

= Laurence of Canterbury =

Laurence (sometimes Lawrence or Laurentius ; died 2 February 619) was the second Archbishop of Canterbury from about 604 to 619 . He was a member of the Gregorian mission sent from Italy to England to Christianise the Anglo @-@ Saxons from their native Anglo @-@ Saxon paganism , although the date of his arrival is disputed . He was consecrated archbishop by his predecessor , Augustine of Canterbury , during Augustine 's lifetime , to ensure continuity in the office . While archbishop , he attempted unsuccessfully to resolve differences with the native British bishops by corresponding with them about points of dispute . Laurence faced a crisis following the death of King Æthelberht of Kent , when the king 's successor abandoned Christianity ; he eventually reconverted . Laurence was revered as a saint after his death in 619 .

= = Early life = =

Laurence was part of the Gregorian mission originally dispatched from Rome in 595 to convert the Anglo @-@ Saxons from their native paganism to Christianity ; he landed at Thanet , Kent , with Augustine in 597 , or , as some sources state , first arrived in 601 and was not a part of the first group of missionaries . He had been a monk in Rome before his travels to England , but nothing else is known of his history or background . The medieval chronicler Bede says that Augustine sent Laurence back to Pope Gregory I to report on the success of converting King Æthelberht of Kent and to carry a letter with questions for the pope . Accompanied by Peter of Canterbury , another missionary , he set off some time after July 598 , and had returned by June 601 . He brought back with him Gregory 's replies to Augustine 's questions , a document commonly known as the *Libellus responsionum* , that Bede incorporated in his *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* . Laurence is probably the Laurence referred to in the letter from Gregory to Bertha , queen of Kent . In that letter , Gregory praises Bertha for her part in the conversion of her husband , details of which Gregory says he received from Laurence the priest . It is known that Laurence returned to England with Mellitus and others of the second group of missionaries in the summer of 601 , but there is no record of Peter being with them .

= = Archbishop = =

Laurence succeeded Augustine to the see of Canterbury in about 604 , and ruled until his death on 2 February 619 . To secure the succession , Augustine had consecrated Laurence before he died , even though that was prohibited by canon law . Augustine was afraid though that if someone did not step into the office immediately , it would damage the missionary efforts in Britain . However , Laurence never received a pallium from Rome , so he may have been considered uncanonical by the papacy . Bede makes a point of comparing Augustine 's action in consecrating Laurence to Saint Peter 's action of consecrating Clement as Bishop of Rome during Peter 's lifetime , which the theologian J. Robert Wright believes may be Bede 's way of criticising the practices of the church in his day .

In 610 Laurence received letters from Pope Boniface IV , addressed to him as archbishop and Augustine 's successor . The correspondence was in response to Laurence having sent Mellitus to Rome earlier in 610 , to solicit advice from the papacy on matters concerning the English Church . While in Rome Mellitus attended a synod , and brought the synodical decrees back with him to Laurence .

In 613 Laurence consecrated the monastery church built by Augustine in Canterbury , and dedicated it to saints Peter and Paul ; it was later re @-@ consecrated as St Augustine 's Abbey , Canterbury . Laurence also wrote to the bishops in the lands held by the Scots and by the Britons , urging them to hold Easter on the day that the Roman church celebrated it , instead of their traditional date , part of the Easter controversy . The letter is also preserved in Bede 's history . Laurence in 609 stated that Dagan , a native bishop , would not eat with Laurence or share a roof with the archbishop , due to the differences between the two Churches .

= = Pagan reaction = =

Æthelberht died in 616 , during Laurence 's tenure ; his son Eadbald abandoned Christianity in favour of Anglo @-@ Saxon paganism , forcing many of the Gregorian missionaries to flee the pagan backlash that followed Æthelberht 's death . Among them in Gaul were Mellitus , who was Bishop of London , and Justus , who was Bishop of Rochester . Remaining in Britain , Laurence succeeded in reconverting Eadbald to Christianity . Bede relates the story that Laurence had been prepared to give up when he was visited by St Peter in a dream or vision . St Peter chastised Laurence and whipped him , and the marks of the whipping remained after the vision or dream ended . Laurence then displayed them to Eadbald , and the king was converted on the spot . Bede , however , hints that it was the death of some of the leaders of the pagan party in battle that really persuaded Laurence to stay . According to Benedicta Ward , a historian of Christianity , Bede uses the story of the whipping as an example of how suffering was a reminder of Christ 's suffering for humans , and how that example could lead to conversion . Wright argues that another point Bede is making is that it is because of the intercession of St Peter himself that the mission continued . David Farmer , in the Oxford Dictionary of Saints , suggests that the whipping story may have been a blending of the Quo Vadis story with some information given by Jerome in a letter .

Modern historians have seen political overtones in the pagan reaction . The historian D. P. Kirby sees Eadbald 's actions as a repudiation of his father 's pro @-@ Frankish policies . Alcuin , a later medieval writer , wrote that Laurence was " censured by apostolic authority " . This may have been a letter from Pope Adeodatus I , commanding Laurence to stay in Kent . Kirby goes on to argue that it was Justus , not Laurence , who converted Eadbald , and this while Justus was archbishop , sometime around 624 . Not all historians agree with this argument , however . Nicholas Brooks states that the king was converted during Laurence 's archiepiscopate , within a year of him succeeding his father . The historian Barbara Yorke argues that there were two co @-@ rulers of Kent after Æthelberht 's death , Eadbald and a Æthelwald , and that Eadbald was converted by Laurence while Æthelwald was converted by Justus after his return to Rochester . Another factor in the pagan reaction was Laurence 's objection to Eadbald 's marriage to his father 's widow , something that Christians considered to be unlawful .

All efforts to extend the church beyond Kent encountered difficulties due to the attitude of King Rædwald of East Anglia , who had become the leading king in the south after Æthelberht 's death . Rædwald was converted before the death of Æthelberht , perhaps at the urging of Æthelberht , but his kingdom was not , and Rædwald seems to have converted only to the extent of placing a Christian altar in his pagan temple . It proved impossible for Mellitus to return to London as bishop , although Justus did resume his duties at Rochester .

= = Death and legacy = =

Laurence died on 2 February 619 , and was buried in the abbey of St Peter and Paul in Canterbury , later renamed St Augustine 's ; his relics , or remains , were moved , or translated , to the new church of St Augustine 's in 1091 . His shrine was in the axial chapel of the abbey church , flanking the shrine of Augustine , his predecessor . Laurence came to be regarded as a saint , and was given the feast day of 3 February . The ninth century Stowe Missal commemorates his feast day , along with Mellitus and Justus . A Vita (or Life) was written about the time of his translation , by Goscelin , but it is mainly based on information in Bede . His tomb was opened in 1915 . Besides his feast day , the date of his translation , 13 September , was also celebrated after his death . Laurence 's tenure as archbishop is mainly remembered for his failure to secure a settlement with the Celtic church , and for his reconversion of Eadbald following Æthelbert 's death . He was succeeded as archbishop by Mellitus , the Bishop of London .