The Argument of the Present History, and the Origins of the Lamentable Schism in England

The Britons (whom we now call the English) were converted to the faith of Christ our Lord by Joseph of Arimathea, who planted the first beginnings of our holy religion in that isle. Afterwards, they were secured there by Pope Eleutherius, who was according to some accounts the twelfth, according to others the fourteenth, pope after Saint Peter. It was he who sent Fugacius and Damianus to England, where they baptized King Lucius and much of his realm. So great did the Christian faith grow there that Tertullian, an ancient writer of the time, wrote these words: “The lands of Britain, which the Romans could not reach, have become subjects of Jesus Christ.” Subsequently, it came to pass that the Angles and the Saxon peoples of Germany made war upon the Britons, conquering them and driving them into the remotest corners of the island. As they were unbelievers, when they seized the kingdom it fell away from

1 Sander, De origine ac progressu, 1–4.
2 In the margin: “This is proven by Polydore Vergil; he takes it from Gildas, an ancient author, Books 2 and 4.”
   Gildas (fl.fifth–sixth centuries) was an early British chronicler, whose best-known work, De excidio et conquestu Britanniae, has been variously dated to 479–84 and 515–30. François Kerlouégan, “Gildas (fl.5th–6th cent.),” in ODNB, 22:223–25, here 223.
   Vergil, Anglica historia, Book 2.
4 In his Lives of the Popes (c.1474), Bartolomeo Platina (1421–81) records, “Immediately after starting his pontificate, Eleutherius (who succeeded Soter, as I said) received a letter from Lucius, the king of Britain, in which he petitioned the pope to accept him and his people into the Christian fold. Eleutherius accordingly sent two excellent men, Fugatius and Damianus, to baptize the king and his people.” Bartolomeo Platina, Lives of the Popes, ed. and trans. Anthony F. D’Elia, vol. 1, The I Tatti Renaissance Library 30 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 91.
5 In the margin: “In the book Adversus Iudaeos.”
   Tertullian, Adversus Iudaeos, 7.4.
the faith of Christ. For this reason, Pope Gregory I sent them Augustine, Mellitus, and other saintly Benedictine monks, who converted them from idolatry, made them Christians, and baptized King Æthelberht of Kent. From that day to the twenty-fifth year of the reign of Henry VIII (1534 after the birth of our Lord), for the space of almost a thousand years, there was no other creed in England, no confession but the Roman Catholic—and this with such humility, obedience, and loyalty to the Apostolic See, that from the mighty King Inas, founder of Wells Cathedral and the famous monastery of Glastonbury, to the wretched times of King Henry (more than eight hundred years), each house in England gave the Roman pontiff a sum of money by way of tribute or voluntary offering, in honor of the glorious prince of the Apostles, to demonstrate the entire realm's special devotion to the Holy See. For this reason, the money they offered was known as “Peter’s pence.” But Henry VIII perverted the faith of Christ and wrenched the kingdom away from the communion and obedience of the Roman Pontiff, though for its ancient loyalty some had called it the firstborn daughter of the Church. What follows is the occasion Henry seized upon to do this.

Henry's elder brother, Arthur, took as his wife Lady Catherine, the daughter of the Catholic Kings of Spain, Don Ferdinand and Doña Isabella of glorious memory, but shortly thereafter he died without issue. What is more, on account of his tender years, feeble health, and sudden death, he left the princess his wife untouched, just as he had found her. With the dispensation of the supreme pontiff, Henry married his sister-in-law, in order to preserve the peace between the Spanish and English. Having taken her as his lawful wife, lived

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6 "Since Bishop Augustine had advised him that the harvest was great and the workers were few, Pope Gregory sent more colleagues and minsters of the word together with his messengers. First and foremost among these were Mellitus, Justus, Paulinus, and Rufinianus." Bede, *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, ed. and trans. Bertram Colgrave and R.A.B. Mynors (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 2.29.

7 Bede's transcription of Augustine of Canterbury's epitaph includes the line “he led King Æthelberht and his nation from the worship of idols to faith in Christ.” According to Bede, Æthelberht ruled from 560 to 616. Ibid., 2.3.

8 In the margin: “Polydore Vergil, [*Anglica historia,*] Book 4.”

King Inas (or Ine) of Wessex ruled from 688 to 726. His law code (“probably [promulgated] between 688 and 694”) required the payment of “church dues” (*ciricesceattas*). It is unclear whether it was Inas, or another king of the period, who began the payment of tributes to Rome that soon acquired the moniker “Peter’s Pence.” Barry Cunliffe, *Wessex to AD 1000, A Regional History of England* (London: Longman Group, 1993), 298. William A. Chaney, “Anglo-Saxon Church Dues: A Study in Historical Continuity,” *CH* 32, no. 3 (September 1963): 268–77, here 268, 271, 276.