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Saint Aidan

In English / Christianity / In English / Συναξαριακές Μορφές



During the seventh century Northumbria, comprising the kingdoms of Bernicia and Deira, was a battleground in which the fate of rival kings determined whether the Celtic or the Roman Church should be the prevailing missionary influence. In 616, when King Ethelfrith of Northumbria was defeated in battle and slain, his son Oswald took refuge in Scotland and was converted to Christianity at Iona. Edwin, the new king, also became a Christian, but under the influence of Saint Paulinus,

bishop of York, whose allegiance was to Rome. After Edwin’s death in 633, Paulinus abandoned his work in northern England. Oswald returned from exile and eventually became king, whereupon he sent to Iona for a bishop who would preach the gospel in Northumbria.

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