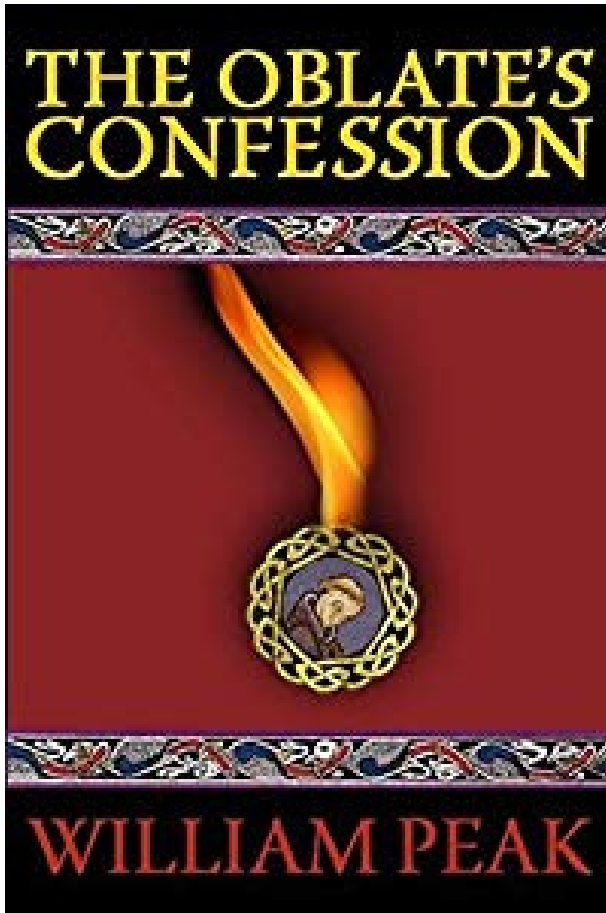


# The Oblate's Confession



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England, the 7th century. Petty Anglo-Saxon kingdoms make war upon one another and their Celtic neighbors. Christianity is a new force in the land, one whose hold remains tenuous at best. Power shifts back and forth uneasily between two forms of the new faith: a mystical Celtic Catholicism and a newer, more disciplined form of Catholicism emanating from Rome. Pagan rites as yet survive in the surrounding hills and mountains. Plague sweeps across the countryside unpredictably, its path marked by death and destruction. In keeping with a practice common at the time, an Anglo-Saxon warrior donates his youngest child to the monastery of Redestone, in effect sentencing the boy to spend the rest of his life as a monk. This gift-child, called an oblate, will grow up in the abbey knowing little of his family or the expectations his natural father will someday place upon him, his existence haunted by vague memories of a former life and the questions those memories provoke. Who is his father, the distant chieftain who sired him or the bishop he prays for daily? And to which father, natural or spiritual, will he owe allegiance when, at length, he is called upon to ally himself with one and destroy the other? These are the dilemmas the child faces. The answers will emerge from the years he spends in spiritual apprenticeship to a hermit who lives on the nearby mountain of Modra nect – and his choices will echo across a lifetime.