

V.—THE ANGLIAN BISHOPS OF HEXHAM.

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AUTHORITIES.

Bede. *Historia Ecclesiastica*. The primary source of information about the early bishops.

Bede. *Vita Sancti Cuthberti*.

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle.

Anon. *Vita Sancti Eatae Hagulstaldensis Episcopi*. Contains little that is not in Bede except the later stories of what happened to the saint's remains.

Eddi. *Vita Sancti Wilfridi Episcopi*.

Frithegoda. *Vita Sancti Wilfredi* in hexameter verse. Frithegoda is said to have been a person of considerable learning and tutor to Archbishop Oswald (d. 992).

Eadmer. *Vita Wilfridi Episcopi*. Eadmer died 1124. He wrote this life amongst the lives of the saints of Canterbury because Archbishop Odo was believed to have translated Wilfrid's body thither.

Folcard. *Vita Sancti Johannis Episcopi Eboracensis*. Eleventh century. Folcard, a monk in the house of St. Bertin in Flanders, migrated to Canterbury and after the Conquest became Abbot of Thorney. There is an appendix on the miracles of St. John by William Ketel c. 1150, and three other appendices giving further miracles of later date.

Annales Lindisfarnenses. A.D. 532-993.

Ricardi Prioris Hagulstaldensis Ecclesiae *de Antiquo et Moderno Statu ejusdem Ecclesiae*.

Aelred Abbot of Rievaulx. *De Sanctis Ecclesiae Hagustaldensis* (twelfth century).

Florence of Worcester. *Chronicon ex Chronicis*.

Symeon of Durham. *Historia Dunelmensis Ecclesiae*.

Symeon of Durham. *Historia Regum*.

William of Malmesbury. *De Gestis Pontificum Anglorum*.

William of Malmesbury. *De Gestis Regum Anglorum*.

Henry of Huntingdon. *Historia Anglorum*.

Roger of Hoveden. *Chronica*.

Bede is our primary source of information. To the *Continuatio Bedae* a ninth-century chronicler seems to have added a chronicle of about seventy years, 737-802. Stubbs thought this was perhaps composed at Hexham. The compiler inserted some things which are not in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. Another chronicler then added notes on the years 803, 830, 849-978. United these two became the *Historia Anglorum sine Saxonum post Bedam*, which was used with some divergences by the eleventh and twelfth century chroniclers. Stubbs gave as the causes of the divergences in chronology the casual omission of uneventful years, the varieties of date chosen for the beginning of the year, incorporation from other annals of matters dated by the regnal years of kings, and lastly the imperfect amalgamation of heterogeneous matter.¹ The *Gesta Veterum Northanhymbrorum*, i.e. the second part of the northern chronicle mentioned above (803-978) was used by the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, but in the latter half of the eighth century sometimes differs by as much as two years. In such cases the *Gesta* has the greater weight of authority.

The ecclesiastical history of Hexham begins with Wilfrid, who in 664 had been chosen as Bishop of Northumbria with York as his cathedral city. He went away to Gaul to be consecrated and was away a long time. This is not surprising if we consider the difficulties of travelling in the seventh century and the time it would take to gather together the twelve prelates who consecrated him. We may safely say also that he remained in Gaul for some time learning all he could of the management of a diocese as practised in that land. Bede says he was consecrated in 664, but this was impossible, for Agilbert, the chief consecrator, did not become Bishop of Paris till 665.² Ralph de Diceto also says that he was consecrated in the latter year. On his return he found St. Chad in possession of the see owing to the impatience of the king at his long absence. Wilfrid quietly retired to the monastery at Ripon, which Alchfrid the sub-king of Deira had given him. In 669 Archbishop Theodore, on his first visitation, found something lacking

¹ Stubbs, *Roger of Hoveden*, I, pp. lxxxvii-ix.

² Mabillon, *Ann. Ben.* I, 478.

in Chad's consecration and reconsecrated him, after which he went to Mercia and became Bishop of Lichfield. Theodore restored Wilfrid to the vacant see, and at the synod of Hertford, 24th September 672,³ he was described as bishop of the nation of the Northumbrians; that is to say he exercised episcopal sway throughout Oswy's dominions. For a time all went well. Oswy was succeeded by Ecgfrith and the latter's queen Etheldreda was one of Wilfrid's warmest supporters. Ecgbert had settled Hexhamshire on his wife, and she made to the bishop a grant of land, twelve miles by six, to enable him to build a monastery. This must have been in or before 672 if in that year she became a nun. Richard of Hexham says the gift was made in 675 with a view to making Hexham an episcopal see, but the year stated seems too late and it is doubtful whether the idea of creating a bishopric there had arisen so soon. Wilfrid was a great church builder; he had already restored the church of St. Peter at York, which had fallen into decay, and he had also built a great church at Ripon.⁴ Now he proceeded to build a monastery at Hexham, with a church which was in after years to be described as the most magnificent to be found north of the Alps. It was a cruciform church, 165 feet long, 126 feet across the transepts and 70 feet across the nave. According to Prior Richard's description it had a clerestory and triforium, and round all three storeys were chapels. The nave had large square piers, and between the arcading and outer walls were circular pillars of smaller size. There were lofty round towers, *cochleae*, with winding stairs which communicated with passages in the thickness of the walls, passages which gave access to the chapels in the upper storeys. The high altar was directly over and immediately to the east of the chapel in the crypt. The atrium, the cemetery at the east end, was surrounded by a wall of great strength, and water was brought to the monastery by a stone aqueduct. Stone was

³ R. L. Poole, *Studies in Chron. and Hist.*, p. 41.

⁴ Eddi, *Vita S. Wilf.*, cxvii.

obtainable in abundance, "stones squared and of various sizes,"⁵ from the neighbouring Roman station of Corstopitum, and some of these are still to be seen in the crypt. The capitals of the columns and the chancel arch were decorated with figures and images carved in relief. Eddi says that Wilfrid brought masons and other workmen to the north, and William of Malmesbury and Richard of Hexham say that he brought them from Italy. The church, decorated with paintings and built after the pattern of an Italian basilica, was probably begun in 674, and was dedicated to St. Andrew, in whose church in Rome Wilfrid had received answers to prayer. Richard tells us that after the destruction by the Danes practically nothing was left except the foundations, which were visible in his day. The Scots did more destruction in 1296, and it was not till 1908 that a portion of the original apse was discovered under the present choir. All Wilfrid's work has then perished except this and the crypt.⁶ During the building of the church a young workman fell from the roof and was thought to be dead, but Wilfrid healed him by his prayers. When it was first completed the privilege of sanctuary was given it over one mile in each direction, and the boundary was marked by four crosses, one set at each of the four cardinal points.

King Ecgrith had a bitter grudge against Wilfrid for supporting the queen in her aspirations towards the religious life. After she had withdrawn to Coldingham, where Wilfrid presided at her veiling, the king married Eormenburga, a sister-in-law of Kentwine, king of Wessex. She hated Wilfrid and constantly stirred up her husband's wrath against him. Eddi called her a Jezebel, Richard of Hexham said Satan lived in her heart, Fredegod called her a chattering partridge. She was always complaining of Wilfrid's wealth and ostentation, and it was she who finally induced the king to confiscate his foundations of Ripon and Hexham.

At the Council of Hertford Theodore had recommended

⁵ Rich. Hexh.

⁶ Hodges, *Hexham*, p. 15.

that as the number of converts to Christianity increased more bishops should be appointed. Now Northumbria was a most unwieldy diocese, and later an assembly of the chief men of the realm, held in 678, decided that henceforth there should be three bishops in the kingdom, one for Bernicia, one for Deira and one for Lindsey, which last was at that moment part of Northumbria. Wilfrid's enemies, jealous of his wealth and influence, were eager for the division as a way of injuring him. They persuaded Theodore that it would be useless to try to get Wilfrid's approval for the scheme, let alone his assistance, and Theodore unwisely allowed himself to be jockeyed into taking part in a private quarrel, but there is no reason to believe Eddi's statement that he was bribed. Without Wilfrid's consent and without the assistance of any other bishops, Theodore consecrated Bosa, a monk of Whitby, Eata abbot of Lindisfarne, and Eadhed, the intention being to divide Bernicia between Bosa and Eata, and to send Eadhed to Lindsey, leaving Wilfrid with Deira. He does not seem to have troubled about the canonical rule of three consecrators, and Wilfrid's consent to the partition of his own diocese was not asked. Theodore's purpose was good, but his methods were deplorable. The Northumbrian assembly referred to must have been held in the early part of 677, for in that year, sometime between February and September, Wilfrid, having taken counsel with some of his brethren, set off to Rome to appeal to the pope.⁷ Florence of Worcester gives the date as 677. Bede seems to make it 678, but Wilfrid's reference to his ten years episcopate need not be taken too exactly, and 678 may be intended as the year of his expulsion from his see. Wilfrid's enemies, enraged at his departure, declared that he had forfeited his see and new arrangements were made. Bosa went to York and Eata took Bernicia, with a choice of Hexham or Lindisfarne for his episcopal seat.⁸ In the following year the Mercians defeated Ecgrith

⁷ R. L. Poole, *Studies in Chron. and Hist.*, p. 48.

⁸ Bede, *Historia Eccl.*, iv, 12.

on the Trent and the province of Lindsey was lost to Northumbria. Eadhed, the first and last bishop of Stow, removed to the monastery of Ripon. He may have performed episcopal functions there but, as far as we know, no special territory was assigned to him, and there is no ground for calling him bishop of Ripon. In 681 Bernicia was divided; Eata remained at Lindisfarne, which he seems to have originally chosen, and Tunbert was consecrated bishop of Hexham.

We must now follow Wilfrid to Rome. It had been proposed to hold a council at Constantinople against the Monothelites, and Pope Agatho, who had ascended the papal throne in June 678, was anxious to get statements of adhesion to the Catholic faith from as many quarters as possible. So he sent John the Archchanter to the English Church, and he was present at the Council of Hatfield on 17th September 679. This is evidence of the close connexion between Rome and England. We shall not find an anti-Roman spirit as we understand it at the back of the succeeding troubles. At a synod in Rome⁹ Wilfrid put in his appeal. The division of his diocese without his consent being asked was a great breach of ecclesiastical order and common courtesy. The confiscation of his abbeys had been a high-handed action of the civil power, while his deprivation of his bishopric had no ecclesiastical authority at all, but was largely, if not entirely, the work of the king and his council. Wilfrid was fighting for the freedom of the Church from state control as much as Becket in later days, and Fisher and More still later. It was a natural thing for the king, who had a personal quarrel with Wilfrid, and for the nobles, because they were all in the wrong, and for Theodore, because a reversed decision would weaken his prestige, to rebel against the papal decision, but it is somewhat surprising to find Hilda and Benedict Biscop on the same side. The Pope at a council or synod held in October 679, ordered that Wilfrid should be reinstated in his

⁹ Poole, *Studies in Chron. and Hist.*, pp. 49-50.

original see, that the bishops irregularly promoted should be deprived, and after that a council should be held to choose bishops whose nomination should be agreeable to Wilfrid. Wilfrid was acquitted of all the charges laid against him. On Tuesday in Easter week, 27th March 680, Wilfrid was one of a hundred and twenty-five bishops who subscribed a declaration of faith.¹⁰ On his return he presented the papal decrees, but they were rejected with scorn by the king and nobles and ignored by Theodore and the other bishops. Wilfrid was thrown into prison by Ecgbert's orders. Released after nine months he went south,¹¹ but driven out of Mercia and Wessex he at last went to Sussex, where he carried on a great missionary work for some years. During this time he obtained from Pope Benedict II in 684 a rescript in his favour, but Northumbria took no notice of it.

Meanwhile Tunbert or Trumbert, his name is variously spelt,¹² was ruling as Bishop of Hexham. He was a relative of Ceolfrid, afterwards Abbot of Wearmouth, and of the latter's brother, Cynefrid, who was Abbot of Gilling near Richmond. Cynefrid had handed over the control of Gilling to Tunbert, who a little later received Ceolfrid into his house. Cynefrid and other monks died of the pestilence and Wilfrid invited Tunbert, Ceolfrid and others to take up their residence at Ripon.¹³ Tunbert was consecrated Bishop of Hexham in 681, and after three years was deposed.¹⁴ The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* says he was turned out in 685. If he was consecrated late in 681 and deposed early in 685 we should have a period of not much more than three years, but the Council of Twyford (or of the Alne) at which King Ecgfrith was present and Archbishop Theodore presided, was held in 684, and at that council Cuthbert was elected to succeed Tunbert.¹⁵ Cuthbert, though elected to

¹⁰ Poole, *Studies in Chron. and Hist.*, pp. 48, 49.

¹¹ Eddi, cc. 39, 40.

¹² Stubbs, *Registrum Sacrum Anglicanum*, p. 4, calls him Trumbert.

¹³ *Hist. Abb. Auctore Anonymo*, cc. 2 and 3.

¹⁴ Bede, *H.E.*, iv, 12, 28.

¹⁵ Bede, *H.E.*, iv, 26.

Hexham, was anxious to go to Lindisfarne instead, and so an exchange was effected and Eata now went to Hexham. Why Tunbert was turned out we do not know. The life of Eata says it is *pro culpa cujusdam inobedentiae*. Probably he had displeased the king, who having got rid of one bishop was anxious to dominate the next. There was much too much of the "my bishop" in the mouths of the early English kings.

Eata had been one of Aidan's twelve English boys whom that saint had taken to instruct in the Christian faith, *puer bonae indolis, natura docilis, ac mansueti animi valde*,¹⁶ he was attentive to the teachings of his master and earnest in following his example. Bede says that before all men he had the grace of mildness and simplicity. He received from the sub-king Alchfrith thirty or forty hides at Ripon for the erection of a monastery, but in 661 Alchfrith transferred the property to Wilfrid because Eata, rather than accept the Roman customs connected with Easter, baptism and the tonsure, then the subject of much debate, had removed with some companions to Melrose. Though Ripon became so intimately bound up with Wilfrid, Florence of Worcester justly calls Eata its founder. At Melrose the monks loved Eata as a father, and with the assistance of grants from landowners he was able to build churches in suitable places. He gathered round him a band of earnest disciples, and specially distinguished among these were Boisil and Cuthbert. When Colman, defeated at the Council of Whitby, abandoned Northumbria, he told Oswy that certain of his brethren wished to remain, and he asked the king to set over them the abbot of Melrose, who would prove a gentle superior. So Eata became Abbot of Lindisfarne and left Boisil as prior at Melrose. When Boisil died Cuthbert became the next prior, but Eata transferred him to Lindisfarne and made him prior there.¹⁷ Cuthbert improved the discipline there by drawing up, at his superior's

¹⁶ *Anon Vita Eatae.*

¹⁷ Bede, *Vita Cuthberti*, c. xvi.

request, a new set of rules for the monastery.¹⁸ When the strife broke out between King Ecgfrith and Wilfrid and the latter was driven out, Eata became bishop of Bernicia with a choice of setting his stool at Hexham or Lindisfarne. At first he chose the latter, but on the deposition of Tunbert he went to Hexham, to the great joy of the people there. Bede speaks of it as the see to which he was first ordained. He had not long to remain there; he was taken ill with dysentery and died in the autumn of 686.¹⁹ He was buried near the *sacrarium* of Hexham, on the south side of it, and a small stone chapel was built over his tomb. Later on his relics were translated to a shrine within the church of St. Andrew.

In 1113 Thomas II, archbishop of York, was persuaded by some of his clergy that it was unjust to the metropolitical church that it had not within it the remains of any of his episcopal predecessors, and that he ought to take some action in the matter. Wilfrid, Chad, Oswald and John of Beverley were held in great veneration in those churches where their bodies were laid, and though it would be impossible to remove any of these four, yet the body of Eata might be brought to York. It would be quite sufficient for Hexham to have the rest of its bishops. The archbishop and some of his priests went to Hexham in the hope of being able to arrange the matter. The brethren of Hexham offered earnest prayer that the body of their bishop might be allowed to remain with them. After the removal had been arranged, however, Eata appeared in a dream to Thomas, rebuked him sternly and smote him twice on the arm with his pastoral staff so that he cried out in pain. Next morning he told the brethren at Hexham what had happened, promised never to propose such a thing again and, after three days illness brought on by his fright, he returned to York.²⁰ It is recorded that Huby, Abbot of

¹⁸ *Anon Vita S. Cuthberti*, CXVI.

¹⁹ *Anon Vita S. Eatae*. *Ann. Lindisf.*

²⁰ *Anon Vita S. Eatae*.

Fountains, in rebuilding a portion of the church at Ripon, introduced inscriptions commemorating some of the early saints there, including Eata and Wilfrid.²¹ Eata was commemorated on 26th October. There is a church dedicated to him at Attingham, or Atcham, in Shropshire; the name of the place being no doubt derived from the name of the saint.²²

Pope Benedict II (683-5) gave a definite pronouncement in favour of Bishop Wilfrid, and some time in 686 Wilfrid had an interview with Theodore and they were made friends again. Eddi says²³ that the archbishop humbly asked Wilfrid's forgiveness. After this reconciliation Theodore wrote to Aethelred of Mercia and Aldfrith, the new king of Northumbria (Ecgbert had died at Nechtsmeré on 20th May 685), trying to make peace. The archbishop also begged Aelfleda, Abbess of Whitby and sister of King Aldfrith, to use her influence. Aldfrith invited Wilfrid back, treated him kindly and restored to him his monastery at Hexham. The bishopric of Hexham had fallen vacant by the death of Eata, and Cuthbert of Lindisfarne died in 687. Wilfrid therefore administered Hexham till 687 and Lindisfarne till 688,²⁴ probably on the understanding that his approval should be sought for the bishops to be proposed for the two Bernician dioceses. Now, according to Eddi, Wilfrid was restored to the diocese of York and the monastery of Ripon.²⁵ What then became of Bosa and Eadhed? If Eddi is correct we must suppose that Bosa retired for a time, and since he tells us that Aldfrith gave him also Ripon and its possessions we must suppose that Eadhed gave place to Wilfrid also. In that case Wilfrid held for a brief period the episcopal supervision of all Northumbria except Lindsey, which had been lost to that

²¹ Raine, *Priory of Hexham*, II, p. lxxii.

²² *D.C.B.*, II, 21. Arnold-Forster, *Studies in Church Dedications*, III, 358.

²³ *Vita Wilfridi*, c. 43.

²⁴ Eddi, 44. Bede, *H.E.*, IV, 29.

²⁵ Eddi, 42. Flor. Wigorn., I, 39.

kingdom. According to Bede, Wilfrid recovered his own see in the second year of Aldfrith, that is, between May 686 and May 687. Eadmer says he recovered the lost property of the church and lived prudently and wisely for five years.²⁶ On 25th August 687, John of Beverley was consecrated Bishop of Hexham, and in the following year Eadbért became Bishop of Lindisfarne, so that Wilfrid's rule was reduced to the limits of Deira. No doubt this was in accordance with the papal decision which did not forbid the increase of dioceses in Northumbria, but ordered that the bishops appointed should be such as Wilfrid approved.

There are still difficulties. We have only Eddi's evidence of the setting aside of Bosa and Eadhed. Bosa was Bishop of York as late as 704. Mr. R. L. Poole argued that Wilfrid only recovered Ripon, but he thinks of Wilfrid as Bishop of Ripon. If this was so, why then was there trouble later on about the possible establishment of a bishopric of Ripon? There is still Eadhed to be accounted for. Was he removed or did he resign?²⁷ On Wilfrid's last journey to Rome he seems to have given up the idea of recovering York. That might be so, but that was years afterwards. After all, Eddi and Bede are our earliest authorities, and Eddi knew Wilfrid's affairs well. All Wilfrid's lands, apart from his Hexham property, seem to have belonged to Ripon. If he was put in possession of these he must have had Ripon whatever had happened to Eadhed. If he was kept out of York he had no bishopric from 688 onwards.²⁸

John of Beverley was born at Harpham in east Yorkshire and was a pupil of Theodore of Canterbury, where he learnt theology and a certain amount of the medicine of his time.²⁹ Folcard says of him that he reached the height of learning, and because of this he was kept at Whitby *aliquantís diebus* by Aelfleda the abbess. He was a power-

²⁶ Eadmer, *Vita Wilfridi*, c. XLVI.

²⁷ Poole, *Studies in Chron. and Hist.*, p. 71.

²⁸ But see Poole, *ibid.*, p. 72.

²⁹ Bede, *H.E.*, v, 3.

ful preacher, a great example of godly life, and never omitted an opportunity of teaching and evangelizing wherever he was. He was one of the five bishops whom the monastery of Whitby afterwards proudly claimed. The fame of his learning had a curious development in later days. Fuller saw his portrait in the library at Salisbury claiming him as the first master of arts of the university of Oxford.³⁰ He was consecrated Bishop of Hexham 25th August 687. The chroniclers vary about this. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* makes him succeed Tunbert and says John was at Hexham till Wilfrid came, and then he took York because Bishop Bosa was *forthfaren*. Richard of Hexham says that John held Hexham for one year and then went to York. The *Lindisfarne Annals* say that John went to Hexham in 685. Florence of Worcester says that Bosa died in 686 and then John succeeded him at York. William of Malmesbury and the *History of the Monastery of St. Augustine's, Canterbury*, both say that John was turned out for Wilfrid. Now Bosa was certainly alive in 704 and probably died in 705. Wilfrid certainly was restored before John became a bishop. Bede says John continued bishop till his death in 721 and had then held the episcopal rank thirty-three years. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* is more definite; he had been a bishop for thirty-three years, eight months and thirteen days. If Florence is correct in saying that he died on 7th May 721, he must have been consecrated on 25th August 687 and was therefore not expelled from Hexham to make way for Wilfrid. He was certainly at Hexham in 691.³¹ Perhaps even before he became a bishop John had a hermitage at Herneshaw or Erneshaw (the eagles' hill), a mile and a half from Hexham. Folcard says that there he dedicated a church to St. Michael. There was certainly a burial-ground there dedicated to St. Michael, on the north side of the Tyne, on the crest of a steep hill overhanging the river. Bede says that the hermitage of St. Michael was

³⁰ Fuller, *Worthies*, II, 497.

³¹ Bede, *H.E.*, v, 4.

surrounded by a ditch and was close to the burial ground. The place which exactly suits Bede's description is St. John Lee.³² Richard of Hexham speaks of an oratory there, and in 1310 we have a mention of a *Capella beati Johannis de Laga*. The modern church of St. John Lee dates only from 1843: the old church was destroyed, but a plan, dated 1788, shows a small building attached to the end of the old church and connected with it by a doorway four feet wide. This may just possibly have been the oratory or chapel.³³ The church is now dedicated to St. John of Beverley.³⁴ The saint is said to have retired to this oratory every Lent, sometimes with a few companions. In the east part of Deira was a place called Inderawuuda silva deirorum, *Inderawuuda id est in silva Derorum*, later known, from the beavers which haunted the place, as Beverley. John bought the place at some time, added a choir to the existing church and an oratory dedicated to St. Martin, and established a monastery there. Welwick, Bilton, Patrington and North Burton became part of the property of the house. This great ecclesiastical organization was perhaps the greatest work of his life. Berhtun, who had been his deacon, became the first abbot and wrote an account of his master's good deeds and the miracles that he wrought.

The miracles ascribed to him before and after his death were very numerous. At Wetadun (Watton, in the East Riding) he healed by his prayers a maiden suffering from a swelling which gave her intense pain. At the vill of a *gesith* named Puch he consecrated a church and miraculously healed the man's wife. He also consecrated another church for a neighbouring lord named Addi. Folcard says this was at South Burton, two or three miles from Beverley.³⁵ There he healed one of Addi's servants who had lost the use of his limbs. Once when out riding with the bishop his young men, when they came to a level place, began to

³² Raine, *Hexham*, I, 16n.

³³ Raine, *Hexham*, p. 16.

³⁴ Arnold-Forster, *Studies in Church Dedications*, III, 388.

³⁵ *Historians of the Church of York*, III, p. 249.

ride races with one another. One of them, a clerk named Herebald, begged the bishop to let him join in, but John forbade him. One can see the youth hanging back, perhaps a little sulky for a few minutes, and finally throwing obedience to the winds and galloping off. Before long he was thrown from his horse and picked up apparently dead. The bishop's prayers delivered him from death, and he lived to become Abbot of Tynemouth. At the time of the accident there was some doubt about his baptism, for he had been baptized by an incapable priest who had been suspended, and therefore Bishop John rebaptized him, we may suppose, conditionally.³⁶ Bede was advanced to the diaconate by John of Beverley at the early age of eighteen. *Nono decimo . . . vitae meae anno diaconatum suscepi.* This was much under the canonical age of twenty-five years, but Bede was an exceptional candidate. John also ordained him priest while he was in his thirtieth year. Jarrow was in the diocese of Hexham. Bede's work *De Miraculis Sancti Cuthberti* begins *Domino in Domino Dominorum dilectissimo Joanni presbytero, Beda famulus Christi salutem.* It has been said that Bede was one of his pupils in the study of the Scriptures, but it would be difficult to say when or where, for Bede only left his cell on very rare occasions. We know that he went once to Lindisfarne and once, at the latter end of his life, to York. The only other possibility is that the bishop must have been at Jarrow at some time, or even occasionally, but if this were so, it seems strange that Bede has left no mention of it.

In 691 there broke out further trouble for Wilfrid, whom Richard definitely speaks of as Wilfrid of York. There were three causes of dispute. The king's jealousy had been stirred up by Wilfrid's old enemies, and he began to seize ecclesiastical property in Deira. Some of these lands had passed into other hands and had been secularized, and Wilfrid demanded their return. Secondly, when Wilfrid returned from exile he had recovered his monastery of

³⁶ Bede, *H.E.*, v, 6.

Ripon, but now the king expected him to make way for the establishment of a permanent bishopric there. Last and worst of all the king suddenly demanded that he should accept the decrees of Theodore. To agree meant to set at nought the decrees of the pope altogether. For a time he had so far yielded to Aldfrith as to waive his full rights, but he had not abandoned hope that the matter might yet be settled in the way the pope had desired. Seeing the attitude which Theodore had taken up towards his own decrees, the sudden thrusting of this demand on Wilfrid seems to have been due rather to spite and malice than anything else. Aldfrith the Learned, as the king was called, banished him, and he left the north and became Bishop of the Middle Angles, with his see at Leicester. Bosa returned to York, and we may suppose Eadhed to Ripon. In some way or other Wilfrid's case must have come again before the Roman court. Pope Sergius (687-701) must have been consulted, for he issued a rescript in Wilfrid's favour. Mr. R. L. Poole says that as certain monks of Wearmouth were in Rome at Christmas 700, and brought back a privilege for their monastery, they might very well have brought back also the bull relating to Wilfrid.³⁷ In 702, if we are to take literally and exactly Wilfrid's statement that his enemies had opposed the papal decrees for twenty-two years, a council was held at Easterfield or Austerfield, near Bawtry, sometimes called the Atswinepath Council. Probably the recent receipt of the decree of Sergius was the moving cause. Wilfrid was invited or commanded to be present, and Berchtwald, Archbishop of Canterbury (693-731) and his suffragans were there. Wilfrid stood before the bishops like Becket before his episcopal colleagues in later days. There was much altercation—the prelates and abbots were all against him. "Would he comply with the decrees of Theodore or not?" "Yes, according to the canons." Becket's answer was almost an echo. "Would he accept the final decision of the archbishop?"

³⁷ Poole, *Studies in Chron. and Hist.*, pp. 74-5.

"Not till he knew what it would be." He was willing to agree to anything which was not contrary to the papal authority. He had been vindicated by three popes, Agatho, Benedict and Sergius, and he rebuked their obstinacy in opposing papal authority for so long.³⁸ The angry king and the archbishop wished to strip him of everything, and the assembly agreed. Then, rather ashamed of themselves, they said he might have Ripon, but he was not to leave the monastery without the king's permission and he was not to perform any episcopal acts.

Mr. Poole saw difficulties in this story. Wilfrid had been a bishop in Mercia for eleven years. Why should the old trouble be dragged up again? The answer is that it was a Northumbrian question, wherever Wilfrid happened to be at that moment. How far is the story of this council true, especially as Bede does not mention it? Was it an invention of Eddi's?³⁹ It cannot be an invention or how are we to explain Wilfrid's next appeal to Rome? Eddi was inaccurate in places and always a hero-worshipper, but to suggest that he invented a council and its proceedings is going too far.

Wilfrid once more appealed to Rome, the indomitable old man travelling thither on foot, and arrived there in 704. The archbishop also sent representatives to the Holy See, but only one of them was even in deacon's orders and they did their cause no good. Once again, as in 680, the pope called a synod and the synod declared in favour of Wilfrid. Pope John VI thereupon wrote to King Aethelred of Mercia and Aldfrith of Northumbria telling them the findings. He ordered the archbishop to summon a synod, to be attended by Wilfrid, Bosa and John, whom he evidently considered hostile, and if they could not agree then let both sides appear in Rome, and if one side refused or delayed to do this the penalty should be deprivation. Wilfrid sent messengers to Aldfrith, who received them

³⁸ Eddi, *Vita Wilfridi*, c. 46-7.

³⁹ Poole, *Studies in Chron. and Hist.*, p. 76.

civilly, but his counsellors persuaded him to do nothing and to take no notice of letters from Rome. On his death-bed (he died 14th December 704) he said that if he recovered he would receive Wilfrid, but he did not live long enough to do this. His successor, Osred, was only eight years old, but Archbishop Berchtwald called and presided at the Synod of the Nidd, perhaps held at the village of Nidd, in the early part of 705. A compromise was finally reached. Wilfrid in his last appeal to Rome, evidently weary of the whole business, had said that he would be content with his monasteries of Hexham and Ripon. He was now restored to the monastery of Ripon and given the bishopric of Hexham with all his lands in Northumbria. Eadhed seems certainly to have been dead by this time, and there was no further attempt at establishing a diocese of Ripon. Bosa had died in 705 and Wilfrid might easily have been restored to York, but it was given to John of Beverley instead, and he moved thither from Hexham.

At an advanced age John consecrated a second Wilfrid to succeed him at York and retired to Beverley. This was in 718.⁴⁰ Florence of Worcester says 721, but he seems to have made some confusion with the day of his death, 7th May 721. Folcard says he was buried in the porch (chapel) of St. John the Evangelist at Beverley. Bede⁴¹ says it was the porch of St. Peter. His remains were placed in a beautiful feretory, and in 1037 he was canonized by Benedict IX. That same year his bones were removed to a very magnificent shrine which was destroyed when the church was burnt down in 1187, but his ashes were rescued. His name was inscribed in the *Liber Vitae* at Durham.

Many miracles were reported at his tomb. Four appendices to Folkard's *Life* relate to these. At one time it was the custom at Beverley for owners of savage bulls to bring them into the cemetery there, where by the influence of St. John they became as quiet as sheep. In Yorkshire the

⁴⁰ Bede, *H.E.*, v, 6. Richard of Hexham, c. xiii, 8.

⁴¹ *H.E.*, v, 6.

churches of Harpham, Salton and Wressle are dedicated to him, though Wressle has an alternative dedication to St. Anne; in Nottinghamshire Aslackton (with an alternative dedication to the Holy Trinity), Scarrington and Whatton-in-the-vale. Beverley became famous because of St. John. When Athelstan invaded Scotland he carried with him St. John's banner, and on his victorious return laid his sword on the tomb and gave many privileges to the church there. William the Conqueror, when he devastated the north, left Beverley alone, fearing to disturb the peace of St. John. The banner of St. John of Beverley was borne at the battle of the Standard together with those of St. Peter of York, St. Wilfrid of Ripon and St. Cuthbert of Durham. On the day of the battle of Agincourt pilgrims to the shrine said it sweated drops of holy oil, and King Henry afterwards went there to give thanks for his victory.

Wilfrid, for the last few years of his stormy life, was now in peace as Bishop of Hexham. On his last journey from Rome he had been dangerously ill at Meaux, and there he had a vision or dream of the Archangel Michael, who commanded him to build a church to Our Lady and promised him four more years of life. During his last period at Hexham he occupied himself in carrying out this command. St. Mary's when completed lay at the east end of St. Andrew's with only the *atrium* or cemetery and a narrow lane between. The remains of the old church have been seen at the south-east corner of the priory. Richard of Hexham tells us that the church was round in shape like a tower, with four radiating arms each of two storeys. It was rebuilt in the thirteenth century. In the seventeenth century it was more or less in ruins with shops and houses encroaching on it. The only fragments of the later building, which was to the south-east of the former, are scraps built into the neighbouring houses.⁴²

Of St. Peter's church built by Wilfrid nothing remains: not even a tradition as to its site. It may have stood on the

⁴² Hodges and Gibson, *Hexham and its Abbey*, pp. 109-14.

east side of the open space which corresponded roughly to the modern market-place and facing St. Andrew's.⁴³ Prior Richard says it was somewhat farther away from St. Andrew's than St. Mary's. It was not in existence in 1310, in which year we have a list of all the sacred buildings belonging to the priory and in its vicinity. Wilfrid is also said to have built a stone cruciform church in honour of St. Michael instead of John of Beverley's oratory at St. John's Lee.⁴⁴ Richard says that Wilfrid showed his thanks to St. Michael by specially dedicating a church to him. Folcard says that John consecrated it. He must be thinking of St. John's oratory, because if Wilfrid built St. Michael's *after* his vision at Meaux, John by that time was at York. Richard⁴⁵ says that Acca finished and adorned the churches of St. Mary, St. Peter and St. Michael which Wilfrid had begun. If Wilfrid's church was substituted for John of Beverley's oratory at Erneshow, the small building already referred to as visible in the old plan of 1788 cannot be it, but Wilfrid's church may very well have been erected on another site.

Wilfrid died at Oundle in 709. Symeon of Durham says he had been a bishop for forty-five years, but he assumed his consecration to have been in 664.⁴⁶ According to Eddi⁴⁷ he died on a Thursday. October 12th has always been kept as his day, but the obituary of the church of Durham⁴⁸ gives his *depositio*⁴⁹ as October 3rd, which was a Thursday; October 12th that year was not. Bede dates his death April 24th. Mr. R. L. Poole suggested that that was the correct day of his death at Oundle, and that October 12th was the day of his *depositio* at Ripon.⁵⁰ In the face of the general observance of his day on October 12th it is not difficult to

⁴³ *Northumberland County History*, III, p. 200.

⁴⁴ W. S. Gibson, *Northumbrian Castles*, 1848, p. 73.

⁴⁵ c. 4.

⁴⁶ Symeon of Durham, *Rolls Ser.*, p. 224.

⁴⁷ *Vita Wilf.*, c. 64.

⁴⁸ *Liber Vitae*.

⁴⁹ *Martyrologium Poeticum*.

⁵⁰ Poole, *Studies in Chron. and Hist.*, p. 79.

suppose that Eddi made a mistake as to the day of the week. Wilfrid's relics were afterwards claimed by Canterbury. Eadmer says that Archbishop Odo (923-7) went to Ripon, found the church there in ruins, discovered the remains of Wilfrid and carried them to Canterbury. On the other hand, Leland saw the shrine of St. Wilfrid at Ripon just before the Reformation, and it is quite possible that the relics carried away were those of the second Wilfrid. Before his death Wilfrid had called together two abbots and other friends, eight in all, and showed them his store of gold and silver and jewels. He had intended to take a quarter of these to Rome, to give a quarter to the poor, a quarter to be divided between Hexham and Ripon, and the fourth quarter to be divided amongst his friends and companions. We do not know how much this store was, but it must have been considerable. This was the real cause of the enmity against him, the wealth of himself and his monasteries. Jealousy and greed have always to be reckoned with in this world.

Acca succeeded Wilfrid at Hexham as the latter had desired. Trained among the clergy of Bosa, he had attached himself to Wilfrid apparently after Bosa's withdrawal in 686. He had been Wilfrid's companion in exile, was with him on his last two journeys to Rome, and while he was converting the south Saxons. "Where is our priest Acca?" cried Wilfrid at Meaux, and when he was brought to him, he confided to Acca alone his vision of the archangel. He was Bede's authority for the conversion of the Sussex people,⁵¹ for the miracle at St. Oswald's burial place,⁵² and for the cessation of the pestilence at Wilfrid's intercession.⁵³ Canon Raine suggested that he probably ruled the monastery of Hexham under Wilfrid during the bishop's last years, and the suggestion is not an unlikely one.

⁵¹ Bede, *H.E.*, v, 14.

⁵² *Ibid.*, III, 13.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, v, 4.

Acca was consecrated Bishop of Hexham in 709.⁵⁴ Symeon of Durham says that Acca adorned the church of St. Andrew with manifold adornments and wonderful workmanship.⁵⁵ Richard says he took pains to gather the relics of the apostles and martyrs, and in their honour set up altars in the separate chapels purposely made within the walls of the church. Eddi says that Acca gave ornaments of gold and silver and precious stones. The buildings thus adorned were highly praised by Alcuin in a letter written near the end of the eighth century to Bishop Ethelbert of Hexham, in which he speaks of them as *pulcherrimae habitationes*. Bede says that Acca was very active, and "great in the sight of God and man." When he collected relics he diligently gathered the histories of the saints and martyrs to whom they belonged, and these works formed part of a noble library which he established there. A scholarly man, we find him quoting from the classics and referring to the writings of the fathers in his letter to Bede urging him to write a commentary on St. Luke.⁵⁶ He industriously provided altar coverings, holy vessels, lamps and other necessary adornments for the sanctuary. A great cantor himself, he invited a famous singer named Maban to the north, a man who had been taught to sing by the successors of blessed Gregory in Kent, and now was brought to teach the Hexham clergy, and remained at Hexham twelve years. Thus the services of the church were greatly improved. Acca was very learned in the Scriptures.⁵⁷ He was perhaps Bede's most beloved and admired friend, and their mutual love of the Bible was a great bond between them. The prologue to Bede's commentary on the *Acts of the Apostles* begins, *Domino in Christo desiderantissimo et vere beatissimo Accae episcopo. . . . Accepi creberrimas beatitudinis tuae literas quibus*

⁵⁴ Bede, *H.E.*, v, 20. *The Anglo-Saxon Chron.* and the *Ann. Lind.* say 710.

⁵⁵ Sym. Durh., *Hist. Reg.*, p. 54.

⁵⁶ Raine, *Hexham*, I, 32.

⁵⁷ Bede, *H.E.*, v, 20.

me commonere dignatus es, ne mentis acumen inertī torpore et obdormire permutam. After reading his exposition, Acca, both in conversation and letters, urged him to write a commentary on St. Luke. Bede had quoted to him the proverb: "Why put fishes in the sea?" Acca replied: *Juxta comicum, Nihil sit dictum quod non sit dictum prius.* He requested Bede to prefix this letter of his to his exposition when completed to show that he had written it simply out of fraternal kindness. He further urged him to write a commentary on St. Mark. That, however, did not appear for some years, but when it did it was also dedicated to the bishop. The prologue to *In Lucae Evangelium Expositio* in six books, perhaps the greatest of Bede's biblical writings, began as before: *Domino beatissimo et nimium desiderantissimo Accae episcopo Beda humilis presbyter in Domino aeternam salutem. Orantem pro nobis sanctam paternitatem vestram gratia superni adjutoris conservare aque ad defensionem ecclesiae suae sanctae semper corroborare dignetur.*

The order of events seems to have been this: Bede had sent to Acca for transcription his work on the *Apocalypse*, and Acca replied urging him to write a patristic commentary on St. Luke. Bede sent him his book on the *Acts*, which he followed up with his *St. Luke*. Next he wrote his allegorical interpretation of the *First Book of Samuel*, in the beginning of which he addresses his friend thus: *Unde tuo crebro, dilectissime ac desiderantissime omnium, qui in terris morantur antistitium Acca provocatus hortu, tuis fretus orationibus.* Acca had asked him to write on 1 Samuel. In answer to questions from Acca about the stations, i.e. encampments of the children of Israel on their wilderness journey, Bede, *fidelis tuus famulus*, wrote for his friend and bishop, *cum omni semper honorificentia nominando*, an epistle entitled *De Mansionibus Filiorum Israel*, and in reply to another question he wrote *De Eo Quod Ait Esaias; Et claudentur ibi in carcere et per dies multos visitabuntur.* This, *Beda humillimus servorum*

Christi put also in the form of an epistle *Domino beatissimo et intima semper caritate venerando*. There is no common form about all this. The words are evidence of a genuine affection. Acca's questions held up for a time the completion of the work on *Samuel*. Acca at another time asked him to collect the best writings of the Fathers on the early part of *Genesis*. He did this in a work called the *Hexaemeron*, and his introductory epistle to Acca ends: *Bene vale semper amantissime nostri memor in Domino*. Bede's work *De Aedificatione Templi* falls within the years 725 to 731. It was dedicated to Acca (though the MS. Phillips 9428 gives the dedication to Nothelm); and it would seem to have been written at a time when the bishop was enduring some anxiety. Bede's commentary on *Ezra and Nehemiah*, written during the same period, was also inscribed to Acca, at whose instigation it was written. Florence of Worcester says exactly the same about Bede's poem *De Dei Iudicii*. If evidence is needed as to the goodness, kindness and learning of the Bishop of Hexham, Bede's numerous affectionate dedications supply sufficient testimony. Eddi tells us that he himself wrote his *Life of Wilfrid* at the wish of Acca and Abbot Tatbert of Ripon, Wilfrid's kinsman.

In 716 Acca confirmed Hwaetbert as Abbot of Wearmouth and Jarrow. In the same year he was present at a council at Cloveshoe at which the privilege conferred by King Wihtréd on the Kentish churches was confirmed. The decree of the council was signed by, among others, fourteen bishops. Among the names we read: *Ego Acca episcopus hoc idem subscripsi*. He was the only Northumbrian bishop present. Possibly he had been sent officially as an act of recognition of Aethelbald of Mercia, who had just come to the throne and was the most powerful king in southern England.⁵⁸

The Northumbrian kings during the eighth century sank greatly in importance. Osred I was slain in 716 and

⁵⁸ Haddan and Stubbs, *Councils and Documents*, III, 300-2.

was succeeded by Coenred, who died two years afterwards. Osric reigned from 718-29, and after him came Ceolwulf, said to be a descendant of King Ida. He was deposed and restored in 731, and made finally to resign in 737.⁵⁹ He became a monk at Lindisfarne and died in 764. While he was king Bede dedicated to him his *Ecclesiastical History*. Before his departure he had arranged that his cousin Eadbert should succeed him.⁶⁰ He did so, and kept the throne till 758, when he too abdicated and became a monk and died in 769.

Deaths of a violent nature and forced resignations as the lot of kings show the turbulence of the Northumbrian nobles. Acca was still in his see when Bede closed his *History*, but he was soon to be driven out. The date is uncertain. The continuator of Bede fixed the event as early as 731. Symeon⁶¹ says 732, as do Richard of Hexham and Roger of Hoveden. The *Chronicle* and Florence of Worcester say 733. Symeon says that he exercised pontifical authority for twenty-four years. If this is to be taken literally the date must be 733. William of Malmesbury says that he was driven out three years after Bede's death, which would be in 738, much too late. *Post* may be a mistake for *ante*.⁶² He also says it is uncertain whether he ever returned to his see.⁶³ His successor was consecrated in 734,⁶⁴ and unless there was an unusually long gap between Acca's departure and the new appointment, the date 733 becomes more probable. As for his return all that we know is that he was buried at Hexham. Why he was driven out is unknown, but his exile may be fairly put down to the turbulence of the time. Richard of Hexham heard a story that Acca went to Whithern where *episcopalem sedem . . . incepit et praeeparavit*. It is true that the bishopric of Whithern

⁵⁹ *Continuatio Bedae*; Symeon of Durham, *Anglo-Saxon Chron.* Florence of Worcester says 738.

⁶⁰ William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regum*.

⁶¹ *Hist. Reg.*, c. 31, 36, 37.

⁶² Plummer's *Bede*, II, 330.

⁶³ William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Pontificum*.

⁶⁴ Roger of Hoveden.

was re-established about this time, but Pecthelm went there as bishop in 730 or 731.⁶⁵

Angus mac Fergus, king of the Picts (731-61) reconstituted the monastery of St. Regulus at what is now St. Andrew's. Hither relics of St. Andrew were brought.⁶⁶ According to the earliest story St. Regulus himself brought them from Constantinople.⁶⁷ It has been suggested that in his last years Acca took them thither from Hexham. It is unlikely that the relics at Hexham were bones. More probably they would be portions of garments or something else which was believed to have been the property of the saint. It is very unlikely that the monastery of Hexham would have permitted the transfer of such a collection as St. Andrew's afterwards claimed,⁶⁸ and it is unlikely that a bishop driven out, we may suppose, in haste, would have carried them with him.

Acca died 20th October 740, and was buried outside the east wall of the sanctuary of St. Andrew's. Two great crosses were placed one at the head and the other at the foot of the grave. There exist portions of a great carved cross which have been put together, and after a long sojourn in the Chapter Library at Durham have returned to Hexham Abbey. There was once an inscription on the face. It has disappeared, but some in times past have thought they recognized the name Acca. This repaired cross is known traditionally as Acca's cross, and it may well be the cross which once stood at the head of the grave. A second cross in Hexham, known as the Spital cross, has for ornament a vine-scroll much like that on the former, and may therefore be what remains of the cross at the foot of the grave.⁶⁹ Since, however, it has some minor features which to some scholars seem more archaic, it may be that the Spital cross is an earlier one.

⁶⁵ Bede, *H.E.*, v, 23. Richard of Hexham, c. xv.

⁶⁶ W. B. Kermack in *Antiquity*, xvii, p. 212.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, xvi, 6.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, xvi, 9.

⁶⁹ Hodges, *Hexham*, p. 50.

After more than three hundred years, by a divine revelation to a certain priest, the body was exhumed and placed in a feretory within the church. Though the body had decayed, the chasuble, tunicle and sudarium were found to be as bright and sound as new. On the saint's breast was found a wooden portable altar consisting of two pieces of wood joined together by silver fastenings and bearing the inscription *Almae Trinitati, Agiae Sophiae, Sanctae Mariae*. (A similar portable altar was, as everyone knows, found in St. Cuthbert's coffin.) A wooden box or chest and two leaden seals, one of which was Acca's, were also found in the grave. The monks of Hexham used on certain days to display these relics to the faithful.⁷⁰ The priest to whom the revelation was made was Aelfrid Westou, a great collector of the relics of the saints in the first half of the eleventh century. He always endeavoured to take a portion of what he found to the convent at Durham.

Symeon says that Acca's miracles are too numerous to recount all. Most of those recorded are concerned with his remains. On Acca's natal day, i.e. the day of his death, he appeared to a blind man named Raven and healed him. A blind woman was healed by the application of water in which one of his bones had been dipped, and a smith was cured of a throat trouble, possibly diphtheria, in the same way.⁷¹ A certain priest wished to remove the saint's bones to a chest which he had prepared. He placed them, wrapped in a sheet, on the altar of St. Michael in the south part of the church. His brother, left in charge during the night, wished to extract a fragment, but was restrained by a sudden fierce heat. Malcolm, king of the Scots, making one of his devastating invasions of the north country, purposed to destroy the church of Hexham. The Tyne rose in a great flood, a miraculous fog appeared, the Scottish army was scattered, the part with the king could not cross the river, and Malcolm returned home in fear and haste.⁷²

⁷⁰ Symeon of Durham, *Hist. Reg.*, 36. ⁷¹ Aelred, *De Sanctis*, cc. 7-9.

⁷² Symeon of Durham, *Hist. Reg.*, cc. 37-9.

Only one church in England is said to be dedicated to St. Acca, the church of Aycliffe, and that is doubtful, the better known dedication being to St. Andrew. Frithbert, who succeeded Acca, was consecrated Bishop of Hexham by Egbert of York on 8th September 734, the Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin. The *Continuation of Bede* seems to assume that Egbert was archbishop when he consecrated him, but he did not receive the pall till 735. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, which like the other authorities makes him die in 766, says he had been bishop thirty-three winters at the time of his death. Roger of Hoveden says that he died, after having been bishop thirty-three years, in the second year of King Alchred, who began to reign in 765. Though the *Continuation* is probably the oldest authority, it ends in 766, the weight of evidence seems in favour of dating the consecration in 734. Prior Richard says he died in the thirty-fourth year of his episcopate.⁷³

We know little about him. He had charge of the see of Lindisfarne in 750 and held the charge for a year, the bishop, Cynewulf, having fallen into disgrace. In 756 King Eadbert led an expedition against the Strathclyde Britons. He captured Alcluith, but his army was utterly destroyed a few days later. In 757⁷⁴ or 758⁷⁵ Eadbert, seeing the evil end of some kings and the glorious end of his predecessor, Ceolwulf,⁷⁶ handed over the kingdom to his son Oswulf, and himself received the tonsure at York, where his brother Egbert was archbishop. Oswulf reigned one year over Northumbria and then was murdered by members of his household at Mechilwongtun, a place apparently not far from Hexham, perhaps Milfield, near Wooler, or one of the various Middletons in Northumberland.⁷⁷ He died on 24th or 25th July 758, "innocently slain."⁷⁸ This would

⁷³ Richard Hexh., c. 16.

⁷⁴ Flor. Wigorn. *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*.

⁷⁵ *Cont. Bedae*. Symeon Durh., Roger of Hoveden.

⁷⁶ Roger of Hoveden.

⁷⁷ Symeon of Durham, *Rolls Ser.*, II, 429.

⁷⁸ William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regum*, 72.

make his accession take place in 757. Ethelwald Moll succeeded on 5th August 758⁷⁹ or 759.⁸⁰ In 761 he fought and slew one of his nobles, Oswin, at Eladunum, probably the Eildon hills near Melrose. In 765 he abdicated, or rather was deprived, at a council of the realm held at Wincanheale (Finchale) on 3rd of October, having completed the sixth year of his reign in the preceding August. William of Malmesbury, who mistakenly makes him reign eleven years, says he fell to the treachery of Alchred.⁸¹ Alchred, *prosapia Idæ regis*, "as some say,"⁸² then mounted the throne.

Frithbert died 23rd December 766. On March 3rd 1154 there was a second translation of relics at Hexham, and a leaden case was discovered containing relics of St. Frithbert, as he was now called. One of his teeth was preserved at Durham down to the Dissolution. He had been able to preserve a saintly character which must have shone brightly against the example of life set by the rough and quarrelsome nobles.

The next bishop of Hexham was Alchmund. He is to be distinguished from Alkmund (generally spelt with a k), who was the son of Alchred, King of Northumbria, and was martyred somewhere about 800. Churches were afterwards dedicated in Alkmund's honour at Derby, Shrewsbury and several other places. Alchmund the bishop was consecrated 24th April 767. Three other bishops were consecrated the same day, Ethelbert of York, Aldbert of London, and Ceolwulf of Lindsey.⁸³

In 774, "by the counsel and consent of his people," King Alchred was driven out in Easter week⁸⁴ and went to exile. With a few companions he took refuge with Cinoth, King of the Picts. Ethelred, son of Ethelred Moll,

⁷⁹ *Cont. Bedæ.*

⁸⁰ Symeon of Durham. Flor. Wigorn. Roger of Hoveden, *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*.

⁸¹ William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regum*, 72.

⁸² Roger of Hoveden.

⁸³ *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* gives the date as 766.

⁸⁴ Roger of Hoveden.

became king and reigned four years.⁸⁵ In 778 Ethelbald and Herebert, chiefs of Northumbria, *duces regis*, rebelled, slew Aldwulf, son of Bosa, commander of the royal army, at the battle of Kingsclive (Coniscliffe), and after that Kine-wulf and Ecgga in a great battle at Helatunum. King Ethelred fled and they set Aelfwald on the throne. Aelfwald was the son of Oswulf, and is described as a pious and just king.⁸⁶

In 780 Eaubald was consecrated Archbishop of York and King Aelfwald sent to Rome for his pall in the following year.⁸⁷ Alchmund, of whose episcopal work we know nothing, died 7th September 781 and was buried near the sanctuary of St. Andrew's, Hexham. Roger of Hoveden says he was distinguished for his religious life and virtues and died, while King Aelfwald was reigning gloriously, in the third year of his reign. Florence of Worcester makes Tilbert succeed as bishop that same year.

About 1032 the story runs that a vision or dream came to a certain *drogmo*, that is, a tenant who held by service other than military.⁸⁸ A pious and generous man, he was told to go to Aelfrid Westou, the priest of Durham, and tell him to transfer the body of Alchmund to an honourable place in the church next to the remains of Acca. People congregated at Hexham on the day appointed for the translation, the bones were disinterred and placed on a reliquary. As it was too late to say mass they laid this on a feretory which they placed for the night in the chapel of St. Peter, intending next morning to take it to its new place in the church. During the night Aelfrid surreptitiously extracted part of a finger, intending to take it to Durham. In the morning, though successive groups of priests tried to lift the feretory, it remained immovable. The following night

⁸⁵ Roger of Hoveden says "scarcely five."

⁸⁶ Flor. Wigorn. and *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* say he began to reign in 778. Symeon of Durham, *H.E.*, II, 4, speaks of 780 as his third year.

⁸⁷ Roger of Hoveden.

⁸⁸ See Arnold's note on Symeon of Durham, *Hist. Reg.*, 51, and Ducange.

was spent in prayer, but the *drogmo* fell asleep and had another vision of Alchmund, who told him that the thief must restore what he had taken. This was announced to the people and clergy, Aelfrid confessed, the bone was restored and the body removed to the shrine on 2nd August.

As an example of the turbulence of the land at this period two of the nobles, Osbald and Ethelheard, gathered together men and slew Bearn, one of the king's officials, by burning him alive at Seletune (perhaps Silton, near Northallerton) on Christmas Eve 779, the reason given being that *rigidior aequo extiterat*.⁸⁹ Ever since the battle of Nechtansmere the moral character of the Northumbrians seems to have decayed. Bede complained of this in his *Epistle to Egbert*, written at the end of the year 734. Lands were being given so profusely to monasteries, many of them mere shams, that there was not enough land left in the hands of the kings to provide for the royal service of the nobles. They therefore were unable to keep their sons in active life on the land, and so the young men wasted their lives in idleness and were ready to fight on the side of any faction which promised them most. The kings seemed entirely unable to control their unruly nobles except by slaying them when opportunity offered. The northern kingdom became of little account, and its history is one long tale of internecine strife and decay.⁹⁰ Of fourteen kings of Northumbria after A.D. 705, not one died in the peaceful possession of his throne.⁹¹ "The king must slay the slayer and himself be slain." Charlemagne described the Northumbrians as "a perfidious and perverse nation, worse than pagans."⁹² In 788 a noble named Sicgan, said to be the king's uncle, headed a conspiracy against King Aelfwald, "the just king" of Northumbria,⁹³ and slew him

⁸⁹ Roger of Hoveden.

⁹⁰ *Camb. Mod. Hist.*, II, 562. The gloom must not be overdrawn.

⁹¹ S. J. Crawford, *Anglo-Saxon Influence in Western Christendom*, Oxford 1933, p. 71.

⁹² Hodgkin, *Pol. Hist. Eng.*, I, 245.

⁹³ Roger of Hoveden.

on 23rd September at a place called Scythlescestir, near the Wall. Perhaps Chesters, the Roman *Cilurnum*, was the place. He was buried at Hexham, and Osred, grandson or nephew (*nepos*) of Alchred succeeded him and reigned two years. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* puts the murder in 789, the year of the synod of Aclea. The *Lindisfarne Annals* and William of Malmesbury say that Osred reigned one year, and ascribe to his successor a reign of seven years instead of six, which still puts the murder in 788. In 790 Ethelred, after twelve years exile, regained the kingdom and captured Osred, who was forcibly tonsured at York and then driven into exile. He returned from the Isle of Man in 792 on the invitation and promises of fealty of some of the chief men, but was captured by Ethelred and put to death at Dyngburch on 24th September. His body was taken to Tynemouth and buried in the monastery there.⁹⁴

In 791 Aelfwald's children, Oelf and Oelfwine were murdered at Wonwaldresmere (?Windermere). They had been persuaded to come out of sanctuary at York by lying promises and were slain by Ethelred's orders.⁹⁵ In 796, Roger of Hoveden says 795, King Ethelred was himself murdered at Cobre or Corebrygge (Corbridge) on 19th April. William of Malmesbury says that after the death of Ethelred no man dared ascend the throne. Nevertheless Osbald, described as *patricius*, was set up by certain chiefs, but after a reign of twenty-seven days he was, by the chief men of the realm, driven out. He went first to Lindisfarne and afterwards to the king of the Picts. Ultimately he became Abbot of Lindisfarne. Next Eardulf, son of Earnwulf, an exiled noble, was called back and consecrated king at York on 26th May 796 by Eanbald the archbishop and bishops Ethelbert, Higbald and Badulf. He reigned ten years, according to Henry of Huntingdon twelve. He was driven out and it is said was restored by Charlemagne,

⁹⁴ Roger of Hoveden.

⁹⁵ Roger of Hoveden.

whose daughter he had married, and Pope Leo III.⁹⁶ William of Malmesbury says he was banished in 806⁹⁷ and restored 808. Aelfwald II began to reign in 806 and was succeeded in 808 by Eanred.⁹⁸ Eardulf's restoration can only have been for a very short time, and Eanred reigned for the unusual time of thirty-two years.

The bishop who succeeded Alchmund was Tilbert, who was consecrated at Wolfswell, *Fons lupi*⁹⁹ on 2nd September 781.¹⁰⁰ In 786 George and Theophylact, legates of the pope and Wighod, an abbot, the representative of Charlemagne, came to England. At the court of Offa of Mercia they met Kynewulf of Wessex, who was killed that same year. George, Bishop of Ostia, discharged many important missions for the pope. Theophylact was Bishop of Todi. From Mercia George and Wighod went to Northumbria and induced the king and bishops to hold a council, which was held at Pincanhala or Wincahalū, that is to say, Finchale, which seems to have been a frequent place of meeting in the north.¹⁰¹ It was held on the 2nd September. Symeon of Durham says the synod was held in 787. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, Florence of Worcester and Henry of Huntingdon all say 788, but both Florence and Henry took the *Chronicle* as their authority, and the *Chronicle* is often a year out in its dates. They all agree as to the day and month. The apostolic delegates produced at the meeting a capitular of matters which should be observed. It was really a series of papal decrees, and these were propounded in the council in the presence of King Aelfwald, Archbishop Eanbald and "all the bishops, ealdormen and people." In their report to the pope the legates said that all the chief people of the region came to the assembly.

⁹⁶ Einhard, *Ann.*, A.D. 802. Haddan and Stubbs, *Councils*, III, p. 561.

⁹⁷ So. Roger Hoveden.

⁹⁸ Sym. Durh., *Hist. Dur. Eccl.*, II, 5, says 807.

⁹⁹ The site of this place is not known. Canon Raine suggested numerous possibilities. Raine, *Hexham*, I, 37n.

¹⁰⁰ Symeon of Durham.

¹⁰¹ Smith, *Bede*, III, 27.

After the northern council George and Wighod went south to Offa's dominions and a council of the southern province was held, where the decrees of the northern council were agreed to. The place of this meeting was Celchyth, that is, Chelsea. Henry of Huntingdon gives the date as 787. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* is obviously wrong in assigning it to 785. If the northern council was held in September 787 the southern must have been held late in 787 or early in 788.¹⁰² The signatories of the decrees of the council at Finchale were King Aelfwald, Dilberch (i.e. Tilbert), Eanbald, Archbishop of York (780-96), Aedilbercht (i.e. Ethelbert) Bishop of Whithern (777-97), Aldwulf, Bishop of Mayo, Aethelwyn, bishop of an unknown see, and five abbots and laymen. Perhaps Tilbert signed before the archbishop because the council was held in his see. Aldwulf was consecrated bishop at Corbridge¹⁰³ by Eanbald, Tilbert and Higbald (Bishop of Lindisfarne 781-802), and was sent to the Saxon colony at Mayo in Ireland. "With many presents and gifts he was sent to his see," but evidently not at once, unless the consecration took place in the following year. At this council Tilbert calls himself *praesul*, while the others call themselves *episcopus*. The general formula used is: "I . . . have subscribed with the sign of the holy cross." The archbishop, however, writes: "I, Eanbald, by the grace of God Archbishop of the Holy Church of York, have subscribed to the pious and Catholic force of this document." The papal legates reported to the pope: "The various chapters we gave them to accept they willingly signed."

King Aelfwald, as we have already seen, was murdered in September 788. A great concourse of clergy and monks accompanied his body to its burial in St. Andrew's, Hexham, and miracles were reported to have been wrought at his tomb. In the north aisle of the choir, where it meets the transept, there is a tomb or shrine in the wall tradition-

¹⁰² Stubbs, *Roger of Hoveden*, Rolls ser., p. xciv.

¹⁰³ Symeon of Durham.

ally assigned to the king, but whatever the truth about the place the floriated cross which covers it is of much later date. A church dedicated to St. Cuthbert and St. Oswald was built at the place of the murder,¹⁰⁴ but the site is not known. The reason for building it was that it was reported that a heavenly light had been seen hovering over the place of slaughter.

On 29th September 788 another synod was held at a place called Achlech. Richard of Hexham gives the exact date. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* makes it a year later. Richard probably had access to information now lost. Now Achlech may be Acle, that is Aycliffe, near Darlington, where there are remains of two Saxon crosses. Another synod had been held at Aclea, as the *Chronicle* spells it, in 782, and Raine suggested that the crosses might have been erected to commemorate one of these ecclesiastical assemblies. There is an Ockley in Essex. Some have thought this to have been a southern council. Dr. Raine and his father, the Rev. James Raine, were strongly in favour of the northern site, the former pointing out that Richard of Hexham never refers to southern councils. On the other hand Symeon of Durham does not mention it, which is something in the way of presumptive evidence that it met in the south. The balance on the whole seems in favour of the northern view. If that is correct, Tilbert would certainly be present and may have presided.¹⁰⁵ We know nothing about what happened at this synod, nor have we any list of signatories, which would have settled our difficulties.¹⁰⁶

Tilbert died in 789 towards the end of the year. He was spoken of after his death as Sanctus Tilbertus, but we have no knowledge of an official canonization. Ethelbert was the next bishop. He had been consecrated Bishop of Whithern on 15th June 777, and was now in 789 translated to Hexham. On 17th July 791, at a place called Hearra-

¹⁰⁴ Symeon Durh., *Hist Rég.*, sub. 796.

¹⁰⁵ Haddan and Stubbs, *Councils*, III, 464n.

¹⁰⁶ Richard of Hexham, c. xvii. Raine's note, I, p. 38.

halch, perhaps the Harneshalg or Earneshow, where John of Beverley had had his hermitage, Archbishop Eanbald and he consecrated Badwulf to succeed him at Whithern. On 26th May 796 he, together with Archbishop Eanbald and Bishops Higbald and Badwulf, consecrated Eardulf as King of Northumbria at York, and on 14th August of the same year Ethelbert, Higbald of Lindisfarne and Eardulf of Whithern consecrated at Sochasburg, or Sockburn, Eanbald II as Archbishop of York.

Some time before 16th October 797, Alcuin wrote a letter beginning: "To the shepherd of chief dignity, Aedilbert the bishop, and to all the congregation of the servants of God in the church of St. Andrew, Hexham, Alcuin the humble client of your love in Christ, wishes health." He commended himself to their prayers and earnestly urged them, "the offspring of such saintly fathers, successors to men of venerated lives, dwelling in such beautiful places," to keep their rule diligently, and reminded them of the saying: "*Si vis ad vitam ingredi serva mandata.*"¹⁰⁷

They might well need good advice. The country was falling into worse and worse confusion. In 790 the ealdorman Eardulf was captured and taken to Ripon by Osred's men, though there is some doubt whether they were Osred's men or his successor's, and, as they thought, put to death outside the monastery. His body was taken into the church, but about midnight he was found to be alive. He lived to become King of Northumbria six years later, though he does not seem to have been of royal blood. Sicgan, the *dux* who murdered King Aelfwald, died by his own hand. In 796 King Ethelred was murdered. We are told by Florence of Worcester that in the general alarm Ceolwulf, Bishop of Lindisfarne, and Eadbald the bishop, departed from the kingdom, but the Bishop of Lindisfarne was Higbald, and the only Bishop Eadbald was the person of that name who became Bishop of London in 793. The year 793 was an alarming one. There were terrible thunder-

¹⁰⁷ Alcuin, *Epp.*, 88. Browne, *Alcuin of York*, pp. 137-9.

storms, the plague appeared, men were said to have seen strange portents in the air,¹⁰⁸ and Lindisfarne was destroyed by the Danes. That would account for the flight of the bishop, but he certainly did not leave his diocese for good, for we hear of him again in 797. The terror of the Danes now began to fall on the land. The monastery of Tynemouth was destroyed in 794. Special savagery seems to have been directed against such places, and bishops and abbots must have been in constant fear of further sudden raids. On 16th October 797 Bishop Ethelbert died at Barton. This was probably Barton near Darlington, though there was another Barton near Penrith. His body was brought to Hexham and buried there.

Eardred succeeded to the bishopric and was consecrated by Eanbald and Higbald at Wduforda or Woodford on 29th October 797. Woodham in the parish of Aycliffe had a ford over the Skerne, but was there a church there? In the following year there was a conspiracy against King Eardulf, promoted by the slayers of King Ethelred, with a certain Wada as their leader. The king defeated them at Billingham near Wallalege, that is Billington-Langho near Whalley, Lancashire. Many were killed on each side and Wada fled.¹⁰⁹ In 798 there was another synod at Pincanhale (Finchale), where there were gathered under the presidency of Archbishop Eanbald most of the great ecclesiastics and chiefs. Enactments were made about the ecclesiastical courts and also about the observance of Easter. Eanbald ordered that the Acts of the five Ecumenical Councils should be read, and of course accepted. The synod made quite clear the orthodoxy and catholicity of the English Church.¹¹⁰ In the following year Osbald, formerly king and now an abbot, was buried at York, and in the same year Aldred, the slayer of King Ethelred, was slain by the ealdorman Thomund to avenge his king and lord.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ Roger of Hoveden.

¹⁰⁹ Roger of Hoveden.

¹¹⁰ Sym. Durh., Roger of Hoveden.

¹¹¹ Roger of Hoveden.

In 800 Bishop Eadred died in the third year of his episcopate.

Eanbert or Osbert¹¹² was consecrated in 800 by Archbishop Eanbald at a place variously called Cellingaham or Etlingaham. Symeon gives the first.¹¹³ Prior Richard calls it Ethingaham.¹¹⁴ Cottingham near Hull has been suggested, and there are places in Northumberland called Ellingham, Eglingham and Edlingham. It was in this year that St. Alkmund, son of King Alchred, was slain. In 801 King Eardulf led an army against Kenwulf, King of Mercia, his ground of complaint being that the latter had received his enemies. On the death of Higbald of Lindisfarne in 802 Egbert was appointed his successor, his consecration taking place at Bigwell (Bywell), and his consecrators Archbishop Eanbald and Bishops Eanbert and Badwulf. Richard of Hexham says Eanbert ruled over the diocese fourteen years,¹¹⁵ but in the next chapter he says thirteen years. We may assume that he died in 813 or 814, but the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* says he died in 806.

Tidfirth was the last of the bishops of Hexham, and of him we know nothing. Richard says the diocese came to an end fifty-four years before the great Danish invasion, so Tidfirth must have ended his episcopate about 821. There is a story that he left Hexham in that year and died on his way to Rome. In the ancient cemetery of Monkwearmouth was a stone (now in the British Museum) with rudely carved figures and the name Tidfirth in runic letters. It may be that Bishop Tidfirth died there while waiting to take shipping for the Continent, but the name was not uncommon. The *Lindisfarne Annals* have the statement that "Osbert," the last bishop of Hexham, died in 820. Henceforth the diocese was merged in that of Lindisfarne. It had roughly covered south Bernicia, that is the modern county of Durham and about three-fifths of Northumberland,

¹¹² Richard of Hexham, xviii.

¹¹³ *Hist. Reg.* 61.

¹¹⁴ c. 18.

¹¹⁵ c. 18.

stretching north and south from the Alne to the Tees, and east and west from the North Sea to Wetheral near Carlisle. In the *Brevis Relatio de Sancto Cuthberto* it is stated that Alfred and Guthred gave the possessions of the see of Hexham to St. Cuthbert. William of Malmesbury tells us that the Danes destroyed Hexham and that in his time it was a villa of the Archbishop of York. Why the see was given up we do not know, but the troublous times doubtless were much to blame.

One last scene. On the 3rd March 1154 there was a solemn investigation of the relics which had previously been placed in the church. In white albs and barefooted the clergy present examined the chest in which these had been deposited in the days of Aelfred of Weston. They had since been kept in a chest before the altar, each set of relics wrapped up separately. Three had a document identifying them as those of Acca, Alchmund and Frithbert. The fourth had no such document, but they were certain the contents were those of Tilbert. In a *scrinium* or small chest they found the bones of Eata, a leaden vessel containing some fragmentary relics of Frithbert, and in another receptacle some of the dust of Acca. All these were placed in a shrine erected near the high altar.¹¹⁶ There they remained until the devastation of the sixteenth century.

¹¹⁶ Aelred, *De Sanctis*, xi, xiii.