

## LESSON 61 Augustine takes Christianity to England (A.D. 597 )

**Desired Results:** The children will understand Augustine's role in bringing Christianity to England and the power of a good example.

**Principle:** "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only" (James 1:22).

### Materials Needed:

Copy of England Map for each child (appendix)  
Copy of "Augustine Meets King Ethelbert" coloring page for each child (appendix).



**Song:** "I Want to Be A Missionary Now," *Children's Songbook*, p. 168 (Music CD's, disc 4, song 4)

**Prayer:** Invite the Spirit to guide the teaching and learning.

**Memorization:** Spend 3-5 minutes memorizing James 1:22 and "Someone Is Watching" (after unit header).

**Timeline Update:** Place a picture of Augustine at A.D. 597.



**Study:** Give each child a copy of the England Map. Find and mark London, Kent, Canterbury, the Thames River, the English Channel, the Straits of Dover, the North Sea, and the Irish Sea.



**Study:** Remind the children that the Christian religion, although in its apostate form, had spread throughout Europe. In order for Heavenly Father to prepare the world for the Restoration, Christianity also had to have a firm hold in England. It was England's people and the heritage of England's laws that led to the American Revolution, which prepared the way for the Restoration.

**Read** "Saint Augustine of Canterbury" (in appendix). Have the children listen for ways the Lord providentially opened the way for Christianity to be taken to England. The children may wish to color their coloring page as you read.

[Note to parent: There is evidence that Christianity arrived in England at a much earlier date, but by Augustine's day, no remnants of the Christian religion remained.]



**Think/Record:** Have the children tell or write the story of Augustine in their own words.



**Think:** **Discuss** what events Heavenly Father used to open England to Christianity. (Events may include the following: Gregory saw the Angles in the marketplace and was filled with

a desire to teach them the gospel; Gregory became pope which gave him the power to send monks to England; Heavenly Father gave the monks the courage to complete their mission; Ethelbert's wife was already a Christian and had a French priest with her, so the people were not entirely unfamiliar with Christianity; Ethelbert's heart was softened toward Augustine and his companions; Augustine and his companions were good examples; Ethelbert accepted Christianity, thus opening the way for his subjects to accept it.)

Have the children title a piece of paper "The Lord's Providential Hand in Taking Christianity to England." Have the children list evidences of God's hand on their worksheet.



**Think:** ? Why were the people of England willing to listen to Augustine and his men and believe them? (The people saw their good works and wanted to be like them. They set a good example.)



**Apply:** Review the poem you started memorizing for this class:

Someone is watching  
and that is a fact.  
Someone will copy  
the way that I act;  
So make this your motto  
and put it to use:  
Be someone's example  
and not his excuse.

**Ask:**

? How might our actions be used as an excuse by someone else? (They might see us do wrong and justify their own wrongdoing by it.)

**Discuss** ways you can set a good example, using "the silent power of holiness" to bring others to Christ.



**Apply/Record:** On a sheet of paper, list one specific thing you can do to become a better example to those around you.

**Enrichment:**

1. When the monks were discouraged and wanted to turn back, Pope Gregory sent them this message: "*Gregory, the servant of the servants of God, to the servants of our Lord.* Forasmuch as it had been better not to begin a good work, than to think of desisting from that which has been begun, it behooves you, my beloved sons, to fulfil the good work, which, by the help of our Lord, you have undertaken. Let not, therefore, the toil of the journey, nor the tongues of evil speaking men, alter you; but with all possible earnestness and zeal perform that which, by God's direction, you have undertaken; being assured, that much labour is followed by an eternal reward.

**Ask:** ? What good works have you begun that you sometimes want to desist doing? (chores, schoolwork, practicing, being a good friend, using good language, dressing modestly. Choose good works that are part of your family.)

**Ask:** ? Why do we sometimes want to stop doing good things? (we get tired, too much work, others ridicule us, etc.)

? How can we resist such feelings? (make good works a habit, remember why we do what we do, become closer to Heavenly Father who strengthens us through scripture study and prayer)

Read D&C 64:33—

33: *Wherefore, be not weary in well-doing, for ye are laying the foundation of a great work. And out of small things proceedeth that which is great.*

**Ask:** ? What small things must we not weary of doing?

2. *Augustine Came to Kent* by Barbara Willard (Bethlehem Books, 1996) is an excellent book of historical fiction about Augustine and his experiences in Kent. Obtain a copy of the book and read it aloud as a family.

## Saint Augustine of Canterbury

(From *Our Island Saints* by Amy Steedman, London: T.C & E.C Jack, 1912; this book is in the public domain in the United States.)

The monk Gregory walked through the market-place of Rome and looked with pitying eyes at the slaves waiting there to be sold like sheep or oxen. It always made him sorrowful and angry to pass through the market and see those poor patient slaves who seemed to have never a friend to help them. It was better perhaps not to pass by that way, and yet the little he could do by friendly words and kindly looks might cheer some of the poor souls, and so the pity that he felt always drew him back.

He knew the market-place so well, and the look of those weary toil-worn faces, and it always seemed to him a very grey sad world in which he walked. But to-day a strange new sight woke him from his half-dreaming pity and made him press forward with eager watchful eyes.

Surrounded by a throng of dark-skinned, brown-eyed Italians there stood a little group of fair-haired children such as Gregory had never seen before. Their limbs were white; their curls shone in the sunlight like threads of gold, and their eyes were as blue as the sky above.

Gregory beckoned to the merchant who stood close by, and pointing to the fair children, asked from whence they came.

"From Britain," answered the man, "where all the people are as fair and beautiful as these are."

"And are they Christians?" asked the monk, with more and more interest.

The merchant shrugged his shoulders and shook his head.

"All heathens," he answered briefly.

"Ah me," sighed Gregory, "to think that so much beauty should belong to the Prince of Darkness; that the souls in such fair bodies should never be visited by God's light."

He turned once more and looked at the boys. "What is the name of their nation?" he asked.

"They are called Angles," replied the merchant.

For a moment a smile lit up the grave face of the monk, the word sounded with such a happy meaning in his ear.

"Angles call ye them?" he said. "Nay, angels rather; for angel-like they are, and must become fit company for angels. But to what province of their country do they belong?"

"Deira," was the answer.

"Ay, and from God's ire they shall be snatched," said Gregory, still playing with the words. "And the king of the country, how call ye him?" "Ælla," said the merchant shortly.

"Rightly indeed is your king called Ælla," said Gregory, turning to the wondering boys, "for Alleluia must be chanted in his dominions."

It was an easy matter to buy those fair-haired boys and take them to the convent on the hill, and teach them how to live in the light of God's love. But Gregory wanted more than this. The light must be carried into that far-away land of darkness. His hand was ready to bear the torch, and his heart was filled with an eager longing to be this messenger of light.

Time after time he begged for permission to set out for England, but the Pope and the Roman people had need of his strong arm and wise head, and refused to allow him to leave Rome. At last, however, the Pope secretly and unwillingly gave his consent, and Gregory started off with a few companions and many high hopes. But he did not go far. As soon as it was discovered that their beloved Gregory was gone, the people demanded that he should be recalled, and messengers were sent in haste to fetch him back. He had only gone three days' journey when the messengers overtook him, and so the mission to England came to an end, and with a sorrowful heart Gregory returned to Rome.

But although it was plain that Gregory's work lay in Rome, where ere long he was made Pope, yet he never forgot the great desire of his heart, and never gave up his determination to send the light into that distant land of Britain. So it came to pass that before long he chose out forty monks from his old monastery on the hill and sent them, with Augustine at their head, to the far-away little island which was waiting in darkness for the dawn of God's light.

The monks whom Gregory chose set forth at once as they were bidden, for they had learned above all things to be obedient. But it was a long unknown journey that lay before them, and their hearts were somewhat unwilling and greatly afraid. They started as bravely as they could, but the further they travelled the more troubled they became. People told them the most fearsome tales of the island to which they were bound.

"There is a most terrible sea to cross," said one.

"And even should you escape the fury of the sea, certain death will await you when you arrive," said another.

"Ay," said a third, "for the people are not only heathens but savages, and fierce as wild beasts, and they speak a barbarous language you will never understand."

Sorely disheartened, the monks called a halt, and sent Augustine back to Rome to ask Pope Gregory if they were still to go on in the face of such dangers and difficulties.

It must have been with unwilling feet and a burning heart of shame that Augustine turned back. He who had been specially chosen by Gregory for this special mission could not have been the kind of man who would be willing to turn his back on any foe or give up the fight without even striking a blow.

The little company of monks waited patiently for the return of their messenger, and ere long he was once more in their midst. The tall figure, "higher than any of the people from his shoulders and upward," stood erect now, and there was a gleam of triumph in his eyes. The order was to march forward, and there was to be no retreat.

"Let not the toil of the journey nor the tongues of evil-speaking men deter you," wrote Gregory, "but with all possible earnestness and zeal perform that which by God's direction you have undertaken."

They needed a strong leader, this little band of despairing monks, and Gregory wisely added in his letter: "When Augustine, your chief, returns, humbly obey him in all things. Had I my wish I would labour with you."

After that there was not one that talked of going back. Not only was obedience the just rule of their order, but the thought that their beloved Gregory would have been with them if he could, made them set their faces steadfastly to do the work which lay before them.

It was truly a terrible journey which they had undertaken. Their path lay through lonely forests and strange countries, where the people often treated them roughly, stoning them and howling after them as they went. Slowly but surely, however, they went their way, and at last reached the sea which swept its angry raging way between them and the grey island of the north. Then with brave hearts they set sail, but as the ship sped on its way and the land they had left grew fainter and fainter in the dim distance, some wondered if they would ever reach the other side, and others were past caring whether they lived or died. Then some one cried aloud that there was land ahead, and eager strained eyes caught sight of a white line upon the horizon, which grew broader and broader until the cliffs of Albion stood out clear against the blue sky, as dazzling in their whiteness as the ramparts of a heavenly city.

But it was with no expectation of finding a heavenly country that the weary band of monks landed at Ebbesfleet, on the Isle of Thanet. Rather they expected at every turn to meet with demons, savage animals, or still more savage people ready to fall upon them and destroy them.

Now the tales which had been told to these poor monks of all the terrors which lurked in wait for them, were much more frightening than true. The Saxon people of Britain were certainly heathens and worshipped strange gods, but they were a brave kindly people, and Ethelbert, the king of that part of the country, was a strong wise man. Already, too, a star of hope had shone out in the heathen darkness if those poor monks had but known it, for Ethelbert's fair Queen Bertha was a Christian, and near the palace, in the tiny chapel of Saint Martin, God was served daily by a faithful priest who had come with the Queen from France.

So instead of fierce blows and savage treatment, instead of being hunted down and driven out as they had expected, the messengers found a peaceful air of welcome and kindness about this strange land. There was a friendly look in the eyes of the people who watched them pass, and the poor wayfarers thanked God and took fresh courage.

It was in the springtime of the year, when our little grey island forgets her dullness and decks herself in tender green and budding flowers, that Augustine and his monks came to England. There was a

feeling of new life and new hope in the air which cheered their hearts, and before long word was brought from the King himself saying he would meet the strangers on the uplands above the sea and hear the message they had brought.

"We will meet in the open air, with the sky above us," said the King. "All shall be open and straightforward in the light of day."

The royal seat was set upon the green sward of a flowery meadow overlooking the sea, and there the King awaited his curious new guests. Across the April blue of the sky the white clouds scudded in ever-changing shapes. Below the sparkling sea shone like a ring of sapphires round our brave little island. In every sheltered nook and corner the primroses peeped out with their broad sunny faces. Sea-birds swooped and screamed around the white cliffs; all the birds were busy with nest-building; the old magic of spring was awake once more in the land. But there was something even more strange and wonderful than the returning life of spring coming that day to England. Across the bare wind-swept uplands a procession began to move slowly from the seashore. The people watched in breathless silence, wondering what it all might mean. These were no warriors, for they bore no weapons and there was no sign of war. In front, lifted high, a silver cross caught the gleams of sunshine as they came. Then a great picture was carried aloft, the picture of a Man, such as none had ever seen before. Close behind followed a little company of men in dark strange garments, and at their head walked one taller and straighter than all the rest. Slowly the procession went forward, and as the gleaming silver cross moved ever nearer, the sound of a low wailing chant came floating over the land, drowned now and then by the thunder of the waves breaking upon the shore. Nearer and nearer came the procession, and the wailing chant sounded more clearly. Now the watchers heard strange words in an unknown tongue, but they did not guess that the words which those dark-robed figures were chanting were a prayer that God's mercy might save and protect our England.

The King listened with deep attention to all that Augustine had to say. The minutes slipped past into hours, and still the dark-robed monk spoke out his message. Beginning with the birth at Bethlehem, he told the wonderful story of God made Man, coming to dwell amongst us; of His Cross and Passion, His glorious Resurrection and Ascension, and His call to all men to follow Him.

Then when he had finished there was a silence over all, for the King sat in deep thought, and the people waited for his answer. At last he spoke.

"Truly the words and promises which ye bring me are fair," he said, "but they are new to me and of doubtful authority. I cannot therefore accept them and forsake the religion in which I and all my people have so long believed. But because you are strangers and have come from afar to my country, and as it would seem that ye believe your teaching to be good and excellent, we will not molest you, but rather receive you with kindness and hospitality. Nor do we forbid you to teach and preach your religion."

The King was even better than his word, and the forty monks were given a home to live in, near the palace of Canterbury, and were treated in every way as honoured guests. There they taught and preached to all the people who would listen to them. But there was something besides preaching and teaching which won the hearts of these Saxon people.

The simple, honest, busy lives of the little company of monks, the "silent power of holiness," taught people better than any words what this new service meant. [Augustine and his companions tried to live the kind of life they were teaching the people of England to live. They prayed and fasted and preached the word of God to all who would listen. They were not greedy and did not care about worldly goods. They were willing to suffer any adversity and even to die for the truth they taught.]

Like the magic touch of spring over the dead land, a new life flowed in, and the first sign of its power was the baptism of the King, when he laid aside his royal robes and took service under his new Master. Before the feast of Christmas came round, ten thousand people were enrolled under the banner of Christ, which had been borne so faithfully by His servant Augustine.

It was good news to send to Gregory, and the monks might well rejoice as they listened to the sound of the Alleluias that echoed now within that heathen land.

But although so much had been done in such a short time, there was ever more and more to do, and the little company of monks, with Augustine at their head, never thought of growing weary or needing rest while so much was still to be accomplished.

Augustine had been commanded by Gregory to return to France and there be consecrated Archbishop; and so the first Archbishop of Canterbury began his work as a prince of the Church and a careful shepherd of his little flock. Many a greeting of encouragement came from Rome, and Pope Gregory sent a most precious gift of a copy of the Holy Bible. It was just one single copy, sent over land and sea to a little island, where God's light had only begun to break dimly through the clouds of heathen darkness, and yet it was the seed from which has sprung the glory and honour of... England.

Slowly but surely the monks worked on, building their churches and carrying their torch further and further into the darkness. King Ethelbert, "noble and valiant" as his name signified, was no half-hearted soldier of Christ, and in simple loyalty he gave up his own royal palace at Canterbury for the monks who were doing God's work in his kingdom. With such an example before them, it was little wonder that the people as well pressed forward to help in the work. It is said, too, that many miracles were performed by these simple faithful monks; many sick folk were healed, and wonders were worked as in the days of the Apostles.

But it was not only the monks who went out to work. Augustine, the Archbishop, would never consent to stay safely at home, but was always the first to undertake fresh journeys and risk new dangers. In his simple monk's robe, unarmed and on foot, he went with his brethren from north to south, from east to west, preaching and teaching through the length and breadth of England. Sometimes they met with harsh treatment; showers of stones, and even sharp weapons were used against them, but no serious hurt ever befell the little band of brave men.

Now among the wild mountains of Wales there were still many of the early British Christians who had been driven there by the conquering Saxons. Augustine was very anxious that these men should join with him now and help to make the whole land Christian. But these poor men hated the Saxons, who had driven them from their home and conquered their land. It seemed almost too much to expect them to return good for so much evil. However, they agreed to meet Augustine and his monks and talk the matter over. They fixed the meeting-place on the border of Wales, and there, under a great oak

tree, the stranger Archbishop from Rome, and the hunted bishops and monks of the ancient British Church, met.

They talked long and earnestly, and at one time it seemed as if Augustine would persuade them to help him in his work. But those British Christians were very bitter in their dislike to their Saxon conquerors, and they mistrusted a stranger monk who called himself Archbishop of Canterbury. They scarcely knew what to decide, but took counsel with an old hermit who lived a holy life among the wild mountains of Wales.

"Is it our duty to make friends with this man?" they asked.

"If he is a man of God, then follow him," replied the hermit.

"But how are we to know if he be a man of God?" they asked.

"If he be meek and lowly, he bears the yoke of Christ, and offers the same to you," was the answer. "But if he be proud and haughty he cannot be of God."

"How are we to judge whether he be meek and lowly or proud and haughty?" they asked again.

"Contrive it thus," said the hermit. "See that this man and his company arrive first at the meeting-place, so that he may be seated ere you come. If he shall arise and greet you, be sure he is Christ's servant. But if he despises you, and does not rise at your coming, then you may in turn despise him."

The plan was easily carried out. The great oak tree spread its branches over Augustine's little company as they rested there, waiting for the coming of the men who had promised to meet them there. Augustine, weary and anxious, sat in his seat gazing out with thoughtful, troubled eyes which saw no fair green meadows or pleasant landscape, but only dark clouds of distrust and enmity. So when at last the company of British priests drew near, the tall figure dreaming his dreams sat on motionless in his seat, and made no movement to rise or come forward to greet them.

Half triumphantly, then, those men of the ancient British Church decided that Augustine was no servant of God, and they refused to have aught to do with him.

So Augustine went back to his work alone, and it is to him and his little band of faithful monks that England owes her great debt of gratitude. Long and patiently he worked, never sparing himself, and well had he earned his rest when they laid him in his quiet grave in the church at Canterbury, which he himself had built. We know little of Augustine; he was but a messenger sent by the great Gregory who had planned the mission to England. But to us the man who carried out the plan, the messenger who brought the message, the hand that bore the torch, is worthy of a special love and honour. Like that other messenger, Saint John the Baptist, sent by God, he desired no honour for himself, but was content to be a voice crying in the wilderness, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord; make His paths straight."

## Parent Resources—Primary Sources about Augustine

### Augustine Comes to Britain

From *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, Book I, Chapter 23

IN the year of our Lord 582, Maurice, the fifty fourth from Augustus, ascended the throne, and reigned twenty one years. In the tenth year of his reign, Gregory, a man renowned for learning and behaviour, was promoted to the apostolical see of Rome, and presided over it thirteen years, six months and ten days. He, being moved by Divine inspiration, in the fourteenth year of the same emperor, and about the one hundred and fiftieth after the coming of the English into Britain, sent the servant of God, Augustine, and with him several other monks, who feared the Lord, to preach the word of God to the English nation, they having, in obedience to the pope's commands, undertaken that work, were, on their journey, seized with a sudden fear, and began to think of returning home, rather than proceed to a barbarous, fierce, and unbelieving nation, to whose very language they were strangers; and this they unanimously agreed was the safest course. In short, they sent back Augustine, who had been appointed to be consecrated bishop in case they were received by the English, that he might, by humble entreaty, obtain of the Holy Gregory, that they should not be compelled to undertake so dangerous, toilsome, and uncertain a journey. The pope, in reply, sent them a hortatory epistle, persuading them to proceed in the work of the Divine word, and rely on the assistance of the Almighty. The purport of which letter was as follows:

"Gregory, the servant of the servants of God, to the servants of our Lord. Forasmuch as it had been better not to begin a good work, than to think of desisting from that which has been begun, it behooves you, my beloved sons, to fulfil the good work, which, by the help of our Lord, you have undertaken. Let not, therefore, the toil of the journey, nor the tongues of evil speaking men, after you; but with all possible earnestness and zeal perform that which, by God's direction, you have undertaken; being assured, that much labour is followed by an eternal reward. When Augustine, your chief, returns, whom we also constitute your abbot, humbly obey him in all things; knowing, that whatsoever you shall do by his direction, will, in all respects, be available to your souls. Almighty God protect you with his grace, and grant that I may, in the heavenly country, see the fruits of your labour. Inasmuch as, though I cannot labour with you, I shall partake in the joy of the reward, because I am willing to labour. God keep you in safety, my most beloved sons. Dated the 23rd of July, in the fourteenth year of the reign of our pious and most august lord, Mauritius Tiberius, the thirteenth year after the consulship of our said lord. The fourteenth indiction."

### Augustine's Way of Living

From *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, Book I, Chapter 26

As soon as [Augustine and his companions] entered the dwellingplace assigned them they began to imitate the course of life practiced in the primitive church; applying themselves to frequent prayer, watching and fasting; preaching the word of life to as many as they could; despising all worldly things,

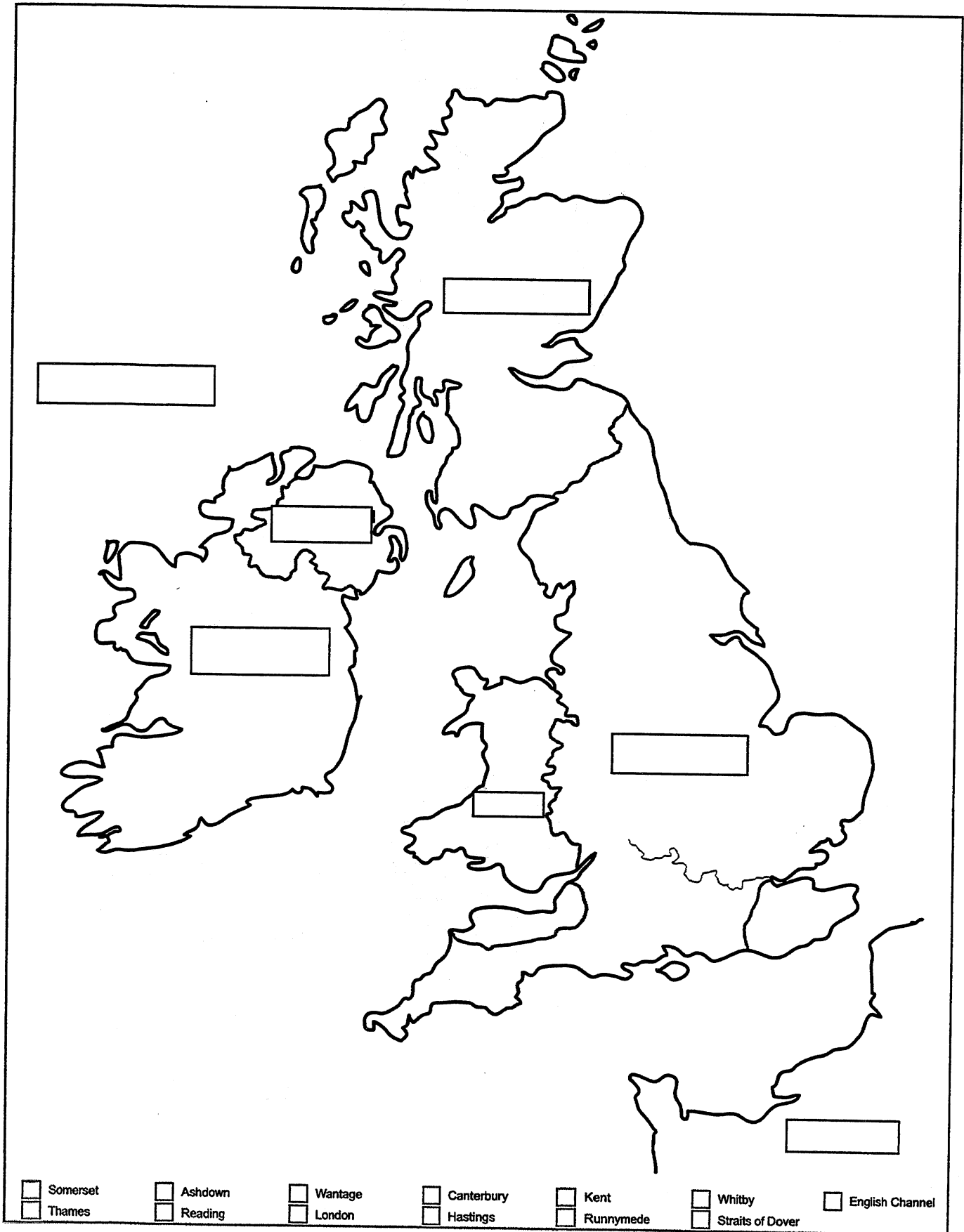
as not belonging to them; receiving only their necessary food from those they taught; living themselves in all respects conformably to what they prescribed to others, and being always disposed to suffer any adversity, and even to die for that truth which they preached. In short, several believed and were baptized, admiring the simplicity of their innocent life, and the sweetness of their heavenly doctrine. There was on the east side of the city a church dedicated to the honour of St. Martin, built whilst the Romans were still in the island, wherein the queen, who, as has been said before, was a Christian, used to pray. In this they first began to meet, to sing, to pray, to say mass, to preach, and to baptize, till the king, being converted to the faith, allowed them to preach openly, and build or repair churches in all places.

When he, among the rest, induced by the unspotted life of these holy men, and their delightful promises, which, by many miracles, they proved to be most certain, believed and was baptized, greater numbers began daily to flock together to hear the word, and, forsaking their heathen rites, to associate themselves, by believing, to the unity of the church of Christ. Their conversion the king so far encouraged, as that he compelled none to embrace Christianity, but only showed more affection to the believers, as to his fellowcitizens in the heavenly kingdom. For he had learned from his instructors and leaders to salvation, that the service of Christ ought to be voluntary, not by compulsion. Nor was it long before he gave his preachers a settled residence in his metropolis of Canterbury, with such possessions of different kinds as were necessary for their subsistence.

England Map-Parent



### England Map-Child



Augustine Meets King Ethelbert

