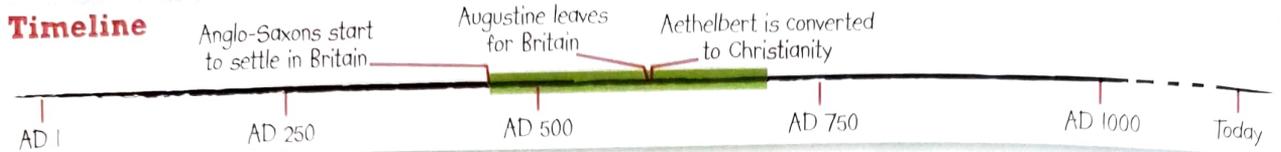


# Anglo-Saxon Religions

## Timeline



To begin with, the Anglo-Saxons followed **Pagan religions**. Pagan religions often worship many gods and goddesses, and nature plays a big part. The Anglo-Saxon religions tended to focus on values that were important to warriors — like courage and bravery.

*Why do you think being a good warrior was important to the Anglo-Saxons? Apart from bravery, what other values do you think a good warrior needs?*

## A holy influence

Where Saxons and Angles had settled in the south and east of Britain, the people were generally Pagan. In areas where the Saxons hadn't settled (like Wales) **Christianity** was still a big part of life. In AD 596, the Roman Christian church sent **missionaries** to convert the Anglo-Saxons to Christianity. The missionaries were led by a monk called Augustine.

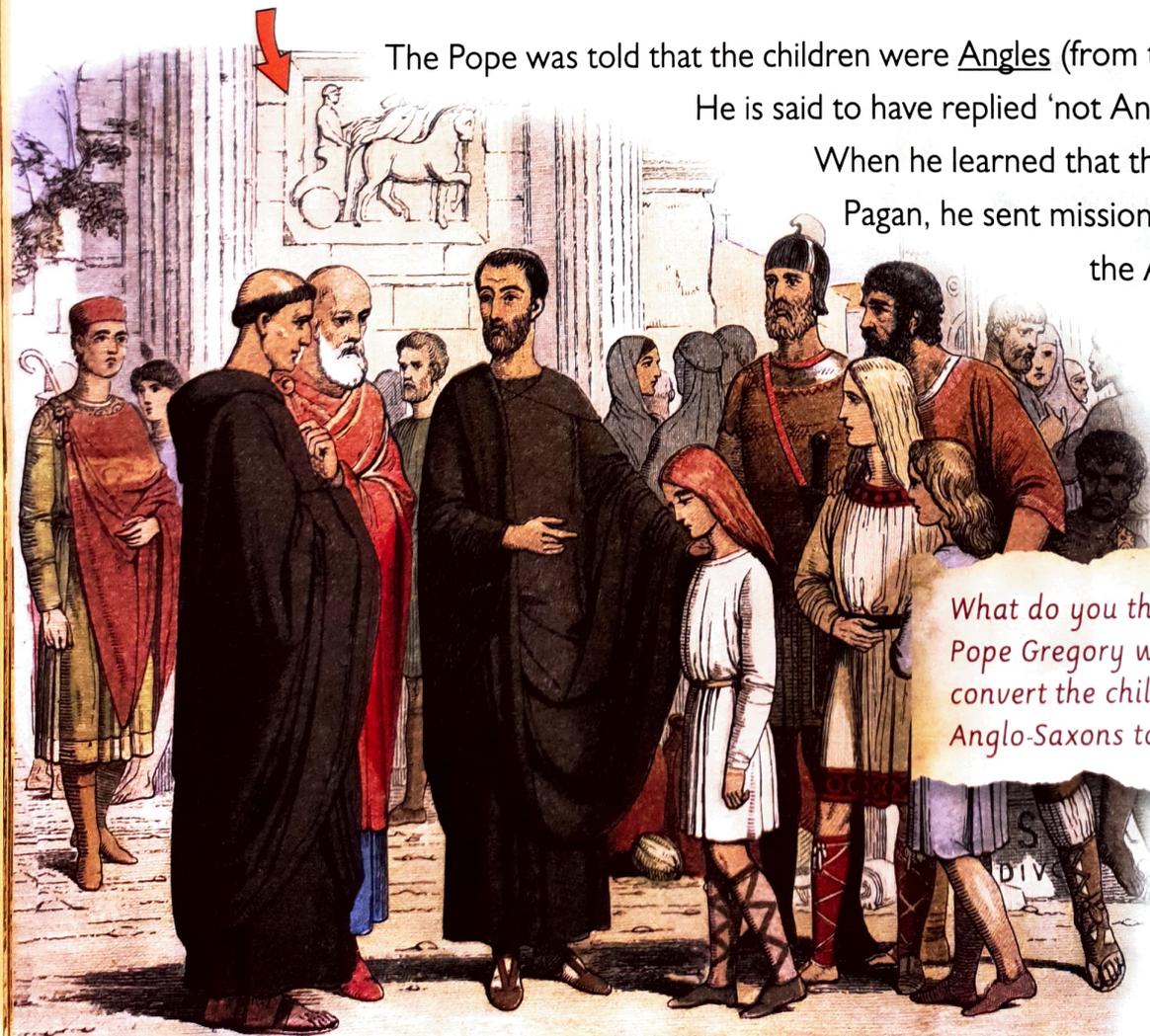
So why did the church decide to send these missionaries? According to Bede, it happened when Pope Gregory came across a group of Anglo-Saxon slave children in Rome.

The Pope was told that the children were Angles (from the Angle tribe).

He is said to have replied 'not Angles but angels!'

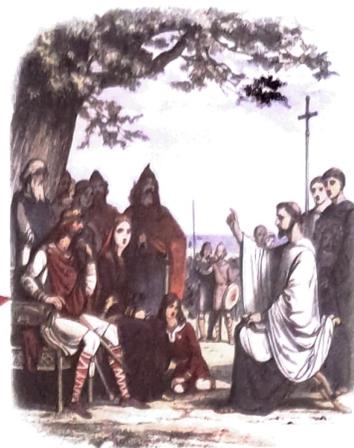
When he learned that the children were Pagan, he sent missionaries to convert the Anglo-Saxons to Christianity.

*What do you think made Pope Gregory want to convert the children and other Anglo-Saxons to Christianity?*



## A monk with a mission

Augustine began his mission by visiting King Aethelbert, the Pagan king of Kent. The king had married a Christian princess named Bertha. Together, Bertha and Augustine converted Aethelbert to Christianity.



## The call of the church

By about AD 700, Christianity was a big part of life and everyone was expected to go to church. Kings who became Christian expected their followers to convert too.

The church in England was organised around minsters. These were places where a group of priests, monks and nuns organised worship.

Minsters were usually set up by a king or nobleman who expected the nuns and monks in his minster to pray for him — especially in times of trouble and war.



The photograph shows Minster Abbey in Kent. It's an Anglo-Saxon minster, which is still lived in by nuns today.

The main duty of a nun or monk was to say prayers and attend daily services. The rest of the time they would work in the farm attached to the minster.



Some monks and nuns were also teachers. Unlike most people at the time, monks and nuns could read and write.

*Once Britain became Christian again, we have more written texts. Why do you think this is?*

## Out with the Pagan gods and in with Christianity...

The Anglo-Saxons weren't keen about giving up their Pagan gods to start with, but over a period of about 100 years, Christianity became central to the Anglo-Saxon way of life.