use as a model. William E. Dunstan, *Ancient Rome* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2010), 483.

44. Ignatius, bishop of Antioch in the second century, claimed that “he that honoureth the bishop is honoured of God; he that doeth aught without the knowledge of the bishop rendereth service to the devil.” Ignatius, “Epistle to the Smyrneans,” in *The Apostolic Fathers*, 2nd ed., trans. J. B. Lightfoot (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1889), 2:569-70.

45. The Eastern Greek elements within Irish Christianity came from the throngs of Christian immigrants who escaped to Ireland in the wake of the Germanic invasions. Ireland experienced an influx of fleeing ascetics, monks, and other holy men after Patrick’s time, and many of these came from the Roman provinces in the Near East. Cahill, *How the Irish Saved Civilization*, 180; Cantor, *The Civilization of the Middle Ages*, 145-9, 162.

46. The precise appearance of Insular tonsure can only be guessed at, but Daniel McCarthy offers some suggestions. See Daniel McCarthy, “On the Shape of the Insular Tonsure,” *Celtica* 24 (2003): 140-67; Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*, 5.21-22.

47. Ibid., 3.4, 3.3, 2.4, 2.19, 3.25, 5.21-22.

48. For an example of such an appeal, see Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*, 2.19.

49. Cahill, *How the Irish Saved Civilization*, 188-9.

50. Columbanus, “Letter to Pope Gregory,” in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. James Barmby, Church Fathers from the Fourth to the Eighth Century 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: W. M. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1890), 13:101-8.

51. Cahill, *How the Irish Saved Civilization*, 191.

52. Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*, 2.1.

53. Gregory the Great, “Letter to Candidus, Presbyter,” in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. James Barmby, Church Fathers from the Fourth to the Eighth Century 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: W.M.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1890), 12:1010.

54. Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*, 1.23.

55. Gregory the Great, “Selected Epistles of the Fourteenth Indiction,” in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. James Barmby, Church Fathers from the Fourth to the Eighth Century 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: W.M.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1890), 12:1046-55; Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*, 1.24.

56. Gregory the Great, “Letter to Clotaire, King of the Franks,” in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. James Barmby Church Fathers from the Fourth to the Eighth Century 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: W.M.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1890), 13:179; Gregory the Great, “Letter to Brunichild, Queen of the Franks,” in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. James Barmby, Church Fathers from the Fourth to the Eighth Century 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: W.M.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1890), 13:180; Gregory the Great, “Letter to Syagrius, Bishop of Augustodunum,” in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. James Barmby, Church Fathers from the Fourth to the Eighth Century 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: W.M.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1890), 13:77.

57. Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*, 1.25.

58. Ibid.

59. Ibid.

60. Ibid., 1.26.

61. Ibid.

62. Ibid.

63. Gregory the Great, "Letter to Eulogius, Bishop of Alexandria," in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. James Barmby, Church Fathers from the Fourth to the Eighth Century 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: W.M.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1890), 12:1132.

64. Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*, 1.27.

65. Ibid., 2.2.

66. Ibid.

67. Ibid.

68. Ibid.

69. Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, 83.

70. Cantor, *The Civilization of the Middle Ages*, 162.

71. Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*, 2.14.

72. Ibid., 3.1.

73. Ibid., 2.20.

74. Ibid., 3.1.

75. Ibid., 2.2.

76. Ibid., 2.20.

77. Ibid., 1.29.

78. Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*, 1.27; Gregory the Great, "Letter to Augustine, Bishop of the Angli," in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. James Barmby, Church Fathers from the Fourth to the Eighth Century 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: W.M.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1890), 13:184.

79. Gregory the Great, "Letter to Edilbert, King of the Angli," in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. James Barmby, Church Fathers from the Fourth to the Eighth Century 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: W.M.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1890), 13:196; Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*, 1.32.

80. Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, 47-8; Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*, 1.33.

81. Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*, 2.15.

82. Ibid., 3.24.

83. Ibid., 3.7.

84. Ibid.

85. Ibid., 2.9.

86. Ibid.

87. Ibid., 2.10-11.

88. Ibid., 2.14.

89. Ibid., 2.11.

90. Gregory the Great, "Letter to Bertha, Queen of the Angli," in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. James Barmby, Church Fathers from the Fourth to the Eighth Century 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: W.M.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1890), 13:141.

91. Gregory the Great, "Letter to Theodelinda, Queen of the Lombards," in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. James Barmby, Church Fathers from the Fourth to the Eighth Century 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: W.M.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1890), 13:253.

92. Paul the Deacon, *Historia Langobardorum*, 4.6.

93. Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*, 39-41.

94. Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*, 3.1, 3.3.

95. Ibid., 3.1.

96. Ibid., 3.25.

97. Ibid.

98. Ibid., 3.25, 3.1.

99. Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, 85. 100. Ibid., 83-6.

101. Ibid.

102. Ibid., 85.

103. Ibid., 86.

104. Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*, 4.13.

105. Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*, 5.22, 3.4. The Scots and the Picts were persuaded to adopt the Roman custom of tonsure and Easter earlier in the eighth century. See Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*, 5.15, 5.21. The British Christians of Wales and Cornwall still refused to abandon their Celtic practices as of Bede's final entry in 731, but Bede dismissed these nations as politically weak and rapidly losing their independence to their English neighbors to the east. Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*, 5.23.

Bibliography

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. Translated by J. A. Giles. London, GBR: Henry G. Bohn, 1859.

Bede. *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum* [Ecclesiastical History of the English People]. Translated by John Allen Giles. London, GBR: Henry G. Bohn, 1859.

- Bury, J. B. *The Life of Saint Patrick and His Place in History*. London, GBR: Macmillan, 1905.
- Cahill, Thomas. *How the Irish Saved Civilization*. New York, NY: Anchor Books, 1995.
- Cantor, Norman F. *The Civilization of the Middle Ages*. New York, NY: Harper-Perennial, 1994.
- Columbanus. "Letter to Pope Gregory." In *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. Translated by James Barmby. Vol. 13. Church Fathers from the Fourth to the Eighth Century 2, 101-8. Grand Rapids, MI: W. M. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1890.
- Dunstan, William E. *Ancient Rome*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2010.
- Gelasius I. "Letter of Pope Gelasius I to Emperor Anastasius on the Superiority of the Spiritual over the Temporal Power." In *Readings in European History*, edited by James Harvey Robinson. Vol. 1, 72-73. New York, NY: Ginn & Company, 1904.
- Gildas. "De Excidio Et Conquestu Britanniae." In *Six Old English Chronicles*. Translated by John Allen Giles, 8. London, GBR: G. Bell & Sons, 1891.
- Giles, J. A., trans. *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. London, GBR: Henry G. Bohn, 1859.
- Gregory of Tours. *History of the Franks*. Translated by Ernest Brehaut. New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1916.
- Gregory the Great. "Letter to Augustine, Bishop of the Angli." In *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. Translated by James Barmby. Vol. 13. Church Fathers from the Fourth to the Eighth Century 2, 184. Grand Rapids, MI: W.M.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1890.
- _____. "Letter to Bertha, Queen of the Angli." In *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. Translated by James Barmby. Vol. 13. Church Fathers from the Fourth to the Eighth Century 2, 141. Grand Rapids, MI: W.M.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1890.
- _____. "Letter to Brunichild, Queen of the Franks." In *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. Translated by James Barmby. Vol. 13. Church Fathers from the Fourth to the Eighth Century 2, 180. Grand Rapids, MI: W.M.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1890.
- _____. "Letter to Candidus, Presbyter." In *A Select Library of the Nicene and*

Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. Translated by James Barmby. Vol. 12. Church Fathers from the Fourth to the Eighth Century 2, 1010. Grand Rapids, MI: W.M.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1890.

“Letter to Claudius in Spain.” In *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. Translated by James Barmby. Vol. 13. Church Fathers from the Fourth to the Eighth Century 2, 90. Grand Rapids, MI: W.M.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1890.

“Letter to Clotaire, King of the Franks.” In *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. Translated by James Barmby. Vol. 13. Church Fathers from the Fourth to the Eighth Century 2, 179. Grand Rapids, MI: W.M.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1890.

“Letter to Constantina Augusta.” In *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. Translated by James Barmby. Vol. 12. Church Fathers from the Fourth to the Eighth Century 2, 967. Grand Rapids, MI: W.M.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1890.

“Letter to Edilbert, King of the Angli.” In *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. Translated by James Barmby. Vol. 13. Church Fathers from the Fourth to the Eighth Century 2, 196. Grand Rapids, MI: W.M.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1890.

“Letter to Eulogius, Bishop of Alexandria.” In *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. Translated by James Barmby. Vol. 12. Church Fathers from the Fourth to the Eighth Century 2, 1054. Grand Rapids, MI: W.M.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1890.

“Letter to Eulogius, Bishop of Alexandria.” In *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. Translated by James Barmby. Vol. 12. Church Fathers from the Fourth to the Eighth Century 2, 1132. Grand Rapids, MI: W.M.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1890.

“Letter to John, Bishop of Constantinople.” In *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. Translated by James Barmby. Vol. 12. Church Fathers from the Fourth to the Eighth Century 2, 730. Grand Rapids, MI: W.M.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1890.

“Letter to Phocas, Emperor.” In *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. Translated by James Barmby. Vol. 13. Church Fathers from

the Fourth to the Eighth Century 2, 239. Grand Rapids, MI: W.M.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1890.

_____. "Letter to Rechared, King of the Visigoths." In *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. Translated by James Barmby. Vol. 13. Church Fathers from the Fourth to the Eighth Century 2, 93. Grand Rapids, MI: W.M.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1890.

_____. "Letter to Syagrius, Bishop of Augustodunum." In *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. Translated by James Barmby. Vol. 13. Church Fathers from the Fourth to the Eighth Century 2, 77. Grand Rapids, MI: W.M.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1890.

_____. "Letter to Theodelinda, Queen of the Lombards." In *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. Translated by James Barmby. Vol. 13. Church Fathers from the Fourth to the Eighth Century 2, 44. Grand Rapids, MI: W.M.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1890.

_____. "Letter to Theodelinda, Queen of the Lombards." In *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. Translated by James Barmby. Vol. 13. Church Fathers from the Fourth to the Eighth Century 2, 253. Grand Rapids, MI: W.M.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1890.

_____. "Selected Epistles of the Fourteenth Indiction." In *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. Translated by James Barmby. Vol. 12. Church Fathers from the Fourth to the Eighth Century 2, 1046-55. Grand Rapids, MI: W.M.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1890.

Ignatius. "Epistle to the Smyrneans." In *The Apostolic Fathers*. 2nd ed. Translated by J. B. Lightfoot. Vol. 2, 569-70. New York, NY: Macmillan, 1889.

Justinian I. *Novella Constitutio*. N.p.: 536. Quoted in Bury, John Bagnell. *History of the Later Roman Empire*. 1923. Vol. 2. Reprint, Mineola, NY: Dover, 1958.

Leo the Great. "Sermon on His Birthday III: Delivered on the Anniversary of his Elevation to the Pontificate." In *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. Translated by Charles Lett Feltoe, 117. New York, NY: The Christian Literature Company, 1895.

McCarthy, Daniel. "On the Shape of the Insular Tonsure." *Celtica* 24 (2003): 140-67.

Pamphilus, Eusebius. "The Church History of Eusebius." In *A Select Library of the*

Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. Translated by Arthur Cushman McGiffert. Vol. 1. Church Fathers from the Fourth to the Eighth Century 2, 1179-85. Grand Rapids, MI: W.M.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1890.

Paul the Deacon. *Historia Langobardorum*. Translated by William Dudley Foulke. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1907.

Ridley, Jasper. *The History of England*. London, GBR: Routledge-Kegan Paul, 1981.

Saint Patrick. "Confessio." In *The Writings of St. Patrick, the Apostle of Ireland*. 3rd ed. Translated by Charles H. H. Wright, 47. London, GBR: Religious Tract Society, 1894.

Tacitus. "Germania." In *Tacitus: The Agricola and Germania*. Translated by R. B. Townshend, 65-68. London, GBR: Methuen & Co., 1894.

Thompson, E. A. *Saint Germanus of Auxerre and the End of Roman Britain*. Suffolk, GBR: Boydell Press, 1984.

Watts, Dorothy. *Religion in Late Roman Britain: Forces of Change*. London, GBR: Routledge, 2002.

Wright, Charles H. H. *The Writings of St. Patrick, the Apostle of Ireland*. 3rd ed. London, GBR: Religious Tract Society, 1894.

Yorke, Barbara. *Kings and Kingdoms of Early Anglo-Saxon England*. London, GBR: Routledge-Taylor & Francis, 2003.

--///---

Jack holds an MBA and an M.A. in Management from the University of Redlands, an M.S. in Applied Economics from Southern New Hampshire University, a B.A. in European History from American Military University, and a B.S. in Business Management from the University of Phoenix. He has over fifteen years of experience leading and managing diverse teams of military policemen in the United States Air Force. His primary expertise resides in organizational design, management skills, environmental analysis, econometrics, and data visualization. He is an amateur historian and professional scuba instructor in his spare time. Jack lives in Beaumont, California with his wife and daughter.