

WARNING CONCERNING COPYRIGHT RESTRICTIONS

The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, U.S. Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted material.

Under certain conditions specified in the law, libraries and archives are authorized to furnish a photocopy or other reproduction. One of these specified conditions is that the photocopy or reproduction is not to be used for any purpose other than private study, scholarship, or research. If electronic transmission of reserve material is used for purposes in excess of what constitutes "fair use," that user may be liable for copyright infringement.

No further Transmission of this material is permitted.

insert citation here:

Bede, auth., & McClure and Rollins, eds.
Chapters 9-14
Ecclesiastical History of the English People, 84-98 (1999).

OXFORD WORLD'S CLASSICS

BEDE

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

Edited with an Introduction and Notes by

JUDITH McCLURE

and

ROGER COLLINS

FAIRFIELD UNIVERSITY
LIBRARY

JAN 28 2004

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

rought
over 700
ia to the
available

ained
Greene,
of reading.
p and
id poetry,
perceptive
meet the

privilege of consecrating bishops as occasion demands and as the Lord in his mercy guides you: so that the gospel of Christ may be spread abroad by the preaching of many among all those peoples who are not yet converted. And, my brother, see to it that with unimpaired integrity of heart you preserve what you have received through the favour of the apostolic see, remembering the significance of this honourable vestment which you have been given to wear on your shoulders. Seek God's mercy and study to show yourself such that, before the tribunal of the great Judge who is to come, you may display this honour which has been granted you, not only without stain or guilt, but also enriched by your reward of souls converted. May God keep you safe, most beloved brother.

CHAPTER 9

AT this time the Northumbrian race, that is the English race which dwelt north of the river Humber, together with their king Edwin,* also accepted the word of faith through the preaching of Paulinus already mentioned. The king's earthly power had increased as an augury that he was to become a believer and have a share in the heavenly kingdom. So, like no other English king before him, he held under his sway the whole realm of Britain, not only English kingdoms but those ruled over by the Britons as well. He even brought the islands of Anglesey and Man under his power as we have said before. The former of these, which is to the south, is larger in size and more fruitful, containing 960 hides* according to the English way of reckoning, while the latter has more than 300.

The occasion of the conversion of this race was that Edwin became related* to the kings of Kent, having married King Æthelberht's daughter Æthelburh, who was also called Tate. When he first sent ambassadors to ask her in marriage from her brother Eadbald, who was then king of Kent, the answer was that it was not lawful for a Christian maiden to be given in marriage to a heathen for fear that the faith and mysteries of the heavenly King might be profaned by a union with a king who was an utter stranger to the worship of the true God. When Edwin heard the messengers' reply he promised that he would put no obstacles of any kind in the way of the Christian

worship which the maiden practised; on the other hand, he would allow her and all who came with her, men and women, priests or retainers, to follow the faith and worship of their religion after the Christian manner; nor did he deny the possibility that he might accept the same religion himself if, on examination, it was judged by his wise men to be a holier worship and more worthy of God.

Thereupon the maiden was betrothed and sent to Edwin and, in accordance with the agreement, Paulinus, a man beloved of God, was consecrated bishop to accompany her and to make sure by daily instruction and the celebration of the heavenly sacraments that she and her companions were not polluted by contact with the heathen.

Paulinus was consecrated bishop by Archbishop Justus, on 21 July in the year of our Lord 625, and so in the princess's train he came to Edwin's court, outwardly bringing her to her marriage according to the flesh. But more truly his whole heart was set on calling the people to whom he was coming to the knowledge of the truth; his desire was to present it, in the words of the apostle, as a pure virgin to be espoused to one husband, even Christ. On his arrival in the kingdom he set vigorously to work, not only, with the Lord's help, to prevent those who had come with him from lapsing from the faith, but also to convert some of the heathen, if he could, to grace and faith by his preaching. But although he toiled hard and long in preaching the word, yet as the apostle says, 'The god of this world blinded the minds of them that believed not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ should shine unto them.'

The following year there came to the kingdom an assassin whose name was Eomer, who had been sent by Cwichelm,* king of the West Saxons, hoping to deprive King Edwin of his kingdom and his life. He carried a short sword, double-edged and smeared with poison, to ensure that if the sword wound was not enough to kill the king, the deadly poison would do its work. He came on Easter Day to the king's hall which then stood by the river Derwent. He entered the hall on the pretence of delivering a message from his lord, and while the cunning rascal was expounding his pretended mission, he suddenly leapt up, drew the sword from beneath his cloak,

and made a rush at the king. Lilla, a most devoted thegn,* saw this, but not having a shield in his hand to protect the king from death, he quickly interposed his own body to receive the blow. His foe thrust the weapon with such force that he killed the thegn and wounded the king as well through his dead body. Swords were drawn and the assassin was at once attacked from every quarter, but in the tumult he slew with his hideous weapon yet another of the king's retainers named Forthhere.

On the same night, the holy night of Easter Day, the queen had borne the king a daughter named Eanflæd. The king, in the presence of Bishop Paulinus, gave thanks to his gods for the birth of his daughter; but the bishop, on the other hand, began to thank the Lord Christ and to tell the king that it was in answer to his prayers to God that the queen had been safely delivered of a child, and without great pain. The king was delighted with his words, and promised that if God would grant him life, and victory over the king who had sent the assassin who wounded him, he would renounce his idols and serve Christ; and as a pledge that he would keep his word, he gave his infant daughter to Bishop Paulinus to be consecrated to Christ. She was baptized on the holy day of Pentecost, the first of the Northumbrian race to be baptized, together with eleven others of his household.

When in due course the king had been healed of his wound, he summoned his army and marched against the West Saxons. During the course of the campaign he either slew all whom he discovered to have plotted his death or forced them to surrender. So he returned victorious to his own country; but he was unwilling to accept the mysteries of the Christian faith at once and without consideration, even though he no longer worshipped idols after he had promised that he would serve Christ. But first he made it his business, as opportunity occurred, to learn the faith systematically from the venerable Bishop Paulinus, and then to consult with the counsellors whom he considered the wisest, as to what they thought he ought to do. He himself being a man of great natural sagacity would often sit alone for long periods in silence, but in his innermost thoughts he was deliberating

with himself as to what he ought to do and which religion he should adhere to.

CHAPTER 10

AT that time he received a letter* from Boniface, bishop of the apostolic see, exhorting him to accept the faith. It ran as follows:

Copy of the letter of the most blessed and apostolic pope of the Church of the city of Rome, Boniface, addressed to the most illustrious Edwin, king of the English.

To Edwin, the illustrious king of the English, Bishop Boniface, servant of the servants of God.

Human speech can never explain the power of the most high God, consisting as it does in its own invisible, unsearchable, and eternal greatness, so that no wisdom can comprehend or express how great it is. Yet, in His goodness, He opens the doors of the heart so that He Himself may enter, and by His secret inspiration pours into the human heart a revelation of Himself. So we have undertaken to extend our pastoral responsibilities so far as to declare to you the fullness of the Christian faith, so that we may bring to your notice the Gospel of Christ, which our Saviour has bidden us preach to all the nations, and so that the means of salvation may be put before you. Thus the goodness of the Divine Majesty who, by his word of command alone, made and created all things, both heaven and earth, the sea and all that is in them, ordaining the orders in which they subsist, and who, by the counsel of the co-eternal Word in the unity of the Holy Spirit, has made man in His own image and likeness, fashioning him out of clay, has also granted him the high privilege and distinction of placing him over all things, so that if he keeps within the bounds of God's commands, he may be granted eternal life. This God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, an undivided Trinity, is adored and worshipped through faith and confession unto salvation by all the human race, from the rising to the setting of the sun, as the Maker of all things and its own Creator. To Him also the greatest empires and the powers of the world are subject, because it is by His disposition that all rule is bestowed. It has pleased Him therefore, in His mercy and loving-kindness towards all His creation to melt, by the fire of His Holy Spirit, the frozen hearts of races even in the far corners of the earth to knowledge of Himself, and that in a marvellous manner.

We suppose that your Majesty is fully aware of what has been accomplished by the mercy of the Redeemer in the enlightenment of our illustrious son King Eadbald and the nations which are subject to him, for your lands are close to one another. We confidently trust that, through the mercy of heaven, this wonderful gift will also be conferred upon you and more especially as we learn that your illustrious consort, who is indeed one flesh with you, has been enlightened by the gift of eternal life through the regeneration of holy baptism. So we have undertaken in this letter to exhort your Majesty with all affection and deepest love, to hate idols and idol worship, to spurn their foolish shrines and the deceitful flatteries of their soothsaying, and to believe in God the Father Almighty and in his Son Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, so that you may be freed from the devil's fetters and, by the power of the holy and undivided Trinity, become a partaker of eternal life.

The great guilt of those who cling to the pernicious superstitions of idolatrous worship is seen in the damnable form of their gods. Of these the psalmist says, 'All the gods of the nations are devils; but the Lord made the heavens.' And again, 'Eyes have they but they see not; they have ears but they hear not; noses have they but they smell not; they have hands but they handle not; feet have they but they walk not; and those who put their trust in them therefore become like them.' How can they have power to help anyone, when they are made from corruptible material by the hands of your own servants and subjects and, by means of such human art, you have provided them with the inanimate semblance of the human form? They cannot walk unless you move them, but are like a stone fixed in one place, and, being so constructed, have no understanding, are utterly insensible, and so have no power to harm or help. We cannot understand in any way how you can be so deluded as to worship and follow those gods to whom you yourselves have given the likeness of the human form.

So you should take upon you the sign of the holy cross, by which the human race has been redeemed, and cast out of your hearts the accursed wiles and cunning of the devil, who is the jealous foe of the works of God's goodness. Then set your hand vigorously to the task of breaking and destroying the gods which up till now you have fashioned from material substances. In fact the very destruction and decay of those things which have never had the breath of life nor could by any means acquire understanding from their makers, should show you clearly the worthless nature of what you have worshipped up to now. You may certainly consider yourselves who have received the breath of life from the Lord to be better made than they. For

Almighty God has appointed your descent through many ages and countless generations, from the first man he created. So come to the knowledge of Him who created you and breathed into you the breath of life, who sent His only-begotten Son for your redemption and to save you from original sin, so that He might deliver you from the power of the devil's perversity and wickedness, and bestow heavenly rewards upon you.

Accept the teaching of the preachers and the gospel of God which they proclaim to you, so that, as we have often said, you may believe in God the Father Almighty and in Jesus Christ His Son and the Holy Spirit, the indivisible Trinity. Then when you have put to flight devilish thoughts and driven from you the temptations of the venomous and deceitful foe, having been born again by water and the Holy Spirit, may you through his bountiful aid dwell with Him in whom you have believed, in the splendour of eternal glory.

We are sending you the blessing of your protector, St Peter, chief of the apostles, in the form of a robe embroidered with gold and a garment from Ancyra, asking your Majesty to accept these gifts in the same spirit of goodwill as that in which they were sent by us.

CHAPTER 11

THE Pope also sent a letter to King Edwin's consort Æthelburh to this effect:

Copy of the letter of the most blessed and apostolic pope of the church of the city of Rome, Boniface, addressed to Æthelburh, King Edwin's queen.

To his daughter the most illustrious lady, Queen Æthelburh, Bishop Boniface, servant of the servants of God.

Our Redeemer, in His goodness, has here furnished providential means of salvation for the human race, freeing us from the bonds of enslavement to the devil, by shedding His precious blood: so that when He had made his name known in various ways to the Gentiles, they might acknowledge their Creator by accepting the mystery of the Christian faith. And this has plainly been conferred on your Majesty's own soul, by the gift of God in your mystical purification and regeneration. Our heart has been greatly rejoiced by the goodness and bounty of the Lord, because He has deigned to kindle by your conversion the spark of orthodox religion; that thereby He could the more easily inflame with His love not only the

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER 12

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

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

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

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

on against the
received him
en Æthelfrith
and was living
iners, he sent
money to put
a second and
and further
despised his
his threats or
and promised
messengers. A
and entered his
the first hour
what the king
e willing I will
guide you to a
ll ever be able
our goodwill,
to be the first
great king; he
owards me so
d than at the
w to fly seeing
roughout all
snares of my
mained alone
his mind in a
to turn.

and 'consumed
ght, he saw a
ere strange
he was not a
greeted him,
watchful and
asleep. Edwin
her he passed
'Do not think
sleeplessness

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER 13

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER 14

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER 15

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