

Due out in *Cities, Saints, and Scholars in Early Medieval Europe. Essays in honour of Alan Thacker*, ed. S. deGregorio & P. J. E. Kershaw (Turnhout: Brepols).

King Ceadwalla and Bishop Wilfrid

Richard Sharpe

The short career of King Ceadwalla in Wessex was a bloody business, perhaps right up to the point when he left England for Rome, where he was baptized by Pope Sergius on Holy Saturday, 10 April 689. Ten days later he was buried at St Peter's basilica, and Bede would publish his Roman epitaph.¹ Was this a great success-story for the Christian mission, a triumphant conversion, crowned by baptism at the hands of the pope and unblemished death in the white surplice of baptism? William of Malmesbury and Henry of Huntingdon in the twelfth century, both of them reading Bede as their chief witness, interpreted Ceadwalla's career in a heroic light.² They saw his life through his death *in albis* in Rome. Such a reading has endured. In commenting on his gifts of land made to churches, Dorothy Whitelock wrote, 'At the time when Ceadwalla made these grants he had not yet been baptized, but this was not out of hostility to the Christian faith, but because he wished his baptism to take place in Rome'.³ Ceadwalla was not hostile to

¹ Bede, *HE* V 7; G. B. de Rossi, *Inscriptiones Christianae Urbis Romae*, 2 vols (Rome, 1857–61, 1888), ii. 288–9; R. Sharpe, 'King Ceadwalla's Roman epitaph', in *Latin Learning and English Lore. Papers for Michael Lapidge* (Toronto, 2005), i. 171–93.

² William of Malmesbury and Henry of Huntingdon both used the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle and Bede for what they say about Ceadwalla. William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regum Anglorum*, I 34. 3, expressed the difficulty (*arduum memoratu*) of joining his career of blood-letting and his gifts to the church when still a pagan. His baptism in Rome, William says, was too well known to need repeating. In *Gesta Pontificum Anglorum*, III 102. 3, he adapts Stephen's chapter, even making Wilfrid provide Ceadwalla with horsemen and money. To William, however, Ceadwalla was primarily a benefactor of Malmesbury abbey. Henry of Huntingdon, *Historia Anglorum*, III 48–9, abridges Bede, *HE* IV 13–14; at IV 3–5 he elaborates on the Chronicle before bringing in his baptism in Rome, *HE* V 7; at at IV 10 he recognizes Ceadwalla and Ine as holy men.

³ D. Whitelock, *Some Anglo-Saxon Bishops of London* (London, 1975), 8; influenced, no doubt, by F. M. Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford, 1943, ³1971), 70n: 'Cædwalla's postponement of baptism does not imply that he had previously been in any hesitation between heathen and Christian beliefs, and gives no ground for describing him as a heathen. It is an illustration of the custom which in the seventh century still allowed an individual, unbaptized in infancy, to decide the circumstances of his formal admission into the church'. C. Twomey, 'Kings as catechumens: royal conversion narratives and Easter in the *Historia Ecclesiastica*', *Haskins Society Journal* 25 (2013) [2014], 1–18 (pp. 9–10), also accepts Ceadwalla's delayed baptism as a reflection of the Constantinian model in Bede's mind. Bede would not agree.

the faith when he yielded to Abbot Cyneberht's persuasion, allowing two young boys, brothers of Arwald, king of the Isle of Wight, to be baptized before he put them to death, but his action was hardly that of a man converted in his heart yet delaying baptism till he could go to Rome to confess his faith. When, we ask, did he have his change of heart? If any person were responsible for his conversion, it would seem to have been Bishop Wilfrid, who for a time enjoyed a close relationship with King Ceadwalla. This is trumpeted in the contemporary *Life of the bishop* by his close associate Stephen. It shows through in the more discreet account provided by Bede. It becomes vivid through the witness-clause of the king's charter from the year 688.

Circumstances offer an explanation of how this conversion was achieved. Ceadwalla was a fighting man, thirty years old, when he went to Rome and died. Baptism does not kill a fit young man, but Bede has provided a clue: Cyneberht came to the king, 'qui tunc eisdem in partibus occultus curabatur a uulneribus quae ei inflictas fuerant proelianti in insula Vecta' ('who at the time lay in hiding in the same parts to be treated for wounds inflicted while he was fighting in the Isle of Wight') (*HE* IV 14). A front-line heathen king was susceptible to injury, perhaps to repeated injury, perhaps to sepsis. A dying king may be persuaded that even death, in the right circumstances, will add to his reputation. Bede's words, informing Whitelock's statement, again contain a clue: 'hoc sibi gloriae singularis desiderans adipisci, ut ad limina beatorum apostolorum fonte baptismatis ablueretur' ('desiring to obtain for himself the peculiar honour of being baptized at the portal of the blessed apostles') (*HE* V 7). Bede means us to understand that the dying king was motivated by special glory. Now, Stephen's *Vita S. Wilfrithi episcopi* says nothing of this: his Wilfrid was King Ceadwalla's high counsellor (*excelsum consiliarium*), uplifted by God in the king's triumphs whether in battle or by treaty (*aut acie gladii uictor aut foedere indultor pacis*).⁴ Bede has much to say about Bishop Wilfrid and little about King Ceadwalla, but by focusing on them together we may improve our understanding of all three.

There are no simple facts from Ceadwalla's reign. It has usually merited a few pages in histories of Anglo-Saxon England, marking a stage in the rise of Wessex towards a position of power.⁵ It is the nature of such

⁴ Stephen, *Vita S. Wilfrithi episcopi*, c. 42.

⁵ F. M. Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford, 1971), 69–71; D. P. Kirby, *The Making of Early England* (London, 1967), 66–7; P. H. Sawyer, *From Roman Britain to Norman England* (London, 1978), 42–8; B. A. E. Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms of Early Anglo-Saxon England* (London, 1990), 137–8, 145–6; D. P. Kirby, *The Earliest English Kings* (London, 1991), 98–104; L.

books to gloss over difficulties for the sake of a clear narrative. In modern scholarship even his name varies: the West Saxon form Ceadwalla is here favoured over Bede's Northumbrian form Cædwalla.⁶ Our sources are few, and we can never really understand his contemporary importance. He appears to have achieved wide power in southern England, laying the foundations of future West Saxon overlordship. A pagan, living according to pagan ways, he prospered without converting, and he got along with churchmen in a way that does not conform to the master-narrative of conversion. Most conspicuous among the churchmen around him was Bishop Wilfrid, despite the fact that his South Saxon diocese suffered the heel of oppression. Whatever the terms of their relationship, it has the appearance of an accommodation that might have brought opprobrium on the bishop. 'This murky episode', our friend Alan Thacker has written, 'which scarcely redounds to Wilfrid's credit, is treated with considerable circumspection by both Bede and Stephen of Ripon.'⁷ As always we must read our sources with attention.

The nearest to a narrative comes from Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica*, following information supplied by Daniel, bishop of the West Saxons, who wrote to Bede about the church in his own kingdom and in the neighbouring kingdoms of the South Saxons and the Isle of Wight.⁸ In recounting the episcopal succession among the West Saxons, Bede tells us that Bishop Hædde, Daniel's predecessor, was consecrated in London by Archbishop Theodore as their fifth bishop in succession from Birinus (*HE* IV 12).

Dutton, *The Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms. The Power Struggles from Hengist to Ecgberht* (Hanley, Worcs, 1993), 215–19; N. J. Higham, *An English Empire* (Manchester, 1995), 88, 121–2; B. A. E. Yorke, *Wessex in the Early Middle Ages* (London, 1995), 173. Sometimes Ceadwalla has barely a walk-on part, as in N. J. Higham, *The Convert Kings. Power and Religious Affiliation in Early Anglo-Saxon England* (Manchester, 1997), 29, 276; J. H. W. Clay, 'Adventus, warfare, and the Britons in the development of West Saxon identity', in *Post-Roman Transitions: Christian and Barbarian Identities in the Early Medieval West*, ed. W. Pohl & G. Heydemann (Turnhout, 2013), 169–213 (at pp. 191–2). The close relationship with Wilfrid figures in M. Gallyon, *The Early Church in Wessex and Mercia* (Lavenham, Suff, 1980), 13–17.

⁶ Usual practice among historians is to follow Stenton, who writes Cædwalla like Cædmon. Cædmon was a Northumbrian, however, and Ceadwalla was a West Saxon. The pattern of readings in Bede manuscripts of the eighth century goes with that dialect difference—four from Northumbria have Cædwalla, one from Southumbria has Ceadwalla. Ceadual was the reading on his tomb in Rome, and his charter calls him Ceadwal. Now, though Stenton writes Cædwalla (in spite of his preference for West Saxon forms), Dorothy Whitelock, who never disagreed with Stenton except with much heart-searching and strong reason, writes Ceadwalla. So, in brief, both reason and authority support the form Ceadwalla. The spelling Cædwalla has remained standard because Bede is the most familiar point of contact for Latinists as Stenton is for historians.

⁷ Brief biography of Wilfrid by Alan Thacker, *ODNB* (2004).

⁸ Bede, *HE Praefatio*.

During Hædde's time the *subreguli*, who had divided the kingdom of the West Saxons between them after the reign of Cænwalh, were defeated and killed by Ceadwalla, who:⁹

suscepit imperium et, cum duobus annis hoc tenuisset, tandem superni regni amore compunctus reliquit, eodem adhuc praesule ecclesiam gubernante, ac Romam abiens ibi uitam finiuit, ut in sequentibus dicendum est.

took sovereignty upon himself, and when he had held it for two years, he relinquished it for love of the heavenly kingdom, all while the same bishop still governed the church, and, going away to Rome, he ended his life there, as shall be said more fully hereafter.

This skips lightly over his two-year reign and looks ahead to his death in Rome. We may wonder whether 'suscepit imperium' was meant to convey more than 'became king', but Bede's use of *imperium* is too various for us to be sure. There is no hint that the kingdom was not securely Christian. The key narrative comes at a point where Bede's text in our editions shows a rare degree of confusion. It straddles two chapters. At the end of a chapter on how Wilfrid converted the South Saxons and, after he left, why they had no bishop of their own, we read:¹⁰

Interea superueniens cum exercitu Caedualla, iuuenis strenuissimus de regio genere Geuissorum, cum exularet a patria sua, interfecit regem Aedilualch, ac prouinciam illam saeua caede ac depopulatione adtriuuit; sed mox expulsus est a ducibus regis Bercthuno et Andhuno, qui deinceps regnum prouinciae tenuerunt. Quorum prior postea ab eodem Caedualla, cum esset rex Geuissorum, occisus est, et prouincia grauiore seruitio subacta. Sed et Ini, qui post Caeduallan regnauit, simili prouinciam illam adflictione plurimo annorum tempore mancipauit. Quare factum est, ut toto illo tempore episcopum proprium habere nequiret, sed reuocato domum Wilfrido primo suo antistite, ipsi episcopo Geuissorum, id est Occidentalium Saxonum, qui essent in Venta ciuitate, subiacerent.

In the meantime, Ceadwalla, a most vigorous young man, of the royal lineage of the Gewisse, who was an exile from his own country, arrived with an army, slew King Æthelwalh, and wasted that kingdom with fierce slaughter and plundering; but soon he was expelled by Berhthun and Andhun, royal ealdormen, who afterwards held the government of the kingdom. The first of them was afterwards killed by the same Ceadwalla, when he was king of the Gewisse, and the [South Saxon] kingdom was subjected to harsh oppression. Ine, likewise, who reigned after Ceadwalla, kept that kingdom under similar servitude for several years. For this reason, during all that time, it happened that they were not able to have a bishop of their own; but their first bishop,

⁹ Bede, *HE* IV 12.

¹⁰ Bede, *HE* IV 13, final paragraph. Plummer numbers the passage as chapter [15], Mynors as 15, and Lapidge (following LM) as 14. 7, but the chapter-headings in CKO (see below) show that it was composed as part of Chapter 13.

Wilfrid, having been recalled home, they were subject to the bishop of the Gewisse, i.e. the West Saxons, who were in the city of Winchester.

If Bede's sequence of events is secure, Æthelwath was killed and Sussex wasted with fierce slaughter even before Ceadwalla took power at home, after which he came again to kill Berhthun and enslave his people. Under Ceadwalla and his successor Ine, who ruled until 726, the South Saxons were oppressed by the West Saxons to such an extent that, during all that time, they were unable to have a bishop of their own but looked to the West Saxon bishop in Winchester. The chapter that follows is entitled, 'How the Isle of Wight received Christian inhabitants and how its two royal boys were put to death immediately after they received baptism':¹¹

Postquam ergo Caedwalla regno potitus est Geuissorum, cepit et insulam Vectam, quae eatenus erat tota idolatriae dedita, ac stragica caede omnes indigenas exterminare ac suae prouinciae homines pro his substituere contendit, uoto se obligans quamuis necdum regeneratus, ut ferunt, in Christo quia, si cepisset insulam, quartam partem eius simul et praedae Domino daret. Quod ita soluit, ut hanc Wilfrido episcopo, qui tunc forte de gente sua superueniens aderat, utendam pro Domino offerret. Est autem mensura eiusdem insulae iuxta aestimationem Anglorum mille ducentarum familiarum; unde data est episcopo possessio terrae trecentarum familiarum. At ipse partem quam accepit commendauit cuidam de clericis suis, cui nomen Bernuini, et erat filius sororis eius, dans illi presbyterum nomine Hiddila, qui omnibus qui saluari uellent uerbum ac lauacrum uitae ministraret.

Vbi silentio praetereundum non esse reor, quod in primitias eorum, qui de eadem insula credendo saluati sunt, duo regii pueri, fratres uidelicet Arualdi regis insulae, speciali sunt Dei gratia coronati. Siquidem imminentibus insulae hostibus fuga lapsi sunt de insula et in proximam Iutorum prouinciam translati, ubi cum delati in locum qui uocatur Ad Lapidem [*Stone, Hants*] oculendos se a facie regis uictoris credidissent, proditi sunt atque occidi iussi. Quod cum audisset abbas quidam et presbyter uocabulo Cyniberct, habens non longe ab inde monasterium in loco qui uocatur Hreutford [*Redbridge, Hants*], id est Vadum harundinis, uenit ad regem, qui tunc eisdem in partibus occultus curabatur a uulneribus quae ei inflicta fuerant proelianti in insula Vecta, postulauitque ab eo ut, si necesse esset pueros interfici, prius eos liceret fidei Christianae sacramentis imbui. Concessit rex, et ipse instructos eos uerbo ueritatis ac fonte saluatoris ablutos de ingressu regni aeterni certos reddidit. Moxque illi instante carnifice mortem laeti subiere temporalem, per quam se ad uitam animae perpetuam non dubitabant esse transituros.

After Ceadwalla had possessed himself of the kingdom of the Gewisse, he also took the Isle of Wight, which till then was entirely given over to idolatry, and by bloodthirsty slaughter endeavoured to destroy all the inhabitants and to introduce in their place

¹¹ Bede, *HE* IV 14. Plummer numbers the chapter as 14 [16] (giving priority to C), Mynors as 16 (14), and Lapidge as 14. 8–10, but it is clearly summarized by the heading of Chapter 14.

people from his own kingdom. Having bound himself by a vow, though he was not yet, as they say, reborn in Christ, to give the fourth part of the land and of the booty to our Lord, if he took the island, he so fulfilled his promise by making this offering to our Lord to the use of Bishop Wilfrid, who was present, arriving just then by chance from his own nation. The measure of that island, according to the computation of the English, is twelve hundred hides, from which was given to the bishop possession of three hundred hides of land. This part that he received, he committed to one of his clerks called Beornwine, who was his sister's son, assigning to him a priest, whose name was Hiddila, who would administer the word and baptism of life to all who wanted to be saved.

Here I think it ought not to be omitted that, among the first fruits of the natives of that island who by believing gained their salvation, were two royal youths, brothers of Arwald, king of the island, who were crowned by the particular grace of God. For when the enemy approached, they made their escape out of the island and crossed over into the nearest province of the Jutes. Here, being brought to the place called At Stone, though they thought they could be hidden from the victorious king, they were betrayed and ordered to be killed. When this was heard by a certain abbot and priest, whose name was Cyneberht, who had a monastery not far from there at a place called Hreutford, that is, the Ford of Reeds, he came to the king, who at the time was hiding in the same parts to be treated for wounds inflicted while he was fighting in the Isle of Wight, and begged of him that, if the boys must inevitably be killed, it might be allowed that they be first taught the mysteries of the faith. The king consented, and Cyneberht, having taught them the word of truth and cleansed them by baptism, made them sure of their entry to the everlasting kingdom. Soon, the executioner being at hand, they joyfully underwent the temporal death, through which they did not doubt they were to pass to the life of the soul, which is eternal.

At one level the facts are allowed to speak for themselves. The word-order, 'stragica caede omnes indigenas exterminare', puts emphasis on Bede's neologism *stragicus* 'bloodthirsty' from CL *strages* 'bloodbath' and leaves no doubt over the sense of the verb *exterminare* 'exterminate'.¹² One can only wonder how many fighters Ceadwalla was able to ship across the Solent for this killing spree. Bede's *ut ferunt* ('as they say') is positioned in the phrase *necdum regeneratus in Christo* as if to doubt those who said that Ceadwalla was not yet baptized: it is meant rather to raise an eyebrow at

¹² Plummer, ii. 229, knew no other example of *strāgicus*, which some later copies turned into 'trāgica'; cf. 'tragica caede' (*HE* III 1), on which the early copies agree. L. Piacente, 'Stragicus (Beda Hist. Eccl. 4, 16 [14])', *Studi latini e italiani* (1986), 81–5, made the case for emending against the early manuscripts in III 1 to the purely Bedan 'stragica'. The word also occurs in an eighth-century Mozarabic chronicle: 'illa minime recenseri tam stragica bella ista decreuit historia' (J. E. López Pereira, *Continuatio Isidoriana Hispana. Crónica Mozárabe de 754* (León, 2009), 270). This is more likely an independent coinage than evidence of early dissemination of Bede's *Historia* in Spain. Eadmer, *Vita S. Wilfridi*, c. 46 (Muir & Turner, 104), ignored the strong words and took the milder sense of *exterminare*, to exile or expel, 'expulsis indigenis'.

those who claimed that an unregenerate pagan vowed a gift to God. His phrase *necdum regeneratus* is unambiguous.¹³

What Bede says of Wilfrid here is extremely limited. The South Saxons were left without a bishop of their own, ‘reuocato domum Wilfrido primo eorum antistite’ (‘their first bishop, Wilfrid, having been recalled home’), and the bishop of the Gewisse in Winchester had oversight of their needs.¹⁴ This sentence immediately precedes the passage quoted at length above, rendering Wilfrid’s reappearance somewhat surprising, so that, when Ceadwalla butchered the inhabitants of the island, he was by chance on hand to accept a quarter share of the land and to appoint a priest to teach and baptize all who wanted to be saved. We may perhaps take this to refer to surviving women and children, taken over by the victors, rather than baptism before killing, such as befell the brothers of Arwald.¹⁵ The story hardly lives up to what Bede’s chapter heading advertised, ‘how the island received Christian inhabitants’, but Bede here wants to highlight the bright side. Wilfrid’s being there is unexplained: ‘qui tunc forte de gente sua superueniens aderat’ (‘who was present, arriving just then by chance from his own nation’). He arrived on the scene at the opportune moment to receive this pagan’s thanksgiving generosity to the church. With no detailed chronology, this is impossible to make sense of. The sequel is the baptism and killing of the royal boys, who, when their executioner arrived, ‘mortem laeti subiere temporalem’ (‘joyfully underwent temporal death’), knowing that they would pass to life eternal. In this way the last of the old heathen England was converted, as Bede sums up at the end of the passage quoted at length.¹⁶

¹³ Compare, for example, ‘conuersatio haec qua uiuitur inter gentes polluta est necdum his qui cathecizantur regenerationis fonte et gratia spiritus ablutis sanctificatis et iustificatis’ (*I Samuel* III 21, 651A); ‘dum cotidie per lauacrum regenerationis regno diaboli auferuntur plures’ (*Ezra and Nehemiah* I, 842D; DeGregorio, 75). Plummer, ii. 229, pointed out the clause in a false charter in the name of King Ine, confirming a gift of land made by Bishop Hædde, ‘Chedwalla annuente et propria manu licet paganus confirmante’ (S 250 for Glastonbury); the act is a twelfth-century forgery, preserved, and perhaps composed, by William of Malmesbury.

¹⁴ Bede, *HE* IV 13.

¹⁵ John Gillingham reads into Bede’s verb *exterminare* the victor’s taking control of the women and children of the defeated, ‘Women, children, and the profits of war’, *Gender and Historiography. Studies in the earlier middle ages in honour of Pauline Stafford* (London, 2012), 61–74 (pp. 65–6); ‘A strategy of total war? Henry of Livonia and the conquest of Estonia, 1208–1227’, *Journal of Medieval Military History* 15 (2017), 187–214 (pp. 209–10).

¹⁶ Bede, *HE* IV 14. Henry of Huntingdon, *Historia Anglorum*, II 39, adds at this point: ‘And so all the kings of England were made believers, and all parts of their kingdoms enjoyed the light and grace of Christ’.

Hoc ergo ordine, postquam omnes Britanniarum prouinciae fidem Christi susceperant, suscepit et insula Vecta, in quam tamen ob erumnam externae subiectionis nemo gradum ministerii ac sedis episcopalis ante Danihelem, qui nunc Occidentalium Saxonum est episcopus, accepit.

In this progression, therefore, after all the kingdoms of the island of Britain had embraced the faith of Christ, the Isle of Wight also received it; yet being under the affliction of foreign subjection, no one there has held the order or office of an episcopal see down to the time of Daniel, who is now bishop of the West Saxons.

And this is Bishop Daniel from whom Bede had his information. Bede appears to transmit a sense of Daniel's sympathy for people under the affliction of alien rule, rule to which the bishop was himself party.¹⁷ He later expresses it that the diocese of the Isle of Wight was held by Daniel.¹⁸ But if Wight was the last kingdom of the English to become Christian, the still unregenerate Ceadwalla, ruling in Wessex and beyond, stands out against the whole of Bede's historical argument. If the Gewisse had been converted by Birinus in the days of King Cynegisl (*HE* III 7), who died around 642, how did Ceadwalla, a member of the royal line, born about 659, remain unbaptized? Such questions point up how much we depend on believing what Bede tells us. He represents conversion as an event, bringing one kingdom after another into the faith of Christ, but here his own account discloses a different, more mixed, reality.

If we seek to put his immediate story into its narrative context, something surprising emerges. At the start of Chapter 13 in Book IV, we learn that Bishop Wilfrid, exiled from his own diocese, had been to Rome and returned to Britain, where, unable to go back to Northumbria, he diverted to the kingdom of the South Saxons, whose king, Æthelwalh, had been converted years earlier with the encouragement of King Wulfhere of Mercia, himself a convert. Wulfhere had given the Isle of Wight and the kingdom of the Meonware to Æthelwalh, allowing the South Saxon king to take over two *prouinciae*, a word usually used by Bede for self-governing kingdoms, *in gente Occidentalium Saxonum* 'in the nation of the West Saxons'. The Wihtware and Meonware were, as Bede makes clear elsewhere, Jutish peoples, whom a Mercian overlord handed from West Saxon dominion to South Saxon dominion. Christianity had made little progress in Sussex until now. The Irish monk Dícuil and his few brethren at

¹⁷ B. A. E. Yorke, 'The Jutes of Hampshire and Wight and the origins of Wessex', *The Origins of Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms*, ed. S. R. Bassett (Leicester, 1989), 84–96 (p. 89).

¹⁸ Bede, *HE* V 23. The bishoprics of the Isle of Wight and of Sussex were held by Daniel but were not part of his West Saxon diocese.

Bosham are said to have had no influence.¹⁹ King Æthelwath gave a great estate to establish Wilfrid as bishop at Selsey. Bede and Stephen agree on the figure of eighty-seven hides, but it was Stephen's text that supplied Bede with such detail.²⁰ Wilfrid remained here, 'merito omnibus honorabilis', 'deservedly honoured by everyone', says Bede (*HE* IV 13), for five years until the death of King Ecgrith of Northumbria and his 'recall' to the north. Ecgrith died in battle against the Picts on 20 May 685 (*HE* IV 24).²¹ Any recall did not happen at once, but Wilfrid in due course went north. The five years between his return from Rome and his abandoning Selsey were roughly 682 to 686. Bede's 'annos quinque' may well mean more than four years but less than a full five.

Bede summarized the sequence of events in his long obituary of Wilfrid (*HE* V 19): Wilfrid came back to Britain, converted the South Saxons and sent priests into the Isle of Wight, and then, 'secundo anno Aldfridi, qui post Ecgridum regnavit' ('in the second year of Aldfrith, who reigned after Ecgrith'), he returned to his northern diocese at the new king's invitation. Here he follows Stephen, and the effect is to bring events in the Isle of Wight earlier to a time before his recall. The difference matters.

At this point, and before the chapter heading has been fulfilled with an explanation of why the South Saxons remained without a bishop of their own, a new chapter intervenes in our editions, for which there is no heading at the front of Book IV. In this chapter Bede tells how plague in a monastery in Sussex was miraculously ended through prayer and the death of one young convert, a boy lately called to the faith ('puerulus quidam de natione Saxonum, nuper uocatus ad fidem'). It is a story found in only one of the two branches of the textual transmission, and it has every appearance of being an afterthought, discontinuous in several ways from what precedes. First, a new source interrupts the information derived from Daniel. This is a story that Bishop Acca 'saepius referre et a fidelissimis eiusdem monasterii fratribus sibi relatum asserere solebat' ('used to tell rather often and to assert

¹⁹ The existence of this Irish settlement at Bosham on Portsmouth harbour must be one of the most unexpected facts recorded in the *HE*. Its later history begs a huge question. In the eleventh century Bosham appears to have been a royal minster with a 200-hide estate, better endowed than the episcopal see at Selsey. Was it really as insignificant at this date as Bede suggests?

²⁰ Stephen, *Vita S. Wilfrithi episcopi*, c. 41. Eighty-seven hides is the total number represented in the forged charter of Ceadwalla in favour of Wilfrid at Selsey (S 232).

²¹ Eadmer, *Vita S. Wilfridi*, c. 47 (Muir & Turner, 106), invents a story that Wilfrid in Sussex miraculously witnessed Ecgrith's death in Pictland, imitating what he had no doubt read in the Lives of St Cuthbert (Colgrave, *Two Lives*, 122, 244).

Table showing Book IV, chapters 13–15

Book IV	CKO	Book IV	LMB	1896	1969	2010
XIII	<i>Vt Vilfrid episcopus prouinciam Australium Saxonum ad Christum conuerterit quae tamen illo abeunte propter aceruam hostium obpressionem proprium episcopum habere nequiuert</i>	XIII	<i>Vt Vilfrid episcopus prouinciam Australium Saxonum ad Christum conuerterit</i>	13	13	13
13. 1	Pulsus autem ab episcopatu	13	Pulsus autem ab episcopatu			13. 1
13. 2	Erat autem ibi monachus	13	Erat autem ibi monachus			13. 2
13. 3	Euangelizans autem genti	13	Euangelizans autem genti			13. 3
13. 4	Quo tempore rex Aedliwalch	13	Quo tempore rex Aedliwalch			13. 4
		XIII	<i>no chapter heading, XIII against text</i>	[14]	14	14
		14	In quo tunc monasterio			14. 1
		14	Eodem ferme tempore			14. 2
		14	Erat tunc temporis			14. 3
		14	Hac etenim die idem rex			14. 4
		14	Quae cum omnia			14. 5
		14	Quibus ita gestis			14. 6
13. 5	* Interea superueniens	14	Interea superueniens	[15]	15	14. 7
XIII	<i>Vt Vecta insula christianos incolas suscepit, cuius regii duo pueri statim post acceptum baptisma sint interemti</i>	XIII	<i>Vt Vecta insula christianos incolas suscepit, cuius regii duo pueri statim post acceptum baptisma sint interemti</i>	14 [16]	16 [14]	
14. 1	Postquam ergo Caedualla	14	Postquam ergo Caedualla			14. 8
14. 2	Vbi silentio praetereundum	14	Vbi silentio praetereundum			14. 9
14. 3	Sita est autem haec insula	14	Sita est autem haec insula			14.10
XV	<i>De synodo facta in campo Haetfelda praesidente archiepiscopo Theodoro</i>	XV	<i>De synodo facta in campo Haetfelda praesidente archiepiscopo Theodoro</i>	15 [17]	17 [15]	15

* At the words *Interea superueniens* C has a later marginal note, 'Hic deest folium [[. . .]]'.

Roman numerals are used for chapters in the manuscripts, arabic for editorial numbering. Italics are used for chapter-headings; words in roman type identify the beginning of paragraphs. The text in CKO relates directly to its chapter headings. In LMB the number XIII was added with the additional text; no corresponding addition was made to the chapter headings, but the heading to XIII was shortened to reflect the fact that its last section had now been cut off. Plummer aimed to retain the numbering of CKO while indicating that a new chapter 14 had been inserted; he inserted chapter headings for the added chapter 14 and the detached section, here 15, without early manuscript authority and therefore in brackets. Mynors, adhering to LMB, gave priority to their numbering of 14 but also introduced 15 for the section cut off from 13. Lapidge, who like Plummer repeated chapter headings at the start of each chapter, inserted the heading for 14 at the start of the added chapter, though it only becomes relevant at his 14. 8; this is clearly contrary to Bede's practice and intention. The number XIII against the added chapter in the manuscripts was carried over from the unaltered chapter headings.

that it was told him by most trustworthy monks of the very same monastery’).²² Second, there is the dating, ‘eodem ferme tempore quo ipsa prouincia nomen Christi suscepit, multas Britanniae prouincias mortalitas saeua corripiebat’ (‘at almost the same time as that kingdom received the name of Christ, a terrible plague seized many of the kingdoms in Britain’). Wilfrid converted the South Saxons around 682, the plague was at its worst in 686. Wilfrid’s five years in Sussex are telescoped. Third, the priest in whose monastery the miracle took place is introduced, Eappa, but no link is made to the preceding chapter, in which he was already named as one of four priests who baptized the people after Wilfrid baptized the *duces ac milites* of the South Saxons. The sick boy on whom the story is centred was lodged in the monastery, but it is not apparent why he was there. He had received the faith, but it is not said that he intended to become a monk. The story involves his being visited in a dream by SS. Peter and Paul, visually distinct, who explain to him what will happen and bid him tell Eappa to look up his calendar. By this means it was revealed that it was the feast of St Oswald, king of the Northumbrians, which was henceforth observed there, in accordance with the saints’ instruction. After mass the sick boy received communion, and his death then proved the truth of his dream.²³ It is a curiously laboured story, and implicit in it is the notion that the calendar of saints in use was not in tune with actual local observance. The story reflects the same obsessions on Acca’s part with St Oswald and with the plague that Bede had recorded in Book III. There, Acca is cited as talking about miracles of St Oswald encountered when he, Acca, accompanied Bishop Wilfrid abroad and stayed with Willibrord among the Frisians in 704. And at that point, Bede inserted, in direct speech, one of the miracle-stories that Acca had told him from his own earlier pilgrim-life in Ireland, namely how he had induced the recovery of a plague-stricken Irishman by means of a fragment from the wood on which St Oswald’s head had been stuck.²⁴ In the

²² This comes across as emphatic, more so at least than Bede’s saying that Acca ‘is used to telling’ (‘solet referre’, *HE* III 13) about his time with Wilfrid or Bede’s teacher Trumberht ‘used to tell me’ (‘referre solebat’, *HE* IV 3); but Bede uses *saepius* quite lightly when referring to his own recurrent subjects, the Irish and Easter (‘cuius saepius mentionem fecimus’, *HE* III 3), St Æthelthryth (‘cuius saepius mentionem fecimus’, *HE* IV 17), and Ecgberht (‘cuius superius memoriam saepius fecimus’, *HE* V 22).

²³ The story is discussed by Jesse Keskiäho with reference to Eappa’s questioning the boy about the appearance of the saints and Bede’s asserting the truth of the vision by reason of its fulfilment, *Dreams and Visions in the Early Middle Ages. The reception and use of patristic ideas, 400–900* (Cambridge, 2015), 43–4.

²⁴ Bede, *HE* III 13. This must have happened during the period of pestilence c. 684–7, when Acca was young. Wilfrid was in Sussex then, but it is not apparent that Acca was already with him. The Sussex story came to Acca from trustworthy brethren, perhaps long after the event. We

manuscripts that have it this new chapter in Book IV has the number 14, and the remarks about how the South Saxons were left without a bishop of their own became detached from Chapter 13.²⁵ The heading of the chapter had said:

Vt Wilfrid episcopus prouinciam Australium Saxonum ad Christum conuerterit quae tamen illo abeunte propter aceruam hostium obpressionem proprium episcopum habere nequiuert.

How Bishop Wilfrid converted the kingdom of the South Saxons to Christ, which, however, when Wilfrid left, was not able to have its own bishop on account of the cruel oppression by its enemies.

In the parent of the M- or μ -text of the *Historia*, that heading was reduced to the first statement without the relative clause.²⁶ Needed for consistency between chapter and heading, this had the effect also of removing what might have been read as an implicit criticism of the bishop who left his flock. No new heading was inserted to advertise the miracle of St Oswald, and the existing heading for Chapter 14 was not amended. Editors have recorded the words as added to the heading in the κ -text rather than deleted from the μ -text. Yet Mynors explicitly acknowledged the chapter as added, ‘The addition in *m* of IV 14, which is clearly authentic, and would never have been removed by a reviser, stamps M as the later form’.²⁷ His policy was to adopt it as Bede’s final text. Michael Lapidge makes a good case that the parent of the κ -text was improved in minor ways at Canterbury and that these few improvements were not authorial.²⁸ In line with a tenth-century marginal note in C, ‘Hic deest folium [[. . .]]’, he explained the absence of the episode as resulting from the accidental loss of a leaf. The fact of editorial changes in the κ -text does not mean that the μ -text at Jarrow necessarily remained untouched, and I disagree with his rejecting the view that this long passage was an addition made there. The insertion of an extra chapter in μ is proved by the disjunction between text and chapter-headings: those in the κ -text relate to the actual text, but in the μ -text the only

do not know when or where Acca became Wilfrid’s priest. At *HE* V 20 Bede says only that he started at York as a child in the household of Bishop Bosa (678–704/6) and thereafter (*deinde*) joined Wilfrid. His Irish sojourn is usually overlooked.

²⁵ Later manuscripts would make this detached paragraph into a self-standing Chapter 15.

²⁶ Plummer, 230n; Mynors, 324n.

²⁷ Comment by Plummer, vol. i, pp. xciv n, xcvi (whose instinct was sound even if his conclusion was not); Mynors, p. xli.

²⁸ Lapidge, ‘Author’s variants in the textual transmission of Bede’s *Historia ecclesiastica?*’, *Filologia mediolatina* 16 (2009), 1–15.

provision made for the additional text intruded as IV 14 was to simplify the heading of Chapter 13. Lapidge's explanation for the supposed accidental loss of the story from κ is implausible: while a single lost folio would easily explain a lacuna of eighty-five lines of prose, the improbability that such an accident should happen so early in the tradition (before L and M were made) and yet remain unnoticed during the period of publication, that it should cause no disruption to syntax, should comprise a complete story, should coincide with what soon became a chapter-break, and should go against the relevance of the *capitula* is all too great to be plausible, nor did accidental loss cause the editing of the chapter-heading in the κ -text. The insertion can be dated. Two astronomical notes relating to events on 14 August 733 and 31 January 734 stand at the very end of the text in M itself; in κ they were added to the annalistic summary in *HE* V 24. While their positioning may be a perceived improvement at Canterbury, the sub-archetype κ cannot have lacked them and so was not written before 31 January 734. The added chapter was intruded after that date. Bede died on 26 May 735. The addition of seven hundred words is a far cry from authorial tinkering to improve a word here or there. Bede must have felt very strong reason for this substantive but botched alteration, the consequence of which is the messy chapter-divisions in our editions and the mismatch between text and headings.

These two episodes, in Book III and in the added chapter in Book IV, cite Acca before he has been properly introduced, and, in Wilfrid's long obituary, he appears again in the bishop's company as they return from Rome in 705. Wilfrid fell sick at Meaux, near Paris, and called for his priest Acca; Bede followed Stephen's *Vita* at this point.²⁹ After Wilfrid's death, Acca, Wilfrid's priest, was chosen to succeed him as bishop of Hexham, in which see he remained in 731, the formal end-date of of Bede's *Historia*.³⁰ He was a friend of Bede and a long-term encourager of his writing, as we know from the prefatory letters to five of his biblical commentaries over a period of years.³¹ Paul Hilliard has characterized Acca as a careful reader of

²⁹ Bede, *HE* V 19. Plummer showed that Bede derived this episode from Stephen's *Vita S. Wilfrithi episcopi*, c. 56 (Colgrave, 120–22), with which there is some direct verbal similarity.

³⁰ Bede, *HE* V 20, 23. Acca is described by Clare Stancliffe as 'the most influential Wilfridian after Wilfrid's death' ('Disputed episcopacy: Bede, Acca, and the relationship between Stephen's Life of St Wilfrid and the early prose Lives of St Cuthbert', *Anglo-Saxon England* 41 (2012), 7–39, at p. 11).

³¹ The earliest dedication to Acca is likely to be the commentary on Luke (709 × 716), the last that on Ezra and Nehemiah (725 × publication of *HE*). The preface to the commentary on Genesis is difficult to date.

Bede's writings, a co-worker, even a taskmaster.³² The Moore manuscript of the *Historia ecclesiastica*, and no other copy, has annal-entries for the years 731 and 732, the first of which says that King Ceolwulf was captured and tonsured, and afterwards restored as king, while Bishop Acca was expelled from his see in 731.³³ The reference to the king's troubles appears also, in vaguer terms, in Bede's account of the state of the country when he ended his history.³⁴ Acca's expulsion is mentioned nowhere else, and its duration is uncertain. It invites one to ask whether Acca was at Jarrow between 731 and as late as 734, when Bede retouched his great work.³⁵ We might even imagine that he had read it and pressed the suggestion to insert his own story of the apostolic visitation on St Oswald's day in Sussex. Its effect is to break the trend of Bede's narrative, which was to say that Wilfrid had converted the South Saxons and then abandoned them to their fate under Ceadwalla. Even the shortening of the chapter-heading, necessitated by the splitting of the original chapter, served to remove Wilfrid's leaving his flock from the *capitulatio*. In the revised text of our editions, a dull miracle about an unnamed boy in an unnamed monastery now separates Wilfrid's mission to the South Saxons under King Æthelwath from Æthelwath's killing at the hands of Ceadwalla's men who ravaged the kingdom. It does not amount to the suppression of truth, but it is a sign that the tone of Bede's writing about Wilfrid was subject to immediate scrutiny.

Acca had for many years been close to Wilfrid, and alongside Abbot Tatberht of Ripon he was named by Stephen as his master, urging him to write an account of Wilfrid's long life.³⁶ What the *Vita* says about Wilfrid's relationship with Ceadwalla reveals less about what happened than Bede does, but Stephen gives it a positive colour.³⁷ Ceadwalla, an exile of high lineage, emerged from the wilderness of the South Downs and the Weald (*e*

³² Bede's relationship with Acca is at the core of the discussion by P. C. Hilliard, 'Acca of Hexham through the eyes of the Venerable Bede', *Early Medieval Europe* 26 (2018), 440–61 (especially pp. 455–6, 459–60).

³³ Plummer, 361; Mynors, 572.

³⁴ Bede, *HE* V 23.

³⁵ The argument made here certainly indicates continuing close contact between Acca and Bede, and Acca's withdrawal to Jarrow may be supported by a further argument. Michael Lapidge has made the case that Acca wrote the Latin original underlying the Old English Martyrology, 'Acca of Hexham and the origin of the Old English Martyrology', *Analecta Bollandiana* 123 (2005), 29–78. The work draws on Bede's *Historia*, and, if the argument is correct, it is even possible that Acca worked on it at Jarrow after his expulsion from Hexham. Hilliard, 'Acca of Hexham through the eyes of the Venerable Bede', 456–7, without these arguments, saw Bede as 'deprived of his co-worker Acca since 731'.

³⁶ Stephen, *Vita S. Wilfrithi episcopi, Praefatio*.

³⁷ Stephen, *Vita S. Wilfrithi episcopi*, c. 42.

desertis Ciltine et Ondred) and asked Wilfrid to teach him and help him, promising with a vow (*uouens uoto*) to be an obedient son.³⁸ The bishop helped him to overcome his enemies and win his kingdom. Now reigning over all the West Saxons, he called Wilfrid from his missionary work in Sussex (*gentilem populum in Suthsexum bene ad Deum conuertentem*) and made him ‘his counsellor in all his realm’. Wilfrid became to Stephen’s Ceadwalla as Joseph was to Pharaoh.³⁹ Ceadwalla kept the kingdom safe, ‘whether victorious by the edge of the sword or making peace by agreement’ (*aut acie gladii uictor aut foedere indultor pacis*). Just one phrase about Ceadwalla’s coming to power reflects his methods, ‘after killing and subduing his enemies’ (*occisis et superatis inimicis eius*), and even that was expunged from one of the two manuscripts in which the *Vita* is preserved.⁴⁰ Stephen’s Ceadwalla has shed his paganism and become well-behaved company for the bishop, albeit still with a sharp sword. The sequence of events, however, is different from Bede’s main narrative. Stephen makes Wilfrid go from his ministry in Sussex directly into Ceadwalla’s service, which Bede echoes in his obituary of Wilfrid (*HE* V 19). Where he follows Daniel, however, Bede has Wilfrid ‘recalled’ from Sussex to Northumbria before his happening to turn up at Ceadwalla’s side a year later.

We are distinctly short of a reliable chronological framework here. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle only adds confusion. For this period it was written two centuries later, and Bede was one of its sources. Under 685 it has the phrase, *Her Ceadwalla ongan æfter rice winnan*, ‘in this year Ceadwalla began to contend for the kingdom’. It adds reference to campaigns involving him and his brother Múl in Kent and, under 686, in the Isle of Wight. Ceadwalla’s conquest of the island is often referred to 686 on this unreliable evidence. And then, under 688, it says that Ceadwalla went to Rome and received baptism from the pope, dying seven days later. The Chronicle has no doubt got this from Bede, whose annalistic summary (*HE* V 24) dates the king’s departure to 688. His detailed text says that he went in

³⁸ ‘Ondred’ is no doubt the Weald of Kent and Sussex, forested and sparsely populated, into which the deposed West Saxon Sigeberht later fled, *Andred* in *ASC* (AE), 755, 892. ‘Ciltine’, rendered Chiltern by Colgrave (and often repeated), is better identified through two eighth-century charters, S 1612, S 106; M. Gelling, *The Early Charters of the Thames Valley* (Leicester, 1979), 99, suggests that the district-name *Ciltinne* is preserved in East and West Chiltington, more than twenty-five miles apart in the South Downs.

³⁹ Stephen may hint here at Ceadwalla’s paganism, as Sarah Foot points out to me, since Joseph worshipped the God of Israel, but Pharaoh worshipped the idols of Egypt. Joseph served as a very acceptable precedent.

⁴⁰ These words appear in Salisbury Cathedral, MS 223 (Fell 3) (s. xii¹, Salisbury), but not in the slightly older northern witness to the text, BL MS Cotton Vespasian D. vi part 2 (s. xi^{ex}, York or at least Yorkshire).

the third year of Aldfrith's reign and died in 689 (*HE* V 7). What Bede said was a reign of two years is thus extended by the Chronicle to three years with vague wording about when Ceadwalla began to win his kingdom.

Ceadwalla's one surviving charter that can be received as contemporary evidence adds another perspective. This 160-word act bears witness to the gift by 'Ceadwal dispensante Domino rex Saxonum' ('by God's providence king of the Saxons'), for the health of his soul, of sixty hides to establish a *monasterium* at Farnham in Surrey.⁴¹ In passing we note that his Roman epitaph also names him 'Ceadual qui et Petrus rex Saxonum' ('Ceadwal, also called Peter, king of the Saxons'). The charter is dated to the first indiction, with the year of the incarnation also stated, 688, and the place at which the giving was done is named *Besingahearh* 'the sanctuary of the Besingas', a group whose name is preserved in the north-east Hampshire places of Old Basing and Basingstoke. The fact that the land given is in Surrey enlarges our sense of how far Ceadwalla's rule extended.⁴² The king subscribed first and then, according to precedence, bishops, abbots, priests, and laymen. The bishops are Wilfrid, Eorconwald, and Hædde. Hædde was bishop of the West Saxons with his see in Winchester, Ceadwalla's own bishop, who took responsibility also for those Christians under his rule in Sussex and the Isle of Wight. With precedence over Hædde was Eorconwald, bishop of London and Essex, evidence that Ceadwalla's power embraced the only urban centre in the whole island. And with precedence above both was Bishop Wilfrid, the king's high counsellor. The charter bears out what Stephen has said. And below the bishops the leading abbot of the West Saxon kingdom attests, Aldhelm, abbot of Malmesbury, whose letter to Heahfrith shows that he knew something of heathen worship.⁴³ If the venue were still a pagan *hearg*, more than likely while Ceadwalla ruled, we must imagine these prelates as attending a public ceremony at, if not actually in, a heathen sanctuary, no doubt at the king's bidding.⁴⁴ If the *hearg* were at Old Basing in Hampshire, the king would have commanded Bishop Eorconwald

⁴¹ S 235; translated by D. Whitelock, *English Historical Documents* i c. 500–1042 (London, 1979), 484–5 (no. 58).

⁴² J. Blair, *Early Medieval Surrey* (Stroud, 1991), 8, points out that King Ine, Ceadwalla's successor, had authority as far east in Surrey as Bermondsey, just across the Thames from London, citing in evidence a privilege of Pope Constantine, 708 × 715 (JE 2148; Birch 133).

⁴³ Aldhelm, *Epistola ad Heahfridum*, § 1 (ed. R. Ehwald, *Aldhelmi opera*, MGH *Auctores Antiquissimi* 15 (1919), 486–94; translated by M. W. Herren, *The Prose Works* (1979), 160–64), 'ubi pridem eiusdem nefandae natricis ermula ceruulusque cruda fanis colebantur stoliditate in profanis' ('where once the crude pillars of the same foul snake and the stag were worshipped with coarse stupidity in profane shrines').

⁴⁴ J. Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society* (Oxford, 2005), 57n.

into his territory.⁴⁵ Excavation has revealed the possible site.⁴⁶ A second charter shows the same bishops together. The Barking archive preserved as a single-sheet charter the gift by an East Saxon named *Hodilred* (Æthilred) of many hides of land to the abbess *Hedilburg* (Æthelburh), attested by the East Saxon King Sæbbi, ‘a man much devoted to God’ (*HE* IV 11), and his two royal heirs Sigeheard and Suæbred, and by the three bishops, Eorconwald, Wilfrid, and Hædde.⁴⁷ Two other clergy appear to attest both acts.⁴⁸ An East Saxon venue, such as London, seems plausible though none is named; Ceadwalla did not attest, but the presence of his bishops Wilfrid and Hædde may mean that he was just off stage.⁴⁹ The Barking charter is dated only to the month of March.

A few documents are enough to show that Ceadwalla’s *imperium* was by no means confined to his own lands as king of the Gewisse and his conquered lands in Sussex and the Isle of Wight but reached across Surrey to London. In what Barbara Yorke has called ‘his brief but spectacular period of overlordship’, he had evidently seen off Mercian superiority.⁵⁰ For his wars in Kent we have the statement of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, apparently corroborated by a charter of King Suæbhard, which mentions his obtaining the kingdom of Kent ‘a rege Mulo’, named in the Chronicle as Ceadwalla’s brother.⁵¹ In Bede’s pages he came to power as *rex Gewissorum*

⁴⁵ The place-name Basing appears denuded of any second element: perhaps *-hearg* was simply dropped after conversion.

⁴⁶ John Blair, *Building Anglo-Saxon England* (Princeton, NJ, 2018), 126, draws attention to the impressive pagan-period complex partially excavated at Cowdery’s Down (now site of the Lynchpit housing development), on the hillside across the river Loddon from Basing minster (M. Millett & S. James, ‘Excavations at Cowdery’s Down, Basingstoke, 1978–81’, *Archaeological Journal* 140 (1983), 151–279). He suggests that the *hearg* itself was defined by the old Roman enclosure juxtaposed to the Anglo-Saxon halls, whose layout reflects ceremonial practice.

⁴⁷ S 1171, which survives as an original; Whitelock, *English Historical Documents*, 486–8 (no. 60). The word-spacing in the uncial script was deemed incompatible with a contemporary date by Lowe, who declared it a single-sheet copy of the second half of the eighth century, appearing to introduce a new category into diplomatic practice. Pierre Chaplais, ‘Some early Anglo-Saxon diplomas on single sheets: originals or copies?’, *Journal of the Society of Archivists* 3 (no. 7, April 1968), 315–336 (pp. 327–32), disagreed but thought the charter as first written was left incomplete with the bounds and witnesses in a second hand at a later stage. He also observed that the number of hides had been altered at some time from LXXV to XL.

⁴⁸ Guda presbiter is named in both; Hugon abbas in S 235 may be same as Hacona presbiter et abbas in S 1171 (copied as Hagona in S 1246).

⁴⁹ A third charter, S 1248, was rightly perceived as false by Whitelock, *Some Anglo-Saxon Bishops of London*, 7–8; it drew the names of its witnesses from the two seventh-century documents.

⁵⁰ Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, 48.

⁵¹ S 10; S. E. Kelly, *Charters of St Augustine’s Abbey, Canterbury* (Oxford, 1995), 139–41 (no. 40). The text carries a date 1 March 689 in the king’s second year, compatible with the killing of

but died as *rex Saxonum*.⁵² His bishops Wilfrid and Hædde attested alongside Eorconwald in his own charter and alongside King Sæbbi in that for Barking. It may be added that after 688, King Ine would still refer to both Hædde and Eorconwald as ‘my’ bishops.⁵³

Without sound dates, all this information leaves us unable to construct a sequential narrative.⁵⁴ Did Wilfrid play any part in Ceadwalla’s rise to power? That appears to be Stephen’s position but not Bede’s. To answer the question, we need to know both when Wilfrid was recalled to Northumbria and when Ceadwalla became king. There has been a temptation to follow Bede, who says that for five years, ‘usque ad mortem Ecgfridi regis’ (‘until the death of King Ecgfrith’) (*HE* IV 13), Wilfrid laboured as bishop of the South Saxons. Now Ecgfrith was slain on 20 May 685. Ceadwalla’s reign of just two years, a figure given twice by Bede, may be counted back from 688 to 686, and a gap opens up. This gap becomes longer if we mistrust Bede’s annalistic summary and date Ceadwalla’s departure just a few weeks before his death in April 689. His two-year reign fell mainly in 687 and 688.

Wilfrid’s recall is itself tied in with the sequence of events in Northumbria, where we have too much information easily to set in order when few of our dates are precise. In all this we must be chary of integrating dates from different sources unless they are chronologically secure. It would be safer to establish the sequence of events as understood by Bede.

Bede has given us two relevant indicators. Wilfrid, he says, was recalled to Northumbria in the second year of King Aldfrith’s reign (*HE* V 19), a date received from Stephen’s *Vita* (c. 44). And Ceadwalla gave up his sceptre in the third year of King Aldfrith’s reign (*HE* V 7). We know too that Ceolfrith was chosen abbot of Jarrow in the third year of the reign on 12 May in the first indiction, that is 688.⁵⁵ Bede had a clear sense of Aldfrith’s regnal years. He reports that he reigned nineteen years (*HE* V 1) and died in 705 before completing the twentieth year of his reign (*HE* V 18). The northern DE-text of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle adds precision: he died on

Múl in 687; there are difficulties over its composite character, but this information is too obscure to be interpolated. Kelly, 143–4, discusses its testimony regarding Múl.

⁵² Yorke, ‘The Jutes of Hampshire and Wight’, 93.

⁵³ Laws of Ine, Prologue, promulgated no later than 694; ed. F. Liebermann, *Gesetze der Angelsachsen* (Halle, 1898–1916), i. 88; Whitelock, *English Historical Documents*, 399 (no. 32).

⁵⁴ Much has been written in an effort to set dates on Wilfrid’s mobile career. A recent point of reference is Catherine Cubitt, ‘St Wilfrid: a man for his times’, *Wilfrid. Abbot, Bishop, Saint* (Donnington, Lincs, 2013), 311–47 (chronology at pp. 342–7).

⁵⁵ *Vita Ceolfridi abbatis*, c. 17 (Plummer, 394).

14 December 705 at Driffield, a royal estate of no small interest.⁵⁶ As Kenneth Harrison pointed out, this means that he was not yet king on that date in 685 but succeeded no later than 12 May 686.⁵⁷ For the purpose of argument, let us suppose he was recognized as king on the first day of 686. This means that Wilfrid did not return to Northumbria until 687. Up to five years back, he did not begin his ministry in Sussex before some time in 682.

Bishop Cuthbert in Northumbria died on 20 March 687. Bede does not make clear whether Wilfrid had already returned or arrived soon after: we do not know whether King Aldfrith called him to take Cuthbert's place, or, if he did, whether he did so following Cuthbert's withdrawal to the Inner Farne, straight after Christmas 686, or only following his death three months later. What Bede says is that, after Cuthbert was buried at Lindisfarne, Wilfrid administered (*seruabat*) the bishopric in that church during one year—not more than twelve months—until a successor was consecrated. Precisely that one year, from the saint's burial to Eadberht's consecration, was described in Bede's verse and prose Lives of St Cuthbert as a time of stormy troubles for the community, when some monks chose to leave the fold. Alan Thacker has joined these remarks with the one sentence in Bede's later *Historia* that points to Wilfrid as the cause, and drawn the inference, 'Bede was evidently determined that Wilfrid's role should be traceable, even if it was not made explicit'.⁵⁸ In other words Bede meant his reader to compare his two works and draw conclusions. Wilfrid's relations with this monastery began in his youth—Bede follows Stephen in writing about this—but they must have been broken long ago, when Wilfrid caused the community to split in 664, so that the Irish withdrew from the Northumbrian church. To judge from the verse Life, Bede depicted Cuthbert as recommending monks to leave rather than to stay and put up with Wilfrid's plans for Lindisfarne.

It is regrettable that we do not know exactly when Eadberht was consecrated, presumably in the early part of 688, and Wilfrid was cast out again. The second visit to King Aldfrith by the renowned Irish churchman, Adomnán, abbot of Iona, is best dated to the period around Easter 688, a

⁵⁶ [A. T. Thacker], VCH *East Riding of Yorkshire*, ix, 10–12; B. A. E. Yorke, *Rex doctissimus: Bede and King Aldfrith of Northumbria*, Jarrow Lecture (2009), 16.

⁵⁷ K. Harrison, 'The reign of King Ecgfrith of Northumbria', *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal* 43 (1971), 79–84; Yorke, *Rex doctissimus*, 20–23.

⁵⁸ Bede, *Vita metrica S. Cuthberti*, cc. 34 (prophecy), 37 (event) (Jaeger, 115, 119–20); id. *Vita S. Cuthberti*, c. 40 (Colgrave, *Two Lives*, 286, and note, 357); A. T. Thacker, 'Shaping the saint: rewriting tradition in the early Lives of St Cuthbert', *The Introduction of Christianity into the Early Medieval Insular World. Converting the Isles I*, ed. R. Flechner & M. Ní Mhaonaigh (Turnhout, 2016), 399–429 (pp. 410–11, 416–18, 419–20, quotation at p. 418).

year when the feast fell on 29 March by Roman reckoning and three weeks later by Irish reckoning.⁵⁹ We can guess that Adomnán would not have come at that time, if Wilfrid were still in authority at Lindisfarne. It would be convenient for our chronology, indeed, if Wilfrid had gone south to join Ceadwalla by March 688, witnessing Hodilred's charter for Barking: no other year fits so well. On this stage of his career both Stephen and Bede shed very little if any light. Stephen has stirred up the chronological sequence. He passed directly from describing Wilfrid's ministry in Sussex (c. 41) to his counselling Ceadwalla (c. 42). Next, however, he reports a meeting in London, at which Archbishop Theodore proposed, in the presence of Bishop Eorconwald, that Wilfrid should succeed him at Canterbury when the time came (c. 43). Wilfrid most properly thought such a decision should come from a synod, and Theodore sent letters to King Aldfrith, to Abbess Ælfflæd at Whitby, and to Wilfrid's patron in Mercia, King Æthelred, after which Wilfrid was restored to his property in Æthelred's kingdom. There follows a chapter on his reconciliation with Aldfrith (c. 44), 'in the second year of his reign' (the only interpretable date here), after which Wilfrid remained secure in his churches at Ripon and York for five years. Then there is the falling out with Aldfrith and the start of an eleven-year exile in Mercia (c. 45). Little of this is rooted in dates, but Stephen wants us to think that Wilfrid lived quietly in Northumbria for five years from 687 to 691.

On this whole period Bede appears to be completely silent, though in reality he was not. In his case too, the elusive sequence of the narrative was the means to discretion.

Only the charters speak to us with a year-date. In the first indiction, 688, Wilfrid is named in a charter by which the West Saxon king gave land in Surrey.⁶⁰ Here he attested as a superior bishop with precedence over the diocesan bishops Eorconwald and Hædde. He was fulfilling Stephen's role

⁵⁹ Bede, *HE* V 15, mentions that, during a visit to King Aldfrith, Adomnán saw the rites of church canonically observed in a context that suggests he referred to the canonical Easter. The year 688 was the penultimate year of the 84-year cycle 606–689, and the date of Easter by Irish reckoning may be read off from the table in D. McCarthy & D. Ó Cróinín, 'The lost Irish 84-year Easter table rediscovered', *Peritia* 6/7 (1987–8), 227–42. Adomnán himself, *Vita S. Columbae*, II 46, says, 'on my first visit after Ecgfrith's battle and on my second two years later, though I walked in the midst of this danger of plague, the Lord delivered me'. A visit in the spring of 686 might well coincide with Aldfrith's accession, and the height of the plague, which carried off Abbot Eosterwine of Wearmouth on 7 March (*Vita Ceolfredi abbatis*, c. 13; Bede, *Historia abbatum*, c. 8). The second visit would fall in 688. He avoided a visit while Wilfrid was bishop at Lindisfarne during 687.

⁶⁰ Gelling, *Thames Valley*, 150, plays with fire: 'It bears an incorrect incarnation date, 688, incompatible with the signature of Bishop Wilfrid. The indiction points to 687'. It does not.

for him as high counsellor to King Ceadwalla. The fact that the venue was a place of heathen worship highlights the level of accommodation between the bishops and the king at this time.

With this in mind, we can return to what Bede says. At the end of *HE* IV 13 he starts with Ceadwalla's defeating and killing Wilfrid's patron Æthelwulf and his ravaging of Sussex, while Wilfrid was still at Selsey. The South Saxon ealdormen took up arms to defend the kingdom and drove him off. In time Ceadwalla gained control of his own kingdom, the Gewisse, perhaps before the end of 686. He returned to Sussex, killed Ealdorman Berhthun, and began to oppress the kingdom. At just this point it was convenient for Wilfrid to go north early in 687 for what proved to be barely a year. Our sources say that he was called, not that he fled. None the less, the church he deserted in Sussex remained with no bishop of its own for decades, coming instead under the oversight of the bishop of the Gewisse. Going into Chapter 14, Bede allows a little overlap in his indicators of time. Already Ceadwalla, 'cum esset rex Gewissorum' ('when he was king of the Gewisse'), had taken over Sussex. Now Chapter 14 begins, 'Postquam ergo Caedwalla regno potitus est Geuissorum' ('After Ceadwalla had possessed himself of the kingdom of the Gewisse'). At this point in Bede's account, he seized the Isle of Wight and massacred the inhabitants. By chance, Wilfrid had turned up from his own people. Without signalling the bishop's movements, Bede and Stephen both knew that Wilfrid had gone north in the second year of Aldfrith's reign and now, in what is surely the third year of Aldfrith's reign, he is back in the south of England, this time close enough to King Ceadwalla to be favoured with three hundred hides of land. If he had got out of Sussex when things became really uncomfortable, why is he back in Wessex, and in Ceadwalla's camp, a year later? Only Stephen tries to explain that and he does so, not only by eliding the sequence of events but also by leaving out all the sort of thing that Bede has told us about Ceadwalla. Wilfrid may have been drawn to Ceadwalla, because, within the space of a year, he had made himself the dominant king in southern England. Ceadwalla, perhaps seeing himself as moving from war to politics, from battle to treaty, wanted a grand representative to speak for him to Christian kings and their bishops. What Bishop Hædde thought of this is nowhere disclosed, but we shall suppose that some of what he knew passed to his successor Daniel. Yet we need not accuse Wilfrid of encroaching on his episcopal authority among the West Saxons and those under their power. Wilfrid was no more than a special adviser to the king, albeit in episcopal orders and taking precedence as such.

Table showing sequence of events

682?	Wilfrid is received in Sussex by King Æthelwath and given land at Selsey, the beginning of nearly five years in Sussex
20 May 685	King Ecgrith's death during his invasion of Pictland; more than six months follow before a new king is installed
685?	Ceadwalla, not yet king of the Gewisse, attacks Sussex and kills King Æthelwath. Berhthun and Andhun take over the kingdom
14 Dec 685	<i>terminus a quo</i> for King Aldfrith's accession, counting backwards twenty years before his death
12 May 686	<i>terminus ad quem</i> for King Aldfrith's succession, counting backwards from Ceolfriht's election as abbot of Jarrow, 12 May 688, in his third year
late 686	Ceadwalla becomes king of the Gewisse
25 Dec 686	After Christmas 686, Bishop Cuthbert retires from Lindisfarne and retreats to Farne Island
early 687	Wilfrid, recalled to Northumbria in the second year of King Aldfrith, leaves Sussex and travels north, a distance of 400 miles; allowing time for the summons to reach him and for him to travel north, perhaps three or four month elapse
20 Mar 687	Bishop Cuthbert's death in Farne Island
	Ceadwalla invades Sussex and kills Berhthun, beginning his rise to power
remainder of 687	Wilfrid at Lindisfarne as caretaker for nearly one year until a new bishop is installed
?Feb 688	Eadberht chosen and consecrated bishop in Lindisfarne; Wilfrid leaves Northumbria and returns to southern England
Mar 688	Wilfrid in London attests the Barking charter with Bishop Eorconwald and Bishop Hædde, perhaps at Easter 688, perhaps in Ceadwalla's invisible presence
29 Mar 688	Adomnán of Iona observes Easter in Northumbria, at a time when Wilfrid was in the south
spring 688	Wilfrid arrives in Wessex in the third year of King Aldfrith
?May 688	King Ceadwalla gives land to found Farnham minster in Surrey in a ceremony held at <i>Besingahearh</i> in the presence of the three bishops, Wilfrid, Eorconwald, and Hædde, perhaps on an important date in his heathen ritual calendar
autumn 688	King Ceadwalla invades the Isle of Wight and massacres the Wihtware
late 688	Abbot Cyneberht intervenes with the wounded Ceadwalla to baptise the young brothers of King Arwald
very late 688	King Ceadwalla is persuaded to leave his kingdom to travel to Rome
10 April 689	Ceadwalla is baptised in Rome and dies ten days later

King Ceadwalla's brand of politics, however, required him to be *uictor* as well as *indultor pacis*. And the Wihtware were not doing well. Wight was perhaps strategically important to holding Sussex and Hampshire together. To weaken Wessex a Mercian king had long ago handed the Isle of Wight over to a South Saxon king, whom Ceadwalla had defeated and killed maybe two or three years before. What dealings he had had with the island in the meantime we are not told. The young King Arwald, whose brothers

were still children, may have only recently inherited the throne. Now Ceadwalla's death-dealing attack in, as I should argue, 688, is the starkest instance of genocide in our sources.⁶¹ The islanders were not Saxons but Jutes.⁶² Bede presents them as the last stubborn outpost of paganism, 'eatenus erat tota insula idolatriae dedita' ('till then the whole island was entirely given over to idolatry'). That was not why Ceadwalla massacred them, and it is a fig-leaf to say that the pagan king already vowed (*ut ferunt*) to give a share of his conquest to the bishop. Wilfrid accepted his reward. Bede then tells the affecting story of how Abbot Cyneberht sought out the wounded Ceadwalla and secured his permission to baptize King Arwald's brothers, last heirs of the Jutish elite, before their execution. And at this point Bede reminds us that the island, like Sussex, came under West Saxon oppression, so that they had no bishop of their own, even as he wrote, when they were still looked after by the West Saxon bishop Daniel.

Daniel had surely known his predecessor Bishop Hædde, who died in 705, and he may well have channelled what Hædde told him. He may have had his own memories of life under Ceadwalla.⁶³ He appears to have instilled in Bede the idea that these territories should have had bishops of their own and not come under his, alien, supervision. He appears to have thought that Bishop Wilfrid abandoned his flock. Bede could no doubt have contributed a northern perspective here, but he chose not to explain Wilfrid's return to Bernicia in 687.

There may have been talk of much worse.

If we may speak of charges against Wilfrid, they divide between his actions in Sussex and his conduct in Wessex as Ceadwalla's counsellor. Reading the two main passages from Bede, set out above, there is nothing to link Wilfrid with Ceadwalla's killing of King Æthelwath. The worst charge here would be that conditions in Sussex became frighteningly hostile, and he thought it safer to return to Northumbria. The truth may be entirely innocent, that he was actually recalled by King Aldfrith. Anyone reading these paragraphs who remembered what Stephen had written, twenty years earlier, could draw a far worse inference. If Wilfrid helped Ceadwalla to his throne, he was already aligned with the pagan when his Christian patron Æthelwath

⁶¹ J. E. Fraser, 'Early medieval Europe. The case of Britain and Ireland', *The Oxford Handbook of Genocide Studies* (Oxford, 2010), 259–79, at p. 269. And p. 271 'Bede's account of the genocide visited on the denizens of the Isle of Wight conveniently weds the purgation of elites with extermination'. He perhaps overstates the killing of the boys as 'its centrepiece'.

⁶² Bede, *HE* I 15. At *HE* IV 14, Bede refers only to the Jutes in southern Hampshire, already under West Saxon control.

⁶³ Consecrated bishop in 705, Daniel had by then no doubt reached the canonical age of thirty. He was therefore aged thirteen upwards at the time of the massacre of the Wightware.

was killed and his Christian flock oppressed. This charge has been recognized by historians for more than a century. William Bright asked an awkward question: ‘One cannot but wonder whether the apostle of Sussex was passive in such a crisis or whether his influence was used in vain’.⁶⁴ D. H. Farmer, trusting Stephen too far, wrote:⁶⁵

Wilfrid befriended an exiled Wessex prince, Cædwalla, and helped him regain his throne in 686. In the course of the fighting, Æthelwath, Wilfrid’s former patron, was killed. At this distance we do not know why Wilfrid apparently abandoned his former friend nor if his role in the whole affair was as important as Eddius [*Stephen*] made it.

Henry Mayr-Harting described the charge as one of ‘the blackest treachery towards his trusting South Saxon patron’.⁶⁶ We are not the first to compare our sources. Bishop Acca knew what was written in Stephen’s *Vita*—he was one of its patrons—and he may have known more behind its surface. In his mind, anyone knowing Stephen’s version and reading Bede’s chapters could well infer that Wilfrid helped Ceadwalla to destroy Æthelwath, a truly appalling charge.⁶⁷ This is the reason why Acca persuaded Bede to interpolate a harmless but distracting chapter into his account of Wilfrid in Sussex. I am more inclined to think that the charge was unreal, arising only because Stephen had distorted the sequence of events in hope of boosting his subject—and without anticipating that someone closer to the events would gainsay him. In Bishop Daniel’s mind Wilfrid left his diocese at the mercy of someone with no mercy. On the second charge, Wilfrid’s choosing to serve a heathen king was hardly the worst of it. Other churchmen served Ceadwalla too, not least Bishop Hædde. But the slaughter in the Isle of Wight seems to have weighed on Daniel, with his apparent sympathy for those oppressed by his own king, and he conveyed his feelings to Bede. Wilfrid’s quarter share of the island and its booty (*praeda*) was a blood-stained gift, albeit one permitted by the law of the church.⁶⁸ None the less

⁶⁴ W. Bright, *Chapters of Early English Church History* (Oxford, 1897), 392.

⁶⁵ D. H. Farmer, ‘St Wilfrid’, *St Wilfrid at Hexham* (Newcastle, 1974), 35–60 (p. 50).

⁶⁶ H. Mayr-Harting, ‘St Wilfrid in Sussex’, *Studies in Sussex Church History*, ed. M. J. Kitch (London, 1981), 1–17 (p. 7).

⁶⁷ There is a comparison to be made here with Clare Stancliffe’s asking whether Bede thought King Oswald was implicated in the murder of King Edwin’s son Eadfrith (*HE* II 20; ‘Oswald, most holy and most victorious king of the Northumbrians’, *Oswald. Northumbrian King to European Saint* (Stamford, 1995), 33–83 (pp. 73–4).

⁶⁸ Theodore, *Iudicia*, I 7. 2, ‘De pecunia quae in aliena prouincia ab hoste superato raptata fuerit, id est rege alio superato, tertia pars ad ecclesiam tribuatur’ (‘Concerning livestock that has been taken from a defeated enemy in a foreign kingdom, that is when a king has been defeated, a third share shall be given to the church’); ib. II 14. 7, ‘Rex si alterius regis terram habet, potest

Acca was more concerned by the thought that Wilfrid betrayed a Christian king than that he was accessory to the genocide of the pagan Jutish Wihtware. Acca's strong partiality swayed Bede, who, in either case, wanted to avoid any direct accusations against Wilfrid.

For Bede, however, Ceadwalla represented a far larger problem in his historic vision for the ecclesiastical history of the English people. Lapses into paganism happened in the early days. Wessex, however, had had four bishops before Hædde. It was a converted kingdom. The conversion of Sussex and, such as it was, of the Isle of Wight marked the end of the whole process of conversion. How then was he to deal with Ceadwalla, *necdum regeneratus*, who paraded bishops at a site of animal-sacrifice while making a gift of land to found a minster? Nothing suggests that he was an apostate who had renounced the faith. It is still less plausible to compare him to Constantine, a believer who postponed baptism because he could not rule without sin. Ceadwalla was quite simply a royal heathen, though born decades after his people received their first bishop. How Christian was the West Saxon aristocracy at this time? Bede can hardly have thought of him as a pagan king who led a band of murderous but Christian followers, but it was not Bede's way to focus on compromise.

Bede picked a careful path, saying enough but no more than enough. It was his use here and there of a few telling words that opened the door to our reconstruction of the likely sequence of events. What resolved the underlying problem for his master narrative was Ceadwalla's final conversion and baptism. The king had been injured in the fighting, and his hurt was so severe that he judged it better to hide away until it was on the mend. We are in the realm of guesswork to think that, whatever the injury, it was not healing well. Infection spelt death, and Bishop Wilfrid could teach lessons about death and beyond. In this way, we can envisage how Ceadwalla might be won over by a new grand plan. It would lead to honour, immortality indeed, for the king and an uplifting story that would wipe away any discredit that Wilfrid had earned from his joining Ceadwalla. The great uncertainty here was how long the plan would take. Would the ailing Ceadwalla survive the journey to the chief of cities? That was no doubt a gamble. If he gave up his sceptre and left his kingdom before the end of 688, as our sources say, then he was either taking the journey very slowly or he arrived in Rome with time to spare before Easter. There are strong reasons to think Abbot Aldhelm accompanied Ceadwalla on the journey to Rome and

dare pro anima sua' ('If a king has the land of another king, he can make a gift of it for the sake of his soul').

returned with a collection of verse inscriptions.⁶⁹ In one of his poems Aldhelm writes of the king's crossing the snowy Alps.⁷⁰ The implication is that he followed the *iter Francorum*, where winter weather could have delayed his passage over the Great St Bernard pass.⁷¹ Paul the Deacon suggests that he passed through Lombardy, where he was 'wonderfully' (*mirifice*) received by King Cunincpert. During the winter of 688–9, however, Cunincpert was excluded from his cities by the usurper Alahis, a problem that makes one wonder whether Paul had his facts right.⁷² Aldhelm's poem relates that the king sickened a week after baptism, but given what we are told by Bede of his injury, we cannot believe he was in rude health until that moment.⁷³ Good luck, or providence, may have had to play its part in the timing of Ceadwalla's death.

Our sources are indeed circumspect. Stephen's role as propagandist for Wilfrid is plain to see. He has said so little about Wilfrid and Ceadwalla that we cannot even deduce how much he may have known. The fact that he mentions him at all, and in such positive terms, indicates that he knew there was a story and that he needed to counteract it. No one relying on Stephen would have learnt that Ceadwalla was not Christian. Bede reveals much more, but we have had to tease it out. What we see in his fractured narrative here makes sense as retelling the story from Bishop Daniel's point of view, modified to reflect other influences on Bede. His difficulties in portraying Wilfrid in the *Historia* have been the subject of remark since at least the

⁶⁹ M. Lapidge, 'The career of Aldhelm', *Anglo-Saxon England* 36 (2006), 15–69 (pp. 59–61).

⁷⁰ Aldhelm, *Carmina ecclesiastica* 3 (ed. Ewald, 14–18), on Bugga's church, lines 23–4, 'exin nimbasas transcendit passibus Alpes / aggeribus niueis et montis uertice saeptas' ('from there with steady pace he crossed the cloud-capped Alps hemmed in by heaps of snow and the mountain precipice'). The language may typify the mountains and need not signify a winter journey.

⁷¹ Earlier in the century the Rhone valley route to Marseille and a voyage from there to Rome were favoured to avoid Lombard territory, though the sea crossing seems not to have been taken in winter. The *Iter Francorum*, much used in the eighth century and later, crossed the Alps by the Great St Bernard pass and headed south through Ivrea and Pavia. Benedict Biscop's route through Vienne in 671 no doubt involved the long passage by sea (*Historia abbatum*, c. 4), but in 679 and 680 Wilfrid took the road over the Alps and met the Lombard king Perctarit (Stephen, *Vita S. Wilfrithi episcopi*, c. 12). Data on such matters are collected by S. Matthews, *The Road to Rome. Travel and travellers between England and Italy in the Anglo-Saxon centuries* (Oxford, 2007).

⁷² Paul the Deacon, *Historia Langobardorum*, VI 15 (ed. G. Waitz, *MGH Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum* 48 (1878), 217): 'His diebus Cedoal rex Anglorum Saxonum, qui multa in sua patria bella gesserat, ad Christum conuersus Romam properauit. Qui per Cunincpertum regem ueniens ab eo mirifice susceptus est'. Paul, however, fits this into his sequence of event only in 698, too late by a decade, despite having the indiction in Ceadwalla's epitaph.

⁷³ Lines 28–30, 'post albas igitur morbo correptus egrescit / donec mortalis clausit spiracula uitae' ('after Easter week his health failed and he took ill, till he closed the breath of mortal life').

days of James Raine and Charles Plummer.⁷⁴ Various ideas have come to the surface as to why Bede did not take wholeheartedly to that most energetic bishop. Discussion of Bede's views on Wilfrid naturally focused on those aspects of his career that feature in the larger story. Bede knew that Wilfrid was hated at Lindisfarne, but some of that resulted from what happened at Whitby in 664 and its aftermath: on the date of Easter Bede would have taken Wilfrid's side, but on his conduct at Lindisfarne Bede made Cuthbert speak against Wilfrid. That was when he revised his *Life of St Cuthbert*. Years afterwards, preparing to write his *Historia*, he learnt Daniel's perspective on what happened in Wessex and Sussex, which may have made Bede very uncomfortable about Wilfrid. His virtues were well known, his prodigious striving for the cause of the church, and Bishop Acca was at hand to keep putting the case in favour, perhaps even after the stage when Bede had set out his views on parchment. Wilfrid's ambition and pride may always have been distasteful to Bede, who preferred monastic modesty; he could and did tone down Stephen's portrait. But Bede could not get out of his mind what Daniel had reported, that Wilfrid left Christians to a killer, that he later served the killer, turning a blind eye to carnage and accepting the victims' land as a gift from the killer. Of course, Cyneberht's story reflects the helplessness of a mere monk, able to persuade the king to permit instruction and baptism before his enemy's brothers were executed, saving souls but not lives. Yet Daniel saw them as victims, and he thought the king's high counsellor was complicit.

In the end, what Bede did was to redeem Ceadwalla's posthumous reputation while at the same time leaving enough hints for the truth to come out. Ceadwalla's conversion and baptism in Rome, featured prominently in Book V, saved the master-narrative. There is nothing to prove who persuaded Ceadwalla to think of his own soul, and there is no means of supporting the guess that Ceadwalla was open to such ideas only because death was near. Wilfrid was on the spot in 688 and had a prominent position.⁷⁵ Others may have played a part. Bishop Hædde and Abbot Aldhelm appear as close to Ceadwalla as Wilfrid. There was good reason for them all to want to turn the story into one of royal conversion at the

⁷⁴ J. Raine the younger, *Historians of the Church of York* (1879–94), vol. i, p. xxxiv; Plummer, ii. 315–16. More recently Walter Goffart has stimulated debate by depicting Bede as a spokesman for those who were against Wilfrid, oversimplifying the complexities of Bede's position.

⁷⁵ Failing health and Wilfrid's influence were invoked by the Revd Charles Hole (1824–1906) in W. Smith's *Dictionary of Christian Biography* (London, 1877–87), i. 373. More recently Wilfrid's likely role has been mentioned by Farmer, 'St Wilfrid', 51, and C. Stancliffe, 'Kings who opted out', *Ideal and Reality in Frankish and Anglo-Saxon Society* (Oxford, 1983), 154–76 (pp. 170–71).

threshold of the apostles. How this news was received by their fellow churchmen in 689 is now lost to us. Decades later, none of them received credit from Bede, who gave the halo to Ceadwalla himself. His sins were remitted in baptism, and he died unstained. Bede needed to do this to expunge the late pagan revival in Wessex in Hædde's time, and it worked on later medieval historians. The one whose reputation may have been tainted by the whole episode was Wilfrid. Writing his *Historia*, Bede could not shake off the idea, planted by Bishop Daniel but very likely not generally known in the north, that Wilfrid had blood on his hands.

What we learn from all this about Wilfrid is the clarification of the sequence of events in the 680s and the harmonization of what Stephen and Bede report. The factors staining the bishop's reputation have been recognized for a very long time. Ceadwalla on the other hand now emerges more visibly as a heathen who fought his way to power and, in enjoying his *imperium*, made prelates spectators and beneficiaries of his pagan conduct. The assembly at *Besingahearh* gives us vivid reason not to be swept along by the conversion narrative. There is doubt about the depth of real conversion in Wessex as late as 688 and, if in Wessex, then elsewhere too. More surprising, however, is the argument for the revision of Bede's *Historia* after its first circulation and in deference to Acca as guardian of Wilfrid's reputation. The unasked and surely unanswerable question here is who wrote the story of the apostolic visitation on St Oswald's day at a monastery in Sussex. We have supposed that, near the end of his life, Bede was persuaded to add it by Acca, something that makes us reflect on his own sense of the integrity of his text. Yet we cannot disprove the possibility that, though mentioning Acca in the third person, it was Acca's interpolation after Bede's death.

ABSTRACT

Bede's account of the heathen West Saxon king Ceadwalla relies on information from Bishop Daniel of Wessex for the king's wars in Sussex and his massacre of the Wihtware. Bede knew of the king's late conversion and his baptism by Pope Sergius from the king's epitaph in Rome. His knowledge of Bishop Wilfrid's work in Sussex derived in part from Stephen's earlier *Life of St Wilfrid* and in part from Bishop Daniel's report. His attitude to Wilfrid was already mixed, because of what he knew about Wilfrid's conduct in Northumbria, but what he learned from Daniel when preparing his *History* was perhaps unsettling. Someone who knew the *Life of St Wilfrid* and came to read Bede's *History* could easily have drawn adverse conclusions about Wilfrid's dealings with King Ceadwalla, and it is argued here that a long passage about an inconsequential miracle of St Oswald in Sussex was added to the *History* at the behest of Bishop Acca, Bede's friend and Wilfrid's former chaplain, after the first copies of the work had gone out, in order to divert attention from the worst interpretation of Wilfrid's relationship with the king. The passage survives as inserted into the archetype of the Northumbrian transmission without adjustment to the chapter-headings, but the parent of the southern and Continental transmission had already gone south and shows the original state of the text. This revision has led to confusion in the chapter-numbering of Book IV; its proper understanding casts a new light on Bede's stance towards his own text. The chronology of the actual events can be worked out to harmonize Northumbrian and West Saxon sources, while a charter of Ceadwalla dated 688 presents the unexpected scene of his giving land for the foundation of a minster at Farnham in the presence of three bishops at a pagan temple. His paganism and his blood-letting, fifty years after his people had supposedly converted, would have been problematic for Bede's master-narrative of conversion. Ceadwalla's injury beyond hope of recovery, however, opened the door to his being persuaded to go to Rome, surely by Wilfrid, where his baptism and immediate death transformed the story. This may have saved Wilfrid's reputation in 689, and it helped Bede's narrative and gave importance to the Roman epitaph. Yet Wilfrid's earlier service to the pagan king appears to have disturbed Bishop Daniel and coloured Bede's already ambivalent assessment of Wilfrid.