

## CONFLICT OF FAITH

BY

DANIEL PETER BUCKLEY

Edwin drifted into a deep sleep his dreams had been suddenly replaced by the darkest of nightmares.

He was a spectator as the heavy oak doors opened slowly towards the guards.

Muffled voices challenged the tall chain mailed figure stood in the doorway of the great hall.

“Give me your name messenger.” Bass demanded.

“Eomor, I have a message for Bretwalda Edwin from my lord Eadbald king of Kent.”

Eadbald was a friend but the guards still waited for Edwin’s approval before allowing Eomor to enter.

Candles in the room flickered as the heavy double doors opened filling the room with ice cold air. At the back of the hall, a large hearth blazed away warming the gathered elites.

As Edwin turned, to face Eomor he lunged forward drawing his sword.

Suddenly the air was filled with voices shouting and cursing the attacker as he swirled his sword towards Edwin.

Lilla had no time to find his shield, so he used his body to protect Edwin.

Taking the full force of the assassin’s sword thrust, Lilla Was killed instantly.

So ferocious was the attack the sword exited Lilla and wounded Edwin.

Eomor exchanged blows with Forthere, as Edwin lay wounded on the floor.

Forthere wrestled with the assassin who lashed out with his stabbing sword piercing his helmet the blade swipe cut deep wounds to his neck and chest.

Blood splattered across the walls and floor as Forthere collapsed shaking uncontrollably.

Bass and Wulfric shielded Edwin, as he lay wounded on the floor.

Fury took over and they turned on Eomor backing him away from Edwin they trapped him in the corner of the hall.

Eomor glowered at the thegns cold eyed as he continued to strike out with his sword.

Repeated frenzied sword thrusts struck Eomor piercing his helmet and eye sockets, before both thegns hacked at his lower legs.

Eomor fell silently forward to the floor into a pool of his own blood.

This left the floor swimming with blood as the attack ended as brutally as it began.

Edwin’s sword felt heavy in his hand his muscles froze and he was unable to move as he relived the fateful night.

Edwin woke with a jolt covered in sweat and breathing heavily, he stood up and staggered blindly around the room.

Every night the same nightmare returned haunting him when he closed his weary eyes.

Edwin vowed by the gods to avenge the killing of his trusted thegns and banish the feeling of guilt that had consumed him.

Because of his position, Edwin was never far from danger he was forced to keep on moving a moving target being harder to find and hit.

At Cadvan's court in Wales, he was forced to flee southwards by Aethelfrith and his allied war bands.

Edwin escaped his rival's snares and found sanctuary at the court of the powerful King Raedwald. During the darkest of hours, Edwin remembered the chance meeting late one night all those years ago.

Raedwald was deciding Edwin's future the king of the East Angles was tempted by the rich offerings pledged by Aethelfrith in exchange for him surrendering Edwin into his rivals grasping hands.

Edwin was unaware of the drama inside the palace sat alone in the Palace gardens oblivious to his Fate.

Out of the darkness, a tall figure slowly approached him.

"Edwin your people await your return and that day will soon be upon us."

Stated his visitor.

Raedwald's queen introduced me to Aethelfrith's messengers in the reception hall they informed me of their intentions and offered me riches beyond belief they presumed that I represented Raedwald.

They wanted you handed on a plate for Aethelfrith but when I refused, they began to curse you, Raedwald and all the gods.

Red mist gripped them Edwin they drew swords with the queen in the next room I acted Quickly striking down three of the messengers, where they stood the fourth, I allowed to escape with his reply to his mortal lord.

Raedwald and the queen are planning a suitable punishment for the arrogant Aethelfrith for sending assassins dressed has envoys to the Kings palace.

Without the intervention of Raedwald's queen, Edwin you would have been handed over to face certain death.

She is as we speak persuading Raedwald to act with honour and back you a royal guest and rival for power who showed loyalty and respect unlike the cunning and devious King Aethelfrith. Edwin had seen the messenger before he served in is his father's retinue, but Edwin could not recall his name only his message.

"Future king you will be Edwin if you accept the guide who carries the sacred insignia of eternal light on his sword as your friend.

His messenger shall lay his right hand on your head as I do now." Stated his visitor.

Edwin remembered the words of the messenger clearly but could not recall a name or face to add to his mysterious visitor.

Like his ancestors, Edwin observed Saxnot, Tiw and Frea powerful deities from his homeland who embodied the warrior way of life he had served like his ancestors with great passion and dedication.

Edwin had wrestled with his conscience for years whilst the gods delivered bitter conflicts and chaos at every opportunity on his people.

He had never felt as low that night sat with his deep wounds bandaged staring into space he was confused and angry with the gods whether Pagan or Christian they had deserted his close friends and thegns that night.

In his darkest moments he remembered the visitor to Raedwald's court who served the Trinity Cult he was the personal bodyguard of Raedwald's Queen

He agreed his daughter, should be baptized into the faith Paulinus and his wife Aethelburh Followed.

His campaign against Cwichelm would answer his own conflict of faith a battle of gods and men with the spoils of victory new kingdoms in heaven and on earth.

“Edwin... Edwin our men are in position for the advance your spearmen wait behind the shield walls with riders posted on both flanks.” Stated Bass.

Edwin signalled towards Bass who shouted the rallying call “Banners Advance Banners Advance.” Edwin, Ceorl, Bleacca, and Caedbard led the forces towards the West Saxon shield wall holding the high ground above Witancaester.

As they advanced, the warriors beat their swords against their shields the sound was deafening, and the anxiety and noise heightened as they closed on the West Saxons.

“Cynric, send out the traitor Cwichelm spare your warriors a battle not of their making.” Edwin demanded.

“Humbrian your either very brave or very foolish nobody dictates terms on this sacred ground our ancestors spilled blood securing this land.” Cynric replied

“Honour drives me and my force onto your lands the Cerdicings lived by that code but now it seems they protect and breed murderers.”

Edwin stated.

“You have no power here Humbrian return north with your warriors or we will send you into the dark abyss of Sancton’s eternal halls.” Cynric replied.

“Kings and warriors will die here today Cynric victims of another’s crime.

All the gods want this battle and your men will soon serve a new high king.

Angles, Saxons Celts all fight alongside me so this land will be subject to new laws.”

“Cwichelm walk out, face me in single combat make good the wrong you have delivered upon your people or West Saxon halls will burn, and the only feasting will be the carrion crows.”

“There will be no sanctuary until you face your accusers in single combat the thegns of your land will be ring less by the end of this day” Warned Edwin.

Edwin turned to Bass with a glint in his eye, he signalled lifting three fingers of his gloved chain mailed hand.

Bass nodded back and the shield wall split into three columns one behind the other in uniformed blocks.

They began to advance charging up the hill towards the Saxon shield wall.

Waiting for them the West Saxon ranks stood their ground as Edwin’s forces approached.

Warriors on both sides offered up silent prayers to their gods.

Missiles began to be loosed by both forces as they exchanged arrow and spear shot.

Edwin stared straight ahead barking out orders as he led the charge up the hill.

Overhead arrows and spears flashed back and forth, as the rivals clashed.

“Close formation keep your lines straight and hold your swords until the Lindel shields are facing us stand together until the Saxon shield wall breaks.”

Edwin ordered.

“Spearmen into position loose your missiles on my signal.”

Bass shouted.

From behind the columns, they took up positions on the flanks standing in banks of ten.

Bass raised his arm and the spearmen fired into the centre of the West Saxon shield wall.

Striking chaos into the centre of the wall and as they formed up Edwin’s warriors charged at the breached wall.

Crashing into the weakened centre, they ran over the stricken bodies slashing away at the defenders Lindel shields on the front line.

Bleacca and Ceorl led the second column forming a wedge between the first column and the West Saxons preventing them wheeling around Edwin's men.

Caedbard and the third column attacked from the front pinning the West Saxons between the Anglian columns.

Battle-axes drawn; the second column struck at the rear of the West Saxon lines causing chaos. All around the sound of iron clashing on iron sounded out mixed with the shattering of Lindel shields.

"Edwin your targets fight on the right of the shield wall protected by Cynric's swords."

"Cwichelm cowering from the front line like the dog he is." Bass remarked.

Edwin thegns spurred by the sighting tried to cut through the warriors protecting the Cerdicings. Only to be met by fierce resistance from Cynric's retainers.

Edwin's men still attacked the Cerdicings with fury protected on the flanks by cavalry.

They could see the retainers had short stabbing swords hung from their right sides for close quarter fighting.

They knew the Cerdicings had never taken a backward step fear and respect dictated the day was to be a long and bloody affair.

Caedbard's archers unleashed volley after volley of arrows into the Cerdicings front line.

Arrows ripped into the lines of warriors who batted them away with their heavy circular shields Anglo Saxons and Celts feared the bowmen of Caedbard they lived in the forests of Lindsey and superstition surrounding the sacred forests fuelled their mystique.

They coated the tips of their arrows with snake poison that left victims with muscle spasms and temporary blindness.

Caedbards men cared little for the battlefield spirits or the killing zone of the sword warrior.

Fear was the key used on all who stood against them.

As high king, he could call upon his allies' finest warriors.

Cynric stood defiantly beside his men in the shield wall.

His chain mail holed, blood stained, and his armour dented by sword and spear.

Edwin and Bass advanced slowly towards the shield wall.

"We have little chance of fighting our way past the Cerdicings retainers Edwin." Claimed Bass.

"Bass we need to flush Cwichelm from hiding keep watch for his retreat."

Edwin shouted.

They clambered over fallen warriors on the floor some still holding their shields.

Arrows ripped into the West Saxon line sending victims writhing to the floor.

"Bass can you see the reserves over the lines." Edwin boomed.

"Moving out fast now." Bass replied.

"Follow them and take warriors with you Bass." Edwin ordered.

Cwichelm and his bodyguards ran towards Witancaester with Bass and his men shadowing them.

Edwin's force s attacked the Cerdicings shield wall and warriors continued to fall on both sides.

Good men lay around the knoll broken and lifeless from the battles rage.

Clashing iron filled the air and victims of the swords edge collapsed beneath the Cerdicings Golden dragon banners.

"Humbrian your bravery is commendable but how many warriors must die before you see sense and withdraw your forces from this land." Cynric demanded.

“We will not leave without our man.” Edwin replied.

“Your pursuit of Cwichelm as seen many sacrificed for a single prize.” Cynric stated.

“Look around warriors have fought for their kings with honour and whilst we fight our rivals plan our downfall.” Cynric warned.

“We fight to avenge Lilla and Wolfhere that was our intention today.” Edwin replied.

Both kings agreed to down weapons and they advanced to the no man’s land in the centre of the knoll.

“Edwin my lands are under threat from all sides and I cannot lose more warriors in this standoff.

“Your leading thegn carries the insignia of eternal light I call upon you to honour my wishes Edwin.” Cynric claimed.

Edwin was shocked the thegn he had known all his life had saved his life more than once in battle. He had no idea he was the carrier of the sword of eternal light.

“Allow Cwichelm back into the light Edwin and we will secure alliances that serve all our people.”

Bass was still shadowing Cwichelm as he headed towards Witancaester.

“Traitors turn and fight die like a warrior if you cannot live like one.” Bass shouted.

Cwichelm and his men turned and faced their pursuers.

Shields raised and swords drawn they stood glowering at one another.

“Bass your eager to join your friends on the other side when you see them say hello from me.”

Cwichelm taunted.

“You run from Edwin like rabbits now prepare to meet Eomor in the dark halls where the sun never shines.” Bass stated.

“You shall die for your arrogance Bass,” shouted Ceowulf.

Bass advanced towards Ceowulf and the pair clashed swords and exchanged blows.

Both men were blowing heavily from their exertions with the heavy sword.

Beneath them the ground was soft, and it cut up as they jostled for control of the ground.

Bass caught Ceowulf a glancing blow to his head the force caused him to stumble backwards and he fell onto the muddied ground.

Ceowulf kept his shield close for protection but Bass drove his sword into his legs.

Blood covered his sword and the ground as he aimed another blow through the body of the wounded warrior.

Ceowulf screamed out in pain and shuddered in shock as the iron cut through him taking his life away.

Bass turned away after the deathblow was delivered and he then challenged Cwichelm.

“Saxnot calls out your name.” Bass shouted at his rival.

His face contorted with rage Cwichelm charged towards Bass at speed and both warriors exchanged sword blows on the open ground.

Cwichelm continued his savage attack catching Bass on the arm splitting his chain mail.

Bass felt the warmth of the blood trailing a path down his arm he kept upright and moved instinctively forwards at Cwichelm.

Catching him with a shield thrust full in the face with the heavy central boss.

Cwichelm recoiled in pain spitting blood his vision badly blurred but still he unleashed his sword towards Bass.

Both staggered under the force of the sword blows desperate for the other to tire first.

Adrenalin kept them going as they continued fighting to a standstill despite the cuts to their sword arms.

Edwin appeared from out of the rising mist that covered the grassy knoll and shouted towards them both.

“Bass and Cwichelm lay down your swords and turn around you will see the golden dragon banners of Wessex fly above me your high king.”

They turned and stared open mouthed at the golden dragon banner fluttering in the breeze. Cwichelm shook his head slowly from side to side before slumping exhausted to his knees.

“Cwichelm as high king I can have you executed for treason but having seen you in single combat with Bass and still standing I drop all the charges against you.” Edwin stated

“What do you want in return Edwin you must have good reason keeping me alive.”

“Cynric needs an heir and you are still young enough to become a better man and a good king.”

Bass glowered at Edwin anger and hurt burning in his eyes.

“Bass my friend I ask you do not cross the line and undo all we have fought for on this campaign.”

“We have alliances and oaths in place with Cynric and he has agreed to provide warriors when we move against Cadwallon and the Mercian rebels.” Edwin stated.

“Cwichelm will support us on campaign.” Challenged Edwin.

“That will be interesting why would you want me.” Replied Cwichelm.

“Trust Cwichelm and honour we must have both or all is lost.” Edwin offered his hand towards Cwichelm and he pulled himself back on his feet.

Edwin handed him the golden dragon banner of Wessex.

“It belongs with the Cerdicings your people have fought and died for it Cwichelm.”

“It can be held beside my banners facing Cadwallon that was all I wanted from Wessex.” Edwin stated.

Edwin turned and surveyed the scattered armour and broken bodies lay as far as the eye could see. Blood covered the sacred grounds and high above ravens circled observing the scene below.

Wearily the soldiers collected themselves and regrouped ready for the long march North.

Across the battlefield, quiet replaced chaos and the ravens began to feast on the poor souls who perished.

Edwin’s mood was not helped by the messenger’s news of raids upon Elmet and Loidis by the Kymry.

Edwin smiled nobody can change history alone he sat meditating and reflecting about the past and wondering about his path to the future.

Bass interrupted Edwin.

“You look troubled lord.”

“My wife and daughter await my return but unless my faith matches theirs my life will be empty and meaningless and I will be a stranger to those who matter most to me.”

That’s why I sit in turmoil cleansing my mind and soul of the old gods.” Edwin replied.

“Your beliefs are your own Edwin follow the path that lifts your spirit and frees your mind.” Bass warned.

“We are fighting a spiritual battle Bass and we must be victorious, or this land will never be free from conflict.” Edwin answered.

Both men retired to their quarters exhausted they needed the dark nights embrace to restore body and mind.

Paulinus turned and looked nervously towards the heavy oak doors that held the warriors outside. He noted the hooded figure in the corner and briefly, he met his gaze.

Paulinus could not put a name to the face but he had seen him before at Raedwald's court. He searched his mind hoping a name would come but the man disappeared into the crowd. Outside the anguished screams of the fallen filled the air haunting those trapped inside the hall. Paulinus grasped his wooden cross and squeezed hard offering prayers for the people around him. He felt sick welling in his stomach but put on a face showing no weakness as he continued praying.

Moving around the crowds he talked calming those who cared to listen.

Paulinus was on a mission and Rome expected converts not corpses.

Loose horses charged down the street, on the floor-stricken riders lay motionless.

People in the hall exchanged nervous glances women and children gently sobbed breaking the eerie silence.

Resigned to their fate they waited for the final onslaught to commence.

A booming voice from behind the door barked orders to the lines of foot soldiers stood facing the heavy doors.

“Inside hear my voice those who do not listen today will be your last.

This town now belongs to Bretwalda Edwin son of Aelle.”

Paulinus sighed with relief; it was Coifi a convert and once high priest of the god Saxnot.

Hammer blows smashed into the heavy oak doors relentlessly pounding away until the door splintered like twigs.

People cowered in the corners as the screams heightened as the doors finally crashed to the floor. Soldiers scrambled over the shattered door and moved through the hall quizzing people as they checked the identity of everybody in the hall.

Goodmanham suffered at the hands of Coifi its pagan temples were burnt to the ground such was the zest and fervour Coifi displayed for the new faith.

Coifi was on the trail of the rebel Laeti who supported Edwin's rivals, the Kymry.

Paulinus slipped past the guards milling around the halls entrance and made his way towards Coifi.

Coifi stood directing men around the burning town.

“Goodmanham revisited Coifi.” Paulinus remarked.

“Bishop you're a sight for sore eyes we thought we had lost you to the Kymry raiders how long have you been trapped in Loidis.” Enquired Coifi.

“Edwin awaits news of you Bishop once we have secured Loidis he will lead forces into the lands loyal to Cadwallon.

Bleacca, Cearl, and Caedbard ride with Edwin.” Coifi stated.

“Edwin as his alliance with Cynric, so we can secure all our borders.”

“Your men are looking for someone Coifi.” Paulinus enquired.

“Clearing up loose ends Edwin wants a clear path into cadwallons lands that means Kymry sympathizers remain locked in this hall or....

Paulinus interrupted Coifi.

“You have painted the picture do not say another word Coifi.” Replied Paulinus.

Paulinus knew Coifi was looking for strangers like the man in the hall but what could one more souls fall achieve.

He would be executed, as a spy, Paulinus knew that if Edwin controlled and ruled the middle Saxon lands the faith and message would spread.

Splitting the Kymry would allow the borderlands breathing space.

“You must have nine lives Bishop only Edwin burns the candle of fate at both ends as you do.” Coifi stated.

“If I fail someone will replace me but Edwin carries the torch that lights this land from York like Constantine before him.” Paulinus noted.

“Alemanni warriors under Crocus allowed Constantine his window of opportunity and Edwin can provide the same today.

Minds will be freed by Edwin’s campaigns and our faith must embrace change sacrifice brings us closer to god.” Paulinus stated.

Edwin stared looking out over the columns that stretched around the city of Eforwic.

Constantine walked beneath the same columns and was crowned emperor here.

Bass coughed catching Edwin’s attention.

“Sorry to disturb you Edwin but the messenger from Loidis brings news of Paulinus and Coifi.”

Bass stated.

“Good show him in Bass and bring us drinks he as earned it.” Edwin replied.

“Edwin Coifi as located Bishop Paulinus and gained control of Loidis from the Kymry rebels.”

“Paulinus is alive.” Edwin replied.

“Yes, he was preaching to all who cared to listen in the great hall at Loidis as the town burned around him.

Bass returned with wine and water as well as food for the weary messenger and Edwin.

“You have delivered very good news enjoy your meal whatever your name is.”

Edwin enquired

“Kilvert of Eforwic.”

“You carry the insignia of the order on your sword.” Enquired Edwin.

“Yes, I do.” Kilvert replied

“What is your family name.”?

“You know by the insignia lord.”

“You claim your line comes down through Crocus will you ride alongside me into cadwallons lands Kilvert.” Edwin replied.

“Edwin it is not my soul that needs saving we guided you long before the bishop appeared.

Constantine listened to my people before he followed the cross, we are messengers of the light.” Kilvert replied.

Bass interrupted them.

“Lord can I retire you and your guest have much to discuss.” Bass stated.

“Yes, bass see you tomorrow sleep well we are in the saddle all week.” Edwin replied

Quiet descended on the streets of Eforwic the inns had been filled by warriors drawn from all over Britain.

With the sound of Lindel, shields clattering on stone and the sharpening of swords warriors waited impatiently for morning to arrive.

Some slept with their shields and swords close to hand before the dawn chorus woke them.

Cadwallons raiding parties had struck out all along the Trent valley and the borderlands of Loidis and Elmet.

Known as the enemy of souls Cadwallon showed no mercy in conflict and those who followed him shared his lust for battle.

Mercenaries from all pagan states took his pay and shared his beliefs.

Edwin’s aim was to banish Cadwallon and take the plains of Teyrnllwg the Kymry would be Isolated and left with an uneasy stand-off with neighbouring states.

Paulinus walked behind the feasting hall in Loidis and looked behind the small hedge that separated it from the street.

“Lost something bishop?” enquired a voice from within the hall.

“Yes, a gift given me by Aethelburh when Edwin’s daughter was baptized.” Paulinus replied.

“Do you need my help Bishop?” enquired the guard.

“N... No” Paulinus Stammered nervously.

With that, the guard left Paulinus to search alone.

Paulinus was sweating and his mouth was dry as he looked around the garden.

“You can search all night Bishop, but you will never find the answers your looking for here.”

“Come into the light do not hide in the shadows like a thief.”

Replied Paulinus.

“Paulinus my messenger stands beside Edwin in Eforwic.” Replied the voice.

“Who are you.”? Paulinus enquired.

“You know Paulinus you saw me in the hall earlier.”

“You cannot serve two masters Paulinus follow the light that serves and feeds all spirits.”

“Edwin will follow the path you and my messenger have guided him towards.”

“What is your faith my friend.” Enquired Paulinus.

“Faith is a much-used word today Paulinus your faith wants to control you tie you to the state and rule your life and thoughts.” Replied the guide.

“Faith should be about freedom your beliefs feed your spirit Paulinus no church or palace can replace such spirit.” Replied the messenger.

Suddenly the guide walked out of the shadows and threw back his hooded robe before placing His right hand on the head of Paulinus.

“Paulinus you have served well in this land my message is safe in your keeping remember you serve the light.”

Then the guide vanished, and a cold wind delivered showers of heavy rain around Paulinus turning the ground into mud beneath them in seconds and sending people hurriedly looking for cover under the hall’s long palisades.

“Hold your lines and detain anyone who speaks with a broken Saxon accent.” Coifi ordered.

Paulinus approached Coifi.

“Coifi the truth who are you looking for.” Demanded Paulinus.

“Edwin waits eager for battle whilst his rivals led by Cadwallon send Brythonic agents with orders to end his reign.” Coifi answered.

“These agents are they pagans or heretics Coifi.”

“Bishop they are paid well by Cadwallon and care little about religion money is their god.” Coifi replied.

“Could Edwin’s retainers be bribed Coifi.” Paulinus questioned.

“They are handpicked they would all give their own lives for Edwin.” Coifi stated.

“Bishop your talking in riddles Edwin has made enemies down the years and finding and eliminating the agents will be difficult?

“Coifi have you heard of the light of eternity a cult that lists Christians and pagans amongst its members.” Paulinus enquired.

“You surprise me Bishop rumours about the cult have never faded but now they whisper like a ghost.”

“Coifi who spreads such whispers.” Paulinus replied.

“Bishop you’re a wise man why are you interested by such myths.”

“Curiosity Coifi we must question what we don’t know.” Paulinus answered.

“Your interest is worrying such ghosts are best left in the past Bishop.” Replied Coifi.

“In this land people follow old ways and old gods we must continue our missions delivering our lords words before our people’s minds and attitudes change.” Paulinus stated

“Bishop these cult members are spiritual warriors they believe like you in god.” Coifi replied.

Paulinus stared back at Coifi and decided against mentioning the messenger.

Edwin’s forces had been arriving from all over Britain a show of strength designed to put doubts and fears into all their enemy’s minds.

Politically the states of Britain had splintered, and new alliances formed by the Kymry posed a serious threat to the balance of power in Britain.

Edwin was to the Kymry and Mercian’s an enigma they never trusted him.

As a Pagan, he was a threat to their lands but as a Christian, he represented a threat to their way of life and beliefs their very existence.

Coifi his right-hand man embraced the new faith and he saw the choice, as black and white you followed God and Edwin or nothing.

Both men stared out across the muddy street as the rain continued to pound down.

A guard moved quickly through the mud his armour offering little protection against the rain as it hammered out tunes noisily on his metal helmet and breastplate as he walked.

“Coifi lord Bass has replied to our messenger he will meet us on the borders of Elmet in full battle order with old and new battle banners flying.”

“New banners Bishop why are you keeping quiet about this news.”

Coifi enquired.

“Believe me Coifi nobody as mentioned Edwin’s new banners to me like you I expected Edwin to carry his raven banners before his force.” Paulinus replied.

“Who was the messenger sent to Edwin.”? Paulinus enquired.

“Eforwic leading thegn he was at Edwin’s side At Raedwald’s court and on his campaigns in the south.”

Coifi answered.

“You have lost the colour in your face bishop what is worrying you.” Coifi questioned.

“You have not given me his name Coifi.” Paulinus replied.

“Kilvert he as always fought with the Anglian kings in battle.” Coifi stated.

“He is a member of the cult Coifi his Saxon friend was here earlier he informed me Edwin would soon be walking the path of Eternal light.” Paulinus replied.

“That is good news bishop Edwin as finally accepted and taken the cross.” Coifi replied.

Paulinus turned and walked silently towards the great hall he was confident Edwin would deliver converts to the faith, but he was also a friend and Paulinus knew time was against them.

Edwin turned to his retainers. “Raise the banners men new and old.”

Edwin turned to Kilvert.

“Have you always carried the sign of the order into our battles on your armour and sword Kilvert.”?

“Yes, but only the followers recognise the design.”

Kilvert replied.

“Now the design shall be displayed on our banners before our force.”

Edwin replied.

All the troops waited patiently for the order to march upon the Cadwallon and his allies.

Lines of spearmen and infantry troops looked at the cavalry gathered drawn up from all over Britain.

Dogs barked as the horses formed up filling the busy town square. Passing traders exchanged tales of the previous week's trading as the city streets sprang to life. Children craned their necks to catch a closer look at the warriors who had taken over the streets and now prepared for the long march upon Cadwallons lands. Drums and pipes began to sound rising in pitch as the banners were raised and began fluttering in the breeze. "Banners advance Banners Advance Banners advance." Bass excitedly called out. Edwin turned towards Kilvert. "Are we ready to meet our destiny." He enquired. "Our Lives are lived for the day Edwin, but our spirits will shine in the light of eternity."