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# Ecclesiastical History of the English People

**Bede** · *731* · *A. M. Sellar, 1907*

Britain, an island in the Atlantic, formerly called Albion, lies to the north-west, facing the coasts of Germany, France, and Spain. Bede's history of the English Church, in Sellar's revised English, is complete in five books, from the island's situation to his own day.

THE CENTRAL QUESTION

## How did the faith come to the English people, and what does a monk at Jarrow think worth remembering of kings, missionaries, and a church under God?

*"Britain, an island in the Atlantic, formerly called Albion,"*
Book I, chapter 1

The translation is A. M. Sellar (1907), a revised English of Bede, PG #38326, complete in five books, with preface, life, and notes. Quote the history, including the opening of Book I, not the editor's life of Bede as if it were the History. The preface to King Ceolwulf is in both witnesses. A Christian history of the English people, openly a work of the Church, excellent for a wide older band in this library. Teach the conversions, the conflicts, and the miracles as Bede writes them, with respect, not as a modern debunking or a mere national tale.

KEY CHARACTERS

**Bede**
*The servant of Christ and priest at Wearmouth and Jarrow, who writes and sends the History.*

**King Ceolwulf**
*The most glorious king to whom the preface is addressed.*

**Augustine of Canterbury, and the missionaries**
*The first mission from Rome, and those who follow.*

**the English kings and teachers**
*The rulers and the monastics in whose lives the church takes root.*

FORMERLY CALLED ALBION

> *"Britain, an island in the Atlantic, formerly called Albion,"*
> Book I, chapter 1

Grades 9–12
Read the full text free at classicslaunch.org.

01

### An Island Called Albion

BOOK I, CHAPTER 1

*Bede begins with the situation of Britain and Ireland, and of their ancient inhabitants. The island, formerly called Albion, lies in the Atlantic, facing the coasts of Europe.*

- The opening of Book I is exact in both witnesses: 'Britain, an island in the Atlantic, formerly called Albion,'
- The geography is the porch of a church history, not a stand-alone travel piece.
- Quote Sellar, not another English Bede.

> *"Britain, an island in the Atlantic, formerly called Albion,"*
> Book I, chapter 1

02

### A Preface to a King

THE PREFACE

*Bede, servant of Christ and priest, had already sent the history to the most glorious king Ceolwulf, and now sends it again to be transcribed. The work is offered for reading and judgment.*

- 'I formerly, at your request, most readily sent to you the Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation' is in both.
- The address is Christian and royal at once.
- Do not quote the editor's Life of Bede as the History.

03

### Missions, and a Church Planted

BOOKS I AND II

*Rome, Augustine of Canterbury, and the first conversions of English kings. The faith arrives as a mission, not as a timeless given.*

- Teach the mission as Bede tells it, with respect.
- Conflicts of custom and of calendar already belong to this history.
- A wide older band can read this with help.

04

### Kings, Councils, and a People

THE MIDDLE BOOKS

*Northumbria and the other kingdoms, teachers, abbesses, and a church taking root in English ground. Miracle and ordinary work stand side by side.*

- The miracles should be read as Bede writes them, not explained away in the map's voice.
- Women of the church (Hilda and others) are part of the history, not an appendix.
- Keep the kingdoms distinct.

05

### Five Books, to Bede's Day

BOOK V AND THE CLOSE

*The hosted text is complete in five books, down to Bede's own time, with a last accounting of the writer's life and works in the History itself. Notes and the editor's life are not the five books.*

- Sellar 1907, PG #38326, five books complete.
- A Christian ecclesiastical history, for a wide older band.
- Quote stretches that appear in both witnesses, from the History and its preface.

A Church Planted · An English People · Kings and Missionaries · A Monk's Memory · An Island

## What to watch for as you read

GRADES 9–12

1. The translation is A. M. Sellar (1907), Project Gutenberg #38326, complete in five books, with preface, a life of Bede, and notes. Quote the History, including "Britain, an island in the Atlantic, formerly called Albion," and the preface to King Ceolwulf. Do not quote the editor's Life of Bede or the notes as if they were the History.
2. A Christian ecclesiastical history of the English people, excellent for a wide older band. Teach conversions, conflicts, and miracles as Bede writes them, with respect, not as a modern debunking or a mere national tale.
3. Quote stretches that appear in both the Gutenberg text and the site EPUB.

**Quotations** are verbatim from the A. M. Sellar, 1907, Project Gutenberg #38326, the public-domain text hosted at classicslaunch.org/works/bede-ecclesiastical-history/. Citations give book and chapter (or canto and line) so every line can be checked.