

Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*
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ENGL 3335
Ancient and Medieval World Literature

Bede the Venerable (673-735)

- Born in Tyne, near Durham (Northumbria)
- oblate at 7 to the monastery at Jarrow
- Deacon at 19
- Ordained a priest at 30

Bede's work

- Numerous scriptural commentaries
- *De temporum ratione* – how time is calculated; *De temporibus liber* – on chronology and natural history
- *De locis sanctis* – holy places in the East
- *Historia abbatum* (*History of the Abbots*, i.e. of Jarrow/Wearmouth monasteries)
- *De arte metrica, De orthographia* – poetic meter and spelling
- Several hymns
- Prose and verse versions (*opus geminatum*) of the life of St. Cuthbert

Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum

- *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*
 - *Gens* – people, race, nation, *ethnie*
 - Geographic origin not only way to define it – religion, language, ancestry, etc.
 - Bede's most famous work
- Purpose as set out in prologue - moral instruction and unification of England
- Many things recognized by modern historians - documentary sources, interviews, etc.
- Also, common report (*fama vulgantis*) as necessary for the *vera lex historiae* (law of true history)

Bede's miracles

- Parallels to Scriptural texts, other saints' lives
- Divine signs - meant to be interpreted and applied
- Typological view of history - figuration and prefiguration