FIRST Reading and Use of English Part 6 – Christianity in Britain

You are going to read a text about Christianity in Britain. Six sentences have been removed from the text. Choose from the sentences **A – G** the one which fits each gap **1 – 6**. There is one extra sentence which you do not need to use.

A. He wrote around 40 books about theology and history.
B. It was Alfred's hope that this would enable Christianity to begin to capture the imagination of the ordinary people.
C. The people on the island started to worship gods from Roman mythology.
D. It was the site of an important monastery.
E. Monasteries and churches were plundered, and priests fled for their lives.
F. The conversion of the king created a strong alliance between Christianity and Kingship.
G. Yet, somehow, Christianity survived on the Western edges of Britain, even during the Dark Ages.

Christianity in Britain

With the departure of the Romans and the arrival of the new **pagan invaders**, Angles, Saxons and Jutes, Christianity lost its dominion in most of Britain. **1**

Missionary activity continued in Wales and Ireland, and in Western Scotland **Saint Columba** helped to bring a distinctly Irish brand of Christianity to mainland Britain. In 597CE the Pope in Rome sent **Augustine** on a mission to King Aethelbert of Kent. **2**

Certainly **the Venerable Bede** wanted to see it this way. For Bede, a Christian England was part of God's master plan. He believed it was the destiny of the Anglo-Saxons to become Christians, united in a single Christian nation. But how would this come about? **St Bede** (the Venerable Bede) (673CE–735CE) was the greatest of all the Anglo-Saxon scholars. **3**

His most famous work was *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum* or *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People* which was completed in 731CE. It was the first work of history in which the AD (now CE) system of dating was used. In the account of the Synod of Whitby in his *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, Bede described the showdown between the Irish Christianity epitomised by Saint Columba and the international Roman brand of Christianity which had been brought by Augustine.

Bede ended his *Ecclesiastical History* complaining about the laziness of the Anglo-Saxons, who he saw as half-hearted Christians still holding onto Pagan practices. An organised and disciplined parish life which would regulate the beliefs and behaviour of the British people was still to mature.

Christianity rose from a minor cult and now had the potential to be a major national religion, but it still had to win the hearts and minds of the population.

Faith had already proved that it was able to survive invasion and attack. But, just when Christianity's rise looked to be unstoppable, the **Viking invasion** of **Lindisfarne** in **871CE** marked the start of a series of attacks which threatened to destroy the Christian church. **4**

It looked as if Paganism would again crush Christianity. **Lindisfarne** is an Anglo-Saxon name which means 'Holy Island'. **5**

Lindisfarne is just off the coast of Northumbria. You can still visit Lindisfarne today. It is an island at high tide but at low tide it can be reached by car and on foot. It was **Alfred**, the Christian King of **Wessex**, who turned things round. Alfred saw the Viking attacks as a punishment from God. Once Alfred had secured a victory over the Viking warrior Guthrum at the **Battle of Edington**, he began to create a new system of Christian learning that would reach the illiterate country people. **6**

In the 10th century, lords began to provide small chapels on their land where local people could use the services of a priest. This sowed the seeds of the parish system, still in existence today.

LIVEWORKSHEETS