

ORTHODOX ENGLAND

In this issue:

Denormanization

*God with us:
St Bede the Venerable*

Saint Guthlac

*On Orthodox Life in Western Countries
'The Scourge and the Showbands'*

and much more . . .

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Editorial: DENORMANIZATION

Foreword

OVER the last thirty years or so, we have often spoken of lifting the curse of Normanization from England and English life. Indeed, it was we who first coined the word 'Denormanization' to describe this process. But what exactly does it mean?

First of all, Denormanization means returning to communion with the Universal Orthodox Church, with which our distant English ancestors were in communion. This was before the Normans cut off our more recent ancestors from Her and then began assaulting Her, whether here, in southern Italy, in Wales and Scotland, or in the Near East during the Crusades and then in Ireland. Hence, our interest in the Church history of the early English period and its saints. Hence, above all, our interest in the living reality of the Orthodox Church of today's world.

This is why, since 1974, we have been trying to 'deconstruct' what passes for English. This has been in order to discover and explain the real sense of Englishness, which lies beneath historical falsity and secular manipulation, constantly appealing for the return to the faith and spiritual unity of the first millennium. Any who read our booklet *Orthodox Christianity and the Old English Church* (1988) will see this communion with the Church catalogued. And the book *The Hallowing of England* (1994) lists the saints of England. This is the sense of our article 'Why I am an Old English Christian', published in *Orthodox Christianity and the English Tradition* (1995), which includes lives of many of the English saints. This was taken up in *The Rebirth of England and English* (1996) and *The Lighted Way* (1999). Finally, this is the meaning of our participation in the media (Channel 4 and BBC Radio 4), the booklet *The Story of St Felix* (2000), our contribution to *Our Englishness* (2000) and the last ten years of the journal *Orthodox England*, its website and, above all, the existence of the Orthodox parish here.

Orthodox Christianity and Englishness

Once in communion with the Church, we start living an Orthodox Christian way of life, living Orthodox values. This means separating ourselves from mentalities foreign to the Church, which, layer by historical layer, have been foisted on

English culture and have overlaid English life over the last millennium. Although some of these mentalities are said to be 'English', they are foreign to the Church. Therefore, they are also foreign to true Englishness, Orthodox Englishness, and they cannot be baptized into the Church. The Church must always come first and what are thought of as 'national characteristics' must come second (Matt 6, 33).

As examples of mentalities foreign to the Church, negative 'national characteristics', we can suggest thinking oneself superior to other races, arrogance, xenophobia, meddling in other people's affairs; boringness and petty-mindedness, hypocrisy, blind obedience to rules, rational but heartless logic, cynicism, being calculating and mean with money, property and other people; reading tabloid newspapers, getting drunk on Saturday nights, getting up late on Sunday mornings

If you look at such negative aspects, often absurdly called 'traditions', they are mainly recent. Some do not go back beyond the 1960s, only a few of them go back beyond the Victorian Age and hardly any go back beyond Protestantism. These characteristics are behind the crimes committed in the name of the British Empire. In any case, many of them have always been rejected by many English people, Orthodox or not, for the English were themselves always the first victims of such mentalities¹.

On the other hand, there are many values, which are said to be English, which can be baptised into the Church. For example, on the positive side, the love of (genuine) tradition, patriotism, the love of the countryside and gardens, loyalty, sobriety, discretion, good taste, gentle humour, reserve and politeness are all values which gel very well with the Church. Of course, all these potentially positive characteristics can be deformed to become negative. Thus, we can have respect for false traditions, patriotism can be distorted into nationalism, the love of nature can turn into a sentimental, pagan worship of nature and animals, reserve can mean refusing to go to confession, politeness can turn into hypocrisy etc.

False Englishness

There are many traps in Denormanization. The first is the cultivation of a false Englishness – false

because it is not in accordance with the Gospel, Apostolic and Patristic teaching of Orthodox Christianity.

Thus, on the one hand, one of the growing pains of 'English Orthodoxy' (as a term, I would prefer 'Orthodox Englishness') is the temptation of not seeking the Kingdom first and putting a false (that is, secular) form of 'Englishness' first, above the Church. For instance, this was the temptation of one group, which refused to live with other Orthodox, including English people. Other Orthodox were rejected, because they wished to follow the Orthodox Tradition and not water it down, that is, to Protestantize it, for their own convenience. When there were few who wished to follow the Tradition, as in the 1970s and 1980s, those few were expelled from their Diocese. When there were many who wished to follow the Tradition, as recently, the group concerned separated from them and left its own chosen Mother-Church in a teenage rebellion.

If you follow this line of putting your modern culture above the Church, then you will not end up with Orthodoxy. You will end up with some form of Eastern-rite Anglicanism, 'Anglicanism with Byzantine furniture'. This has either High Church, Low Church or else Broad Church features. In other words, it may have either ritualistic Anglo-Catholic traits and a tendency for vagantes, or moralistic Evangelical features, or else modernistic, neo-calendarist characteristics. All of these deformations exist here today in the early, childish stages of the growth of 'English Orthodoxy'. Indeed, these deformations can even be linked with tendencies inside particular jurisdictions.

Ironically, those who fall into one, or all, of these three traps reject much that is actually English. For example, ritualism is not historically a part of Englishness (apart from on semi-military secular parades and Royal occasions – inventions, like Anglo-Catholicism itself, of Victorian pomp). And yet so many converts can get stuck into trying to resurrect dead rites from the past, when there is perhaps no need for them, because we have living rites from the present, which already have an Orthodox spirit. Our Faith is not in rites. Interest in rites is like the interest of a thirsty man in a glass, when what should interest him is the water inside the glass. Content must always prevail over form.

Similarly, spiritless moralism was certainly not part of English life until Victorian times (read about England in the eighteenth century or in the Middle Ages). Moreover, it has been entirely rejected by the mass of English people in recent decades, who

became fed up with Evangelical moralism, the 'Bible thumping' of 'Jesus people', being rammed down their throats. Now, by way of reaction, we see the opposite extreme and the present cult in this country seems to be not moralism, but 'immoralism' and 'amoralism'.

As for anti-Tradition modernism, it is particularly astounding to see English Orthodox rejecting the treasury of the liturgical language of the King James Bible, the best that the English language and culture has to offer the Church. In the same spirit, as regards the calendar question, surely, if we have a choice, it is preferable to be on the same calendar as the vast majority of Orthodox. This is the calendar of the Fathers and the Councils, that of the New Martyrs and Confessors, as well as that of our early English forebears, rather than on a calendar which is a recent invention of the Non-Orthodox, secular world.

False Orthodoxy

On the other hand, at the other extreme, there is the danger not of putting a false Englishness first, but putting a false Orthodoxy first. Thus, you can find those who pretend to be something that they are not – Greek, Russian etc and form 'ethnic', 'convert' ghettos. There, people cannot get on with the vast majority of other Orthodox, including other English Orthodox, with whom they refuse to be in communion, because they alone are 'True Orthodox'. In reality, this is false Orthodoxy. This happens whenever converts cut themselves off from Orthodox realities and instead of integrating, remain exactly what they call themselves – 'converts' and so, in one sense or other, on the fringes of the Church.

Tragically, these are actually also refusing 'Englishness', in favour of a Protestant-type sectarianism. This means a false worship of 'the typikon' and 'the canons', which stems from that blind Protestant obedience to rules, to their craze for quoting misunderstood chapter and verse. It also leads to pseudo-Greekness, 'Byzantinism', pseudo-Russianness, stemming from a rootless and unknown Englishlessness. You will generally find no actual Greeks and Russian among them, because they find such disincarnate fantasies so strange. This is, literally, 'convert Orthodoxy', not Orthodoxy. Anyone who thinks of themselves as 'a convert' is not actually Orthodox. It is a sure sign.

Usually, such people have brought this sectarian mentality with them into the Church,

often from High Church Anglicanism. This latter naturally has a siege mentality. It can be divisive, litigious and polemical, because, by its very nature, it is a minority form of imitation Catholicism in an overwhelmingly Protestant State institution. It is this mentality which is brought into the Orthodox Church.

Afterword

To conclude, Denormanization means balance and moderation, truth and mercy (*akrivia* and *oikonomia*), making reality checks with other Orthodox, whatever their nationality. It means faithfulness to the Tradition of the Church, consultation with one's bishop wherever possible, if not, with other Orthodox confessors.

It means saying our morning and evening prayers, attending the services, going to the vigils, taking confession and communion regularly. It means reading the Gospels and the Lives of the Saints, discovering the contemporary righteous, the saints of the future.

It means not insisting on having our own way, using the language or languages of the people present in Church. And when using English, it means using the best that we can save from our own culture, in terms of liturgical language and

singing, and of the veneration of local saints through their icons and services to them. In brief, Denormanization simply means being genuinely Orthodox and genuinely English, living the Orthodox Christian Faith in the English context in which the Lord has placed us.

Fr Andrew

1. Among these crimes, we cannot fail to mention: the heartless exploitation of the enslaved English peasantry and then the theft of their land during the Enclosures, which in fact was a form of collectivization; the Protestant massacres in Ireland in which tens of thousands died; the Scottish Highland 'clearances' (nowadays called 'ethnic cleansing') of the eighteenth century, mainly carried out by German troops; the incompetence and contempt which allowed the Irish potato famine to take place; the persecution of the Welsh language and culture; the massacres of native peoples in Canada and Australia; the ruthless exploitation and asset-stripping of colonies in Africa and Asia; the pro-Muslim Crimean War; the Opium Wars; the concentration camps of the Boer War in which thousands of Boer women and children died; the errors committed during the First and Second Wars - notably from 1945 the handing over of many tens of thousands of Russians to be massacred by Stalin; the concentration camps and many deaths in Kenya in the 1950s; and such recent crimes as the bombing of Serbia and the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, for which the recent dictatorial British government came to be so hated by its people.

From the Fathers: BEDE THE VENERABLE

God with us

IN response to the desires of those who seek good, by His many appearances the Lord wished to show that He is everywhere present in His divine nature. Thus, He appeared at the tomb to those who mourned and He will be present with us in our sadness at His absence. He came to meet those going home from the tomb, so that they might proclaim the joy of His resurrection. He will surely also be present with us, when we proclaim to our neighbours the joy of what we know to be true.

He revealed himself in the breaking of bread to those who invited Him into their home, thinking Him to be a stranger. He will also be present with us, when we generously give what we can to strangers and the poor. And He will certainly be with us when, in the breaking of bread, we share in His body, our living bread, with a pure and simple conscience.



ST GUTHLAC

'Be Not Afraid, But be Resolute, For God is Your Help'.

St Guthlac, The English St Antony the Great

St Guthlac of Crowland, the English St Antony the Great, was born in c. 673 and reposed on the Wednesday after Easter in 714. This was at Crowland (sometimes wrongly given as Croyland) near Peterborough on the River Welland in the Lincolnshire fens. Thus, unlike the Desert Fathers of Egypt, Guthlac was surrounded not by rock and sand, but by marsh and swamp, for he struggled in the then undrained fenlands of the eastern midlands, near the border with East Anglia.

Like some of the Desert Fathers, he had fallen from childhood grace and then led a dissolute life in his youth, as a kind of seventh-century gang-leader, only to be brought to profound repentance as a young man. His life recounts all the classic temptations of the hermit, and indeed of all Orthodox Christians, alternating between discouragement, despair and demonic attacks with their deluding flattery.

The Latin life was written by a monk called Felix at the request of King Alfwald of East Anglia. This was about a generation after St Guthlac's repose and Felix, by his name probably an East Anglian, used the eye-witness accounts of several of those who had known the saint. As a result, St Guthlac became the most popular of the English hermit-saints after St Cuthbert. At least nine churches were dedicated to the saint and an Old English Life, two Old English poems, later an English verse life and accounts in Latin were written and illustrations made. It seems that veneration for the saint began to fade only in the late thirteenth century, when new forms of mediæval pietism began to replace the old Orthodox Christian devotions.

To this day St Guthlac is commemorated among Orthodox on 11/24 April. Thus, his feast often falls during Lent, a season suitable for such a monastic saint, though in some years, also suitably, it falls just after Easter. In recent years an akathist has been written to the saint (see this site) and pilgrimages made to the place of his feats. It has long been our desire to make St Guthlac's life better known

in an accessible form. In this new and slightly free translation from the Old English, provided with notes, we hope that this desire has now been met.

The Life of St Guthlac

Chapter 1

DURING the reign of the famous King Ethelred of Mercia¹, there lived a Mercian nobleman called Pendwald. He came from the oldest and noblest family, known as the Iclings. He was very wealthy and at the height of his prosperity he desired to marry. From a multitude of girls, he chose the prettiest and from the noblest family, a girl called Tette.

They came together and by God's will, Tette was with child. When she was ready to give birth, a sign suddenly came down from heaven, clearly marking out the child with a seal. Revealed to many, this consisted of a hand of the most beautiful red colour coming down from heaven, holding a gold cross and pointing down in front of the door of the house where the child had been born. Everyone who saw it hurried to draw near to look at the sign more closely. Then the hand with the cross returned up into heaven.

Everyone who saw the sign bowed to the ground and prayed that God would explain the meaning of the sign, which had so suddenly been revealed to them. After their prayers, a woman came running quickly out of the house, where the child had been born and called to them: 'Be steadfast and take heart, for a man of future glory has been born here on earth'. When they heard this, they said that a divine sign that been revealed, because the child had been born there. Some of them said that the holy sign that had been revealed at his birth by divine dispensation signified that eternal bliss was a gift pre-ordained for the child. All were utterly amazed at the sign, and indeed, before the sun had set, it was known all over the land of the Middle Angles.

Chapter 2

About a week later, when the child had been brought to the holy bath of the baptismal font, he was named after his family and people – Guthlac.

This name seemed to be providential, for the learned say that the name consists of two words: the name Guthlac means 'the gift of struggle', because he not only endured many hardships in worldly labour, but also by conversion received the gift of eternal bliss with the victory of eternal life, saying with the apostle: 'Blessed is the man who endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him'².

After the child had been bathed in the bath of holy baptism, he was taken back to his father's home and cared for. When he was old enough to speak, he was not at all difficult or disobedient to his parents and those who cared for him, old or young. Neither did he engage in childish silliness, the idle chatter of the vulgar, or unseemly flattery or hypocrisy. Nor did he care about various birds and their singing, as is often the way of boys. Instead, he grew in intelligence, was cheerful in face, pure and clean in spirit and innocent in his ways. The light of spiritual brightness shone so brightly in him that all who saw him could see what would become of him.

With the passing of time, he grew stronger and began to think about the brave deeds of the heroes of old and the great men of the world³. As if he had woken up, his character changed. He gathered together a large band of friends and equals and took up arms. He wreaked his displeasure on his enemies, burned down their strongholds and ravaged their villages. He made great slaughter throughout the land, killing and stealing other people's property. For about nine years, Guthlac engaged in looting, straying amid the troubles of the world.

Now, one night after returning from an expedition, he was resting his weary limbs and turning many things over in his mind, when suddenly he was inspired with the fear of God and his heart was filled with spiritual love. He was so inspired with godly fear that he vowed to God that if He would spare him until the morning, he would become His servant.

When he woke up, he thought about the ancient kings of old, who had died wretchedly and miserably in this wicked life. He saw the great wealth which they had once owned all swiftly pass away and his own life daily hastening towards its end. With the darkness of night passed away and daylight come, he got up and crossed himself with the seal of Christ's cross. Then he asked his companions to find another leader for their company, confessing and telling them that he

wanted to be a servant of Christ. He had suddenly been divinely admonished and told to give the following order: A third of all he had taken should be returned to those whom he had taken it from.

When his companions heard these words, they were very surprised and very frightened of what they had heard. They all bowed to him and begged him never to do what he had said. However, he did not listen to them, desiring to follow through on the very things he had planned. The love of God burned so strongly within him that he scorned not only the world, but his parents' riches, his home and even his very companions and gave all of this up. He was twenty-four years old when he left all worldly pomp and put all his hope in Christ.

Thus, he went to the Monastery at Repton and there, under Abbess Elfrida⁴, received the mystic tonsure of the Apostle Peter⁵. After he had received the tonsure and taken up the monastic life, he refused all alcohol. On account of his abstinence, the monks at first hated him, but soon when they saw his purity of mind and the cleanness of his life, they all grew to love him⁶. He was large in appearance, clean in body, cheerful in disposition, handsome in face, gentle and modest in speech, patient and humble. The love of God always burned in his heart. Drawn to learning, he longed to learn the psalms. The fruitful heart of the blessed man was filled with the grace of God and the teaching of the best of God's masters. Thus, he was instructed in divine discipline, for two years learning psalms, hymns and prayers according to the order of the Church. He began to observe the good customs of those virtuous in that way of life: humility, obedience, patience, long-suffering and bodily continence. After living in this way in the monastery for some two years, he began to long for the wilderness and a hermit's cell. When he heard tell and learned about the anchorites of old who, in the name of God, had longed for the desert and hermits' cells, living their lives there, his heart was inspired by the grace of God and he longed for that too. Thus, a few days later, he asked permission from the servants of God, the elders, to leave.

Chapter 3

Now in Britain there is a huge area of fen or marshland, which begins around the River Granta, not far from the town called Grantchester⁷, and extends to the North Sea with many wide, lengthy meanders. There are immense swamps, dark stagnant water, muddy streams of running water, and many islands, reeds, hummocks and thickets.

When Guthlac of blessed memory heard of this great, uncultivated wilderness, he was supported by the help of God and at once went there by the most direct route. On arrival, he asked the local inhabitants where he could find a place to live in the wilderness. They told him a great deal about the vast extent of the wilderness. A man called Tatwine said that he knew of a certain particularly remote island, where many had often tried to live, but which none could endure. This was because of various horrors and fears and the solitude of the great wilderness, which made everyone flee from it. When the holy man heard these words, he at once asked Tatwine to show him the place. This he did immediately.

Getting into a boat, they travelled through the wild fenlands until they came to a place called Crowland. The area was very remote and situated in the middle of the wilderness of the above-mentioned fen. No-one had ever lived there before Blessed Guthlac arrived, because of the wretched spirits that lived there⁸ and very few knew of it except for Tatwine. Blessed Guthlac at once spurned the temptations of the wretched spirits and, strengthened by heavenly support, began to live alone amid the swampy thickets of the wilderness.

By Divine providence Guthlac arrived at the island on the feast of the Apostle Bartholomew (25 August), since he had sought the Apostle's help in everything to do with the hermitage⁹. He loved the remoteness of the place and vowed that he would serve God on that island all the days of his life. After he had been there for a few days, he



An impression of Saint Guthlac, holding an icon of St Bartholomew, arriving at Crowland with his two disciples in the Anglo-Saxon style, based on a mediæval MS.



A picture of the remaining Fenlands today

surveyed the area. He thought that he would go back to the monastery and greet the monks, because he had left without taking leave. Thus, at daylight the next morning, he returned to the monastery. He stayed with the monks there for ninety days. Finally taking leave of them, he returned to his beloved wilderness with two young disciples. God's champion was twenty-six years old when, endowed with heavenly grace, he first settled in the wilderness.

In order to protect himself from the attacks of the wicked spirits with spiritual arms, Guthlac immediately took up the shield of faith in the Holy Spirit, dressed himself in the armour of heavenly hope and put the helmet of pure thoughts on his head. He continually attacked and fought the wretched spirits with the arrows of the holy psalms. How we must wonder at the secret strength of our Lord and His merciful judgements. Who can speak of them all? Like the noble teacher of all the nations, the holy Apostle Paul, whom our Lord Almighty God had foreordained to preach the Gospel to His people, but who had before been a persecutor of His Holy Church and on the road to Damascus had been delivered from the dark errors of the Jewish faith by a heavenly voice, so Guthlac, of venerable memory, was led from the tribulations of this world to the struggle for eternal life.

Chapter 4. About the Holy Man and His Way of Life

I will now begin describing in order the life of Blessed Guthlac, just as I heard tell from those who knew of it, Wilfrid and Cissa.

On the island there was a large burial-mound, which treasure-hunters had previously dug up and broken into. On one side of the burial-mound there was a sort of large reservoir and by this Blessed Guthlac built a hut. As soon as he settled into the hermitage, he decided that he would wear

neither woollen nor linen clothing, but would live all the days of his life in garments of skin. From then on that is what he did. From the beginning of his life in the wilderness, his diet was so frugal that every day he ate nothing but barley-bread and water and that only after sunset.

One day, soon after he had started living in the wilderness, as he was singing his psalms in his accustomed manner and beginning his prayers, the ancient foe of mankind (who even as a roaring lion went about the grassy plain, widely scattering the poison of his temptations), scattering the power of his wickedness and the poison of his ferociousness in order to wound the hearts of men, suddenly, as if from a taut bow, planted the arrow of his temptation in the heart of Christ's athlete. The blessed man was wounded with the wretched spirit's poisoned arrow and his heart was greatly troubled about living alone in the wilderness in that way.

He continually thought about this, remembering his former sins and wickednesses, and how he had done greater and more enormous things than he imagined he could ever repent for. The devil's arrow had wounded him with despair. For three days Blessed Guthlac was wounded, so that he himself did not know where to turn his heart. It was only on the night following the third day that he stood up firmly to these doubting thoughts. With prophetic lips he sang and cried to God: 'In my distress I called upon the Lord and cried unto my God; he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, even unto his ears'¹⁰.

Soon afterwards, his faithful support, St Bartholomew, came to him. He did not appear to him while he was asleep, but Guthlac saw the apostle in angelic splendour while he was awake. From that moment on Blessed Guthlac was very joyful because of the heavenly visitor. Immediately his heart and mind were completely enlightened and he soon renounced his evil and irresolute thoughts. The heavenly visitor, St Bartholomew, comforted him, confirming him and strengthening him with words, commanding him not to doubt, but to be resolute, saying that he would be a help to him in all his troubles. When St Guthlac heard the words of his faithful friend, he was filled with spiritual bliss, confirmed and trusting steadfastly in God Himself.

Chapter 5

Once, as he was pondering his way of life and how he might live most acceptably to God, two

demons suddenly came to him, slipping down from the sky, speaking to him familiarly: 'We are acquainted with your life and we know about the steadfastness of your faith. We also know about your patient desire not to be defeated, inasmuch as we tested and tried you, when we sent our arms against you with manifold cunning. From now on we will trouble and annoy you no more. Not only will we not hinder you in what you wished to do before, but we will also tell you about all those who inhabited the desert of old and how they lived their lives.

'First Moses and Elijah fasted, then the Saviour of all the world fasted in the desert, next there were the famous monks who lived in the desert in Egypt. Through their abstinence they struck down and destroyed all vice in themselves. Therefore, if you want to wash away the sins that you have committed, afflict your body with abstinence, because inasmuch as you severely afflict yourself in the world, so afterwards you will be the more firmly strengthened in eternity, inasmuch as you endure more distress in this present life, afterwards you will receive so much more in the future, and when you fast in the world, then you will be raised up in God's eyes. Therefore your fasting must not



*An Icon of St Bartholomew,
Guthlac's favourite Saint*

be for two or three days, or every day, so that you should congratulate yourself on such very great abstinence, but you need a six-day fast to cleanse yourself. As God first fashioned and adorned the beauty of all the earth in six days and on the seventh rested, so it is fitting for you similarly to adorn the spirit with a six-day fast and then on the seventh to eat and rest the body'.

When Blessed Guthlac heard these words, he got up at once and cried to God, saying: 'Let my foes be forever driven back, my Lord God, for I know Thee and understand Thee, for Thou art my Creator.' As soon as he had said this, the wretched spirit vanished from before his face, just like smoke¹¹. He rejected the demonic teaching, for he understood that it was utterly empty. He ate modestly, that is, barley-bread, and sustained his life. When the wretched spirits realized that he had completely rejected them and their teachings, they lamented and wailed that they had been defeated. The blessed man was so triumphant that he had rejected the blasphemy of their teachings and temptations.

Not many days later, as he was keeping vigil with holy prayer in the quiet of the night, suddenly there came great multitudes of the wretched spirits. They filled the whole hut, pouring in from every side, from above, below and everywhere. They were terrible in appearance, with huge heads, long necks and scraggy faces, filthy, unkempt beards, shaggy ears, crooked noses, cruel eyes and foul mouths. Their teeth were like horses' teeth and their throats were filled with flames. They had harsh voices, crooked legs and huge knees, were big in the rear and had shrivelled-up toes. They shrieked hoarsely, entering with such great noise and immense horror that it seemed to him that everything between heaven and earth resounded with their dreadful cries.

As soon as they had entered the hut, they bound the holy man's limbs and dragged him out of his cell. Leading him into the black fen, they flung him into the filthy water. After this they took him to remote places in the wilderness, to dense thickets of brambles so that his body was all scratched and bleeding. After tormenting him in the dark for a long time, they left him alone for a while. Then they ordered him to leave the wilderness, otherwise they would afflict him and try him with more filth. Blessed Guthlac did not listen to them, but with prophetic lips said: 'I have set the Lord always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved'¹².

At this the wretched spirits seized him and beat him with iron whips. Then they took him on their horrible wings to the cold regions of the sky¹³. When he was at that height in the air, he saw all the northern part of heaven, which seemed to be surrounded by the blackest clouds and intense darkness. Suddenly he saw an immense host of wretched spirits coming towards him. They gathered together and immediately they all took the holy man to the black places of torment, to the gates of hell. When he saw the foul smoke, the burning flames and the terror of the black depths, he soon forgot all the torments and punishments that he had previously suffered from the wretched spirits. The latter promptly rushed in and fell among the terrible flames, tormenting the souls of wicked men with different punishments.

When Blessed Guthlac saw the severity of the punishments, he was in dread of them. At once the wretched spirits cried out very loudly, saying: 'Power has been granted us to thrust you into the torments of this abyss and here is the fire which you yourself set alight inside you, because of your sins and crimes the gates of hell are open before you'. After the wretched spirits had threatened him with these words, he answered them: 'Woe to you, children of darkness and fruit of perdition! You are dust and ashes and cinders. Who granted you wretches that you should have power to send me to these punishments? Well, I am here and ready and await the will of my Lord, so why frighten me with your false threats?' The wretched spirits at once moved towards the blessed man, as if they were going to throw him in. Suddenly the heavenly dweller, the holy Apostle Bartholomew, came shining with heavenly brightness and glory amid the dark gloom of black hell. The wretched spirits were not able to stay, because of the splendour of the holy visitor and they hid in the dark.

When Blessed Guthlac saw his faithful friend, he rejoiced with spiritual bliss and heavenly joy. At this the holy Apostle Bartholomew ordered the spirits to be subject to him and return him with gentleness to where they had taken him. This they did, taking him with all gentleness on their wings, so that he could not have been taken more pleasantly even in a ship. When they came to the middle of the height of the sky, a company of holy spirits approached him, all singing and saying: 'Holy men shall go from strength to strength'¹⁴. Then, in the morning just before dawn, they set him down again from where they had taken him.

When Guthlac was about to complete his morning rule of prayer, he saw two of the wretched

spirits standing there, greatly weeping and lamenting. When he asked them why they were weeping, they answered him, saying: 'We are weeping because our power is all broken through you and now we cannot approach you or talk to you. You have mocked us in every way and overcome all our strength.' After this the wretched spirits went out of his sight, just like smoke.

Chapter 6. How the Devils Spoke in Celtic.

In the reign of Coenred, King of the Mercians¹⁵, the British enemies of the English, attacked the English, starting many fights and various raids. Once, at cockcrow, as Blessed Guthlac was beginning his morning prayers, he was suddenly lulled into a light sleep. Then he started up from the sleep, immediately went out, looking and listening. He heard a great host of the wretched spirits speaking in Celtic¹⁶, and he knew and understood their language, because some time previously he had been exiled among them. Immediately after this he saw his hut all filled with fire.

The demons all struck him with the points of spears and hung him up in the air on them. The strong athlete of Christ immediately understood that these were the terrors and torments of the wretched spirits. Fearless, he at once thrust the arrows of the spirits away from him, singing the psalm: 'Let God arise and let his enemies be scattered'¹⁷. As soon as he had sung the first verse of the psalm, they vanished from his sight just like smoke. As Blessed Guthlac fought and contended with the wretched spirits so frequently, they realized that their power and activity had been vanquished.

Chapter 7. About Beccel the Priest¹⁸

A priest called Beccel came to the holy man and asked him to take him in, promising that he would live humbly in God's service according to his instructions. The wretched spirit sprinkled and mixed the heart and mind of the priest with the poison of his treacheries, urging him to strike Guthlac down and slay him, suggesting to his heart 'If I kill him, later I can own the place and men of the world will honour me, as they now do him'.

Thus, one day Beccel came to the holy man to shave his tonsure (his custom was to wash every twenty days) and was overcome by a very strong desire to shed the holy man's blood. Guthlac immediately recognized the cunning of the wretched spirit (since through the grace of God, all

future things were known to him, and similarly those present, and he could see and understand the inner man as well as the outer man). He said to him: 'Oh, my Beccel, why have you hidden the wretched fiend in your foolish heart? Why will you not spew out the deadly drink of the bitter poison? I see that you have been deceived by the wretched spirit and the wicked thought of your heart. The tempter of mankind and the enemy of the world has given birth to these unceasing evil thoughts in you. Turn away from the evil teaching of the wretched spirit'. At once Beccel realized that he had been deceived by the wretched spirit, promptly fell at the holy man's feet and immediately confessed his sin to him with tears. St Guthlac not only forgave him the sin, but also promised him that he would help him in all his troubles.

Chapter 8. How the Devils Departed

One evening, as St Guthlac was beginning his prayers, he heard the bellowing of cattle and various wild beasts. Soon afterwards he saw the forms of all sorts of creatures, wild beasts and serpents, coming towards him. First he saw the face of a lion, threatening him with its bloody fangs, then the likeness of a bull and the face of a bear, when they are enraged. Then he saw the form of vipers and heard a pig's grunting, the howling of wolves, the croaking of ravens and the various whistlings of birds, that by their appearance the demons might turn the mind of the holy man.

St Guthlac, armed himself with the weapon of Christ's cross and the shield of holy faith, spurned the temptations of the wretched spirits, saying: 'Oh you wretched, perverse spirits, your power has been seen and your might has been made known. Now, wretches, you take on the forms of wild beasts, birds and serpents, you who once exalted yourselves when you wanted to be equal to God. Now I command you in the name of the Everlasting God, who made you and flung you from the height of heaven, to cease this tumult'. At once all the manifestations of the wretched spirits fled.

Chapter 9. How the Writing was Recovered

One evening a monk came to speak to the holy man. A few days later he wrote something down on a piece of paper and then went out. A raven entered and, as soon as it saw the paper, took it and went into the fens with it. The visitor returned directly, saw the raven carrying off the paper and was at once very distressed.

At that moment St Guthlac came out of his church and saw that the monk was sorrowful. He comforted him, saying: 'Do not be sorrowful, brother. As the raven flies up through the fens, row after him and you will find the paper'. Shortly afterwards the monk who had written on the paper got into a boat. Rowing through the fens, he came to a mere which was very near the island. There, in the middle of the mere, he saw a reed-bed and the paper hanging on a reed, just as if someone had put it there. Straightway he picked up the paper with joy and, marvelling, brought it to the man of God. St Guthlac said that this was not due to his own efforts, but to the mercy of God.

On the same island there lived two ravens, which were so greedy that they would carry away whatever they could. Yet Guthlac endured all their greed, so that he might later give others an example of his patience. Not only were the birds subject to him, but all the fish and wild animals of the wilderness also obeyed him. Every day he would give them food appropriate to them.

Chapter 10. How the Swallows Settled on him and Sang.

Once there came to him a venerable monk called Wilfrid, who had long been united with him in spiritual communion. While they were pondering on the spiritual life with much discussion, two swallows suddenly flew in. Behold, they sang, rejoicing, and settled fearlessly on St Guthlac's shoulders and sang again. Then they sat on his chest, arms and knees.

Marvelling and staring at the birds, Wilfrid asked him why the wild birds of the great wilderness settled on him so submissively. St Guthlac answered him: 'Have you not learned in holy scriptures, brother Wilfrid, that the wild beasts and wild birds come closer to those who have led their lives according to God's will? The angels draw nearer to those who would live their lives apart from men of the world, but those who frequently wish for the conversation of worldly men cannot converse with the angels'.

Chapter 11. About the Gloves Carried off by Ravens

Once a prophetic miracle happened with regard to the holy man. There was a prominent man of the royal house of Mercia, called Ethelbald, who wanted to come and speak to the holy man. He prevailed on Wilfrid to take him to the man of God and they got into a boat and sailed to the island where St Guthlac lived.

When they came to the holy man, Wilfrid left his gloves in the boat. While they were speaking to him, Blessed Guthlac asked them whether they had left anything in the boat (for God had made all hidden things known to him). Wilfrid answered that he had left his gloves there. Soon afterwards, as soon as they had left the hut, they saw a raven up on the thatch tearing the glove with its black beak. St Guthlac immediately rebuked the raven for its mischief. It obeyed his voice and the bird flew away westwards over the wilderness and Wilfrid got the glove down from the roof of the house with a stick.

Not long after this, three men came to the landing-stage and rang the bell. The holy man Guthlac went out to the men directly, with cheerful face and good humour and spoke to them. When they wished to leave, they brought out a glove and said that it had fallen from a raven's mouth. Smiling, the holy man immediately took it, gave them his blessing¹⁹ and they left and he returned the glove to its owner.

Chapter 12. How Hwated Recovered his Health.

In East Anglia there was a nobleman called Hwated. Although he was dutifully subject to his parents in his daily life, one day in his father's home a wretched spirit entered into him and he went out of his mind. The wretched fiend afflicted him with madness so severely that he would bloody and wound his own body, both with iron and with his teeth. He not only wounded himself with his savage teeth, but likewise also tore at whomever he could.

One day a great company of his relatives and other close friends met to bind him and take control of him. But Hwated picked up a battleaxe, struck three men to death and wounded many others. In this way he was afflicted with madness for four years. Then he was taken to a holy monastery by his family, so that priests and bishops could wash him and cleanse him from his madness. But, despite many attempts, they could not drive out the evil power of the wretched spirit. Finally, they all went home again, sorrowing and wishing that he were dead rather than that he should trouble people any longer.

Eventually, rumour reached the province that on an island called Crowland in the middle of the fens there lived a hermit who abounded with various powers before God. They immediately found out about the holy man and wanted to take the man there, if it were God's will for them to find help.

This they did and went to a certain island, very near the one where the man of God was. They spent the night there with the sick man, arriving at Crowland at dawn, ringing the bell in the usual way.

St Guthlac went out to them directly with the great power of God's love. Once they had told him tearfully of the situation, he was at once filled with pity. He promptly took the sick man into his church, remaining there for three days and praying unceasingly. When the sun rose on the third day, Guthlac bathed the man in holy water, blew on his face and, at that, all the power of the wretched spirit in him was broken. It was as if the same man, stretching, had woken from a deep sleep. He recovered his health, went home and the sickness never troubled him again for as long as he lived.

Chapter 13. About Ethelbald's Companion

Once a companion of Ethelbald, a man called Ecga, was troubled by a wretched spirit. It afflicted him so severely that he did not know what he was doing. His family took him to the man of God. As soon as he came to Guthlac, the latter put his belt around him and no sooner was he girded with the belt than all the uncleanness left him and the sickness never troubled him again. Moreover, the blessed man Guthlac flourished and prospered in the prophetic spirit, making known to men the future as clearly as the present²⁰.

Chapter 14. About the Abbot

Once there came to him an abbot, who had long been united in spiritual communion with him. On his way there, his two servants who were with him asked permission to take another route, saying that it was unavoidable and vital for them. The abbot granted them permission. When the abbot arrived to talk to the blessed man and drink together from the well of the holy scriptures, Guthlac said: 'But where did the two who turned aside from you earlier go?' The abbot answered him: 'They asked leave of me, because they had other business and could not come here.'

Guthlac answered him – inasmuch as God revealed all future things to him, so that they were as clear to him as the present – and began to tell him of the doings of the monks, telling him: 'They went to a widow's house and got drunk'. Not only did he tell him about their route, but also about their refreshments and even the very words which they said. He told him everything as it had happened. After the abbot had taken his blessing, he left. When the two monks returned to the abbot,

he asked them where they had been. They answered that they had been very tired by their vital business. When he asked them whether it was true, they swore vehemently that it was. Then he said to them: 'But why do you both swear falsely? For you were at a widow's and lived your life there thus, saying these words there, thus!' When they realized their misdeeds, the monks fell at his feet and begged his forgiveness, confessing to him that it was just as he had said.

Chapter 15. About the Monks who Came to Him

One day, two monks came to him from a monastery. They brought two flagons of beer with them, but agreed to hide them under a turf, so they could keep them for the journey home. When they reached Guthlac, he strengthened them with his instruction and edified their hearts with his exhortations. After they had spoken at length together, Blessed Guthlac said to them with a cheerful face and laughing voice: 'Why did you hide the flagons under a turf and why did you not bring them with you?' They marvelled greatly at the words of the holy man, bowing to him and asking him for his blessing. He blessed them and they went home again.

At the same time, people of various ranks, nobles, bishops, abbots, both the humble and the powerful, came to see Guthlac. People sought him out not only from the great kingdom of Mercia, but also from everywhere in Britain where they had heard of the blessed man²¹. They hastened to him from all over, the sick in body or afflicted and taken with a wretched spirit, or those suffering from other evils and various sorrows and pains, with which mankind is beset. Hope failed in none of those they brought to him, and there was no sick person that left him without a cure, no possessed that was not sound in mind again, nor any sick who did not depart from him healed.

Chapter 16. About Ethelbald's Companion

Among the many who came to him on various matters, a certain Offa, a companion of the above-mentioned Ethelbald, came to visit and speak to the saint. On the second day of his journey, he trod on a thorn in the dark. The thorn stuck in his foot and was so long that it went right through the foot. Walking with difficulty, he managed to get to the island where Blessed Guthlac lived. That night, over half his body from the loins to the feet, swelled up and he was so grievously afflicted with the pain that he could neither sit down nor stand up.

When they told Guthlac, the man of God ordered them to bring the man to him. When he had been brought to him, he told Guthlac how he had been hurt and how the trouble first came about. Guthlac immediately undressed and put the garment he was wearing next to his skin on the man. No sooner was Offa dressed in the clothing of such a great man than the wound was healed. Straightway the thorn sprang out of him, just like an arrow leaving the bow, and landed some distance away. At the same time all the swelling and the pain left him at once and he began talking to the holy man with a cheerful spirit, leaving him without any pain. So everyone who heard about this marvelled and gloried in it, praising the God of heaven.

Chapter 17. About the Holy Bishop Hedda

We should not fail to mention how by miraculous and prophetic power, Guthlac knew and made things known to men. This was because it was granted to him through the grace of God to know the words of those who were absent, as readily as the words of those standing in front of him.

Once Bishop Hedda²² came to him, urged by a heavenly thought to go and speak to the man of God. The bishop had with him in his company a learned man whose name was Wigfrith. On his way there together with other servants of the bishop, the conversation turned to the holy man and many things were said about his miracles. Some spoke of the hardship of his life and the miracles he worked, others doubted his life and said that they did not know whether he did things by the power of God or the power of the devil. As they discussed this among themselves, Wigfrith said to them: 'I can test and find out whether he practises divine piety, because for a long time I lived among the Irish and saw many good men who led their lives well in the service of God. By God's power they shone before the eyes of men with many miracles and signs. From the life of the men I saw there, I can recognize what kind of life this man's is, whether he works miracles by the power of God or by the power of the devil'.

When Bishop Hedda came to speak to the man of God Guthlac, they drenched themselves in the wines of the sweetness of the Gospel. The brightness of God's grace shone so strongly in Blessed Guthlac, it was as though what he preached and taught was preached and taught with the voice of an angel. There was also great wisdom, heavenly prudence, in him, so that whatever he taught, he confirmed with the divine

lessons of the holy scriptures. Suddenly, in the middle of the discussion which they were having, the bishop humbly bowed to the man of God, earnestly begging him and beseeching him to accept ordination to the priesthood for the service of the Lord's altar. Guthlac at once agreed to his requests and, prostrating himself on the ground, said that he would do what was God's will and the bishop's.

After the service and his ordination, the bishop asked the holy man to eat with him. Although it was contrary to his custom, Guthlac did so. When they sat down to the meal as I have described, Guthlac looked at the bishop's servants. Seeing the monk Wigfrith, he said: 'So, brother Wigfrith, what do you think of the priest about whom yesterday you said you would find out whether he is good or wicked? Wigfrith got up at once, bowed to the ground and confessed his sin to him. The holy man at once embraced him and forgave him. The consecration of the island of Crowland and of Blessed Guthlac took place at harvest-time, five days before the feast of St Bartholomew.

Chapter 18. About Abbess Egburgh

Once, the venerable virgin Abbess Egburgh, daughter of King Aldwulf²³, sent the venerable Guthlac a lead coffin with a shroud. She beseeched him through the holy name of the Heavenly King that his body be put in it after his death. She also sent a message by a monk of venerable life, telling him to ask who was to be the keeper of the place after Guthlac. After he had graciously received greetings from the venerable virgin, he answered that that man lived among a heathen people and not had yet been baptized, but that he would soon come and receive the sacrament of baptism. Thus it came about, for the same Cissa who later held the place, came to Britain shortly afterwards and was baptized there, as the man of God had foretold²⁴.

Chapter 19. About Ethelbald the King

We should not fail to mention the marvel which the holy man Guthlac foretold and made known. One day, Ethelbald came to him at the time when Ceolred the King was pursuing him far and wide. Ethelbald had fled, escaping his persecution and hatred. He came to speak to St Guthlac, for when human aid failed him, divine aid comforted him. After he had come to the man of God and told him his troubles, Guthlac spoke to him in this way: 'Oh my son, I have not forgotten your struggles and troubles. Therefore I have taken pity on you and because of your troubles I have prayed to God to

have mercy on you and help you. And He has heard my request. He will grant you dominion and power over your people, all those that hate you shall flee from before you and your sword shall destroy all your adversaries, because the Lord is your helper. But be patient, for you will not gain the kingdom by seizing it in a worldly way, you will gain your kingdom with the help of the Lord, for the Lord shall bring down those who now hate you and remove the kingdom from them. He has remembered and appointed you.'²⁵

When he heard these words, Ethelbald immediately confirmed his hope and faith in God Himself, trusting and believing everything the holy man foretold, how kingdoms are overturned and taken away, how we are always hastening towards the end and how strong death seizes and takes all alike, the powerful and the lowly, the learned and the unlearned, the young and the old.

Chapter 20. About the Length of the Holy Man's Life and his Death

Some time after this, when Guthlac, the beloved servant of God, had been living according to God's will for fifteen years, God deigned to take His beloved servant from the strife of the troubles of this world to the everlasting rest of the kingdom of heaven. Thus, one day when he was at prayer in his church, Guthlac suddenly fell ill. At once he realized that God's hand was on him and, rejoicing, began to prepare himself to enter into the kingdom of heaven. He was afflicted with the illness for seven days and on the eighth day was brought to the turning-point. The illness began on the Wednesday before Easter and on the same day in the Easter Week following, he sent his life from the body.

A monk called Beccel was with him and it was through him that I learned about the death of the blessed man. When he came to him on the day he was taken ill, he asked him about certain things. Guthlac answered him slowly, drawing breath from his lungs with long gasps. When Beccel saw the holy man so distressed in spirit, he said to him: 'What a change has come over you now! Has some illness befallen you in the night?' He answered him: 'I fell ill in the night.' Again he asked him: 'Do you know why you are ill, my father or how the illness will end?' The holy man answered him again and said: 'The cause of my illness is this, that the soul must be taken away from this body, for my illness will end on the eighth day. Therefore it is proper that the soul be prepared so that I may follow God.'

When Beccel heard these words, he cried a great deal and began to mourn. In great sorrow his cheeks repeatedly shone with his tears. The man of God, Guthlac, comforted him, saying: 'My son, do not sorrow, because for me it is no hardship to be going to my Lord God.' There was such a depth of holy faith in him and he had such a great love of God that with regard to good deeds, the known and unknown seemed all alike to him. Four nights later when the first day of Easter came, Blessed Guthlac gave praise to God in his illness and celebrated the liturgy. After he had offered up the precious sacrifice of Christ's blood, he began to preach the Gospel to Beccel, moving him so very deeply with his teaching that he never before nor after heard the like.

On the seventh day of his illness, Beccel came to visit him at about the sixth hour of the day. He found Guthlac leaning in the corner of his chapel against the altar. However, he could not speak, for he saw that his illness troubled him greatly. Nevertheless, he begged him to leave his word with him before he passed away. Blessed Guthlac raised his tired limbs a little from the wall, and said: 'It is now very near the time, my son, so listen to my last instructions. After my soul leaves my body, go to my sister²⁶ and tell her that I avoided her here on earth, refusing to see her, so that afterwards we might see each other again in heaven before the face of God. Ask her to put my body in the coffin and wrap me in the shroud that Egburgh sent me. I refused to dress in linen clothing while I lived, but now for the love of Christ's virgin, I will use the gift she sent me for the purpose I kept it. When body and soul part, have them wrap my body in that garment and lay it in the coffin'.

When Beccel heard this, he said: 'Now I see and understand your illness and realize that you must leave this world, I beseech you, my dear father, to tell me about something which I never dared ask you about before. Since I first came to live with you in this wilderness, I have heard you talking in the evening and the early morning – who with I do not know. Therefore I beg and beseech you never to leave me troubled and anxious about this after your death.' The man of God drew breath from his lungs with a long gasp and answered him: 'My son, do not be troubled. What before I did not want to tell anyone in the world for as long as I lived, I will now reveal and tell you.

'From the second year that I lived in this wilderness, God himself sent me an angel for my consolation in the evening and in the early

morning. He revealed to me the heavenly mysteries which it is not permitted to any man to speak of, wholly relieving the hardness of my struggle through heavenly angelic conversation. He told and revealed to me things absent as well as things present. Now, my beloved son, keep my words and tell them to no-one else, except Pega my sister and Egbert the hermit, if you should speak to him. When he had said this, he leaned his head against the wall and drew breath from his lungs with a long gasp. When he recovered and got his breath back again, a fragrance came out of his lips like the scent of the sweetest flowers. On the following night, as Beccel began his evening prayers, he saw the whole hut surrounded by a great brightness and the brightness remained there until daylight.

In the morning, the man of God stirred a little again and, raising up his weary limbs, said to Beccel: 'My son, prepare to go on the journey as I asked you, because it is now time for my soul to leave these weary limbs and go to unending bliss in the kingdom of heaven'. When he had said this, he stretched his hand towards the altar and strengthened himself with the heavenly food, the body and blood of Christ. After that he raised his eyes to heaven, stretched out his arms and with joy and bliss sent his spirit to the eternal bliss of the heavenly kingdom. During all this, Beccel saw the whole hut completely filled with heavenly light and a fiery tower stretching from the earth to the height of heaven, the brightness of which was unlike anything else. On account of its beauty, all the brightness of the midday sun itself was turned to paleness. He heard angelic songs throughout the regions of the air and the whole island was completely filled with a great fragrance of a wonderful scent.

Beccel was immediately struck with great fear, got into a boat and went to where the man of God had told him. Arriving at Pega's, he told her everything in order as it had happened, as her brother had asked him. When she heard that her brother had died, she immediately fell to the ground and was filled with grief so great that she was speechless. When she had recovered, she drew a long sigh from her heart and gave thanks to the Almighty for His will. The following day, according to the instructions of the blessed man, they reached the island, finding the place and the building filled with the fragrance of ambrosia. For the space of three days, she commended the holy man to God with holy hymns and on the third day, as the man of God had instructed, they buried the body with honour in the chapel.

Divine Goodness wished to show clearly to people how great a glory the blessed man had after he was buried, for he had shone and been resplendent with so many miracles before the eyes of men. So twelve months after his death and burial, God put it into the mind of the handmaid of the Lord to move her brother's body to another tomb.

Thus, exactly twelve months after the blessed man had died, she gathered together God's servants and clergy and opened the tomb. They found the body as entirely sound as it had been before, as though he were still alive. In the suppleness of the joints and in all things he was much more like a sleeping man than a dead one. Moreover the garments were as pristine as when they had first been wrapped around the body. When those who had gathered there saw this, they were very frightened, so struck with fear that they could say nothing.

When Christ's handmaid Pega saw it, she was immediately filled with spiritual bliss. With hymns in honour of Christ she wrapped the holy body in another shroud, which Egbert the hermit had previously sent him, when he had been alive, for the same purpose. They did not bury the coffin, but set it in a more memorable and honourable place. Now the place where the triumphant body of the holy man rests in spirit has since been honourably dignified with various buildings by King Ethelbald. He who seeks out that place will with all his might carry out and accomplish whatever he desires through the intercessions of the holy man,

Blessed Guthlac was chosen for his godly deeds and treasure of all wisdom. He was steadfast in his duties and so diligently occupied in Christ's service that there was never anything in his mouth except praise for Christ, nor anything in his heart except



*Crowland Abbey
as it is today.*

piety, nor anything in his mind except peace, love and gentleness. Nor did anyone see him angry or negligent in Christ's service, but in his face one could always see love and peace. There was always sweetness in his character, wisdom in his heart and so much joy in him that he always seemed the same to friends and strangers alike.

Chapter 21. About King Ethelbald

After all this, Ethelbald in exile in distant lands heard about the repose of the holy man, St Guthlac, who alone had been his refuge and comfort. Suddenly he was moved by sorrow and travelled to where the body of the man of God was, hoping that through the holy man God would grant him comfort in his struggle. When he came to his tomb, he said with tears: 'My father, behold, you know my miseries, you were always a help to me in my difficulties. Where shall I turn now; who will comfort me if you leave me?'

After he had said this and many other things with tears at the tomb, in the evening he went to a house where he had sometimes stayed as a guest while Guthlac was alive. There his thoughts turned over in his unhappy mind until at last he fell sleep. Suddenly, he started up, afraid, and saw everything inside the cottage filled with heavenly light. In fear of this unusual sight, he saw Blessed Guthlac standing before him in the form of an angel, saying: 'Be not afraid, but be resolute, for God is your help. I have come to you because God heard your prayer through my intercessions. But be not sad, for the days of your miseries have passed and within a year you will rule the kingdom for which you have fought so long'. Not only did he tell him of his future kingship, but he also described to him the whole course of his life. God worked these signs through the holy man after he was dead and buried.

Chapter 22.

In the country of the Wisse²⁷, there was a head of household of the exile Ethelbald. For twelve months his eyes had been covered with a white spot and cloudiness. After being treated for a long time by his doctors with ointments and failing to cure him, he was admonished by God that if he were taken to Guthlac, he would recover his health and eyesight. Soon after this his friends took him to Crowland, where they spoke to the handmaid of Christ, Pega. Hearing of the man's firm and steadfast faith, she took him to the church and Guthlac's venerable body, took some salt which Guthlac himself had consecrated, moistened it and dropped it in the man's eye. Before she could put a

drop into the other eye, he could already see with the first eye. He saw clearly in front of him and went home whole and healed.

To our Lord be praise and glory and honour, and to the blessed St Guthlac, age without end, for ever in eternity. Amen.

1. King Ethelred (Æthelred) of Mercia reigned from 675 to 704, then abdicated and became a monk, reposing in 716.
2. James 1, 12.
3. He was then aged fifteen, which at that time was considered to be early manhood.
4. The monastery at Repton in Derbyshire (the burial-place of the Kings of Mercia) was a double one, that is a convent and a monastery, in this case under the rule of Abbess Elfrida (Ælfhryth). This system of double monasteries existed briefly in the missionary situation of the Church in early times, both in East and West. In 783 it was forbidden by Canon XX of the Seventh Œcumenical Council because of inevitable abuses.
5. The tonsure on the point of the head, representing the crown of thorns, gradually became more or less universal throughout the Church, even in remote Ireland, where an older form had been used for a time. In the West it became known as the tonsure of St Peter, since he by tradition had introduced it to the West. It is referred to in Canon XXI of the Sixth Œcumenical Council and can be seen on icons of the fourteenth century St Gregory Palamas and many other saints of that age. After the West fell away from the Church, the tonsure became exaggeratedly large and deformed, whereas in the Orthodox East, it became symbolic and monks began to wear their hair long in deference to hermits.
6. Here and further on in the Life, the modern reader should understand that weak beer was at that time the normal beverage, since it was often difficult to find clean drinking water.
7. Grantchester is now a village outside Cambridge. The latter was the original Grantchester, the Roman camp on the River Granta (now called the Cam and further upstream the Ouse). The vast area of marshland and swamp referred to is now the fens, which were drained in relatively recent times.
8. 'The wretched spirits', often referred to here, are the demons. Just as the demons had been cast out of the cities of Christian Egypt and went to live in the Egyptian desert, once the scene of the pagan rites of the Pharaohs, so in England they lived in wild, uninhabited and pagan places after they had been cast out by the Christianization of the towns that had begun a century before in 597. Also, the people in the remotest areas of the country, in Latin '*pagani*', were the last to receive the Faith and so remained 'pagans'.
9. Interestingly, some seven centuries later, the Apostle Bartholomew also aided the Russian monastic, St Sergius of Radonezh.
10. Psalm 17, 6 (Septuagint). Several passages of the Life are clearly taken from the Psalms, the mainstay of all true monastics.
11. Psalm 67 (Septuagint), the Psalm that all Orthodox Christians should know and repeat at times of demonic illusion and temptation.
12. Psalm 15, 8 (Septuagint).

13. As is known, the demons inhabit the air, as has been seen in recent times by the many aerial phenomena (so-called 'UFOs'), which were widespread as long as the gullible were willing to believe in such things.
14. Psalm 83, 7 (Septuagint).
15. King Coenred of Mercia reigned from 704 to 709, then abdicated and became a monk.
16. Like the angels, the demons can communicate in any language. Since the fens were one of the last outposts in England of pagan Celtic tribes after the invasion of the English, it is not surprising to learn that they spoke in Celtic.
17. Psalm 67 (Septuagint).
18. Beccel is one of the most important sources for the Life by Felix. This repentant priest is better known as St Beccel and his name is also given as Bettelin and Bertram. He was one of St Guthlac's closest disciples and is feasted on 9 September.
19. Notice how they took his blessing, just as we would today.
20. The gift of clairvoyance is to this day often given to monastic elders like St Guthlac.
21. Here too we see the close parallels between the monastic elders of Eastern Europe and the monastic elders of the old Orthodox Western Europe.
22. Bishop Hedda was Bishop of Lichfield from 691 and of Leicester from 709.
23. King of East Anglia 663–713.
24. St Cissa of Crowland is commemorated on 23 September.
25. King Ethelbald came to the throne on King Coenred's death and reigned for forty-one years until 757.
26. His sister is St Pega of Peakirk (= Pega's kirk or church) c. 719, commemorated on 8 January. Peakirk is about six miles to the south-west of Crowland.
27. The area along the River Wissey in Norfolk.

OPINION PAGE

Some Home Truths About Orthodox Life in Western Countries

By Vladimir de Beer



1. The Orthodox Church contains the fullness of divine revelation to mankind.
 - 1.1 Forms of Christianity, such as Roman Catholicism and Protestantism, are only partial expressions of the Christian Truth.
 - 1.2. This statement does not imply hostility towards heterodox Christians – the Gospel requires peaceful co-existence with all mankind.
2. The Orthodox Church is for everyone in the world who is striving towards God.
 - 2.1. During the first centuries of the Orthodox era, Greek more than any other language was used to fulfil Christ's commandment to spread the Gospel across the then known world. In addition, the New Testament appeared in Greek and several of the Church Fathers wrote in Greek.
 - 2.2. After the fall of Constantinople in 1453, the Russian Church took over responsibility for spreading the Faith across Asia and into Alaska and for defending the Orthodox peoples in Eastern Europe and the Middle East. Since 1917 this activity has providentially been extended to Western Europe and other parts of the world.
 - 2.3. During the second half of the 20th century, valuable contributions were also made by the Churches of Serbia and Romania and the Patriarchates of Constantinople and Antioch in establishing an Orthodox presence in the Western world.
- 2.4. Both parts of the Russian Orthodox Church should be given credit for their enormous contribution to the Kingdom of God in the face of immense suffering. Neither it nor any other Orthodox Church should be referred to in derogatory terms as 'ethnic' etc.
3. 'Western Orthodoxy' does not exist, but there are native Orthodox in the West
 - 3.1. Since the Western world has been cut off from the fullness of the Orthodox Church for a millennium, the Orthodox Faith can only be planted in the West in one of its existing forms, for example, Russian, Romanian, Greek, Serbian or Syrian.
 - 3.2. Attempts to create an English, Irish, French or other Western form of Orthodox Church without being grounded in one of the existing Orthodox Churches are at present premature, even if well-intentioned.
 - 3.3. The transplantation of the Tradition of the Orthodox Church to the West does not imply a precedence of culture over faith. Orthodox Christians are first and foremost Orthodox

and only then Russian, Greek, English, Irish etc.

4. The Orthodox Church and Faith do not conform to Western cultural influences – instead they strive to nurture Christian values and the Christian way of life among Western people who have solemnly accepted the teachings and way of life of the Church.
 - 4.1. Modern Western society is based on the urge for the instant satisfaction of needs, hence the rampant consumerism of our time.
 - 4.2. The Orthodox Tradition does not adapt to make entry into it by Western people easier or quicker. Thus services are not abbreviated or rushed through to accommodate heterodox, standing during worship is normal, men and women who accept the Orthodox Faith learn to dress modestly and women and girls cover their heads in church.
5. The Orthodox Faith is naturally a liturgical faith – the Church therefore requires regular services wherever there is a resident priest.
 - 5.1. As a minimum, a parish should have Saturday Vespers to prepare for the Sunday Liturgy, as well as Vespers and Liturgies for all major feasts, providing that the priest is available and not forced to work in secular employment
 - 5.2. If Orthodox new to the Church wanted to have more social meetings than services, this

would be a clear sign of a lack of Orthodox consciousness.

6. Orthodoxy is an episcopal faith – the role of the bishop is of vital importance in the Church, as St Ignatius of Antioch and all the other Fathers emphasized in their writings. 'He who does not have a bishop for his father, does not have the Church for his mother'.
 - 6.1. In accordance with the Tradition inherited from the Apostles and the practices of the first centuries, contemporary Orthodox parish life can only function properly where there is an active bishop overseeing his parishes.
 - 6.2. Where a parish or parishes do not have a bishop actively overseeing them, their life inevitably suffers.
7. The Orthodox Church is characterized by Eucharistic communion between its bishops.
 - 7.1. If a 'bishop' is not in Eucharistic communion with at least one of the canonical Orthodox Churches, then his jurisdiction is not recognised as Orthodox.
 - 7.2. It is precisely the rejection of this requirement that has led to the emergence of a plethora of tiny non-canonical groups, especially in Western countries, claiming to be Orthodox, but in reality consisting of politicians, nationalists, careerists, adventurers and sectarians.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS



Why do Orthodox use a Protestant translation of the New Testament?

J. S., Sussex

I assume you mean the use of the King James translation. Around about the year 1600, literary English had reached an all-time high. This was the time of Shakespearian language. As regards the Epistles, it is true that there are one or two mistranslations and some passages where the translation is not clear, but as regards the Gospels, the beauty of the translation seems to me to be unsurpassed. As you know we have on the

orthodoxengland website published a translation of the Septuagint Psalter in the same style of translation. The Orthodox in Etna, California are now hoping to publish the whole of the Septuagint in that King James-style translation made by the same English Orthodox translator.



Is it really true that Orthodox do not venerate statues? I have heard of cases

J. L., Belgium

Clearly, in the very early centuries before the Seventh Ecumenical Council in 787, when there

was a carryover influence from paganism which was still strong, there were cases of the creation of statues of the saints and their veneration among Orthodox, east and west. However, all this more or less stopped with that Council, which forbade idolatry and was hostile to three-dimensional images, as encouraging idolatry. Sadly, in the West, pagan influence continued. Even though Rome accepted that Council, semi-pagan Germans like Charlemagne, who flatly rejected the Seventh Council in the *Libri Carolini*, did not. (In his *Early Medieval Art*, the art historian John Beckwith calls Charlemagne, correctly, 'a semi-iconoclast').

The Germans began to break off from Orthodoxy altogether towards the end of the tenth century, wishing to revive the practices of pagan Rome. Thus, statues began to reappear more and more from about 980 on and the rupture was consummated by the events of 1054: Hence, their existence in Roman Catholicism. This then is due to the lack of the full acceptance of the Seventh Council and the resurgence of pagan barbarianism in the West (as can also be seen in the Crusades and the Middle Ages in general). We do not have statues in the Orthodox Church. The nearest you will find is carvings in deep relief, still two-dimensional, however.



Isn't the idea that Moscow is the Third Rome dangerous? It could make Russians nationalistic.

V. K., London

I agree with you. That idea must always be balanced by the concept of Holy Russia. Otherwise, the Third Rome will finish like the First and Second Roms, fallen to secular power. The Russians have already had the earth-shaking warning of 1917. This must be the last chance for Russia and the whole world. At the present time in Russia, Patriarch Alexis is calling for a return to Orthodox Russia. That is the first stage. Holy Russia is the next stage.



Is there any reference to global warming in the Bible?

M. T., Felixstowe

And the fourth angel; poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire. And men were scorched with great heat (Rev. 16, 8-9).



Why can Orthodox be so bad?

A. P., Oxford

All Orthodox are bad, because Orthodoxy is absolute, it is perfection ('Be ye perfect, as is your Father in heaven'). For example, although we say 'a good Catholic' or 'a bad Catholic' etc, we cannot speak of Orthodox in this manner, because Orthodoxy is not manmade, but divine. It is impossible to be anything else than a bad Orthodox. Ask the saints, they will tell you that they are the worst Orthodox.



How would you compare Harry Potter, C. S. Lewis and Tolkien?

Priest D., USA

You are asking the wrong person. I have never read a complete book by any of them. I have tried reading them, but find them boring, as I find most fiction. However, I have seen films. I suppose that Harry Potter is the least directly Christian, though this is still about the battle between good and evil. Tolkien, though clearly Christian, seems to me to be marked by rather gloomy Catholic redemption theories and equally gloomy Germanic mythology (and surely also his own apocalyptic experiences in the trenches of the First World War). As for Lewis, some Orthodox seem to love him. Although he is the most obviously Christian of the three, he does remind me of a sort of conservative evangelical Christianity which, rammed down your throat, is very irritating. So I find most of Lewis spiritually flat and conventional. But that's purely personal taste. I prefer by far the Gospel and the Lives of the Saints to all three.



Bede the Venerable often uses the word 'catholic' in his writings. How are we Orthodox to understand it, especially when he talks about 'the Catholic Church'?

N. L., London

You are quite right. Many Western Fathers and writers, writing in Latin, used the word 'catholic' in exactly the same way. The confusion comes from the modern use of 'Catholic' (i.e. Roman Catholic). In the Fathers, the word means 'non-heretical', i.e. not Pelagian, not Arian etc, not belonging to any of the heresies that were known to Christendom. Thus '*Ecclesia Catholica*' (the Catholic Church) in their writings means the Orthodox Church.



Can the Jesus Prayer be undertaken by people outside the Orthodox Church?

N. S., Portugal

It can be, but this can become spiritually dangerous. If you are not practising inside the Church, not already leading a life based on confession and communion, prayer and Scripture readings, the prayer can easily become a motive for pride and spiritual illusion. It is rather like icons painted by people who are outside the Orthodox Church or Orthodox singing recorded by Non-Orthodox. They are instantly recognizable as such. They have mastered 'techniques', but techniques do not bring prayer and so salvation. It is much safer to follow what you have in your own tradition. Of course, if you find that you are not being spiritually fed by that tradition, then that's another story. It is all a question of humility. No-one who is proud or pretentious, whatever their faith, should undertake this prayer.



In the Scriptures, it is said that women must obey their husbands. How do you reconcile that with our modern life?

M. N., Hampshire

I assume that you refer to passages like I Peter 3, 1; I Timothy 2, 11; Ephesians 5, 22-24, which are interpreted by modern feminists as some sort of recommendation for men to boss 'inferior' women about.

The problem here is then one of misinterpretation, looking back with modern prejudices at the past. First of all, we must understand the past. We must realize that the Orthodox being addressed by the Apostles were first generation. In other words they came from a pagan background, where marriage, as Christians understand it, was not established. Secondly, looking at our modern prejudices and conditioning, nowhere in the Scriptures does it say anything about men and women being 'equal'. The emphasis is rather on differences and complementarity. For example: 'Neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord' (I Cor 11, 11). This is simply a recognition of the differences between male and female psychology.

Thus, the passages do not mean that men can boss their wives about (let any man try it!). They mean that most women will look to their husbands to announce a decision, but that decision is always

reached together, with consultation and discussion. What a man often decides is in fact a decision which has been carefully moulded by his wife's advice and views. There are plenty of wives who are far more sensible than their husbands and who reach far better decisions. But the point is that intelligent women tend to 'mould' their husbands, rather than boss them about. If they do boss them about, then the husbands tend to get mocked by others, including by other women, as 'henpecked' or 'nagged'. There is here the whole female need to feel protected, without being tyrannized, and the male need to lead, without being tyrannical. There is a subtle psychological balance here, which each individual couple has to reach within a marriage. If not, the couple will break up.



Why does the Apostles' Fast exist? All the other fasts are in honour of Christ and the Mother of God. And when was it instituted?

M. M., Isle of Wight

All fasts are in fact times for prayer. Fasting without prayer is spiritually senseless. It is called dieting or slimming and can bring on irritability and even depression. Therefore, there must be prayer as well as fasting. The Apostles only managed to do what they did 'by prayer and fasting'. Therefore, this fast is really instituted by Christ according to His words in Mark 9, 29. From my reading, this Fast began as such in the fourth century, no doubt based on earlier traditions. The fourth century was when the Church became the Church of the Empire. As a result, there were large masses of nominal Orthodox and monastic and fasting discipline developed accordingly. I think it is useful to have such a fast in the late spring and early summer, for that is when many temptations occur.



How can we answer Roman Catholics who reproach the Orthodox Churches for being controlled by States (like the shameful episodes in the history of the Russian Patriarchal Church under Communism)?

O. R., Bristol

A brief look at Roman Catholic history shows that human nature and human weakness are the same everywhere. True, some Russian bishops inside Russia made hideous compromises, but that was only after 600 of them had first been martyred. I don't think that the Polish Catholic Church did too brilliantly under Communism in Poland, or

Slovak Catholic clergy in Slovakia. In China, there is still a schism in Catholicism, with a majority of Chinese Catholics broken off from Rome.

Further back in history, there was the erastian conduct of German Catholic bishops and the bishops in Vichy French, let alone the conduct of the Papacy itself at that time. Why was Hitler, a Catholic, not excommunicated long before 1939? Then there is Croat Catholicism and its monstrous war crimes during World War II. Before that there is the example of the Spanish Catholic bishops under the Fascist Franco, like the Archbishop of Burgos: 'No forgiveness'. Before that there was the case of the bloodthirsty Napoleon, crowned Emperor by the Pope in 1804. Some Catholics say that the Pope was a prisoner, 'he had no choice'. Of course, he had a choice. Everyone has a choice, even though the choice may be martyrdom, that is still a choice.



How do Orthodox justify the practice of calling their priests father? The Bible tells us not to.

H. F., Felixstowe

We have to read the Bible in context. In Matthew 23, what Christ is referring to is the absurd honours given to the pharisees, what today we would call clericalism. Protestants pick out this verse, because in distant history this clericalism is what Roman Catholicism imposed on our ancestors. They objected to it – and quite rightly too. But this verse should not be used against the practices of the non-clerical Orthodox Church.

In general, we have to read the Bible with discernment and understanding, looking at the context in which things are said. If we read the Bible literally, then we should not call our own father 'father', and we should not call anyone our master. And yet we constantly refer to our fathers in the flesh as 'fathers' and we use the word master (Matt 23, 10). According to you, this would be against what the Bible says.

About forty years ago Fr George Sheremetiev, a Russian priest in London, met a zealous young Protestant man in a train. He refused to call him Fr George and roundly abused him for not being a Protestant. With a joking reply, Fr George told him: 'If you can't call me 'father', then call me 'daddy'! And 'daddy after all is what Russians call their priests – 'batyushka'. It is a pity that the English word 'father' can sometimes sound rather haughty.

I get called all sorts of names. It does not bother me what people call me, but we should all think of

the way we treat and name Christ. Priests have, despite their personal weaknesses, all received the grace of the priesthood in ordination. That grace is from Christ



What should we think of Alcuin, the English adviser to Charlemagne? The Catholics give him the title 'Blessed' and he did live some 250 years before the schism of 1054.

H. V., Germany

There are two reasons why Orthodox can be positive about Alcuin of York († 804). First of all, though appointed by Charlemagne as his 'schoolmaster', he opposed Charlemagne's massacre of the Saxons in the latter's revolting and barbaric, anti-Saxon campaign of 'baptism or the sword', in which he killed thousands of Saxons, some of them personally. (It is interesting that many contemporary German Orthodox, like Archbishop Mark, are Saxon). Alcuin took the Orthodox line that people should only become Orthodox voluntarily:

'Faith is, as St Augustine teaches, born of free will, not compulsion: person can only be attracted into Christianity, he can never be forced. If he is forced into baptism, it is useless for engendering true faith, except in a baby. An adult must be able to answer personally for his own beliefs and desires. To profess faith falsely is to prevent true salvation. If the message of Christ and the burden of his light yoke preached to the obdurate Saxons as keenly as demands for and legal punishments are being imposed (by Charlemagne's government), perhaps they would not reject the whole idea of Christian baptism. Teachers of Christianity must be educated in the example of the apostles. They must be preachers (predicatori), not predators (predatori), trusting in the goodness of God alone'. (Letter of Alcuin: 796).

The second reason why Orthodox can be positive about Alcuin is because he also opposed the filioque, writing: 'Follow the faith of the fathers and unite with the Universal Church in the most sacred unanimity. Do not introduce anything new into the Symbol of the Catholic Faith and as regards the church services do not attach yourselves to any customs unheard of in ancient times'. (Letter to the monks of Lyons, written in 798).

However, on the other hand, Alcuin did help with the 'Caroline Books', in which Charlemagne showed that he was an iconoclast and rejected the

Seventh Œcumenical Council, which had been accepted by the Church in Rome. Even though Charlemagne used barbaric mistranslations of the decisions of the Council, we still cannot justify this, because from elsewhere it is clear that Charlemagne was in fact an iconoclast. Here, Alcuin was either too weak or else too ignorant to stand up to his master. It also seems that Alcuin did not oppose the use of the organ, which Charlemagne first introduced into church services.

Generally speaking, the Roman Catholic use of 'Blessed', as in the titles Blessed Alcuin and also Blessed Charlemagne (!), means that the individual concerned received no popular veneration. It denotes a political decision of Rome regarding the individual, which dates from after the Schism.

As regards the 1054 date for the Schism, I think that the date is only symbolically useful. The Schism was a process, a change of mentalities from the apostolic to the mediæval. We have to understand that there were people in the West who had broken away from the Church even before 1054. We only have to think of various individuals after about 754, when the Pope of Rome first became an owner of lands and secular sovereign. Thus, at the Court of Charlemagne, or in the ninth century (the filioquist Pope Nicholas), and then at the beginning of the eleventh century, there were already powerful anti-Orthodox forces at work in the West. On the other hand Empress Theophano of the West, in the late tenth century, was a Greek and there were case of communion being given to Western pilgrims right into the 1070s. In general, we have to look very carefully at the lives of these individuals between about 754 and about 1054, before accepting them as saints, and so worthy of veneration, into the Orthodox calendar.



Why do we put a candle in front of the holy doors during the communion hymn?

S. P., Felixstowe

Firstly, at this moment and during the priest's communion, the curtains and doors are closed. The people are awaiting the Resurrection of Christ, in which they can participate by taking communion. The curtains and the closed doors thus represent the sealed tomb. The candle therefore reminds us of the angel at the tomb and the people represent the myrrh-bearers, who approach the doors which are about to be unsealed, that is opened, and are kissing the icons at this moment.

Secondly, the candle should also remind us of the 'flaming sword', 'keeping the way of the tree of life', and the Cherubim who guarded the doors of paradise 'at the east of the garden of Eden', after the expulsion of Adam and Eve (Genesis 3, 24). For now through communion, we may approach paradise again.



What is the Orthodox attitude towards nature? Many greens accuse Christians of being responsible for the contemporary rape of the environment and contempt for the natural world.

L. T., London

This is due to an error of identification, which confuses Christians with traditional Protestants. The contemptuous attitude to nature comes from the traditional Protestant attitude to the whole material world. Rejecting the possibility that matter can be sanctified, it is the heretical notion of Protestantism, inherited by modern capitalism, that gave rise to environmental rape and the general destruction and exploitation of matter. The Orthodox attitude believes in the Incarnation, that God became man, that therefore all matter is potentially good, as it was made, it can be sanctified. This attitude is of course Biblical (Genesis 1). It is why Orthodox venerate the cross, icons, relics and oppose the shocking cremation of human bodies. It is why Protestants do not do this and, amazingly, accuse Orthodox of idolatry.

In other words, Orthodox do not believe in man's domination of nature (the Protestant-Capitalist attitude), but man's God-given dominion over nature (Genesis 1, 29 and 2, 19). Dominion means responsible stewardship, for man is only a trustee, nothing more. That is why we see and understand in nature the signs and symbols of Divine, and not human, presence in nature. They denote the Divine, and not human, origin of all creation. Only God dominates His creation. Any man who usurps God and thinks that he dominates nature as its Creator will soon learn otherwise. He will lose the little that he does have in hurricane and monsoon, drought and flood. This is the spiritual meaning of the contemporary human-driven climate change.



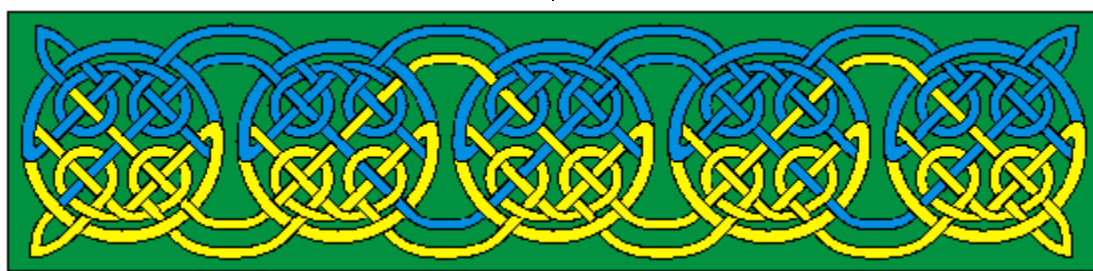
Do you think that Anglicanism has a future?

D. G., London

You should ask an Anglican! All I can do, as an outside observer, is to wonder that a religion, which was invented as a political compromise in

the sixteenth century, has survived into the twenty-first century. Anglicanism is after all a sort of Protestant Uniatism, Protestantism with some Roman Catholic trappings, devised in order to keep some measure of national unity in the Tudor England of long ago. Obviously, today's British State has no more use for Anglicanism. I would have thought that most Anglicans would feel happier in any of the numerous Protestant sects – though some, like Methodism, with 265 churches

closed in the last decade, are dying out. Though that does leave thousands of mediæval churches, most of them virtually empty, many of them in small villages, some in a poor state of repair, and a very rich organization which employs well over 10,000 clergy and pays pensions to thousands of others. But that is none of our problem. We have our own problems. Let us concentrate on them and our own salvation



THE CONTINUING CRISIS IN IRISH CATHOLICISM

The following article appeared in *The Irish Times* 'Weekend Review' on Saturday 9 December 2006. It is a review of *A Different Journey*, the autobiography of probably the best known Roman Catholic priest in Ireland, Fr Brian D'Arcy, born in 1946. It was written by Kate Holmquist, an *Irish Times* journalist and novelist, and published under the title of 'The Scourge and the Showbands'.

We reproduce it here because it illustrates the whole crisis in present-day Irish Catholicism, in which paedophile clergy and their victims are now openly revealing what went on in Ireland for generations. At the present time, Catholicism there is going through its confessional stage, in which Irish clergy and laity are themselves openly attacking the institutionalization of their religion, which caused institutional sexual abuse and sadism. This institutionalization, the result of the papist-clericalist structure inherent in Catholicism, and the absence of authentic Churchliness and Tradition inspired by the Holy Spirit, the result of the filioque heresy, have finally led to the collapse of Catholicism in Ireland after nearly nine hundred years.

Sadly, the Catholic authorities there have failed to repent for the errors of the past, by taking action to unravel the folly of nine hundred years of heresy, restructuring and re-equipping Catholicism with Apostolic and

Patristic teachings and practices, returning to the pre-eleventh century Christian Tradition. Sadly, so far, this unrepentant Catholicism has not been replaced by anything positive, merely the same futile consumerism and spiritual emptiness as elsewhere in the EU.

We recall that in Greek the word 'crisis' means 'judgement'. Let us hope that from the 'judgement' affecting Ireland today, positive will yet emerge, as the Irish who have kept faith return to their roots in the ancient traditions of the Irish Church, before Normanization and institutionalization, imposed from Rome via England in the twelfth century.¹

The Scourge and the Showbands

The original 'Father Trendy' is also a self-questioning, tortured soul.

AS a 17 year-old Passionist novice, Brian D'Arcy was made to go to his room three nights a week and flagellate his own naked body with a scourge of tightly knotted cord for as long as it took to say five Our Fathers, five Hail Marys and five *Glorias*. The sounds of whacking and whipping echoed down the corridors of the monastery at night. 'To do it in the privacy of your room/cell was an advance. Even then it felt sick', he writes in his new book – part-memoir, part-social document – which has gone straight into the bestseller list.

Now aged 60, D'Arcy believes that the Passionist order at that time was a brainwashing cult and he feels ashamed of his unquestioning cooperativeness in becoming one of their clones. The draconian monastery regime at The Graan in Enniskillen 'was designed to kill your own unique spirit and you had to become whatever the institution wanted you to be ... it was about killing your self-esteem, even though most of us hadn't much of it to kill', he states. To this day, D'Arcy feels crippled by his own unworthiness and has to constantly struggle with self-image.

A sadistic training system enabled dysfunctional people to mask their shortcomings in the worst aspects of religion. D'Arcy himself was sexually abused by a priest at the age of 10, then again in the monastery soon after he entered it. It took him years to even acknowledge the destruction of his deepest self, much less mourn it, and he still occasionally feels a crippling guilt. He was meant to leave behind his old life, so that even when his own father rushed up to greet him for the first time in a year, the priest leading D'Arcy by the hand insisted that he keep his eyes directed at the ground and not speak. 'The priest said, "Isn't your son looking well, Mr D'Arcy?" and he chucked me by the hand in case I would touch, speak to or look at my own father. I glanced back as I was pulled up the street and I saw my father with tears in his eyes looking aghast as I disappeared around the corner'.

This compelling memoir contains many moments of heartbreak as D'Arcy persevered with the Passionists because he didn't want to return home in shame as a 'spoiled priest', especially since his parents had tried to dissuade him from the priesthood. He still struggles with remaining a priest in an institutional Church that has lost credibility due to its dishonesty, cover-ups and disrespect for the laity. He wants to see women becoming priests and priests marrying but doesn't hold out much hope that either will happen in his lifetime.

It is difficult, at first, to reconcile this tortured, self-questioning man with D'Arcy's public persona as a name-dropping 'Father Trendy', who has been chaplain to the show business community, turning up in dance halls six nights a week in the early days, then following the performers he admires to concerts in the UK and the US. The book is full of pictures of D'Arcy with Johnny Cash, Daniel O'Donnell, Cliff Richard, Terry Wogan and many others, showing how D'Arcy always had a camera at the ready and pursued friendships with the famous with an almost frightening persistence.

One wonders if he needs these famous friendships in order to feel good about himself.

D'Arcy explains that for him, Jesus Christ was a human being and that singers and songwriters are the people closest to Christ's Passion in the way they put listeners in touch with emotion, even when – in the case of Johnny Cash – they themselves self-destruct. Priests belong in the middle of life, in 'relationship' with other people, or else priests self-destruct, he argues. His close friendships with women have always been non-sexual, even though he has been 'in love' and at times he has had to disentangle himself from women who tried to 'own' him.

But why persist with being a priest when means giving up so much?

D'Arcy tries to answer this question, using as his inspiration the theological writings of Thomas Merton, Henry Rouwen and even the paintings of Van Gogh who was himself 'a spoiled priest'. D'Arcy's theological chapters show the serious, insightful and soul-searching side of his character, yet sit alongside some pretty comical anecdotes about the showband era and Jimmy Magee's Allstars.

There's an asexual innocence to D'Arcy that makes him seem, at times, like an enthusiastic pop puer eternus like Daniel O'Donnell and Cliff Richard – whom age does not wither.

No stranger to ridicule, D'Arcy was so cautious in writing the book that he asked psychologists to read it before publication because he didn't trust his own motives. This says a lot about D'Arcy, a man who is deeply uncomfortable with being a priest in the current Catholic ethos, so that even today superior at The Graan, he believes that if doesn't continually reflect on life, he will be 'like the out-of-breath climber – caught up the journey itself, without fulfilment, purpose or peace'. He argues convincingly that writing for the *Sunday World*, going to concerts and saying Mass in Las Vegas hotel rooms is precisely what a priest should be doing if he is to sow the seeds of faith that the laity may one day choose to nurture with a new kind of church of their own. With this valuable memoir, he tries to give them the tools to do it.

1. See, for example, pp.21–23 in *Conquest, Colonization and Cultural Change 950–1350* by Robert Bartlett, Penguin, 1993 and 1994:

'The experience of the Celtic world provides another major doubt about simply equating the territorial growth of western society with the multiplication of Latin bishoprics. The case of Ireland is particularly instructive. The country was among the earliest non-Roman societies

to be converted to Christianity, by Patrick's missions of the fifth century, and thereafter was itself the centre of missionary activity, as wandering Irish monks evangelized virtually every Germanic people in western Europe. A rich Irish monastic tradition flourished for centuries. There might seem to be no question that Ireland was fully part of Latin Christendom. However, although Christianity was ancient in Ireland, the history of the country in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries seems to be marked by processes very similar to those that were taking place in the areas of northern and eastern Europe being incorporated into Latin Christendom at that same time. The incursion of a feudal cavalry elite, the immigration of peasant settlers, the formation of chartered towns, the introduction of a more widely diffused documentary literacy and coinage – all these aspects of Irish history can be paralleled in other areas experiencing the expansionary wave of the High Middle Ages. A colonial settlement in Munster would have a strong resemblance to one in Brandenburg. Ireland and, to a greater or lesser degree, the other Celtic countries were subject to many of the same processes of conquest, colonization and cultural and institutional transformation as eastern Europe or Spain, but were also an integral part of Latin Christendom from an early date. Despite their being Latin they were the victims, not the bearers, of Latin expansion. It is better to look for a fresh characterization of the process of expansion that includes the Celtic lands rather than be satisfied with the label "the expansion of Latin Christendom" at the expense of excluding them.

'Another aspect of this Irish anomaly is revealed in the way that Ireland was conceptualized by outsiders in the twelfth century. Although the Irish were of ancient Christian faith and shared the creed of Frankish Europe, they exhibited pronounced differences in culture and social organization. The absence of a territorial, tithed church or unitary kingship, the very distinctive system of kinship and the non-feudal, uncommercialized economy struck Latin clergy and Frankish aristocrats as outlandish. When St Bernard described the Irish in the early twelfth century, he wrote of their "barbarism" and their "beastlike ways", criticized their marriage customs and their failure to conform to correct ecclesiastical practices, such as the payment of tithes, and concluded by condemning them as "Christians only in name, pagans in fact". Native clergy were as outspoken as foreigners and one of the things they sought in this period was the remodelling of the Irish church along lines more like those of the Frankish world. Defined hierarchies of territorial dioceses were introduced into the Celtic lands in the course of the twelfth century. Previously there had, of course, been bishops, but neither diocesan boundaries nor chains of authority had been clear or uniform. Although there are some similarities between this ecclesiastical remodelling and what went on in Spain or England in earlier centuries, where a growing territorialization and the definition of archdioceses can be found, it is a more extreme case. The native leaders of the twelfth-century reform movement in Ireland were trying to integrate their country into a wider world whose norms were taken as a standard:

'Barbarous laws were abolished, Roman laws introduced; everywhere the customs of the Church were received, those that were contrary rejected ... everything was so much changed for the better that today we can

apply to that people the word which the Lord speaks to us through the prophet: "Them which were not my people, Thou art my people."

'Native reformers therefore thought that the Irish could not be God's people until they had adopted "Roman laws". An even sharper line of exclusion was drawn by non-native critics, such as the English prelates who criticized Irish ways or the immigrant warriors and clerics who began to establish lordships in Ireland in the 1170s and 1180s. These observers and intruders made a neat elision. For, while twelfth-century Anglo-Norman incursions into Ireland were motivated, in the words of a contemporary source, by the desire for "land or pence, horses, armour or chargers, gold and silver ... soil or sod", the invaders were able to claim "some show of religion" by portraying the Irish, in the words of St Bernard, as "Christians only in name, pagans in fact". They were "pagans in fact", despite their avowed creed and rituals, because their social order was deviant from the continental western European model. By the twelfth century their economy and social structure looked odd to men from England, France and Italy and this meant that, although the Irish were Christian, they could be described and treated as if they were not. Just as the Christian knights in *The Song of Roland* recognized their counterparts in the chivalrous warriors of Islam and lamented only the fact that they were of the wrong religion – "If he were Christian, what a knight he would be!" – so, in Ireland, Frankish warriors recognized alien customs even under the cover of a shared religion. When we bear in mind the earlier missionary history of the Irish, the phrase used to justify the planned Anglo-Norman invasion of Ireland is poignant: its purpose was "to expand the boundaries of the Church". Not sharing the social patterns of Western Europe meant not being part of the Church.

'The images of exclusion and otherness available to those who formed and expressed opinions in twelfth-century western Europe included not only the dichotomy Christian/non-Christian, but also that of civilized/barbarian, and the two polarities were often mutually reinforcing. The Welsh were "rude and untamed" and hence "nominally profess Christ but deny him in their life and customs". The Ruthenians, who "confess Christ only in name, but deny him in their deeds", were associated with other "primitive Slavs" and "wild peoples" of "uncivilized barbarism". All this suggests that mere adherence to the Latin liturgy and obedience to Rome were not enough to qualify for full inclusion in the ecclesia, that is, in society. As the men of Frankish Europe intruded upon societies around and unlike their own, they found both non-Christians (in eastern Europe and the Mediterranean lands) and local variants of Christianity (notably in the Celtic countries). Their response was to equate the two, if the Christian societies did not have the social and legal characteristics with which they were familiar. The expansion of the High Middle Ages was a matter not simply of Latin Christendom growing, but of the territorial growth of a certain kind of society. It tended to describe itself as Roman and Christian, but also recognized the Celtic lands as alien to it. By the eleventh century "Latin Christendom" can be used to designate not merely a rite or an obedience but a society'.

The Second Coming

Turning and turning in the widening gyre
 The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
 Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
 Where anarchy is loosed upon the world,
 The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
 The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
 The best lack all conviction, while the worst
 Are full of passionate intensity.
 Surely some revelation is at hand;
 Surely the Second Coming is at hand.
 The Second Coming! Hardly are those words out
 When a vast image out of 'Spiritus Mundi'
 Troubles my sight: somewhere in sands of the desert
 A shape with lion body and the head of a man,
 A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,
 Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it
 Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds.
 The darkness drops again; but now I know
 That twenty centuries of stony sleep
 Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle,
 And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,
 Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?

William Butler Yeats

