

KING OSWALD AND KING ALFRED

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Although people allege that true Christianity began in England by King Henry (who had six wives), Protestant Christianity is, in fact, indebted to the labours of kings in England long before the Reformation.

King Oswald is one of those kings in England that not many hear of, because historians mainly focus on the main figures in the historical line from King Alfred (849–899) to the present day. King Oswald (604–642) was king of the northern part of England called Northumbria. He ruled in the days of the Angles and Saxons.

Oswald was banished out of Northumbria when he was a prince, and went to live with the Scots. The Scots at that time were of the early Christianity which had come to them directly from Asia Minor and the Early Church. This was called the “Celtic Church”, and was much purer than the religion which was centred at Rome, which was spreading over Europe. In fact, there was a great conflict between Romanism and the old Christians. The Romanists presented their superiority by arguing for their date for Easter rather than the traditional date, and that uniformity was based on Rome, not on the collective of believers. This shows that their arguing and persecution was nothing to do with promoting the Word of God. (The date for Easter is irrelevant. Although the Protestants follow the Roman dating, this does not mean that Rome is actually spiritually superior. In fact, true Protestants follow the Roman dating for the sake of uniformity and tradition, knowing full well that Christ did not die on a Friday, and that the Passover and Easter are two different festivals. The world promotes Easter as a time for chocolate eggs. While true believers may freely partake of buns and chocolate with a clear conscience, they would be wise to focus at that time of the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.)

King Oswald came from a heathen nation. However, he embraced Christianity as taught by the Celtic Church, and when he became king of Northumbria, he had missionaries come in, notably Aidan from Scotland, who converted many people. Northumbria became a base for evangelising all the Anglo-Saxons in England.

Those in the south of England, in Kent, had been turned to Romanism by Augustine of Canterbury, who resorted to manipulation and force to convert people to Romanism. Thus, Northern and Eastern England became a stronghold for the purer Christianity, while Southern and Western England were Romanised. This led to a gradual blending. In England, there was always some trace of the old Christian witness, though the Vikings did much damage to the Celtic Church. (The Viking raids destroyed much of the old Church in Scotland and Ireland, and the Viking occupation of part of England also weakened them.) On the other hand, such an ignorance (it was the Dark Ages) descended upon England, that almost no one in the south and west could read Latin or even had books of learning.

King Alfred was king of south-western England. He was barely able to resist the Danish Vikings as they took over the land. Although Alfred had to live like Robin Hood in some marshes, he was able to build up a small army and actually managed to attack the Danes at London. King Alfred was interested in reviving learning. It was very important for him to revive the learning of the Northumbrian Christians (such as

Bede), and have it made available from that time. This including the writing of the history of the English people, which recorded the history and influence of the Celtic Church. Most importantly, King Alfred turned some of the Scripture, such as Exodus and the Psalms, into the common tongue, which was not the Romanist practice.

These things show that God has worked to prepare the circumstance of the English nation, even before the Reformation, to have their language and other things prepared, so that there were a people who were ready to hear the Gospel, and that by their Protestant English Bible, the Word of God would be preached through the whole world.

The Lord has been working, even among the Gentiles, “to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.” (Luke 1:17b). In fact, true Christians have despaired at the growth of Romanism, or at the seeming dominance of darkness. Even today, people may despair at the failing of Protestantism, the fall of Pentecostalism, the end of the King James Bible. “But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to *the image of* Baal. Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.” (Romans 11:4, 5).