A study of episcopacy in Northumbria 620 - 735

Gaunt, Adam

A STUDY OF EPISCOPACY IN NORTHUMBRIA 620 – 735

ADAM GAUNT

ABSTRACT

The Northumbrian people were subject to two different conversions within the space of a single generation. The former was Gregorian in origin, headed by Bishop Paulinus and the latter was Ionan, being led by Bishop Aidan. The result was that the Northumbrian church became a melting pot where these two traditions met. The aim of this study is to look again at the early days of the Northumbrian church; however, this study does so by considering the styles of episcopacy employed by the missionary bishops. This thesis attempts to get behind the hagiographical and historical sources to determine how the bishops themselves understood their role.

The thesis begins by considering the Gregorian and Irish background to the two missions and looks at how bishops Paulinus and Aidan sought the conversion of the people of Northumbria, thereby demonstrating the differences in their styles of episcopal oversight. Following their legacies growing tensions between the two groups resulted in the Synod of Whitby where King Oswiu ruled in favour of following Roman customs. The episcopate of Wilfrid, a controversial and complex figure, followed the synod. I examine the claim, made by his biographer Stephen, that Wilfrid was metropolitan bishop of York and demonstrate that Wilfrid is likely to have seen himself as a metropolitan bishop. The figure of Wilfrid contrasts well with Bishop Cuthbert, to whom the Venerable Bede devotes a lot of his historic and hagiographic writings. The thesis discusses what Bede's own theology of the episcopate was and relates this to his portrayal of Bishop Cuthbert.

The thesis concludes by discussing the events that resulted in Bishop Egbert of York receiving the pallium from Pope Gregory III, confirming the position of York as the head of a Northumbrian province in 735.

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A STUDY OF EPISCOPACY IN NORTHUMBRIA 620 – 735

Mr ADAM GAUNT B.A.

St. John's College,

DURHAM.

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Department of Theology

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABBREVIATIONS

ECI   T.M.Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland,* (Cambridge UP: 2000.)

HE   Bede, *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People,* ed. J.McClure and R.Collins (Oxford UP: 1969.)

PR   Gregory the Great, *The Book of Pastoral Rule,* trans. James Barmby in Vols. XII and XIII of: *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church,* (Oxford, J.Parker: 1895.)

VCA   Anonymous, *Life of St Cuthbert,* ed. and trans. B.Colgrave, *Two Lives of Saint Cuthbert,* (Cambridge UP: 1940.)

VCP   Bede, Prose *Life of St Cuthbert,* ed. and trans. B.Colgrave, *Two Lives of Saint Cuthbert,* (Cambridge UP: 1940.)

VW   Stephen, *The Life of Bishop Wilfrid,* trans. B.Colgrave, *The Life of Bishop Wilfrid by Eddius Stephanus,* (Cambridge UP: 1927.)

WL   Anonymous, *The Life of Gregory the Great,* trans. B.Colgrave, *The Earliest Life of Gregory the Great, by an Anonymous Monk of Whitby,* (University of Kansas Press: 1968.)

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1:1 THE AIMS

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the early history of the Northumbrian church by focusing directly on the leaders of the church, who, in their numerous ways, influenced the conversion of Northumbria and the establishment of its church. As the spiritual leaders were for the most part members of the episcopate, it is the aim of this thesis to evaluate how the bishops of the Northumbrian church exercised their office as bishops. Consequently, this work strives to go behind the historical and hagiographic accounts of the period, and aims to determine how the bishops themselves understood their role.

By endeavouring to discover how these missionary bishops understood their position as spiritual leaders, it is intended that this study will enable the reader to understand more clearly the theology that lay behind their office and work. In other words, it is intended that by demonstrating how the bishops saw their roles theologically, this work will help the theologian and historian alike to recognise more readily the varying characteristics within the episcopates of the Northumbrian bishops.

Because Northumbria was the subject of two very distinct missions, one of Gregorian origin and the other of Ionan origin, the early Northumbrian church offers a unique opportunity to discover the interaction between bishops who held different views of how a bishop was to exercise his episcopal oversight. This study will further demonstrate that the legacies of the pioneer bishops, Paulinus and Aidan, was to have a lasting effect on the Northumbrian church, resulting in division, which was not bridged for many years. Indeed, it appears that the divisions were not entirely resolved by the time Bishop Egbert received the pallium in 735.

The study takes the period from 620 to 735, the former being around the year in which Bishop Paulinus arrived in Northumbria from Kent and the latter being the year in which Bishop Egbert was formally recognised as the chief bishop of a northern province by the sending of the pallium by Pope Gregory III.

Chapter 1: Introduction.

The following chapters deal with the episcopates of the Northumbrian bishops in chronological order, beginning with Paulinus and ending with Egbert. Furthermore, Chapters Two and Three have detailed sections dealing with the background to the Gregorian and Ionan missions. These chapters fulfil an important role as they ground the Northumbrian church in a wider context. It is my opinion that the Northumbrian church needs to be seen within a wide ecclesiastical context and I have been wary not to make the mistake of seeing the Northumbrian church as a self-contained entity in its own right. If anything, the Gregorian and Ionan missions linked the Northumbrian church to a wider Christian community, be it with the continental or Irish churches. It was not until 735 that the Northumbrian church really became its own self-contained organisation.

Although the chapters are independent of each other, the nature of the subject results in many of the same themes overlapping from chapter to chapter. However, I stand by the decision to approach this subject chronologically, rather than thematically, because it gives the thesis a greater sense of order. It also enables the reader to see the progression of episcopates as they occurred.

1:2 SOME DEFINITIONS

Before proceeding any further it is important for the sake of clarity that the reader be left in no doubt of what I may mean by terms such as 'Northumbria' and 'episcopacy.' I am especially aware that this is important with the term, 'Northumbria,' which is likely to be an anachronistic term for the years with which this study is concerned.

The fact that Bede has to define the term in his *History*, might suggest that the term was far from commonplace.[1] Rather, it appears more likely that the inhabitants of the kingdom would have been more likely to have perceived themselves as belonging to the individual kingdoms which constituted what we understand to be Northumbria. Charles-Edwards, to name just one modern scholar, has asserted that

> the very term Northumbria, is, as far as one can see, a creation of Bede's; and the details of the history of the Bernicians and Deirans given by Bede do not suggest that they felt any more warmly towards each other than did the

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[1] Bede, *HE*, II ch 9.

> southern neighbours of the Deirans, the men of Lindsey, towards the English of the North.[2]

Although the kingdoms of Bernicia and Deira constituted the majority of the territory North of the Humber, it was often the case that the expansionist policies of the Northumbrian kings resulted in other territories being annexed to Deira and Bernicia, (which we might better term, Greater Northumbria.) For example, during the period in question, the expansionist policies of Edwin and Ecgfrith, resulted in an enlarged territory under one king, which went beyond the boarders of Deira and Bernicia. For example, Bede informs us that Lindsey, Elmet, parts of Pictland and even the Isles of Man and Anglesey all came under Northumbrian sway during this period.[3]

Thus, the term 'Northumbria' is used within this study to apply to the political realm that was ruled by the king of both Deira and Bernicia. However, this study does also acknowledge that the term is likely to be an anachronism.

It also appears to have been the case that the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of Northumbrian bishops matched the secular jurisdiction of the Northumbrian kings. The best evidence for this comes from the *Life of Bishop Wilfrid*. Stephen informs us that as Ecgfrith's secular kingdom extended so did Wilfrid's ecclesiastical kingdom.[4]

By 'episcopacy' I am referring to the government of the Northumbrian church by bishops. Therefore, a study of episcopacy in Northumbria is concerned with how the bishops conceived of and exercised their episcopal oversight as the leaders, and governors, of the Northumbrian church.

I have just referred to the author of Wilfrid's *Life* as 'Stephen' rather than Eddius. Following the example of scholars such as Dr Foley,[5] this study dismisses the claim of a link between the author of the *Life* and the singing master Æddi, surnamed Stephen, whom Bede mentions as being a companion of Bishop Wilfrid's.[6] Although scholars including B.Colgrave have upheld the reference,[7] it appears that the link is based on nothing more than a possibility that the two are synonymous. Consequently,

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[2] T.M.Charles-Edwards, 'Bede the Irish and the Britons,' p 49.
[3] *Ibid.* II chs 9, 15, 16, & IV 26.
[4] Stephen, *VW*, ch 21.
[5] W.T.Foley, *Images of Sanctity*, p i.
[6] Bede, *HE*, IV ch 2.
[7] B.Colgrave, 'Introduction,' to his trans. of the *VW*, pp ix-x.

throughout this study the author of Wilfrid's *Life* will be referred to as Stephen and not Eddius.

Further definitions are made throughout the thesis when needed. This is especially the case in chapter five, which discusses in detail the definition of a 'metropolitan bishop.'

1:3 SOURCES

The primary sources for this period are limited and the study is heavily reliant on the works of Bede and Stephen. However, it is important to note from the start that the function of many of their works was hagiographical. Christian hagiography remained a developing genre during this period. Evidence that the authors had read earlier Christian hagiography is evident from the anonymous *Life of St Cuthbert* which includes quotations from Athanasius's *Life of St Antony*, and Sulpicius's, *Life of Saint Martin*.[8] Almost identical quotations are made in Stephen's *Life of Bishop Wilfrid*, however, it may be the case that Stephen took these words from the anonymous *Life* of Cuthbert, rather than having access to earlier hagiography himself.[9]

The nature of hagiography means that it operates on many levels. There appear to be many factors that the authors of these lives needed to take into account and balance. For instance, what the community requesting the hagiography had required of the author; elements of historical information about the saint's earthly life; information that would allow his followers to celebrate his memory and sections that acted as apologia for the life and work of the saint. Consequently, hagiography attempts to meet the demands of the author and his patron: it balances the need to hold the saint in the memory of Christendom, with the requests of those who wish to follow the saint's example themselves. At the same time hagiography puts into a permanent written form the oral traditions that a community held of a saint, making it a useful historical source.

The anonymous hagiographies of Cuthbert and Gregory, Stephen's *Life of Bishop Wilfrid*, Bede's Prose *Life of St Cuthbert*, Adomnán's *Life of St Columba*, were all written within this context. This thesis endeavours to recognise the factors

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[8] Anon, *VCA*, I chs 1, 2 & IV ch 1.
[9] Stephen, *VW*, Preface, chs 6 & 11.

that had a bearing on their writings, which makes up a large number of the available primary sources, while attempting to understand what the authors were trying to say about their saints.

Although Bede's episcopal theology shall be discussed in detail in Chapter Six it is imperative to take this opportunity to make a note on Bede's *History*. Without doubt, Bede's *History* is a crucial source for any study in this period and like the above mentioned hagiography, its aims and intentions need to be addressed.

The first point to note is that what has been said above concerning hagiographical works is to a certain extent true of Bede's *History*. Campbell has asserted that "Bede made his *Ecclesiastical History* a chronological hagiography as well as a record in the manner of Eusebius."[10] Without doubt, parts of the *History* are hagiographic in their content; especially in the accounts of Bishops Aidan and Cuthbert, a factor that needs to be taken into consideration.

The hagiographic nature reflects how Bede's work is not 'history' in the way we in the twenty-first century would normally understand the term 'history.' Campbell asserts that for Bede there would have been "no clear division between history and theology."[11] It does appear that Bede on one level was writing an *Ecclesiastical History* for the Anglo-Saxon church, in a similar manner to that written by Eusebius;[12] however, at the same time Bede had his own agenda and his own views, which affect his writings.[13] These factors undoubtedly affected his narrative history, which, again pointing to his representation of the British and Irish, is selective.

Consequently, Bede's *History* is as complicated in its composition as any saint's life. It shares in common with hagiography many similar aims, it is didactic in nature and aims to uphold the memory of those of whom it speaks. Nevertheless, the *History* remains as notable for what Bede appears to have left out as much as to what he included.

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[10] J.Campbell, *Essays in Anglo-Saxon History*, p 5.
[11] *Ibid.* p 31.
[12] *Ibid.* p 5.
[13] For example, Bede's portrayal of the Irish and the Britons which is discussed by T.M.Charles-Edwards, 'Bede the Irish and the Britons.'

CHAPTER 2
THE GREGORIAN MISSION

2:1 GREGORY AND THE EPISCOPATE

It is not unreasonable to suggest that to gain an understanding of the motives behind the Gregorian mission, the mission must be considered within the context of its contemporary thought and theology. This chapter aims to show that the mission to England from Rome was very much Gregory's mission and therefore must be seen and understood in the context of Gregory's thought. Consequently, with particular reference to his understanding of the episcopal office, it is necessary to examine the thought and theology of Gregory the Great that lay behind the mission to the Anglo-Saxons. This is not an unrealistic aim as there is a considerable number of Gregory's own works available, which demonstrate his thoughts on the role of the episcopate. A number of Gregory's epistles, especially his work *The Book of Pastoral Rule*, are particularly beneficial in understanding Gregory's theology in this area.[1]

A suitable starting point to such an exploration of Gregory's thought is with his writings on his own ministry as Bishop of Rome. Gregory was Bishop of Rome from 590 until 604, and his early epistles, in particular, speak of how he felt at adopting such a position. Before becoming Pope, Gregory had held a number of positions inside and outside the Church; it is worthwhile to note some of these positions, as they were influential on his later thought. Gregory had held the position of Prefect of Rome, for a year before turning to the religious life. On entering the monastic life, Gregory founded six monasteries, including one dedicated to St. Andrew in his former family home: nevertheless, Gregory entered this monastery as an ordinary monk. The time that Gregory spent in a monastic setting clearly had a profound effect on the rest of his life and ministry. Gregory left the monastery only when Pope Benedict I ordained him deacon; he was given the responsibility of charitable administration over one of the seven districts of the city of Rome. Gregory does not appear to have been in Rome

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[1] The Epistles and the Pastoral Rule, as quoted in this study, are taken from a translation by James Barmby in Vols. XII and XIII of: *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church,* unless stated otherwise.

long before Pope Pelagius II sent him as his Ambassador to the Imperial Court in Constantinople. On leaving Constantinople Gregory returned to his monastery as Abbot until elected Pope in 590.

Gregory's reaction at becoming Bishop of Rome was far from positive. In a letter to Narses, a Patrician, Gregory states

> I have lost inwardly while mounting outwardly, though undeserving, to the top most height of rule. Know then that I am stricken with so great sorrow that I can scarcely speak; for the dark shades of grief block up the eyes of my soul.[2]

Furthermore, in a letter to Theoctista, sister of the Emperor, Gregory states

> Under the colour of episcopacy I have been brought back to the world, in which I am involved in such great earthly cares as I do not at all remember having been subjected to even in the lay state of life. For I have lost the deep joys of my quiet, and seem to have risen outwardly while inwardly falling down. Whence I grieve to find myself banished far from the face of my maker.[3]

Clearly Gregory saw his appointment as Pope as dragging him back into the secular world, that he had renounced in order to enter the religious life. This is especially the case as, during this period in particular, the position of Bishop of Rome clearly held a secular as well as an ecclesiastical role. Although Gregory's epistles confirm that becoming Pope was ultimately the last thing that he would have chosen for himself, Gregory demonstrates elsewhere that he had no will of his own in this appointment and that he was at the mercy of God's will

> My infirmity cannot reach to the height of the apostolic see, [I had] rather have declined this burden, lest, having pastoral rule, I should succumb in action through inadequate administration. But, since it is not for us to go against the will of the Lord who disposes all, I obediently followed the way in which it pleased the merciful hand of the ruler to deal with me.[4]

In short, as Homes Dudden has precisely summarised, Gregory's acceptance of the papal office was one of an "intense conviction of a divine vocation."[5]

It is generally accepted that the *Pastoral Rule* was written after the pontiff had received a letter from John of Ravenna, which admonished Gregory on his

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[2] Gregory, *Epistle*, I. 6.
[3] *Ibid.* I. 5.
[4] *Ibid.* I. 27, to Archbishop Anastasius of Corinth.
[5] F.Homes Dudden, *Gregory The Great - His Place in History and Thought* Vol. 1 book 2 p 228.

unwillingness to accept his position and his pastoral oversight.[6] The *Pastoral Rule* is Gregory's response to this letter, and is duly addressed "To John, Bishop of the City of Ravenna."[7] As the *Pastoral Rule* sets out Gregory's thoughts on the episcopate in detail, this work is, consequently, of great interest to this study. The *Rule* gives the clearest possible understanding of contemporary thought on the episcopal office at the time immediately prior to the conversion of England, from the person who was to be very closely associated with the mission.

The *Rule* is divided into four parts, which are themselves sub-divided into chapters. The first part of the work is concerned with what sort of man should become a bishop in the Church. For Gregory the man who is to become a bishop must be learned because

> No one presumes to teach an art till he has first, with intent meditation, learnt it. What rashness is it, then, for the unskilful to assume pastoral authority, since the government of the soul is the art of arts![8]

However, Gregory acknowledges that there is a danger that such learned men, who are able to assume the episcopal office, refuse to do so for what he calls "the pursuit of their own ease."[9] For Gregory this cannot be right; Jesus had told Peter to feed his sheep and likewise the Church must feed Christ's sheep in its day. Therefore, by refusing to feed Christ's flock, a man would also be guilty of refusing to love the shepherd of the sheep.[10] At the other extreme, a learned man should not be seen to be seeking the episcopal office, since desire, including the desire of the episcopal office, is usually driven by pride.[11] In chapters ten and eleven, Gregory goes into further detail concerning the type of man who would be suitable or unsuitable to the task of oversight; however, it would be inappropriate to recount its contents here.

The second section of the Rule is concerned with the manner and conduct of the life of a bishop. Primarily, the leader must be pure in thought, as

> The hand that would cleanse from dirt must needs be clean, lest, being itself sordid with clinging mire, it soils whatever it touches all the more.[12]

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[6] The *PR* is duly dedicated to John of Ravenna and in Part IV, the final paragraph, Gregory makes a reference to "thy reproof;" this paragraph is quoted below.

[7] Gregory, *PR*, from the title as translated by James Barmby: see footnote above.

[8] *Ibid.* Part I Ch. 1.

[9] *Ibid.* Part I Ch. 5.

[10] *Ibid.* Part I Ch. 5. Gregory makes reference of John 25:16-17.

[11] *Ibid.* Part I Ch. 9.

[12] *Ibid.* Part II Ch. 2.

Other characteristics, which Gregory describes, include: pointing the way by being the best example to those who are under him;[13] being discreet in silence and profitable in speech;[14] being close to those in sympathy, and yet exalted above those who are in contemplation, in order to be weak with the weak and exalted to the exalted.[15] The ruler should be compassionate with those who are good livers and yet strict with those who are evil-doers, so that

> Gentleness, then, is to be mingled with severity; a sort of compound is to be
> made of both; so that subjects be neither exulcerated by too much asperity,
> nor relaxed by too great kindness...For with a rod we are smitten, with a staff
> we are supported.[16]

Furthermore, in addition to balancing his position of authority with humility, the bishop should also balance his care for those things that are part of his occupation, which are those things that are without, with those things that are within.[17] He should also be aware not to become occupied with pleasing his brethren rather than seeking truth; he must be so conscious of vices that he does not pass them off as virtues. The bishop must also meditate on the words of holy writ that they may restore him and renew him daily.[18]

The third section is by far the largest section of the *Rule* and is concerned with the art of preaching. By the act of preaching the bishop is able to admonish, as well as uphold; yet, most importantly, it is by preaching that the bishop functions as a teacher. This third part of the *Rule* discusses diversity in preaching and how a bishop is to preach to the different members of his flock. In total, Gregory identifies thirty-six different groups of people whom the preacher must address in a particular manner. For example, the preacher is to preach differently if addressing the poor or the rich, the meek or the passionate, and so on.[19] An entire chapter is dedicated to each of the thirty-six different cases identified by Gregory in the first chapter. There are also

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[13] *Ibid.* Part II Ch. 3.
[14] *Ibid.* Part II Ch. 4.
[15] *Ibid.* Part II Ch. 5.
[16] *Ibid.* Part II Ch. 6.
[17] *Ibid.* Part II Ch. 7.
[18] *Ibid.* Part II Ch. 8, 9, 11.
[19] *Ibid.* Part III Ch. 1.

further chapters on how a bishop is to address a congregation that has a mixed composition of people[20] and a warning that a preacher should never draw

> The mind of the hearer beyond its strength, lest, so to speak, the string of the soul, when stretched more than it can bear, should be broken. For all deep things should be covered up before a multitude of hearers, and scarcely open to a few. [21]

The fourth and final section of the work comprises just the one chapter, and its tone reminds the reader that Pope Gregory sent it as a defence to John of Ravenna. This section has two remaining warnings: firstly, that a bishop should not spend so much time tending to others that he himself falls; and, secondly, that the leader should always be conscious not to become too self confident.[22]

The final paragraph of the apologia demonstrates just how important Gregory saw his role as a bishop to be; something that is important to keep at the forefront of our thinking, as this study progresses to discuss Gregory's plan for the conversion of England. Gregory ends his *Rule* as follows

> See now, good man, how, compelled by necessity laid upon me by thy reproof, being intent on showing what a Pastor ought to be, I have been an ill-favoured painter portraying a handsome man; and how I direct others to the shore of perfection, while myself still tossed among the waves of transgressions. But in the shipwreck of this present life sustain me, I beseech thee, by the plank of thy prayer, that, since my own weight sinks me down, the hand of thy merit may raise me up.[23]

In summary, for Gregory, a bishop was the physician of souls, practising his work with the medicine of preaching and through the example he set others. A bishop of the Church was also to uphold and admonish his flock, yet he was to be aware of the needs of those he was preaching to, lest he should prescribe the wrong medicine or the wrong dose. He was to be a rod to discipline the ungodly and a staff to comfort the godly, forever taking care of his own self also by the daily reading of scripture, lest he be too dirty to remove sin or too self confident to be humble.

From a reading of the *Rule* and a number of his epistles, it can clearly be demonstrated that Gregory the Great placed an exceptionally high value on the episcopal office. Furthermore, he set remarkably high standards for those who were to

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[20] *Ibid.* Part III Ch. 36.
[21] *Ibid.* Part III Ch. 39.
[22] *Ibid.* Part IV.
[23] *Ibid.* Part IV.

fulfil this role within the Church. It is a strong possibility that what Gregory set down in his *Rule* was what Gregory had believed long before rising to the episcopal rank himself.[24] Consequently, for Gregory, becoming Bishop of Rome was the greatest of burdens, yet a burden of divine appointment that had to be accepted. By demonstrating what he believed the role of a bishop to be, Gregory aimed to demonstrate to John of Ravenna just why he had been so negative about becoming Bishop of Rome.

We are aware from Gregory's later epistles that the *Rule* was circulated far beyond Rome and Ravenna. Gregory himself informs us that he had sent a copy to Archbishop Leander of Seville. Furthermore, a letter from Licinianus, Bishop of Carthagena in Spain, to Gregory gives one example at least of what the Spanish Church felt about the *Rule*, the bishop praising it as "a palace of virtue."[25] It is also generally accepted that Augustine brought a copy of the *Rule* with him when he first arrived in England. However, it does remain a possibility that the *Rule* was among the "very many manuscripts"[26] sent to Augustine after the conversion of King Æthelberht of Kent. Plummer, for one, is content to accept the tradition that originates from the Preface of King Alfred's English translation of the *Rule*, which informs the reader that Augustine had indeed brought a copy into England with him.[27]

Although written as an apology of his views on his own circumstances, the *Pastoral Rule* appears to have soon become the main handbook for the continental bishop. Its circulation throughout the West and into Britain would undoubtedly have set the highest standards for those holding the episcopal office. Certainly, it was with this model of episcopacy in mind that Gregory the Great considered whom to send on a mission to the Anglo-Saxons.

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[24] Dudden suggests that while working on the *Commentary on Job* Gregory had already conceived of a work on the role of the episcopate. F.Homes Dudden, *Gregory The Great - His Place in History and Thought*, Vol. 1 book 2 p 229.

[25] Gregory, *Epistle*, V. 49 & II. 54.

[26] Bede, *HE*, I ch 29.

[27] C.Plummer, *Opera Historica*, Vol. 2 p 71.

2:2 GREGORY AND THE MISSION TO THE ANGLO-SAXONS

Before we consider the details of Gregory's plan for the conversion of Anglo-Saxon Kent and Northumbria, along with his recommendations for the intended English episcopal structure, the first question that needs to be addressed concerns Gregory's motives for sending a mission to England. Clearly, there is not one straightforward answer to this question. Even though there are numerous works of Gregory's surviving, and despite the comprehensive treatment of the subject by converts themselves in later generations, such as the anonymous Whitby monk or nun who wrote *The Earliest Life of Gregory the Great*, and also Bede in his *History*, the motives that lay directly behind the sending of Augustine to Kent remain unclear. A number of suggestions have been put forward, of which four appear to be worth discussing at this juncture.

The first three suggestions work from the premise that Gregory had been the sole initiator of a mission to convert the Anglo-Saxons. This is the picture which is presented in the *Whitby Life*, and in Bede's *History*.[28] The first suggestion is that Gregory saw a mission to England as the means by which the Frankish church in Gaul could be reformed.

If Christianity were established within England, then, simply as an accident of geography, the links between the Church there and the Church in Gaul would be very close, at least at first. Consequently, through the mission to England, Gregory's own sway over the Church in Gaul would be increased.[29] The most striking primary evidence to support such an assertion comes in two places: firstly, in the letter of Gregory the Great to Augustine in which the Pontiff responds to the questions posed to him by Augustine; and secondly in a letter to Archbishop Vergilius of Arles. Bede, in his *History*, quotes both letters.[30] Gregory's response comes to Augustine, after the conversion of Æthelberht and after Augustine's own consecration to the episcopate at Arles. Gregory states in response to question seven that

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[28] Anon, *WL*, chs 9 & 10. Bede, *HE*, I ch 23.

[29] H.Mayr-Harting, *The Coming of Christianity to Anglo-Saxon England*, pp 59 - 60.

[30] Bede, *HE*, I ch 27 & ch 28.

> We give you no authority over the bishops of Gaul because the bishop of
> Arles received the pallium a long time ago in the days of my predecessors and
> we must on no account deprive him of the authority he has received. So my
> brother, if you chance to cross over to the province of Gaul, you must consult
> with the bishop of Arles <u>as to how such faults as are found among the bishops
> may be amended.</u> If he should happen to be slack in his discipline he must be
> kindled by your zeal. We have also sent letters to him bidding him profit by
> the presence of your Holiness in Gaul, to use his utmost efforts to check
> whatever is contrary to our Creator's commands in the conduct of the
> bishops.[31]

Furthermore, in his letter to the Archbishop of Arles, Gregory requests him to look into any matters of sins committed by bishops, which are identified by Augustine. For Gregory to set out the relationship between Bishop Augustine and the Bishop of Arles strongly suggests that the Pontiff had, at some point, suggested to Augustine that he did have the authority to admonish the Frankish bishops. These two letters provide clarification of Augustine's role and how he should proceed in fulfilling the task Gregory had set before him. Clearly, there is evidence to suggest that there were problems in the Frankish Church, which greatly concerned Gregory.[32] Nevertheless, to assert that the whole mission to England was a circuitous way of bringing the Frankish Church back into line is not really warranted from the evidence available.

Another proposed suggestion is that Gregory wished to convert the Anglo-Saxons before they were converted from paganism to a form of Christian heresy. The Anglo-Saxons were a people dwelling in what was part of the old Roman Empire and were still "honest-to-God heathens."[33] Save for the marriage between King Æthelberht of Kent and the Christian Frankish Princess Bertha, daughter of the King of Paris,[34] the Anglo-Saxons were as yet untouched by Christianity, but more importantly untouched by Christian heresy.[35] There is evidence for Gregory's hatred of the Arian heresy and of his delight in Arians repenting and embracing orthodox Christianity. In a letter to Bishop Leander of Seville, Gregory is clearly thrilled to hear of the conversion from Arianism of the Spanish king, Reccared

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[31] Bede, *HE*, I ch 27.
[32] See also Gregory, *Epistle*, IX. 114.
[33] H.Mayr-Harting, *The Coming of Christianity to Anglo-Saxon England*, p 60.
[34] Bede, *HE*, I ch 25.
[35] Although it is possible that Arianism had been in Britain at an earlier point, J.Mc Clure and R.Collins 'Notes' in the *HE*, p 364.

> What shall I say at the dread judgement to that great judge if I come empty-
> handed while you bring with you a great flock of believers won to the true
> faith by your earnest and constant teaching?[36]

Clearly, Gregory would have considered the possibility that the Arians might have targeted the Anglo-Saxon people, but there was no evidence that the Arians had managed to make their way into England. Nonetheless, Gregory could well have considered it his pastoral duty to get there first.

The third assertion is, in my mind, the most likely motive behind Gregory's involvement in a mission to the Anglo-Saxons. In his *Pastoral Rule* Gregory clearly demonstrates how seriously he took the office of bishop. Furthermore, the section of the letter to Bishop Leander quoted above is additional evidence of Gregory's strong sense of responsibility for his flock, and for his belief in his own accountability to God for them, a characteristic that is also recorded in the Whitby hagiography and in Bede's *History*.[37] Markus has asserted that the real driving force behind the mission to England was indeed Gregory's own sense of pastoral responsibility.[38] Notwithstanding other factors, it appears more likely that the primary motivation behind the mission was indeed Gregory's own personal convictions. Markus firmly states

> The sending of a mission really needs no special examination. Unverifiable
> theories...have sometimes been allowed to obscure the simple and patent fact
> that the mission was quite simply a practical application of Gregory's concept
> of the pastoral office - a concept he had, as we know, meditated upon long
> and deeply.[39]

An altogether different perspective has been put forward by Ian Wood who, using Gregory's own correspondence as his primary source, argues that the Kentish establishment had itself shown an interest in being converted. Consequently, Wood's paper re-evaluates the premise that Gregory was the sole initiator of the mission.[40] Wood further suggests that there was a strong and positive Frankish element to the mission. In his view, "Frankish help was not only sought. It was quite clearly forthcoming."[41] Indeed, as was noted above, continental Christianity already had a foothold in Kent after the marriage of Æthelberht to Bertha. Wood suggests that

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[36] Quoted by B.Colgrave in his notes to the, *WL*, p 25.

[37] Anon, *WL*, ch 6 & the letter to Augustine in Bede, *HE*, I ch 23.

[38] R.A.Markus, 'Augustine and Gregory the Great,' pp 41-49.

[39] *Ibid.* p 44.

[40] I.Wood, 'The Mission of Augustine of Canterbury to the English,' p 9.

during the reign of King Eormenric, Æthelberht and Bertha would not have been in any position to promote a new religion; nevertheless, on Æthelberht's accession, "overtures" appear to have been made suggesting that he might be willing to accept missionaries into his realm. Furthermore, if Æthelberht had not become king until 589, as Wood suggests, then the arrival of Augustine can be seen as a suitable response to such overtures. The paper demonstrates that there were many reasons why Æthelberht may have seen the possibility of conversion in a positive light, not least the examples of the powerful Merovingian kings.[42]

Although Wood's paper leaves a lot of uncertainty as to why Gregory was so keen to send a mission to Kent, it does strongly suggest that the initiator of the mission was the Kentish establishment itself. As for Gregory's active involvement, I remain in no doubt that he would have seen it as his duty to act upon such a request. The mission to Kent may also have had the added benefit of reasserting a papal presence in Frankish Gaul, as well as making sure that the church got to Kent before the Arian heretics. Nevertheless, it is likely that it was Gregory's pastoral concern which drove him to become as personally involved in the mission as he did.

2:3 AUGUSTINE IN KENT

The mission to Kent that followed is so definitely identified with Gregory that it appears impossible for him not to have instructed Augustine in the process of how he thought it was best to proceed in converting the Anglo-Saxons. By examining the recorded events it is possible to establish an insight into Augustine's chosen method of conversion. Although this is an uncertain process, and moreover I am aware that for the evidence we are primarily relying on Bede, who is secondary in this case, it appears that the role of bishop and of the missionary were inseparable in this mission. I acknowledge, however, that in the case of Augustine there is an exception in that he was consecrated after the conversion was well under way. Furthermore, the differences in missionary work between Roman and Ionan bishops appear to have been symptomatic of their differing assumptions about the episcopal office.

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[41] *Ibid.* p 6.
[42] *Ibid.* p 11.

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So what was the plan? Firstly, Gregory's choice of Augustine and his companions is noteworthy. Augustine, as would be bishop to the converted Anglo-Saxons, like Gregory was to be a monk-bishop. Clearly Gregory assumed that a monk-bishop with a monastic community to support his mission would be the most appropriate and effective means of conversion. Secondly, Augustine had landed in the kingdom of Kent; clearly no mistake, especially when we consider Wood's assertion. Gregory may have been further aware of King Æthelberht's so called 'Bretwaldaship' over the southern kingdoms.[43] Therefore, it is almost certain that Æthelberht would have been familiar with aspects of the faith before the arrival of Augustine on Thanet. Thirdly, Augustine's policy was to direct his attentions to the king himself. On his arrival Augustine sent messages to Æthelberht informing him of his entry into his kingdom. The king, in turn, requested them to remain on Thanet until he could decide how to act. Augustine's party remained obedient to his wishes. It was "some days afterwards" that the King and his thegns met Augustine and his party in the open air, as the king had requested. Augustine preached to the council who then granted him permission to stay and gave him land in Kent's chief city of Canterbury. In Canterbury they practised their faith and following the apostolic example; many were being converted because of their model, and the King himself was baptised "being attracted by their pure life."[44] By converting the King, the mission would have then become the religion of the court and within time the kingdom, although in this case there appears to have been no compulsion from Æthelberht for anyone to turn to the new religion. It appears that Augustine recognised that conversion was attainable through example, as well as preaching, and acknowledged that conversion had to be voluntary.

There are a number of characteristics about this mission to Kent, which are likely to have been recommended to Augustine and his missionary team by Gregory himself. Augustine directed his attention to the king himself whilst remaining obedient to him. He preached before the king and his council, he and his fellow monks accepted the offer of land and they lived as humbly as the apostles. The missionaries demonstrated that example, as well as preaching, was good medicine for the heathen souls. Some of these characteristics relate closely to our knowledge of Gregory's

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[43] Bede, *HE*, I ch 25 & II ch 5.
[44] *Ibid.* I ch 26.

thought, while others are less obvious. The mission was relatively successful, relatively quickly, and appears to have been well-organised and well thought out from the start.

It was only after his consecration as Bishop in Arles that Augustine sent his representatives back to Rome with the news of the conversion for Gregory and with questions for his consideration. Gregory duly replied to these questions; he also reinforced the mission by sending more ministers to assist Augustine and by outlining in a further letter his plan for the episcopal structure of England.[45] The episcopal structure was for two metropolitan bishops, one of whom was to have his see in London and the other in York; each metropolitan was to have twelve suffragan bishops. The sees of London and York were to be equal, with the metropolitan bishop who had been consecrated the longest taking seniority over the other. Augustine was to decide who was to be consecrated Bishop of York and Augustine for the duration of his lifetime was to be the most senior bishop in all Britain.

In a letter to Abbot Mellitus, one of those sent to assist Augustine, Gregory appears to have changed one element of his plan. This change might appear relatively minor at first, but it demonstrates the detailed consideration Gregory had given to the English mission. Gregory informed Mellitus not to destroy the pagan temples, only to destroy their idols. After the sprinkling of holy water these temples were to house altars with relics in them; consequently pagan temples were to be used for the worship of God. The new religion was to take over the fabric of the old; it is clear that Gregory believed such continuity would assist in the conversion rather than be a hindrance to it.

We should recognise that the mission has Gregory's own personality stamped on it and that the mission was a highly organised and well thought out operation from its very beginnings.[46] The letter to Mellitus demonstrates that Gregory was willing to, and did, change his mind on certain aspects of the plan as it was being put into practice. However, at the very least, this is a demonstration of the continuing effort that Gregory gave to the enterprise. Before his death, Gregory was to see the achievement of the conversion of the kingdom of Kent and to rest in the knowledge

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[45] *Ibid.* I ch 29, I ch 30. & I ch 31.
[46] Compare, R.A.Markus, 'Augustine and Gregory the Great,' p 47.

that he had laid the foundations and had begun the process of the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons. Continental Christianity had a foothold in Kent, a foothold from which the faith was to spread, initially across the South East and then further afield, and into the kingdom of Northumbria.

2:4 THE EPISCOPATE OF PAULINUS

The arrival of the Gregorian mission in Northumbria occurred with the marriage of King Edwin of Deira to the daughter of King Æthelberht, Æthelburgh. The reigning Kentish king, Eadbald, declared that it was not lawful for a Christian to be married to a pagan. However, Edwin sent assurances to Eadbald that he would allow Æthelburgh and her retainers to practise their religion without hindrance. An agreement was made similar to the one between Æthelberht and Bertha's family, when she had married into the Kentish royal family.[47] Furthermore, Queen Bertha had brought with her from Gaul Bishop Liudhard, whose role it had been to minister to her. In the case of Æthelburgh, Paulinus, one of the second group of missionaries sent from Rome, was duly sent to accompany Æthelburgh to Northumbria.[48] With such arrangements in place Æthelburgh and Edwin were duly married.

What follows in Bede's account is a complex series of events that eventually results in the baptism of Edwin and the Deiran royal family at York, on Easter Day 627.[49] However, this date of 627 is based on Bede's chronology, a chronology which has received extensive evaluation by Kirby. Kirby has demonstrated that Bede is likely to have calculated dates before 685 by counting the number of years that each king reigned. However, there are discrepancies, as Bede appears to have failed to recognise that kings did not always reign for exact numbers of years and that the years were calculated from the date of their accession to the throne. This has the consequence that most of Bede's dates are calculated to within about a year of their most likely date.[50]

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[47] Bede, *HE*, I ch 25.
[48] *Ibid.* II ch 9.
[49] *Ibid.* II ch 14.
[50] D.P.Kirby, 'Bede and Northumbrian Chronology,' p 515. S.Wood, 'Bede's Northumbrian Dates Again', made a response to Kirby; however, this does not effect Kirby's revised dating of Paulinus' arrival in Northumbria.

In the same paper Kirby reassesses the chronology of Paulinus' arrival into Northumbria and demonstrates that Paulinus was likely to have arrived in Northumbria much earlier than Bede would have us believe. For instance, Bede records that Paulinus arrived with the queen in July 625,[51] whereas Kirby's revisions, using the letters of Pope Boniface as evidence, place his arrival in 619.[52] Kirby's complete re-evaluation of the chronology of this period must be recognised by this work, and consequently, the remainder of this chapter will reflect Kirby's findings. Therefore, when referring to possible dates I shall quote both Bede's and Kirby's, in that order. To assist the reader further, I have placed in the appendix a table which briefly outlines, in parallel columns, some of the differences in the dates given by Bede concerning Paulinus after being reassessed by Kirby.[53]

Notwithstanding the above, the episcopate of Paulinus still appears to have had three distinct phases: firstly, between Paulinus' arrival in Northumbria and Easter Day 626/627; secondly, the period between Easter Day 626/627 and Easter Day 627/628; and thirdly the period between Easter Day 627/628 and the death of Edwin at the battle of Hatfield Chase in 633/634.

In the first period, Paulinus' initial role does not appear to have been any different to that assumed by Bishop Liudhard in Kent after Bertha's arrival there as queen. However, Bede informs us that Paulinus desired to do more and to call the people he was coming to live among to the faith. Bede further records that Paulinus attempted to do so by preaching to them within this first year; nonetheless, his labours appeared to have been in vain, as the peoples' hearts were hardened.[54] The assassination attempt on Edwin the following Easter Day, provided an opportunity from a near catastrophe, this marked the beginning of the second phase of Paulinus' episcopacy.

With the failed assassination attempt and the birth of Eanflæd, Bede informs us that the king was giving thanks to his gods when Paulinus informed Edwin that it had been by the prayers of Christ that Eanflæd had been safely delivered. It was at this point that the king suggested he would give up the worship of idols if he were granted

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[51] Bede, *HE*, II ch 9.
[52] D.P.Kirby, 'Bede and Northumbrian Chronology,' p 522.
[53] Appendix, Fig. 1.
[54] Bede, *HE*, II ch 9.

victory over those who had that day attempted to assassinate him. It is from this point, until the king's baptism a year later, that there appears to have been a distinct shift in Paulinus' aims: for the following year Paulinus' primary purpose appears to become that of the securing of Edwin's soul.

Although Edwin's conversion appears to have been one of the most drawn out in the Anglo-Saxon period, it also appears to have been one of the most well considered conversions of the period. Therefore, Paulinus' role as a teacher is not to be underestimated, nor is his patience. His work did eventually bear fruit. Helped along by Paulinus' reminder of a vision that Edwin had received whilst exiled in the East Anglian court, Edwin desired to turn fully to Christ. Even at this stage the king still insisted on conferring with his witenagemot first. With their agreement, including that of the chief priest Coifi, the decision was made and the court turned to the Christian faith.[55] In Bede's account, the king, his family, all his nobles and a vast number of common people were eventually baptised by Paulinus on Easter Day 627.[56] Kirby accepts that it remains a possibility that the baptisms took place on Easter Day; however, he asserts that the date was more likely to have been Easter 628.[57]

Further to Bede's account there is another account of the events surrounding the conversion of Edwin in the earliest *Life of Gregory the Great*. In this account the Whitby author identifies Edwin's earlier experience at the court of Rædwald as being an encounter between him and Paulinus.[58] However, as noted above, in Bede's account no such identification is made at all. There is also an account of Paulinus having a crow shot down out of the sky, after the crowd saw its presence as an omen. At this stage the king was still receiving instruction from Paulinus, who then used the dead bird to demonstrate the powerlessness of the bird over its own death, never mind the lives of men.[59] There is also a curious note in the *History of the Britons*, which states that Edwin was actually baptised by a British priest named Rum Map Urbgen.[60] This note represents a tradition, which claimed that the Deirans were converted by the British Church, rather than by the Gregorian missionaries. This account is completely

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[55] *Ibid.* II ch 13.
[56] *Ibid.* II ch 14.
[57] D.P.Kirby, 'Bede and Northumbrian Chronology,' p 518.
[58] Anon, *WL,* ch 15.
[59] *Ibid.* ch 16.
[60] *The History of the Britons,* Para. 63.

irreconcilable with Bede and the earliest *Life of Gregory the Great.* Consequently it has been seen as a reflection of a British tradition which was, in fact, not based on historical events at all.[61]

Within a year Paulinus had successfully converted the king and his court to the faith, overcoming his initial failure to convert the general population. It appears that Paulinus had begun his episcopate by preaching to the people, which was initially unsuccessful. However, with the conversion of the king, the numbers of "common people" who turned to the faith seem also to have been sizeable. With the conversion of the establishment complete, and with the destruction of the idols by the former high priest, Paulinus' episcopal ministry changed again. This is the third phase to his ministry, which dates from Edwin's baptism until his death at the battle of Hatfield Chase in 633/634. With the support of the Northumbrian establishment Paulinus had his see fixed in York, just as Gregory had envisaged, and his preaching to the Northumbrian populace could begin. In this third period the efforts made by Paulinus were rewarded with many conversions.

The extent of Paulinus' episcopal oversight as Bishop of York is demonstrated by Bede's accounts of his preaching and baptising over this six-year period. In the sub-kingdom of Bernicia at Yeavering, Paulinus spent thirty-six days teaching catechumens and then baptising them in the River Glen. In Deira, Paulinus baptised in the River Swale near Catterick and a church was built at Cambodunum in the region of Elmet. [62] Paulinus' oversight also extended into Lindsey, where he preached and baptised, initially converting the Reeve of Lincoln. It was also in Lincoln that Paulinus consecrated Honorius as bishop of Canterbury, being the only bishop available for the task. Both Honorius and Paulinus were sent the pallium in accordance with the wishes and plan of Gregory the Great.[63] It appears that Paulinus was recognised as a metropolitan by Rome who, if it had not been for Edwin's untimely end, would have established York as an ecclesiastical province in its own right, something that was to be postponed until 735.

The task of maintaining episcopal oversight across such a large diocese must have been extremely difficult for Paulinus, who appears to have been supported only

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[61] C.Plummer, *Opera Historica*, Vol. 2. p 101.
[62] Bede, *HE*, II ch 14.

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by his deacon James. Paulinus brought to his episcopate a method whereby he travelled across the kingdom and would stay in one place for an extended period of time; for example we are aware that he spent thirty-six days at Yeavering. Once there he would begin to teach and baptise, leaving a sizeable community of converts behind in each location, probably including the local noble or reeve. However, with so few clergy it would have been difficult for Paulinus to do anything more. If Edwin had not been killed in battle, if Paulinus had been given reinforcements of clergy and if he had stayed and received the pallium, then Paulinus' achievements, would surely have been much greater. Nonetheless, Paulinus' achievements, especially in the third period of his episcopate, can sometimes be somewhat overlooked, probably because Paulinus' mission and episcopate were not to survive the death of Edwin and the turmoil that followed. On his return to Kent Bishop Paulinus continued to exercise episcopal oversight, becoming bishop of Rochester a ministry he continued to exercise until his death.[64]

Through Paulinus the Gregorian mission reached Northumbria, and if nothing more, was successful in converting the Deiran royal household to the Christian faith. Furthermore, Paulinus also left a legacy in establishing foundations for other missionaries to build upon in later years: both physical foundations, such as the half-built stone church in York, and metaphorical foundations, which were to overshadow the Ionan missionaries and to resurface in the future episcopate of Wilfrid.

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[63] *Ibid.* II ch 16, 17. & 18.
[64] *Ibid.* II ch 20.

CHAPTER 3

THE IONAN MISSION AND THE IRISH EPISCOPAL STRUCTURE

3:1 THE MISSION FROM IONA IN CONTEXT

Just as in the previous chapter placed the episcopate of Paulinus within its context, so this chapter focuses on placing Aidan's episcopate within its context. Aidan had arrived in Northumbria after King Oswald had requested the "Irish elders," amongst whom he had sought refuge while in exile, to send him a bishop whose task it would be to convert the Northumbrians back to the faith.[1] Being duly consecrated, Aidan was sent to Northumbria by his abbot, Ségéne the fifth abbot of Iona, and it is likely that he arrived in Northumbria during the spring of 635.[2] This segment of the chapter is concerned with speculating on how Aidan may have understood his role as bishop to the Northumbrians; such considerations must be based on the evidence there is available on the role of the bishop in the church centred on Iona, and in the Irish Church generally.

It becomes apparent to the reader of any work connected to the Irish Church that the structure of the church was not separated from the structure of Irish society. However, unlike England and indeed the majority of mainland Europe, the Irish had never been subjected to the rule of the Roman Empire. Although this appears to be an apparently obvious observation it is in fact crucial. Rome had never conquered Ireland and consequently Ireland had never been divided in fixed Roman provinces with fixed *civitates*. Consequently, the form of government established and operating in Ireland in the sixth and seventh centuries was, in at least some aspects, peculiar to Ireland. Just as the structure of government in Ireland was not based on a Imperial Roman model, neither was the Irish Church.

We need only compare these circumstances with those of Edwin, who appears to have based his court at York, the former Roman provincial *civitas*, and of his bishop, Paulinus. For example, an account contained within the earliest *Life of Gregory the Great* appears to describe the Roman buildings at York, which

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[1] Bede, *HE*, III ch 3.
[2] *Ibid.* III ch 5, the date is taken from C.Plummer, *Opera Historica*, Vol. 2 p 136.

demonstrates that the court of King Edwin occupied them while the court was resident in York.[3]

Without a Roman heritage there were no fixed provinces and it seems that during this period Ireland's political structure was to a certain extent fluid. Ireland appears to have been populated by groups or tribes of different peoples known as *túatha*, each *túath* having its own acknowledged king. These *túatha* or tribes also appear to have had their own churches, poets and ecclesiastical scholars. Some scholars believe that these small *túath* kingdoms numbered well over one hundred. Byrne, for example, has asserted that there were probably no fewer than one hundred and fifty *túath* kings.[4] These *túatha* seem to have been loosely grouped into four 'would-be' provinces of Leinster, Munster, Ulster and Connaught; together with land under the control of the Uí Néill, each province being headed by a Supreme-King. It appears to have been the case that, unlike examples from Anglo-Saxon England, although the *túath* kingdoms were subject to a Supreme King on a provincial level, the individual *túath* kings remained the king's of their particular tribe. With reference to this structure Charles-Edwards has commented that

> These small kingdoms were indeed politically subordinate, but the subordination was of one king to another rather than of a local officer, such as a sheriff or count, to the king.[5]

This overall structure seems to have remained a consistent feature of Irish government; what was fluid was who held supremacy over each province and therefore, over the *túath* kingdoms.

Each *túath* appears to have had its own church; evidence from the canons of the *First Synod of Patrick,* sometimes referred to as *The Bishop's Synod,* suggests that each *túath* church had its own bishop. Charles-Edwards has concluded that the synod's most likely dating is no later than the middle of the sixth century, thereby placing it within one or two generations of St Patrick's mission.[6] Furthermore, Charles-Edwards argues that synods later than the mid-sixth century were normally

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[3] Anon, *WL,* ch 15. Compare further how in the previous chapter Paulinus, as part of Edwin's court, was firmly based in, and eventually made bishop of, the Roman city of *Eboracum.*

[4] F.J.Byrne, *Irish Kings and High-Kings,* (London, 1973) p 7, quoted in T.M.Charles-Edwards, *ECI,* p 12.

[5] T.M.Charles-Edwards, *ECI,* p. 13. Also pp 12-4 and 518-9.

[6] *Ibid. ECI,* p. 247.

held on a provincial, rather than a national basis.[7]   Therefore, the *First Synod of Patrick*, probably dating from the sixth century, provides information on how the church, in at least one Irish province, was structured in the first generations after the mission of Patrick.

The canons of the *First Synod of Patrick*, amongst other things, define the relationship between the clergy and their bishop.   For instance, canon twenty-four states that a newcomer into a *túath* was not to baptise, celebrate the mass, or build a church until he had first received permission to do so from the bishop.   The bishop's jurisdiction was itself limited by canon thirty: when outside of his own *parochia* a bishop was not permitted to exercise his episcopal ministry unless he had received permission to do so from the bishop of the said *túath*.[8]   The canons of the synod provide evidence of an episcopally governed Irish Church, which was likely to have been divided according to the political structure of the *túath* kingdoms.

The development of Irish monasticism within the sixth and seventh centuries was the catalyst for a further development within the structure of the Irish Church.   Monasteries, such as Iona, were in time to become principal houses for a family of monastic houses throughout Ireland and Northern Britain.   The heads of these churches were initially the founders of the monasteries themselves.   For instance, a reading of Adomnán's life of Columba demonstrates that Columba appears to have been church-head, or abbot, over the monastery of Iona as well as over daughter monasteries such as, Derry, Durrow, *Cella Diuni*, Hinba *et al.*[9] As these monastic houses were spread across Ireland and Northern Britain, the authority of Columba as church-head cut across the authority of several *túath* churches and their bishops.

It has been argued, and to a certain extent assumed, that the development of monasticism in the sixth and seventh centuries undermined the established structure of the Irish Church.   However, the work of Hughes and Sharpe, who responds to Hughes, has questioned this assumption.[10] Hughes points to various canons, which are believed to have been written in the seventh century, that demonstrate the continued

[7] *Ibid. ECI*, p 247.
[8] Trans. in J.T.Mc Neill and H.M.Gamer, *Medieval Handbooks of Penance.*
[9] Adomnán, *Life of St Columba*, Derry I ch 2. Durrow I ch 3. Cella Diuni I ch 31. Hinba I ch 45.
[10] K.Hughes, *The Church in Early Irish Society*, & R. Sharpe, 'Some Problems Concerning the Organisation of the Church in Early Medieval Ireland,' pp 230-70.

existence of bishops and of secular clergy in the seventh century;[11] this undermines the argument that the monastic foundations completely superseded the episcopally governed church.[12] Likewise, Sharpe concludes that the development of monasticism, far from removing one organisation to replace it with another, was not responsible for changing the pastoral organisation of the church in any fundamental way; rather, it introduced an important new element into the life of the church.[13] More recently Charles-Edwards, using extracts from the eighth-century *Rule of Patrick*, has further demonstrated that the development of monasticism did not kill the episcopal church. Instead he concludes that the Irish Church was both "episcopal and peculiarly monastic." Furthermore, that "the problem is to know how to determine the limits within which these two views are correct."[14]

Rather than the Irish Church undergoing a fundamental change, it is increasingly clear that the development of families of monasteries, based around mother churches such as Iona, resulted in the Irish church being monastic and also based on the *túath* model. Furthermore, the existence of these two models side by side does not necessarily suggest that they were in opposition to each other.

The abbots who succeeded the monastic founders as church-heads, in such monasteries as Iona, maintained a similar status to that which the founders had themselves received. Baithéne, second abbot of Iona,[15] would have been acknowledged as Columba's successor by all the daughter houses of Iona. As such, Baithéne held coarbial authority over the Ionan federation. Thus such an arrangement within the Irish Church effectively transmitted itself from one generation to another.

Other evidence from the eighth-century *Rule of Patrick* goes some way to shed further light on the role of the episcopate in the Irish Church. Admittedly the document dates from some time after Aidan's episcopate; however, the text remains of interest in that it demonstrates that some effort was being made to uphold the rights and dignity of the episcopate in Ireland during the eighth century. Its emphasis is

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[11] *The Penitential of Cummean* canons II. 1 and II. 4. A translation of this can be found in Mc Neill and Gamer, *Medieval Handbooks of Penance*, p 98.
[12] K.Hughes, *The Church in Early Irish Society*, p 79.
[13] R.Sharpe, 'Some Problems Concerning the Organisation of the Church in Early Medieval Ireland,' p 270.
[14] T.M.Charles-Edwards, *ECI*, p 259.
[15] Adomnán, *Life of St Columba,* I ch 2.

primarily on the need for a bishop to provide pastoral care for the *túath*.[16] The point is clear; pastoral oversight of the *túath* belonged to a bishop, not to an abbot. If this was the position of the Irish Church in the eighth century and in the sixth-century (evidence to suggest it was being in the *First Synod of Patrick*) then it is fair to speculate that this was the situation right through this period. Consequently, as King Oswald had spent time exiled among the Irish, he would have been aware of what he was asking for when he approached the Irish elders for a bishop.[17]

The bishop's role in the Irish church appears to have become limited to one of pastoral oversight. This was especially so in the monastic churches where the abbot, or prior, would have been responsible for the day-to-day running of the monastery. It is such a model that we find Bishop Aidan bringing to Northumbria.

Before considering Aidan's episcopate it is worth making a brief note on Bede's portrayal of the Ionan community in the *Ecclesiastical History*. Bede describes the monastery at Iona as having an unusual ordering, which he confirms followed the example of Columba.

> This island [Iona] always has an abbot for its ruler who is a priest, to whose authority the whole kingdom, including even bishops, have to be subject. This unusual arrangement follows the example of their first teacher, who was not a bishop but a priest and a monk.[18]

Although this thesis is primarily dealing with Iona, from where Aidan came, it is important to note that Bede's description is of Iona and does not necessarily reflect the general make up of the church on the island of Ireland. Charles-Edwards further suggests that the comments by Bede on Iona should not be so readily applied to the Irish church and certainly not to other British churches.[19]

In the same chapter, Bede also asserts that the Picts granted the island of Iona to Columba after a successful mission. Information found in the Irish Annals and in Adomnán's account contradicts Bede's that implies that Bede's source for this chapter was likely to have been of Pictish and not Irish origin.[20] This point demonstrates Bede's limitations, as well as reminding the reader that, as with the previous chapter,

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[16] T.M.Charles-Edwards, *ECI*, p 258.
[17] Bede, *HE*, III ch 3.
[18] Bede, *HE*, III ch 4.
[19] T.M.Charles-Edwards, *ECI*, p 241.
[20] *Ibid.* p 299.

when Bede records the events of this era, he does so as a secondary source. Consequently, what Bede tells us about Iona must be read alongside other, more primary, sources. One account recorded by Adomnán informs the reader of the extent of an abbot's authority. Adomnán records an account where a bishop was apparently compelled to ordain a man, Áed Dub, under the direction of an abbot.[21] Although in this case it is not the abbot of Iona, and presumably it was an exception rather than the rule, it remains a graphic demonstration of the rule that could be exercised by such figures in the monastic tier of the Irish Church.

What then can be said of the relationship between the abbot of Iona and the bishops of Northumbria? Bede informs us that in Northumbria, from Aidan until the Synod of Whitby, the abbot and community of Iona were directly responsible for appointing the bishops to Lindisfarne.[22] At the very least, Iona's sway reached into Northumbria by remaining the authority responsible for the appointment of its bishop. The three Ionan appointed bishops, Aidan, Finan and Colman, were all members of the Iona community before becoming bishops of Northumbria and thus were subject to the abbot's rule like any other monk.

3:2 THE EPISCOPATE OF AIDAN

It has already been established above that it was at the request of King Oswald that the Iona community sent Bishop Aidan to Northumbria. Bede informs his reader that Iona had sent another bishop to Northumbria before Aidan. However, he had turned out to be of a "harsher disposition" and consequently he had been unsuccessful in preaching to the Northumbrians. At a meeting of the elders gathered together to discuss what course of action to take, Aidan spoke; he recommended that the Northumbrians needed milk before moving on to the food of the word of God. Because he had demonstrated "the grace of discretion," the community had Aidan consecrated bishop and he was sent to Oswald.[23] As aforementioned, Plummer has dated Aidan's arrival in Northumbria during the spring of 635.[24]

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[21] Adomnán, *Life of St Columba*, I ch 36.
[22] *Ibid.* III ch 5, III ch 17 & III ch 25.
[23] Bede, *HE*, III ch 5.
[24] C.Plummer, *Opera Historica*, Vol. 2. p 136.

Aidan, unlike Paulinus, appears to have been given the discretion to decide for himself where he was going to base his mission and his see. Paulinus' see, in the former Roman provincial city of York, had been the city chosen by Gregory the Great; however, in comparison to the Gregorian mission, there does not appear to have been an Ionan plan for Northumbria's conversion. Aidan requested, and Oswald granted him land on Lindisfarne for his see. Being an island Lindisfarne would have been more likely to appeal to Aidan; as Lindisfarne rather than York would have had an air of Iona about it. [25] Aidan would have had no experience of a Roman provincial city such as York and would have had difficulty acknowledging its suitability as an episcopal see. Clearly Aidan was much more comfortable with the environment of Lindisfarne where his see was to be established within a monastic context. Furthermore, Lindisfarne was conveniently placed for connections with the court, as Bamburgh, a major royal city founded by Ida around the year 547, was easily within reach.[26] Moreover, Bamburgh was more likely to have been Oswald's principal city as his power base was within Bernicia not Deira; consequently, it made more practical sense for Aidan to be based at Lindisfarne in Bernicia than at York in Deira. For these two reasons, Aidan would have been likely to see Lindisfarne as an ideal location for his bishopric.

Nevertheless, Mayr-Hartings is likely to be correct in his assertion that Aidan would have been unlikely to have seen himself as bishop of Lindisfarne, rather he would have been more likely to have perceived of his role as bishop to the Northumbrians.[27] Aidan's Irish view of episcopacy would probably have had the effect that Aidan saw himself being attached to a people (the Northumbrians) rather than a see (Lindisfarne).

In his prose *Life of St Cuthbert*, Bede describes, in some detail, the arrangement that Aidan had put in place on Lindisfarne

> Aidan, who was the first bishop of this place, was a monk and always lived according to the monastic rule together with all his followers. Hence all the bishops of that place exercise their episcopal function in such a way that the abbot, whom they themselves have chosen by the advice of the brethren, rules

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[25] Bede, *HE*, III ch 3.
[26] The year 547 is the year calculated when the reigns of the kings are subtraced from known dates and it is this date that Bede gives. Ref. D.P.Kirby,' Bede and Northumbrian Chronology,' p 515.
[27] H.Mayr-Harting, *The Coming of Christianity to Anglo-Saxon England*, p 95.

> the monastery; and all the priests, deacons, singers and readers, together with the bishop himself, keep the monastic rule in all things.[28]

Although it appears that Aidan had been keen to establish a monastic community around him, it is also likely that Aidan saw it as important to appoint an abbot to rule over the community on Lindisfarne. With an abbot appointed, Aidan was free to concern himself with his role as bishop. In other words, following the example he had been accustomed to on Iona, Aidan delegated authority for the internal affairs of the monastery to an abbot. This arrangement was responsible for leaving Aidan free to pursue the external affairs of missionary work and pastoral oversight of the Northumbrian people. Although the growth of monasticism in Ireland had reduced the role played by the bishops, one consequence was that its bishops were freed to spend their time and efforts on the pastoral care of their flocks. Aidan was able to exploit this arrangement in Northumbria with great effect.

It remains unclear whether this was what Aidan had been instructed to do, or whether alternatively, once in Northumbria Aidan had been given the freedom from the abbot of Iona to establish a community and practise his oversight in whatever manner he saw fit. As stated above, it is clearly the case that Aidan's episcopate fits into an Ionan pattern. Whether or not Aidan had been instructed to act as he did by Iona seems somewhat irrelevant. Evidently Aidan had stuck to what he had known; he had established his see in a monastery, which was based on an island and he had appointed an abbot to deal with the every day running of the monastic life.

Another similarity with the Irish situation with which Aidan would have been familiar, was that his pastoral oversight was primarily fixed by the boundaries of the political kingdom. Where the sway of Northumbria stretched, so did Aidan's episcopal oversight. Nonetheless, Northumbria was considerably greater than any of the small *túath* kingdom-bishoprics that Aidan may have known in Ireland. The eventual establishment of further monastic houses as daughters of Lindisfarne seems to have been part of Aidan's solution. Bede informs his reader that Heiu under Bishop Aidan established the double-monastery at Hartlepool. We are also aware that on Hild's return to Northumbria, she took possession of a hide of land on the north bank of the

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[28] Bede, *VCP*, ch 16.

river Wear.[29] It is also remains a possibility that the monastery at Melrose had been founded during Aidan's episcopate, although persuasive arguments have been advocated, which suggest that Melrose may have been established by British Christians before Aidan's arrival in Northumbria.[30] We are aware that Cuthbert had chosen to enter the monastic life after seeing a vision of Aidan's soul being received into heaven on the day of his death; and Bede further informs the reader that Cuthbert chose to enter the monastery at Melrose, rather than Lindisfarne, after hearing of the reputation of its priest Boisil.[31] For Cuthbert to hear of the reputation of Boisil at Melrose, it must have been established some time before Aidan's death, which suggests that the British Church could have established it.

We are entirely reliant on the work of Bede for a record of Aidan's episcopate in Northumbria, which is striking in its very positive portrayal. Bede's own theology of the episcopate will be discussed in a later chapter, but it is impossible to divorce Aidan from Bede's portrayal of him. Consequently, it is worth noting at this point current opinion, which has aimed to answer the question: why is Aidan painted in such a positive light? It has been suggested that Bede's picture of Aidan was a response to the challenges mounted against Lindisfarne by Wilfrid and the Wilfridian party. Therefore, with the obvious exception of the tonsure and the all-important question of Easter, Bede's account of Aidan is a very positive portrayal indeed.[32] I do not think it profitable to spend a great deal of this chapter reciting Bede's list of Aidan's virtues. Nevertheless, it is worthwhile to note just a few such points, thereby demonstrating how Bede describes Aidan. For example, Aidan was

> A most salutary example of abstinence and self-control; and the best recommendation of his teaching to all was that he taught them no other way of life than that which he himself practised among his fellows.[33]

Aidan is clearly demonstrated as maintaining the same rule of life alongside his fellow monks. While we have no reason to doubt what Bede tells us, he may have been saying more than just stating the obvious. Is Bede answering a charge against Aidan and Lindisfarne that they did not practise what they preached to others? Alternatively,

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[29] Bede, *HE*, IV ch 23.

[30] C.Stancliffe, 'Oswald, Most Holy and Most Victorious King of the Northumbrians,' in *Oswald: Northumbrian King to European Saint*, ed. Stanclife,C. pp 79-80.

[31] Bede, *VCP*, chs 4, 5 & 6.

[32] T.M.Charles-Edwards, *ECI*, p 343.

is what Bede tells us of Aidan possibly an attack against the Wilfridian party, or indeed the bishops of his own day?[34] If we are to accept the proposition that while writing his *History* Bede was to a certain extent following an agenda and setting forth Aidan, and indeed Cuthbert, as prime examples of Christian men who were to be followed, then must we not also accept the possibility that what Bede is really saying is that other groups were guilty of not practising what they preached to others? Indeed, those qualities of Aidan, which are emphasised by Bede, coincidentally happen to be the very ones whose absence caused Wilfrid great difficulties in later years. Although Wilfrid is held in "blessed memory," for Bede it is Aidan and Cuthbert who are proposed as greater examples for the church to follow.[35]

Another most striking quality to Aidan's episcopate is his excellent working relationship with the Kings, Oswald, Oswiu and Oswine. Aidan seems to have arrived in Northumbria as a monoglot, as Bede is eager to portray Oswald as acting as his interpreter until Aidan had grasped enough English to act alone.[36] The bishop is also portrayed as using royal vills as centres of the new religion, until other monasteries and churches could be constructed.[37] Manifestly, Aidan's mission was closely identified with King Oswald himself. However, after the battle of Maserfelth in 642/643 Aidan was able to stand on his own achievements and maintain a working relationship with both King Oswiu of Bernicia and Oswine of Deira. This was of crucial importance; after the death of Oswald, Aidan's mission could have faced serious problems and indeed failure, as had been the case in 633. Nonetheless, Aidan was able to maintain his position

> Because Aidan had managed to cross the divide between the two feuding dynasties, he gave to Northumbria - probably not known by that name - an accepted shape as an ecclesiastical diocese before it was ever acknowledged to be...a single kingdom.[38]

In other words, Aidan was able to keep in favour with both kingdoms after Oswald's death with the consequence that his diocese united Deira and Bernicia into a single

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[33] Bede, *HE*, III ch 5.
[34] Compare to Bede, 'Epistle to Egbert.'
[35] T.M.Charles-Edwards, *ECI*, p 343 & below, ch 7.
[36] Bede, *HE*, III ch. 3.
[37] *Ibid.* III ch 17.
[38] T.M.Charles-Edwards, *ECI*, p 315.

entity, beyond the reign of one monarch. In this respect Aidan's mission was able to go further than Paulinus'.

Although it is problematic to distinguish Aidan from Bede's portrayal of Aidan, there is still a great deal that can be said of his episcopate. It can be clearly demonstrated that Aidan's episcopal oversight followed the Irish practice: as has been said, the bishop concentrated on the pastoral oversight while the abbot of Lindisfarne oversaw the community's internal affairs. It is also a possibility that Abbot Ségéne visited Northumbria in Aidan's lifetime: as head of the Ionan federation Ségéne would have been likely to have visited the daughter monasteries of Iona and a visit to Northumbria would have strengthened links between Iona and Lindisfarne at this early stage.[39] It remains a possibility that Abbot Ségéne may have visited Northumbria to check on Aidan's progress for himself.

Aidan was also responsible for envisaging and establishing further monastic houses throughout Northumbria. Whether these houses should be seen as daughters of Lindisfarne or Iona remains uncertain. However, as Aidan was subject to the Abbot of Iona himself, it may have been that these monasteries were seen as daughter houses to the Ionan confederation, in a like manner to Lindisfarne. Furthermore, Bede tells us that Aidan stayed on royal estates because "he had no possessions of his own."[40] It is possible that the churches and monasteries established by Aidan were acknowledged as belonging to the Abbot of Iona and consequently, as Aidan was subject to his authority the bishop himself held no possessions. The establishment of further monasteries reduced Aidan's reliance on the royal establishment while simultaneously extending pastoral oversight across Northumbria as widely as possible.[41] As part of this monastic establishment programme, Aidan had brought Hild back to Northumbria; as Abbess of Whitby, Hild was to have a great influence on the Northumbrian church.[42]

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[39] Adomnán, *Life of St Columba*, I ch 1, relates Oswald's account of a vision of Columba, which he told Ségéne. Charles-Edwards, *ECI*, p 316 argues it is more likely that the abbot came to Northumbria than Oswald leaving Northumbria to travel to Iona. However, Richard Sharpe in his translation of Adomnán, argues that it was likely that Oswald had returned to Iona (p 253.)
[40] Bede, *HE*, III ch 17.
[41] On the role of monasteries in the pastoral oversight of the population see, A.Thacker, 'Monks, Preaching and Pastoral Care in early Anglo-Saxon England,' pp139-52.
[42] Bede, *HE*, IV ch 23.

Bede also demonstrates Aidan balancing the pastoral needs of the diocese with his own need for time in contemplation. Bede writes of Aidan being in retreat on Farne Island where,

> He often used to retire there to pray in solitude and silence; in fact the site of his solitary habitation is shown on the island to this day.[43]

Bishop Cuthbert would also make use of the Farne Islands for time in silence and prayer. The need for those Northumbrian bishops, following an Irish style of episcopacy, to spend periods of time in solitude is common throughout this period, and is likely to have originated in Northumbria with the example set by Aidan. For example, other than Cuthbert we are also told by Bede that Chad had a place of solitude near his church in Lichfield and John of Beverley's chosen place is also described in Bede's *History*.[44]

Without doubt, Aidan's episcopal style was to be taken as an example for others to follow. Most notably, Bede claims that Aidan never preached anything other than that which he would do himself.[45] The other notable example is the account of Aidan travelling about on foot rather than on horseback and how, on one occasion, he gave his horse away to a beggar.[46] The connection between bishop's and their horses is one that later reoccurs with Bishop Chad, who Bede informs us, followed the example of Aidan preferring to walk than to ride on horseback. Bede informs his reader that Aidan would only ride on horseback when compelled to do so by necessity.[47] In a similar manner to Aidan Chad appears to have been so insistent on walking even for long journeys that Archbishop Theodore was forced to put Chad onto horse back "with his own hands."[48] It is interesting that this issue, of whether or not a bishop should be seen on horse back, is one that reoccurs throughout this period and is an issue which appears to be linked to the question of whether a bishop was to be seen as being part of the establishment on par with the nobility or a humble servant of his people. Certainly, Aidan's approach to his people was one of humility rather than dominance and on no account can Aidan be accused of being a quasi-nobleman.

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[43] *Ibid.* III ch 16.
[44] *Ibid.* IV ch 3 & V ch 2. For a more extensive examination of this issues see, C.Stancliffe, 'Cuthbert and the Polarity between Pastor and Solitary.'
[45] *Ibid.* III ch 5.
[46] *Ibid.* III ch 5 & 14.
[47] *Ibid.* III ch 5.

Although Wilfrid's view of episcopacy appears to take the opposite standpoint to Aidan's, it is noteworthy that Stephen claims that on one occasion Wilfrid walked all the way to Rome![49]

The greatest legacy of Aidan's episcopate was the fact that the faith was established strongly enough to endure the death of King Oswald and to thereby continue into a second generation. It is true that there were already Christians in Northumbria before Aidan's arrival, and there was at least a symbolic presence for Paulinus's mission in James the deacon. There may be some accuracy in Bright's comment that "Aidan was entering another man's labours, having found the soil prepared by Paulinus."[50] However accurate this assertion may be, the fact remains that Aidan was needed to establish firmly a lasting faith in Northumbria. Bede informs us that Aidan's dating of Easter was tolerated because the work he was doing in Northumbria was acknowledged so that,

> He was deservedly loved by all, including those who had other views about Easter. Not only was he respected by the ordinary people but also by bishops, such as Honorius of Kent and Felix of East Anglia.[51]

After Aidan's death the abbot and community of Iona appointed Finan as bishop to the Northumbrians, likewise Finan's successor, Colman, was also duly appointed by Iona.[52] Essentially, Aidan's legacy in Northumbrian was to remain unchanged, (although challenged) until the Synod of Whitby in 664.

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[48] *Ibid.* IV ch 3.
[49] Stephen, *VW,* ch 50.
[50] W.Bright, *Chapters of Early English Church History,* p 44.
[51] Bede, *HE,* III ch 25.
[52] *Ibid.* III ch 17 & 25.

CHAPTER 4
WHITBY AND ITS AFTERMATH

4:1 WHITBY IN CONTEXT

It is tempting to elaborate in great detail on the issues that were behind the Synod of Whitby . Nevertheless, the parameters of this work only make provision for a brief discussion of the synod's context. As it has been set out above, Northumbria had been subject to two different missions: the Gregorian mission brought north by Bishop Paulinus and the Ionan mission initiated by Oswald and executed by Bishop Aidan. The need for a second mission, by definition, implies that Paulinus' mission had failed to convert Northumbria to a lasting faith. As Bede's *History* demonstrates, the Gregorian mission had been dealt a fatal blow by the death of Edwin.[1] Nonetheless, the mission of Paulinus had left its mark on Northumbria: Æthelburgh Edwin's queen, Æthelburht, and his young descendants, Eanflæd, Uscfrea and Yffi,[2] had fled to Kent, they did not abandon the faith which they had received from Paulinus. Furthermore, the Deiran royal family did return to Northumbria when Oswiu married Eanflæd.

There is also the curious figure of James the deacon who, Bede informs us, remained in Northumbria after the flight of Paulinus on Edwin's death at the battle of Hatfield Chase. Bede records that through his teaching and baptising James "rescued much prey from the ancient foe."[3] Consequently, at least in Deira, the presence of James meant that Paulinus' mission remained present, if only symbolically. The Ionan mission was more successful in that it secured Northumbria to the Christian faith.

Following the battle of the Winwæd in 655/656 King Oswiu became the fourth undisputed king of all Northumbria and his marriage to Eanflæd resulted in the royal court embracing both traditions. The queen and her company maintained Roman custom and practice, being ministered to by Romanus, while Oswiu upheld the Ionan form as practised on Lindisfarne. It appears that such a division at the heart of the Northumbrian establishment need not have been the cause of great tensions, notwithstanding the fact that the two groups differed over issues such as the monastic

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[1] Bede, *HE,* II ch 20.
[2] *Ibid.* II ch 20.

tonsure and the dating of Easter. By far the most notable divide between the two groups was this difference in the calculation of the date of Easter. Bede informs us that it was sometimes the case that the queen and her court would celebrate Easter at a different time to that of the king. This would have had the consequence of the royal households holding different dates for those festivals, which are determined by the date of Easter Day. The Roman reckoning, which Paulinus and the other Gregorian missionaries used, was based on a nineteen-year cycle, or at least on a multiple of it; whereas Aidan had followed an eighty-four year cycle for the dating, which was practised on Iona. It is evident that the Easter question was at the heart of the division between the two groups.

The debate concerning what was the correct reckoning for Easter was central to the Synod of Whitby; however, Northumbria was not alone in debating this matter. In Ireland it was becoming increasingly commonplace to find this issue debated there. Many churches became involved in synods held to discuss the controversy.

It is worth noting at this stage that the make up of Irish synods appears to have been peculiar to Ireland. A letter sent by John, pope-elect, to a group of Irish ecclesiastics, probably being gathered in a synod, sheds light on the possible make-up of an Irish synod.[4] Irish synods appear to have been more inclusive than the type of synod found in the Roman Church, which appears to have been episcopally based.[5] Not only is John's letter addressed to bishops, but also to priests, teachers and abbots. Charles-Edwards has commented that such an arrangement was a natural consequence of the Irish ecclesiastical structure. Because bishops, abbots and scholars were all acknowledged sources of authority, they all partook of a synodical structure, which brought together all these authorities into one institution.[6] It is interesting to note that the gathering at the Synod of Whitby was more akin to this structure than the Roman pattern for a synod. However, the make up of attendants at the Synod of Whitby appears to have represented even more closely an extended gathering of the king's witenagemot.

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[3] *Ibid.* II ch 20.
[4] *Ibid.* II ch 19.
[5] Stephen, *VW*, ch 53.
[6] Charles-Edwards, *ECI*, p 277.

When the Synod of Whitby is seen within the context of these Irish debates, it becomes increasingly clear that there is something inevitable about the Easter issue coming to the fore in Northumbria in the seventh century. Bede informs his reader in great detail about the ecclesiastical circumstances that led to the Synod of Whitby. He tells us that during the episcopate of Aidan the Easter question had not been an issue within Northumbria; rather it was in the episcopate of Finan, 651-661, that a "great and active controversy" first arose.[7] Bede declares that those from Kent and Gaul charged the Irish with not keeping the reckoning of the universal church. It appears possible that those "from Kent and Gaul" could be a reference to the queen's company. We know from Bede's *History* that Edwin's descendants were sent from Kent to Gaul, in order that King Dagobert might bring them up safely. Although they subsequently died, Bede does inform us that Æthelburh of Kent and Dagobert were friends.[8] It is also important to note that there is also the possibility that this may be a reference to the Gaulish bishop, Agilbert of Wessex, who appears to have arrived from Ireland around the year 650.[9]

We are informed that another advocate of the Roman Easter was Ronan, of whom nothing of great consequence is known. Bede informs us that Ronan was an Irishman who had spent time on the continent where he had learnt the Roman methodology. Bede seems to have been aware of a confrontation between Bishop Finan and Ronan over the Easter question, which resulted in making Finan more zealous about the Irish reckoning.[10]

A "still more serious dispute" appears to have arisen during the episcopate of Colman, 661-664. This dispute appears to have taken the Easter controversy a step further than had ever been the case before in Northumbria. Bede informs us that on this occasion, the dispute resulted in many fearing that "though they had received the name of Christian, they were running or had run in vain."[11] The suggestion is that the debate had ceased to be solely about which methodology was correct. Rather it went as far as to suggest that by following another custom and refusing to accept the

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[7] Bede, *HE*, III ch 25.
[8] *Ibid.* II ch 20.
[9] *Ibid.* III ch 7.
[10] *Ibid.* III ch 25.
[11] *Ibid.* III ch 25.

universal methodology, the Irish churches were somehow invalidating their right to be part of the one universal Christian Church.

It has been asserted that bishops Finan and Colman would not have had the authority to change the reckoning of Easter even if they had wanted to do so. As these bishops were appointees of Iona, they were under the abbot's jurisdiction and therefore, likely to have been expected to follow his ruling on such matters.[12] Nevertheless, it appears that both would have been unwilling to change even if they had had the authority to do so. In my mind it seems more likely that these bishops were unwilling to consider changing the practice, which they had been accustomed to, rather than feeling bound to the will of the abbot. To assert that these bishops were powerless, being under the authority of the abbot of Iona, suggests that the abbot exercised a rule, the type of which we later see in the Abbot and Bishop Wilfrid. However, if the abbot's rule was absolute, why then when Abbot Adomnán attempted to change Ionan community to the universal reckoning was he unsuccessful?[13] It would appear that the abbots might not have exercised the type of sway that is implied by such an assertion.

It appears that before Colman's episcopate the assertion that the Irish church was somehow schismatic had never been argued before. Consequently we are left to consider the question of where such a theology originated? Although Bede does not tells us outright it is possible to suggest that this new development arose with Wilfrid's return to Northumbria.

Bede tells his reader that this new escalation took place during the episcopate of Colman, whose oversight began after the death of Finan in 661.[14] It was at this same time that Wilfrid returned from Gaul and was granted lands in Deira by the under-king Alhfrith. Initially Wilfrid was awarded land at Stanford, before gaining possession of the monastery at Ripon as abbot.[15] Consequently, it seems highly probable that Wilfrid had something to do with this intensification of events. Wilfrid had just spent an extended period of time in Rome and Lyon where there had sometime previously been a dispute over the dating of Easter with Columbanus's monasteries. Furthermore,

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[12] C.Stancliffe, *New Cambridge Medieval History*, (forthcoming.)
[13] Bede, *HE*, V ch 21.
[14] C.Plummer, *Opera Historica*, Vol. 2 p 188.
[15] Stephen, *VW*, ch 8.

we are aware of Wilfrid's opinions of the Irish reckoning from the accounts of his speeches made at the Synod of Whitby, which further confirm that he took such a standpoint.[16]

There also appears to have been another factor in the escalation of hostilities between the Irish and Roman groups, that is, the contemporary political situation. It is to the figure of the under-king Alhfrith that we must look for the origins of such tensions. It is Alhfrith who summoned Wilfrid back to Northumbria, granted him land, and removed the patronage of Melrose from Ripon. The motives in Wilfrid's return to Northumbria and his establishment within the kingdom appear to have been Alhfrith's, not Wilfrid's. We also learn from Stephen that the under-king "greatly loved" the Roman ways before he summoned Wilfrid to his court, he was, after all, a child of Eanflæd as well as of Oswiu.[17] Furthermore, we are aware that there were such political tensions as Bede informs us that Alhfrith was later responsible for attacking his father, King Oswiu.[18] Therefore, it remains a possibility that Alhfrith, who from all accounts appears to have been something of a political animal, wanted to use Wilfrid to undermine his father's religious practice. Alhfrith would have been only too aware of the divisions at court; if he was attempting to undermine his father's authority, then one way of doing so would have been to ally himself with the Roman practice and its powerful supporters in Kent and Wessex.

Without doubt, on the eve of the Synod of Whitby, the divisions over Easter had become the cause of increasingly greater tensions: firstly between Ionan and Roman churchmen, with each side becoming increasingly zealous, and secondly between Oswiu and Alhfrith. The political capital that Alhfrith may have wanted to gain from the situation would have caused Oswiu great anxiety, especially if Alhfrith was to win the favour of the other pro-Roman kingdoms.

There is considerable debate concerning who was actually responsible for the calling of the Synod of Whitby. Clearly such a political gathering needed Oswiu's consent. If Oswiu had conceived of the synod himself, it might have been the case that he saw it as a way by which to settle the political situation down. As Higham has

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[16] Bede, *HE*, III ch 25 & Stephen, *VW*, ch 10.
[17] Stephen, *VW*, ch 7.
[18] Bede, *HE*, III ch 14.

suggested, it was a means by which he could bring his son into line.[19] If Alhfrith was behind the synod, to the extent that he had persuaded his father to call such a meeting, then it is possible that he saw it a way to humiliate his father by bringing down his policy, which had been to maintain the faith as he had received it from Lindisfarne. If Alhfrith were successful he would undoubtedly have undermined his father's credibility and authority.[20]

4:2 THE SYNOD OF WHITBY

It remains unclear why Whitby was the chosen location for the synod. It appears likely that one factor may have been that Hild was abbess. Hild was a member of the Deiran royal family and had received her baptism from Bishop Paulinus. However, she returned to Northumbria under persuasion from Bishop Aidan.[21] In this sense Hild would have been an acceptable figure to both sides. Furthermore, if we were to maintain that Alhfrith had been responsible for the synod, then Whitby would have been a good choice. The monastery at Whitby was the largest in Deira and therefore came under his jurisdiction. Moreover, the Whitby community would have been aware that Alhfrith had already removed Eata's community at Ripon and replaced it with one headed by Wilfrid. As a result of this they would have been careful not to upset Alhfrith.

King Oswiu chaired the debate, which focused primarily on the Easter issue, but inevitably dealt with the greater questions of authority and primacy. Oswiu's bishop, Colman, spoke on behalf of the Ionan party, whereas Abbot Wilfrid was permitted to represent Roman interests, as Bishop Agilbert had not an adequate grasp of the language.[22] In Bede's account, Oswiu opened the synod by declaring that

> Those who served the one God should observe the same rule of life and not differ in the celebration of the heavenly sacraments.[23]

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[19] N.J.Higham, *The Convert Kings*, pp 255-57.
[20] Mayr-Harting and Meissner have both asserted that Alhfrith was behind the Synod of Whitby . Ref. H.Mayr-Harting, *The Coming of Christianity to Anglo-Saxon England*, pp 107-8 & J.Meissner, *The Celtic Church in England After the Synod of Whitby*, ch 2.
[21] Bede, *HE*, IV ch 23.
[22] Bede, *HE*, III ch 25.
[23] *Ibid.* III ch 25.

The king then ordered Colman to expound the customs that his tradition followed and their origins. Colman informed the synod that the rules he followed belonged to those who had sent him from Ireland. Moreover, they held that St. John himself had observed these traditions in the same way. Wilfrid's response was to point out that the only exception to the universal observance of Easter were these Picts and Britons whom he accused of foolishly attempting to fight against the whole world.[24] This attack by Wilfrid is nothing short of a monumental reproof of the traditions and practices of the Ionan Church: so much so that some have questioned whether or not Wilfrid could have spoken in such a manner within the setting of a synod.[25] Indeed, Stephen claims Wilfrid addressed the synod with "his customary humility."[26]

Colman responded by placing the origins of their practice with St. John. Wilfrid argued that St. Peter's way of calculating Easter had been adopted by St. John's followers in Asia and was reaffirmed by the Council of Nicea in 325. Consequently, Wilfrid asserted that the Ionan Church followed neither the example of St. Peter nor St. John. Colman replied that Iona had followed such a rule from the days of St. Columba, its founder, whose saintliness was demonstrated by numerous miracles. Consequently Colman had no wish to cease following this rule of life. Wilfrid's final response concluded by asking whether a man of holy works, such as St. Columba, was to be preferred

> to the most blessed chief of the apostles, to whom the Lord said, 'Thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build my Church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it, and I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven'?[27]

Clearly, the debate over the Easter question had become one of primacy. Oswiu inquired of his bishop whether the Lord had spoken these words to Peter and Colman answered that he had. Oswiu further asked whether any such authority had been granted to Columba; the response was that there had not. The King addressing both sides asked whether they agreed that Christ's words had been addressed primarily to Peter and whether the Lord had given him the keys to heaven; they jointly affirmed that it was so. Consequently, Oswiu concluded that since Peter was the doorkeeper to

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[24] *Ibid.* III ch 25.
[25] Ref. P.Hunter-Blair, *A History of Anglo-Saxon England*, p 124.
[26] Stephen, *VW*, ch 10.
[27] Bede, *HE*, III ch 25.

heaven he did not intend to contradict him but to obey him to the best of his ability lest the kingdom of heaven should remain closed to him.[28]

What we witness at Whitby is a twofold struggle between the Ionan and Roman traditions and between the form of Christianity most closely associated with the kingdoms of Bernicia and Deira. It is possible to assert that the synod reflects Alhfrith's attempt to assert Deira's position as the base of Northumbrian Christianity. Consequently, although Oswiu's position was not challenged outright, from the synod onwards the base of Northumbrian Christianity and its episcopate moved from Lindisfarne in Bernicia to York in Deira. In this sense, Whitby marked another turning point for the Northumbrian church and its episcopate.

If Bede's account is accurate, Oswiu had decided to obey Peter's commands in everything to the best of his knowledge and ability. Although superficially this statement appears to have given Roman Christianity authority over Oswiu's kingdom, the complex nature of the Northumbrian church meant that this was not necessarily going to be the case. If we are to assert that Whitby impacted upon the Northumbrian church then it must first be established what the nature of the Church was prior to the synod.

Essentially, one can identify three groups within the Church before the synod. Group One was the Lindisfarne-based group, which was founded by Aidan and followed the eighty-four year reckoning. Group Two was the remnant of Paulinus' mission, including Eanflæd's company and James the Deacon; they followed the Roman nineteen-year reckoning and from 661 Wilfrid also upheld this position in Northumbria. Group Three appears to have been a small group made up of just one or two prominent members, such as Ronan and Bishop Tuda. Both were Irish Churchmen who accepted the Roman nineteen-year reckoning for Easter. The synod brought groups one and two into discussion with each other, but on Colman's flight, (he not being able to accept the synod's ruling) it was Tuda who, already being in bishop's orders, became bishop of Northumbria.

Bede notes that Tuda had arrived in Northumbria during the episcopate of Colman and had already begun teaching the faith by word and example.[29]

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[28] *Ibid.* III ch 25.
[29] *Ibid.* III ch 26.

Consequently, for the sake of continuity, Tuda would have seemed the ideal choice to be Colman's successor, being trained in Ireland while following the rule of life required by Whitby. We are not informed of where Tuda took his see; although there is no evidence for either Lindisfarne or York, the possibility that Tuda had become bishop of York has been recognised by Charles-Edwards.[30] Furthermore, it is worth noting Eric John's assertion that, although there is no evidence in the accounts, the Gregorian plan for York is likely to have been discussed at Whitby.[31] If King Oswiu was not wanting to contradict Peter, then there may have been pressure on him to accept York as Northumbria's principal see. Nevertheless, there is no strong evidence that this was the case. Bede gives the impression that Tuda was Colman's replacement and as such Tuda is just as likely to have been bishop of Lindisfarne. Nevertheless, such a debate on Tuda appears to be of little consequence, as he remained bishop for less than a year. As such his influence and position as bishop was limited.

Since Aidan's arrival the Abbot of Iona had made the appointment of bishops; however, Bede does not inform us who was responsible for the appointment of Tuda. It certainly was not an appointment made from Iona; rather the appointment was most likely to have been made by Oswiu himself. Consequently, Tuda appears to have been bishop over the Northumbrian church by royal command.

Bishop Tuda, who fell into the pre-Whitby Group Three, and who might have consequently been seen as a compromise candidate by Oswiu, was to be among the many who fell victim of the plague within a year of the synod. The Northumbrian church, like many of the other Anglo-Saxon churches, was left without episcopal oversight. Arguably, the plague could not have come at a worse time since the Northumbrian church after Whitby must have been in a state of flux, unaware of precisely where its future lay. Tuda's appointment would have been ideal for this period: he was familiar with the situation in Northumbria and, having already been consecrated to the episcopate, he was able to take immediate control. Consequently, to lose him after such a short time must have been particularly unfortunate.

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[30] Charles-Edwards, *ECI*, p 430.
[31] Eric John, 'Land, Church, and People,' p 48.

4:3 A CHURCH DIVIDED

The Synod of Whitby marks a turning point for the Northumbrian episcopate in a number of ways. Firstly, from Whitby the appointment of the bishop, or bishops, no longer involved the abbot and monastic chapter of Iona; rather it appears to have become the privilege of the king to decide who should become his bishop. Secondly, at some point after Whitby the primary Northumbrian see moved from Lindisfarne back to York, this possibly beginning with the appointment of Tuda after Colman's departure. Thirdly, the Northumbrian church being no longer directed by Iona allowed the kings to appoint freely from either of the groups that remained within the Northumbrian church after the synod, with the consequence that the Northumbrian church changed its direction according to the will of whichever bishop was at its head.

It was suggested above that the Northumbrian church before the Synod of Whitby appears to have been divided into three groups and although one of the synod's aims was to settle the growing tensions, divisions seems to have remained. After the synod one can identify two major groups: what was Group One before Whitby divided into two. Many, including Bishop Colman, were unable to accept the ruling of Oswiu and they left Northumbria. Those who remained loyal to Ionan traditions while accepting the Roman Easter and tonsure remained, and those from the pre-Whitby Group Three appear to have become incorporated into this first group.[32]

Group Two, now headed by Wilfrid, remained and grew in strength as a result of Whitby. It is to these two groups that we must turn our attention, as this divide was one that was to remain with the Northumbrian church throughout this period. The following chapters will demonstrate how important the individual standpoints of the Northumbrian bishops were to become after the synod, and I shall attempt to ascertain just how far these divisions went. Firstly attention will be paid to the episcopate of Wilfrid, who after Whitby appears to have become head of the Roman group and who succeeded Tuda as bishop.

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[32] I have placed a diagram in the appendix, Fig. 2. setting out the relationship between the different groups before and after the Synod of Whitby .

CHAPTER 5

THE EPISCOPATE OF WILFRID

Wilfrid is without doubt the most interesting bishop of the conversion period. This chapter will demonstrate that his approach to the episcopate was far from uniform, a quality that makes him a deeply fascinating yet complex figure.[1] His forty-seven years in bishop's orders were far from smooth and were constantly being interrupted by events and controversies that often appear to have been of his own making. Consequently, there is something to be said for the assertion that Wilfrid would be the last person to win any popularity stakes.[2] However, there remains no doubt about the important role that Wilfrid played in the development of the Northumbrian Church. Subsequently, no apology is offered or required for the dedication of the entire chapter to this remarkable figure of the Northumbrian and indeed English church.

5:1 STEPHEN AND BEDE- THE SOURCES FOR WILFRID

This chapter aims to focus on Wilfrid as bishop, to consider how Wilfrid might have conceived the purpose and role of the episcopate and to examine Stephen's claim that Wilfrid was metropolitan bishop of York.[3] Nevertheless, it is of the utmost importance that due thought and consideration be paid to the primary sources. It is important to note the context of Stephen's *Life* and Bede's *History* in relation to each other, as it is on these two works that we depend for primary written sources.

Stephen's *Life of Bishop Wilfrid* is the earlier of the two works and is believed to have been written shortly after Wilfrid's death in 709. Colgrave has asserted that the *Life* was written before 720.[4] However, this calculation is based on the premise that Stephen and Æddi, a singing master who had been invited to Northumbria by Wilfrid to re-introduce the correct method of singing into Northumbria,[5] were synonymous and by calculating his likely age at Wilfrid's death. Foley, who does not

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[1] D.Pelteret, 'Saint Wilfrid: Tribal Bishop, Civic Bishop or Germanic Lord?' p 165.
[2] H.Mayr-Harting, *The Coming of Christianity to Anglo-Saxon England,* p 129.
[3] Stephen, *VW,* ch 16.
[4] B.Colgrave, 'Introduction,' to his translation *The Life of Bishop Wilfrid by Eddius Stephanus,* p x.
[5] Bede, *HE,* IV ch 2.

acknowledge the link between Æddi and Stephen, also suggests that the work was begun relatively quickly after Wilfrid's death asserting the possibility of commencement in 715.[6] It is worth noting at this juncture two possibilities raised by such a dating: firstly, if Stephen was writing in 715, then he was writing before Iona had changed its reckoning of Easter to the Roman method.[7] This may account for the anti-Ionan sentiments in his work. It is also worth noting at this point the assertion made by Kirby that the version of the *Life* which we now possess may have been revised after Bede's use of the text in his *History*.[8] Notwithstanding Kirby's assertion, Stephen's *Life* remains the most comprehensive and the older of the two primary sources.

Furthermore, it has been held that Stephen's *Life* must be approached, read and understood as a piece of Christian hagiography. However, it has recently been asserted that Stephen's *Life* may be better understood as apologia rather than hagiography.[9] In some respects, the work does differ from other Christian hagiography, for example its heavily historical nature, which is in stark contrast to other works, such as the *Anonymous Life of St Cuthbert*. Although unique in some respects the motivations behind its composition do not appear to have been very different from those behind the writing of other hagiography. Stephen himself informs his readers that he was writing at the command of "Bishop Acca and of Abbot Tatberht, and of the whole community."[10] Stephen's task appears to have been to compose a work which was to glorify Wilfrid's achievements as bishop; however, the *Life* also includes explanations of Wilfrid's reasoning, which ultimately lay behind his actions. In this sense the *Life* does come across as being more of an apology for Wilfrid's life and ministry.

Therefore, the context of the work is of great importance to our understanding of it. If we can ascertain what Stephen was trying to say about Wilfrid in the *Life*, then we can understand more accurately what Wilfrid's life had meant to Stephen and the Wilfridian communities. Stephen, himself in priest's orders and writing from the

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[6] W.T.Foley, *Images of Sanctity*, p 1.
[7] Bede, *HE*, V ch 22.
[8] D.P.Kirby, 'Bede, Eddius Stephanus and the Life of Wilfrid,' p 109.
[9] M.D.Laynesmith, 'Stephen of Ripon and the Bible: Allegorical and Typological Interpretations of the Life of St Wilfrid,' p 178.
[10] Stephen, *VW*, Preface.

monastery at Ripon,[11] was well placed to have reflected what was held in common in the Wilfridian communities. There can be no certainty as to what the community's underlying convictions about their bishop and abbot were. However, using the *Life*, Foley has suggested that the community's conviction was that Wilfrid was more than an abbot or bishop; rather Wilfrid had been for this community a vessel of God's grace.[12] Such a proposition appears to be highly plausible; consequently, the *Life* was to bear witness to Wilfrid's achievements. In turn these achievements were to be remembered by and passed on to other Christian communities and to future generations. However, the Foley model would suggest that the *Life* fits more closely the hagiographic model. Therefore, it appears to be the case that Stephen's *Life* must be read, understood and treated as being both hagiographic and apologetic in its composition and in its contents.

If Stephen's portrayal is a balancing of the Wilfridians' hagiographic and apologetic needs, what then is to be made of Bede's portrayal of Wilfrid in his *History*? A number of scholars such as Colgrave and Goffart have asserted that Bede's *History* proves that Bede had strongly disliked Wilfrid.[13] However, this position has been challenged by Marion Gibbs and Foley who goes as far as to suggest that Bede writes about Wilfrid with "much admiration."[14] Both sets of scholars bring to this debate their relevant quotations of Bede. Those who suggest that Bede was anti-Wilfrid further stress how Bede was accused of heresy in Wilfrid's hearing[15] and to how Bede portrays Aidan and Cuthbert as exemplars but not Wilfrid. On the other hand, Foley points to the fact that Bede gives to Wilfrid a crucial role in the divine plan that was the conversion of England.[16] Whether Wilfrid's role had been crucial is irrelevant; what is crucial is that Bede recognises Wilfrid as an important figure. The fact that both sides continue producing persuasive arguments and evidence suggests that both

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[11] Stephen, *VW*, ch 17, Stephen declares the Abbey Church at Ripon as, "our church," which suggests that Stephen was attached to Ripon.

[12] W.T.Foley, *Images of Sanctity*, p 8.

[13] B.Colgrave, 'Introduction,' to his translation, *The Life of Bishop Wilfrid by Eddius Stephanus*, p xii & W.Goffart, ' Bede and the Ghost of Bishop Wilfrid,' in *Narrators of Barbarian History, (AD 500-800)*, especially pp 254, 256, 263, 268, 326.

[14] W.T.Foley, *Images of Sanctity*, p 20 & M.Gibbs, 'The Decrees of Agatho and the Gregorian Plan for York,' p 245.

[15] Kirby, 'Bede, Eddius Stephanus and the Life of Wilfrid,' p 101.

[16] W.T.Foley, *Images of Sanctity*, p 20.

groups are to some extent correct. It appears to be the case that Bede is at least at times *anti* and at times *pro* Wilfrid.

To begin to understand what may lie behind such a portrayal of Wilfrid by Bede, I shall have to refer the reader back to the previous chapter where it was asserted that after the synod of Whitby the Northumbrian church was divided into two main groups. In which group Wilfrid stood there is no doubt, both the sources agree on that. Furthermore, it is clear that Stephen's *Life* represents the views of the Wilfridian community, whereas Bede initially appears to have identified himself more closely with the other remaining group, which did not reject the Ionan heritage of the Northumbrian church while also accepting Roman custom. Nevertheless, the number of examples where Bede does acknowledge the role Wilfrid played in the conversion of the English would actually suggest that Bede did not stand entirely in this group, nor in the Wilfridian confederation. In short, Bede's *History* appears to have been written by a writer with a foot in both camps.

Bede's own background goes a long way to show why this is the case. Essentially Bede and Wilfrid held a lot in common, the best example being their joint rejection of the Irish reckoning of the dating of Easter. Furthermore, Bede was writing from Wearmouth/Jarrow, which itself had links with Bishop Wilfrid; Ceolfrith, abbot of Wearmouth/Jarrow, had come to assist Benedict Biscop from the monastery at Ripon with Wilfrid's permission.[17] Simultaneously Bede identifies himself with the Ionan mission and saw figures such as Aidan and Cuthbert as exemplars, whom he believed the Church in his own day should follow. Bede clearly balanced both traditions and can consequently be identified with both. Bede did not go as far as to suggest that the Irish influence in Northumbria needed rooting out; rather it was to be respected and even to be admired, while simultaneously Wilfrid's contribution was to be recognised and the Irish reckoning for Easter was not to be tolerated. In other words, rather than being pro-Irish and anti-Wilfrid or anti-Irish and pro-Wilfrid, Bede's *History* is to all intents and purposes both.

Bede's *Epistle to Egbert* is evidence that Bede was far from being unaware of the problems facing the Northumbrian church in his day. This being so, I cannot believe that Bede was writing his *History* ignorant of the divisions remaining after the

Synod of Whitby. Furthermore, Bede's *History*, unlike Stephen's *Life*, was written after Iona had accepted the Roman reckoning of Easter, making it easier for Bede to hold figures like Aidan in high esteem. With Iona following the universal dating of Easter, Bede could turn to the situation in his own day: with his knowledge of the Scriptures, Bede would have been more than aware of Christ's words concerning division.[18] It thus remains a probability that the *History* represented an opportunity for Bede to define for the English a common Christian heritage that acknowledged the contribution of the Gregorian mission, the Ionan missionaries and of Wilfrid.

Other than the written material of Stephen and Bede, there is further primary evidence in the two remaining Wilfridian crypts at Ripon and Hexham. In conjunction with the descriptions offered by Stephen in his *Life* and of other archaeological evidence from these sites, it is possible to assert that these church buildings were, in effect, Wilfridian theology manifested in stone.[19] This increasingly appears to be the case when the descriptions offered by Stephen are compared to those made by Bede of the church on Lindisfarne, which he tells us was built in the Irish manner.[20] By building his churches in what Gilbert describes as the Merovingian style[21] and building them on a scale hitherto unknown in Northumbria, Wilfrid was not simply importing a new form of architecture into the kingdom, but was manifesting in stone all that he and his disciples stood for. Nowhere must such a statement have been more powerful than in Ripon where Eata's community had once dwelt.

Everything that can be known of Wilfrid comes through at least one of the above primary sources. Inevitably this includes what we know of Wilfrid's episcopate, incorporating what his own understanding may have been and indeed how he was seen by his contemporaries. Stephen's portrayal, which is both hagiographic and apologetic, portrays Wilfrid in an unashamedly partisan way, which undoubtedly reflects the Wilfridian community's collective consciousness of their founder and bishop. Stephen's work has also recently been evaluated in light of its highly scriptural nature, which itself has enabled Foley to make the assertion that Wilfrid was seen by

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[17] Anonymous, *Life of Ceolfrith*, trans. D.H.Farmer, paragraphs 3 & 5. Ref. also to Goffart, 'Bede and the Ghost of Bishop Wilfrid,' pp 294-5.

[18] St. Matthew, 12:25.

[19] E.Gilbert, 'Saint Wilfrid's Church at Hexham,' in *Saint Wilfrid at Hexham*, ed. D.P.Kirby pp 81-113.

[20] Compare, Bede, *HE*, III ch 25 with Stephen, *VW*, chs 17 & 22.

[21] E.Gilbert, 'Saint Wilfrid's Church at Hexham,' p 108.

his community as a vessel of God's grace.[22] On the other hand, Bede's portrayal of Wilfrid appears to remain one of the more controversial points; nevertheless, in my mind it appears that Bede's aim was far from being partisan and Bede appears to plot a course that is cautious of opening old wounds. Essentially Bede's portrayal appears to have allotted Wilfrid his rightful place as a Northumbrian bishop who had an extraordinary influence on the Anglo-Saxon Church in its earliest days.

5:2 WILFRID'S UNDERSTANDING OF EPISCOPACY

Stephen informs us that Wilfrid's religious life began when he requested Queen Eanfled's permission to serve God under her patronage. The Queen, Stephen tells us, agreed and placed Wilfrid on Lindisfarne to assist an elderly nobleman named Cudda.[23] This early association with the queen is noteworthy as Eanfled had continued to follow Roman practice. What is more significant, for the purpose of this work, is that during the years Wilfrid spent on Lindisfarne, he would have undoubtedly encountered Bishop Aidan. Without doubt Wilfrid's first experience of the episcopate would have been of the Irish model as practised from Lindisfarne by Bishop Aidan. When Wilfrid came to leave Northumbria he would have done so with this model of episcopacy in mind. However, Aidan's model would have contrasted greatly with the styles of episcopacy Wilfrid was to discover on his pilgrimage to Rome.[24]

Both Mayr-Harting and Foley, in their examinations of Wilfrid's episcopate, conclude that the years Wilfrid spent on the continent were crucial to his understanding of the episcopate.[25] Certainly, the years that Wilfrid had spent on mainland Europe should not be underestimated for their influence on him. Over this period, which numbers some six or seven years, Wilfrid observed how bishops in places other than Northumbria exercised their episcopal oversight. This would have included time in Kent as well as Rome and Lyon. However, it seems likely that the three years Wilfrid

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[22] Ref. W.T.Foley, *Images of Sanctity*, & M.D.Laynesmith, 'Stephen of Ripon and the Bible: Allegorical and Typological Interpretations of the Life of St Wilfrid.'

[23] Stephen, *VW*, ch 2.

[24] Stephen informs his reader, *VW*, ch 3 that Wilfrid's pilgrimage to Rome was divinely inspired. However, Stephen's reference to Queen Eanfled helping to make arrangements for Wilfrid, appears to suggest that Eanfled had an influence in this decision. Ref. W.T.Foley, *St Wilfrid of York as Pius Pater*, p 101.

[25] H.Mayr-Harting, *The Coming of Christianity to Anglo-Saxon England*, pp 130-9 & W.T.Foley, *St Wilfrid of York as Pius Pater*, pp 221-4.

spent in Lyon with Bishop Aunemundus was to have the greatest influence on him. Foley asserts that while he was in Rome and Lyon, Wilfrid was not only exposed to the Roman and Frankish model of episcopacy, rather Wilfrid in fact became a convert to it. Foley summarises this continental concept of the office of a bishop as being a *Pius Pater* figure. It will be beneficial to this discussion of Wilfrid's own understanding of episcopacy to discuss this assertion in some detail.

Foley demonstrates that there had previously been a high regard for the father figure within late Roman antiquity, something that was evident as the *paterfamilias* in Roman law.[26] This Roman background, when effectively combined with the *abba* ideal of the Egyptian fathers, resulted in the notion of a bishop being a *Pius Pater* figure to his flock.[27] Furthermore, at the time that Wilfrid visited Rome and Lyon their bishops had become largely responsible for the running of their respective cities. Rome had all but been forgotten, the Imperial court being at Constantinople and the exarch at Ravenna; likewise the Merovingian royal dynasty often chose to leave the responsibility of city government to the bishop. Consequently in both cities where Wilfrid had spent an extended period of time the bishops were responsible for more than the governing of souls; they were also responsible for the provision of basic amenities to their flocks.[28] The two bishops also had wider jurisdiction; Lyon was a metropolitan see and Rome, then as now, held extended oversight across the Church.

The view of Roman antiquity on the role of the father and the Egyptian *abba* ideal had easily fitted into the Christian tradition. God had been revealed as a father figure and was addressed as such by all Christians in the Lord's prayer. Furthermore, the apostle Paul had taught that he was to be seen as a father figure by those communities that had been converted under him.[29] The language of this father and son relationship is also present in the writings of Gregory the Great. Therefore, it is highly likely that Wilfrid would have perceived that the role of a bishop was as a father figure over the community to which he had been appointed. He would have further seen that this role of *Pius Pater* often demanded more from the bishop than the spiritual needs of the community.

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[26] W.T.Foley, *St Wilfrid of York as Pius Pater*, pp 234-40.
[27] *Ibid.* p 229.
[28] *Ibid.* p 233-4.
[29] 1 Corinthians 4:15.

Foley demonstrates that the typical virtues and duties attributed to the *Pius Pater* bishop are found in the accounts of Bishop Wilfrid's episcopate. These virtues include: generosity, mentoring and nurturing, teaching and preaching, judging, legislating and debating.[30] For example: Wilfrid demonstrates himself as being generous in teaching the South Saxons to fish and by giving a third of the catch to the poor.[31] The best example of Wilfrid as mentor and nurturer is found in Stephen's account of the bishop restoring the life of a child. His mother agreed that the boy would be returned to Wilfrid at the age of seven to commit his life to the service of God. However, when the woman was not forthcoming with the child Wilfrid dispatched his reeve to take the boy, who was duly renamed *Filius Episcopi*. In this example Wilfrid is demonstrated as a father figure, even if he is also demonstrated as a rather forceful father figure, who desired to nurture, mentor and even adopt this boy.[32] As for teaching and preaching, Wilfrid is adequately described by Stephen as fulfilling this commitment, preaching both to the nobility and to their subjects.[33] Wilfrid the judge and legislator, which might be better referred to as the legalistic virtue of the bishop, is also adequately demonstrated in Stephen's account. This is primarily so in his constant appeals to the canons, which he used to full advantage whilst appealing in Rome.[34] As for Wilfrid as a debater, one need look no further than the numerous accounts in Stephen, especially of Wilfrid's speeches at the synods of Whitby and Austerfield.[35]

What Foley appears to have done is to have identified characteristics which are particularly evident in the style of episcopal oversight exercised in Rome and Lyon at the time Wilfrid was on pilgrimage. Foley has then searched for these characteristics in the accounts of Stephen and Bede, thereby attempting to demonstrate that Wilfrid was to become a *Pius Pater* bishop. Without doubt Foley has succeeded in portraying Wilfrid in such a mould. I do not intend to criticise Foley's criteria or undermine his scholarship on this matter; however, in my opinion, where Foley's argument is weakest

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[30] W.T.Foley, *St Wilfrid of York as Pius Pater*, pp 303-16. Foley has put the examples that follow forward as evidence.

[31] Bede, *HE*, IV ch 13.

[32] Stephen, *VW*, ch 18.

[33] *Ibid.* ch 41.

[34] *Ibid.* ch 30.

[35] *Ibid.* chs 10 & 47, for Bede's version of Wilfrid's speeches at the Synod of Whitby see *HE*, III ch 25.

is in the fact that little acknowledgement is made of the influence Wilfrid's earlier time on Lindisfarne would have had on his understanding of the episcopate.

It is strongly asserted by Foley that Wilfrid's journey to Rome and Lyon must be understood as a pilgrimage, and that the pilgrim has to start his pilgrimage from somewhere.[36] In Wilfrid's case the pilgrimage began at Lindisfarne, centre of the Irish mission to Northumbria. The assumption is made that when Wilfrid returned from pilgrimage he did so as a changed man. In other words the Wilfrid who returned from the continent was very different from the Wilfrid who left Lindisfarne. With this premise I cannot disagree; however, I would not go as far as to dismiss entirely Wilfrid's experiences before leaving Lindisfarne. This would be to go a step too far.

Surely what Wilfrid had experienced at Lindisfarne would have remained in his memory throughout his life. Consequently, the time Wilfrid had spent at Lindisfarne would, at the very least, have influenced Wilfrid's formation and development as a seventh-century ecclesiastic. Furthermore, Wilfrid's first experience of the episcopate would have been of Aidan who, we are led to believe, spent a considerable amount of time on Lindisfarne.[37] Therefore, it is also probable that the years Wilfrid spent at Lindisfarne influenced his understanding of the episcopate even after his return from Lyon.

The greatest example of how Wilfrid appears to have been influenced by his time on Lindisfarne is demonstrated in the development and maintenance of his own monastic *familia*. Stephen records something of the scale of the land and monasteries under Wilfrid's control. These included Ripon, Hexham, land in Lichfield, a monastery on land given by Berhtwald in Mercia, Selsey, and Oundle, as well as "consecrated places" once occupied by British clergy in the regions of the Ribble, Yeadon, Dent and Catlow.[38] Stephen gives his reader a further impression as to just how extensive Wilfrid's monastic *familia* had been when he records that, "many thousands of his monks" were left behind when Wilfrid went to seek justice in Rome and how upon his death "all his abbots and anchorites" had travelled to be at his side.[39] Stephen records that at his deathbed Wilfrid's last words were concerned with the appointing of

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[36] Foley allots several pages of his thesis to the religious dimensions and functions of pilgrimage in, *St Wilfrid of York as Pius Pater*, pp 325-36.

[37] Bede, *VCP*, ch 16.

[38] Stephen, *VW*, chs 8, 22, 15, 40, 41 65 & 17.

[39] *Ibid.* chs 25 & 62.

suitable successors. Acca was to succeed at Hexham and Tatberht at Ripon.[40] Clearly by 709 no one person was able to succeed Wilfrid as head over such a large federation. However, it appears that Wilfrid intended Ripon and Hexham to remain as the two principal monasteries in the federation; Ripon being based in Deira and Hexham in Bernicia.[41]

The Wilfridian monasteries demonstrate that Wilfrid maintained something akin to an Irish understanding of the role of monastic federations. For instance, like the Irish federations, Wilfrid's monasteries also cut across political boundaries. The accounts of the conversion of Sussex also suggest that Wilfrid held a monastic understanding of evangelism. This had been the chosen method of Aidan's mission and indeed Augustine's, a fact I am sure Wilfrid would have discovered for himself whilst in Kent. Although the monastery at Selsey may be unique, in that it was the only Wilfridian monastery established in an entirely pagan kingdom, it appears plausible that the other monasteries were also concerned with evangelisation. It seems likely that his monasteries, even Ripon and Hexham in Northumbria, were designed to evangelise people into what Wilfrid saw as the more correct tradition. If Bede's comments are correct and "a yet more serious controversy arose"[42] simultaneously with Wilfrid's taking possession of the monastery at Ripon, then it appears a strong possibility that this was the sort of influence the establishment of a monastery could have. If Wilfrid was given the monastery at Ripon in 661, then for two or three years that monastery would have held Easter at a different time to the other Northumbrian monasteries, demonstrating the differences and tensions between the two traditions for all to see. Again, after his consecration as bishop we told by Stephen that Wilfrid introduced the Benedictine Rule to the monastery,[43] which must also have stood out in comparison to other monastic houses, especially double-monasteries such as Whitby.[44] Although something of the Irish structure can be detected in Wilfrid's monastic federation it appears that the Wilfridian monasteries were built for the propagation of Wilfridian theology.

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[40] *Ibid.* ch 65.
[41] *Ibid.* ch 63.
[42] Bede, *HE,* III ch 25.
[43] Stephen, *VW,* ch 14.
[44] Ref. D.Pelteret, 'Saint Wilfrid: Tribal Bishop, Civic Bishop or Germanic Lord?' p 170 & 177.

Nevertheless, whatever Wilfrid's intentions were for his monasteries, they had too much of an Irish character for this to be merely coincidental. In my mind, Wilfrid's monasteries demonstrate that far from forgetting what he had seen on Lindisfarne, which was itself part of Iona's monastic federation, Wilfrid never forgot his time there and was able to use what he had learnt there to his later advantage.

David Pelteret has recently asserted that Wilfrid's understanding of episcopacy may have been more deeply affected by his time in Northumbria before leaving on pilgrimage. Pelteret argues that there is evidence to suggests that Wilfrid based his role as bishop on "the indigenous model of a secular king,"[45] pointing to Stephen's portrayal of Wilfrid. Examples include his lavish consecration as bishop, evidence of his own armed retinue, the fact that he was seen as a threat to King Ecgfrith by Queen Iurminburg[46] and so on. On the basis of all this Pelteret argues that Wilfrid modelled himself on an Germanic lord. More significant still is Stephen's reference to "the ecclesiastical kingdom of St Wilfrid,"[47] which raises the possibility that he was seen in such a role by his followers. Indeed, the rule of Benedict, which Stephen tells us Wilfrid introduced into Northumbria, demanded total obedience to the abbot, that is Wilfrid.[48]

Therefore, Foley's portrayal of Wilfrid as *Pius Pater* demonstrates one very good possibility of how Wilfrid might have conceived of his own ministry as bishop, or even as abbot. To a certain extent Wilfrid the Germanic lord and Wilfrid the *Pius Pater* do share many characteristics. What Wilfrid had encountered in Northumbria and at Lindisfarne before his departure to the continent appear to have remained with him throughout. It appears that Wilfrid did perceive his ministry in a different way to his Northumbrian contemporaries, a fact that might demonstrate why Wilfrid was to become Northumbria's most controversial bishop and the leader of his own ecclesiastical movement. Therefore, it seems more plausible to suggest that Wilfrid's personal understanding of episcopacy was influenced by many different factors. Although I agree with Mayr-Harting and Foley's assertions that Wilfrid's idea of episcopacy must be seen in the light of his pilgrimage to Rome and of the time that he spent in Lyon, this itself must also be seen and understood more closely in its context.

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[45] *Ibid.* p 175.
[46] Stephen, *VW*, chs 12, 13 & 24.
[47] *Ibid.* ch 21.

In the accounts of Wilfrid's life and episcopate we can see elements which have numerous points of origin, as Pelteret has noted: Wilfrid "drew upon a variety of episcopal models in living out his episcopacy."[49] With his base of experience being as comprehensive as it was, Wilfrid would have understood his episcopate in a variety of ways, which were themselves shaped by differing regional and social institutions. Consequently, Wilfrid's episcopate represented a combination of approaches. In my mind the Roman and Frankish model remained dominant; however, as has been demonstrated above, we can also see other factors in how Wilfrid understood his role as bishop, which must not be over looked.

5:3 WILFRID AS METROPOLITAN BISHOP OF YORK?

Stephen clearly states that Wilfrid had been appointed metropolitan bishop of the city of York.[50] This section of the chapter attempts to evaluate the reality of this claim and to assess whether Wilfrid conceived his position as bishop of York as being that of a metropolitan. It is also intended that this section should evaluate the evidence to determine whether or not Wilfrid was ever seen as a metropolitan by his contemporaries.

Before beginning to assess the evidence I believe it important, for the sake of clarity, that this section begins with a definition of what is meant by metropolitan bishop. The present canonical definition of a metropolitan bishop, as held by the Roman Catholic Church, makes an adequate starting point:

> A metropolitan is an archbishop who, presiding over an ecclesiastical see that has been designated or approved by the pope as the head of a province, exercises some degree of actual jurisdiction over the suffragan bishops of that province and is himself subject directly to the pope.[51]

This contemporary definition can not be taken as read and then applied to the church of the seventh century. Nevertheless, we can attempt to refine this definition with the use of the evidence to reflect what a seventh-century understanding of a metropolitan bishop may have been.

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[48] Ref. D.Pelteret, 'Saint Wilfrid: Tribal Bishop, Civic Bishop or Germanic Lord?' pp 162-3.
[49] *Ibid.* p 165.
[50] Stephen, *VW*, ch 16.
[51] Ref. L.G.Wrenn, 'Metropolitan (Canon Law),' in the *New Catholic Encyclopaedia*, Vol. 9 pp 758-59.

The first point to note is that the title of archbishop has not always been synonymous with the title of metropolitan bishop. The application of the title archbishop to metropolitans does not appear to have begun until the sixth century.[52] Therefore, in the seventh century it was not necessarily the case that all metropolitan bishops were styled archbishop.

As for the approved sees in Britain we are aware that the metropolitan sees had been designated as such by Gregory. Not surprisingly he intended them to be London and York, the former Roman metropolitan cities of Britain. Furthermore, it was Gregory's intent that the metropolitan bishops of London and York were to receive the honour of the pallium from Rome.[53] Although throughout the sixth and seventh centuries the pallium came to be increasingly recognised with metropolitan bishops it was not until the ninth century, under Pope John VIII, that all metropolitans had to petition Rome for the pallium.[54] Consequently, it cannot be argued that a seventh-century bishop could not be a metropolitan if he never received the pallium, as this assertion would not be historically correct. It is reasonable to assert that a seventh-century metropolitan, like his contemporary counterpart, would have had jurisdiction over the bishops of his province and would have also been directly accountable to Rome.

Therefore, a reasonable definition of a seventh-century metropolitan bishop might be: the bishop of a see that has been based in a former Roman metropolitan city or a see designated by the pope as the head of a province, who exercised a degree of jurisdiction over the suffragan bishops of the said province and who was directly responsible to the Apostolic See.

Using such a definition as a starting point, what can be said of Wilfrid's own ministry as bishop and what does this tell us about his own conception of being bishop of York? The first point to note is that Wilfrid had been consecrated in Gaul to the see of York,[55] the see which Gregory had designated as the metropolitan see for Northern Britain.[56] Consequently, it remains a possibility that Wilfrid conceived his role as bishop of York as being that of a metropolitan on this basis. That is, he was elected

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[52] Ref. S.G.Messmer, 'Archbishop,' in *The Catholic Encyclopaedia*, Vol. 10 pp 691-92.
[53] Bede, *HE*, I ch 29.
[54] Ref. J.A.Abbo, 'Pallium,' in the *New Catholic Encyclopaedia*, Vol. 10 pp 929-30.
[55] Stephen, *VW*, ch 12.
[56] Bede, *HE*, I ch 29.

and consecrated to a see that had been designated as a metropolitan see by Gregory; a see, which had not been occupied by a Roman bishop since the flight of Paulinus in 633. Although Bishop Paulinus left York before he had received the pallium, which had been dispatched to him from Rome,[57] this is not crucial, as the pallium was not necessary for a bishop of a metropolitan see to exercise metropolitical oversight.[58] This appears to have been because it was the see that was designated with the status of a metropolitan, not the individual in question.

Why then were Augustine, Paulinus and Honorius sent the pallium from Rome? It seems to have been the case that before the pallium was so closely linked with the metropolitan rank, by Pope John VIII, the pallium was awarded by the pope as a mark of distinction. Usually such an honour was bestowed upon metropolitans but this was not exclusively the case; on occasions other bishops are known to have received the honour, for example, in the pontificate of Gregory the Great we are aware that Bishop Syagrius of Autun, Bishop Donus of Messina and Bishop John of Syracuse received the pallium.[59] The fact that the pallium was awarded as a sign of distinction might also explain why Augustine and others were awarded this honour. In Gregory's letter to Augustine the pontiff declares that,

> While it is certain that untold rewards in the eternal kingdom are laid up for those who labour for Almighty God, nevertheless it is necessary that we should bestow rewards and honours upon them...we grant to you the use of the pallium but only for the performance of the mass: so that you may ordain twelve bishops...who are to be subject to your jurisdiction: the bishop of London shall however, for the future, always receive the honour of the pallium from that holy and apostolic see which, by the guidance of God I serve.[60]

There appear to have been two purposes for Gregory in awarding the pallium to Augustine: firstly Gregory sees the pallium as a rightful reward for all that Augustine had done in converting Kent, and secondly, the reward comes at a time when the pallium was being increasingly recognised with the metropolitan rank. Therefore, Gregory awards the pallium as recognition of Augustine's efforts while maintaining, at the same time, that all bishops of London were to receive the pallium from that time forth. It was Gregory's plan that such a link should also be made with the see of

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[57] *Ibid.* II ch 17.

[58] T.M.Charles-Edwards, argues that there was no link between metropolitical oversight and the pallium in seventh century Frankish Gaul, where Wilfrid had spent about three years Ref. *ECI*, p 432.

[59] J.Braun, 'Pallium,' in the *Catholic Encyclopaedia*, Vol. 11 p 428.

[60] Bede, *HE*, I ch 29.

York.[61] We are aware that initially in the western church the pope alone had had the right to wear a pallium.[62] Consequently, those awarded with the pallium were closely identified with the pontiff and with his ministry. This is an important point when understood in light of recent scholarship on the Gregorian mission. Markus has strongly asserted that the mission to England was a direct consequence of Gregory's ideals of the pastoral office; consequently the mission is to be closely identified with Gregory himself.[63] Therefore, by awarding the pallium to Augustine and his successors, as well as planning to do so for the bishops of York, Gregory was closely associating himself and his ministry with the fruit of the mission, which had been his.

The letter of Pope Honorius I to King Edwin appears to assume that Bishops Honorius of Canterbury and Paulinus of York were already metropolitans before they received the pallium. The letter reads, "We are also sending a pallium for each of the two metropolitans, that is for Honorius and Paulinus."[64] This appears to be further evidence for suggesting that the metropolitan rank was not dependent upon the pallium. The letter also suggests that the pallia were sent in order that at the death of one metropolitan bishop, the other English metropolitan could consecrate someone to the vacant metropolitan see.[65] In other words, the letter of Pope Honorius presumes that Honorius and Paulinus were already metropolitans and that the pallium was to represent one metropolitan's authority over the other's province in the event of that metropolitan's death. This is precisely what had occurred on Bishop Justus' death when Paulinus had consecrated Honorius in Lindsey.[66] Pope Honorius is likely to have known the circumstances of Honorius' consecration; this letter recognises Paulinus' actions as the norm for the English Church.[67]

Thus, it is possible to argue that Wilfrid may have seen himself as a metropolitan even though he never received the pallium, on the assumption that the designation of the see of York as a metropolitan bishopric by Gregory was all that was necessary. However, what actual evidence is there that Wilfrid understood his

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[61] *Ibid.* I ch 29.
[62] J.Braun, 'Pallium,' in the *Catholic Encyclopaedia,* Vol. 11 p 428.
[63] R.A.Markus, 'Augustine and Gregory the Great,' in *St Augustine and the Conversion of England,* ed. R.Gameson p 47.
[64] Bede, *HE,* II ch 17.
[65] *Ibid.* II ch 17.
[66] *Ibid.* II ch 16.
[67] Ref. T.Charles-Edwards, *ECI,* p 432 footnote 70.

episcopate in such terms? There are two pieces of primary evidence, which I suggest, strongly point to Wilfrid understanding his role as bishop of York in such a manner. The first is that Stephen was clearly left with the impression that Wilfrid had been metropolitan bishop of York.[68] At the least this is evidence that Wilfrid was seen as a metropolitan by the community he had governed; however, it further remains a possibility that the community were reflecting how Wilfrid had conceived his own role. This assertion only works if Stephen was reflecting the traditions of the community and if the community upheld what Wilfrid had believed of himself. As we set out at the beginning of this chapter, although Stephen's *Life* is both hagiographic and apologetic, it remains the older of the two written sources, which was written at Ripon, the centre of Wilfrid's ecclesiastical *familia*. Therefore, Stephen's sources about Wilfrid, presumably including the testimony of Abbot Tatberht,[69] were as close to Wilfrid himself as possible. Therefore, in my mind, his testimony should not be dismissed outright when it differs from that of Bede.[70]

The second primary source, which strongly suggests that Wilfrid saw himself as a metropolitan, comes from Rome and is included in both Stephen's *Life* and Bede's *History*. After his successful appeal to the Apostolic See in 679 Wilfrid played a part in the discussions that led to the Sixth Ecumenical Council. At this council the issue of Monothelitism was to be addressed; that is, whether Christ, being fully man and fully divine had two wills, that pertaining to the human and that to the divine, or whether he had only one divine will. At this council, it appears to have been Pope Agatho's wish to present a united western position; therefore, in preparation several synods were held. The largest of these met in Rome on 27 March 680.[71] One hundred and twenty-five bishops including Wilfrid signed the final decree of this synod. Both Stephen and Bede quote the document, which has Wilfrid signing the document as

> Wilfrid, Bishop of York, beloved of God, appealing to the Apostolic See about his cause, and absolved by its power from definite and indefinite charges, with one hundred and twenty-five other bishops called together in synod set in the seat of judgement, confessed the true and catholic faith for all the northern part of Britain and Ireland and the islands which are inhabited by the race of

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[68] Stephen, *VW*, ch 16.

[69] *Ibid.* ch 65

[70] Ref. M.Gibbs, 'The Decrees of Agatho and the Gregorian Plan for York,' p 214.

[71] This date is given by J.N.D.Kelly, *The Oxford Dictionary of Popes,* under 'Agatho,' pp 77-8.

Angles and Britons as well as Scots and Picts, and corroborated it with his signature.[72]

Wilfrid's signature here is described by Gibbs as a "properly metropolitan function."[73] Wilfrid claims to represent many more peoples than could possibly have been the case; he is claiming to have jurisdiction across Northern Britain and beyond. This is in line with what Gregory had envisaged for the metropolitan see of York. It is also noteworthy that Wilfrid had been acknowledged as having such oversight while he was in Rome. Indeed, Stephen records that when this document was read at Wilfrid's appeal to Pope John VI it had the effect of turning the people of Rome on to Wilfrid's side and helped acquit Wilfrid of the charges against him.[74]

Charles-Edwards has recently endeavoured to explain the extent of the claims, which Wilfrid made in Rome. By attempting to place the statement into the context of Northumbrian history, Charles-Edwards asserts that there must be some link between Wilfrid's claims and the military campaigns of Kings Oswiu and Ecgfrith.[75] There is ample evidence to suggest that as Northumbrian sway increased, so did Wilfrid's ecclesiastical power.[76] For Charles-Edwards the best evidence of this link is found in the letter of Pope Vitalian to King Oswiu, as recorded by Bede.[77] It appears that the territory that Oswiu was wishing to hold sway over corresponds with that which Wilfrid claimed to be representing in Rome. Indeed if Pope Vitalian had given Oswiu his blessing to bring the islands of Britain under his sway, for the purpose of dedicating them to Christ, then the see of York and its bishop would have held ecclesiastical jurisdiction over them. By setting the Roman statement into its political context, and especially by placing it alongside the letter of Vitalian, Charles-Edwards has demonstrated that the Irish Church continued to be seen as schismatic, and in this context Wilfrid's claims to such oversight makes sense.

Consequently, there appears to be a strong case for asserting that Wilfrid may have been justified in assuming that as bishop of York he was rightly metropolitan of Northern Britain. Stephen saw the see of York as possessing the rank of metropolitan, which might explain why he styles Colman as metropolitan bishop of York, when it

[72] Stephen, *VW*, ch 53 and Bede, *HE*, V Ch 19.
[73] M.Gibbs, 'The Decrees of Agatho and the Gregorian Plan for York,' p 244.
[74] Stephen, *VW*, ch 53.
[75] Charles-Edwards, *ECI*, pp 432-37.
[76] Stephen, *VW*, ch 21.

was almost a certainty that Colman had been bishop of Lindisfarne; on this point Eric John goes as far as to accuse Stephen of being "a barefaced liar."[78] Furthermore, the recent scholarship of Charles-Edwards goes a long way to assert that Wilfrid's position as bishop of York, when seen alongside the expansionist policies of the Northumbrian kings, was an increasingly powerful one. It has been suggested by Pelteret that by the time of Wilfrid's first dispute in 678, Wilfrid may have been on the verge of creating suffragan bishoprics to the see of York at Ripon and Hexham.[79] Marion Gibbs has also brought to our attention how in the Norman period Canterbury aimed to assert its primacy over England, in some cases doing so by forging historical documents. This included documentation concerning Wilfrid's appeal to Agatho.[80]

Therefore, for several reasons little doubt remains in my mind that Wilfrid conceived of his own role as metropolitan bishop of York. Firstly, I find the argument that Wilfrid could not have been metropolitan because he never received the pallium historically inaccurate. Secondly, it appears to have been more likely that the rank of metropolitan was associated with the see of York, rather than the persons of Paulinus, Colman or Wilfrid. Thirdly Stephen clearly thought of Wilfrid as a metropolitan, and although it remains possible that this assertion is nothing more than the rantings of an over-zealous hagiographer, I find it highly improbable to be so in this case. Fourthly, the expansion of Northumbrian hegemony across Northern Britain makes it increasingly likely that Wilfrid saw himself holding a form of extended oversight; the evidence from Rome suggests that he was seen as legitimately holding this position. Fifthly, Wilfrid is demonstrated throughout Stephen's *Life* and Bede's *History* as exercising episcopal ministry across England and in helping to establish bishoprics and consecrating bishops.[81] Furthermore, Wilfrid's constant appeals to Rome suggest that he saw himself as being ultimately accountable to the Apostolic See rather than Canterbury. It is to the first dispute of 678, and the implications that this had upon the rest of Wilfrid's ministry, that this chapter now turns its attention.

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[77] Bede, *HE*, III ch 29.

[78] E.John, 'The Social and Political Problems of the Early English Church,' p 42 & 45.

[79] D.Pelteret, 'Saint Wilfrid: Tribal Bishop, Civic Bishop or Germanic Lord?' p 170.

[80] M.Gibbs, 'The Decrees of Agatho and the Gregorian Plan for York,' p 213-14. See also D.Pelteret, 'Saint Wilfrid: Tribal Bishop, Civic Bishop or Germanic Lord?' p 172.

[81] For example, Bede, *HE*, IV 23 for Wilfrid's consecration of Oftfor as bishop and Stephen, *VW*, ch 15 for Wilfrid's part in the consecration of Chad to Lichfield.

5:4 THE CONTROVERSY OF 678

From a reading of the sources it becomes increasingly clear that the majority of Wilfrid's conflicts with bishops and kings have their origins in the first dispute of 678. Consequently, it is important to consider the circumstances around the controversy of 678, contemplating in particular the implications for Wilfrid's ministry as bishop. The events of 678 are significant for this chapter because they deal directly with the two main points that we have been discussing, namely, how Wilfrid understood his role as bishop of York, and how Wilfrid's role was perceived by others. The dispute also offers further insight into the related question of whether or not Wilfrid saw himself as a metropolitan bishop.

Before examining what was actually at stake in the dispute of 678 it is imperative that the controversy is first placed in its context. There seems to be no doubt that the dispute began when King Ecgfrith summoned Archbishop Theodore to Northumbria, which led to Theodore consecrating three bishops over Wilfrid's see.[82] These events came at the end of a nine-year period,[83] which is portrayed by Stephen as Wilfrid's heyday. It was during this period that Wilfrid was able to restore the church in York, rebuild the church at Ripon and commence work at Hexham.[84] Furthermore, as the Northumbrian king's sway continued to increase so did Wilfrid's spiritual jurisdiction.[85]

The roots of the dispute lie in this period and with the relationship between King Ecgfrith and Queen Æthelthryth. Although married for some twelve years, Æthelthryth had refused to consummate the marriage. Bede quotes as his source Wilfrid, who informed Bede that Ecgfrith had petitioned him to persuade Æthelthryth to consummate their union, even promising Wilfrid further estates if he was successful.[86] However, Æthelthryth was determined to leave her marriage in order to seek the veil. Consequently, Wilfrid was to all intents and purposes caught in the middle and it was ultimately Wilfrid's responsibility either to persuade the queen to remain with her husband or to admit her to the religious life.

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[82] Stephen, *VW*, ch 24.
[83] B.Colgrave, *The Life of Bishop Wilfrid by Eddius Stephanus*, dates Theodore's restoration of Wilfrid in 669 and his deposition in 678 pp 33 & 49.
[84] Stephen, *VW*, chs 16, 17 & 22.
[85] *Ibid.* ch 21.

We are aware that King Ecgfrith eventually gave Æthelthryth permission to seek the religious life and that it was Bishop Wilfrid who admitted her to Coldingham.[87] What Wilfrid stood to lose by bestowing the veil was the prospect of further estates. However, Wilfrid still appears to have received an estate at this time, although it was the gift of Queen Æthelthryth rather than King Ecgfrith. There is some uncertainty over when Æthelthryth received the veil; Plummer suggests no later than 672.[88] Coincidentally, it was at about the same time that the Hexham estate was given to Wilfrid.[89] The granting of the Hexham estate to Wilfrid may have been one of the last actions taken by Æthelthryth as queen. If the prospect of further expansion had made Wilfrid consider persuading Æthelthryth to lie with her husband then Æthelthryth herself showed that she , also, could provide estates for the church.

It is to Wilfrid's crucial role in this affair that we must look to for the origin of the dispute. After Æthelthryth had been admitted to the religious life, Ecgfrith was entitled to take a new wife and it is to Queen Iurminburg that Stephen points for the eventual cause of the dispute.[90] Evidently, Iurminburg perceived Wilfrid as a threat to her and her husband's authority. Stephen tells us that it was Iurminburg constantly reminding Ecgfrith of Wilfrid's possessions and sway that eventually resulted in the king's wish to reduce Wilfrid's sway. There appears to have been ample cause for Ecgfrith to feel betrayed by Wilfrid, who clearly favoured Æthelthryth's offer of the Hexham estate and her will to leave her husband. Furthermore, we get the impression from Stephen that Iurminburg was more than willing to stir up trouble between the king and his bishop.

There is a degree of uncertainty as to why Theodore agreed to divide Wilfrid's see without his knowledge or permission. There appear to be two possibilities: one is that this was the only method by which Theodore could fulfil his wish to divide the northern see; or that what was at issue was whether England had two metropolitical sees or one.

The first argument, which is currently being proposed by Brooks, suggests that Theodore's ultimate motive was his concern for pastoral care in the Northumbrian

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[86] Bede, *HE*, IV ch 19.

[87] *Ibid.* IV ch 19.

[88] C.Plummer, *Opera Historica*, Vol. 2 p 318.

[89] Stephen, *VW*, ch 22 clearly states that Hexham was a gift of Queen Æthelthryth.

[90] *Ibid.* ch 24. Stephen even likens Iurminburg to Jezebel.

diocese.[91] Indeed, Bede's record of the Council of Hertford informs us that the reasonable division of sees was on Theodore's agenda.[92] However, such an assertion suggests that Wilfrid never intended the Northumbrian diocese to be divided, and that Wilfrid had been content to rule the whole diocese single-handedly. However, this view has been challenged by Pelteret who suggests that Wilfrid's building programme at Ripon and Hexham is evidence that Wilfrid saw these monasteries as future bishoprics in the northern province.[93] The second suggestion, which is advocated by Gibbs, takes more fully into consideration the political background.[94] This is one reason why Gibbs' argument appears more persuasive than that offered by Brooks.

The political situation in Southern England and the uncertainty of Wilfrid's position in relation to Canterbury both appear to be high on the agenda in 678. Politically Bede informs us that Kent had recently been ravaged by King Ethelred of Mercia, and even the cathedral church at Rochester had been destroyed.[95] Ecgfrith of Northumbria was, however, approaching the zenith of his power and Gibbs suggests that Northumbria was in a position to hold sway over Mercia.[96] Consequently, King Ecgfrith could offer Theodore protection from further Mercian attack; in turn Theodore could help Ecgfrith and Iurminburg reduce the Wilfridian threat by consecrating bishops over Wilfrid's vast diocese. Stephen clearly suggests that Theodore had been bribed by the royal couple. However, if Gibbs is correct then it appears more likely that the Archbishop had little choice

> Theodore may well have been convinced that the survival of the Gregorian traditions of Canterbury, the principal church entrusted to him, was his first care. Could they be maintained if it passed under the Mercian yolk, subject to further depredations of the last sons of Penda?[97]

It also appears that through this act Theodore gained Ecgfrith's recognition as having the metropolitan authority over Northumbria. Indeed Brooks argues that after 678 Canterbury continued to hold ecclesiastical primacy over Northumbria, thereby allowing Canterbury to maintain its position as England's primary see and stalling any

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[91] N.Brooks, *The Early History of the Church of Canterbury*, p 73.

[92] Bede, *HE*, IV ch 5.

[93] D.Pelteret, 'Saint Wilfrid: Tribal Bishop, Civic Bishop or Germanic Lord?' p 170.

[94] M.Gibbs, 'The Decrees of Agatho and the Gregorian Plan for York,' p 216.

[95] Bede, *HE*, IV ch 12.

[96] M.Gibbs, 'The Decrees of Agatho and the Gregorian Plan for York,' p 224.

[97] *Ibid.* p 224.

attempts by Wilfrid to consecrate suffragan bishops to Ripon and Hexham.[98] There appears to have been plenty of incentive for Theodore to support Ecgfrith and Iurminburg's plans.

The combination of Theodore's archiepiscopal and Ecgfrith's royal authority was enough to remove Wilfrid from his see. Stephen records that, when Wilfrid sought an explanation, he was told that they did not ascribe to Wilfrid any "criminal offence in any injurious act, but we will not change our established decree respecting you."[99] Wilfrid's power had gone from rivalling "Ecgfrith's in wealth and Theodore's in authority"[100] to being left with practically nothing. Wilfrid's diocese was initially split into three: Bosa became bishop of York, Eata became bishop of Hexham but chose to have his see at Lindisfarne and Eadhæd was consecrated bishop of Lindsey. Three years later two further sees were added at Abercorn and Hexham.[101]

Stephen informs us that Wilfrid's decision to pursue the matter in Rome was taken under the advice of his brother bishops. However, if hitherto Wilfrid had seen himself as metropolitan bishop of York, then he may have seen the journey to Rome as the natural course of action. The alternative would have been nothing short of perpetual exile from his see.

Wilfrid's appeal to Pope Agatho makes it clear that Wilfrid was not appealing against the principle of dividing the northern see as he professes to be willing to have other bishops with whom he could "serve God in unity." Consequently, Wilfrid's dispute was against the uncanonical division of the see by Archbishop Theodore and the bishops who had "preferred themselves to be bishops in my church."[102] The words, *in mea ecclesia*, further suggest to me that Wilfrid did indeed see himself as exercising metropolitical oversight from York. The point is made that Theodore had consecrated these three bishops without Wilfrid's prior knowledge and permission into Wilfrid's church for no justifiable reason. On this point Wilfrid is vindicated by the Apostolic see; however, there were to be other bishops to assist him, whom he chose, but it was to be Archbishop Theodore who was to consecrate them.[103]

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[98] N.Brooks, *Anglo-Saxon Myths, State and Church 400-1066*, p 107.
[99] Stephen, *VW*, ch 24.
[100] C.Cubitt, 'Wilfrid's Usurping Bishops: Episcopal Elections in Anglo-Saxon England, c 600-c800,' p 19.
[101] Bede, *HE*, IV ch 12.
[102] Stephen, *VW*, ch 30.
[103] *Ibid.* ch 32.

In reality Wilfrid's victory was short lived as this dispute was far from over. Wilfrid would have to face imprisonment, exile, an English council and another trip to Rome before the Synod of Nidd in 705 was to settle the dispute once and for all.[104] Although Wilfrid remained Bishop of Hexham until his death, he was never to govern the northern church single-handed again; however, Wilfrid's influence was to extend in wider bounds, through his monastic *familia*.

To what extent Wilfrid considered himself a metropolitan after the dispute of 680 remains uncertain. However, it appears that from his consecration in Gaul and throughout his time at Agatho's court Wilfrid understood his role in such a manner. It may be the case that Wilfrid stubbornly held on to this assertion throughout; it would be characteristic of him to have done so.

The reader may have noticed that throughout this section I have styled Theodore as archbishop. This indeed is the title that is given to Theodore by Stephen and Bede.[105] Furthermore, there is no doubt that Theodore was a metropolitan, occupying the primary English see of Canterbury.[106] Therefore, Theodore can clearly be identified as the "superior or chief bishop"[107] that is, Archbishop.

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[104] *Ibid.* ch 60.

[105] E.g. Bede, *HE,* Preface & III ch 7, Stephen, *VW,* chs 15 & 24.

[106] Bede, *HE,* IV chs 1 & 2.

[107] This is a definition of an archbishop offered by, S.E.Donlon, 'Archbishop,' in the *Catholic Encyclopaedia,* Vol. 1 p 743.

5:5 CONCLUSIONS

The episcopate of Wilfrid was far from straightforward and certainly not without controversy. Within Wilfrid's episcopate various characteristics are displayed, showing that Wilfrid was able to take on board and use to his advantage different models of episcopacy. Essentially it appears to me that Wilfrid adopted for himself what Foley describes as the *Pius Pater* model. After all, as was demonstrated in the previous chapter, Wilfrid stood for all things Roman. However, Wilfrid's earliest experiences in Northumbria and on Lindisfarne can also be detected as holding influence throughout. Furthermore, it appears to me that Wilfrid did understand his role as bishop of York as being that of metropolitan of the north, in line with what Gregory had wished. The statement from the Roman council and his reference to "my church" in his appeal strongly suggest that this was how Wilfrid conceived his role, something that Stephen also clearly believed to have been the case.

CHAPTER 6

BEDE'S EPISCOPAL THEOLOGY

The extent to which this study has hitherto been indebted to the writings of the Venerable Bede will not have gone unnoticed by the reader. It is primarily through Bede that the historian and theologian alike have been left with a valuable record of the events that make up the Church's formative years in Northumbria. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that Bede, like any other writer, was not writing in a vacuum and indeed Bede is without doubt as much a product of his own time as we are a product of ours. Consequently, it is of the utmost importance to this study that we establish an understanding of what the Venerable Bede's own thoughts and opinions on the episcopate were. Without doubt his own views will have coloured his writings; even so, the opinions of such a learned man are interesting in themselves and worthy of note.

The placing of a chapter on Bede at this stage in the thesis is symbolic, because this chapter marks a turning point for the study as a whole. Thus far, this study has discussed the episcopates of Paulinus, Aidan, and Wilfrid and also to a lesser extent, Finan and Colman. With the exception of Wilfrid, Bede himself would have perceived these bishops as belonging to Northumbria's past; admittedly the recent past, but as part of history nonetheless. On the other hand, Cuthbert and Wilfrid had both exercised their episcopal ministry during Bede's own lifetime. Consequently, when Bede wrote his historical and hagiographic works on the figures of Cuthbert and Wilfrid, he would have done so while they remained part of the present 'consciousness' of the Northumbrian Church. Therefore, Bede's scholarship on Wilfrid and Cuthbert had its own significant bearing on the unfolding reality of the Northumbrian Church in his own day, in a way his scholarship on other, now historical bishops did not. This of course does not suggest that Bede's work on other bishops had no effect at all; rather the point I am wanting to make is that, Bede's portrayal of those who had been his contemporaries is likely to have had a greater effect upon the Northumbrian Church than his writings upon the other bishops. This is one reason

why such detailed consideration was paid to his portrayal of Bishop Wilfrid in the previous chapter.

By Bede's historical and hagiographic works I am primarily, but not exclusively, referring to Bede's *History* and to his two *Lives of St. Cuthbert*. However, by far the best place to discover Bede's own thoughts on the state and nature of the episcopate is in his epistle to Bishop Egbert of York. It is clear from reading this letter that Bede's aim in writing was to propose the reform of the Northumbrian Church to Bishop Egbert. Bede wrote to Egbert in November 734, which we know was within a year of Egbert's reception of the pallium. It remains unclear whether or not Bede was aware that Egbert was about to receive the pallium. When Bede suggested that a council should be called and that Egbert, in conjunction with King Ceolwulf, should create at least one more bishopric, he confirms that it was his view that Egbert would more easily receive the pallium, if he were to be seen as acting in accordance with the Gregorian plan: that is, creating up to twelve bishoprics around York. In Bede's own words

> If, with the help of God, you do what we suggest you will very easily achieve,
> or so we think, metropolitan status for the church of York, according to the
> decrees of the apostolic see.[1]

It appears that when Bede composed his letter in November 734 there remained uncertainty about when York might be recognised by Rome as being an ecclesiastical province in its own right. In the context of the last chapter, it is of interest to note that although Bede looks to the creation of York as a metropolitan see, he sees Egbert as having the authority to create new bishoprics in conjunction with the king already. Indeed he sees them as a means by which York might be more readily acknowledged as a metropolitan see by Rome once again. Nonetheless, it is clear that Bede saw the metropolitan status as something that had to be re-conferred upon the see by Rome. It is also possible that Bede saw such recognition from Rome coming with the pallium for Egbert, as had been the case in Paulinus' day.

The context of a letter enables Bede to deliver his message of reform directly to its recipient. Bede opens his letter by stating that he had wished to express his

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[1] Bede, 'Epistle to Egbert,' in *Bede, The Ecclesiastical History of the English People,* (Oxford World Classics Paperback, 1999.) p 349. I have decided to cite page numbers from this popular translation in order to assist the reader.

opinions in the context of a "private conversation" with the bishop. Consequently we have a letter revealing Bede's concern for the state of the Northumbrian church, written as if he were speaking with his bishop face to face. As such, in this letter we hear Bede expressing himself in a way which he is not able to do elsewhere.

Bede who was now within a year of his death informs Egbert how he envisaged his role as bishop of York and how he perceived the role and duties of bishops in a more general manner. Bede leaves Egbert in no doubt as to the high values he places on the episcopate for example; he addresses him as "your Holiness" and describes Egbert as exercising a "most sacred office."[2] Furthermore, he warns Egbert to beware of undermining his "episcopal dignity" and places a high burden of responsibility upon him, warning him that at the Day of Judgement he would be held accountable for his flock.[3] The evidence of the letter itself strongly suggests that Bede saw Egbert as being in a position actively to put right the wrongs he saw in the Northumbrian Church. I do not think that Bede would have composed such a letter to someone unless he believed that he had the authority to do something about his concerns. Bede's language goes as far as to tell Egbert that, if he should ever encounter bishops who were tempted by the vices of the secular world then, "I should like you to correct them."[4]

The letter also sets out in considerable detail how Bede saw the role of the episcopate in a more general manner. Bede clearly believed that it was a bishop's duty to "preach the word boldly" to set an example for his flock and to instruct his people to "enable them to distinguish between good and evil."[5] Furthermore, the bishop should not deny the laity the hands of confirmation.[6] As for the monastic communities a bishop ought to establish what was right and wrong.[7] As for his responsibility to the laity, the list continues, a bishop should teach the laity which acts were most pleasing to God; which sins should be abstained from; what devotions they ought to pray and so on.[8]

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[2] *Ibid.* p 343.
[3] *Ibid.* p 346.
[4] *Ibid.* pp 344-5.
[5] *Ibid.* pp 345-8.
[6] *Ibid.* p 347.
[7] *Ibid.* p 353.
[8] *Ibid.* p 354.

Furthermore, in order to be able to carry out such pastoral oversight a bishop should ordain enough priests to assist him, so that even small villages would have their own priests.[9] Within the epistle Bede expresses a great concern for the pastoral oversight of the Northumbrian population. In his opinion it was not acceptable

> That there are many of the villages and hamlets of our people...where a bishop
> has not been seen over the course of many years performing his ministry and
> revealing the divine grace.[10]

Bede sees this as being highly irregular when a tax was paid to the church and yet the laity often received little benefit from it, seldom seeing their bishop.

This is naturally in stark contrast to how Bede describes the situation under Aidan and Cuthbert. In his writings Bede shows Aidan and Cuthbert in particular spending a great deal of time and energy amongst their people.[11] It is also of interest to note the importance Bede places on the teaching role of the episcopate. In another example, Bede informs Egbert that he had himself offered translations of the Lord's Prayer and Apostles' Creed for those who had no knowledge of Latin.[12] Bede also suggests that such extensive pastoral care may be even better if:

> The enormous weight of ecclesiastical Government [were] to be divided up
> amongst many.[13]

In other words, Bede's view was that pastoral care would be best served by the creation of at least one more northern bishopric; as it was noted above, this was to be achieved with royal support. Indeed Bede urges Egbert to seek the assistance of the king, who was Egbert's cousin. We need look no further than to the example of Aidan and Oswald to see how Bede may have envisaged the ideal relationship between a bishop and his king. The example of Oswald and Aidan is of course in great contrast to Wilfrid's relationships to the Northumbrian royal household.[14] Moreover, Bede suggests that Egbert's creation of new bishoprics via a council would strengthen York's claim to metropolitan status. Bede also feels able to suggest to the bishop that any new bishopric would be best placed within an existing monastery.[15] This is not an

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[9] *Ibid.* p 345.

[10] *Ibid.* p 347.

[11] e.g. For Aidan, Bede, *HE,* III ch 17 & for Cuthbert, Bede, *VCP* ch 26.

[12] Bede, 'Epistle to Egbert,'. p 346.

[13] *Ibid.* p 349.

[14] Bede, *HE,* III ch 3.

[15] Bede, 'Epistle to Egbert,' pp 348 - 349.

unrealistic claim; furthermore it is one that should not be unexpected. After all, Bede was himself a monk; furthermore, missionaries who were monk-bishops had led the missions to Northumbria and Kent.

There are also many parallels between Bede's episcopal theology and that of Gregory the Great. Indeed at an early point in the letter Bede suggests that Egbert should "carefully consider" what Gregory has to say in the *Book of the Pastoral Rule*.[16] The reader will recall that Gregory's episcopal theology was discussed in some detail in chapter three, and consequently will have noted that Bede's epistle emphasises many similar qualities, duties and responsibilities, which appertain to Gregory's theology of the episcopate. From the letter it is clear that Bede is heavily influenced by Gregorian theology. For example, the emphasis on preaching, on balancing the solitary and pastoral and on maintaining the episcopal dignity are also common in the theology of Gregory.

Furthermore, the assertion by Bede that at least one new bishopric should be created demonstrates that Bede's theology of the episcopate was in this way similar to that of Archbishop Theodore. If Wilfrid had been opposed to Theodore's plans then on this point Bede and Wilfrid would have disagreed; however, as chapter five suggested, it remains possible that Wilfrid had a time table for dividing his own see and that political events resulted in a premature division of his see.

Thus, what Bede sets out in his epistle is very similar to what we find in the writings of Gregory, and is consistent with how he describes bishops such as Cuthbert and Aidan. Thacker has argued that Bede's view of the episcopate in the letter to Egbert follows his earlier portrayal of Cuthbert in his historical and hagiographic works.[17]

What, then, can be made of the motives behind Bede's earlier work, and is Thacker correct in his assertions? The following chapter will consider the episcopate of Cuthbert in more detail; however, at this juncture it may helpful to attempt to ascertain why Bede felt he needed to write a second *Life of St Cuthbert* and what some of the underlying factors to this work and his *History* may have been.

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[16] *Ibid.* p 344.
[17] Alan Thacker, 'Bede's Ideal of Reform,' p 141.

The question as to why Bede wrote not just one life, but two lives, of St Cuthbert when an anonymous Lindisfarne monk had already written such a work is of great interest. William Trent Foley has made a recent response to this question. Dr Foley, examining the circumstances behind Bede's lives of St. Cuthbert, has asserted that the *Prose Life* was underscored by three motives. Firstly, there was a need for a *Life* which placed greater emphasis on the connection between Cuthbert's suffering and sanctity: secondly, a need for a *Life* which had taken into account liturgical considerations for Cuthbert's feast day; and thirdly, a *Life* which was apologetic, that is, written by way of a response to Stephen's hagiographic account of the *Life of Bishop Wilfrid*.[18] Although primarily concerned with the issue of sanctity in Bede's *Prose Life*, Foley maintains that Bede should not be seen solely as an historian but; also as a "theologian, exegete, narrative artist, and perhaps most of all, monastic reformer."[19]

Essentially, Dr Foley would have us believe that Bede's motives in writing a *Prose Life* of Cuthbert appear to have had little to do with the saint, or the actual need for another written *Life*, and everything to do with the state of the Northumbrian Church at the time he was writing.[20] Bede the ecclesiastic, rather than Bede the historian, would undoubtedly have placed the spiritual well-being of the Church in his own country before all things. Thus, the need for another version of Cuthbert's life would indeed have been based on the continuing need to build up the Church with books portraying those whom he saw as the Northumbrian Church's greatest exemplars. This would appear to correlate with the view asserted by Alan Thacker, who points to the fact that the *Anonymous Life* fulfilled a function in that it was "well adapted to serve a cult."[21] However, the *Anonymous Life* was never meant to be, and in practice never was, didactic in its content. Bede's *Lives* on the other hand appear to have served to correct this.

What then of the motives behind the writing of the *Ecclesiastical History*?[22] If we are to assert that Bede was primarily concerned with the state of the Northumbrian

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[18] W.T.Foley, 'Suffering and Sanctity in Bede's Prose Life of St. Cuthbert,' pp 102 - 116.
[19] *Ibid.* p 115.
[20] *Ibid.* pp 115 - 116.
[21] Alan Thacker, 'Bede's Ideal of Reform,' p. 137.
[22] For a comprehensive discussion on Bede's *History*, see J.Campbell, *Essays in Anglo-Saxon History*, Essays, 'Bede I' & 'Bede II.'

church then his motives must have been ecclesiastical rather than purely scholarly. What evidence is there to support such an assertion? The first point is obvious, yet still worth noting; the title itself identifies the work as an *Ecclesiastical History*, written in a similar manner to the *Ecclesiastical History* by Eusebius. In other words, a history with an emphasis on the Church, rather than a secular history of a nation or a people. Consequently, we discover that on one level the *History* records events in a scholarly manner, where on another level the work clearly becomes hagiography. One example of this is in Bede's account of the life and ministry of Bishop Aidan, where the history and hagiography become one and the same. Furthermore, the tone is unashamedly didactic; for instance, Bede describes Aidan's life as being "in great contrast to our modern slothfulness."[23]

When the *History* is read with those themes expressed in his letter to Egbert in mind, it becomes increasingly clear that Bede was using examples from the past as a stick with which he could beat his present. In this way the *History* appears to be fulfilling a role similar to that of Bede's *Life of St. Cuthbert*. Thus, there appears to be something in Alan Thacker's assertion that the *Ecclesiastical History* is, at least in part, "'a gallery of good examples,' a collection of models of right living and teaching which demonstrated the way reform could be achieved."[24] At least one of the motives behind the *History* appears to have been to propose reform in Bede's present by demonstrating the glories of the past. Without doubt Bede uses history as a yardstick to measure and judge the church in his own time. This may account for why it is held that Bede's *History* records a "golden age" for the Northumbrian Church: an era that appears to have ended with King Ecgfrith's death at Nechtansmere in May 685.[25]

What, then, does Bede make of the role of the episcopate in his historical and hagiographic writings? Above I pointed to Bede's highly positive portrayal of Bishop Aidan in his *History*, and to his writing of two *Lives* of Bishop Cuthbert. The attention that Bede gives to Cuthbert is disproportionate to that given to any other bishop. One reason for this could well have something to do with the ecclesiastical struggle that followed the Synod of Whitby, between the two groups outlined above.[26] The

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[23] Bede, *HE*, III Ch 5.
[24] Alan Thacker, 'Bede's Ideal of Reform,' p 142.
[25] *Ibid.* p 143.
[26] Ref., Walter Goffart, 'Bede and the Ghost of Bishop Wilfrid.'

episcopates of Aidan and Cuthbert seem to be the examples Bede wanted to set before the church in his own day. Bishop Aidan's episcopate has been discussed above and I do not intend to repeat myself here; nevertheless, it is worth noting that it is only through Bede that we know anything of significance about Aidan at all. Consequently, it is impossible to ascertain whether Bede's portrayal of him really is over zealous. Bede's clear emphasis is on Aidan's tireless aim to teach the faith to the Northumbrians by word and deed.[27] Bede's portrayal of Aidan may be positive for a further reason. According to Bede's accounts of Cuthbert's life, it was on Aidan's death that the young Cuthbert saw a vision of the bishop's soul being carried into heaven. This in turn led to Cuthbert seeking a monastic life. If Bede was aiming to portray Cuthbert in the best possible light, then the connection between Cuthbert entering Melrose and his vision of Aidan's death is significant as it portrays Cuthbert following in Aidan's footsteps. Thus, Bede needed to demonstrate Aidan's better aspects, whereas his use of the eighty-four year reckoning for Easter has to be placed to one side and excused by Bede during his *History*.[28]

Therefore, to understand what qualities Bede really saw in the ideal bishop we must turn to his portrayal of Cuthbert. There are differences between Bede's Cuthbert and the Cuthbert portrayed by the anonymous Lindisfarne writer. As has been said, it can be demonstrated that the anonymous *Life's* depiction of Cuthbert used material from both Athanasius's *Life of Antony* and from Sulpicius Severus's *Life of Martin*. Alan Thacker points to the Martinian material being especially influential on the portrayal of Cuthbert, demonstrating the maintenance of the ascetic and monastic life alongside the episcopal office.[29] However, Bede in his *Prose Life* re-drafted this section, not including the quotations from the *Life of Martin*.[30] Bede's portrayal of Cuthbert remains that of a bishop who was able to balance carefully a deeply spiritual nature, often spending time alone for his own contemplation (usually on Inner Farne) and yet never losing his sense of responsibility towards his flock.[31] Such conclusions are also made by Stancliffe who, summarising Bede's portrayal of Bishop Cuthbert, states

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[27] Bede, *HE*, III Ch 5.
[28] *Ibid.* III Ch 17.
[29] Alan Thacker, 'Bede's Ideal of Reform,' p 136.
[30] *Ibid.* p 141.

> Above all, Bede's subtlety and skill show in his shaping of the material to portray Cuthbert as an exemplary figure who at every stage of his life was concerned to help and teach others, while never relinquishing the contemplative ideal.[32]

Bede's portrayal of Bishop Cuthbert, as Thacker demonstrates, embodied remarkably similar qualities to those which Bede was later to recommend Bishop Egbert.[33] Bede's Cuthbert was able to fulfil his pastoral responsibilities, by teaching and preaching to his flock; he was able to fulfil his monastic vows, whilst spending time alone in contemplation that was not to the detriment of his pastoral responsibilities. Without doubt, Bede portrayed Cuthbert as being an ideal bishop.

The evidence from the *Anonymous Life* suggests that such qualities had already been recognised by the Lindisfarne community; however, it was Bede who turned Cuthbert into an example who was to be followed. As such, underlying Bede's work was the aim to demonstrate that the fusion of the contemplative life with pastoral responsibility, as demonstrated in the figures of Gregory, Aidan and Cuthbert, really did work.[34] Furthermore, in all the examples where it was demonstrated as working those in question were all monk-bishops.

As Coates has suggested, Bede saw the ideal bishop as being a monk-bishop, as he suggested that a monk-bishop was more successful in balancing the pastoral and the solitary.[35] They were demonstrated as being able to administer the sacraments, to be great teachers and preachers of the faith and above all they were to demonstrate in their lives that which they taught to others. Bede appears to have believed strongly in monk-bishops; after all, Gregory the Great, Augustine, Aidan and Cuthbert had all been highly successful monk-bishops to whom Northumbria owed much. They had all successfully combined the pastoral and solitary and had achieved much in the tasks that they had set out to accomplish.

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[31] *Ibid.* p 141.
[32] Clare Stancliffe, 'Cuthbert and the Polarity between Pastor and Solitary, p 28.
[33] Alan Thacker, 'Bede's Ideal of Reform,' p 141.
[34] *Ibid.* p 143.
[35] S.Coates, 'The Bishop as Pastor and Solitary,' p 619.

CHAPTER 7

WILFRID AND CUTHBERT AS IDEAL BISHOPS

7:1 WILFRID AND CUTHBERT AS PRODUCTS OF THEIR AGE

This chapter will examine the figures of Wilfrid and Cuthbert as representative bishops of the two groups that made up the Northumbrian Church after 664. These bishops are well suited to such a study for several reasons: firstly, the oversight of these two bishops is well documented. In both cases we are not entirely reliant upon the evidence of one author, as Stephen and Bede both write concerning the ministry of Wilfrid, whereas Cuthbert is the subject of the hagiographic writings of an anonymous writer of Lindisfarne and of Bede. Secondly, the two bishops were contemporary with each other. Although Wilfrid's episcopate began well before and continued after that of Cuthbert, the two figures were both products of the same age.

Cuthbert and Wilfrid were both prominent figures within a church which, after a complex evangelisation, and the Synod of Whitby, was still in a state of flux, unsure of where its future lay. As Stancliffe as suggested, Cuthbert and Wilfrid were prominent ecclesiastics in an "unhappy period."[1] It appears that both were bishops of their time, who similarly appear to have been held in comparable admiration by their respective communities, to the extent that they were to become model bishops for their particular communities.[2]

The reader will already be aware of how the Northumbrian Church remained divided after the Synod of Whitby. The evidence suggests that the nature of this division had its roots in how these groups interpreted the outcome of the synod. It appears that Group One saw the synod's rejection of the Ionan reckoning for Easter and the tonsure as not necessarily suggesting that all the traditions of the Ionan community were to be abandoned. Group Two, on the other hand, appears to have seen the synod's decision as their victory, which was seen as giving Roman Christianity a dominant position in Northumbria. Furthermore, there is evidence to demonstrate that this group went as far as to suggest that all of the Irish customs were subordinate

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[1] C.Stancliffe, 'Cuthbert and the Polarity between Pastor and Solitary,' p 21.
[2] W.Goffart, 'Bede and the Ghost of Bishop Wilfrid,' p 263 for a description of Cuthbert as an anti-Wilfrid figure.

to those of Rome and even that their ecclesiastical orders were invalid.[3] For example, Bishop Wilfrid's description of the Irish Christians in Northumbria as "poisonous weeds" suggests that he believed they needed to be rooted out in their entirety, presumably to allow the true faith to grow and flower.[4] Furthermore, it is evident enough that the Roman party, and in this I also include Archbishop Theodore and the wider Church, did not recognise the orders of the Ionan missionaries as being valid. Stephen informs us that Wilfrid travelled to Gaul for his consecration because Rome did not receive those who maintained fellowship with schismatics.[5] Such a position is reinforced by the actions of Theodore and Wilfrid who, when they consecrated Chad as bishop of Lichfield, consecrated him "through all the ecclesiastical degrees."[6]

Such a split, whereby the one side saw the other with such utter contempt, demonstrates that the division between the two groups was not easily reconcilable within a generation. Consequently the position of the episcopate, or more precisely who it was that exercised oversight in this period, is of crucial importance. It appears to have been the case that as the Northumbrian bishoprics passed between the two groups, the Northumbrian Church would be taken and led according to the standpoint of the said bishop, often to the detriment of the other group. Notwithstanding the fact that there was more than one Northumbrian bishopric after 678, the change of a bishop in this period must have brought considerable uncertainty. The best evidence that a change in oversight did affect the diocese in question comes from Bede's *Prose Life of St. Cuthbert*. Bede informs us that after the death of Bishop Cuthbert

> so great a blast of trial beat upon that church that many brethren chose to depart from the place rather than be in the midst of such dangers.[7]

We are aware that for a year after Cuthbert's death Bishop Wilfrid of York exercised oversight across the see of Lindisfarne.[8] If this statement accurately reflects the situation on Cuthbert's death then it can be read as an indication of the effect of a change of Bishop: particularly when the new bishop was appointed from the other ecclesiastical group.

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[3] C.Stancliffe, 'Cuthbert and the Polarity between Pastor and Solitary,' p 21.
[4] Stephen, *VW*, ch 47.
[5] *Ibid.* ch 12.
[6] *Ibid.* ch 15.
[7] Bede, *VCP*, ch 40.
[8] Bede, *HE*, IV ch 29.

It cannot be asserted that because these two bishops were portrayed in different styles by their hagiographers that this is exactly how they exercised their ministry. Therefore, it is not only necessary to discuss what they say but also to get behind the hagiographic writer's spin, in order to use their texts in a way, which will demonstrate where Wilfrid's and Cuthbert's styles of episcopacy really did differ.

Chapter five has already discussed the episcopate of Wilfrid in some detail. The reader will be aware from that chapter of how Wilfrid's episcopate appears to have been influenced by many models of episcopacy and indeed secular models of lordship. However, as I have already argued above, Wilfrid's episcopate appears to have been unique in this period as being strongly influenced by Continental and Roman models of episcopacy, which may be best understood in Foley's assertion of Wilfrid being a *Pius Pater* figure.[9]

Nevertheless, this work has not yet considered the ministry of Bishop Cuthbert. Consequently, it is important to begin by noting and commenting on some aspects of Cuthbert's ministry as we find it presented in the two hagiographic accounts.

Cuthbert was probably born as King Oswald was establishing his rule and initiating the second conversion from Iona.[10] This is an interest point when we consider how both the hagiographic accounts tell us that one of the major events of Cuthbert's early life was being witness to the assumption of Aidan's soul into heaven. Bede takes the link further than the anonymous author, suggesting that it was only after witnessing this vision that Cuthbert himself turned to the monastic life.[11] Without doubt Cuthbert grew up within a society recently evangelised by Aidan and the Ionan missionaries and so Cuthbert, like Wilfrid, was one of the first Northumbrian natives, of a second generation, who were to seek the religious life.

It is interesting to use this account as an example of how the two hagiographic versions differ; the language employed by Bede is noteworthy. Other than Bede seeing the event as a turning point for Cuthbert, Bede tells his reader that he witnessed the vision while "he was keeping the flocks committed to his care": a description which when seen in comparison to the companion shepherds who were asleep, is

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[9] W.T.Foley, 'St. Wilfrid of York as Pius Pater.'

[10] C.Stancliffe, 'Cuthbert and the Polarity between Pastor and Solitary,' p 21.

[11] Anon, *VCA*, I ch 5 & Bede, *VCP*, ch 4.

noteworthy.[12] Without doubt Bede's version of this event is recorded in such a way that it demonstrates Cuthbert as being a dedicated shepherd of his sheep in the literal sense, before later becoming a great shepherd of his sheep in the episcopal sense. The point Bede appears to be making was that Cuthbert was persistent in keeping watch and praying over the flock to which he had been assigned.

The anonymous hagiographer portrays Cuthbert receiving the Petrine tonsure while at Ripon.[13] This is a point that Bede disputes; he informs his reader that Cuthbert received the tonsure at Melrose, which indicated that it was likely to have been after the Irish manner.[14] It is possible that the anonymous writer, writing in or around 699,[15] was writing with a view to how the *Life* might have been read by others, including those of Group Two.[16] Consequently, the author might have been deliberately cautious, attempting to portray Cuthbert as following what had been demanded by the Synod of Whitby before the event. By the time Bede came to compose the *Prose Life*, in or around 721,[17] the contemporary position of the Northumbrian church may have allowed Bede to write with different considerations.

7:2 THE EPISCOPAL OVERSIGHT OF WILFRID AND CUTHBERT

Although comparing and contrasting the similarities and differences between the two accounts of Cuthbert's life is of great interest, I am aware that this chapter is concerned with how Cuthbert exercised his oversight as bishop. Therefore, our attention needs to be turned to how the two authors portray Cuthbert's episcopate. The Anonymous author clearly states that on becoming bishop of Lindisfarne, Cuthbert

> continued with the utmost constancy to be what he had been before; he showed the same humility of heart, the same poverty of dress, and, being full of authority and grace, he maintained the dignity of a bishop without abandoning the ideal of monk or the virtue.[18]

[12] Bede, *VCP*, ch 4.
[13] Anon, *VCA*, II ch 2.
[14] Bede, *VCP*, ch 6.
[15] Ref. B.Colgrave, 'Introduction,' in *Two Lives of St Cuthbert*, p 13.
[16] W.Goffart, 'Bede and the Ghost of Bishop Wilfrid,' p 268 describes the *Anonymous Life* as being "sensitive" to Wilfridian views.
[17] *Ibid.* p. 16.
[18] Anon, *VCA*, IV ch 1.

There is no impression from the author that the elevation to the episcopate changed Cuthbert's attachment to the solitary life. Cuthbert's attachment to the solitary and ascetic life is a major theme that runs throughout the *Anonymous Life*. For example, within the course of the text Cuthbert is described using words borrowed from the *Life of Antony* as well as being portrayed doing the type of acts that were associated with Irish ascetics.[19]

This linking of Cuthbert to the Irish manner of asceticism is important when we consider the fact that there are two references within the text to Cuthbert as a martyr.[20] Colgrave considers the example of the Irish Christians, who did not experience literal martyrdom until the eighth century, attempted to win the martyr's crown by the means of extreme asceticism.[21] In the *Anonymous Life* we see a balancing by the author of two factors: firstly a concern not to antagonise his readers, by efforts such as the assertion that Cuthbert received the Petrine tonsure; secondly, the demonstration that Cuthbert was a martyr after the Irish and Antonian model.[22]

What then of Bede's portrayal? As the previous chapter dealt with Bede's episcopal theology, it is unnecessary at this stage to repeat what has already been said. However, when Bede's *Prose Life* is read in the light of the *Anonymous Life* it becomes clear that Bede's portrayal of Cuthbert is in a different light. Bede's Cuthbert is without doubt more influenced by Roman custom. Notwithstanding their different accounts concerning Cuthbert's tonsure, Bede's Cuthbert is portrayed as being more orthodox in the Roman sense. Nowhere is this more obvious than in Bede's record of Cuthbert's speech from his deathbed. In Bede's account Cuthbert warns against breaking the catholic peace by the use of an incorrect dating for Easter.[23] In Bede's portrayal of Cuthbert there is something of an insight into what was later to be written in his *History*. Although Bede portrays Cuthbert as a bishop who abides fully by the ruling of the Synod of Whitby, he is nonetheless still portrayed as a deeply spiritual figure in the Irish manner. For instance, Bede demonstrates Cuthbert entering many "remote solitudes" and successfully fighting the "phantoms and demons" that dwelt

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[19] *Ibid.* II ch 1 & 3.
[20] *Ibid.* IV ch 15 & 17.
[21] B.Colgrave, 'Notes to the Anonymous Life,' in *Two Lives of St Cuthbert*, p 315-16.
[22] Ref. C.Stancliffe, 'Cuthbert and the Polarity between Pastor and Solitary,' p 40.
[23] Bede, *VCP*, ch 39.

upon the island of Farne.[24]   Bede's accounts of the events surrounding Cuthbert's election to the episcopate add further detail to the Anonymous author's account. Where in the former account Cuthbert is demonstrated as being led away from his solitude, "weeping and wailing,"[25] Bede's account tells us that King Ecgfrith and Bishop Trumwine themselves had to come to Cuthbert and

> adjured him in the name of the Lord, with tears and prayers until at last they
> drew him, also shedding many tears, from his sweet retirement.[26]

As Coates has asserted, and as the previous chapter demonstrated, for Bede Cuthbert was seen as ideal because he had managed to bridge the gap between Roman orthodoxy and Irish spirituality.[27] Consequently, Bede's Cuthbert is a Cuthbert who is orthodox but who remains attached to aspects of Irish spirituality.

The influences upon Bede's writings were also different from those on the anonymous author. Stancliffe has argued that, as the earlier *Life* was influenced by the *Life of St Antony* and Irish spirituality, so Gregorian and Augustinian ideals of spirituality influenced Bede's account. To quote just one example, in chapter sixteen of the *Prose Life* Bede holds in comparison the monastic regime on Lindisfarne with that which had been established in Canterbury.[28]

What can then be demonstrated of Bishop Cuthbert when we attempt to discover the figure that lies behind these hagiographic accounts?   Stancliffe has attempted to uncover what Cuthbert's ministry was like, just as Foley and Pelteret have attempted to discover what Wilfrid's episcopal style was like.[29] As has been noted above, Stancliffe asserts that Cuthbert is portrayed in the *Anonymous Life* as representing a form of spirituality, which was akin to an Antonian, Martinian and Irish model, whereas Bede's portrayal is of a Bishop who was heavily influenced by Augustinian and Gregorian models.   There are echoes of Irish spirituality and asceticism in both accounts, which remain stronger in the *Anonymous Life* than in Bede's. Stancliffe argues that it is likely that Cuthbert understood his spirituality in an

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[24] *Ibid.* ch 17.

[25] Anon, *VCA*, IV ch 1.

[26] Bede, *VCP*, ch 24.

[27] S.Coates, 'The Role of Bishops in the Early Anglo-Saxon Church: A Reassessment,' in *History* Vol. 81 April 1996 p 193.

[28] C.Stancliffe, 'Cuthbert and the Polarity between Pastor and Solitary,' p 40.

[29] For Cuthbert: C.Stancliffe, 'Cuthbert and the Polarity between Pastor and Solitary,' For Wilfrid: D.Pelteret, 'Saint Wilfrid: Tribal Bishop, Civic Bishop or Germanic Lord,' & W.T.Foley, 'St. Wilfrid of York as Pius Pater.'

Irish manner, which as Stancliffe argues, seems perfectly reasonable an assertion to make when we consider the fact that Cuthbert had been brought up in a society that had just been evangelised by the Ionan Church.[30]

So, if Cuthbert is to be seen as a bishop who had been influenced by the Irish model of spirituality, with the consequence that his episcopate took the shape of something akin to that of the Irish model, how, then, is Cuthbert to be seen in comparison to Bishop Wilfrid? The reader will by now be aware of some of the differences in their episcopal oversight. Cuthbert's preference for the ascetic life meant that he resisted wealth, whereas Wilfrid appears to have been happy to have used his wealth for the work of the church, even leaving money from his treasury to buy the favour of kings and bishops.[31] Cuthbert spends a great deal of time in isolation away from the secular world, where Wilfrid is seen taking full part within it, even in political life, at one point becoming supreme counsellor to the King of Wessex.[32]

Although the two bishops appear to have exercised their ministry in different ways, nevertheless, it remains the case that after death Wilfrid and Cuthbert were both held in a similar high regard by their disciples. Goffart offers one suggestion as to why, although dissimilar in their own day, both were seen as being of a similar type by their communities after death.

It is asserted by Goffart that the cult of Cuthbert grew as a reaction against the growing power of the Wilfridian group. Cuthbert had become bishop only after Archbishop Theodore had deposed the Wilfridian, Bishop Tunberht, from Hexham, something that may have resulted in an instant Wilfridian disliked for Cuthbert, notwithstanding their ecclesiastical politics.[33] Furthermore, in Wilfrid's lifetime Cuthbert's body was elevated and the *Anonymous Life* was composed. Goffart asserts that in death Cuthbert was to become "the alternative focus of enthusiasm" to Wilfrid.[34] When the Northumbrian church is seen as being divided into the two groups set out above, it becomes increasingly plausible that Cuthbert was seen in such a manner. Furthermore, Stephen's *Life* was likely to have been written in reaction to the *Anonymous Life*, having the purpose and effect of, in Goffart's words, "scorning St

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[30] Ref. C.Stancliffe, 'Cuthbert and the Polarity between Pastor and Solitary,' p 41.

[31] Stephen, *VW*, ch 63.

[32] *Ibid.* ch 42.

[33] Bede, *HE*, IV ch 28.

[34] W.Goffart, 'Bede and the Ghost of Bishop Wilfrid,' p 263.

Cuthbert, saying: Let me illustrate the nature of the real Northumbrian heroism."[35] It is possible that Stephen wanted to say for Wilfrid what had been said of Cuthbert, and in the hostile nature of the division of the Northumbrian Church it would not surprise me if Stephen's aim had also been to pour scorn on Cuthbert.

The most convincing evidence, which suggests that this may have been the case, is that Stephen quotes at length two passages from the *Anonymous Life*. Firstly Stephen quotes in his Preface material lifted from the Preface of the *Anonymous Life*, which sets out Stephen's aims and makes a humble apology for his work. Secondly Stephen quotes Book Four Chapter One in Chapter Eleven of his *Life*. This section, which sets out the qualities of Cuthbert, appears to have been used by Stephen to say of Wilfrid what had already been said of Cuthbert. In effect, Stephen seems to be reinforcing the fact that Group Two felt as strongly about Wilfrid as Group One had felt about Cuthbert.

An alternative way of viewing the relationship between the two bishops and their followers has been offered by Simon Coates. In my mind Coates' argument goes a long way to explain why the works are so similar. Coates argues that Wilfrid and Cuthbert were both seen as martyrs by their followers, even though neither received the crown of martyrdom in the traditional sense.[36] What we encounter is two different forms of martyrdom: a form that appears to have been common in Ireland, which was based on extreme asceticism; and another established on the Gaulish and Roman model. This second model of bloodless martyrdom is based on the persecution of the church and its members by the civil authorities.[37] Stephen does not, however, refer to Wilfrid as a martyr; rather he styles him 'confessor,' as he did not lose his earthly life as a direct consequence of his uncompromising stand against the civil authorities. However, within Stephen's *Life* there are elements of martyrdom within his account, for instance the emphasis on Wilfrid's conflicts and appeals and his triumphing in the face of adversity, for example in the conversion of Sussex. The reader is left with the impression that Stephen saw Wilfrid as being more often than not persecuted by the civil authorities and even by the church itself. Coates has asserted that Stephen's

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[35] *Ibid.* p 284.
[36] S.Coates, 'The Role of Bishops in the Early Anglo-Saxon Church: A Reassessment,' pp 190-1.
[37] *Ibid.* p 191.

actual description of Wilfrid as a confessor may indeed mean, a saint who was persecuted by the authorities without actually suffering death in the apologetic sense.[38]

As it appears that the *Anonymous Life of Cuthbert* was written with a view of it being read by members of the Wilfridian group, so it appears that Stephen's *Life of Bishop Wilfrid* was written with an eye on Lindisfarne, which, by the time of Wilfrid's death, must have begun to reassert itself as a place of pilgrimage as well as an episcopal see. It does appear that both Wilfrid and Cuthbert were acknowledged by their respective communities to have been martyr bishops, and as such to have reached a state of perfection. Consequently, they both appear to have been seen as examples of ideal bishops. Cuthbert was seen as such because he had been able to demonstrate that it was possible to balance the episcopal office with the ascetic and solitary life, in the Irish model. Wilfrid, on the other hand, had proven himself worthy by maintaining throughout adversity what he believed to be right. Indeed, Wilfrid was a bishop who saw no room for compromising his theology for any purpose: for example, he told King Ecgfrith that he would prefer to lose his head rather than deny the canonical statutes of the Apostolic See.[39]

The high regard that is paid to the two bishops is symptomatic of the state of the Northumbrian Church after the Synod of Whitby. Without doubt, the divisions were to produce an environment in which the two cults were to develop. It appears that the two cults were to react against each other, in the sense that, as one side claimed something the other group would respond with a counter claim. As Cuthbert's holiness was affirmed after his elevation, and a *Life* was written, so after Wilfrid's death Stephen's *Life* responded to that of the Anonymous author. What then of Bede's *Prose Life*? It may be the case that Bede really did see Cuthbert as the greatest example to all; however, as we saw above, by the time he came to compose his *History* it was increasing likely that Bede had chosen to bridge the divide, which had torn the Northumbrian Church into two.

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[38] *Ibid.* p 191. Stephen describes Wilfrid as a Confessor in *VW*, ch 6.
[39] Stephen, *VW*, ch 36

CHAPTER 8

THE GREGORIAN PLAN BY 735

8:1 NORTHUMBRIAN BISHOPRICS - AN OVERVIEW

The year 735 is of particular importance to the Northumbrian church as it marked the arrival of the pallium for the bishop of York as well as being the year in which the Venerable Bede died. Before addressing the consequences of the arrival of the pallium it is necessary that this chapter should begin by dealing with two noticeable loose ends: that is, the position of the Northumbrian bishoprics by 735 and a brief discussion on the position of the Whitby community within the Northumbrian church.

It is prudent to begin this chapter by taking an overview of the Northumbrian bishoprics in order to demonstrate to the reader just how far the Northumbrian Church had developed from its infancy by the year 735. Under Paulinus and Aidan the Northumbrian kingdom comprised of a single diocese and remained so until King Ecgfrith and Archbishop Theodore divided the see in 678. As a single diocese the Northumbrian kingdom had a succession of seven bishops: Paulinus metropolitan bishop of York, Aidan bishop of Lindisfarne, Finan of Lindisfarne, Colman also of Lindisfarne, Tuda who may have been based at either Lindisfarne or York, Chad bishop of York and Wilfrid, who was likely to have seen himself as the metropolitan bishop of York. It is clear from the sources that as the Northumbria kingdom grew, so did the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of its bishop.[1]

In 678 Theodore, working with Ecgfrith, divided the kingdom-bishopric into three separate dioceses. Cubitt has demonstrated that these divisions were made so that the main component and formerly independent kingdoms of Northumbria were given their own bishoprics.[2] Eata was consecrated to be bishop of Hexham for Bernicia, Bosa was consecrated as bishop of York for Deira and Eadhæd as bishop to Lindsey.[3]

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[1] For example, Stephen, *VW*, ch 21.
[2] C.Cubitt, 'Wilfrid's Usurping Bishops: Episcopal Elections in Anglo-Saxon England, c. 600 - c. 800,' p 19.
[3] Bede, *HE*, IV ch 12.

Bishop Eadhæd of Lindsey appears to have remained in Lindsey until it was conquered by Mercia at which he was translated to Ripon and placed over the church there. However, it appears that it may have been the case that this was a position created for him only after Lindsey was annexed to Mercia. No other bishop was consecrated to the see of Ripon until the nineteenth-century.[4]

Bede informs us that Theodore further divided the expanding Northumbria into two further dioceses in 681.[5] It appears that Bishop Eata preferred to be based at Lindisfarne and so Theodore consecrated a new bishop, Tunberht, to Hexham. Trumwine was also consecrated in 681 to be bishop of those Picts who were now under Northumbrian sway. It appears that Trumwine's see was based at Abercorn, a see that was not to survive the death of Ecgfrith at Nectansmere.[6] Consequently by 681/2 there were a total of five bishoprics based within the kingdom of Northumbria, which Wilfrid had overseen alone only four years earlier.

Bishop Wilfrid returned to Northumbria under King Aldfrith in 686/7. It has been suggested by Cubitt that Wilfrid may have been invited back to the see of Hexham, not the see of York as Stephen suggests.[7] The see at Hexham had remained vacant after Eata's death; furthermore, there is no evidence to suggest that the episcopate of Bosa was interrupted at this point.[8] It was also at this time that Cuthbert resigned his see and that Wilfrid also exercised oversight over the diocese of Lindisfarne. If Wilfrid was bishop of Hexham at this point, which appears to have been the case, then on taking charge of the diocese of Lindisfarne Wilfrid would have exercised episcopal oversight across all Bernicia. Nevertheless, Wilfrid's working relationship with King Aldfrith did not last and on his exile in 691/2 John of Beverley became bishop of Hexham.

The Synod of the Nidd in 706 restored the monasteries of Hexham and Ripon to Wilfrid and the bishop ended his days at Hexham. The death of Bishop Bosa meant

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[4] C.Cubitt, 'Wilfrid's Usurping Bishops: Episcopal Elections in Anglo-Saxon England, c. 600 - c. 800,' p 21 footnote 4.

[5] *Ibid.* IV ch 12.

[6] *Ibid. HE,* IV ch 26.

[7] Stephen, *VW,* ch 44.

[8] C.Cubitt, 'Wilfrid's Usurping Bishops: Episcopal Elections in Anglo-Saxon England, c. 600 - c. 800,' p 20.

that John of Beverley could be translated to York from Hexham to facilitate Wilfrid's return as bishop of Hexham.

On Wilfrid's death the Kingdom of Northumbria consisted of three dioceses: York, Lindisfarne and Hexham. Neither Lindsey, Ripon nor Abercorn had stood the test of time. This remained the arrangement of the Northumbrian church throughout this period and was the way things stood when Bede wrote to Bishop Egbert in 734. As it was demonstrated above, Bede believed in the need for at least one further bishopric to provide adequate pastoral oversight for the Northumbrian people.

8:2 THE POSITION OF WHITBY

Whitby's position was to become increasingly influential with many Whitby based clerics becoming candidates for the episcopate, including that of York itself. Therefore, it is important to note the position which the Whitby community maintained as it has a baring on the general state of the Northumbrian church by 735.

It has been asserted throughout this thesis that after the Synod of Whitby the Northumbrian church was divided into two large groups; this does appear to have been to be the case. However, it appears that the Whitby community, for the most part, took a different stance during this period of division. This is an interesting point as Whitby was beginning to play a greater role in the Northumbrian church, being the monastery which provided the see of York with many of its future bishops.

Evidence to support such an assertion comes from the *Earliest Life of Gregory the Great*, which was written at Whitby between the years 704 - 714.[9] The *Whitby Life* is the earliest biography of Gregory the Great and its existence suggests that the Whitby community saw the role of Gregorian mission, which came to Northumbria via Paulinus, as being of paramount importance. In other words, within the same period that the Wilfridians had Stephen writing Wilfrid's biography and just before Bede was to compose his *Prose Life*, the Whitby community was preparing a piece of hagiography whose subject was the initiator of the Roman mission to the Anglo-Saxons. The existence of this work suggests that the viewpoint taken at Whitby might have been different to that of either Group One or Group Two. Without doubt Whitby

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[9] Ref. B.Colgrave, 'Introduction' in, *WL*, p 49.

was unique within the Northumbrian church in producing a work that was concerned with the Gregorian mission.

The fact that the community at Whitby wrote a *Life* of Gregory suggests the community had not forgotten that it had been Paulinus who had initially brought the faith to Northumbria in this period. This is not surprising when we recall that Whitby's likely founder and previous Abbess, Hild, had been baptised by Paulinus on Easter Day 627/628.

It has been has argued, by Goffart, that the *Life* of Gregory demonstrates that the Whitby community were in fact anti-Wilfridian. Goffart asserts that by concentrating on the first generation of Roman missionaries, Whitby was attempting to undermine Wilfrid who was relegated to a second generation of missionaries.[10] Nonetheless, although it remains a possibility that Whitby was anti-Wilfridian, this does not automatically suggest that it was allied to Group One. It may have been the case that by recognising the role of the Gregorian missionaries, Whitby was showing itself to be fully in line with the decisions taken there in 664 and with the Romanists, while at the same time distancing themselves from the Wilfridians.

Furthermore, we are aware from Stephen, who confirms that Hild had sent representatives to the Apostolic See to speak against Bishop Wilfrid in 678, that there was some anti-Wilfrid sentiment at Whitby.[11] Again, although Whitby appears to have been in part anti-Wilfridian, it is not necessarily the case that Whitby was allied with Group One. Rather, it appears as if Whitby did not actively belong to either of the two large groups. Such a position, I suggest, was to stand the community in a very strong position for the future. In my mind, a Whitby community that was based on the continental model of the double monastery, which acknowledged the importance of the Roman missionaries; accepted the Roman Easter, did not dispute the orders of the Ionan clergy and had become the resting place for members of the Northumbrian royal family, could only, and did, gain from maintaining a distance from the ecclesiastical politics of the day. As Chapter Four discussed, this may indeed have been one of the reasons why the monastery had been chosen as a suitable site for the synod. Furthermore, it appears that immediately after the synod, Whitby would not have been

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[10] W.Goffart, 'Bede and the Ghost of Bishop Wilfrid,' p 267.
[11] Stephen, *VW*, ch 54.

in a position to have actively supported either group. As long as the under-king Alhfrith was alive the Whitby community must have feared the same treatment as was given to the Melrose based community at Ripon and would have been likely to keep some distance from Group One. Moreover, the Wilfridian party would not have been as attractive an option as it has been demonstrated; Wilfrid's preference for the Benedictine Rule was far from being compatible with the rule of a double-monastery.[12]

Whitby's position was to grow in significance. Five of its sons were to become bishops within this period: Oftfor as bishop of Hwicce; Bosa had already become bishop of York; John of Beverley was to become bishop of Hexham and later York; Wilfrid II became bishop of York and Ætla became bishop of Dorchester.[13] It appears that Whitby was only able to become so active in producing bishops, because its community managed to tread a tight rope between the two dominant groups in the Northumbrian church. Furthermore, candidates from a monastery which did tread such a line, may have been seen as ideal candidates for the episcopate, as their appointments may have been viewed as being less controversial.

By remaining between the two groups it appears that Whitby was able to spread its influence, through those of its number who became bishops. As the list above demonstrates, Whitby was to produce bishops whose sees and influences were often external to Northumbria. Meantime, within Northumbria itself, it has been asserted that Whitby was almost to become "the mother church of the Deiran diocese."[14]

8:3 SOURCES AFTER BEDE

Because Egbert was granted the pallium after the period covered by Bede's *History*, we are reliant upon other sources to inform us about the circumstances of York's promotion to the metropolitan rank. There are four sources that touch on this period: the continuations of Bede's *History*, which are translated in the McClure and Collins edition of the *History*; the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle; *The History of the Kings of*

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[12] D.Pelteret, 'Saint Wilfrid: Tribal Bishop, Civic Bishop or Germanic Lord,' p 177.
[13] B.Colgrave, 'Introduction' in *The Earliest Life of Gregory the Great*, p 37.
[14] S.Coates, 'The Bishop as Benefactor,' p 532.

England attributed to Simeon of Durham,[15] and Alcuin's poem *The Bishops, Kings and Saints of York.*

The most comprehensive of these sources is Alcuin's poem on the *Bishops Kings and Saints of York.* Alcuin's work is significant because the historian is reliant on his work for near contemporary information of the period between Bede's death and when the Anglo-Saxon chronicle becomes a contemporary source.[16] Consequently, it is necessary to mention briefly here the content of this poem and to note what is relevant about the author.

Garrison asserts the probability that Alcuin was raised by the community at York Minster and was educated at its famous school.[17] The school itself was likely to have been founded, or at least re-established, by Archbishop Egbert.[18] Alcuin was likely to have been born in the second quarter of the eighth century and would almost certainly have met Archbishop Egbert, as well as to have been taught by Ælberht, who was to succeed Egbert as Archbishop.[19] Thacker has demonstrated that the community at York Minster in Alcuin's day was not necessarily non-monastic.[20] However, Alcuin unlike Bede, was not a monk himself.

The poem on *The Bishops, Kings and Saints of York,* is believed to have been written around the year 792-793.[21] Other than informing its reader about the bishops, kings and saints of York, the poem also provides information about Alcuin's personal opinions on the Northumbrian state and church, this may reflect what was held in common at York. Coates asserts that Alcuin saw episcopal sanctity as resting in a bishop's attachment to a place, a view that contrasts heavily with the views of spirituality, which are expressed in the hagiographic writings of the Anonymous author, Stephen and Bede.[22] Therefore, where Bede *et al* assert that it was a bishop's attachment to the ascetic ideals which made him great, Alcuin, in contrast, suggests that it was his see that did this. In other words, having Northumbria's principal see

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[15] On *The History of the Kings of England,* see M.Lapidge, 'Byrhtferth of Ramsey and the Early Sections of the Historica Regum Attributed to Symeon of Durham.'

[16] M.Garrison, 'Alcuin,' in *The Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Anglo-Saxon England,* p 24.

[17] *Ibid.* p 24.

[18] P.Godman, 'Introduction,' in his edition of, Alcuin, *The Bishops Kings and Saints of York,* p lxii.

[19] *Ibid.* p xxxvi.

[20] A.Thacker, 'Monks, Preaching and Pastoral Care in Early Anglo-Saxon England,' p 139.

[21] S.Coates, 'The Bishop as Benefactor and Civil Patron: Alcuin, York, and Episcopal Authority in Anglo-Saxon England,' p 530.

based at York made the city of York great and, in turn, by its qualities of greatness, the city defined its bishop's greatness.[23]

Alcuin did not write a preface or a detailed introduction that sets out what his aims in writing the poem had been. However, it is clear enough that Alcuin's aim in writing was to assert the position of York as the principal Northern see and to declare the greatness of its bishops and kings. This can be demonstrated by the fact that Alcuin gives little mention of the Irish mission to Northumbria, which had been Bernicia based, and his accounts of Bishop Wilfrid are favourable, in Godman's words Alcuin demonstrates "a noteworthy bias."[24] The fact that Alcuin concerns himself so heavily with the Deira-based bishops may demonstrate not only York's pride in its own position, but may also reflect how the kingdom of Deira still saw itself as separate from Bernicia. Indeed, if Alcuin's poem stood alone as a source we would hardly be aware of the Irish contribution to the conversion of Northumbria, although Aidan does get a brief mention. Alcuin's stance even results in his failing to mention Chad, who had been bishop of York.[25] Furthermore, it is noteworthy that Aidan is mentioned only in relation to Cuthbert, who, Coates suggests, is seen by Alcuin, as Bede may have seen him, as a unifying figure for the Northumbrian church.[26] Coates suggests that this is symptomatic of Alcuin's theology, as he clearly sees bishops as being at the summit of responsibility; they were great benefactors, civic patrons who brought order and stability to a kingdom, and were the sources of hope and consolation.[27]

Thus, we find in Alcuin's poem valuable references to those prominent figures of York who fall outside Bede's lifetime. However, the work is to be noted for its highly partisan nature and the poem does not supply all the information which we would need to build up a comprehensive picture of the Northumbrian church after Bede. Even with addition of information from the other sources mentioned above, there remains a lack of substantial evidence for the period following Bede's *History*.

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[22] *Ibid.* p 530.
[23] *Ibid.* p 531.
[24] P.Godman, 'Introduction,' in his edition of, Alcuin, *The Bishops Kings and Saints of York*, p li.
[25] *Ibid.* p li. Aidan is mentioned in Line 693 of the poem.
[26] S.Coates, 'The Bishop as Benefactor and Civil Patron: Alcuin, York, and Episcopal Authority in Anglo-Saxon England,' p 536.
[27] *Ibid.* p 542 & p 558.

Consequently, what follows is not as detailed as the author and reader alike may wish it to be.

8:4 FROM WILFRID TO EGBERT: THE NORTHUMBRIAN CHURCH BY 735

It has been suggested that the episcopate of Wilfrid was so influential that his life must be seen as nothing less than epoch-making.[28] The previous chapter demonstrated how, after Wilfrid's life, the Wilfridian communities, especially Ripon, maintained his memory and practice just as Cuthbert had been remembered on Lindisfarne. It is no exaggeration to suggest that much had been achieved in Wilfrid's lifetime and one of his greatest personal achievements, other than persuading the Synod of Whitby to accept the Roman Easter, had been to reassert the position of the see of York as the primary see of the Northumbrian church.

Wilfrid had ended his days as bishop of Hexham after John of Beverley, the previous incumbent at Hexham and sometime monk of Whitby, had been translated to York in 705. Bishop John remained at York until 714, when he ordained his priest Wilfrid to take his place at York.[29] Alcuin unsurprisingly speaks highly of Bishop John, describing him as, "a high pontiff, cast in the mould of the ancient fathers."[30] Lamb's history of the bishopric suggests that John had attempted to administer his diocese more effectively than had been the case in the past.[31] The appointment of Wilfrid II as his successor may have been John's attempt to make provision for the continuation of the reforms, which he had initiated, Lamb further suggests that Wilfrid II did introduce the reforms proposed during John's episcopate, although, as stated above, the evidence to back up such a claim remains uncertain.[32]

Alcuin speaks equally well about the episcopate of Wilfrid II. Wilfrid is described, among other things, as "a worthy heir,"[33] who added many ornaments to the

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[28] J.W.Lamb, *The Archbishopric of York*, p 49.
[29] Bede, *HE*, V ch 6.
[30] Alcuin, *The Bishops Kings and Saints of York*, Line 1087.
[31] J.W.Lamb, *The Archbishopric of York*, p 49.
[32] *Ibid.* p 49.
[33] Alcuin, *The Bishops Kings and Saints of York*, Line 1217.

church of York, and who never neglected his duty to the laity.[34] There remains some uncertainty concerning the end of the second Wilfrid's episcopate and the beginning of Egbert's. It appears that Wilfrid resigned his see in 732; Alcuin informs us that he gave

> himself up entirely to the contemplative life, he left the varied and empty cares of the world. Although his body remained on earth, his spirit was entirely in Heaven.[35]

It appears that Wilfrid, like Cuthbert, had been able to balance successfully the pastoral and spiritual natures of the episcopal office.

Wilfrid II was succeeded by Egbert, who may not actually have been consecrated bishop until 733 or even 734. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle states the year of Egbert's consecration to be 734.[36] However, it has been suggested that this may be inaccurate as Alcuin noted that Egbert's episcopate lasted thirty-four years.[37] When we consider the date of Egbert's death, which *The History of the Kings* informs us was on 19 November 766,[38] this would suggest that Egbert was consecrated in 732, the year in which Wilfrid II left York.[39] Such uncertainty means that we are only able to state that Egbert was consecrated bishop at some point between Wilfrid's stepping aside in 732 and when he received Bede's epistle in November 734. The content of Bede's letter, which strongly emphasises the role of the bishop in the church, could possibly suggest that Egbert had only recently been consecrated to the episcopate.

Bishop Egbert was himself of royal birth, being the brother of the future Northumbrian king and cousin to King Ceolwulf of Northumbria. Although his episcopate appears to have had uncertain origins, it was Egbert who was to receive the pallium, making him the first Archbishop and Metropolitan of the Northern province, *ipso facto*. Bede's letter is a very valuable resource as it not only informs us of his thinking on the episcopate, but also sets out in some detail the problems he saw facing the Northumbrian church on Egbert's election. Bede also provides his own opinions as to how the problems might be best addressed. Nevertheless, Bede's letter and Egbert's later reception of the pallium may be best understood when the relationship

[34] *Ibid.* Lines 1223-37.
[35] *Ibid.* Lines 1241-44.
[36] 'The Laud Chronicle (E),' in *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, trans. & ed. G.N.Garmonsway p 45.
[37] Alcuin, *The Bishops Kings and Saints of York*, Line 1285.
[38] Simeon of Durham, *History of the Kings of England*, p 35.

between the Northumbrian church and the metropolitan see of Canterbury is considered.

It has been demonstrated that the disturbed nature of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms and the political weakness of Kent resulted in the links between the Northumbrian church and the see of Canterbury becoming increasingly diminished. This was especially the case after the episcopate of Theodore.[40] Consequently, a situation appears to have occurred whereby the Northumbrian church received little oversight from the metropolitan see of Canterbury, which may have being finding it difficult to offer any effective oversight because of the political climate. Furthermore, the see of Canterbury after the death of Archbishop Tatwine in the summer of 734 remained vacant for two years.[41] It becomes clear that such a situation would have been likely to have contributed to York's case for receiving Papal recognition as a metropolitan see, by awarding its incumbent Egbert the pallium.

Egbert was a suffragan bishop of Canterbury, like the other English bishops, however, he was the bishop of a see that had claimed metropolitan status. Bede urging him to reprimand other bishops who preferred the vanities of the secular world,[42] when seen in light of Gregory's letter suggests that Bede saw the bishop of York as being in a position above the other suffragan bishops while the see of Canterbury remained vacant. Furthermore, as was discussed in Chapter Six, Bede actively encouraged Egbert to perform duties, which would more easily bring the pallium to his shoulders. Such actions included the creation and appointment of further northern bishoprics, actions that appear to have pertained to the metropolitan rank. Bede also acknowledges in his letter the need for royal support in the gaining of the pallium from Rome; such secular support appears to have become a custom by this period.[43]

It has been asserted that Bede did not acknowledge Egbert as a metropolitan bishop already, which the evidence from his letter appears to suggest was the case. Nevertheless, the point which I am attempting to make is that Bede saw the recognition of the metropolitan status as coming with the pallium, which he argues would be more readily attained if Egbert were to be seen already acting in a similar

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[39] J.W.Lamb, *The Archbishopric of York*, p 50.

[40] *Ibid.* p 54.

[41] F.M.Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, p 145.

[42] Bede, 'Epistle to Egbert,' p 345.

manner to a metropolitan in the absence of an Archbishop at Canterbury. The facts that Gregory the Great had already given metropolitan status to the see (and it appears to have been the case that it was the see that was given metropolitan status and not the individual) suggests that Bede saw the absence of a bishop at Canterbury as the perfect opportunity for York to assert its claim to metropolitical status and Egbert's personal right to a pallium.

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle informs us that Egbert received the pallium in 735, a date also confirmed in the continuation of Bede's *History* and in *The History of the Kings*. It appears that when Egbert did receive the pallium he did so as the only metropolitan in Anglo-Saxon England. Whether Egbert travelled to Rome to receive the pallium or not remains unclear. Lapidge suggests that Egbert went to Rome in person, whereas Lamb, pointing to evidence from Alcuin, maintains that the pallium came to Egbert in England.[44]. The Chronicle informs us that Bishop Nothelm of Canterbury did not receive the pallium until 736. Until that point the Anglo-Saxon church had not been in possession of two formally recognised metropolitan bishops, both of whom possessed the pallium, as Gregory the Great had envisaged. Consequently, the sending of the pallium to Egbert in 735 does represent the successful implementation of the Gregorian plan in this respect. However, it is worth noting that not all of Gregory's recommendations had been implemented.

Most notably, Egbert did not increase the number of suffragan bishops to twelve as had been Gregory's suggestion. The political situation of the day under King Ceolwulf and King Eadberht remained disturbed, thus restricting Egbert's ability to sub-divide the diocese in his province.[45] Stenton has argued that in the hundred years that followed King Aldfrith, no Northumbrian king was ever entirely secure in his reign.[46] However, King Eadberht's expeditions into the north were successful and Alcuin does see the partnership of the two brothers, Egbert and Eadberht as

> fortunate times for the people of Northumbria, ruled over in harmony by king and bishop.[47]

[43] J.W.Lamb, *The Archbishopric of York*, p 56.

[44] M.Lapidge, 'Ecgberht, Bp,' in *The Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Anglo-Saxon England*, p 157 & J.W.Lamb, *The Archbishopric of York*, p 56.

[45] *Ibid.* p 59.

[46] F.M.Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, p 90.

[47] Alcuin, *The Bishops Kings and Saints of York*, Lines 1277-78.

Although the king's rule may never have been totally secure <u>internally</u>, Stenton argues that the kingdom under Eadberht was politically stronger <u>externally</u> and that its borders were wider under Eadberht than at any time since Nechtanesmere.[48]

It may have been the case that Egbert was unable to implement the Gregorian plan further because of the internal political situation; however, such an assertion rests on the premise that Archbishop Egbert had wished to sub-divide the diocese and that political circumstances alone foiled his plans. Nonetheless, as far as we can know, this premise is by no means a certainty. Although Gregory's suggestion of twelve suffragan bishops may have been over optimistic, the expansionist policy of Eadberht would have been the ideal situation for the establishment of further bishoprics, like those previously at Abercorn and Lindsey. The evidence appears to suggest that Egbert was satisfied with the dioceses of his province as they were.

Without doubt, the arrival of the pallium in 735 changed the Northumbrian, and indeed English, church forever. The Northumbrian church in this period was now effectively independent from the rest of the English church and Gregory's vision of a church with two metropolitans in possession of the pallium was complete. It had been over a hundred years since the flight of Paulinus to Kent before Rome believed York worthy of being granted the honour of the pallium to its incumbent bishop. However, by 735 York was undoubtedly seen as the principal northern see and the Northern church was in a position where it could consider the creation of further sees within Northumbrian boundaries, even though it chose not to act upon such considerations. To this extent, in the year 735 Gregory III, by awarding the pallium to Egbert, presided over the implementation of the Gregorian plan, a plan which would have been implemented a century earlier if it had not been for the death of Edwin. Although there were not the twelve bishoprics envisaged by Gregory the Great, in 735 Gregory's plan was implemented in the most appropriate form for that time.

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[48] F.M.Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England,* p 92.

CONCLUSIONS

This study has sought to establish how the leaders of the missions to Northumbria understood and exercised their office as bishops. By attempting to view the conversion of Northumbria, and the establishment of its church, from the perspective of those who were dominant in the conversion period, this thesis has attempted to view the Northumbrian conversion from a different viewpoint. A point of view that is both theological and historical.

This thesis has attempted to set before the reader the different ways in which these bishops appear to have perceived the role of the episcopate. Furthermore, it has been demonstrated that the Northumbrian kingdom was in something of a unique position being subject to two well-documented and distinct missions. The complex conversion of the kingdom (and the subsequent striving of the groups for the dominant ecclesiastical position) resulted in Northumbria becoming nothing less than an ecclesiastical battleground. The Synod of Whitby attempted to bring together the different groups within the church, however, in this aim it failed.

Without doubt, the two groups of missionaries brought to Northumbria different understandings of the episcopal office. Chapters Two and Three duly set the scene for the Gregorian and Ionan missions and put forward what the Gregorian and the Irish models of episcopacy were. Furthermore, Bishop Wilfrid's time in Rome and Lyon appears to have been responsible for introducing him to a third concept of the episcopal office which is best understood, in the light of Foley's work, as the bishop being a *Pius Pater* figure. On his return to Northumbria and especially after his elevation to the episcopal dignity, subsequent to the Synod of Whitby, Wilfrid was to introduce elements of the *Pius Pater* concept into Anglo-Saxon England, through his role both as Bishop of York and as Abbot of a sizeable monastic *familia*. Moreover, Chapter Five's reassessment of the evidence asserted that Wilfrid considered his appointment as bishop of York as giving him metropolitical oversight across Northern Britain. The evidence from Stephen's account, some of which came from Rome and is also quoted by Bede, appears to be incontrovertible in suggesting that Wilfrid saw himself, and was seen by others, as a metropolitan bishop at least during the first years and heyday of his episcopate as bishop of York.

Although there were divisions elsewhere in the Church it is imperative to assert that the decision of the Synod of Whitby to accept Wilfrid's argument and the Roman dating for Easter and the Roman tonsure, was a decision to accept the customs of the universal church; not for the Northumbrian church to turn from the customs of one section of the Church to another. Bede's record of Wilfrid's speech makes it clear that the traditions maintained by the Ionan missionaries were contrary to that of the universal church. This is stated as such in what Bede records as Wilfrid's words at the synod

> The only exceptions are these men and their accomplices in obstinacy, I mean
> the Picts and the Britons, who in these, the two remotest islands of the Ocean,
> and only in some parts of them, foolishly attempt to fight against the whole
> world.[1]

Although this might be something of a over simplification of the actual situation, the point which I am attempting to make is that, to see Wilfrid as the figure responsible for subjecting England to the perverted rule of Rome, or to see him as a nineteenth-century Tractarian convert to Roman Catholicism, is not only inaccurate, but also highly anachronistic.[2] Furthermore, such assumptions have resulted in Wilfrid receiving what I consider to be an undeserved reputation. It is the case that during his life Wilfrid was responsible for strengthening Northumbrian links with the Patriarchal see of Rome. Nevertheless, this does not make Wilfrid a seventh-century Ultramontane.

Moreover, this thesis has attempted to demonstrate that there were numerous influences upon Wilfrid's episcopacy. David Rollason has asserted that to describe Wilfrid as a Roman is to be guilty of over simplifying the situation; because Wilfrid appears to have been influenced far more by the Gaulish church, which he experienced at Lyon, than by the Roman church. Rollason also acknowledges that in Wilfrid's ministry there is evidence of his having been influenced by the Irish church in relation to his monastic *familia,* as this thesis also asserts in Chapter Five.[3] Clearly there have

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[1] Bede, *HE*, III ch 25.
[2] The former view was taken by Thomas Carte, *A General History of England,* (1747.) quoted in Foley, 'St Wilfrid of York as Pius Pater,' p 17. Foley asserts that this second view is the view of Wilfrid made by, Frederick William Faber, 'Life of St Wilfrid,' in *Lives of the English Saints Written by Various Hands at the Suggestion of John Henry Newman,* (1900.) quoted in Foley, 'St Wilfrid of York as Pius Pater,' p 25.
[3] D.Rollason, 'To Whitby for Easter: Wilfrid's Triumph, p 27.

been problems in the past of misunderstanding the episcopate of Wilfrid; however, the work of Foley and Rollason has attempted to re-evaluate this reputation, a re-evaluation that this thesis entirely accepts and has endeavoured to reassert. [4]

The figure of Wilfrid has been readily compared in this study, and elsewhere, to that of Bishop Cuthbert. Both have been seen as representing the legacies of the two missions, in what was a second generation of converts. Both were bishops in the post-Whitby era; both were natives of Northumbria and the two had spent time in Ionan monasteries. Nevertheless, they seem to have become figureheads for the two major groups that made up the Northumbrian church after 664; both became the subjects of two movements, which during this period appear to have reacted against each other.

This struggle in the Northumbrian church suggests that the two groups of missionaries had managed to maintain considerable influence within the kingdom. Both had been patronised by one of the Northumbrian royal dynasties and each continued to have powerful advocates, political and ecclesiastical. For example, the Ionan counterpart to King Edwin was King Oswald; again we can compare the under-King Alhfrith and King Oswiu, or ecclesiastically Bishop Wilfrid to Bishop Cuthbert. Clearly if it had been the case that one missionary group had consistently had greater dominance than the other, then its monopoly of the Northumbrian church would not have produced the conditions whereby the Northumbrian church was faced with such a difficult division.

The problems of division appear to demonstrate that both groups were victims of their own success. It seems that the Ionan mission was more successful in converting the Northumbrian people to a lasting Christian faith; however, its organisation of the church was to be challenged by Wilfrid who was successful in restoring Paulinus' see at York as the principal Northumbrian bishopric. Furthermore, the Synod of Whitby recognised the Roman dating for Easter and the tonsure, which effectively cut off Iona's position of responsibility over the Northumbrian church. Moreover, as has been demonstrated above, in 735 the Gregorian plan for the northern church was implemented, and Egbert received recognition from Rome as its chief bishop by the granting of the pallium.

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[4] *Ibid.* & W.T.Foley, 'St Wilfrid of York as Pius Pater.'

It has also been asserted that Bede's writings can be seen as attempting to bridge the divide between the two groups. However, this is not to suggest that Bede was without his own opinions. On the contrary, his epistle to Egbert demonstrates that Bede had his own views on the role of the episcopate. Clearly Bede was heavily influenced by Augustine's and Gregory's concepts of episcopacy; furthermore, it is just such an ideal type that he expresses in his correspondence to Bishop Egbert.

It has become apparent throughout this thesis that, although three main models of episcopacy can be identified,[5] the most prominent bishops all shared one thing in common. They were all monk-bishops: Gregory the Great, Augustine, Aidan, Cuthbert and Wilfrid were all monastic bishops. Coates has asserted that Bede greatly admired and believed in the monk-bishop. For Bede the monastic bishop was able to balance a life of contemplation with his duty to preach the gospel and oversee his flock, themes that duly echo Gregory's *Pastoral Rule.*[6]

The conversion of Northumbria and indeed the evangelisation of Anglo-Saxon England in general, was peculiarly monastic. It is not surprising that Bede, a monk himself emphasises the monastic element; however, even without Bede's likely bias the fact remains that the conversion of Northumbria was monastically based. The way which groups of monks moved into a region and used a monastery as a base from which they could evangelise an entire region, appears to have been the methodology held in common by both missions. Notwithstanding the differences in their understanding of the episcopal office and their religious practices, be it Augustine's monastery in Canterbury, Aidan's on Lindisfarne or Wilfrid's abbey at Ripon, the procedure of evangelisation appears to have been the same. The monk-bishop, actively supported by the physical and spiritual encouragement of his monastic brethren, appears to have put the monk-bishop in the foremost position to lead a successful mission to those whom he had been called to convert.

Was it because Paulinus' mission had not included the establishment of monastic houses that his mission was unable to last after King Edwin's death? This is, of course, in comparison to Bishop Aidan who established numerous monastic houses that were to survive the death of King Oswald. Moreover, in the case of monasteries

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[5] That is, Gregorian, Irish and what Foley identifies as the Pius Pater model.

such as Whitby, the monasteries themselves became establishments from which bishops were to come. Consequently, it comes of little surprise when we read that Bede recommended to Egbert that new sees should be established within monasteries.
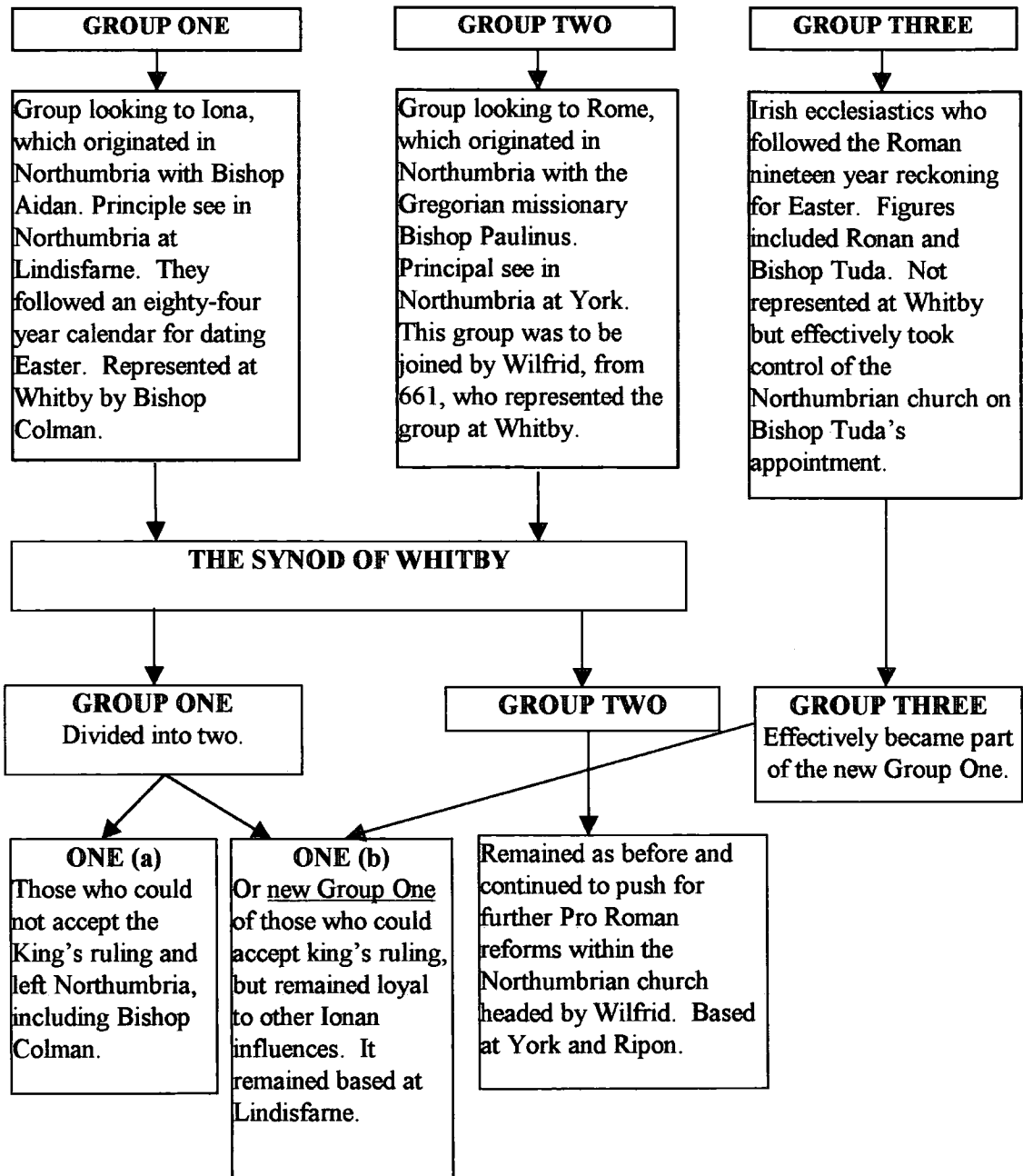
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[6] S.Coates, 'The Bishop as Pastor and Solitary: Bede and the Spiritual Authority of the Monk-bishop,' pp 618-9.

APPENDIX

Fig. 1. Table comparing the dates given by the Venerable Bede and revised by D.P. Kirby in, 'Bede and Northumbrian Chronology.'

BEDE'S DATING		KIRBY'S REVISED DATING
		▼
		Eadbald, king of Kent from 618.
		▼
		King Edwin asks for Æthelburga's hand in marriage.
		▼
		King Edwin and Æthelburga marry, late 618 or early 619.
▼		▼
Bede implies that Paulinus went north in July 625. (Kirby asserts that this date should be amended to 626.)		Bishop Paulinus moves north with Æthelburga in 619. ⏐ ▼
		Paulinus attempts to convert Edwin, but was unsuccessful, evidence from the letter of Pope Boniface. c. 620.
		▼
		Paulinus consecrated to the episcopate, 626.
▼		▼
Assassination attempt on Edwin, Easter Day 626. ⏐ ▼		Assassination attempt on Edwin, Easter Day 627. ▼
Edwin baptised, Easter Day 627. ▼		Edwin baptised, Easter Day 628. ▼
Edwin's death at Hatfield Chase, 633. ⏐ ▼		Edwin's death at Hatfield Chase, 634. ⏐ ▼
TOTAL time of Paulinus' episcopate in Northumbrian, eight years. 625 to 633.		TOTAL time of Paulinus' episcopate in Northumbrian, fifteen years. 619 to 634.

Fig. 2. Table of Groups, or Parties, Present Within the Northumbrian Church Before and After the Synod of Whitby 664.

GROUP ONE	GROUP TWO	GROUP THREE
Group looking to Iona, which originated in Northumbria with Bishop Aidan. Principle see in Northumbria at Lindisfarne. They followed an eighty-four year calendar for dating Easter. Represented at Whitby by Bishop Colman.	Group looking to Rome, which originated in Northumbria with the Gregorian missionary Bishop Paulinus. Principal see in Northumbria at York. This group was to be joined by Wilfrid, from 661, who represented the group at Whitby.	Irish ecclesiastics who followed the Roman nineteen year reckoning for Easter. Figures included Ronan and Bishop Tuda. Not represented at Whitby but effectively took control of the Northumbrian church on Bishop Tuda's appointment.

THE SYNOD OF WHITBY

GROUP ONE Divided into two.	GROUP TWO	GROUP THREE Effectively became part of the new Group One.

ONE (a) Those who could not accept the King's ruling and left Northumbria, including Bishop Colman.	ONE (b) Or new Group One of those who could accept king's ruling, but remained loyal to other Ionan influences. It remained based at Lindisfarne.	Remained as before and continued to push for further Pro Roman reforms within the Northumbrian church headed by Wilfrid. Based at York and Ripon.

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