



DC English IV

World/British Literature

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The Venerable Bede (672-735)

The Venerable Bede

- an English Benedictine monk at the monastery of St. Peter in the Kingdom of Northumbria of the Angles (contemporary Northeast England).
- **known as the Father of English History**
- attempted to show a united England, despite the numerous kingdom-states that existed at the time, pre-Norman times

Ecclesiastical history of the English People

- Latin: *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*
- Completed in 731
- In full, it exists as a historical account of the Christian Churches in England, and of England itself.
- Composed in Latin, it is one of the most important original references on **Anglo-Saxon history**.
- Helped create an early English national identity before the emergence of Geoffrey Chaucer's work in the Fourteenth Century.

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from Ecclesiastical history of the English People

I must here relate a story which shows Gregory's deep desire for the salvation of our nation. We are told that one day some merchants who had recently arrived in Rome displayed their many wares in the crowded market-place. Among other merchandise Gregory saw some boys exposed for sale. These had fair complexions, fine-cut features, and fair hair. Looking at them with interest, he enquired what country and race they came from. 'They come from Britain,' he was told, 'where all the people have this appearance.' He then asked whether the people were Christians, or whether they were still ignorant heathens. 'They are pagans,' he was informed. 'Alas!' said Gregory with a heartfelt sigh: 'how sad that such handsome folk are still in the grasp of the Author of darkness, and that faces of such beauty conceal minds ignorant of God's grace! What is the name

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of this race?’ ‘They are called Angles¹,’ he was told. ‘That is appropriate,’ he said, ‘for they have angelic faces, and it is right that they should become fellow-heirs with the angels in heaven. And what is the name of their Province?’ ‘Deira²,’ was the answer. ‘Good. They shall indeed be *de ira* [*l.* of anger] saved from wrath and called to the mercy of Christ. And what is the name of their king?’ he asked. ‘Aella³,’ he was told. ‘Then must Alleluia be sung to the praise of God our Creator in their land,’ said Gregory, making play on the name. [...] I have thought it fitting to include this traditional story in the history of our Church.

Angles are a group of early Germanic people who settled in Great Britain after the Roman occupation. They founded numerous kingdoms within the territory. Their name is the root of the name England, “land of Ængle”).

Deira was an Anglo-Saxon Kingdom in Northern England.

Ælla (reigned in 560 CE - 588 circa) first known king of Deira before Christianity. In Chaucer’s “Man of Law’s Tale” King Ælla is shown as a major secondary character in the story.

<https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/source/bede-greggrea.asp>