



Oxford Cambridge and RSA

Wednesday 24 May 2023 – Morning

A Level History A

Y301/01 The Early Anglo-Saxons c.400–800

Time allowed: 2 hours 30 minutes



You must have:

- the OCR 12-page Answer Booklet

INSTRUCTIONS

- Use black ink.
- Write your answer to each question in the Answer Booklet. The question numbers must be clearly shown.
- Fill in the boxes on the front of the Answer Booklet.
- Answer the question in Section A and **any two** questions in Section B.

INFORMATION

- The total mark for this paper is **80**.
- The marks for each question are shown in brackets [].
- Quality of extended response will be assessed in questions marked with an asterisk (*).
- This document has **4** pages.

ADVICE

- Read each question carefully before you start your answer.

SECTION A

Read the **two** passages and answer Question 1.

- 1 Evaluate the interpretations in **both** of the two passages and explain which you think is more convincing as an explanation of the significance of Augustine's mission in 597. [30]

Passage A

Christianity in Britain had probably already undergone over a century and a half of internal development before the withdrawal of Roman civil administration in 410. The next major event was the supposed 'introduction' of Christianity to Anglo-Saxon pagan Britain by St Augustine's missionaries, who arrived at Canterbury in 597. The notion that Augustine's mission was to pagans and new British converts is undermined by Bede himself. According to Bede, before meeting Augustine the British bishops consulted a wise and holy hermit who advised them to follow Augustine. Seven bishops turned up on this occasion, not the whole bench of bishops. That implies that more existed in the British Church. The British were better Latinists than the Augustinian missionaries. All of this illustrates that sixth century south-eastern Britain was far from a pagan wilderness.

So south-eastern Britain was far less ignorant and pagan than the missionaries had been led to expect. We also know that in the seventy or so years that followed St Augustine's mission, the newly arrived Roman Church and the indigenous Celtic Churches developed their own forms of service, which reflected their different cultural backgrounds. After the famous Synod of Whitby [664] St Augustine's Roman Church would become the official Church of Britain. The Celtic Church, however, had been a powerful force in the land for perhaps three centuries, and its influence would continue to be felt for as long, or even longer.

Adapted from: F. Pryor, Britain AD: A Quest for Arthur, England and the Anglo-Saxons, published in 2004.

Passage B

The fact of the matter is that most people living in eastern Britain at the time of Augustine's arrival would have been entirely innocent of the religion of Rome. The seventh century was when the English began converting to Christianity. Many an English king in this period, when first encountering foreign missionaries, must have considered conversion to Christianity as one more status-enhancing move. This was because the new religion came bundled with impressive writing and building technologies. Moreover, one of the perks of becoming Christian was access to the expertise of foreign churchmen from more Roman parts of the world, who were willing and able to help convert-kings more efficiently administer their territories and more profitably manage their resources.

So, when Augustine and his fellow missionaries arrived in Kent in 597, declaring that they 'came from Rome', the Kentish King was probably open to these men's approaches, in part because he thought that conversion could help him triumph over competing dynasties. While conversion meant the end of some ritual practices embraced by royal households, nonetheless, because missionaries showed little inclination to obstruct the status-enhancing burial practices that were so central to kings' strategies for glorifying themselves, a change in religion did not interfere with one of the most basic means of political competition. Progress was not entirely smooth, of course, and a number of royal courts initially resisted conversion or slid back into paganism after a year or a decade. But, so many important dynasties came to make the transition to Christianity in the first half of the seventh century that it appears that those which were initially reluctant to accept the new religion, in the end had little choice but to become Christians themselves in order to stay in the game.

Adapted from: R. Fleming, Britain After Rome: The Fall and Rise, 400–1070, published in 2010.

SECTION B

Answer any **two** questions.

- 2*** To what extent were the reasons for the expansion of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms during the period from c.400 to 600 the same as those during the period from c.600 to 800? **[25]**
- 3*** 'The Church was hindered by its relations with kings throughout the period from c.400 to 800.' How far do you agree? **[25]**
- 4*** To what extent was Anglo-Saxon art and literature an expression of Christian belief in the period from c.400 to 800? **[25]**

END OF QUESTION PAPER

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