

The Benedictine Centuries:
Monasticism in Anglo-Saxon England,
597-1066

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St. Benedict's monastery is a microcosm. It holds all types, all classes and all ages. Children, brought almost in infancy by their parents, ex-serfs, sons of the poor and noble, clerics and priests, the highly intelligent as well as the Goth *pauper spiritu* and those who will not or cannot read - all are there, and among them there is no distinction whatever save in the service of the altar.¹

This synopsis of the type of person who became a Benedictine monk reflects the welcoming attitude that St Benedict hoped to give to the rule for monastic living that now bears his name. It also reflects the variety of people who came into a life of monasticism in England during the Anglo-Saxon period of 597-1066. These people were drawn to the simple

¹ Dom David Knowles, *The Monastic Order in England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1949) 9.

spiritual life formed by St Benedict of Nursia.

St Benedict of Nursia, father of the Benedictine rule, was born in 480. He spent his early monastic life as a hermit in a cave at Subiaco in Italy. He founded a house at Monte Cassino in 525. It was here that the Rule of St Benedict was first formulated. St Benedict died in 550.²

The Rule of St Benedict divided the day into three parts - prayer, study, and manual labour. Prayer was the *Opus Dei*, offering prayer and praise in church. Study came through the *Divine Lectio*, sacred reading. Labour was required because "Idleness is the enemy of the soul, therefore let the brethren devote certain hours to work with their hands."³

The part of a monastery's day called chapter was a bit like homeroom or assembly in today's schools. A portion of the Rule was read and the superior would make comments on it. Breaches of discipline were confessed, alleged, and corrected. Announcements were made and the day's work was blessed. A special event during the chapter would be the consent to admission and profession of novices.⁴

As the Benedictine rule began to be established in Italy and on the rest of the continent, this way of life began to be seen as a vehicle by which Christianity could be carried across the channel to Britain. There had been some early attempts at missionary work in that land, but those and any other attempts to permanently establish churches there had

² J. C. Dickinson, *Monastic Life in Medieval England* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1961) 59-60.

³ G. H. Cook, *English Monasteries in the Middle Ages* (London: Phoenix House Ltd., 1961) 38.

⁴ Knowles, *Monastic Order*, 412.

been quashed by the pagan rulers. In the late sixth century, an Italian monk named Augustine came to be concerned for the lives of these pagans and saw a window for mission work opening to him.

The Roman mission

In 596, Pope Gregory sent Augustine and a group of missionary monks to Britain. The monks were frightened of the task ahead of them.⁵ Horror stories abounded about the Angles - their godlessness, their ferocity, their crude living. Augustine and his monks did not feel that they would make any progress in their mission. They were not meeting with easy success their goal of converting the Angles to Christianity. On behalf of his brother monks, Augustine wrote a letter to Pope Gregory, pleading for the band of missionaries to be recalled to Rome. Pope Gregory wrote back, encouraging Augustine and urging him to press on in what at times seemed to be a fruitless task.⁶

Apparently, Gregory's encouraging letter had an effect on the morale and energy of the missionaries. The group pressed on and arrived on the Isle of Thanet in Kent, England, in 597.⁷ Interpreters were sent to King Ethelbert to inform him of the group's arrival. Ethelbert willingly received the group.⁸ He already was familiar with Christianity

⁵ Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1963) 33.

⁶ Daniel Rees, *Monks of England: The Benedictines in England from Augustine to the Present Day* (London: S.P.C.K., 1997) 21.

⁷ Lionel Butler and Chris Given-Wilson, *Medieval Monasteries of Great Britain* (London: Michael Joseph, 1983) 17.

⁸ Bede, *History*, 35.

because his wife Bertha, the daughter of the king of Paris,⁹ was a Christian. Ethelbert did not agree to be converted right away, but he did promise the monks protection and allowed them to go about their work in a safe environment.¹⁰

Right away, the monks began to devote themselves to the monastic life. They preached in the old Roman church of St Martin in Canterbury until the king was converted. They were then allowed to preach in the open and to build and repair ruined churches for renewed use.¹¹

Not even one year after arriving in Kent, Augustine presided at the baptism of over 10,000 people on Christmas Day, 597.¹² Within ten years, Christianity became the official religion of Kent, Essex, and London. Roots of the church were firmly planted in Canterbury, London, and Rochester, later to be the sites of three monastic houses. By 700, paganism in southeast England was defeated or dying.¹³

The first monasteries

Now that a foothold had been gained in England, it was time to establish religious houses in key areas. The first foundations were made in Kent, where Augustine and his fellow missionaries had landed. Two houses were founded in Canterbury in 598 with another founded twenty-four miles away in Rochester in 604.

⁹ Butler, *Medieval Monasteries*, 17.

¹⁰ Bede, *History*, 35-36.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 36.

¹² Rees, *Monks of England*, 24.

¹³ Butler, *Medieval Monasteries*, 17.

St Augustine's Abbey at Canterbury in Kent was the first foundation arising from the Roman mission. The house here was founded by St Augustine and King Ethelbert in 598 and dedicated to Sts Peter and Paul.¹⁴ The church was consecrated by Laurentius.¹⁵ Abbot Adrian oversaw the house in the seventh century when it became known as an important center of learning. In 978, Archbishop Dunstan added Augustine's name to the house's dedication.¹⁶ The house was dissolved in 1538.¹⁷

Christ Church Canterbury may have been originally founded as a monastery¹⁸ in 598.¹⁹ Archaeological evidence suggests that there may have been an old Roman church on this site. Because of its importance to Augustine, this priory soon and justly became the focal point of the English church.

Christ Church was occupied by secular canons throughout the ninth century. The reformer Dunstan was named Archbishop in 960. The house was refounded in 997 as a Benedictine monastery when Archbishop Aelfric replaced the secular canons with monks on the command of the Pope. In 1011, Canterbury experienced a low point in its history when it was plundered by the Danes.²⁰ It was dissolved in 1540 but remained the center of the Protestant English church.²¹

¹⁴ Ibid., 337.

¹⁵ Bede, *History*, 57.

¹⁶ Butler, *Medieval Monasteries*, 337.

¹⁷ David Knowles and R. Neville Hadcock, *Medieval Religious Houses: England and Wales* (London: Longmans, Greene & Co., 1953) 62.

¹⁸ Knowles, *Monastic Order*, 50.

¹⁹ Knowles, *Medieval Religious Houses*, 61.

²⁰ Butler, *Medieval Monasteries*, 170.

²¹ Knowles, *Medieval Religious Houses*, 61.

Rochester Cathedral Priory in Kent was founded by King Ethelbert in 604. the foundation was for a college of five secular canons. Justus was consecrated by Augustine as the first bishop of Rochester. The house was raided by the Danes several times and was bypassed by the tenth century monastic revival.²² Rochester was refounded in 1080 and dissolved in 1540.²³

Help from Rome

While these first monastic houses were being founded, more support came from Rome to help the infant English church. In 601, Pope Gregory sent Mellitus, Justus, Paulinus, and Rufianus to England. Those men brought with them a variety of vessels, vestments, ornaments, relics, and books to give the fledgling English church a solid start.

Mellitus had been given a special task to accomplish during his time in England. He was to convert any pagan temples he found into Christian churches. He was to destroy any idols, make holy water and sprinkle it around the site, erect altars, and place relics.²⁴

Two of the others sent in the second wave of support became leaders in the English church. In 604, Augustine ordained Mellitus and Justus bishops. Mellitus was named bishop of London in the province of the East Saxons. He likely served at a church dedicated to St Paul that was built in London by King Ethelbert. Justus was named bishop of Kent

²² Butler, *Medieval Monasteries*, 327.

²³ Knowles, *Medieval Religious Houses*, 74.

²⁴ Bede, *History*, 51-2.

at Rochester, twenty-four miles west of Canterbury. The church built here was dedicated to St Andrew.²⁵

Augustine's compatriot Paulinus was ordained bishop by Justus on July 21, 625. He accompanied Ethelberga, daughter of King Ethelbert and sister to King Eadbald, to Northumbria²⁶ where she married the pagan King Edwin.²⁷ Edwin received the Christian faith through the preaching of Paulinus. Edwin and Ethelberga had a daughter Eanfled on Easter Sunday 626. The baby princess was baptized on Whitsunday of that same year with twelve other members of her family.²⁸ Edwin was baptized the next year.²⁹

Paulinus and his monks were able to make York the center of northern Christianity due to these newly forged relationships. However, it did not take long for this new kingdom to be overturned. Northumbria partially reverted to paganism upon Edwin's death in 632.³⁰ King Penda of Mercia led a holy war against the northern Christians, destroying almost all that Paulinus had accomplished.³¹

After Edwin's death, Paulinus took Queen Ethelberga and sailed back to Kent. There he was received by Archbishop Honorius and King Eadbald. Paulinus brought with him many of King Edwin's possessions, most notably a cross and chalice. Paulinus then was named bishop of

²⁵ Ibid., 68-9.

²⁶ Bede, *History*, 79-80.

²⁷ Rees, *Monks of England*, 56.

²⁸ Bede, *History*, 80-1.

²⁹ Butler, *Medieval Monasteries*, 17.

³⁰ Rees, *Monks of England*, 56.

³¹ Butler, *Medieval Monasteries*, 17-8.

Rochester.³² He died on October 10, 644, and was buried in Rochester. He was succeeded by Ithamar.³³

Celtic monasticism and the northern church

The Roman church was not the only Christian body to establish itself in England in the sixth century. Celtic monasticism had already taken hold in the north before 597,³⁴ no doubt due to the efforts of the monks at Iona. Its origins are obscure. It likely has some French influence. That may have come to Ireland from Egypt via French monasteries.³⁵ It also could have developed from St Martin of Tours, with its foundations at Marmontier.

After taking root in Ireland, Celtic monasticism was quick to spread. It moved first to Iona in Scotland and then on to Lindisfarne in England. It then spread throughout northern England, through an area north of the Humber and east of the high moors. Notable houses within these bounds included Melrose, Gateshead, Ripon, and Whitby.³⁶

Celtic houses in England were often double houses led by an abess.³⁷ Double monasteries were much more common in the north than in the south. In this system, men and women were under the same roof. Men served the community as priests and labourers.³⁸

³² Bede, *History*, 102.

³³ *Ibid.*, 124-5.

³⁴ Cook, *English Monasteries*, 39.

³⁵ Dickinson, *Monastic Life*, 57.

³⁶ Knowles, *Medieval Religious Houses*, 1.

³⁷ Cook, *English Monasteries*, 40.

³⁸ Rees, *Monks of England*, 60.

The strands of Celtic and Roman monasticism in England were spun in near parallel. Monks were sent to southern England from Rome at the same time monks were being sent from Ireland and Iona to northern England. The two groups had a common purpose - to preach the gospel and to convert their lives through prayer.³⁹ Both were known for their missionary spirit.⁴⁰ They also had similar styles of conversion. When trying to convert people, the monks never used force. Rather, they converted by love, prayer, consultation, and example.⁴¹

Celtic monasticism did differ slightly from Benedictine monasticism. It placed less emphasis on communal life and the spiritual benefits drawn from that life. More emphasis was placed on prayer, fasting, work, and penance.⁴² Monks in this framework were expected to live a simple, austere life with stress on instant obedience. A popular cause for Celtic monks to follow was that of "white martyrdom", leaving their home monasteries to journey to foreign lands for the sake of Christ. Most white martyrs went to the continent, concentrating on the pagan and de-Christianized areas.⁴³

The monk most responsible for carrying Christianity across the Irish Sea to England and Scotland was St Columba. Columba came from Ireland to Scotland as a missionary in 563. He established a small monastery on the island of Iona. The monks were led by an abbot who was so important that the whole province, even the bishops, were

³⁹ Ibid., 55.

⁴⁰ Knowles, *Monastic Order*, 23.

⁴¹ Rees, *Monks of England*, 56.

⁴² Butler, *Medieval Monasteries*, 15-6.

⁴³ Dickinson, *Monastic Life*, 57.

subject to him.⁴⁴ Aidan, one of Iona's favourite sons, went out from Iona and set up a satellite house on Lindisfarne in 635.⁴⁵

After King Edwin died and Paulinus returned to Kent, Northumbria briefly returned to paganism. The reconquest of Northumbria by Oswald helped to bring that kingdom back to Christianity. He had been converted to Christianity and baptized by the Irish missionaries at Iona. He sent for missionaries from there to minister to his largely pagan kingdom.⁴⁶

Wilfrid arose as an important figure in British monasticism. He was the first monk sent to Lindisfarne, one who met with no success there and complained to his superiors at Iona. He visited Rome then returned to England in 658, bringing with him the Rule of St Benedict, which he gave to the foundations at Ripon and Hexham.⁴⁷

Despite his close ties to these communities, Wilfrid did not lead a "normal" monastic life. He did not live in cloisters as was expected. He acquired estates and land and built up military forces. He also educated future warriors and monks, all while supervising the whole northern church.

Wilfrid incurred the wrath of King Ecgrith and was expelled from Northumbria in 677 for encouraging the Queen to become a nun at Coldingham Abbey. He was not able to regain his post in Northumbria, so he headed south and began to convert pagans on the Isle of Wight and in the Netherlands.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Bede, *History*, 108-9.

⁴⁵ Dickinson, *Monastic Life*, 58.

⁴⁶ Rees, *Monks of England*, 56.

⁴⁷ Knowles, *Monastic Order*, 21-2.

⁴⁸ Butler, *Medieval Monasteries*, 19.

Despite Wilfrid's initial lack of success on Lindisfarne, King Oswald was not deterred in his quest to return Christianity to Northumbria. Aidan was sent to King Oswald and his kingdom in 635. Aidan was thought of as meek and pious, two excellent characteristics. However, the belief existed that Aidan was "not altogether according to knowledge"⁴⁹ and wanted to keep Easter according to Irish custom instead of adopting the Roman system.

Aidan was made bishop of Lindisfarne, an island off the northeast coast of England.⁵⁰ He worked in the area between the Forth and the Humber.⁵¹ He persuaded Hilda to remain in England rather than become a nun in Gaul. Hilda set up an abbey on the coast of Yorkshire at Whitby, the site of the famous Synod of 664.⁵² Aidan died on August 31, 651, and was succeeded by Finan, also from Iona.⁵³

Lindisfarne, Wearmouth, and Jarrow were the first houses founded in Northumbria. They also gained a reputation as the more illustrious of the northern houses. Sadly, this also led to their downfall when they were the first monasteries affected by the eighth and ninth century Danish invasions.

Lindisfarne Priory in Northumberland began in 635 when King Oswald of Northumbria asked the community at Iona to send missionaries to minister to his people. These monks were led by Bishop Aidan. A monastery in the Celtic pattern was founded on the island in the late

⁴⁹ Bede, *History*, 106.

⁵⁰ Butler, *Medieval Monasteries*, 18.

⁵¹ Cook, *English Monasteries*, 40.

⁵² Butler, *Medieval Monasteries*, 18.

⁵³ Bede, *History*, 129.

seventh century and led by Cuthbert. Lindisfarne fell victim on June 7, 793, to the first Danish raids on the English coast. In 875, the monks abandoned the island for Chester-le-Street.⁵⁴ A community was refounded on the island in 1082 and dissolved in 1537.⁵⁵

Durham Cathedral Priory was established because of the Danish raids that collapsed Lindisfarne. The focus of this house was the shrine of Cuthbert.⁵⁶ Cuthbert of Lindisfarne had emerged as one of the leading figures in Northumbrian Christianity. He trained as a novice at the Celtic abbey at Melrose and became a monk at Ripon. He returned to Melrose as prior before becoming prior at Lindisfarne.

Cuthbert accepted Roman ways of monasticism, the authority of the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the need for a bishop to administrate his own diocese rather than depending on outsiders.⁵⁷ In 683, while bishop of Lindisfarne, Cuthbert told his monks to take his body with them if they were ever forced to leave Lindisfarne. After his death, Cuthbert's body became the most revered relic in the northern church. When they were forced to leave in 875, the monks opened Cuthbert's grave, only to find that the saint's body had not decayed at all. The monks wandered with Cuthbert's body for 120 years, first settling in Chester-le-Street. They moved to Durham in 995 at the request of Bishop Aldhun. The "White Church" built on top of a U-bend in the River Wear was dedicated on September 4, 998.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Butler, *Medieval Monasteries*, 283.

⁵⁵ Knowles, *Medieval Religious Houses*, 69.

⁵⁶ Butler, *Medieval Monasteries*, 212.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 212.

Benedict Biscop founded communities at Wearmouth in 674 and Jarrow in 685.⁵⁹ He was known there for securing a papal privilege for the free election of an abbot by the monks of Wearmouth and Jarrow.⁶⁰ He had earlier journeyed to Rome with Wilfrid. He stayed behind at Lerins for two year, returning to England with Archbishop Theodore of Canterbury. He was abbot at the abbey of Sts Peter and Paul in Canterbury from 669 to 671, when he was relieved by Abbot Hadrian.⁶¹

The houses at Wearmouth and Jarrow were different than any of the usual patterns of monasticism. They were neither minsters nor double monasteries. They had no direct parochial responsibilities.⁶² From their beginnings, both were Benedictine houses⁶³ founded by Benedict Biscop.⁶⁴ The work of these monks - prayer and conversion of lifestyle - was closer to that of early monasticism.⁶⁵

The monks of Wearmouth and Jarrow were committed to educating those who were unable to read and those who did not know Latin. They thought that someone had to be able to read the Bible, so they took it upon themselves to teach reading and writing in Latin, the language of the church. The frescos at Jarrow were used to teach Bible stories to those who could not read. The Creed and the Lord's Prayer were translated into English by Bede, who was concerned that the English people likely would never learn Latin and learn the basics of Christianity

⁵⁹ Dickinson, *Monastic Life*, 62.

⁶⁰ Knowles, *Monastic Order*, 395.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁶² Rees, *Monks of England*, 61.

⁶³ Knowles, *Monastic Order*, 22.

⁶⁴ Rees, *Monks of England*, 56.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 61.

in the preferred language of the church.

Even though their personal discipline was more hermitic, the monks still felt responsible for teaching, preaching, and organization. The hermit Cuthbert would leave his cell to go out to the remote hill country to say Mass, preach, and hear confession. These monks were not deeply concerned with evangelizing and converting others. Rather, they saw their mission more as educators for all levels of learning.

Whitby Abbey in North Yorkshire was founded in 657 by King Oswy, the first of twelve monasteries he promised to found if he was victorious in battle over King Penda of Mercia. From the start, Whitby was a double monastery, first led by Abbess Hilda from Hartlepool. Elfled, daughter of King Oswy, became abbess sometime before her death in 714. In 664, a synod was called here which moved English monasticism toward Roman ways rather than the Celtic pattern. Whitby was destroyed by the Danes in 867⁶⁶ and refounded as a priory in 1077. It served as an abbey from 1109 until its dissolution in 1539.⁶⁷

In 664, King Oswy of Northumbria decided to call a council to meet at Whitby. Those seated at this council were to discuss and reconcile the differences between Celtic and Roman monasticism, concentrating mostly on the calculation of Easter. The king came out in support of the Roman calculation. Rome won out on all other issues discussed at Whitby. Gradually, the solely Celtic influence on the northern monasteries subsided. Celtic monasticism in northern England began to decline due to

⁶⁶ Butler, *Medieval Monasteries*, 389.

⁶⁷ Knowles, *Medieval Religious Houses*, 80.

a lack of official support. Eventually, Benedictine monasticism and the Roman way triumphed.⁶⁸

Perhaps the most prominent figure in northern monasticism came shortly after the Synod of Whitby. Bede was born in Monkton on Tyne in 673. At the age of seven, he was sent to Wearmouth Priory.⁶⁹ His heroes were Irish, and he saw Aidan as the ideal evangelist and monk.⁷⁰ Bede was to become one of the major figures in early English monasticism. He saw how the monasteries were slipping away into the hands of secular clerks. In a letter to Archbishop Egbert of York, Bede expressed his disappointment that the monasteries were falling under the control of men who had no concept of what monasticism really was about.⁷¹ He urged Egbert to appoint more bishops to oversee the north of England.⁷²

Bede saw to it that the Anglo-Saxons were educated, able to read, write, and do math. At Jarrow, the monks there copied books. This eventually led to the development of a written language for the Anglo-Saxons.⁷³ Bede himself took part in this project when he wrote what is perhaps the most well-known book from this time, his *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, written in 731.⁷⁴ This document has proved to be valuable as a written record of events and people connected to the young English church. This *History* was the last great legacy left by Bede

⁶⁸ Dickinson, *Monastic Life*, 59.

⁶⁹ Bede, *History*, v.

⁷⁰ Rees, *Monks of England*, 56.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 63.

⁷² Knowles, *Medieval Religious Houses*, 76.

⁷³ Rees, *Monks of England*, 62.

⁷⁴ Butler, *Medieval Monasteries*, 22.

before his death at Jarrow on the eve of the Ascension, May 25, 735.⁷⁵

If Bede's *History* is the most well known literary product of the northern church, the Lindisfarne Gospels surely run a close second. These books were illuminated between 678 and 721 under the auspices of Bishop Eadfrith. These books were more Old English than Celtic.⁷⁶

Southern houses

The 664 Synod of Whitby served to bring the northern and southern houses under one method of monastic life. Just as in the north, the south had a number of more prominent houses and people. These houses extended from Winchester in Hampshire, west to Somerset, north to Gloucestershire, and east through Worcestershire, Hertfordshire, Cambridgeshire, and Suffolk. They became the seedbeds of English monastic reform in the tenth century.

Glastonbury Abbey in Somerset is probably the oldest religious house in England. The early history of Glastonbury is cloudy. Joseph of Arimathea might have visited there, Arthur and Guinivere may have been buried there, and an episcopal see may have been founded there in the fifth century. There may have been a settlement there as early as the first century.

Glastonbury's history becomes more concrete and certain by the turn of the sixth to seventh centuries. In 601, a charter was granted to

⁷⁵ Bede, *History*, v.

⁷⁶ Butler, *Medieval Monasteries*, 22.

establish a monastic community here.⁷⁷ This was likely a Celtic foundation. It probably adopted the Anglo-Roman model of monasticism⁷⁸ when it was refounded in 705 by King Ine of Wessex after he conquered Somerset.⁷⁹ Glastonbury became a Benedictine monastery in 943. The abbey was dissolved in 1539, having become one of the richest monasteries in England.

Gloucester Abbey was founded by Osric in 681 as a double monastery. It was deserted after 767 and refounded in 823 as a house for secular canons.⁸⁰ King Cnut refounded Gloucester as a Benedictine monastery in 1022. In 1058, an abbey church was built by Bishop Alfred of Worcester after the monastery burned down.⁸¹ Gloucester was dissolved in 1540.⁸²

Worcester Cathedral Priory in Worcestershire was founded in 680 and dedicated to St Peter. It served as home to a mix of monks and secular clerks. A double monastery dedicated to St Mary was founded in the same place in 743. It replaced St Peter's as the cathedral and became a collegiate house.⁸³ By the early tenth century, monastic life here was nearly extinct. In 969, Oswald refounded a Benedictine abbey here and placed Worcester at the forefront of the tenth century revival. The abbey was destroyed by Danish raids in 1041⁸⁴ and dissolved in

⁷⁷ Ibid., 248.

⁷⁸ Knowles, *Monastic Order*, 22.

⁷⁹ Butler, *Medieval Monasteries*, 248.

⁸⁰ Knowles, *Medieval Religious Houses*, 66.

⁸¹ Butler, *Medieval Monasteries*, 251.

⁸² Knowles, *Medieval Religious Houses*, 66.

⁸³ Ibid., 81.

⁸⁴ Butler, *Medieval Monasteries*, 396.

1540.

St Alban's Cathedral in Hertfordshire was the site of two significant events before its foundation as a monastic house. St Alban was martyred here in 304 during the Diocletian persecution. In 429, St German of Auxerre visited the tomb of St Alban and left behind some relics of other saints. In 793, these relics were discovered by King Offa of Mercia. He founded a double monastery there to preserve the relics. The Benedictine rule was not closely observed until 968 when St Oswald and King Edgar instituted a strict rule.⁸⁵ the double house status was preserved until 1140. St Alban's was dissolved in 1539.⁸⁶

Ely Cathedral Priory in Cambridgeshire was founded in 673 by Queen Etheldred. She was married to King Ecgrith of Northumbria and lived under a vow of chastity with her husband's consent. In the year before she founded Ely, Etheldred became a nun at Coldingham. Her husband wanted to abduct her from the abbey, but she heard of the plot and fled to East Anglia, where she became the first abbess at Ely. In 870, the Danes destroyed the church built by Etheldred. Later, eight priests returned to Ely and founded a secular college. In 970, the college was converted to a Benedictine abbey, and relics of Ethelred were enshrined there.⁸⁷ Ely served as a cathedral priory from 1109 until its dissolution in 1539.⁸⁸

The community at Peterborough in Cambridgeshire was known as

⁸⁵ Ibid., 331.

⁸⁶ Knowles, *Medieval Religious Houses*, 75.

⁸⁷ Butler, *Medieval Monasteries*, 226.

⁸⁸ Knowles, *Medieval Religious Houses*, 65.

Medeshamstede before the tenth century. It was founded in 656 by King Peada of Mercia, the son of the pagan king Penda. Saxulf served as the first abbot. The Danes sacked and destroyed Peterborough in 870. Bishop Ethelwold of Winchester refounded a Benedictine abbey here in 966.⁸⁹ The abbey was dissolved in 1539.⁹⁰

Bury St Edmund's was founded in Suffolk, one of seven houses free from episcopal control. The early foundation of this house was in 633 when King Sigebert, the first Christian king of the East Angles, founded a religious house near Beodricsworth. The abbey gained its name when in 903, the relics of King (later Saint) Edmund of the East Angles, who died in 870 near Norwich, were brought here and enshrined. In 1020, Bishop Aelfwine of Elmham replaced the secular clergy resident at the time with twenty monks from the abbey at St Benet of Holme. This move freed the house from the bishop's control, and a charter was then granted by King Cnut.⁹¹ The abbey was dissolved in 1539.⁹²

Winchester Cathedral in Hampshire is the longest cathedral building in England. It is the end product of several monastic houses. Legend says that there was a monastery here in the second century. The first house proven to exist here was Old Minster, founded in 642-3 by Cenwealh, son of King Cynegils of Wessex. The house was dedicated to the Holy Trinity and Sts Peter and Paul. King Egbert's coronation was held here in 827. St Swithun's name was added to the dedication of this

⁸⁹ Butler, *Medieval Monasteries*, 315.

⁹⁰ Knowles, *Medieval Religious Houses*, 73.

⁹¹ Butler, *Medieval Monasteries*, 162.

⁹² Knowles, *Medieval Religious Houses*, 61.

house after his rule from 852-62. Winchester was sacked by the Danes in 860 and again in 879.⁹³

King Alfred had planned to start one or two more houses in Winchester. At the time, Old Minster was the sole house and was served by secular clerks. A foundation was planned for New Minster,⁹⁴ and buildings were begun for Nunnaminster, a house for women. King Edward followed through on Alfred's plans and built New Minster just north of Old Minster. He also finished the first buildings at Nunnaminster.⁹⁵

Winchester became a focal point of monastic reform in 963 when Ethelwold was chosen by King Edgar to be bishop. He was consecrated by Archbishop Dunstan. In 964, Ethelwold replaced the resident secular canons with Benedictine monks from Abingdon.⁹⁶ At Easter 965, a synod was called at Winchester. At this synod, the king took over all ecclesiastical endowments that were held by individual secular clerks and gave them to new monasteries.⁹⁷ Winchester remained at the forefront of English monasticism until its dissolution on November 15, 1539.

The Danish invasions

The first major wave of monasticism only lasted for about two hundred years. The Danish invasions began in 789. Monasteries were

⁹³ Butler, *Medieval Monasteries*, 391.

⁹⁴ Diana K. Coldicott, *Hampshire Nunneries* (Chichester, Sussex: Phillimore, 1989) 2.

⁹⁵ Coldicott, *Hampshire Nunneries*, 6.

⁹⁶ Rees, *Monks of England*, 391.

⁹⁷ Coldicott, *Hampshire Nunneries*, 10.

sitting ducks for the invaders. Most were undefended, isolated, and unprotected. They were rich targets, containing silver and gold crosses and crucifixes, chalices and vestments.⁹⁸

The first monastery hit was Lindisfarne, sacked on June 8, 793. Alcuin of York, a former student of Bede, saw this as a sort of divine judgment for Lindisfarne forsaking the true legacy of the Northumbrian church. He urged Jarrow to mend its ways, lest it succumb to the same fate. Unfortunately, Jarrow fell in 794.⁹⁹ After these and other invasions in the north, the only house to revive was Lindisfarne, which had fled to Chester-le-Street and later settled in Durham.¹⁰⁰

In the second half of the ninth century, the Danes made it to the southern kingdoms, where they continued to wreak havoc. In the 850's, they launched a series of attacks against the urban centers of London, Canterbury, and Rochester, all sites where Augustine had founded monasteries soon after his arrival in England. In 869, the kingdom of the East Angles was overrun, the monastery at Peterborough destroyed, and all the abbots, monks, and nuns slaughtered.¹⁰¹ Only Wessex and King Alfred were able to withstand the Danish invasions.¹⁰²

The Danish leader Guthrun accepted the Christian faith and was baptized when King Alfred defeated the Danes at Edington in 878. A short period of peace followed, broken by raids on London and Rochester in 885. A year later, a treaty was reached in which it was decided that

⁹⁸ Rees, *Monks of England*, 66.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 63.

¹⁰⁰ Knowles, *Monastic Order*, 32.

¹⁰¹ Rees, *Monks of England*, 66.

¹⁰² Butler, *Medieval Monasteries*, 25.

the English would control the south and the Danes would control the north.¹⁰³

The Danish invasions had a deep effect on English monasticism. By 867-70, monastic life north of the Humber had been destroyed. Between 830-880, all monasteries in Wessex and south Mercia were either extinct or had become houses of secular priests and clerics who did not follow a regular ordered monastic life.¹⁰⁴ By 886, every monastery affected by the invasions had either perished or shrunk. Those Danes who stayed and settled did accept Christianity and were converted rather quickly.¹⁰⁵

King Alfred

Near the end of the Danish raids, Alfred was crowned king of Wessex in 871. Monastic life had been halted by the invasions, and Alfred saw it as his duty to revive it.¹⁰⁶ He then spent the last ten years of his reign reestablishing the church in his kingdom. He designated half of all royal revenues to be used for religious causes, with a quarter of that used for "religious institutes".¹⁰⁷ In 888, Alfred founded two houses, one a monastery and the other a nunnery.

In his quest to revive the English church, Alfred could not find any ranking Englishmen who were interested in monastic life. Thus, he was forced to look abroad for leadership for the monastery he founded at

¹⁰³ Rees, *Monks of England*, 68.

¹⁰⁴ Knowles, *Monastic Order*, 24.

¹⁰⁵ Butler, *Medieval Monasteries*, 25.

¹⁰⁶ Coldicott, *Hampshire Nunneries*, 2.

¹⁰⁷ Rees, *Monks of England*, 69.

Athelney. He named the German monk John the Old Saxon as abbot, and filled the ranks with foreign clerics and monks and with children from Gaul. Tensions between the differing nationalities arose, and a plot was discovered in which the Gaulish monks had plotted to kill their German leader. This community never flourished.

In addition to the monastery at Athelney, Alfred founded a nunnery at Shaftesbury. Its first abbess was Ethelgifu, Alfred's daughter. Little is known about this house, other than it led a more peaceful existence than its companion at Athelney. Records indicate that this house continued throughout the tenth century.¹⁰⁸

Alfred was a sort of transition figure bridging the gap between the first wave of English monasticism and the revival to come in the tenth century. In the mid-tenth century, three monks came together to lead a reformation of English monastic life. Together, Dunstan, Ethelwold, and Oswald led the English church into and through a time of change and revival, the likes of which had not been seen before in that country.

Dunstan, Ethelwold, and Oswald

Dunstan is often recognized as the most influential and most well known of the three great reformers. He was born in 909 near Glastonbury. His relatives were bishops at Wells and Winchester Cathedrals. Dunstan had wanted to be married, but a serious illness led

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 70.

him to be consecrated as a monk.

Dunstan became chaplain to the bishop of Winchester. He was ordained priest on the same day as his friend Ethelwold. He was sent into exile in 939.¹⁰⁹ Dunstan was the last of the three reformers affected by monastic reform until he came in contact with continental monasticism while in exile.¹¹⁰ He was recalled from exile after King Edmund was almost killed in a hunting accident near Cheddar in 940. The king attributed his recovery to the prayers offered up by Dunstan. As a reward, the king made Dunstan abbot of Glastonbury and gave the abbey massive endowments. With these endowments, Dunstan rebuilt Glastonbury.¹¹¹

While abbot of Glastonbury, Dunstan improved the physical plant, enclosing the precincts and building a cloister. He also reinforced observation of the Benedictine rule by the exceptionally promising monks he attracted to Glastonbury.¹¹² A testament to this talent, and to the important role Glastonbury held, is that of the twenty-four monks in that community in 958, sixteen went on to become bishops. One of those was his friend and fellow priest and reformer, Ethelwold.

It was twice unlucky for Dunstan, who was exiled in 956 after being drawn into a quarrel with King Edwig.¹¹³ He was recalled the next year by Edgar, Edwig's brother, who had become king of Mercia. Dunstan was consecrated bishop of Worcester in 957 and bishop of London that same

¹⁰⁹ Knowles, *Monastic Order*, 37-8.

¹¹⁰ Coldicott, *Hampshire Nunneries*, 9.

¹¹¹ Rees, *Monks of England*, 73.

¹¹² Knowles, *Monastic Order*, 38.

¹¹³ Coldicott, *Hampshire Nunneries*, 9.

year. In 959, when Edgar added Wessex to his kingdom, Dunstan became Archbishop of Canterbury.¹¹⁴

Dunstan's time as Archbishop was a fruitful time. He was the primary writer of the *Regularis Concordia*.¹¹⁵ He was regularly called upon as an advisor to kings. He saw to it that monks returned to Malmesbury, Bath, Westminster, Cerne, Sherborne, and both Christ Church and St Augustine's at Canterbury.¹¹⁶

Dunstan died in 988. His final illness came shortly after he had preached three times in Mass on Ascension Day. He lingered until Saturday, May 19, and died right after receiving the Viaticum.¹¹⁷ Not long after his death, many of Dunstan's disciples had become bishop or archbishop throughout England. Twelve years on, two monks from his home monastery of Glastonbury had been Archbishop of Canterbury and seven others had been or were then bishops.¹¹⁸

Ethelwold (908-94) was another of the reformers. He began monastic life by becoming a monk at Glastonbury under Dunstan. He then desired a more strict and austere life and wanted to go overseas to pursue that, but Queen Edith and King Edred would not give him permission to leave.

In 954, Ethelwold was given the task of reviving Abingdon. He took three clerks from Glastonbury with him.¹¹⁹ In later years, monks from

¹¹⁴ Knowles, *Monastic Order*, 39.

¹¹⁵ Knowles, *Monastic Order*, 404.

¹¹⁶ Butler, *Medieval Monasteries*, 26.

¹¹⁷ Knowles, *Monastic Order*, 54.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 65.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 39.

Abingdon would go out to restore the Old and New Minsters at Winchester, Peterborough, Ramsey, Ely, Crowland, and Thorney, much in the same manner as the monks of Glastonbury had done. Disciples of Ethelwold reformed St Alban's and founded Eynsham.¹²⁰

Ethelwold was made bishop of Winchester in 963. He reformed that community and established the Benedictine rule there. In order to fully accomplish this change in format, it was necessary to replace the incumbent secular clergy with monks who upheld the Benedictine rule. Ethelwold accomplished this change in spectacular fashion. On Saturday, February 21, 964, monks from Abingdon waited outside for Mass to end. When they heard the Communion text "Get you discipline, lest ye perish from the right way", they took this as a sign and stormed into the cathedral. They gave the clerks the option to either leave or become monks. All the clerks left, but three returned later to become monks.¹²¹

Bishop Ethelwold accomplished several other tasks before his death. He translated the Rule of St Benedict from Latin into Old English on the request of King Edgar and Queen Elfthryth.¹²² He also translated the Rule specifically for nuns. He taught young disciples and visited the monasteries he founded.¹²³ He managed to secure tax immunities for Peterborough and Ely. He also raised a "westwork" over the tomb of St Swithun at Winchester. Ethelwold died a worn-out man in 984.¹²⁴

Oswald, a Dane, was the youngest of the three reformers. He came

¹²⁰ Butler, *Medieval Monasteries*, 26.

¹²¹ Knowles, *Monastic Order*, 41.

¹²² Coldicott, *Hampshire Nunneries*, 15.

¹²³ Knowles, *Monastic Order*, 53.

¹²⁴ Rees, *Monks of England*, 81.

from a strong monastic line, being related to both Archbishop Oda of Canterbury and Archbishop Oskytel of York. Oswald began his clerical life in Winchester.¹²⁵ He was exiled to the continent and spent eight years at Fleury, during which time he became a monk. He was recalled from Exile in 958.¹²⁶

In 961, Oswald became bishop of Worcester on the recommendation of Dunstan to King Edgar. His major foundations while in that office were Deerhurst, Pershore, Winchcombe, Evesham, and Ripon. He established a Benedictine community at Worcester. In 972, Oswald was appointed Archbishop of York. He served simultaneously in both offices for twenty years. He died on February 28, 992, while engaged in his traditional daily Lenten ritual of washing the feet of twelve poor men.¹²⁷

Regularis Concordia

King Edgar, a great-grandson of Alfred, worked closely with Dunstan, Ethelwold, and Oswald. Together, these four saw the need for an updated monastic rule in light of reforms recently instituted.¹²⁸ They summoned church leaders, abbots, abbesses, and bishops to Winchester for a synod around Easter 970.¹²⁹

The grandly titled document *Regularis Concordia Angicae Nationis*

¹²⁵ Ibid., 74.

¹²⁶ Knowles, *Monastic Order*, 40.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 55.

¹²⁸ Butler, *Medieval Monasteries*, 27.

¹²⁹ Knowles, *Monastic Order*, 42.

*monachorum sanctimonialiumque*¹³⁰ was the focus of this synod. This document was drafted by Ethelwold and based on continental ideas. All monks and nuns present at the synod vowed obedience to this code of monastic law based on the Rule of St Benedict. Roman ideas in this document overwhelmed the Celtic/Northumbrian ideal.

The twelve chapters of the *Regularis Concordia* covered all areas of monastic life. Ethelwold decided that the primary task of the monastic community now was to observe the liturgy. He prescribed liturgical functions and ceremonies connected with a monk's death. There would be a prolonged pealing of the bells on Christmas and on feast days. Processions would go through city streets, not just through monastery buildings. Daily communion was encouraged. The prayers were to include special petitions for the king and queen. the public was now allowed to attend Mass at monasteries on Sundays and festivals.

The *Regularis Concordia* subdued the educational calling of the Celtic monks, stating that education was best left to the secular clergy, other than teaching the oblates. When they weren't otherwise occupied with observing the liturgy or teaching in this newly reduced capacity, the monks were allowed to write and illuminate books, make handicrafts, and engage in domestic service.¹³¹ In the winter, monks would be allowed to do this work in shelter.

All English monasteries were brought under the patronage of the king and queen, who would be guardians of monastic life. Nunneries

¹³⁰ Dickinson, *Monastic Life*, 66.

¹³¹ Butler, *Medieval Monasteries*, 27.

were to be cared for by the queen, and monasteries by the king. Houses were to seek the king's advice when choosing a new leader.¹³² No other patron could influence the selection process.

If a monastery was located at a cathedral, the monks there were to elect the bishop. the bishop should already be a monk, but if he wasn't, then he was to become one. This assumed that regular monastic communities had taken the place of clerks in the cathedral.¹³³ The *Regular Concordia* required that the superior of a monastery should follow the Rule of St Benedict, no matter where the monastery was located.¹³⁴

In the 970's, the greatest threat to continued revival and reform was internal strife rather than external harassment such as had been suffered at the hands of the Danes. Some houses were still held by secular clerks, those who were not members of a monastic order. The reformers sought to replace those clerks with monks and to convert those communities into proper monastic houses.

King Edgar and continued reform

Edgar served as King of England from 959-75. He was anointed king at the age of thirty at Bath Abbey by Archbishops Dunstan and Oswald on Whitsunday 973. Even though he had actually become king at age sixteen, his decision to be officially crowned at age thirty was a significant symbolic one. It was at age thirty that a man could be made

¹³² Coldicott, *Hampshire Nunneries*, 12.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 45.

¹³⁴ Knowles, *Monastic Order*, 407.

bishop, and it was also at that age that Jesus Christ began his public ministry. King Edgar saw himself as vice regent of Christ, King of the Universe, and therefore ruling England on Christ's behalf. The ritual for Edgar's anointing was written by Dunstan and formed the basis for all future coronations in England.¹³⁵

The last five years of Edgar's reign were the high point of the English monastic movement. Unfortunately, after Edgar's death in 975, good fortune did not continue. Almost immediately, a violent but temporary anti-monastic reaction rose up from the Anglo-Saxon nobility. In Mercia, landowners expelled the resident monastic communities and replaced the monks with secular clerks. The abbeys at Pershore and Winchcombe dispersed for a short time. Deerhurst Abbey did not enjoy as well a fate, never recovering after dispersal.¹³⁶

In the last twenty years of the tenth century, those monasteries founded during Edgar's reign grew to full stature. Several new houses had been founded during the time of revival, including Hyde Abbey (965), Ramsey (969), Cerne (987), and Burton-on-Trent (1004). Revived monasteries include Malmesbury (970), Bath (944), Westminster (958), St Augustine's at Canterbury (978), Abingdon (964-5), Peterborough (966), St Alban's (969), Winchcombe (972), Hexham (975), and Ripon (980).¹³⁷

The monastic revival was at its peak by 1000. England was now a Benedictine nation with at least one monastery in every diocese. By this time, four cathedrals - Canterbury, Winchester, Sherborne, and Worcester

¹³⁵ Rees, *Monks of England*, 77-8.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 81.

¹³⁷ Dickinson, *Monastic Life*, 64.

- had been converted into cathedral priories.¹³⁸ Here, the bishop served also as abbot of a monastic community and was expected to be fully a part of the community and to lead a monastic life.

In the long term, monastic reform was a victim of its own success. Danish invasions had resumed in 997, having much the same result as those raids from two hundred years earlier. The rapid expansion of monasteries had ceased by then. New foundations were rare after 1000.¹³⁹ Much of the initial fervor for monastic life had also waned by 1015.

All three reformers became the focus of cults after their death. This was likely influenced by their popularizing devotion to Swithun, Cuthbert, and Edward. Other than their cults, each reformer left his own legacy on the religious world. Dunstan was remembered for his prophetic and visionary nature, Ethelwold for his commitment to asceticism, and Oswald for his humility and gentleness.¹⁴⁰

Danish influence continues

For some time, England had been a peaceful land. The Danish raids then resumed, escalating to war. Hostilities reached a peak when on November 13, 1002, King Ethelred ordered the murder of all Danes in England. In 1006, the Danes raided Hampshire and Berkshire and defeated the Wiltshire militia near Avebury. They landed in Kent in 1011

¹³⁸ Rees, *Monks of England*, 80.

¹³⁹ Knowles, *Monastic Order*, 66.

¹⁴⁰ Rees, *Monks of England*, 82.

and murdered Archbishop Elfheah of Canterbury. King Ethelred fled to Normandy in 1013 and Sven of Denmark assumed the English throne. Ethelred returned to England when Sven died in 1014. Ethelred died in 1016, as did his son and successor Edmund Ironside.¹⁴¹

The conflict came to a halt in 1016 when the Danish leader Cnut laid claim to the English throne. Cnut was the Christian son of the Danish king Sven, himself a convert to Christianity. King Cnut brought twenty years of peace and stability to England during his reign.

A brief glimmer of a second revival came during Cnut's reign. He founded two new monasteries, St Benet's at Holme in 1019 and Bury St Edmund's in 1020.¹⁴² Both houses received monks from Ely. He also reendowed a house at Winchester. Besides these, there was little new monastic growth from 1020-42.¹⁴³

Cnut married Emma, the widow of his predecessor Ethelred. Their son Harthacnut became king after his father's death. He died after ruling for only seven years. His brother Edward followed as king. Their mother Emma died in Winchester in 1052. She was buried in Old Minster near Cnut and Harthacnut. The remains of all three were moved when the present cathedral was built.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴¹ Coldicott, *Hampshire Nunneries*, 210.

¹⁴² Dickinson, *Monastic Life*, 64.

¹⁴³ Knowles, *Monastic Order*, 70.

¹⁴⁴ Coldicott, *Hampshire Nunneries*, 21, 23.

Edward the Confessor and the shift to Norman monasticism

King Edward "The Confessor" made a small attempt at monastic revival. He restored Westminster and made it a royal private abbey directly dependent on him. This revival came at the expense of the revived Pershore Abbey.¹⁴⁵

Westminster Abbey in London serves as the royal and national church of England. Legend has it that a Christian church was built on this site in 184 but was turned into a temple to Apollo during the Diocletian persecution. It is more likely that the first church was erected here by King Sebert in 618 at the request of Bishop Mellitus. A monastery may have been attached to the church, but that was not mentioned in Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*. The church was destroyed by the Danes in the ninth century and rebuilt and restored during the tenth century revival.

In 959, Westminster was refounded by Dunstan as a Benedictine abbey for twelve monks and dedicated to St Peter. King Harold Harefoot was buried here in 1040. Westminster was made the royal church of England by King Edward the Confessor and consecrated to that role on December 28, 1065. King Edward died one week later and was buried here. The Norman king William the Conqueror was crowned king here.¹⁴⁶ Westminster was dissolved in 1540.¹⁴⁷

King Edward married Edith in 1045. The queen was educated at Wilton Abbey. She was the daughter of Earl Godwin, the most powerful man in the kingdom. Edward resented his father-in-law's power and in a

¹⁴⁵ Rees, *Monks of England*, 82.

¹⁴⁶ Butler, *Medieval Monasteries*, 380.

¹⁴⁷ Knowles, *Medieval Religious Houses*, 80.

fit of power, he forced Godwin and his sons to leave the country in 1051. Queen Edith was sent to a nunnery, either Wherwell or Wilton, though it is possible she spent time at both. Edward had cooled down by the next year, Edith was brought back into the royal court, and Godwin and his sons returned from exile.¹⁴⁸

Edward the Confessor had several ways of choosing an abbot. He might "bestow" the office as in the feudal system on the continent. He might make a direct appointment to an outsider as a reward for services rendered to the crown, such as he did when appointing Ralph of Scandinavia to the abbacy of Abingdon. He might choose someone and present him to a group of monks to "elect" him, such as with Baldwin at Bury in 1065. He might also have a seated abbot name his successor, such as with Mannig and Aethelwig at Evesham in 1059.¹⁴⁹

Edward the Confessor chose four important abbots as his advisers. Wulfric of St Augustine went with Edward to the Council of Rheims in 1049. Aelfwine of Ramsey went along to that council. He was also sent on a diplomatic mission to Denmark. Also serving as advisers were Leofric of Peterborough and Aethelwig of Evesham.¹⁵⁰

Edward the Confessor began a gradual shift away from monk-bishops. He showed a fondness for the Norman system of monasticism. His principal benefices were fledgling Norman abbeys in southern England and the west Midlands.

English church records from the years immediately preceding the

¹⁴⁸ Coldicott, *Hampshire Nunneries*, 23.

¹⁴⁹ Knowles, *Monastic Order*, 396.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 71.

Normal Conquest were destroyed by the Normans. It was as if they were trying to obliterate the past and start over. The only major record of monastic life to survive was the *Liber Vitae* of 1054.¹⁵¹

It is extremely rare to find a complete roster of members of a medieval religious house. Record keeping of that detail was not practiced widely. Therefore, the *Liber Vitae* of New Minster in Winchester is a great treasure. It contained the names of all those who joined New Minster. It also listed the bishops of England, many abbots, and all those at Abingdon, Ely, and Romsey at the time. This detailed recording ceased by 1020. Until 1054, the only new additions to the *Liber Vitae* were the names of friends and benefactors of New Minster.¹⁵²

At the time of the Norman Conquest, England was home to thirty-four abbeys with 740 monks, six ex-abbeys and conventual priories (63), five lesser priories and cells (26), three alien priories (15) and twelve houses of nuns (206), for a total of sixty monastic communities with 946 residents.¹⁵³

In the roughly five hundred years following the arrival of Augustine and a band of missionary monks, the church took hold in England, setting down roots and thriving. It did have its down times, but it was able to persevere and continue through those rougher periods. It never lost sight of the original aim - to bring Christianity to a pagan nation. Growth and diversity continued in the years following the Norman Conquest as more and more ideas came into the church, challenging the foundation

¹⁵¹ Coldicott, *Hampshire Nunneries*, 24.

¹⁵² Knowles, *Monastic Order*, 66-7.

¹⁵³ Knowles, *Medieval Religious Houses*, 359, 363.

set by Augustine, Columba, and their fellow workers in Christ all those centuries ago.

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