Orthodox England

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The Saints of the Kingdom of Kent

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EDITORIAL:
'Love God and Find the Truth of Your People'

ONE of the differences between the Orthodox Church and the Christian denominations which are in the majority in the Western world is in attitudes to the Church Fathers. Sadly, outside the Church, the Fathers tend to be considered as strict and fanatical old men who lived a long time ago and have little to say to contemporary mankind. Indeed almost any Roman Catholic manual speaks little of the Fathers, but much of mediæval philosophers and modern intellectuals. Such manuals also tell you for example that the last Western Church Father was St Bede the Venerable and the last Eastern Church Father St John of Damascus! Although this ethno-centric vision is true for the West, it is certainly not so for the East. Such a Non-Orthodox understanding ignores the continuity of Church Life and Theology, expressed in every age by such great Church Fathers as St Photius the Great, St Simeon the New Theologian, St Gregory Palamas, St Mark of Ephesus, St. Paisius (Velichkovsky), St Nicodemus of the Holy Mountain, let alone such contemporary Fathers as St. John the Wonder-worker and Blessed Justin (Popovich). Orthodox know that in and through the Church there will be Saints and Holy Fathers until the end of time: within the Church the Tradition never stops, for in the Church the Holy Spirit never stops.

And among those contemporary figures we would now like to mention one who was born in 1913 and reposed in 1960: St John the Romanian, a pilgrim and hermit in the Holy Land, whose still intact relics are to be venerated there to this day. Much could be said of this pious hermit, praying for his native land and its martyric people, threatened historically by Muslim and Roman Catholic imperialism alike, then in these latter days torn apart first by Fascism then by Communism. St John had all the nostalgia for the old simplicity of his grandmother's peasant Romania, as is shown by his Orthodox hymnography. He also possessed all the awareness of twentieth century man, as is witnessed to by his prophetic writings and his approach to Western pilgrims to Orthodoxy. We now quote an extract from a letter recently received from an Australian reader, S. McDonnell:

> I was told how Fr Ignatius (a holy Russian hermit from Hebron) often spoke prophetically of the spiritual Resurrection of the West and quite specifically of the restoration of Orthodox monarchy in the West, particularly in England and the British Isles. He also spoke of the hallowed sacred places that would rise as beacons for restored Romanity, the Orthodox Christian Commonwealth. I was also told of St John the Romanian who lived in the Monastery of St George the Hosebite. He always received English pilgrims with such joy, but also shed many tears before them and would say in Romanian: 'If only they knew'. A brother who knew Romanian would translate his pleas to the English to – 'love God and to find the truth of your people'.

This day St. John has spoken to the readers of '*Orthodox England*'. Let him who has ears hear.

Fr. Andrew

Holy Father John,
pray to God for us!

From the Holy Fathers
ST JOHN THE ROMANIAN (1913 – 1960)

I HEAR SOME SAY
'The world progresses,
Only the old fogeys
Fail to leave the old ways!'

How the world loses its reason!
If your hair is long,
They mock you with words
To your face and behind your back.

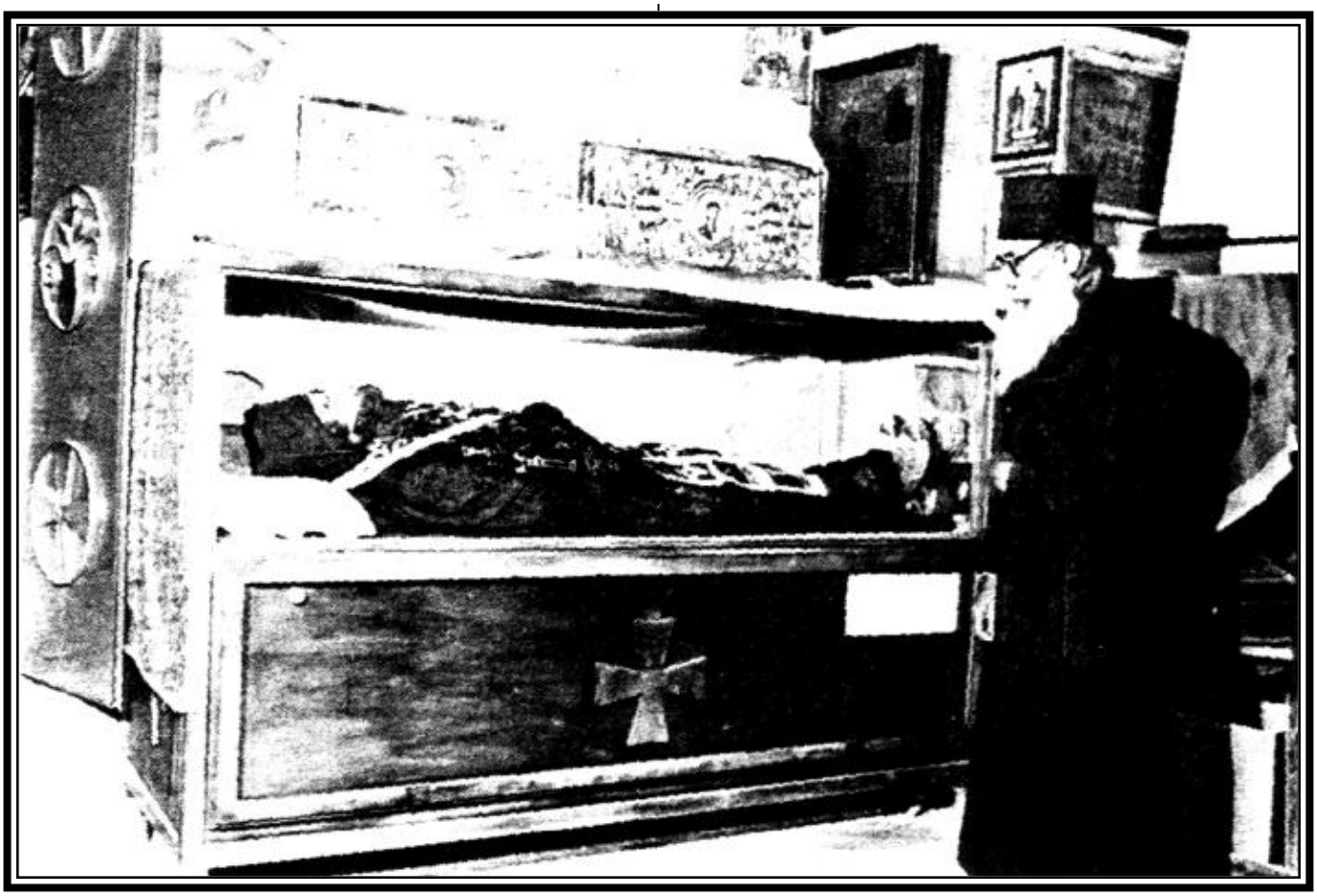
If a wolf was led on a lead
They would laugh less at it
Than at us with our cassocks
And our long hair.

This world only respects
The people with bare heads
And a full stomach,
Very useful at carnivals!

All these new-fashioned people
Have to stop their ears
At Church for they only hear
The singing of the old chants.

No transistor? they say,
In your old-fashioned dress
How do you live for nothing
With no sign of progress?

For the world moves on
With the means to live.
You are backward, Father,
You can only think of Paradise!



St John the Romanian, 'only thinking of Paradise,' awaits the Day of the Resurrection in his shrine at the Monastery of St George the Hosebite near Jericho:

'O modern man, you run with many clever inventions at great speed, but you are running to your perdition, your way is not the way of Christ!'

THE GLORY OF THE ISLES

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Foreword: The True Glory

GREAT Britain and Ireland form IONA – the Isles of the North Atlantic – an Anglo-Celtic group of islands off the coasts of north-western Europe. So, in geography, they form the sunset isles. In spirit the importance of the islands where we live is not in the history of wars and empires, inventions and revolutions. It is in something else.

In reality, a land is great and important only in its saints. And it is the saints who are the true glory of these Islands. Our interest is therefore in the first thousand years of Christian history, the thousand years when saints of all nations lived in these islands. Many are called great on earth, but only the saints are great in heaven.

1. The Apostles

England heard of Christ before England was. For at the beginning of the first century there was no England, but Britain, which in AD43 became part of the Roman Empire. It was thanks to contacts and trade with the Roman Empire that we have the first legends about how the good news of Christ's Resurrection was brought here.

First of all, there is the legend which the poet William Blake refers to in 'Jerusalem', the legend that Christ actually came here as a child and lived in what is now Glastonbury, in Somerset in the west:

'And did those Feet in ancient time
Walk upon England's mountains green?'

This legend says that St Joseph of Arimathea, mentioned in the Gospels, was at that time a rich merchant in Jerusalem and its region. (Arimathea is not far from Jerusalem and is now called Ramallah). This legend says that Joseph went to stay with the Mother of God in Nazareth, and saw and loved Christ, who was then about fourteen. So St Joseph asked His Mother, who now had no protector, for her guardian the Righteous Joseph had just passed away, to take Christ with him for a voyage on one of his ships. The Mother of God talked to her Son and found that He wanted to go. She gave permission and St Joseph took Him home.

And so his ship sailed all through the Mediterranean, stopping at different ports to sell its cargo and get more, and then right out into the Atlantic, until at last they reached the coast of Cornwall. It would have taken about three months. The ship would have been full of exotic goods which they hoped to exchange for Cornish tin. It must have been a little ship to our notion of ships, not much more than a boat. When they arrived in Britain, they came to what was then a port and trading place, Glastonbury. Possibly the merchants also went with their goods on donkeys to the more inland towns and took Him with them. Of course, this is a legend and we should see in it symbolic and spiritual truth, not literal truth.

There is another legend which also involves St Joseph of Arimathea. After our Lord's Resurrection, the chief priests were angry with St Joseph, for he had helped take Christ down from the Cross, wrap His body in a winding sheet and bury Him in his 'new tomb'. So much so that the chief priests wanted to kill him, but did not dare to because he was an important person in Jerusalem. So they put St Joseph on a ship and sent him out to sea. The little ship sailed safely all along the Mediterranean and then on to Britain. St Joseph came to the port by Glastonbury and preached to a nobleman who lived there. The noble listened gladly to his preaching, but could not make up his mind. So on

Christmas Eve he said to St Joseph: 'There is much that I like in your faith, but I could not believe it unless that staff that you have in your hand were to have leaves and blossoms tomorrow'. St Joseph prayed all night that the pagan noble might become Orthodox. Sure enough, when morning came and the snow was deep on the ground, there was a may-tree in full flower outside his hut.

St Joseph baptised the nobleman and some of his chief men too and they built a little church and had the first Orthodox services there. You can still go to Glastonbury and see the thorn, which experts identify as coming from Syria. It is not at all native to these islands, and it is said that it blossoms only on our Christmas, which on the secular calendar falls on 7 January. When Cromwell's Puritans were in power in the seventeenth century, they cut the thorn down, but people had taken cuttings. Later, when Cromwell's dictatorship was over, the thorn was replanted in its old place. There is a certain proof of this legend here, because of the thorn and because Glastonbury was almost certainly where our Orthodox Faith first came to Britain. It has been honoured ever since that very early time.

However, apart from legends, there are also Church traditions which have come down to us from ancient times. Thus, St Dorotheus of Tyre, writing in about 303, tells us that St Aristobulus, one of the seventy apostles (Romans 16, 10) and brother of St Barnabas, was chosen by St Paul to be the first to come here from Cyprus with the news of Christ. This information is recorded as a fact in the Orthodox Lives of the Saints. Some say that the apostle reposed in Wales at a place now called Arwystli near the source of the River Severn. The Orthodox Lives say that St Simon the Zealot also came 'to Britain'. Local traditions say that he was in what is now Lincolnshire or Yorkshire.

Furthermore, early traditions maintain that both the Apostles Peter and Paul themselves came and preached in London. The Orthodox Lives of the Saints affirm the coming of the Apostle Peter to Britain and that he remained here for a long time. As for the Apostle Paul, they say that he crossed 'all the lands of the West'. And the Church Father Theodoret, Bishop of Cyropolis, writing in about 435, says that St Paul came specifically to Britain. This is why the two main churches in London, St Paul's Cathedral and St Peter's Westminster Abbey, are still dedicated to them. The two Apostles are therefore the patron saints of London.

Writing in about 200, the Church writer Tertullian said that the Christian Faith had reached parts of the Britain where Rome had never held sway. This we can also believe. His statements were supported by the writer and philosopher Origen, writing in about 250, and Eusebius, Bishop of Ceasarea, writing a little later. He declared that: 'The apostles passed beyond the ocean to the isles called the Britannic Isles'.

2. St Alban and St Constantine

In AD43 the Roman Emperor Claudius invaded and conquered Britain. There is a legend based on that recorded by the Roman historian Tacitus that he took one of the kings, Caradoc, and his father, who was already a Christian, and Caradoc's two children, Llyn and Gladys, to Rome, to march in chains in his Triumph, as was the custom after a victory. It was also the custom to kill prisoners after they had been shown off in the Triumph. However, Claudius liked Caradoc (he called him Caractacus) and sent him back to rule his kingdom for the Romans, and his father with him, but he kept the children as hostages.

The Romans could not pronounce the British names, so they called Llyn 'Linus', and Gladys 'Claudia', and brought them up in Rome. When they grew up, Claudia married Pudens, a Roman senator. Their house can still be seen in Rome today, only it is a church now, called after their daughter Pudentiana. Although after all these hundreds of years, most of the house is buried, you can go down in the dark and see all that has been dug out.

You can also see the place where Pudentiana and her sister Præside went at night, at peril of their lives, to gather up the relics of the martyrs. They hid the relics till they could give them an Orthodox burial. It is said that the Apostle Peter preached there, which may be true, but certainly Pudens, Linus, and Claudia were friends of the Apostle Paul, for he sent a message to them in his letter to St Timothy. Some even claim that this Linus is the Linus who became the first Pope of Rome, appointed by the Apostle Peter. Of this there is no proof and in general there is much doubt about all these legends. Are the Pudens, Linus and Claudia mentioned from Britain, or are they others?

However it may be, in provincial Britain life seems not to have been too hard for the small number of Orthodox who lived here for the first 250 years. Thousands of Roman soldiers and their families ran their straight roads across Britain and built fortified towns. You can still know which they

were from their names. There are nearly seventy of them that end with 'chester', 'caster' or 'cester', like Chester, Winchester, Chichester, Manchester, Dorchester, Rochester, Colchester, Lancaster, Doncaster, Cirencester, Worcester, Gloucester and Leicester. In each town there were a few Orthodox Christians, some Roman, some of Jewish origin, others Britons.

Some of these Britons served in the Roman army. We know this, because when there was a terrible persecution of Orthodox, it was a soldier called Alban who was baptised by a priest and became our first martyr, perhaps in about 301, perhaps earlier. The city of St Alban's, north of London, is named after him and there we can still venerate his relics. He is our first saint, or proto-martyr, and in him, who confessed Christ the Living God, we find our foundation. We also know of the holy martyrs Julius and Aaron in south Wales and there were others who sacrificed their lives for Christ at that time.

Very soon, when the persecutions stopped, on 25 July 306 the Roman military leader Constantine was proclaimed Emperor in York. He was to become the first Roman Christian Emperor and also a saint. Constantine may well have visited other cities and towns in England together with his mother St Helen or Helena. Some say that his mother visited Colchester and there dedicated a church to St John the Theologian. In any case, she is the patron-saint of Colchester. If you go to Colchester, you can still see the foundations of a Roman church, which was built in the fourth century and continued in use until about 420.

In 315 the Bishop of London and the Bishop of York and another Bishop, perhaps of Colchester, all journeyed to Arles in the south of France, to meet other Orthodox bishops for a Church Council. In 347 bishops from Britain probably went to Sardica, now called Sofia in Bulgaria, for another Church Council, and in 357 they certainly attended a Council in Rimini in Italy.

3. St Germanus

At the beginning of the fifth century the Roman legions were called back from Britain to Rome to defend it. The Western part of the Roman Empire was collapsing. One of the Britons here disputed an important Orthodox teaching. This says that we need the grace of God to bring us to salvation and that we cannot be saved by ourselves. He denied this. His name was Pelagius.

So the British bishops sent for help to Gaul, which we now call France, to St Germanus, Bishop of Auxerre and to St Lupus, Bishop of Troyes. They came here in about 429 and held a Church Council at St Albans, where they venerated the relics of the First Martyr of Britain. At that time the Picts from what is now Scotland and the Irish (called Scots) from Ireland were taking advantage of the absence of Roman soldiers and made life fearful for the Britons. St Germanus offered to help them to repulse the Picts, who had already crossed Hadrian's Wall and were raiding southwards.

It was Easter time, and there was a great baptism in a river in a narrow valley in the north of what is now Wales. The catechumens were there, when a scout came running to tell them that a great number of Picts were coming down on them. The Britons had no army and they were frightened. St Germanus told them to trust in God and all would be well. He told all the people who were not there to be baptised to hide and, when he gave the signal, to shout 'Alleluia' as loudly as they could. In the meantime the service would go on. They obeyed and as soon as the scout saw the Picts coming over the hills, Germanus gave the signal and so frightened the enemy that they turned and ran for their lives, and never stopped running. The battle is called, the 'Alleluia Victory' to this day.

St Germanus went back to France, perhaps taking with him Christians from Britain, whom he could later send back as trained missionaries. His influence here, as we shall see, was very great. St Germanus returned for a second visit to Britain a few years later, in about 444. Then he went back to Auxerre and reposed there. His relics remain there to this day.

4. St Patrick

After the Romans left Britain in about 410, English mercenaries who had fought in the Roman Army stayed on. Other pagan English tribes began to raid the east and south of what is now England. Picts, from what is now Scotland, and Scots, from what is now Ireland, also began to invade in the north and west. The British tribes began to war among themselves. From about 449 on, the English began to sail across the North Sea, invited by the Britons. But then they began to settle in numbers and to seize land by violence. Many peasant Britons intermarried, other Britons who had lived in the towns, where most of the Christians were, decided to move westwards, fearing enslavement.

Many of these left Britain altogether and between about 410 and 550 went across the sea to what is now part of France. This area used to be called Armorica, but there were so many Britons who went there that it came to be called 'Lesser Britain', nowadays Brittany. That is why this small island is often called 'Great' Britain, because, though small, it is still much bigger than 'Lesser' Britain, as Brittany was called. Some of the Britons even took refuge in the north-western corner of Spain, the area called Galicia.

In the west of these islands, a minority kept the Orthodox Faith. In the very Romanised south of Wales they even kept Roman names like those of St Paternus and St Paul Aurelian, who both lived in about 500. Among these Britons there was at this time a commander called Arthur, which is probably also a Roman name. We do not know whether he was Christian or not. It was only much later that all sorts of fictitious stories were invented around his name. The same thing happened in what is now north Wales, the north-west of England and the south-west of Scotland, where there were still Orthodox minorities. Here in the fifth century there were born St Ninian († *c.* 432) and St Patrick († *c.* 461). Patrick is also a Latin name and means 'noble'. It was about the time that the pagan Irish (they were called Scots then) crossed the sea to what is now called Scotland after them. Before that, Scotland had been inhabited by the pagan Picts, so called they painted pictures on their bodies, rather like tattoo artists do nowadays. So then it had been called 'Pictland'.

One day the Scots (= Irish) raided a town near the west coast near Hadrian's Wall and carried off young people as slaves, among whom was a boy of sixteen called Patrick. In Ireland they made him their shepherd. He was cold and hungry and homesick. As he was a Christian, he found living among pagans not very easy, and there seemed no chance of escape. The story is that one day, when he was watching the sheep on a moor above the sea, he was startled to see a figure beside him, who said: 'Fear not, Patrick, I am Victor, your Guardian Angel, come to help you leave these pagans and return to teach them the faith of Christ. 'Your prayers have been answered in God's good time,' said the Angel. 'Climb down the cliff, and you will find a boat'. Then he vanished.

Patrick had often looked down the cliff, but it seemed impossible to get down. Now his eyes were opened and he saw a faint track, and at the bottom there was an empty boat. He fled and found his way to Gaul, that is France, before returning to Britain, perhaps to see his grandfather priest and his father deacon. Then he returned to Gaul again, possibly to Auxerre. It was here that he was trained under St Germanus in Auxerre. He may have visited the famous monastery of Lerins, or perhaps the monastery of St Martin in Tours. There he would have learned about the monastic and ascetic life of Egypt which had been brought to Gaul by St John Cassian and St Martin.

Patrick never forgot what the Angel had said. As soon as he was ready he collected twelve friends and in about 432 went back to Ireland, knowing that he took his life in his hands. As a wise bishop, St Patrick told his companions to rest in a wood when they landed and to keep out of sight until he found out where they were. Now it happened that the two daughters of the King of Leinster went down to the river to bathe just as the sun was rising, and when he saw them St Patrick came out of the wood alone and spoke to them. He had not forgotten the Irish language which he had learnt when he was a slave. We see how God arranges things. No experience or knowledge is ever wasted.

At first the girls were frightened; but there was something so kind in St Patrick's face that they soon recovered from their fright, sat down with him and listened to him. When he had finished speaking, the elder princess said: 'Your faith is better than ours, and we believe it', and St Patrick baptised them both in the river. Then he called to his companions to come out and the princesses took them to their father, the King of Leinster. He too and all his court eventually became Christian.

St Patrick preached against paganism and slavery and brought learning to Ireland. He set up a great centre of faith in Armagh and baptised thousands, reposing in what is now Downpatrick. In the end all of Ireland was to become peaceful, an Orthodox Christian country and his mission spread to the Isle of Man. Here it was greatly influenced by the Egyptian monasticism which had grown strong in Gaul. It was this influence which was brought to Ireland, bringing it to be called the Isle of Saints. Although St Patrick is its patron saint, there were many, many saints living there.

Even before St Patrick there had been small missions from Wales and, in 431, there had been the brief mission of St Palladius, from Auxerre or from Rome. His mission was not successful and St Patrick was sent to replace him. Later there were saints like St Brigid of Kildare († *c.* 525), St Enda of

Aran († *c*. 530), St Finnian of Clonard († 549), St Ciaran of Clonmacnoise († *c*. 549), St Finnian of Moville († 579), St Comgall of Bangor (*c*. 601), St Kevin of Glendalough († *c*. 618), St Fintan of Taghmon († 635) and St Maelruain († 792). But scattered all over Ireland and the countless islands off its coasts and in its lakes, in woods and caves and on hill-tops, lived holy men and women, hermits, spending their lives in praise and prayer. Ireland was like an Egypt for its monks. The Irish became famous for their wisdom which they took to England and to many parts of Europe.

It is said that there are no snakes in Ireland because St Patrick turned them all out. According to another legend, he also taught the Irish about the Holy Trinity through the shamrock, which has one stalk but three leaves – it is three in one. In about 460 St Patrick also wrote his famous prayer, 'the Deer's Cry': 'Christ be with me, Christ within me, Christ behind me, Christ to win me, Christ to comfort and restore me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me. Christ in quiet, Christ in danger, Christ in hearts of all that love me, Christ in mouth of friend and stranger'.

5. St David

There are ruined Roman villas all over England. Sometimes we can see how the owners of the villa must have abandoned them from the beginning of the fifth century on at the time of the Roman evacuation. Sometimes the Romano-British owners of the villas left Orthodox items behind them, like baptismal fonts or mosaics. As we have said, after them the pagan English came to settle in great numbers, especially from about the year 449 on at the invitation of the Britons, who thought that the English would protect them from the Irish and the Picts.

The first English tribes, Angles, the majority who settled in the east, the midlands and the north, with their cousins, Saxons and Jutes who settled only in the south, were pagans. They worshipped Odin and Thor, the god of thunder, who gave their names to the days of the week – Wednesday and Thursday, and Friday the day of Freya, the goddess of spring. Thus, in the fifth and sixth centuries the first English gradually absorbed or else pushed the faithful Orthodox back into what is now Cornwall and Wales – the land of the 'foreigners' or 'Welsh', as they called them. Some were martyred during this period, like St Lewina in Sussex († 5C.), Sts Urith and Sidwell in Devon († 6C.) and St Aldate (*c*. 577) in Gloucestershire, killed by the invading English tribes.

As for the name Cornwall, it means the 'Welsh who live in the horn', that is, the horn-shaped part of the south-west. From south Wales many people crossed into Cornwall and then into what became called Brittany. So that instead of having a small Orthodox Christian minority, all the south and east of Britain became completely pagan again. However, in the west, Wales and Cornwall, Orthodoxy remained and there are areas where every village is named after its local saint. The most famous saints of Cornwall, crossing from Wales, are St Piran († *c*. 480) and St Petroc (Peter) of Padstow, who both lived in the sixth century.

In the middle of the sixth century St David, the patron saint of Wales, lived in the far south-west corner of Wales at what is still called St Davids. This is on the very edge of the Atlantic. There is no longer the little monastery and school that St David built there, but there is a Cathedral and there are the relics of St David inside it. It is said that St David was consecrated bishop by the Patriarch of Jerusalem. Whatever the truth, literal or more likely symbolic, the Saint was inspired by the vision of Jerusalem. He lived a very ascetic life, imitated in all things the monks of Egypt and was often visited by monks from Ireland

St David had many disciples, both in the south-west of Wales and in the north-west. Among the great Welsh saints are St Illtyd, who trained St David, then St Cadoc, the pilgrim to Jerusalem, St Dubricius (a Roman name), St Teilo, St Samson, who went to Brittany and St Gildas, who lived at the same time as St David. One of the great centres of Orthodoxy in Wales was the island of Bardsey, though other Welsh islands were occupied by monks, like Anglesey, Barry Island and Caldey, those in the Bristol Channel like Flatholm and Steepholm, the Isles of Scilly or the Channel Islands. St Malo was another disciple, sent by St David or by his disciples to keep the British in Brittany Orthodox, and he did his work well.

These saints knew that it was not enough to make their neighbours Christians. When that was done and the churches built, they remembered the commandment in St Matthew's Gospel, 'Go to all nations'. Thus, they left their homes and settled in new countries. They went out to danger and sometimes to death, certainly to a very hard task, for the love of Christ and for those for whom He died. A Church which is not a missionary church is a dead Church.

6. St Columba

The Patron Saint of Scotland is St Andrew, who was called to be an apostle first, even before his brother Simon called Peter. It is very doubtful if the Apostle Andrew himself ever came to Scotland, but his relics were taken to Scotland, it seems by a Greek bishop, and venerated where St Andrew's Cathedral now stands. St Andrew was martyred by being crucified on a cross shaped like an X. His cross, a diagonal white cross on blue, is on the Union Jack together with St George's cross red on white, and St Patrick's cross, which is a diagonal red cross on white.

At the beginning of the sixth century Scotland was not Christian, even though St Patrick of Ireland had come from near the border with Scotland and St Ninian had lived there. St Patrick's home was destroyed by pirates. As for St Ninian, who came from the south of Scotland and may well have gone to St Martin in Tours or to St Germanus in Auxerre to be trained and ordained, he converted the southern Picts round the Solway Firth. He even built a church of white stone, which was later dedicated to St Martin. It was only much later that St Kentigern Mungo († 612 – Mungo simply means the beloved) – returned to the Clyde from north Wales and founded Glasgow. But virtually all of Scotland, especially the Highlands, was still pagan when, in about 521, a boy was born in Ireland and baptised Columba, which means 'dove'.

At that time in Ireland there were hermits and monks and nuns who kept the peace of Christ alive. The Faith had been brought to them from Gaul, Wales and even from Egypt. The monks and nuns spent their time praying, healing the sick and copying books in wonderful writing and pictures in the initial letters. St Columba was a monk and when he was Abbot of his monastery he borrowed a particularly beautiful book. According to the legend, before he returned it, Columba copied it all. The owner was unhappy with this and judgement was passed that Columba must leave Ireland.

However it may have been, in the year 563 Columba and twelve of his monks set off in a coracle, a boat about as big as a rowing boat, and sought to live in the west of Scotland, where the Irish had already settled. They were granted land for a monastery on an island on the west coast of Scotland, Iona by name. It was a bare, windswept island. But before St Columba reposed, it had its church and a famous monastery; and men from Iona went on missionary journeys all over Scotland, successfully converting the Picts. Thus, Iona became the spiritual capital of Scotland. His monks were also to go in the seventh century and convert much of England. Later, Scottish kings were crowned at Iona, sitting on the very stone that was for long under the coronation chair in Westminster Abbey, but which since 1996 has been in Scotland again.

The fame of Iona and of St Columba's disciples went all over Europe. His monks went out to the north and east to convert Scotland and all its islands, the Hebrides and the Orkneys, and further still, as far as Iceland to the north and west and to continental Europe to the south and east. These saints loved animals. There are many stories about these saints and beasts. Once St Columba's monks were worried while at church by the barking of the seals and wanted to kill them, but the saint went out and preached to them, and they leapt into the sea, and never afterwards came out at church time.

As regards the future of Iona, we cannot but recall St Columba's prophecy that one day it is to become an Orthodox monastery once more: 'In Iona of my heart, Iona of my love, instead of monks' voices shall be the lowing of cattle. But before the world shall end, Iona shall be as it was'. As for the old white horse, on which Columba rode when he was an old man, he wept so bitterly one day when the monks were ploughing on the other side of the island that they thought that something was wrong and took the old horse back to his stable. There they heard that the Saint had just died. It was the year 597 in the far north-west of Iona, but at the opposite end of the island, in the far south-east of England, another saint had just arrived.

To be continued ...

The Decline of England: 15. ROBIN HOOD

By Eadmund

ROBIN HOOD is such a huge figure in English folklore that it is irresistably tempting to try to find a historical basis for the stories. However the closer that one brings the lens of history to the outlaw, the more likely he is to vanish into the greenwood, and all attempts to catch him and pin him down to a particular place or a definitive historical person have so far failed.

Robin through the Centuries

Each century has added a little to the tale, and we need to be clear how it developed in order to track down the essential parts of it. Since the 1980s it has become commonplace to include a Saracen (Muslim) in the band of outlaws. This is not in fact traditional, and originated in the ITV *Robin of Sherwood* television series, a clever bow to political correctness which was taken up by following films and series.

The 1938 film The Adventures of Robin Hood starring Errol Flynn and Olivia de Havilland portrayed Robin as a hero on a national scale, leading an army of oppressed Saxons in revolt against their Norman overlords. This film, in fact, struck such a chord and established itself so definitively that many of the subsequent Robin Hood films were made about his 'son' in order not to compete directly with it.

The idea of Robin Hood fighting the Normans originates in the nineteenth century, which had its own versions of the myth. The most notable contributions to this idea are Jacques Nicolas Augustin Thierry's *Histoire de la Conquête de l'Angleterre par les Normands* (pub. 1825) and Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe* (pub. 1819). It is in this particular work that the modern Robin Hood 'King of Outlaws and prince of good fellows!' as Richard the Lionheart calls him, makes his appearance. The traditional tales were often adapted for children, most notably in Howard Pyle's *The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood*. Robin is established as a staunch philanthropist who steals from the rich with the specific intention of giving the proceeds to the poor – something that has also influenced accounts throughout the twentieth century.

In the eighteenth century Robin Hood was a somewhat farcical figure, and was often severely drubbed by various people, although he often acts with great shrewdness. Robin is always able to defeat his traditional enemy, the luckless Sherriff, and even when defeated he tricks his opponent into allowing him to blow his horn, which immediately brings the other outlaws to his aid.

The seventeenth century introduced the minstrel, Alan-a-Dale, who first appeared in a broadside ballad and unlike many such introductions, managed to adhere to the legend. In the 1598, Alan Munday wrote a pair of plays, *The Downfall … and The Death of Robert Earl of Huntingdon*. It was in the fifteenth century that Robin Hood acquired a specific setting. Up to this point there had been little interest in when the exploits had taken place. Ballads had referred to 'King Edward', but there had been no indication as to which King Edward was referred to, giving the outlaw a historical 'window' from 1272–1377. However during the sixteenth century the stories became fixed in the 1190s, when King Richard was absent from the country fighting in the Crusades. Giving Robin an aristocratic title and female love interest (Maid Marian), and placing him in the historical context of the true king's absence, all represent moves to domesticate his legend and reconcile it to ruling powers. In this, his legend is similar to that of King Arthur, which morphed from a dangerous story of Celtic disenfranchisement to the chivalrous Norman romance under the troubadours serving Eleanor of Aquitaine. From the 16th century on, the legend of Robin Hood is often used to promote the hereditary ruling class, romance, and religious piety. The 'criminal' element is retained to provide dramatic colour, rather than as a real challenge to convention.

Early Ballads

The earliest surviving text of a Robin Hood ballad is 'Robin Hood and the Monk'. This is preserved in Cambridge University manuscript Ff.5.48. It was written shortly after 1450. It contains many of the elements still associated with the legend, from the Nottingham setting to the bitter enmity between Robin and the local sheriff.

The first printed version is 'A Gest of Robyn Hode' (c.1475), a collection of separate stories that attempts to unite the episodes into a single continuous narrative. After this comes 'Robin Hood and the Potter', contained in a manuscript of c.1503. 'The Potter' is markedly different in tone from 'The Monk': whereas the earlier tale is 'a thriller' the latter is more comic, its plot involving trickery and cunning rather than straightforward force.

Other early texts are dramatic pieces such as the fragmentary 'Robyn Hod and the Shryff off Notyngham' (c.1472). These are particularly noteworthy as they show Robin's integration into May Day rituals towards the end of the Middle Ages; 'Robyn Hod and the Shryff off Notyngham', among other points of interest, contains the earliest reference to Friar Tuck.

The plots of neither 'the Monk' nor 'the Potter' are included in the Gest; and neither is the plot of 'Robin Hood and Guy of Gisborne', which is probably at least as old as those two ballads although preserved in a more recent copy. Each of these three ballads survived in a single copy, so it is unclear how much of the mediæval legend has survived, and what has survived may not be typical of the mediæval legend. It has been argued that the fact that the surviving ballads were preserved in written form in itself makes it unlikely they were typical; in particular stories with an interest for the gentry were by this view more likely to be preserved. The story of Robin's aid to the 'poor knight' that takes up much of the Gest may be an example.

The character of Robin in these first texts is rougher edged than in his later incarnations. In 'Robin Hood and the Monk', for example, he is shown as quick tempered and violent, assaulting Little John for defeating him in an archery contest; in the same ballad Much the Miller's Son casually kills a 'little page' in the course of rescuing Robin Hood from prison. No extant ballad actually shows Robin Hood 'giving to the poor', although in a 'A Gest of Robyn Hode' Robin does make a large loan to an unfortunate knight which he does not in the end require to be repaid; and later in the same ballad Robin Hood states his intention of giving money to the next traveller to come down the road if he happens to be poor.

'Of my good he shall haue some,
Yf he be a por man.'

As it happens the next traveller is not poor, but it seems in context that Robin Hood is stating a general policy. From the beginning Robin Hood is on the side of the poor; the Gest quotes Robin Hood as instructing his men that when they rob:

loke ye do no husbonde harme
That tilleth with his ploughe.
No more ye shall no gode yeman
That walketh by gren-wode shawe;
Ne no knyght ne no squyer
That wol be a gode felawe.

And in its final lines the Gest sums up:

he was a good outlawe,
And dyde pore men moch god.

The Character of Robin

Within Robin Hood's band mediæval forms of courtesy rather than modern ideals of equality are generally in evidence. In the early ballads Robin's men usually kneel before him in strict obedience: in 'A Gest of Robyn Hode' the king even observes that 'His men are more at his byddynge / Then my men be at myn.' Their social status, as yeomen, is shown by their weapons; they use swords rather than quarterstaffs. The only character to use a quarterstaff in the early ballads is the potter, and Robin Hood does not take to a staff until the 18th century 'Robin Hood and Little John'.

The political and social assumptions underlying the early Robin Hood ballads have long been controversial. It has been influentially argued by J. C. Holt that the Robin Hood legend was cultivated in the households of the gentry, and that it would be mistaken to see in him a figure of peasant revolt. He is not a peasant but a yeoman, and his tales make no mention of the complaints of the peasants, such as oppressive taxes. He appears not so much as a revolt against societal standards as an embodiment of them, being generous, pious, and courteous, opposed to stingy, worldly, and churlish foes. Other scholars have by contrast stressed the subversive aspects of the legend, and see in the mediæval Robin Hood ballads a plebeian literature hostile to the feudal order.

The 'Merry Men'

Although the term 'Merry Men' belongs to a later period, the ballads do name several of Robin's companions. These include Will Scarlet (or Scathlock), Much the Miller's Son, and Little John – who was called 'little' as a joke: of course he was quite the opposite. Even though the band is regularly described as being over a hundred men,

usually only three or four are specified. Some appear only once or twice in a ballad: Will Stutely in 'Robin Hood Rescuing Will Stutly' and 'Robin Hood and Little John'; David of Doncaster in 'Robin Hood and the Golden Arrow'; Gilbert with the White Hand in 'A Gest of Robyn Hode'; and Arthur-a-Bland in 'Robin Hood and the Tanner'.

Printed versions of the Robin Hood ballads, generally based on the Gest, appear in the early 16th century, shortly after the introduction of printing in England. Later that century Robin is promoted to the level of nobleman: he is styled Earl of Huntingdon, Robert of Locksley, or Robert Fitz Ooth. In the early ballads, by contrast, he was a member of the yeoman classes, which included common freeholders possessing a small landed estate

Some authors have sought for the origins of the character in mythology or folklore, from fairies or other mythological origins. The 'mythological theory' does go back to at least to 1584, when Reginald Scot identified Robin Hood with the Germanic goblin 'Hudgin' or Hodekin and associated him with Robin Goodfellow. Maurice Keen provides a brief summary and useful critique of the view that Robin Hood had mythological origins. A. J. Pollard (2004) stressed the symbolical significance of the 'perpetual springtime' of the ballads, but other modern authors reject this line of argument as untenable.

While Robin Hood and his men often show great skill in archery, swordplay and disguise, they are no more exaggerated than those characters in other ballads, such as Kinmont Willie, which were based on historical events. A 'Robin and Marion' figured in 13th-century French 'pastourelles' (of which Jeu de Robin et Marion *c*. 1280 is a literary version) and presided over the French May festivities, in the intervals of the attempted seduction of the latter by a series of knights, over a variety of rustic pastimes. In the Jeu de Robin and Marion, Robin and his companions have to rescue Marion from the clutches of a 'lustful knight'. Dobson and Taylor in their survey of the legend, in which they reject the mythological theory, nevertheless regard it as 'highly probable' that this French Robin's name and functions travelled to the English May Games where they fused with the Robin Hood legend.

The origin of the legend is claimed by some to have stemmed from actual outlaws, or from tales of outlaws, such as Hereward the Wake, Eustace the Monk, Fulk FitzWarin and William Wallace. Hereward appears in a ballad much like 'Robin Hood and the Potter', and as the Hereward ballad is older, it appears to be the source. The ballad 'Adam Bell, Clym of the Cloughe and Wyllyam of Cloudeslee' runs parallel to 'Robin Hood and the Monk', but it is not clear whether either one is the source for the other, or whether they merely show that such tales were told of outlaws.

The Name

The search for the possible origins of Robin Hood is made yet more obscure by the fact that Robert was a very common name in mediæval times, and Robin an equally common diminutive. The surname Hood (in its various forms Hod, Hude, referring ultimately to a head covering) also occurs frequently in the records, and some of them are also on record as having fallen foul of the law.

Even more obscurity abounds in this area, because the name had become a stock alias in use by thieves. What appears to be the first known example of 'Robin Hood' as the general name for an outlaw dates to 1262 in Berkshire, where the surname 'Robehod' was applied to a man apparently because he had been outlawed. This could suggest two main possibilities: either that an early form of the Robin Hood legend was already well established in the mid-13th century; or alternatively that the name 'Robin Hood' preceded the outlaw hero that we know; so that the 'Robin Hood' of legend was so called because that was seen as an appropriate name for an outlaw. This has become so generic that the gangsters of 30s Chicago were known as 'hoods'.

The 1911 *Encyclopædia Britannica* remarks that 'hood' was a common dialectical form of 'wood'; and that the outlaw's name has been given as 'Robin Wood'. There are indeed a number of references to Robin Hood as Robin Wood, or Whood, or Whod, from the 16th and 17th centuries. The earliest recorded example, in connection with May games in Somerset, dates from 1518.

Attempts at Identification

One well-known theory of origin was proposed by Joseph Hunter in 1852. Hunter identified the outlaw with a 'Robyn Hode' recorded as employed by Edward II in 1323 during the king's progress through Lancashire. This Robyn Hode was identified with one or more people called Robert Hood living in Wakefield before and after that time.

Comparing the available records with the Gest and also other ballads, Hunter developed a fairly detailed theory according to which Robin Hood was an adherent of the rebel Earl of Lancaster, defeated at the Battle of Boroughbridge in 1322.

According to this theory, Robin Hood was pardoned and employed by the king in 1323. (The Gest does relate that Robin Hood was pardoned by 'King Edward' and taken into his service.) The theory supplies Robin Hood with a wife, Matilda, thought to be the origin of Maid Marian, and Hunter also conjectured that the author of the Gest may have been the religious poet Richard Rolle (1290–1349), who lived in the village of Hampole in Barnsdale.

This theory has long been recognised to have serious problems, one of the most serious being that 'Robin Hood' and similar names were, as we have noted, already used as nicknames for outlaws in the 13th century. Another is that there is no direct evidence that Hunter's Hood had ever been an outlaw or any kind of criminal or rebel at all; the theory is built on conjecture and coincidence of detail. Finally, recent research has shown that Hunter's Robyn Hood had been employed by the king at an earlier stage, thus casting doubt on this Robyn Hood's supposed earlier career as outlaw and rebel.

Another theory identifies him with the historical outlaw Roger Godberd, who was a die-hard supporter of Simon de Montfort, which would place Robin Hood around the 1260s. There are certainly parallels between Godberd's career and that of Robin Hood as he appears in the Gest. John Maddicott has called Godberd 'that prototype Robin Hood'. Some problems with this theory are that there is no evidence that Godberd was ever known as Robin Hood and there is no sign in the early Robin Hood ballads of the specific concerns of de Montfort's revolt. As I have already intimated in a previous article, de Montfort was a French-speaking aristocrat whose vested interests were with a section of the Norman baronage: his involvement with a cause that has only subsequently been united with that of universal liberty was largely accidental.

Another well-known theory, first proposed by the historian L. V. D. Owen in 1936 and more recently floated by J. C. Holt and others, is that the original Robin Hood might be identified with an outlawed Robert Hood, or Hod, or Hobbehod, all apparently the same man, referred to in nine successive Yorkshire Pipe Rolls between 1226 and 1234. There is no evidence however that this Robert Hood, although an outlaw, was also a bandit.

Locating Robin Hood

In modern versions of the legend, Robin Hood is said to have taken up residence in the verdant Sherwood Forest in the county of Nottinghamshire. For this reason the people of present-day Nottinghamshire have a special affinity with Robin Hood, often claiming him as the symbol of their county. For example, major road signs entering the depict Robin Hood with his bow and arrow, welcoming people to 'Robin Hood County'. BBC Radio Nottingham also uses the phrase 'Robin Hood County' on its regular programmes. The 'Robin Hood Way' runs through Nottinghamshire and the county is home to literally thousands of other places, roads, inns and objects bearing Robin's name.

Specific sites linked to Robin Hood include the Major Oak tree, claimed to have been used by him as a hideout, 'Robin Hood's Well', located near Newstead Abbey (within the boundaries of Sherwood Forest), and the Church of St Mary in the village of Edwinstowe, where Robin and Maid Marian are historically thought to have wed. To reinforce this belief, the University of Nottingham in 2010 has begun the Nottingham Caves Survey with the goal 'to increase the tourist potential of these sites'.

However, the Nottingham setting is a matter of some contention. While the Sheriff of Nottingham and the town itself appear in early ballads, and Sherwood is specifically mentioned in the early ballad Robin Hood and the Monk, certain of the original ballads (even those with Nottingham references) locate Robin on occasion in Barnsdale (the area between Pontefract and Doncaster), approximately fifty miles north of Nottingham, in the county of Yorkshire; furthermore, it has been suggested that the ballads placed in this area are far more geographically specific and accurate. This is reinforced for some by the alleged similarity of Locksley to the area of Loxley, South Yorkshire, in Sheffield where, in nearby Tideswell, which was the 'Kings Larder' in the Royal Forest of the Peak, a record of the appearance of a 'Robert de Lockesly' in court is found, dated 1245. As we have mentioned, 'Robert' and its diminutives were amongst the most common of names at the time, and also since it was usual for men to adopt the name of their hometown ('De Lockesly' means simply, 'of

[or from] Lockesly'), the record could just as easily be referring to any man from the area named Robert. Although it cannot be proven whether or not this is the man himself, it is further believed by some that Robin had a brother called Thomas – an assertion with no documentary evidence whatsoever to support it in any of the stories, tales or ballads. If the Robert mentioned above was indeed Robin Hood, and if he did have a brother named Thomas, then consideration of the following reference may lend this theory a modicum of credence but it is again equally likely that Nicolas, John, Robert and Thomas were simply members of a family that came from the area.

In Barnsdale Forest, Yorkshire, there is a well known as 'Robin Hood's Well' (by the side of the Great North Road), a 'Little John's Well' (near Hampole) and a Robin Hood's stream (in Highfields Wood at Woodlands). There is something of a modern movement amongst Yorkshire residents to attempt to claim the legend of Robin Hood, to the extent that South Yorkshire's new airport, on the site of the redeveloped RAF Finningley airbase near Doncaster, although ironically in the historic county of Nottinghamshire, has been given the name 'Robin Hood Airport Doncaster Sheffield'.

In the city centre of Leeds, West Yorkshire, at 71 Vicar Lane, is a retail clothing store operated by Hugo Boss. This was the previous location of a pub/music venue known as *The Duchess of York* that was previously known as the *Robin Hood*. During an interior refurbishment, wallpaper was removed to reveal a wall mural depicting Robin Hood and his Merry Men in the small snug of the pub. The Landlord at the time, Robin Dover, was photographed standing next to the mural, which was published in *The Yorkshire Evening Post*. There have been further claims made that he is from Swannington in Leicestershire or Loxley, Warwickshire.

This debate is hardly surprising of course, given the considerable value that the Robin Hood legend has for local tourism. The Sheriff of Nottingham also had jurisdiction in Derbyshire that was known as the 'Shire of the Deer', and this is where the Royal Forest of the Peak is found, which roughly corresponds to today's Peak District National Park. The Royal Forest included Bakewell, Tideswell, Castleton, Ladybower and the Derwent Valley near Loxley. The Sheriff of Nottingham possessed property near Loxley, amongst other places both far and wide including Hazlebadge Hall, Peveril Castle and Haddon Hall. Mercia, to which Nottingham belonged, came to within three miles of Sheffield City Centre. But before the Law of the Normans was the Law of the Danes: The Danelaw had a similar boundary to that of Mercia but had a population of Free Peasantry which were known to have resisted the Norman occupation. Many outlaws could have been created by the refusal to recognise Norman Forest Law. The supposed grave of Little John can be found in Hathersage, also in the Peak District.

Robin Hood himself was once thought to have been buried in the grounds of Kirklees Priory between Brighouse and Mirfield in West Yorkshire, although this theory has now largely been abandoned. There is an elaborate grave there with an inscription. The story said that the Prioress was a relative of Robin's. Robin was ill and staying at the Priory where the Prioress was supposedly caring for him. However, she betrayed him, his health worsened, and he eventually died there. Before he died, he told Little John (or possibly another of his Merry Men) where to bury him. He shot an arrow from the Priory window, and where the arrow landed was to be the site of his grave. The grave with the inscription is within sight of the ruins of the Kirklees Priory, behind the Three Nuns pub in Mirfield, West Yorkshire. The grave can be visited on occasional organised walks, organised by Calderdale Council Tourist Information office.

Further indications of the legend's connection with West Yorkshire (and particularly Calderdale) are noted in the fact that there are pubs called *The Robin Hood* in both nearby Brighouse and at Cragg Vale; higher up in the Pennines beyond Halifax, where Robin Hood Rocks can also be found. 'Robin Hood Hill' is near Outwood, West Yorkshire, not far from Lofthouse. There is a village in West Yorkshire called Robin Hood, on the A61 between Leeds and Wakefield and close to Rothwell and Lofthouse. Considering these references to Robin Hood, it is not surprising that the people of both South and West Yorkshire lay some claim to Robin Hood, who could easily have roamed between Nottingham, Lincoln, Doncaster and right into West Yorkshire.

There are also modern theories that Robin Hood was in fact Welsh, and was called Rybyn Hod. In fact, the Welsh city of Swansea has in recent years been known as 'Hodsville' in reference to the mythical figure. Sites around Swansea that lend credence to this theory include 'Rybyn Hod's Hatshop', 'Rybyn Hod's Stoop', 'Rybyn Hod's Wad'

(a thicket of trees located off Rifleman's Row) and 'Rybyn Hod's Fortress', which according to local legend was on the site of the current Morriston Tabernacle.

A British Army Territorial (reserves) battalion formed in Nottingham in 1859 was known as 'The Robin Hood Battalion' through various re-organisations until the 'Robin Hood' name finally disappeared in 1992. With the 1881 Childers Reforms that linked regular and reserve units into regimental families, the 'Robin Hood Battalion' became part of 'The Sherwood Foresters' (Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire Regiment).

Man or Myth?

This, then, appears to be the sum total of what scholastic research has been able to throw up. There is not much that one can pin down. Things that seemed to be certain become less so when subjected to detailed examination. Nothing can be established beyond any doubt. But are we then to say that the whole concept of Robin Hood is a myth? Historical research, while it has not proved that Robin Hood did exist, by the same measure has also not proved that he did not. As I said at the beginning of this article, it is still irrestistably tempting to try to link him to some definite time or place. The whole still seems to be greater than the sum of its various impossibly scattered parts. It is as if the spirit of freedom and resistance to Norman tyranny has taken human form and settled upon Robin Hood, rather as the spirit of generosity and good-fellowship at Christmastide has become mixed up with St Nicolas, Bishop of Myra, and transformed him into Santa Claus. It is very possible that there were several 'Robin Hoods', who fled to the Greenwood in defiance of the Normans and their forest laws, who there gathered a number of other similar discontented folk, and continued to wage war to the extent that their limited wealth and ability allowed. This lawlessness was to continue. In the 1230s the pass of Alton in Hampshire had been a notorious haunt of criminal gangs preying on the trade passing between London, Winchester and the Channel ports. This was still the case in the 1260s when Adam Gurdun, a local forester and landowner who had sided with Simon de Montfort against the King and thereafter turned outlaw, joined them. Prince Edward (later Edward IV [I][1]) eventually stormed his hideout and he was imprisoned, being released only after paying a stiff ransom. Over a five-day period in May 1303, a criminal gang headed by Richard Pudlicott broke into the vaults under the royal palace at Westminster and made off with treasure. Pudlicott was later hanged, but it was nevertheless the most daring robbery from any king to that date. At Ashby Folville in Leicestershire, the local lord, Eustace de Folville, was responsible for robbing and murdering one of the barons of the King's Exchequer, and six years later for the kidnap and ransom of a notoriously corrupt royal justice. An associated gang, led by James Coterel, was involved in murder, kidnapping and extortion throughout the Peak District, yet despite the outlawry of his associates and his own attachment for murder in 1331, he was sufficiently well protected to die officially pardoned in 1351.

As late as the 1370s Langland's *Piers Plowman* was insisting that 'Folville's Law' might be the only means by which the poor could ever recover those things wrongfully plundered from them by the rich. It is clear that some of these men were pure criminals and maybe lacked the essential quality of generosity to the poor, but each of them and the other un-named heroes, many of them uncelebrated outside a small local area, has nevertheless contributed something towards the whole that we know and love and will always rightly celebrate as 'Robin Hood'.

1 It all began with Edward I in 1272, who should really have been Edward IV. Most chroniclers could recall the deeds of Eadweard 'the Confessor' (1042-66) and Eadweard 'The Elder' (899-924) but overlooked the short reign of the boy King Eadweard 'The Martyr' (975–78), so there are instances of Edward I being wrongly called Edward III during his reign. Later those practices fell out of use and Edward became known in later times as 'King Edward, son of King Henry'. However with three Kings named Edward in succession it became necessary to differentiate between them, so they were numbered Edward I, II and III by the middle of the 14th century with 'since the Conquest' added to show the fact that there were others in the dim and distant past. This is how the Norman Conquest of 1066 became the official starting point for Regnal numbers of English Monarchs; but with our superior historical knowledge I think we may revert to a more factual numeration, with a bracketed acknowledgement to Mediæval error

THE SAINTS OF THE KINGDOM OF KENT

Introduction

THE name 'Kent' comes from a Celtic word meaning 'edge' or 'rim'. This name describes the south-eastern corner of the island of Britain and was adopted by the Romans. After the collapse of Roman rule in England in AD410, this corner was settled largely by Jutes, who also settled the Isle of Wight and the area opposite it in Hampshire now known as the New Forest. The Jutes originally came from what is now Jutland in Denmark, but they had moved down the coasts of Western Europe and crossed to Britain from northern France, where there are place-names identical to those in Kent. By about 500 the Kingdom of Kent had been established and it continued to exist as a semi-independent kingdom until the tenth century.

History

Kent was one of the seven kingdoms of England but it lost its full independence in the eighth century when it became a sub-kingdom of Mercia and in the ninth century a sub-kingdom of Wessex. After the terrible Viking attacks in the ninth century, in the tenth century it became part of the united Kingdom of England created under the leadership of Wessex. Its name has continued in the county of Kent. The earliest recorded King of Kent was Ethelbert (Albert) who had influence over all the closely-related Germanic settlers in Britain, Angles, Saxons and Jutes, who all spoke dialects of the same language that is now called early Old English. The Christianization of the Old English began in Ethelbert's reign.

This was marked by the arrival of the priest-monk Augustine of Canterbury († 604) on the Isle of Thanet with 40 monks in 597. They had been sent as missionaries to Britain by Pope, later St Gregory of Rome, called the 'Great' or the 'Dialogist'. Encouraged by Queen Bertha († after 601), the Frankish Christian wife of King Ethelbert, the missionaries set up their centre in 'Canterbury' (meaning 'the fortress of those who live in Kent'), effectively Ethelbert's capital. The earliest churches here have been termed the 'Kentish Group' and reflect Continental influences. These include St Pancras, St Mary, and Sts Peter and Paul, all of which were part of St Augustine's monastery in Canterbury, as well as St Andrews in Rochester and St Mary in Lyminge.

Kent was first attacked by Viking raiders in the late eighth century. Kent and south-east England was an attractive target for these Scandinavian raiders because of its wealthy monasteries, usually located in exposed coastal locations or on rivers. Thus, in 804, the nuns of Lyminge (pronounced Liminzh) were granted refuge in Canterbury to escape the attackers, while in 811 Kentish forces gathered to repel a Viking army based on the Isle of Sheppey in the north of Kent. The cities were nevertheless attacked by Viking forces; Rochester in 842, Canterbury in 851 and Rochester again in 885, when they laid siege to it until it was freed by King Alfred.

The Saints of Kent

Canterbury will always be the centre of holiness in Kent and one of the main spiritual centres in the whole British Isles, together with Lindisfarne and Iona. King Ethelbert himself († 616) was venerated as a saint throughout Kent and beyond and his wife Bertha was also venerated locally in Canterbury, as was her Frankish chaplain Liudhard († *c.* 603). During the Orthodox period of Canterbury history, there were 35 archbishops, of whom 22 are venerated as saints. The full list of the sainted Archbishops of Canterbury includes five Italian, one Greek, one Danish (St Oda), one Germanic (St Bregwine) and fourteen English, with at least three of these from Kent itself.

In the seventh century we have St Augustine, St Laurence, St Mellitus, St Justus, St Honorius (all Italian missionaries), St Deusdedit (the first English hierarch) and St Theodore the Greek; in the eighth century seven more – St Berhtwald (from Reculver in Kent), St Tatwine, St Nothelm, St Cuthbert (from Lyminge in Kent), St Bregwine, St Janbert (from Kent) and St Ethelhard († 805). Apart from the latter the ninth century gave no saints by reason of the Viking devastation, but in the tenth century we have St Plegmund, St Athelhelm, St Oda the Good and St Dunstan. In the early eleventh century we also have four more – St Aelfric, St Alphege the Martyr, St Ethelnoth and St Eadsige.

Apart from the archbishops, the other Canterbury saints are St Peter, Abbot of Canterbury († 607), some of whose relics are still venerated in Ambleteuse in northern France, and the African St Adrian, Abbot of Canterbury († 710). The second see in England was also in Kent, at

Rochester, dedicated to the Apostle Andrew. Its first bishop was the future archbishop St Justus († 627), its second St Paulinus († 644), who is considered to be the town's patron saint, despite the fact that he later became the first Bishop of York. (The town of St Paul's Cray in Kent is named after him). The third bishop, the first English one, was St Ithamar († 660), who took the name of St Aaron's son in the Old Testament.

St Ethelbert's grand-daughter, St Eanswythe (pronounced Inswith, *c.* 640), founded the first English convent, in Folkestone. Unfortunately nothing remains of this through coastal erosion, but part of her relics survive at her church in Folkestone to this day. However, after being widowed, St Ethelbert's daughter, Eanswythe's mother St Ethelburgh († 647), also became a nun and founded a convent at Lyminge, just a few miles from Folkestone. The second great centre of holiness in Kent must be Minster-in-Thanet, the former island on the north-eastern tip of Kent. This convent was founded by St Deusdedit († 664), the first English Archbishop.

The royal St Ermenburgh († *c.* 700) was the first abbess. She was the mother of three nuns, Saints Mildred (who succeeded her mother as abbess and is also the patroness of the small town of Tenterden in southern Kent, reposing after *c.* 732), Milburgh († 715), and Mildgyth († 676). They were all born on the royal estate in Eastry near Canterbury. Her sister, also a nun, was St Ermengyth († 680) and her younger brothers Sts Ethelbert and Ethelred. These latter were murdered in a family dynasty rivalry in Eastry, probably between 664 and 667, perhaps because they threatened the then King Egbert's reign. They were venerated as martyrs. The next abbess was St Edburgh († 751), who was highly educated.

Another 'minster' (= monastery) is Minster-in-Sheppey ('the isle of sheep'), an island in the north of Kent. This was founded by the widowed Queen of Kent, St Saxburgh (699). The first abbess was her daughter St Ermenhild († 703). There Saxburgh gathered 74 nuns before returning to her native East Anglia and becoming Abbess of Ely, later being succeeded by her daughter, St Ermenhild. Another early church with Continental architecture was at Reculver on the north-east coast. This is where St Berhtwald, the future archbishop († 731), was abbot. In the Viking raids in the ninth century a monk called St Ymar (830) was martyred here.

Conclusion

Today, shamefully, Kent has no permanent Orthodox church anywhere. A county of over one and a half million people without a permanent church and the liturgical cycle! As the historic centre of Orthodox Christianity in England, it most certainly should have one – in Canterbury, and a second elsewhere, in west Kent, perhaps in Tunbridge Wells, or possibly in the county town, Maidstone. Let us pray to the native saints of Kent, so many of them royal, who mainly all lived in the seventh and eighth centuries and whom we have listed above, that this injustice may be righted through the mercy of God and our repentance for sloth, and lack of foresight and pastoral care.

Questions & Answers

Are Catholics heretics or not?

I. D., Moscow

First of all, I do not think that we should spend time 'hunting for' heretics. We should hunt for sins in ourselves, not in others.

Here is an answer. Roman Catholicism is a heresy. However, you have to deal with Roman Catholics on an individual basis. Generally speaking, the simpler they are, the less likely they are to be heretics. Ask them simply questions like: Do you believe in God the Holy Trinity? Do you believe that Christ is True God and True Man? Do you believe that He sent us the Holy Spirit Who proceeds from His Father? Do you believe that Christ is the Head of the Church? Do you believe in the Resurrection of Christ? Do you believe in the Ever-Virginity of the Mother of God? Do you believe in Heaven and Hell? Most will say yes to all these questions, therefore they are not heretics.

Can a baby be baptized before the 40 day period after birth?

E. V., Colchester

Yes, of course. The number 40 is only symbolic. For example, the Tsarevich Alexey was baptized only twenty days after his birth.

Why do monks and nuns often have such unusual names?

F. D., Colchester

True, you will find monks called Isaiah, Serapion or Theopempt, nuns called Deborah, Sephora or Seraphima, names very rare among laypeople. Why? Firstly, because some of these names are those of the Desert Fathers and so monastic, but secondly because we should try and honour all the names in the Church calendar. If someone does not have the unpopular name, who will, if not monks and nuns?

I have a bad habit of saying 'Oh my God'. What can I do about it?

J. T., Felixstowe

We do not take the Lord's name in vain. It is a sin. Replace it with: 'Oh my Goodness' or 'Oh my Word'. Even better is 'Oh dear'.

I thought that you had Church divorce in the Orthodox Church, but a priest has told me that it does not exist. Can you explain?

O. L., Norwich

Technically this is correct. We do not have Church divorce, but the Church does recognize that a marriage has ended (because of the adultery or absence of one of the parties and so their refusal or inability to consummate the marriage) and so a second marriage is possible. This is a parallel to the death of one of the parties, when a second marriage is also possible.

What, spiritually, is health and safety?

D. K., Bury St Edmunds

It is the attempt to stop people using their common sense, being responsible, thinking for themselves, so becoming slaves and zombies of the State.

Is a priest allowed to wear sandals when celebrating?

G. L., Brussels

I am sure that there is no canon against this! I think that what is important is being dressed in such a way that people are not distracted by the priest's appearance, but are concentrating on Christ Whose power should come through the priest, not on some personality. We should always avoid unnecessary distractions, the priest should be as anonymous as possible when celebrating. How can we pray if we are distracted: that is why people in church should always be dressed modestly. I am fairly sure that my bishop would not approve of me wearing sandals if I were celebrating.

In the XXX Local Church, to which I belong, it is normal for priests to demand money for the slightest act. This scandalous activity has led some of my friends to become Roman Catholics, as in the Gospels it says 'freely have you received, freely give', referring to the sacrament of ordination. What would you say about this scand-alous situation?

D. S, Ipswich

The problem in the Local Church to which you refer is that at least half of the bishops are simoniacs, charging between $5,000 and $20,000 for ordinations and appointments to parishes. The richer the parish, the more they charge. Only when these bishops have been defrocked will this scandal stop because they set the example to the priests. They also charge for awards like 'protopresbyter'. As they say, 'a fish rots from the head'. It is little consolation, but this is not the only Local Church where this happens. In another Local Church the charge for an episcopal consecration in 1991 was $20,000 (this happened in France). I have no idea what the charge is now. I have come across one case each of simony also in the Serbian Church (that of an Englishman in the 1980s), in the Church of Jerusalem and in the Russian Church (in Moscow), but I cannot say that it is as widespread as in your Local Church and the other one I mentioned.

Which of the seven jurisdictions in the Diaspora do you think will come to dominate in generations to come?

H. P., Norwich

Without a shadow of a doubt I can confidently predict that it will be the jurisdiction that is the least phyletist (racist). Only such a jurisdiction can provide spiritual food for all comers. However, I must say that phyletism also includes Anglican

Establishment phyletism. I know of two groups largely composed of ex-Anglicans in which some preach English racism. Having failed to integrate the spirit of Orthodoxy, they then have the effrontery to condemn anyone who is really Orthodox, but not English!

I find it sad in particular that the Greek Thyateira diocese has not learned from crass Russian mis-takes which meant that the Russian groups largely died out, or rather committed suicide, in the 70s and 80s. Now the same mistake is being made by Thyateira which is in its turn dying out.

Do you have any particular regrets about the situation of Orthodox in the UK?

J. W., London

I regret greatly that the Church has been dominated for decades by academics and theoreticians of 'cerebral Orthodoxy' (a Parisian disease), rather than practical, creative people. I regret this because it explains why Orthodox infrastructure is so hopelessly weak. Take Cambridge for example, where they have an institute for the ecumenical (!) study (!) of Orthodoxy (!), but no church of their own! What would St Gregory Palamas have said!

Given that you cannot put lamps in front of the deacons' doors on the iconostasis as they are in use, how can we venerate them?

A. M., Manchester

Simply by kissing the hands of the archangels (or deacons or prophets) portrayed on those doors. This is what clergy do as they enter the altar for the first time.

Can we venerate Saint Bernulf or Bernold of Utrecht (died 19 July 1054) as an Orthodox saint?

J. D., New York

In my view no, not necessarily because he lived so late, but because of his life.

Bernulf (or Bernold) was appointed by Emperor Conrad II, not a friend of the Church. A supporter of Conrad and his successor Henry III, Bernulf was an active 'reformer', that is he drew people away from Orthodoxy, aiding the Emperor. Bernulf was also a friend of the future Emperor Henry III, who succeeded Conrad in 1046, instigating the Western schism, and travelled on Henry's 1041 campaign against the Hungarians as a feudal lord.

Do you have Bible study in the Orthodox Church?

N. G., Norwich

No, we do not, we do not study the Bible, but try and live it. That is much more important. The only Bible study I have ever heard of was done by some ex-Protestants who had not yet become Orthodox.

How can you support the Russian Patriarch when he is involved in all sorts of scandals?

K. V., Paris

Involved in all sorts of scandals? Is he? Do you have proof? Or is this mere political propaganda? Supposing he is not, then you are in a very undesirable situation. He who believes slanders, will in turn suffer from them.

However, let us, for the sake of argument, suppose that some of these slanders are actually true. Then, so what? The Patriarch is not the Head of the Church, Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church. Patriarchs and bishops come and go, here today but gone tomorrow, but Christ is yesterday, today and forever. We are not Roman Catholic, believing in some papal infallibility or that the Pope is the Head of the Church.

Is it possible for a Catholic who loves the tradition of the first millennium to be Orthodox? After all, the Orthodox Church in Greece or Russia can only be heir to the first millennium Tradition of their own countries.

A. C., Nantes

In theory, yes, it is possible. After all, Roman Catholicism claims that it is heir to the first millennium West. However, the reality is different and you will find that such a view is only wishful thinking in the abstract. I have never met a Roman Catholic who, realizing the impurity of the second millennium West, from Aquinas to Pope Francis I, has been able to remain a Roman Catholic. Again and again, I have met Roman Catholic intellectuals, Catalan (Fr Joaquim of Barcelona), French (Fr Placide Deseille and Fr Elie Ragot), English (Fr Andrew Wade and Fr Gregory Wolfenden) and Hungarian (Fr Gabriel Patasci), all first pass over to the 'Eastern rite' and then actually join the Orthodox Church. Why? Because you cannot live

the Orthodox Faith outside the Orthodox Church, just as a newborn child cannot live without its mother's milk. It is very simple. The impurities of the second millennium are such that you cannot live an 'Old Catholicism', it no longer exists, either theologically or liturgically. It can only be an intellectual theory and that cannot feed the soul. For example, the 19th century Old Catholic movement itself has simply become Protestant with a Roman Catholic exterior.

As regards, say, the Russian Church only being heir to the Russian Tradition, that is not true, for we are drawn together by the same universal spirit of the saints, the Holy Spirit, the measure of our unity. The Russian Church has always celebrated the saints of the multinational Orthodox calendar, for example, Greek, Bulgarian, Serb, Syrian, (St Isaac of Nineveh), Arab (St John of Damascus), Egyptian (St Antony the Great), Georgian (St Tamara) and Roman, for instance, St Alexis the Man of God, St Tatiana of Rome or St Leo the Great, not to mention Gallic, like St Martin of Tours, St Julian of Le Mans, St John Cassian etc. These saints have always been in the Church calendar. To do otherwise would be to fall into the Greek heresy of phyletism (racism).

The introduction of previously unknown local Western saints into the Russian calendar – one example would be St Alban – is simply due to global communications and international life. There are now Russian and other Orthodox who actually live in the city of St Albans. The idea that they should not venerate the local saint in whose city they live, simply because this local saint was previously unknown to the Russian calendar, seems very strange, even racist, and certainly this goes against the catholicity of the Church.

I can give you an even more concrete example of people whom I know personally and I even signed forms for one of them to attend, that is, two Russian Orthodox children who attend St Edmunds Primary School in the city of Bury St Edmunds in Suffolk. Why would they not venerate this saint? We recognize the Orthodox spirit of the saint, even though their name may have once been unknown to us because we did not know the local saints before. There are lots of local saints in Russia who are not venerated outside one particular diocese, but that is not because other Russian Orthodox outside that diocese are racist. If we moved there, we would start venerating them as well.

Whom do you see as the patron-saint of Western Europe?

P. A., Turin

I think it has to be the fourth century European, the Roman soldier St Martin of Tours, born in what is now Hungary, living in Italy and becoming a great monastic founder and saintly bishop of Tours in Gaul. His famous act of social justice, giving half his cloak to a beggar (half only, because the other half belonged to the Roman Army) took place in Amiens.

What are we to think of Archbishop Theophan of Poltava's criticisms of the understanding of the Redemption and his emphasis on the prayer in Gethsemane as redemptive by Metr Antony of Kiev?

G. C., San Francisco

First, we must understand that in the 1920s Metr Antony of Kiev wrote his booklet on the Doctrine of the Redemption in order to object quite rightly to the wholesale adoption of the anthropomorphistic, heretical, feudal Western scholastic satisfaction theory by Russian academic theology. Invented by the scholastic Anselm of Canterbury, this portrayed God the Father as a primitive, wrathful feudal lord. In so doing, however, by reaction Metr Antony exaggerated the redemptive importance of the prayer in Gethsemane over the Cross on Golgotha.

In the 1920s the patristic theologian Archbishop Theophan corrected this over-reaction. After this the controversy was largely forgotten, especially given the humility of Metr Antony in not insisting on his sometimes badly expressed ideas that had turned out to be divisive, as the world of academic theology was not yet ready for them. St Justin (Popovich) would later give the balanced view of the Redemption, describing Christ's whole life as redemptive, including the prayer in Gethsemane, but all culminating only in the Cross. The recent part of the story is psychological, not theological.

Sixty years later, the late monk Herman of Platina, in revenge for being defrocked by ROCOR for extremely serious moral reasons, together with his few, rather naive convert disciples, revived the forgotten story. He decided to accuse Metr Antony of the heresy, invented by them, of 'stavroclasm', that is, the rejection of the Cross, taking quotations out of context and poor translations. In this way they thought they could discredit the whole of ROCOR. For this reason, modernists from the OCA and elsewhere, also with a grudge against ROCOR,

adopted the absurd slanders of monk Herman, misreading Metr Antony and quoting him out of context. This is all about self-justification, not about theology.

Their nonsense has nothing to do with Archbishop Theophan. It is true that the latter, a theologian and saintly bishop in exile in Bulgaria and later a recluse in France, did correct the 'misunderstanding' (as he correctly called it) of Metr Antony, re-emphasizing the central importance of the Cross in the Redemption. That Metr Antony never denied the centrality of the Cross is clear if you bother to read his writings and sermons given in Belgrade on the Sunday of the Veneration of the Cross and on the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, though these sermons are in Russian.

In other words, this whole nonsense of the invention of a new heresy of 'stavroclasm' is much ado about nothing. It has certainly nothing to do with the just criticisms of the sometimes awkwardly expressed and exaggerated views of Metr Antony. Interestingly, at the present time the relics of Archbishop Theophan are being transferred from the small village in western France where his life ended to Saint Petersburg. There he was rector of the Theological Academy and also the confessor of the Imperial Family, for which he was much slandered by the Rue Daru jurisdiction.

Why are the Western confessions obsessed with sexual morality? Catholics and many Anglicans both seem to think that the worst sin is divorce. Surely there are worse sins than sexual sins?

A. T., Colchester

Sexual sins can be very serious – for example, they can result in child murder (abortion) and, through the passion of jealousy, terrible violence, even murder of a former husband or wife. As for divorce, when children are involved, it can break their lives. Do not underestimate such sins. However, I take your point about obsession. Where does it come from?

Historically, there is firstly the fact of unnatural, obligatory clerical celibacy in Roman Catholicism, which led to puritanism and misogyny, the denigration of women and the cultivation of sexual guilt (not to mention sexual perversions). This puritanism was then taken up by Protestantism – let us not forget that Luther was a Roman Catholic monk who got married. I also see in this sex obsession moralism and moralism always comes in the absence of spirituality, whether in the Roman Catholic or Protestant context. Moralism is external result, spirituality is internal cause; genuine morality comes as the natural result of spirituality. You will find modernists very moralistic, for example, because they do not have spirituality. And I think that is the real reason for this obsession – lack of spirituality, as we could also see in the moralizing Protestant Sotir and Zoe movements in 20th century Greece.

How can you tell if someone is close to Orthodoxy and not just a nominal member of the Church?

K. P., Bury St Edmunds

There are many ways. For example, you can ask them if they keep the fasts, what they think of the filioque, of ecumenism, the new calendar and freemasonry, what do they think of the Russian Revolution, in English history what they think of the events of 1066. From their views you can tell a great deal, whether they are really Orthodox or just nominal.

I do not mention these criteria by chance. One of the great disappointments of my life took place at St Serge in 1979 when I met and heard the 'Professor of the History of the Western Church'. An academic of Russian origin, he did not keep the fasts, he thought the filioque was irrelevant, he was an enthusiastic ecumenist, lived on the new calendar, had freemasons among his closest friends (was he one himself?), approved of the Russian Revolution of February 1917 and, naturally for him, approved of the Bastard's invasion of England. All these things went together in him. Needless to say, I only attended the first of his courses, where I discovered this latter error, my discovery of the others later. Such is spiritual impurity – it affects every aspect of a world view and everyday life.

s there a difference between the translations of the Liturgy as made and used by various jurisdictions?

C. T., Pennsylvania

Unfortunately, yes, but only on the fringes of the Church. In the centre of the Church, there is broad agreement.

However, if we start on the right hand fringe of the old calendarists or 'traditionalists', as they like to call themselves, you will find a literalism and rigidity in their translations (rigidity is their characteristic, you can see it in their theology, all outside their sect will burn in hell, and in their

icons, like those of Kondoglou, which – quite untraditionally – he signs!). Such literalism introduces a word order that is unnatural to English (though not unnatural to 'Byzantine' Greek) or the translation of the Greek word for 'sing' as 'chant', which sounds very strange in English. It also rigidly insists on any number of deliberate archaisms (the 'eth' ending on the third person singular, for example, which was already archaic and not pronounced in the 17th century). This rigidity and literalism comes from fundamentalist converts to old calendarism, of whom many are former Protestants who are very insecure in their faith, which makes them over the top, 'more Orthodox than the Orthodox'. There has also been a very eccentric, 'traditionalist' translation made by a 'mystical' esoterist and former Theosophist and Hindu, but this has never caught on.

At the other end of the spectrum, you will find the 'street English' translations beloved by Greeks and Ukrainians and to some extent by Antiochians, which simply shows a lack of English culture and knowledge that liturgical English even exists! They actually use You rather than Thou! (Sadly, such modernism has crept into more recent OCA translations, which only use Thou for God, but not for the Mother of God and the saints, with the result that we end up with a sort of semi-modernism, which, alas!, also characterizes a lot of official OCA theology and iconography, betraying its Episcopalian, 'neither hot nor cold', origins). There has also been a very eccentric translation made by an extreme liberal homosexual Greek Orthodox priest. It was very modernistic and everybody disliked it. In contrast to the old calendarist translations, one can say that these translations are 'less Orthodox than the Orthodox'.

However, these are tiny minorities on the fringes; they do not concern the mass of Orthodox in the mainstream who use very similar translations.

There are various tendencies in Church life, from liberal to conservative. Are we always to try and stay in the middle, avoiding extremes?

O. L., London

Certainly, we should avoid extremes, but I do not share your analysis. Liberalism and conservatism are both inherently secular attitudes, therefore they are both to be avoided. And therefore, to take a middle of the road position is also inherently secular and smells of politics. We must belong to the Truth, that is, to the Church, not to the world. And what is the Church? The Church is the saints, they are what we must belong to. Only a 'Church' that no longer produces saints is dead. So we must belong to the Church in heaven, the Church triumphant, and bring it down to earth, and not belong to any secular current or 'ism'. (Note that conservatism and liberalism are isms. One old calendarist bishop, trying to justify himself, once wrote to me on this subject and pointed out that there is a French word 'christianisme', meaning Christianity'. However, he did not know French very well, for that word was an invention by 18th century secularists who were precisely trying to reduce 'chretiente' (the original French word for Christianity) to secularism).

IWhat is the norm for Romanian Orthodox – confession before communion?

L. A., Norwich

Most definitely, as for all Orthodox everywhere. Anything else is pure decadence of practice, not some 'alternative' tradition. The only Romanians who would dare take communion without confession are lapsed, Westernized and Catholicized. Real Romanian Orthodox are shocked by such practices in the Church of Constantinople and among untrained converts.

From AN INTRODUCTION TO ENGLISC ART

by Eadmund

NO, there is no spelling mistake in the title. I have used the word that our forefathers, the original Englishmen, used to describe themselves. The words 'Old English' are usually only applied to the language that they spoke, and the words 'Anglo-Saxon', which are usually given to the folk and their artifacts, seem to make it seem that they were in some way removed from us, instead of being blood of our blood and bone

of our bone. I will therefore continue to use the term Englisc to describe them. It is pronounced the same way as the modern word English, as long as one pronounces it as it is spelt, and not 'Inglish', as some persist in having it.

Why am I writing about Englisc art in an Orthodox magazine? Should I not save my words for some obscure scholarly journal? No, for the art of the Englisc was the original Christian art of England, made during the first millenium, when West was united with East in one Church. I shall hope to demonstrate that it is therefore as Orthodox in spirit as the Greek and Russian icons being offered for veneration in the West, both in Orthodox churches and the other Christian denominations. There is a Western tradition of icon-making – a tradition that we Englishmen ignore at our peril; for it is a native tradition, embedded in hearts and racial memories, which may grant us more easy access to the spiritual world. I do not mean by this in any way to decry the Russian or Greek icons. I simply offer our own icons, hitherto largely despised by many Western art critics, as being of equal worth.

It is necessary to understand, first, something of the spirit which moved the painters and sculptors[1] of these icons, and to do this we, as Orthodox or (as in my own case) travellers towards Orthodoxy, are in a particularly advantageous position. We have a privileged access to the original precepts, given out by the Universal Church, of which later Western artists became increasingly unaware, whether out of perversity or ignorance, as their church drifted further from the truth until now many have no belief at all.

As I understand it, the ideal of the icon painter is to portray his subjects as they exist in the spiritual world. This is manifestly impossible, because he is using pigments and brushes that are of the earthly world, which is subject to the corruption resulting from the fall from grace. The painter is therefore striving after a goal impossible of total realisation; but because he is going in the right direction, he stands some chance of coming close to the achievement of his goal. (The artists of the post-Orthodox West, with their constant changes of style, and their ceaseless new '-isms', are incapable of deciding what the goal is, or even if there should be a goal at all, let alone achieving it!)

Constantine Kalokyris, in his book *Orthodox Iconography*, writes of the iconographic style:

> The Church ... is primarily interested in the beauty of the spiritual world and, with the means which She possesses, ... seeks to be the interpreter of that world. But because this spiritual world is not visible but is expressed, the particular painting of the Church does not present Her themes but simply expresses them. Her transcendental content is not the physically beautiful or the naturally good ... . Those, therefore, who see and judge Byzantine iconography with the conceptions of classical antiquity regarding the beautiful will only confuse things. ... the purpose and the ideal of Byzantine iconography is the expression of the category of holiness, which, of course, is not made sensate by the physically beautiful, that is, is not by necessity united to this.

I have been studying Englisc art for some years, and I have found in it a unique expression of these ideals. David Talbot-Rice in his book *English Art 871–1100*, published by the Oxford University Press in 1952, has shown that the Englisc, through trade and pilgrimage, had a close relationship with Constantinople that has been frequently overlooked and underestimated. He it was who first set me on the spiritual path which has led me to my present position.

It is no accident that C. R. Dodwell wrote in *Anglo-Saxon Art – a New Perspective*[2] that the interior of an Anglo-Saxon church must have presented an appearance very like that of a present-day Russian Orthodox Church.

The Lindisfarne Gospels[2]

The original form of our art, which we brought over from our continental homeland

The 'cross-carpet page' from the beginning of the Gospel according to St. Luke, Lindisfarne Gospels f. 138v.

The full-page portrait of St John accompanied by his symbol, an eagle carrying a book ('imago aequilae') from the Lindisfarne Gospels *f. 209v.*

in the fifth century, was a wonderful, abstract art of swirling geometrical patterns, controlled by a rigid geometrical framework. Many folk, egged on by the media and the current fashion, fondly imagine that this art is Celtic. True, Celtic art drew its inspiration from a common fount, but Englisc art is nevertheless entirely Englisc, and in fact many examples of it have been mistakenly and wrongly claimed by the Celts as their own.

The *Lindisfarne Gospels*, for example, are the most superb example of the writer's and illuminator's art that have survived into these degenerate times, and can only inspire us to wonder what other examples must have perished. They were written and illuminated, single-handedly, in honour of St Cuthbert, by St Eadfrith of Lindisfarne[3], probably just before he was consecrated Bishop of Lindisfarne in 698, and are as Englisc as it is possible to be; and yet the Celts continually claim them for their own! *The Book of Kells*, which is definitely of lesser stature (I was privileged to see the two books exhibited in close proximity at the Royal Academy in the early '60s), may be claimed as Celtic with more justice, but even that is thought by some scholars to be Englisc in origin.

The construction of these abstract patterns calls for considerable self-discipline, and the constant painting of repetitive themes is a very therapeutic exercise for the soul, rather like the constant repetition of a prayer. I have found from experience that the intense concentration required in one area of the mind, controlling the pen and brush, together with the semi-

disengagement of another area, because the task has become familiar, can lead to a heightened spiritual awareness, and I am sure that the Englisc monks would have used this as a form of meditation.

The most splendid examples of these abstract patterns occur on the 'carpet pages'. These are a stylistic feature of early Gospel Books. They were inserted on the *verso* side at the beginning of each Gospel, and as well as being of exceptional beauty, they also formed a bookmark, so that a monk, gently flicking through the pages in order to find his place, would know whereabouts in the Gospels he was. When one realises that the parchment pages measure 13½ × 9¾ inches (only slightly larger than the magazine you are reading), and considers that the manuscript was written with quill pens, out of doors, without the benefit of magnifying glass or modern graphic equipment, one cannot but marvel at the fineness of the detail. The colours glow from the original pages like rare and precious jewellery. It is hard to believe that the manuscript was once lost overboard in a storm at sea, and only recovered when it was washed up on the beach some time later.

There are few examples of representational art in the *Lindisfarne Gospels*. Those that are there, the portraits of the Evangelists, although more realistic than those in the Book of Kells, do not represent in the way that the impressionistic tradition of the West would have us believe to be correct. Nevertheless, looked at from the Orthodox point of view, as spiritual portraits, they have great power and majesty, and are excellent examples of their kind.

Each evangelist appears seated, beneath his appropriate symbol. It will not be lost on the readers of this magazine that the titles are given in the Greek form *Agios*, not the Latin *Sanctus*, although these are Latin gospels. St Matthew and St Luke face to the right, St Mark to the left, and St John is shown full face. In the St Matthew picture the face of another person is shown peering round the curtain, holding a book. It has been suggested that this represents Jesus Christ. The book is held respectfully, in a fold of cloth, however, suggesting a Gospel book, and the nimbus which surrounds the head does not bear a cross, so I would humbly suggest that Blessed Jerome is a more likely candidate.[4]

Of the three profiled figures, only St Mark has a writing desk, which is represented in a highly stylized manner. The other two balance their book or scroll on their knee. St John is not represented as writing. He has a scroll on his knees, which he indicates with his right hand, but he stares out directly at the viewer of the picture. Although the figures are not strictly representational, none of their features are exaggerated in the manner of the later Greek and Russian icons, except the eyes. The large and penetrating eyes of St John engage the viewer's attention in a mysteriously compelling way, even in reproduction, and quickly become the sole focus of the picture. This representation, especially, I would submit as worthy of the status of icon.

But, wonderful though they are, artistically speaking the *Lindisfarne Gospels* are the finest example of a species doomed to extinction. One cannot improve upon perfection, and the fact that Bishop Eadfrith made a deliberate mistake in each of his carpet pages, lest God should think him, a mere mortal, presumptuous in creating a book that was in all respects perfect, speaks for itself.

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1 I trust I may be forgiven if I concentrate specifically on Manuscript Illumination. It is the branch of art that I know best. The reader should be aware that the Englisc sculptors, metalsmiths and jewellers were no less skilled, and although much of their work has also perished, either by accident or the design of evil men, many examples of it yet survive.

2 Unfortunately I cannot give a precise reference, as I borrowed the book, and noted the quotation without these details.

3 Readers interested in the subject of this article should read the book by Janet Backhouse entitled *The Lindisfarne Gospels*, published by Phaidon in association with the British Library, where Janet Backhouse is an Assistant Keeper of Manuscripts, and in whose hands the MS presently resides.

4 The *Lindisfarne Gospels* actually contains two versions of the Gospel Texts. The original, in Latin, was copied out by St Eadfrith, and the other, an Englisc translation, was added by Aldred, a priest, in the tenth century. In this article, we shall only refer to the original work of St Eadfrith.