Orthodox England

In this issue:

and much more . . .

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Editorial:
WHICH ENGLAND?

> The traditional historic England; the industrial England of the nineteenth century; and the new post-war England, belonging far more to the age itself than to this particular island. America, I suppose, was its real birthplace. This is the England of arterial and bypass roads, of filling stations and factories that look like exhibition buildings, of giant cinemas and dance halls and cafes, bungalows with tiny garages, cocktail bars, Woolworths, motor-coaches, typing, factory girls looking like actresses, greyhound racing and dirt tracks, swimming pools and everything given away for cigarette coupons.
>
> *J B. Priestley, English Journey, 1933*

1933 IS a very long time ago. However, we still live in different Englands – 'the traditional historic England' and the modern England. The latter has been formed from the merger of 'the industrial England of the nineteenth century', 'the 'new' post-war England', both described above by the writer J. B. Priestly nearly eighty years ago, and their modernisation. This is without Woolworths, but with satellite television, motorways, digital technology and the whole modern global way of life that goes with them.

Sadly, this is also the England (or rather 'Britain') of amoral media, 24-hour drinking, easy supplies of drugs and 'safe' sex (= abortion on demand), all provided, as sometimes it seems, to the sub-literate and dumbed-down of the soap opera age. Dependent on State subsidies, tabloid TV (together forming the new bread and circuses) and the surveillance cameras of our neo-Stalinist State, this is the Britain of the spiritually and morally deprived. This is the England of Wayne and Sharon.

However, there still persists the other England, the England of John and Mary. This possesses the much-loved vestiges of the much older, traditional and historic England, to which we and, in part at least, many others also belong. We witness to another England. This is the England which does not put 'none' as our religious affiliation on official forms, the England that does not pay Danegeld to the EU, the England that does not invade other countries.

Yes, we are still here, still alive and not ashamed.

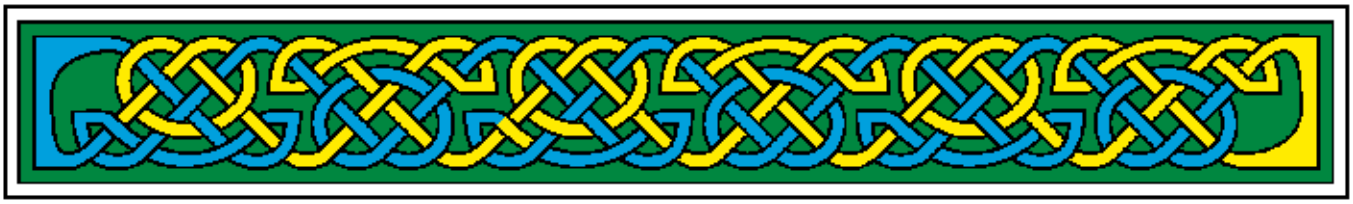
As we come to this fiftieth issue of *Orthodox England*, which we have only by the grace of God reached, we cannot but look back with gratitude. Twelve and a half years ago we were a small and maligned minority in tiny premises above a disused shop in a small seaside town. Now we have our own church in a large town near the Capital.

Twelve and a half years ago we were a word-processor struggling to pay the bills, now we are an established on-line journal. Isolated by the powers of this world and those who obeyed them, even mere survival seemed highly unlikely to us twelve and a half years ago. Why not simply leave, go away from the voices of left and right which pursued us and accused us? But we persisted.

Now we are a properly established and equipped large church with our own premises and infrastructure. The ghetto days, forced on us by circumstances against our will, are over. Yet, if you had predicted then any of what has happened to us since 1997, we would have looked at you as wild dreamers. This teaches us to persevere and never give up hope.

Although with this issue, we complete the final three chapters of *The Saints of England*, we have piles of material waiting – ready for the next fifty issues at least. May God grant us health and strength.

Fr Andrew



From The Righteous: ABBOT ÆLFRIC OF EYNSHAM

20 November: The Passion of Saint Edmund, King And Martyr, Patron-Saint of England

IN the reign of King Ethelred[1], a certain very learned monk came to Archbishop Dunstan from St Benedict's monastery across the sea in the south[2]. The monk was called Abbo. This was three years before Dunstan reposed[3]. One day, as they were talking together, Dunstan told him about St Edmund. This was the very story that Edmund's sword-bearer had told King Athelstan[4], when Dunstan had been a young man and the sword-bearer a very old man. The monk wrote the whole story down in a book and when it came to us a few years later we put it into English, just as it is below. Two years later the monk Abbo returned to his monastery, where he was almost immediately appointed Abbot:

Edmund the Blessed, King of the East Angles[5], was wise and honourable and always glorified Almighty God by his outstanding way of life. He was humble, devout and always lived in faith, refusing to commit shameful sins, in no way changing his customs, but always mindful of the true teaching. If you are made a leader of men, do not exalt yourself, but you are among men as one of them. He was generous to the poor and like a father to widows, always benevolently guiding his people to righteousness and restraining the violent. He lived in bliss in the true faith.

However, a fleet of Danes invaded, pillaging and killing all over the country, as is their wont. Their leaders, Ingvar and Ubba, leagued together by the devil, came with the fleet. Their ships landed in Northumbria, devastated the country and killed the people. While Ubba, who had won his victory through cruelty, stayed in Northumbria, Ingvar sent his ships eastwards. He rowed into East Anglia when Prince Alfred, who later became the famous West Saxon King, was twenty-one years old[6].

Wolf-like, Ingvar marched swiftly through the land, slaughtering people, men, women and innocent children, shamefully tormenting innocent Christians. Soon after this he sent the King a threatening message, saying that he must bow down to him in homage if he cared for his life. The messenger went to King Edmund and straightaway announced Ingvar's message: 'Ingvar, our King, is vigorous and victorious by sea and by land and rules over many peoples. He has just landed with an army to winter here. He orders you to share your hidden treasures and ancestral wealth with him at once. If you want to live, you will be his under-king, because you are not strong enough to resist him'.

King Edmund called the bishop closest to him[7] and asked him for advice on how to answer the savage Ingvar. The bishop was frightened at the terrible misfortune and feared for the King's life. He said that it seemed best to him that the King submit to Ingvar. The King was silent and looked down at the ground. Finally, he answered him, like a King; 'Look, my lord, the poor people of this country have been put to shame. I would sooner fall in battle against anyone who wants to take my people's inheritance'. The bishop said: 'Alas, dear king, your people lie dead and you do not have enough troops to fight. The pirates will come and capture you alive, unless you flee and save your life or else save yourself by surrendering to him'.

King Edmund, who was very brave, said: 'I do not wish to live after my dear servants have unsuspectingly been killed by these pirates, perhaps even in their beds with their wives and children. I have never been accustomed to running away and, if I must, I would sooner die for my country. Almighty God knows that I will never turn from worshipping Him, nor from His true love, dead or alive'.

At these words, he turned to the messenger Ingvar had sent and told him undaunted: 'Really you deserve to die, but I will not stain my clean hands with your foul blood because I follow Christ, Who has given us an example. I would gladly be killed by you, if God so ordained. Go at once and tell your cruel lord that King Edmund will never bow down to Ingvar the leader of the heathen, unless he first bows down here in faith to Jesus Christ.

The messenger left at once. On his way he met the bloodthirsty Ingvar with all his army, hurrying to Edmund, and told the wicked man how he had been answered. Ingvar arrogantly ordered all his

troops to seize only the King, who had scorned his orders and at once tie him up.

When Ingvar arrived, King Edmund was standing in his hall, thinking of the Saviour[8]. He threw down his weapons, wishing to imitate the example of Christ Who stopped Peter from fighting against the bloodthirsty Jews. The wicked men bound Edmund, insulted him shamefully and beat him with clubs. Then they led the faithful King to an earth-fast tree and tied him to it tightly. They whipped him for some long time. Between the lashes Edmund continually called on Jesus Christ with true faith. The heathen were furious because of his faith with which he called on Christ to help him. As if for their amusement, they shot arrows at him until he was all covered with them like a porcupine's bristles, like St Sebastian.

When the wicked pirate Ingvar saw the noble King refusing to deny Christ, but still calling on Him with his strong faith, he ordered him to be beheaded, which the heathen did. With the saint still calling on Christ, the heathen took him to one side to kill him, striking off his head with a single blow. His soul departed joyfully to Christ. There was a certain man nearby, who had been kept hidden from the heathen by God. He overheard all this and later told the story, just as we tell it now. The pirates returned to their ships, hiding St Edmund's head in the thick brambles, so it could not be buried.

After they had left, the country-folk who were still alive started to return to where their lord's body lay headless. Their hearts were much grieved by his murder, especially because they did not have the head with the body. The man who had seen what had happened said that the pirates had taken the head with them. It seemed to him, as was quite true, that they had hidden the head in the nearby woods.

So they all went looking in the forest, searching for the head among the thorns and brambles everywhere. Then a great miracle happened. By Divine Providence a wolf was sent day and night to protect the head from other animals. The people went on searching, calling out all the time, as those who walk through forests do. 'Where are you now, friend? And the head answered them: 'Here, here, here'. And so it called out all the time, answering whenever any of them called, until they all found it through the cries. There lay the grey wolf guarding the head, holding the head between his paws. Although greedy and hungry, for God's sake he dared not touch the head, protecting it from other animals[9].

The people were astonished at the wolf guarding the head. They took the holy head home with them, thanking the Almighty for all His wonders. As if tame, the wolf followed the head until they reached the town, then it turned back to the forest. The country-people laid the head by the holy body and buried it as best they could, as they were in a great hurry. Very soon they built a church over it. Time passed. Many years later, when the pillaging had stopped and peace was restored to the oppressed people, they met and, since many miracles had happened in the chapel where he had been buried, they built a church worthy of the saint.

Next, by popular acclaim, they decided to raise the holy body from the grave and place it inside the church. A great miracle happened. The body was whole, just as if the King were alive, with a clean body and the neck, which had been cut through, was whole. It was just as it had been before his martyrdom. The wounds which the bloodthirsty heathen had inflicted on his body with their repeated arrows had also been healed by the God of Heaven. So he lies incorrupt to the present day, awaiting the resurrection and everlasting glory. His incorrupt body shows that he lived without fornication here in this world and passed to Christ in purity of life.

For many years after this there was a widow called Oswyn who lived near the saint's burial-place in prayer and fasting. Once a year she would cut the saint's hair and nails soberly and lovingly. She kept the hair and nails in a shrine, like relics on an altar. So the people in the area faithfully venerated the saint. Bishop Theodred[10] greatly enriched the church with gifts of gold and silver in the saint's honour.

One night some eight wretched thieves came to the venerable saint, hoping to steal the treasures which people had given. They tried to get into the church by cunning. One of them hit the door hard with a hammer; another tried using a file; another dug under the door with a spade; another tried to unlock the window using a ladder. But they toiled in vain and fared miserably, because the saint transfixed them miraculously. Each of them was fixed to the spot as he stood working with his tool, so that none of them could do their evil deed or move. They stood there until the morning. People were amazed to see the wretches, one on a ladder,

one bent down at his digging, each held fast at his work.

Then they were all brought before the bishop. He ordered them to be hanged from a gallows. However, he had forgotten how the God of mercy spoke these words through His prophet: 'Always deliver those who are led to death'[11]. The holy canons also forbid the ordained, both bishops and priests, to busy themselves with thieves. It is not fitting that those who are chosen to serve God, the Lord's servants, should agree to anyone's death. Once Bishop Theodred had looked at his books, he bitterly regretted the harsh sentence he had passed on the unhappy thieves and constantly deplored it to the end of his life. He earnestly asked people to fast with him for a full three days, praying that the Almighty would have mercy on him.

In the area there was a man called Leofstan who was rich in worldly things but ignorant of God. He rode to the saint's shrine with great insolence and very arrogantly ordered the guardians to show him the saint to see if his body were incorrupt. As soon as he saw the saint's body, he started raving and roaring horribly. His life ended miserably in an evil death. This is similar to what the Orthodox Pope Gregory wrote concerning St Lawrence, whose relics are in the city of Rome. People, both good and evil, were always wanting to see what he looked like, but God stopped them. In looking at him out of vain curiosity, seven men died all at the same time. In this way others stopped looking at the martyr with such idle curiosity.

We have heard of many miracles from popular tales about St Edmund. We will not set them down here in writing, everyone knows them. Through this saint and others like him, it is clear that at the Last Judgement Almighty God will be able to raise people up incorrupt from the earth. He preserves Edmund whole in his body until that great day, even though he was made of earth[12]. The place is worthy of veneration for the sake of the venerable saint and God's pure servants who work in Christ's service should be well provided for, because the saint is greater than people can imagine.

The English people are not deprived of the Lord's saints, since in England there are such saints as this holy king, Blessed Cuthbert, St Audrey in Ely and also her sister[13], incorrupt in body, for the confirmation of the faith. There are many other saints among the English. They work many miracles, as is widely known, to the praise of the Almighty in Whom they believe.

Christ shows men through His illustrious saints that He is the Almighty God, Who works such miracles. However, the miserable Jews altogether denied Him because they are accursed, as they desired for themselves. No miracles are worked at their graves because they do not believe in the living Christ. Christ shows men where the true faith is, since He works such miracles through His saints all over the earth. Therefore to Him be glory forever, with His Heavenly Father, and with the Holy Spirit, forever and ever. Amen.

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1. King Ethelred, called the Unready, that is to say King 'Noble Counsel No-Counsel', reigned from 978 to 1016. He became King after the dramatic assassination of his young half-brother Edward the Martyr (✙ 978).
2. St Dunstan (born c. 909) was Archbishop of Canterbury from 960 to 988.
3. The learned St Abbo (c. 945–1004) came from St Benedict's Monastery at Fleury-sur-Loire near Orleans. He arrived in England in 985 to become Abbot of Ramsey in Huntingdonshire and left in 987, writing in Latin this life, which Abbot Ælfric then translated into (Old) English. At that time the relics of St Benedict were in Fleury.
4. King Athelstan, grandson of King Alfred the Great, reigned from 924–939.
5. St Edmund the Martyr, King of East Anglia, 841–869.
6. King Alfred the Great (born in 849) reigned from 871–899.
7. Bishop Hunbert of South Elmham (in Suffolk) was consecrated in 824, anointed Edmund King of East Anglia and died in 869, possibly also martyred by the Danes.
8. Tradition has it that this all happened in Hoxne in the north of Suffolk.
9. It has been suggested in explanation that the wolf was in fact St Edmund's pet wolfhound, used for hunting and that it was the cries of the wolf that sounded like 'here, here, here'.
10. Bishop Theodred of London (✙ c. 960) was responsible for establishing East Anglian Dioceses at Hoxne in Suffolk and North Elmham in Norfolk after the Danes.
11. Proverbs 24, 11.
12. Like other Orthodox saints from the early history of England, St Edmund's body was not preserved whole once people lost the Orthodox Faith and turned from the Church. Today there are only bones.
13. This could be St Audrey's sister St Withburgh of East Dereham (✙ c. 743), but is more probably her other sister, St Saxburgh of Ely (✙ c. 700).

AN ORTHODOX PILGRIMAGE TO THE SHRINES OF ENGLAND

ON three separate occasions over the last eighteen years, I have been asked to draw up a pilgrimage itinerary for visitors to the country. Here is a basic list of holy sites in England to visit over two weeks. They create a circuit around England, beginning and ending in London. The list is flexible and could be reduced, even to a regional basis (A, B, C, D, E, F). Possible sightseeing is included:

A. London and South-East of London (2 days)

Day 1:

London – arrival, Russian Patriarchal Cathedral. Sightseeing tour

St Albans (Hertfordshire – 20 m. north of London. Pilgrimage to shrine and relic of St Alban in the Cathedral, which can be venerated)

Day 2:

Canterbury and Folkestone (Kent, 60 m. south-east of London. Visit Canterbury Cathedral and venerate relic of St Eanswythe (pronounced 'Inswith') in St Eanswythe's church in Folkestone)

B. South-West (4 days)

Day 3:

Winchester (120 m. west of Folkestone – Hampshire, near Southampton 60 m. south-west of London, Old English Capital – Cathedral – St Swithin's relics concealed but present – and museum)

Day 4:

Shaftesbury (Dorset, 50 m. west of Winchester, where the relics of St Edward were originally placed in the ruined Abbey)

Wimborne (Just near Shaftesbury in Dorset, a historic town, a great convent once stood here)

Wareham (Pre-schism church, 15 m south of Wimborne, near Bournemouth in Dorset)

Corfe (Dorset, site of St Edward's martyrdom, just near Wareham)

Day 5:

Whitchurch Canonicorum (45 m. west of Corfe, in Dorset, east of Exeter, nearest 'big' town is Lyme Regis on coast; tiny village; relics of St Wite are intact in the pretty village church)

Crediton (30 m. west of Whitchurch, in Devon, nearest town is Exeter; birthplace and relic of St Boniface in RC church)

Culbone – St Bean (tiny village, 30 m. north of Crediton, in Somerset. Nearest 'big' town is Minehead. No relic, but tiny ancient chapel in typical picturesque and atmospheric Celtic saint location by sea. A hidden jewel)

Day 6:

Glastonbury (Somerset, about 30 m. from Culbone. Historic town. Legend of St Joseph of Arimathea)

Wells (Somerset, very near Glastonbury, about 20 m. south-west of Bath. Historic Cathedral town)

C. West (2 days)

Day 7:

Bath (sightseeing) (near Bristol, 30 m. east of Wells, 60 m. west of London, historic Roman town)

Bradford-on-Avon (pre-schism church, Wiltshire, about 10 m. from Bath)

Day 8:

Dorchester-on-Thames (60 m. north-east of Bradford-on-Avon, visit church, St Birinus, no relic, historic town, in Oxfordshire, very near Oxford, 50 m. north-west of London)

Oxford (sightseeing + relics of St Frideswide in Christchurch Cathedral. St Nicholas Orthodox parish)

Binsey (on edge of Oxford) (St Frideswide – holy well)

D. North-East (3 days)
(150 m. north-east of Oxford)

Day 9:

Travelling to Beverley (Yorkshire) (St John's relics are here in the main church, though concealed)

Day 10:

York (Yorkshire, Roman city, where St Constantine was proclaimed Emperor (sightseeing))

Whitby (Yorkshire coast, 45 m. north-east of York. St Hilda, ruins, no relics)

Day 11:

Durham (County Durham, 45 m. north-west of Whitby, relics of St Cuthbert and St Bede in Cathedral)

Lindisfarne, Holy Island (Northumberland, 60 m. north of Durham, not far from Scottish border. St Cuthbert, no relics, but site)

E. South to East Anglia (2 days) (200 m. south-east of Lindisfarne)

Day 12:

Travelling to Ely (Cambridgeshire, just north of Cambridge) (St Audrey – relic in RC church)

Day 13:

Hoxne (40 m. east of Ely, near Diss, in Suffolk, site of St Edmund's martyrdom. Atmospheric)

Iken (30 m. east of Hoxne, near Aldeburgh on Suffolk coast, ancient thatched church, site of St Botolph's monastery. Atmospheric)

Colchester (Essex, 45 m. south of Hoxne – St John's Orthodox Church)

F. Return to London (1 day)

Day 14:

Bradwell-on-Sea (Essex, 25 m. south-east of Colchester on coast – St Cedd, no relics, but pre-schism church)

London ROCOR Cathedral (60 m. from Bradwell-on-Sea, service of thanksgiving, departure)

THE SAINTS OF ENGLAND

13. On the Pilgrim Road

SOME clever people assure us that pilgrimages started with the localisation of ancient divinities. There were river gods and mountain gods and these could do nothing for you unless and until you came to the spots where they worked. It sounds feasible enough, although the explanation seems to ignore the natural instinct of curiosity that attracts us to places historically associated with anything outstanding. The same instinct, consecrated, drew the early English converts to the Holy Land, to Constantinople and to Rome.

At that date the various parts of the Roman Empire were closely knit by the public highways which, starting from the *Forum*, crossed Italy and the provinces, and had their *termini* at the frontiers. We can be fairly certain that these roads were working in early English times; some of them are still working. They were carefully divided by milestones, and from one town to another, without bothering their heads about private property or natural obstacles. Mountains were tunnelled and rivers bridged even the widest and most rapid rivers, as can be seen in places even to this day.

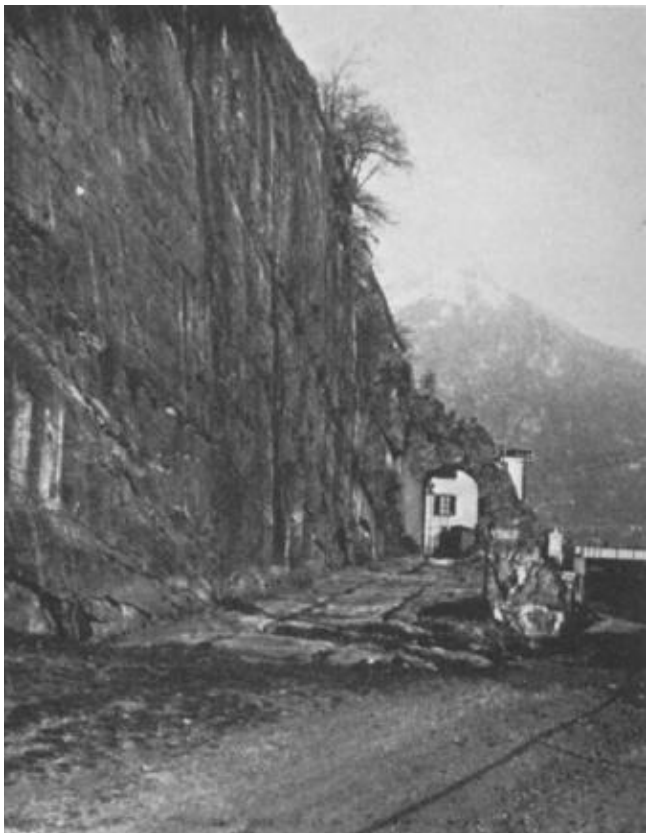
The centre of the highways was raised into a terrace, which commanded the surrounding countryside. The basis was sand, gravel and cement, the top being paved with large stones and, near Rome itself, with granite blocks. In the palmy days, there were hostels all along the line each provided with good stabling, so that a hundred miles could be covered very quickly. When Severus set out from Vienna to make himself Emperor, he and his army marched the whole eight hundred miles in forty days. In the reign of Theodosius, a certain magistrate travelled from Antioch to Constantinople. He started at night, reached Cappadocia 165 miles away the following evening and arrived at his destination on the sixth day just in time for lunch. The entire distance was 665 miles.

However, the posts or hostels were only for officials and the chances are that they had been damaged somewhat by the time St Wilfrid took to the road. Still, we are assured that when St Ceolfrid was making his way to the tombs of the Apostles, he was able to celebrate the liturgy daily, except when crossing the Channel. He only got as far as Langres and that portion of the route took one hundred and fourteen days, but we must allow for the fact that he was an ailing and dying man; also for the fact that, as Abbot of the most considerable community in the North of England, he had a retinue of eighty persons. Conversation on the way was no great difficulty, for St Bede tells us that the early English and the Germanic Franks understood one another's language quite well.

Let us accompany St Wilfrid on one of these pilgrimages and so get some idea of what was involved. With the exception of the sea-crossing, he would have had the benefit of Roman roads from start to finish. The first of these roads started from the Wall which Antoninus built between the Firths of Clyde and Forth, about 220 Roman miles (slightly less than an English mile of today) above the point where our traveller would join it, namely at York. From York to London was 227 Roman miles, from London to Sandwich or *Rhutupiæ* 67, the crossing to Boulogne 45, from Boulogne to Rheims 174; from there to Lyons 330, to Milan 324 and to Rome 426, making a total of over 1800 Roman miles, about 1600 English miles. Saints like Willibald who journeyed to the Holy Land, had a long way to go after reaching Rome, although it was probably the easier part of the trip. Brindisi was 360 miles farther on, the crossing to *Dyrrachium* was 40, from there to Constantinople 711, to Ancyra 283, to Tarsus 301, to Antioch 141, to Tyre 252 and to Jerusalem 168. The whole of the above is an actual route used by the Romans and represents a journey of over 4000 Roman miles, about 3,600 English miles.

As far as we know, St Wilfrid was the first Englishman to make the pilgrimage to Rome. This was in 634. He started a fashion which, almost at once, attained formidable and even dangerous dimensions. Restless and energetic by nature, St Wilfrid travelled more than any of his colleagues. His apostolic work in the North brought him as far as the Clyde. On foot or on horseback, it was all the same to him. Only once do we hear of him being carried in a litter, in which Emperor Severus had travelled to Britain to meet his death.

Roman Road across Wheeldale Moor, Yorkshire. Photograph by A. H. Robinson



Roman Mountain Road in the Alps at Donnaz, midway between Turin and Aosta. The road is of solid rock formed by slicing away the cliff and is provided with artificial 'ruts' for chariot wheels

Photograph: Fototeca Unione, Rome.

On the last occasion, Wilfrid walked, although he was in his seventieth year.

St Benedict Biscop, who made six pilgrimages between the years 653 and 686, once made the sea-crossing in a trading vessel. The return journey from Rome to Canterbury took him a year. He also was a tireless traveller and collector of books and icons and, as Abbot, he appointed a deputy so that he himself might be free to come and go. How long St Egwin took and what condition he was in when he got there we are not told. He was the third Bishop of Worcester and went to Rome in order to vindicate himself. Instead of travelling comfortably, he put shackles on his legs, locked them and threw the key into the Avon. Shackles or no shackles, he arrived and, when praying at the tombs of the apostles, had the key put in his hand by his valet. It seems that a fisherman had found it that very morning mouth of a fish which he had caught in the Tiber. This was the St Egwin who founded the monastery at Evesham.

'All roads lead to Rome' is an old saying. At that date, the Roman-built English roads did. So many followed St Wilfrid's example that an entire quarter

of the city came to be called *Vicus Saxonum*, later *Sassia*, the English village. After all it was the centre of everything that these new converts valued most – the apostles and the martyrs. Very touching in its simplicity is the statement of the chronicler that they went there in order to get an introduction to the martyrs, so that they might be recognised and be well received by them in heaven. It was the great ambition of many of them to die there, of St Ceolfrid, for instance.

Abuses, however, grew up alongside this urge, as abuses grow up alongside every urge. The example of St Benedict Biscop found too many imitators who had neither his excuse nor his discretion. A kind of vagabondage invaded the monasteries and convents. Archbishop Theodore succeeded in getting some to calm down and stay put, but this reform was slow and difficult. This stability was not to the taste of the Celtic monastics and indeed its early imposition might have ruined their apostolic labours. There were no parishes at that time and the Christian ministry was and had to be a travelling ministry. Thus, St Cuthbert journeyed as far as Blair Atholl and helped to create a community which became the cradle of St Andrew's University.

As for some nuns, many in France and Italy were scandalised at the liberties which some allowed themselves when on pilgrimage. At any rate, St Boniface wrote to the Archbishop of Canterbury a letter so frightful in its details that the primate encouraged the government to veto pilgrimages of nuns to Rome. We gather that many of these eager ones were motivated by the natural enough desire of escaping from the miseries of their own country which, at that date, was being raided as much as in these latter days, only in a different way. Sometimes the exchange was no improvement, for we read of an Abbess called Wethburgh who, having gone to Rome in the hope of being able to say her prayers in peace, found the city shaken by tumult, rebellion and the threat of a Saracen invasion.

At King Alfred's instigation, Bishop Swithelm of Sherborne may even have made his way to the coast of Malabar in India, by way of Rome and Alexandria, and found there the native Orthodox. He brought back from India aromatic liquors and splendid jewels which still reposed in the treasury of his church as late as the twelfth century. Two of Alfred's sea-captains explored the Baltic and the White Sea and got as far as what is now Archangelsk in northern Russia. Their ships were a great innovation on their predecessors, being twice as long and far swifter; some of them had sixty oars apiece. St Richard, a Wessex noble, set out for the Holy Land via Rome, but he got no farther than Lucca where he reposed in 722. His relics are still there and an icon has been painted of him.

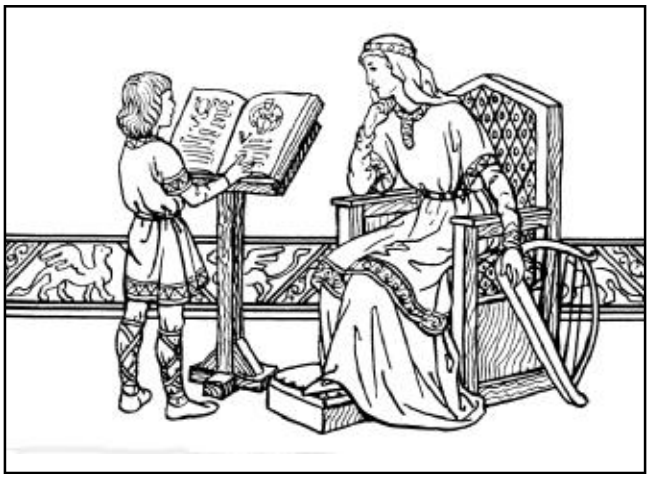
These voyagings expanded if they did not actually create commercial contact between England and the Continent. Even the pilgrims of those days brought home with them other things besides holy water. Indeed the profession of palmer (from the word 'palm', as in palm-tree) was already being taken advantage of as a cloak for smuggling. The smugglers in question pretended to be pilgrims in order to evade the customs, as we understand from a letter addressed by Charlemagne to Offa, King of Mercia. The document dates from the end of the eighth century and must be regarded as the earliest commercial treaty on record. It runs as follows:

> 'Charles, to our venerable and most dear brother Offa, greeting. First, we give thanks to God for the sincere faith which we see so laudably expressed in your letters. Concerning the strangers who, for love of God and the salvation of their souls, wish to go to the threshold of the blessed Apostles, let them travel in peace. Nevertheless, if any are found among them not in the service of religion but in the pursuit of gain, let them pay the established dues at the proper place. We also wish that your merchants might have lawful protection in our kingdom; and, if in any place they are unjustly treated, let them apply to us or our judges'.

14. Peace-Weavers

Tacitus the Roman historian, published his 'Germania' in the year 98. If this account is fact and not just propaganda, then some early English women were certainly ripe for conversion. 'No one laughs at vice there and good habits have more force with them than good laws elsewhere'.

Certainly, in the place and period occupying our attention, women were the objects of an esteem hardly to be matched elsewhere. It is reasonable to conclude that this was derived in the main from the respect they had for themselves. We are assured that, throughout the reign of St Edwin of Northumbria, a woman might travel alone through the kingdom without fear of molestation or insult. The influence wielded by the gentle sex,



Queen Osburh teaches the young King Alfred to read.

both in the family and in the eyes of the law, was very considerable. Women were the possessors of land and of other property. They could make separate wills. They could engage in lawsuits even against their own husbands. They pulled their weight in the political and educational spheres. It was King Alfred's mother, Osburh, who first awakened the literary tastes of her son. The latter's eldest daughter, Ethelfreda, inherited her father's intellect and accomplishments as well as his patriotic spirit and martial ardour. The chronicles call her the wisest woman in all England. The character of King Athelstan was formed by Ethelfleda and to such good purpose that he rivalled his forebear King Alfred the Great.

Altogether then, the position of the early English woman was in many ways an enviable one, considering the age she lived in. She was looked up to and respected, so much so that the legend associated with Leofric and Lady Godiva of Coventry seems ruled into the realm of fiction from the start. Much was expected of her and, on the whole, she seldom fell short. In *Beowulf*, she is called 'the one who weaves the links of peace'. Abbesses like Hilda, Ebbe and Elfleda had an influence and an authority rivalling that of bishops themselves. If they were of royal blood, they were allowed to maintain the retinue and state of royalty. They went where they pleased, were present at all the national solemnities, and even took part in the deliberations of the Parliament. Their signatures appear in the charters. The law or Dooms of King Ina puts them on the same level as the first personage in the land.

Assuredly, some of the heroines of the old German epics were bloodthirsty and pitiless enough, and there were those amongst the Englishwomen who took after them. St Kenelm owed his martyrdom to the ferocity of his aunt (sister?) Cynefrith or Cwendreda. He was called to the throne of Mercia when he was only seven, whereon Cwendreda invited the boy to take a walk in a neighbouring wood. He was never again seen alive. But a miraculous ray of light uncovered the crime and the corpse. This happened in the Clent Valley in Staffordshire where there is still a spring called St Kenelm's Well. Hence the lines that were very soon quoted all about the countryside:

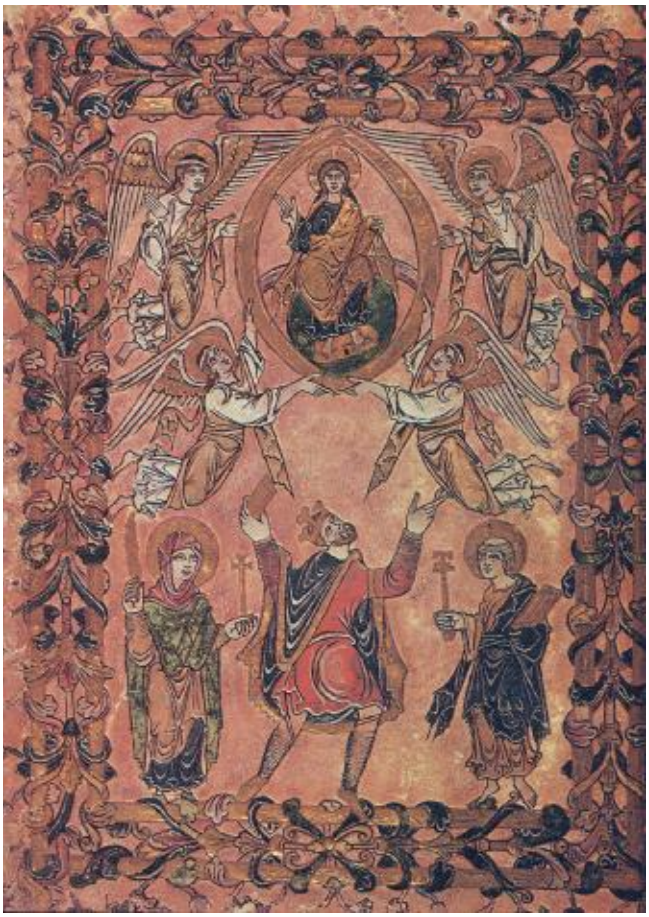
> In Clent cow-pasture under a thorn
> Of head bereft lies Kenelm King born.

Cwendreda's repentance took time. However, she too finished a nun.

On the other hand, Ermenburgh, the Jezebel of her day, the wife of the cruel King Egfrid, changed from a wolf into a lamb in twenty-four hours, or very nearly. When her husband invaded Caledonia, she awaited the result of the expedition at a monastery at Carlisle governed by one of her sisters. It was St Cuthbert who broke the news to her. Before any tidings of disaster could reach Carlisle, he read them in the heavens. 'See how clear the sky is, and remember that the judgements of God are inscrutable'. St Cuthbert had an intuition amounting to a certainty. In the same way, St Cuthbert knew that Egfrid had perished with his army and he broke the news to the queen, bidding her take refuge in the fortress of Bamburgh. But Ermenburgh bowed before the divine hand that had struck her. She stayed where she was and St Cuthbert received her as a nun.

These women were not obliged to accept the husbands that their parents chose for them. When St Wilfrid was staying at Lyons, the Archbishop so much liked the fine young man that he wanted him to stay and he offered him his niece in marriage as an inducement. The niece, apparently, was expected to say yes. But things were not so easily managed in England. St Edith was King Edgar's illegitimate daughter. After his wife's death, Edgar very properly tried to marry the mother of Edith. But she – later St Wilfrida – refused him and became a nun and later Abbess of Wilton where her daughter was one of her subjects.

Edgar was guilty of abduction. But he did not get away with it, king though he was. St Dunstan rebuked him publicly. To his credit, Edgar accepted the reprimand and submitted to penance. It was a stiff penance. It lasted seven years and during that time the king was forbidden to wear his



The New Minster Charter
King Saint Edgar is shown offering the document to Christ

crown, was obliged to fast, give alms to the poor twice a week and found a nunnery as a sort of practical compensation. Edgar was venerated as a saint after his repose – such is the result of sincere repen-tance. Again, when King Edwig, the successor of King Athelstan, on the very day of his anointing, rose up from table and went off to visit his lady friend, St Dunstan rose up too and went after him and administered so sharp a reproof that he was banished from the kingdom.

Considering the ascendancy which nobility of blood and rank worked on the age, it is not surprising to find the calendar of saints showing a marked preference for royalty. This is particularly true of the women saints whose canonisations are in a proportion of about two to each male. And these women were nearly all nuns. The royal princesses were in some cases dedicated to the convent from the cradle. St Edburgh was a granddaughter of King Alfred. When she was quite a child, her father, Edward the Elder, allowed her to make the choice by means of an expedient. She was taken into a room in which, on one side, there was a pile of royal robes complete with jewellery and, on the other a chalice and a book of the Gospels. The girl looked everything over and then settled down in front of the religious objects. Her parents, thereupon, handed her over to the nuns of Winchester, so that, as it can be said, she may be said rather not to have known the world than to have left it. She died at the early age of twenty-three, but meanwhile she had become a nun and very young, since the usual age in the England then seems to have been twenty-five.

A different kind of procedure caused a good deal of disturbance at the time. This was the renunciation of married life by wives who separated from their husbands, either with or without their consent. St Etheldreda or Audrey, as the English pronounced it, was much sought after by princes and she went through the marriage ceremony twice. With her second husband, King Egfrid, she argued and pleaded for twelve years. At last he let her go. She was hardly out of the door, when he changed his mind and went in pursuit. She disguised herself as well as she could and got to a place of safety. It was a near thing, however. Once she fell down exhausted by the wayside and went to sleep, but her staff grew into a giant ash-tree (a weeping ash?) which hid her from view. On another occasion when she was hard pressed, the tide rose up and cut off her aggrieved partner. Eventually she reached her home on the Isle of Ely, the Isle of Eels, and built a double monastery, which was soon peopled by her former courtiers both men and women. This flight was remembered and commemorated for centuries; artists worked the representation of its details into their capitals and painted windows.

A reliquary containing an incorrupt hand of St Audrey (Æthelthryth) of Ely, Roman Catholic Church, Ely Place in London

St Audrey (Æthelthryth) of Ely

Throughout, this queen was strenuously supported in her resolution by St Wilfrid whom the king never forgave for this interference. The inference drawn is that she had never properly consented to he married at all. St Bede describes Egfrid as very pious and highly beloved of God. St Wilfrid's interference was due, in the first instance, to the entreaties of Egfrid himself, who asked the bishop to use his influence with the queen, even offering him large estates and money as reward for his success. If we are to believe the monk of Ely who wrote St Audrey's life, St Wilfrid encouraged her in her resistance while, in the beginning, pretending to second the views of the king in order to retain his favour. The Venerable Bede says nothing about that but in all that relates to Wilfrid's disputes he exhibits great reserve.

St Audrey is responsible for an English word. At her annual fair held in Ely, cheap jewellery was sold which came to be called 'tawdry' (St Audrey) laces. And so an old ballad runs:

> One time I gave thee a paper of pins,
> Another time a tawdry lace;
> And if thou wilt not grant my love,
> In truth I'll die, before thy face.

Here, then, by a curious irony, we have our St Audrey, of all people, more or less invoked to enable boy and girl to become husband and wife. She died after an operation for throat trouble which she linked with her one-time fondness for costly, necklaces.

Who was the first English woman to become a nun in England in the recognised sense? There was a certain St Hieu (or Heiu), whom St Aidan made a nun and placed at the head of the first nunnery in the North. If we knew more about her she might be able to claim the place of honour. Then there is St Ethelburgh, but she went abroad and reposed in 604. It is in fact St Eanswithe (pronounced Inswith) who appears upon the stage very early on.

She was a granddaughter of St Ethelbert of Kent and, having been educated by the first Roman missionaries, founded and took charge of a monastery at Folkestone. It is related that her father had arranged to marry her to a pagan Northumbrian prince. She refused and set about building her convent. The disappointed young man sought her out and found her supervising the roofing of her convent. He had plenty to say, but she would not listen to him. As a parting shot, she picked up a rafter that had been rejected as too short, and challenged the youth to lengthen it by the aid of his false gods. What he could not do, she managed quite easily – one fervent prayer and the timber was right.

Her foundation became a great agricultural centre as well as a literary one. The flock of wild geese that had destroyed her harvests, she converted to a tame and harmless life; with the point of her crosier she made a canal that brought a supply of water to the drought-stricken district. She died young in the year 640. The site of her monastery has been swallowed up by the sea, but the parish church in Folkestone is dedicated to her and some of her relics remain there to this day.

St Domneva is noteworthy as being the foundress of Minster in the Isle of Thanet. She was married to one of Penda's sons when the story opens. As reparation for a double murder which had been committed, Domneva asked for as much land in Thanet as her tame doe could run round in one course. The king consented and the rabbit was let loose. It crossed the island in two directions before it returned to its mistress, making a boundary containing forty-two plough-lands. This became Minster, that is to say The Monastery, whose first Abbess was Domneva herself. Soon after she resigned in favour of her daughter St Mildred.

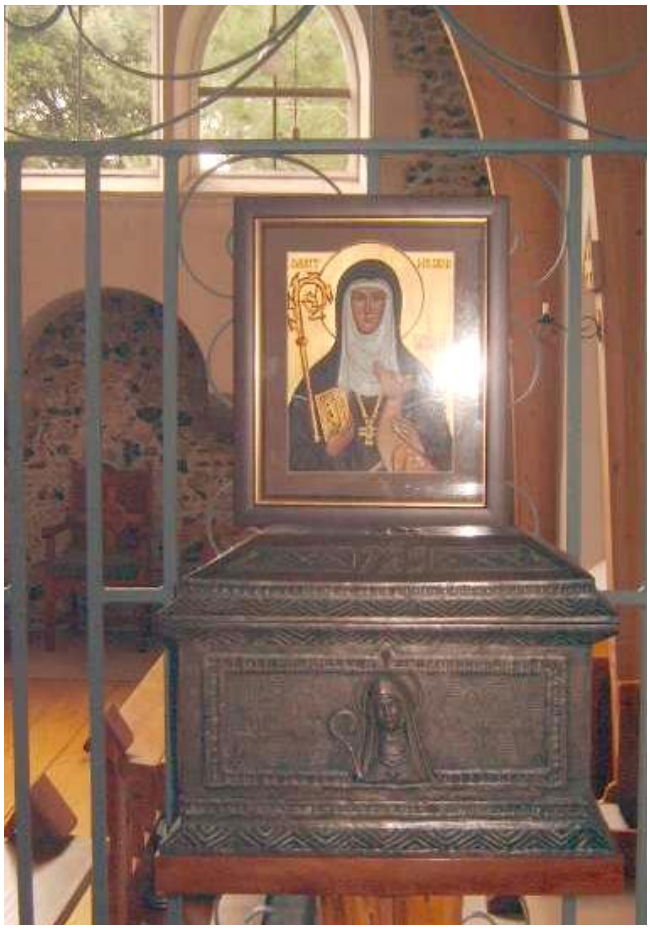
Very few details of St Mildred's life have come down to us, but her popularity in the South was

St Mildred, Abbess of Minster in Thanet

very great. The very rock which had received her first footstep on English soil, came to be called St Mildred's Rock. Grave and gay are intermingled in the legends that grew up around her memory. In one legend she appeared to a bell-ringer who fell asleep at her shrine, boxed his ears and told him off: 'This is an oratory, not a dormitory'. Until the nineteenth century Mildred was a popular name in Kent, from where it was taken to New England.

There is a well in Norfolk still bearing the name of St Withburgh. She renounced the world as soon as she heard that King Anna, her father, had fallen in battle. Gathering a few companions, she built a small enclosure at Dereham. We are told that the poverty of this princess was such that she and her nuns, as well as the very workmen engaged on the building, lived on dry bread alone. One day, however, two deer attached themselves to the community and supplied it with milk. Then came the gamekeeper, a savage man, who proceeded to hunt the deer with his dogs. They got away, however, while the keeper broke his neck in attempting to leap a hedge.

Curiously, few, if any details, are preserved relative to the rules and manners of early English convent life. We do know that nuns were clothed in black robes and white veils, they had to attest



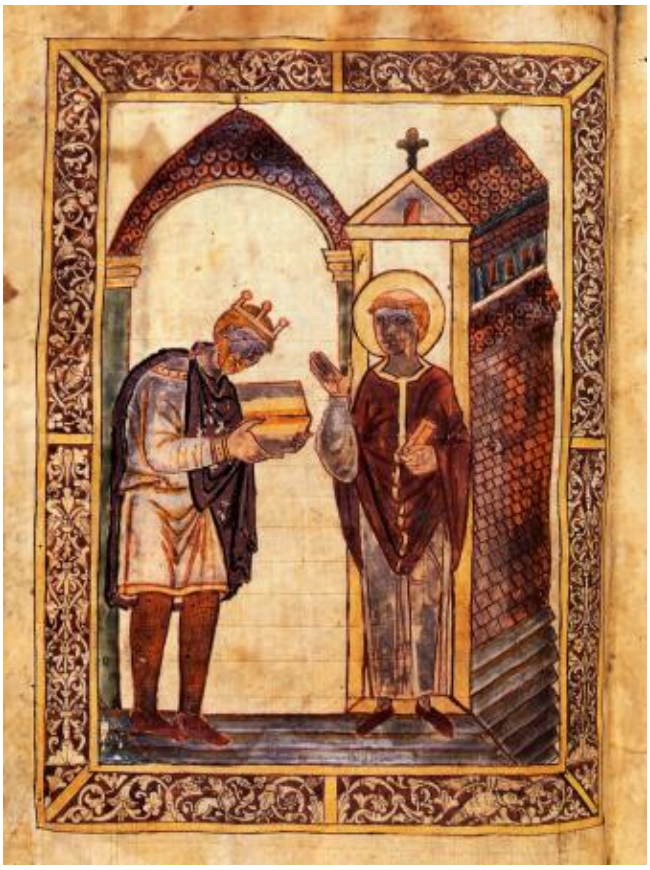
The Icon of St Mildred above her reliquary in the chapel at her convent in Thanet which, after a gap of centuries, exists still on the same site

their freedom of choice and to promise obedience. A prayerful homily followed in which the new sister was urged to thank God for a vocation which, while in no way detracting from the value of marriage, enabled her to aspire to union with God.

15. Endings and Blessings

Two years of the episcopate consumed the strength of St Cuthbert. After celebrating Christmas with his community at Lindisfarne, a presentiment made him resign and return to the little island of Farne there to prepare for the final encounter. Here he lived for two months in great peace, it is true, but his exhaustion was unto death.

For weeks on end, storms prevented his followers from visiting him. When they succeeded at last, they found him wan and worn. He was given a little warm wine, which so far revived him that he was able to dictate his last message. Stretched out on his bed of stone, with his grief-stricken monks gathered around him, he first of all directed that his remains be laid to rest near the chapel



King Athelstan offering a copy of St Bede's works to St Cuthbert, the patron of Northumbria, at Chester-le-Street, where his shrine then was

which he with his own hands had hollowed out of the rock and at the foot of the rough cross which he had himself planted.

> 'I would like to repose', he said, 'in the spot where I have fought my little struggle for the Lord, where I have desired to finish my course and from where I hope that my merciful Judge will call me to the crown of righteousness. You will bury me there and bury me wrapped in the linen which I have kept for my shroud out of love for the Abbess Verga, the friend of God who gave it to me'.

Then he fell silent for a little, as though reviewing the evening of his life and chiefly the disputes in which, all unwillingly, he had been involved. And so he began again with an exhortation to peace, humility and the love of that unity which he had prized and worked so hard to establish in the renowned Anglo-Celtic sanctuary over which he had presided. This was his response to the appeal made by the new Abbot Herefrith:

> 'Be unanimous in your counsels; live in good accord with other servants of Christ; despise none of the faithful who approach you, but treat them with friendly familiarity, not esteeming yourselves better than others who have the same faith and often the same way of life. But have no communion with those who withdraw from the unity of the peace of the Church. Remember always, I beg you, that, if you must choose, I prefer that you should leave this place carrying my bones with you than that you should remain bent under the yoke of heresy. Learn and observe with diligence the decrees of the Fathers and the rule of monastic life, which God has deigned to give you by my hands. I know that many have despised me in my life, but after my death you will see that my teaching has not been despicable'.

This effort was his last. He lost the power of speech, received communion and unction in silence, and reposed in the act of raising his eyes and arms to heaven. It was midnight on 20 March 687. One of his attendants immediately mounted to the summit of the rock where the lighthouse is now placed, and gave the monks of Lindisfarne, by waving a lighted torch, the signal agreed upon to announce the departure of perhaps the finest and most loveable saint who has given glory to these islands. He was fifty years old and had spent thirty-five of them in the monastic life.

Now we turn to the account of St Bede's end:

> 'The little gift which you sent I have received very gladly, and with much pleasure I have learnt that liturgies and prayers are diligently offered for our master Bede. He was seized with illness about two weeks before Easter Day, and for a fortnight his weakness was extreme and his breathing difficult. He had no pain, however, and continued alive until the twenty-sixth day of May, rejoicing and thanking God continuously night and day. He continued his work of teaching as well, and the time over he spent in singing psalms and reciting verses in our native tongue'.

Occupied all his life though he had been with Latin, a very natural motion of the mind directed his memory, at the end, back to the language of his childhood, 'for', says one account, 'he was very learned in our songs and putting his thoughts into words, he spoke them with compunction'. These thoughts, which he spoke with compunction, have been translated as follows:

St Bede's tomb in the Gallilee Chapel, Durham Cathedral

Before he must journey,
None can be wiser
Than he will need to be.
If he only ponder
Before his departing
What judgement
His spirit may receive
For evil or blessing
After his death-day.

The meaning is that, when the end approaches the wisest will need to use all their wisdom in pondering the judgement that awaits the good and evil of their life.

Three days before the Ascension, St Bede began to be distressed in his breathing and a slight swelling appeared in his feet. Yet all that day he continued to teach and to dedicate cheerfully. Presently he said: 'I have certain things of value in my cupboard, that is some pepper, napkins and incense. Run quickly and bring the priests of our monastery to me so that I can give them such small gifts as God has granted me'. And once the pepper, napkins and incense had been brought to him, he made gifts of them among the community. Seeing their distress he wept, but reassured them with his words: 'I am not afraid to die, because our Master is good'.

Tradition affirms that St Columba was warned of the near approach of death as he was illuminating a page of the Psalter and that before entering the church to die, he added a footnote entrusting his successors with completing the chapter. Much the same is related of St Bede. His young scribe Wilbert approached the bed and told him that the translation of St John's Gospel was incomplete as to one sentence. To which the dying man made the answer: 'Take your pen and write quickly'. And when the boy had done so, he told him that it was finished. Whereupon he said: 'Well have you spoken truth: it is finished indeed. Take my head in your hands, for it much delights me to sit opposite the holy place where I used to pray'. Soon after he asked to be laid on the floor and, when this had been done, he sang, 'Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit'. With the naming of the Holy Spirit, he drew his last breath. 'And all those who heard and saw this confessed that they had never seen any other end in such great devoutness and peace'.

St Bede is amongst the best of English writers with a sweet personality radiating from every page. A monk, the soul of Bede ranged far beyond the walls of his monastery and concerned itself eagerly with the whole state of the English people. First and last, it is his personality that fascinates us and we are glad to think that the story of his repose is so in tune with the beauty of a gentle life of good deeds.

We now turn to St Ercongotha the daughter of King Erconbert of Kent, and of her departure to the heavenly kingdom. The day of her calling at hand, she visited the cells of the sick and aged members of her community, commending herself to their prayers and telling them that her death would very shortly come to pass, inasmuch as she had received a revelation to that effect. For, she told them, the night before, she had seen a company of men dressed in white enter the monastery. When she questioned them as to their business, they answered that they had been sent there so that they could take with them that gold coin (Ercongotha herself) which had come from Kent to that place. The night following, just as dawn was breaking, she passed through the darkness of the present world to the brightness that is above. And when she went forth, many members of the community reported that they had clearly heard the melody of angels and that they had also seen an exceeding great light coming out of the heavens to guide that holy soul to the joys of the heavenly country'.

St Bede writes of St Hilda: 'She saw death with joy'. For seven long years she had been ill, but the whole time this strong-minded woman never ceased to rule her community with painstaking zeal and affection. But, 'in the seventh year of her sickness, the pain turning to the inward parts, she came to her last day and, about the crowing of the cock, after she had received communion, she called the sisters to her and advised them to keep

the peace of the Gospel amongst themselves, indeed with all. And while she was still speaking these words of peace, she beheld her death with joy. In which night the Almighty vouchsafed to reveal her ending by a clear vision in another monastery that was a great way off.

There was in that same monastery a certain nun named Begu who, being at rest, suddenly heard the tolling of the convent bell. Opening her eyes, as she thought, she saw the roof of the house uncovered and all filled with light pouring from above. As she marked this light, she saw the soul of Hilda carried towards heaven accompanied and led by angels. On this, the started up to see the dormitory and the nuns asleep in their beds, and so she knew that what she had seen had been shown to her in a dream or in a vision of the mind. Straightway she got up and ran to Frigyth the elder sister and told her that the mother of them all was now departed. When Frigyth heard this, she woke all the sisters and calling them to the church asked them to pray and sing psalms until morning. At the break of day messengers arrived with tidings of Hilda's departure.

We hark now to St Cædmon, another saint of the monastic stronghold of Whitby. At the very beginning of his illness, which lasted fourteen days, he asked for his bed to be made in that part of the infirmary, which was assigned to the dying. They marvelled why he wanted this when he seemed unlikely to die, but nevertheless they did his bidding. And when they were laid in the same place and were making merry and midnight was passed, he asked whether they had communion there. They answered: 'What need is there for communion? Your end is not yet come, since you are talking as merrily as a man in good health.' And yet', he said again, 'bring me communion'.

When he had received it, he asked whether they were all of a quiet mind towards him, and without complaint of quarrel or bitterness. They answered all that they were very peaceably disposed towards him and were far from anger. And so, arming himself with the heavenly voyage-provision, he asked how close the hour was when the brethren would wake up to say their nightly praises to the Lord. 'It is not far off', they answered. 'Well then', he said then, 'let us wait for that hour'. And signing himself with the sign of the holy Cross, he laid his head on the bolster, and falling a little in slumber ended his life in silence. Thus was it brought about that, even as he had served the Lord with a simple mind and a peaceful devoutness, so likewise he left the world without disturbance; and the tongue which had framed so many wholesome words in praise of the Creator spoke its last words in His praise also.

Many such death-beds there were. St Oswald the Archbishop passed away in the very act of washing the feet of twelve poor people. He was seen to perform the act with some difficulty and when he bent his knee at the Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, he breathed his last.

The church at Beverley contains the tomb of two daughters of an earl who had become nuns in St John Monastery. One Christmas after the midnight liturgy, they were missed by the Abbess who went to look for them and found them fast asleep. Their only excuse was that they could not help it, and presently it was discovered that they had each dreamed the self-same dream – a dream of paradise. Then they knelt before the astonished Abbess, asked her blessing and so fell asleep again for good.

Willisenda, a sister in the same convent, while digging the fields, said to her companions, 'One of us workers is about to die; let us all be ready, therefore, in case we are taken unawares'. In vain the scared nuns asked which one of them it was to be. That night, Willisenda fell ill and, with her eyes fixed upon the ceiling, began to repeat long passages from Holy Scriptures, though she had never learned them by heart. After this, she started to sing the services as she had often heard them sung by the priests, and ended up by pronouncing the word Welcome. 'Whom are you talking to? they asked. 'To our sisters whom death took from us. There, do you not see Ansilda and the others. She breathed her last at the same moment.

During the great plague of 664 which, in some places, brought the work of the Church almost to a standstill, one double monastery lost nearly all its monks. The night following their funeral, the nuns went out after matins to pray for the victims, when the whole cemetery was flooded with a great light. They were so terrified, St Bede says, that the hymn died on their lips. The light, by degrees, contracted to the size of a small globe, which moved to one side and stood over a piece of unused ground. Instinctively the sisters knew that this was a warning and that before long they would themselves occupy the empty plot.

'Put out the lamp! Put out the lamp!' cried one dying nun again and again. 'No doubt,

you think that I am delirious, but I tell you this cell is filled with a glory so brilliant that your lamp only annoys me with its faint glimmer. Keep your lamp if you like, but mine is elsewhere and at dawn it will come to light me home'.

And sure enough it did.

On the eve of Abbess Ethelburgh's death at Barking, a nun saw her wrapped in a shining shroud and raised to heaven by golden chains. She survived the Abbess by nine years, though grievously afflicted. In the end she was paralysed from head to foot. Then, all of a sudden, she felt sound and whole and recovered the use of her limbs and speech. St Ethelburgh had appeared to tell her that her troubles were over. 'I can hardly bear this joy', the dying woman declared; and the following night, freed at once from the bondage of the flesh and from all sickness, she went to rejoin her Mother.

The saints were often able to look death in the face beforehand. It was quite an ordinary topic of conversation. This attitude is part of the healthy strong-mindedness of the Faith. They would discuss their funerals, and give careful directions concerning them. St Audrey warned her sisters against worldliness in the matter of her burial. 'When I am dead I am still a simple nun. Dress me as such and provide a coffin of simple wood'. In her time the use of coffins had become fairly general, stone ones for the well-to-do and wooden ones for the poor; but some manuscripts show the poor being lowered into the grave covered with a shroud and nothing more. The custom of the pagan English, that of cremation, had quickly been abandoned in the seventh century, with the coming of Christian Faith.

Here is the account of St Wilfrid's funeral.

'One day, many abbots and clergy met those who were taking the corpse of the holy bishop in a hearse to wash it and dress it honourably. Thereon, one of the abbots named Bracula his cassock on the ground while some others laid the body on it, washed it with their own hands, dressed it in vestments and then, taking it up, carried it to the place, singing psalms and hymns the whole time. Then they again deposited the corpse, set a tent over it, bathed it in pure water and dressed it in robes of fine linen. It was then put back in the hearse and all proceeded to Ripon. When they drew near the monastery, the whole town came out to meet them and there was hardly one of who abstained from tears. After that, all raising their voices, they took the remains into the church and there buried it in a most solemn and honourable manner'.

The End

(Our thanks to A. Roche for much preparatory work on the above *The Saints of England*).

CHILDREN OF LIGHT

7. Coming Together

WE are drawn together towards God and towards one another by Faith. Faith creates Love and Love creates Faith. Love creates Freedom and Freedom creates Love, Freedom creates Truth and Truth creates Freedom. Truth creates Faith and Faith creates Truth.

We are also helped to come together by Nature and Art. Nature and Art help to unite our hearts. Both are irrational, both are of the heart and both can produce good and uplifting emotions in the Christian heart. Nobody can say why he or she finds Nature or Art attractive or spiritually meaningful. The answer, strange as it may sound, is perhaps that such feelings are natural.

God created the Universe out of the void and the darkness. And there was Light. Such is the power of Love. In the Universe He made the Planet Earth and on it He created Nature – Nature which culminated in Man. Nature, therefore, is inherently part of God's world. God expressed His Truth in the beauty of Nature, in her primordial and elemental being.

Nature is God's raiments. Nature is God's garden and God is the good gardener, tending every good thing in her. In His garden He has grown men and women, and also the plants and the animals. Some of the men have been bitten and killed by the Devil's blight. Those are the men who have blighted the flowers and the animals of Nature.

Recently in America scientific experiments were carried out with a polygraph. By connecting the polygraph up to plants, it was found that the polygraph registered human reactions when the

plants were threatened with destruction. This merely illustrates that at last Science is coming to realise what many simple, green-fingered people have known for a very long time – that Nature has feelings. Here is what the Russian poet Tyutchev said of Nature

> Nature is not what you think:
> She is not a copy, not a soulless face –
> In her there is a soul, in her there is freedom,
> In her there is love, in her there is a tongue.

God made Nature beautiful as He made all things beautiful.

> And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the fields, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these (Matt. 6, 28–29).

For all Man's vain strugglings and artifices he can create nothing as beautiful as Nature. God made Nature with intent. In Nature every living thing has its role to play in God's World. Take something like a spider's web and see how it illustrates the spiritual plan of God's World: at the centre there is the Maker, all others are striving to reach that centre – spiritual perfection. The flowers, the trees, the animals, all with their different colours, seasons, mating-habits – all have their individual part to play in the Divine purpose. Nature may express the glory of God; that does not of course signify pantheism, there is no god in Nature, Nature is merely a part of God's Creation.

On the other hand, Nature, which is now fallen, can be a terrible, cruel and demonic mistress. This is when the dualism of Nature is revealed. The Devil takes over, causes the excessive heat, the storms, the violent hurricanes and monsoons. Nature lives on refuse, on Death itself (as does mankind). The fallen animals are cruel, 'wild'. Nature lives off her own Death in a delicately proportioned balance. The fallen world of Nature is not sentimental and tolerates no sentimentality. Although she is certainly very beautiful, do not be lead into the illusion that she cannot at times be very hard and violent. Nature can feel – but towards those who live off her she can be very unfeeling.

God's purpose in making Nature however is clear. Did He not mean to express in Nature the Glory both of Himself and of mankind? For mankind alone has no need to live off himself, Nature is his eating-bowl. Mankind alone is redeemed from the violence and the Death which pervades this fallen and now dualistic Nature. Nature's way of living would be mankind's also if God had not redeemed mankind from it. God also made in Nature a problem for mankind, that mankind should know how strong and wonderful Nature is. All is comprehensible in Nature as long as we see in Nature a part of the Divine Plan and know that is now fallen, that it was made perfect.

Thus we see that fallen Nature, although beautiful, like so many beautiful things, is now also cruel and hard. God did not destroy Nature, once mankind had developed by Divine design, for mankind was to live with his past, for mankind without his past would have felt bewildered, disorientated, lost – somewhat like a child in a big shop which has lost its mother. Creation would have been quite incomplete. Mankind, seeing Nature before him must work with her, using her to grow his food, to build his homes from her that all should merge into one. Mankind should use Nature, we should co-operate with her, respect her, instead of uglifying and destroying her. Mankind has still to learn to live together, to live in harmony with the other parts of God's Creation.

Mankind must Christianise the Natural, just as God has tried to Christianise mankind. As God loved mankind, so ought mankind to love Nature. Let us follow God, the good gardener, the Sower of all good seed; let us tend our plants, trees and animals with a similar love to that with which God created them. This surely is how we can thank God and praise Him in our everyday lives for giving us such beauty and joy. Let us worship God for having, given and entrusted to us something so beautiful that even the wealthiest and the wisest of men, Solomon, could not equal it. For mankind is not capable of creating Life: God alone can do that. And in so creating, God unites us, for we all grow aware of our common origin and we marvel at it.

God's Creation is seconded by mankind's Creation: Art. The very word tells us of its artificial origin. Art, like Nature, unites.

Art, is quite simply an æsthetic and / or moral response to the society in which the artist lives. It is an expression therefore about human existence, it is a reflection of a given society, as seen through the eyes of an individual, an artist. If the Art reflects something evil, then the society is evil and vice versa. Art is expressed in words, lines, colours,

shapes and sounds – in anything which appeals to the human senses, intellect and heart. Art is not necessarily Morality, though this depends on what sort of Art we deal with.

This is however an extremely broad definition of Art and, as such, it is open to criticism; simply because it does not distinguish between bad Art and good Art. As a Christian I feel that Art must be Judged on spiritual criteria: it must be guided by a religious consciousness, the highest guide that there can be. A sick and Godless society produces a sick and Godless Art. Art reflects reality. Sick Art, therefore, will be overcome only when sick societies have been overcome.

The highest Art demonstrates the Truths of Goodness, of our Christian Faith, as opposed to Evil. The highest Art in some way expresses the wisdom of the heart, the Christian Truth in the broadest and most accessible terms. This Christian Art may express the Love of God, the Love of one's neighbour, it may express the difficulties encountered in living by every human-being, the simple, the everyday, the universal feelings of every human-being. The highest Art therefore infects the most and uplifts (according to the Christian understanding of uplifting) the most.

Broadly speaking, it may be said that there are four forms of this highest Art; Religious Art, Spontaneous Art, Folk Art and Intellectual Art. All these types of Art may of course merge together. Religious Art is self-explanatory, though its quality depends on the purity of our Faith. Spontaneous Art is defined as, for example, a conversation in the street, a casual meeting on a bus, when suddenly we are enabled to penetrate through the surface of life into the emotional and spiritual realities beneath. This is the simplest and least artificial of Arts.

Thirdly there is Folk Art – folksongs, folk tales etc. The importance of Folk Art lies in its universality, for it communicates the simple thoughts and feelings or our everyday lives. Intellectual Art is that which is written by intellectuals. In Europe this is the works of men like Shakespeare, Milton, Moliere, Goethe, Tolstoy, Michelangelo, Raphael. Rubens, Constable, Meshtrovitch. Van Gogh, Botticelli, Tchaikovsky, Debussy, Brahms, Mozart, Kant, Aristotle etc all belong to this category.

Art merges and joins together in the expression of its moral force. For the highest Art is moral Art, not merely æsthetic Art. It is not furniture, it is not Art Nouveau, it is not cloisonné enamel. It is often not architecture: it is not the applied arts which are important. All this, by itself, however ingenious and decorative, is superficial, artificial and meaningless entertainment and decoration. From a Christian viewpoint Art must, whatever beauty it may transmit, also possess a moral force through its spiritual truth. The æsthetic in itself can express nothing.

When it express the great Christian Truths, Art is togetherness. It must show our Faith in action. It is the Ideal put into practice, however much that Ideal may fall and sin: Christian Art must be realistic. If Life is holy, then Art must attempt to express its holiness or sacredness. The artist therefore must be sincere and spontaneous and he must express himself clearly, that the greatest number of people possible are enabled to understand him, without any sort of elitism, exoticism and esotericism.

This view or the best Art tends then to imply a greater admiration of Religious, Spontaneous and Folk Art than of Intellectual Art. All too often Art has become merely a corrupt and decadent toy of the upper classes. We only have to look at the architectural monuments of the Neo-Classical Age, or at the decadent Art of the end of the Nineteenth Century, or at the Art of the present time, with its deliberately esoteric, decadent and wasteful extravaganzas, designed for the amusement of the 'educated' and over-privileged few of the Western world in order to understand this.

This Intellectual Art has often been hypocritical. It has often expressed the æsthetic alone, instead of the moral and spiritual. We think, for example, of the Gestapo officers in the last War who could listen to Beethoven's music and then go and gas a few hundred Slavs or Jews. We think of the Soviet State, which annually spends millions of roubles on sponsoring Art and annually kills thousands in concentration camps.

Civilisation and Culture are often merely superficial. Only Christianity, that is the knowledge of God gives depth and meaning. Art becomes meaningless because generally it does not have the impact to change our way of life without the Grace of God. Art provides a consciousness; Religion provides the necessary power to change our life according to the newly-acquired consciousness. Without God the Truth that Art is capable of expressing is usually lost.

Art therefore must infect and uplift – in the Christian sense of uplifting – in the broadest and profoundest possible way. It must become a tool in which great truths are expressed about human-beings, about Christianity. It must adapt the living truths of Christ into everyday situations. Art is a weapon against sin, against Evil. It is Art which can draw human-beings together, just as Nature can also. The difference between the two is that the latter is God's Creation, the former is mankind's Creation.

Yet, however much we are drawn together by the themes of these last five chapters -Faith, Love, Truth, Freedom, Nature and Art – we still find ourselves separated and divided in the modern World. We must take a broader view of the world-situation as it is today. We have as yet only looked at the more obvious themes, which draw Christians together. There are two other highly important themes, which we have not yet looked at: Heart and Mind, East and West.

In Memoriam: FR NICHOLAS GIBBES

With the founding of the parish of St Nicholas the Wonderworker, Divine Providence calls you to open a new chapter in the history of Orthodoxy of the Russian tradition in Oxford. May the life of its first priest, Hieromonk Nicholas (Gibbes), who was possessed of a deep love for Russia, of the Royal Passion-Bearers, Tsar Nicholas and his family, and who at the same time laboured to make the spiritual treasures of the Orthodox Faith accessible to his fellow Englishmen, serve as an inspiration and example to you.

Archbishop Innocent, on the founding of St Nicholas' Russian Orthodox Parish in Oxford on 10 September 2006

CHARLES Sydney Gibbs was born on 19 Jan 1876, the son of a bank manager. He and his ten siblings grew up in Bank House in the High Street of Rotherham, Yorkshire. The Gibbs family spent holidays at the family home in Normanton-upon-Trent. No fewer than three of his brothers became bank managers. John, the eldest, went to Argentina, William, the second eldest, went to India, while the more stolid fourth son, Percy, settled in Gloucester.

School reports recorded Sydney (as he was usually called) as a thoroughly reliable, gentle-manly young man. Evidently the bright star of the family, he studied at University College, Aberystwyth before attending St John's College, Cambridge, where in 1899 he took his BA (Moral Sciences Tripos). He was recalled as 'a man of high character, good sense and agreeable manners'. At Cambridge, he added the 'e' to his surname: 'Gibbes', as the fastidious scholar insisted that this was the more accurate historical spelling. His

father hoped that he would become a clergyman in the Church of England.

Gifted for languages and teaching, in 1901 Sydney went to Russia and spent that summer with the well-known Shidlovsky family. He was taken on as tutor to two boys, aged ten and four. After several days in St Petersburg, he travelled with the family to their country dacha. He was entranced by the novelty of Russian life, describing it in a letter to his younger sister, Winifred. After this he went to work for a family called Soukanov and in 1902 took his pupil to England. The pair returned in high spirits and with many presents.

Over the next six years Sydney divided his time between Russia and England. By 1907 he had been appointed vice-president and committee

member of the St Petersburg Guild of English Teachers. In 1908 he came to the attention of the Tsarina Alexandra. She and Tsar Nicholas both spoke perfect English and in 1908 Sydney was invited as a tutor to improve the English accents of the Grand Duchesses Olga and Tatiana and subsequently Maria and Anastasia. In 1913 he became tutor to the Tsarevich Alexei. The children referred to him as Sydney Ivanovich. Sydney Gibbes' career as tutor to the Imperial Family continued until the Revolution and during those ten years he developed a deep love and respect for the Family.

When the First World War broke out in 1914, Sydney was in Normanton with his father. John Gibbs had recovered from his disappointment at his son's rejection of the Church of England as a career. Indeed, he had written rapturously on hearing of his son's Imperial appointment: 'If only your dear mother had lived to see this'. Mary Gibbs (née Fisher) had died in 1906. It was the last time father and son would be together, for John Gibbs died in April 1917.

On 2 March 1917 the Tsar, deserted and abandoned, was forced to abdicate, bringing to an end over 300 years of Romanov rule. In October 1917 the Imperial Family were removed from St Petersburg to Tobolsk in Siberia. In Tobolsk, Sydney lived in the royal household and his account provided new insights into the character of the Emperor and individual members of the family, including the children. The oldest, Olga, 'was fair, direct, honest and open ... but could be easily irritated and her manners were a little brusque'. Tatiana 'was reserved, haughty, not open, but the most responsible'. Maria loved their place of exile in Tobolsk, and she told Sydney that 'she would happily stay there forever'. Anastasia 'was a real comedian, and she made everyone laugh. But she herself never laughed, just her eyes twinkled'. And Alexis was clever, though not fond of reading, and had odd fancies, such as collecting old nails, saying 'they may be useful'.

The English tutor to the Family since 1908 remained with them until the Family's evacuation from Tobolsk to Ekaterinburg in May 1918. When the Romanovs were told they were to be moved to a 'safer' location, the Ipatiev House in Ekaterinburg, Sydney was separated from them. On the 17 July 1918 the Family gathered in the cellar of this 'House of Special Purpose' in Ekaterinburg, told to line up against the wall for a photograph and then brutally gunned down. When the Czechs took Ekaterinburg back from the Bolsheviks, Sydney went there and assisted in the investigation into the Family's disappearance.

He was allowed to wander at will in the deserted Ipatiev House where, 'as he walked through the echoing rooms, he picked up an assortment of keepsakes'. Among the items Gibbes acquired were some of Alexis' bloody bandages, which he treasured for the rest of his life. Also he found the last letter the Tsarevich ever wrote to Dr Derevienko's son, Kolya. He also managed to take the small chandelier from the ceiling in the bedroom of the Grand Duchesses, a number of icons, some slightly charred, from the fireplaces and dustbins, and a pair of the Tsar's felt boots. He also took the exercise books of Maria and Anastasia, a pencil case and a bell belonging to the Tsarevich.

Sydney was now alone, unemployed and without any clear direction. He found himself reduced to taking any teaching job that came his way. At that time he reported to his Aunt Kate that he was making the best of teaching in Ekaterinburg. In 1919, Sydney accepted a post with the Chinese Maritime Customs at Harbin and spent nearly 20 years there. It was in Harbin in 1922 that he met the Russian orphan George Paveliev, whom he adopted and eventually brought back to England.

Sydney Gibbes briefly returned to England in 1928 and enrolled to train as an Anglican priest in Oxford, but again decided that this was not his vocation. Back in Harbin, on 25 April 1934, he was received into the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia (ROCOR) by Archbishop Nestor of Kamchatka and Petropavlovsk, who was there in exile with hundreds of thousands of Russian refugees. He took the baptismal name of Alexei in honour of the Tsarevich. He was tonsured a monk on 15 December 1934, ordained deacon on 19 December and priest on 23 December, taking the name Nicholas in honour of the Tsar. In March 1935 he became an Abbot and soon after Archimandrite.

In 1937 he returned to England. Here Archimandrite Nicholas effectively founded and led the Anglo-Russian Orthodox Church from then until the 1950s. During the early part of World War II, Father Nicholas was attached to the ROCOR parish of St Philip on Buckingham Palace Road in London, but when the Blitz began, he moved out to Oxford, where he established a church at Bartlemas (St Bartholomew's) Leper Chapel off the Cowley Road. It was in Oxford in 1949 that Fr Nicholas bought a house at 4, Marston Road, to be known as St Nicholas House, and established a Russian Orthodox chapel dedicated to St Nicholas. The light fixture from the Grand Duchess' bedroom in the Ipatiev House was

Sydney Gibbes in 1925

installed in the chapel and the Tsar's boots were placed near the altar. Over his bed in his bedroom hung an icon given to Fr Nicholas by the Imperial Family.

Having seen so much death in Russia after the Revolution, capital punishment had become repugnant to Father Nicholas. In 1953 he went to Wandsworth prison in London when Derek Bentley was executed after he had been found guilty of murder. When the murderer Ruth Ellis was hanged, Father Nicholas also went to pray outside the gates of the prison.

One of Fr Nicholas' friends, the former British Ambassador David Beattie, kept a record of a conversation with him in 1961. 'He (Fr Nicholas) did not consider Rasputin influential or harmful; he was simply a peasant with naïve cunning and some healing powers'. Significantly, this is very much the prevailing view in Russia today, where the history of Rasputin has been studied seriously only in recent years and the many myths and slanders about the peasant Rasputin laid to rest. Fr Nicholas also revealed to another friend, that he had met Rasputin once. He claimed he created such a good impression upon Rasputin that the Tsar later suggested that the three of them dine

The St Nicholas chapel candelabra, originally from the Ipatiev House in Ekaterinburg

together. As it turned out, Rasputin was killed shortly afterwards, so the dinner never took place.

On 24 March 1963, two months after his 87th birthday, Father Nicholas passed away in St Pancras Hospital. He had been admitted after suffering a minor stroke. A funeral service at the Russian Orthodox Patriarchal Cathedral in Ennismore Gardens was followed by a moving farewell in the chapel in Marston Street. The body of Fr Nicholas rests in Headington Cemetery in Oxford. It is related that three days before Fr Nicholas' repose, the icon which hung over his bed suddenly and 'miraculously' began to glow and shine.

To the Ever-Memorable Archimandrite Nicholas – Eternal Memory!

Compiled by Fr Andrew

Note: The candelabra and other items which Fr Nicholas brought out of Russia are now part of the Gibbes Collection. This is only a small part of the privately-owned and extensive Wernher Foundation Russian Collection held in London. Although we have tried to obtain a loan of the Gibbes part of that collection to the Orthodox Church, the owners of the collection do not wish to divide it. Also, it is of extremely high value and not currently exhibited for lack of a suitable secure venue. It would need insurance, fireproof buildings, sophisticated alarm systems and 24-hour curators. None of this are we able to give. Is there a Russian billionaire in London who could provide this?

CHILDHOOD IN THE LIGHT OF ORTHODOXY

3. An Englishman Comes Home

MY father's family were Methodists and my grandmother's family were High Church Anglicans. My mother, after meeting a remarkable Roman Catholic priest, actually converted to Rome. My parents therefore both decided to become Anglicans, and I was baptised into the Anglican faith.

However there were customs that came down from my mother's family that harked back to days before the Reformation. At Easter time we always ate Good Friday buns on Good Friday[1], eggs boiled pink in cochineal for breakfast on Easter Day, roast lamb for dinner and Simnel cake for tea. Christmas was also governed by rigid traditions. I had a stocking with a few small presents, but nothing else until Christmas dinner, which was eaten at midday off the best dinner service set on a white cloth with the family dressed in their best clothes.

My great-grandfather had always considered the Christmas feast to be almost a part of the religious celebration and insisted that it should be conducted with equal earnestness, although this did not mean that the participants wore solemn faces and did not laugh and joke. At this meal the serviettes were always folded in the form of mitres, and underneath each one was a small gift. The curtains were always drawn to make believe it was evening and candles were lit, so that children could join in and enjoy the idea of sitting up late.

At the end of the meal toasts were drunk, including one to 'absent friends', and by the time everyone had finished their Christmas pudding it was almost time for the King's broadcast to the nation. It was not, therefore, until about half-past three (almost the hour of Boxing Day Vespers, and so, I suppose, not on Christmas Day at all!) that the formal opening of presents started. Owing to the war there was very little in the shops and my parents were by no means wealthy folk, so although parcels were sent from far and wide, the presents would have been considered pretty plain by today's standards.

I was brought up to say my prayers each night and was given some books with prayers suitable to my years. My grandmother took religion very seriously and would kneel in her bedroom every morning and read the service from the prayer book. She did this so naturally, however, that I did not think it at all strange. Also she would not play cards – even patience – on a Sunday. She was not at all 'puritanical', and was quite prepared to allow others to do what they would – it was just that she did not join in.

She used to talk about God – again perfectly naturally and only if it was relevant to the conversation. I remember one such conversation when she stood up and pointed up at the sky and told me that God was up there, far away in the blue, looking down on all of us to see that we did not get into trouble. She said this with such perfect confidence and conviction that I have always, since that day, had a firm belief in God, although I did not at that time have any clear idea of His nature. It took a long and complicated spiritual journey before I managed to sort that little problem out.

I sometimes went to church on Sunday with the family and felt overawed by the Gothic architecture of the great, old, parish church. I noticed all kinds of things, though – the fact that the enormous Victorian organ at the east end completely filled what had once been a chapel, and that there was a holy-water stoup by the main door. My mother told me what it was when I asked her, but said that holy water was not used any more. I thought that this was very silly – why, I wondered, did they have things that they did not use any more.

I lived a rather isolated life for a lot of the time. I fondly imagined that all other children had the same kind of religious upbringing that I had. My school was on the edge of the Kentish weald, surrounded by fields of cows and apple orchards. I was accustomed to this, for although my home was in the middle of the village it was also surrounded by my father's fields, bordered to the east and south by orchards, so that I did not think it anything unusual.

At school I acquired my lifelong interest in history, which seemed to me the most important subject, because it bound all the rest together and gave them some kind of focus: however I could never properly understand the 17th century wars of religion. There always seemed to be something wrong in both Catholic and Protestant philosophies and I could never decide which side I was on. I often wished for some kind of third way.

I started gradually to research the English people who settled these shores in the fifth century, and to realise that was where my cultural roots were. On a school outing we visited Chichester Cathedral and there I saw the wonderful early English relief carving of Christ raising Lazarus. I never forgot this image, although it was some time before I came to know that it was in fact an early English icon: another signpost on the road to Orthodoxy.

I became a Catholic for a while, because I thought the early English were Catholic, but found the Roman church cold and unforgiving – not the church of St Bede and St Cuthbert – and I lapsed when I met my wife. It was only when I realised that the early English had actually been Orthodox that everything at last slipped into place: so I was drawn to Orthodoxy because I feel akin to the early English. At last I had come home: I had found the missing 'third way'.

1 Good Friday, or Hot Cross, buns actually used not to be available at any other time of the year. It is only recently that supermarkets have started selling them all year round. Now I sometimes eat them at other times, but I always feel that there is something almost sacrilegious in doing so.

BOOK REVIEWS

How we'd talk if the English had won in 1066

by David Cowley

Bright Pen Books, 2009. 266 pages. Price £9.99. Available from http://www.authorsonline.co.uk/book/798/How

Also available as an e-book at www.authorsonline.co.uk

AT long last, yes, it has taken 943 years, someone has written systematically about what English would probably have been like, had the Norman-French invasion and occupation not taken place. True, in the nineteenth century the poet-priest and scholar William Barnes began the task, but David Cowley now takes it further.

A key feature of the book is that the words covered are updated forms of known Old English originals. Thus, brand new words are coined from English roots in the way that Barnes (and indeed the Old English themselves) often did. No surprise to learn than that the book has received the recommendation of the renowned Professor David Crystal, who has called its word-formations 'clever and ingenious'.

Indeed, they are. As a true teacher who has clearly worked with young people, David Cowley explains very logically and in simple and popular language how he has projected English as it might have been. This book also provides a dictionary of over 100 pages to translate our Latinised modern English into an Old English reborn. Here are some examples of these real English words to use instead of our Latinised words, presented in alphabetical order:

Agriculture – earthtilth
Butcher – fleshmonger
Chapel – bedehouse
Debate – wordwrestle
Epilepsy – fallsickness
Frivolity – lightmoodness
Genuflection – kneebowing
Human race – earthkin
Indigenous – inlandish
Jaundice – yellowaddle
Lethally – deathbearly
Market – chapstow
Nautical – shiply
Obstinacy – onewillness
Pedestrian – footly
Quality – suchness
Refuge – frithstowe
Satisfactory – enoughsome
Treasury – goldhoardhouse
Unreliable – untruefast
Verbose – wordful

Belonging to the 'What if' school of history, this is a fascinating and highly educational book which we would recommend to anyone interested in the English language or languages in general. If that is not you, surely you do know someone who would enjoy it as a Christmas present. At 266 pages and at a penny shy of ten pounds, it is in any case a very stimulating buy.

The Glory of the Isles

by Fr Andrew Phillips

Bury St Edmunds, 2009. 38 pages. Price £4 / €5 / $6

WRITTEN from an Orthodox standpoint and intended primarily for older children and teenagers, this booklet can also be read by adults. In simple language, it explains the history of the first thousand years of Christianity in Great Britain and Ireland. Giving the lives of the main saints of Britain and Ireland, it is abundantly illustrated with a map, eleven line drawings and thirteen icons, all printed on glossy paper.

Its chapters explain the Glastonbury legend of St Joseph of Arimathea, the stories of St Alban and the Celtic saints, Patrick, David, Columba, Aidan, the Italian Archbishop of Canterbury St Augustine, the Greek Archbishop of Canterbury St Theodore, then St Bede and other English heroes like St Edmund, King Alfred and St Alphege. It considers the Norman Invasion with sadness and looks forward to a potential rebirth of native Orthodoxy under the spiritual guidance of St John the Wonderworker and St Elizabeth the New Martyr. It concludes:

> 'For we have a spiritual secret weapon buried in our Isles, which can deliver us from the fury of the Northmen, from whom we have suffered for a thousand years. This secret weapon, which the world cannot see, understand or take from us, is the prayers of the saints of the Isles – our True Glory. The Glory of the Isles is not in the pride of the past and its crimes. It is in the humility of the Saints. And this is what makes sincere Orthodox Christians different from others'.

Printed on high quality paper, with Fr Mark's icon of All the Saints of Britain and Ireland on the cover, this is an ideal resource for Orthodox church schools. The book is available for £4 (€5 / $6), p. and p. included, from 12, Garfield Road, Felixstowe, Suffolk IP11 7PU. A discount will be made for orders of more than ten copies. Payment from a British bank should be made by cheque to Fr Andrew Phillips. Payment from overseas can be sent in cash in firmly sealed envelopes.

The Icon of 'All the Saints of Britain and Ireland', by Fr Mark, which appears on the front cover of The Glory of the Isles

An Unsolved Mystery: WHERE IN ENGLAND ARE THE RELICS OF THE MARTYR ROMANUS?

ROMANUS was a simple and illiterate villager from Carpenesion. Learning of the heroism and glory of the martyrs of Christ, the young Romanus yearned for martyrdom himself. He went to Salonica, where he began to extol the Christian faith in the streets, and to call Mahomet a writer of fables. The Turks tortured him terribly, then handed him over to a galley-captain. Christians rescued him from the galley and sent him to the Holy Mountain, where Romanus became a monk under the famous Elder Acacius. But he still yearned for martyrdom for the sake of Christ.

With the blessing of his elder, he went to Constantinople, pretended to be a fool and began to lead a dog about the streets. When asked why, Romanus replied that he fed that dog as Christians fed Turks. The Turks threw him into a dry well, where he lived without bread for forty days. They then took him out and executed him. Light streamed from his body for three days, after which **an Englishman took it to England**. But a monk soaked a towel in his blood, and that towel is kept to this day in the monastery of Docheiariou on Mt Athos. This glorious soldier of Christ suffered in 1694 and his feast-day is 16 February.

(From the Prologue *by St Nicholas of Zhicha)*