

Bede, Bishops and Bisi of East Anglia: Questions of Chronology and Episcopal Consecration in the *Historia Ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*

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ABSTRACT

This article examines a contradiction in Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica* between Bede's own claims and the implications of the list of bishops in the conciliar document produced at the Synod of Hertford, concerning the date of Bisi's consecration. Modern reconstructions of East Anglian episcopal chronology rely on Bede's account. The article opens by considering Bede's concern to identify episcopal consecrators, which led to the contradiction. The implications of the Synod of Hertford are then explored for dating East Anglia's bishops and the consequent impact this has upon interpreting East Anglia's royal chronology and the evangelization of the kingdom. This further exposes Bede's motives for writing his history and how he constructed his narrative.

'Bisi ... episcopus ... Theodoro ordinante factus est'.¹ One can hardly think of a more straightforward statement. Bisi, bishop of East Anglia, was consecrated by the new bishop of Canterbury, Theodore (668–690), after Theodore's arrival in 669. Bede's reference to this event is also very important in modern scholarship: it serves as underpinning for modern reconstructions of East Anglian chronology. Bede's East Anglian information is notoriously poor. He could identify kings, for example, but not their reign lengths. Their reigns may be judged roughly by association with other kings and events for which there are more secure dates.² He did have some information about the length of the first three bishops' episcopacies, but even this tails off in the second half of the seventh century. Felix arrived in Canterbury a bishop and governed the East Anglian Church for seventeen years. Thomas succeeded him, was consecrated by Honorius of Canterbury (627 × 631–653) and was bishop for five years and was in turn succeeded by Berhtgisl (also known as Boniface), who was also consecrated by Honorius and held the East

¹ Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* [hereafter *HE*], Preface, in Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. B. Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors (Oxford, 1969), p. 352. 'Bisi ... was made bishop ... and consecrated by Theodore.'

² B. Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms of Early Anglo-Saxon England* (London, 1990), pp. 58, 62–4, 67 (Table 6); R. Shaw, *The Gregorian Mission to Kent in Bede's Ecclesiastical History: Methodology and Sources*, (London, 2018), p. 166; R. Hoggett, *The Archaeology of the East Anglian Conversion* (Woodbridge, 2010), pp. 35–6.

Anglian see for seventeen years. Bisi succeeded him and according to Bede was consecrated by Theodore of Canterbury. Bede supplies no dates for East Anglia but Bisi's presence at the Synod of Hertford (672) and Bede's identification of Theodore as his consecrator provides an ostensibly crucial narrow window of time for his consecration.

Charles Plummer sought to use elements of Bede's relative chronology to establish a scholarly East Anglian episcopal chronology. He began with Edwin's baptism in 627. Bede associated it with Eorpwald's conversion and assassination, which was followed by three years of pagan 'error'. Berhtgisl was consecrated by Honorius of Canterbury twenty-two years after Felix's arrival. On account of Honorius' death in 653, Plummer was thereby able to pin Felix's arrival to *c.* 630/631.³ This in turn allowed the deaths and successions of the other East Anglian bishops to be dated. Felix died in *c.* 647/648, Thomas in *c.* 652/653 and then Berhtgisl in *c.* 669/670, setting up Theodore's consecration of Bisi.⁴ While Plummer gives only the dates 669 × 673 for Bisi's consecration, it is often taken that Bisi was consecrated in the months following Theodore's arrival.⁵ This is certainly a logical assumption, given Bede's comment that Theodore consecrated bishops during the first tour of his province.⁶ Both the *Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedia* and the *Handbook of British Chronology* place Bisi's accession in 669/670.⁷ Overall, Plummer's logic is impressive and his argument intricate and convincing.

There is, however, reason to suspect that Bede made a mistake. The Synod of Hertford places Bisi ahead of Wilfrid in the order of bishops and the eighth canon asserts that bishops were to be ordered according to the date of their consecration.⁸ Wilfrid was consecrated in Francia several years before Theodore's arrival in Kent.⁹ This is a significant problem, exposing a potential contradiction in the *Historia Ecclesiastica (HE)*, which renders East Anglian episcopal chronology suspect. Furthermore, it exposes a need to examine Bede's identification of

³ Bede, *Opera Historica* [hereafter *OH*], ed. C. Plummer, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1896), II, 106. Whitelock follows this logic: D. Whitelock, 'The Pre-Viking Age Church in East Anglia', *ASE* 1 (1972), 1–22, at 3–8.

⁴ Plummer, *OH*, II, 174.

⁵ F. M. Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 3rd ed. (Oxford, 1971), p. 132; N. P. Brooks, *The Early History of the Church of Canterbury: Christ Church from 597 to 1066* (Leicester, 1984), p. 71; Whitelock, 'Pre-Viking Age Church', p. 8.

⁶ Bede, *HE* iv. 2 (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 332–6).

⁷ E. B. Fryde, D. E. Greenway, S. Porter and I. Roy, *Handbook of British Chronology*, 3rd ed. repr. (Cambridge, 1996), p. 216; S. Keynes, 'Appendix II', *The Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedia of Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. M. Lapidge, J. Blair, S. Keynes and D. Scragg, 2nd ed. (Chichester, 2014), pp. 539–66, at 553.

⁸ Bede, *HE* iv. 5 (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 348–54).

⁹ Stephen, *Vita Wilfridi* [hereafter *VW*] 12, in *The Life of Bishop Wilfrid by Eddius Stephanus*, ed. B. Colgrave (Cambridge, 1927), pp. 24–6.

episcopal consecrators throughout the *HE* carefully, because this would suggest that Bede was reconciling chronologies to infer who the consecrator was, rather than working from a source.¹⁰ Why he felt the need to do so is an important question to ask and has the potential to provide further insight into how Bede operated as a historian and the nature of the sources underlying the *HE*.

This discussion therefore seeks to explore the reasons for Bede's interest in episcopal consecrators, as well as to resolve this apparent contradiction at the heart of East Anglia's episcopal chronology. There are four principal sections to the argument. The first explores the latter issue, considering the themes present in the consecrators that Bede identifies, and seeks to explain why Bede felt it necessary to provide this information within his great historical work. The second section deals with the tension between the evidence of the Synod of Hertford and Bede's narrative, arguing that the synodal record should be given preference. It also examines the best interpretation of the Synod's record and how the apparent contradiction in the *HE* came about. The third section looks to determine, as far as is possible, the date of the consecration of Bisi. Given that it relates to Wilfrid's

¹⁰ For other discussions concerning Bede's chronology: there has been debate concerning the chronology of Paulinus' mission to Northumbria, see: D. P. Kirby, 'Bede and Northumbrian Chronology', *EHR* 78 (1963), 514–27, at 522–3, cf. P. H. Blair, 'The Letters of Pope Boniface V and the Mission of Paulinus to Northumbria', *England before the Conquest: Studies in Primary Sources presented to Dorothy Whitelock*, ed. P. Clemoes and K. Hughes (Cambridge, 1971), pp. 5–13. The date of the Synod of Hatfield has provoked discussion, with Bede giving 680, but scholars typically preferring 679: R. L. Poole, 'The Chronology of Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica* and the Councils of 679–80', *JTS* 20 (1918), 24–40, at 33–5, 38–40; W. Levison, *England and the Continent in the Eighth Century: the Ford Lectures delivered in the University of Oxford in the Hilary Term 1943* (Oxford, 1946), pp. 265–6; K. P. Harrison, *The Framework of Anglo-Saxon History to AD 900* (Cambridge, 1976), p. 41; C. Cubitt, *Anglo-Saxon Church Councils c. 650–c. 850* (London, 1995), pp. 252–6. The date of Wilfrid's death is given as 709 by Bede, but there is reason to prefer the 710: C. E. Stancliffe, 'Dating Wilfrid's Death and Stephen's Life', *Wilfrid: Abbot, Bishop, Saint: Papers from the 1300th Anniversary Conferences*, ed. N. J. Higham (Donnington, 2013), pp. 17–22. Bede provides two calculations for the date of Æthelberht's death, twenty-one years from receiving Christianity and in the twenty-first year after Augustine departed. This has led to suggestions that Æthelberht died in 618 or converted before Augustine arrived: N. P. Brooks, *Anglo-Saxon Myths: State and Church 400–1066* (London, 2000), p. 48, cf. D. P. Kirby, *The Earliest English Kings*, rev. ed. (London, 2000), pp. 24–5. Frank Stenton thought Bede's chronology suggested that the Synod of Whitby was held in 663, not 664: Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 129. Immo Warntjes has observed that Bede provides two possible dates for the foundation of Lindisfarne, 634 and 635, and that annalistic evidence favours the latter date: I. Warntjes, 'Victorius vs Dionysius: the Irish Easter Controversy of AD 689', *Early Medieval Ireland and Europe: Chronology, Contacts, Scholarship: Festschrift für Dáibí Ó Cróinín*, ed. P. Moran and I. Warntjes, *Studia Traditionis Theologiae: Explorations in Early and Medieval Theology* 14 (Turnhout, 2015), 33–98, at 43, n. 36. General discussions of aspects of Bede's chronology include: Harrison, *Framework of Anglo-Saxon History*, pp. 76–98; Levison, *England and the Continent*, pp. 265–79; Kirby, 'Northumbrian Chronology', pp. 514–27.

own consecration, consideration will be given to Wilfrid's own episcopal consecration, itself a debated point.¹¹ The fourth and final section discusses the implications of redating Bisi's consecration for East Anglian history. As the above discussion makes clear, there is little that is certain about early East Anglian chronology and history. This section seeks to make reasonable inferences and such suggestions as seem logical from a reappraisal of the evidence. This reappraisal is therefore simply a hypothesis, but it seeks to draw out the implications of altering the East Anglian episcopal chronology and place them within the broader context of Bede's East Anglian and evangelistic narratives. I aim to reassess the early history of East Anglian Christianity and give some thought to Bede's construction of the *HE*.

EPISCOPAL CONSECRATION IN THE *HISTORIA ECCLESIASTICA*

The question of episcopal consecration is a small yet consistent theme that permeates the *HE*, easily overlooked as an inconsequential detail in the unfolding narrative of the English Church's development over the seventh century. It is the new bishop and his role within the process of evangelization that grabs the historian's attention.¹² Nevertheless, Bede took care to record this information and presumably had a purpose in so doing. More to the point, Richard Shaw's survey of Bede's sources for the Gregorian mission concluded that Bede often had no evidence of the individual consecrators, although it is likely that Canterbury was something of an exception to this.¹³ The *Vita Sancti Gregorii* (*VSG*) also displays an interest in episcopal consecration and has Augustine consecrated by Gregory and Laurence consecrated by Mellitus.¹⁴ That Bede would not include such a link to Gregory, stressing instead the Frankish Church, suggests that he had some meaningful evidence for Canterbury. This is further supported by his acknowledgment of Augustine's uncanonical association of Laurence with him at Canterbury.¹⁵ On the whole, however, Bede went to the effort of reconciling different episcopal lists and their respective chronologies in order to identify the likely consecrator.

¹¹ C. Cubitt, 'Appendix 2: the Chronology of Stephen's Life of Wilfrid', *Wilfrid*, ed. Higham, pp. 334–46, at 342, cf. W. Goffart, *The Narrators of Barbarian History (AD 550–800): Jordanes, Gregory of Tours, Bede and Paul the Deacon* (Princeton, NJ, 1988), p. 308.

¹² J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People: a Historical Commentary* (Oxford, 1988), p. xxviii.

¹³ Shaw, *The Gregorian Mission to Kent*, pp. 189–92.

¹⁴ Anon., *Vita Sancti Gregorii* [hereafter *VSG*] 11, in *The Earliest Life of Gregory the Great by an Anonymous Monk of Whitby*, ed. B. Colgrave, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, 1985), p. 92.

¹⁵ Bede, *HE* i. 27, ii. 4 (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 78–102, 114–16).

Bede, Bishops and Bisi of East Anglia

Table 1:
Bede's bishops and their consecrators.

<i>HE</i> reference ¹⁶	Bishop-elect	See	Consecrator
i. 27	Augustine	Canterbury	Aetherius 'of Arles' ¹⁷
ii. 3	Mellitus	London, later translated to Canterbury	Augustine of Canterbury
ii. 3	Justus	Rochester, later translated to Canterbury	Augustine of Canterbury
ii. 4	Laurence	Canterbury	Augustine of Canterbury
ii. 8	Romanus	Rochester	Justus of Canterbury
ii. 9	Paulinus	York, later translated to Rochester	Justus of Canterbury
ii. 16	Honorius	Canterbury	Paulinus of York
iii. 7	Birinus	Dorchester	Asterius of Genoa
iii. 7	Leuthere	Winchester	Theodore of Canterbury
iii. 14	Ithamar	Rochester	Honorius of Canterbury
iii. 20	Thomas	<i>Dommoc</i>	Honorius of Canterbury
iii. 20	Berhtgisl	<i>Dommoc</i>	Honorius of Canterbury
iii. 20	Deusdedit	Canterbury	Ithamar of Rochester
iii. 20	Damian	Rochester	Deusdedit of Canterbury
iii. 21	Diuma	Mercia and Middle Anglia	Finan of Lindisfarne
iii. 22	Cedd	Essex	Finan of Lindisfarne
iii. 28/v. 19	Wilfrid	York, later expelled and occupied numerous other sees	Agilbert and eleven Frankish bishops

(Continued)

¹⁶ This table simply reproduces Bede's information. Errors such as describing Aetherius of Lyons as bishop of Arles and Bisi's consecration by Theodore are included unchanged.

¹⁷ Bede does get certain details of Augustine's consecration wrong. While Aetherius, as a senior bishop of the Frankish Church, is a logical candidate to have consecrated Augustine, he was bishop of Lyons, not Arles. Augustine also seems to have been consecrated on the way to Kent, rather than returning to Francia after initial contact with Æthelberht. Gregory, *Registrum Epistolarum* viii. 29 [hereafter *RE*], in *Gregorii I papae Registrum epistolarum*, ed. P. Ewald and L. M. Hartmann, MGH Epist. 1–2, 2 vols (Berlin, 1891–99), II, 30–1; Bede, *HE* i. 27 (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 78–102); Shaw, *The Gregorian Mission to Kent*, pp. 59–63.

Table 1 (Continued)

<i>HE</i> reference	Bishop-elect	See	Consecrator
iii. 28	Chad	Lindisfarne/ Northumbria	Wine and two British bishops ¹⁸
iv. 2	Theodore	Canterbury	Pope Vitalian
iv. 2	Putta	Rochester	Theodore of Canterbury
iv. 3	Winfrith	Lichfield	Theodore of Canterbury
iv. 5	Bisi	<i>Domnoc</i>	Theodore of Canterbury
iv. 5	Æcci	Dunwich	Theodore of Canterbury
iv. 5	Baduwine	Elmham	Theodore of Canterbury
iv. 6	Seaxwulf	Lichfield	Theodore of Canterbury
iv. 6	Eorcenwald	London	Theodore of Canterbury
iv. 12	Hædde	Winchester	Theodore of Canterbury
iv. 12	Cwichelm	Rochester	Theodore of Canterbury
iv. 12	Gefmund	Rochester	Theodore of Canterbury
iv. 12	Bosa	York	Theodore of Canterbury
iv. 12	Eata	Lindisfarne and Hexham, later translated to Hexham	Theodore of Canterbury
iv. 12	Eadhæd	Lindsey, later translated to Ripon	Theodore of Canterbury
iv. 12	Tunberht	Hexham ¹⁹	Theodore of Canterbury
iv. 12	Trumwine	Picts under English rule	Theodore of Canterbury
iv. 23	Oftfor	The Hwicce	Wilfrid of York (in exile in Mercia)
iv. 28	Cuthberht	Hexham, later translated to Lindisfarne	Theodore of Canterbury with six other bishops

(Continued)

¹⁸ Chad's orders were regarded as invalid owing to his links to the *Latencus* and its suspected Quartodecimanism. Theodore consecrated Chad with Wilfrid to the Mercian see, then centred on Lichfield. Bede, *HE* iv. 3 (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 336–46); C. E. Stancliffe, *Bede, Wilfrid and the Irish*, Jarrow Lecture 46 (Jarrow, 2003), 11–15.

¹⁹ Tunberht did not replace Eata, rather Eata's see was then located solely on Lindisfarne. Eata and Cuthberht then switched sees, giving Eata Hexham and Cuthberht Lindisfarne.

Table 1 (Continued)

<i>HE</i> reference	Bishop-elect	See	Consecrator
v. 6	Wilfrid II	York	John of Beverley ²⁰
v. 8	Berhtwold	Canterbury	Godwin of Lyon
v. 8	Tobias	Rochester	Berhtwold of Canterbury
v. 11	Swithberht	Frisia	Wilfrid of York (in exile in Mercia)
v. 11	Willibrord	Frisia	Pope Sergius
v. 23	Ealdwulf	Rochester	Berhtwold of Canterbury
v. 23	Tatwine	Canterbury	Daniel of Winchester, Ingwold of London, Ealdwine of Lichfield and Ealdwulf of Rochester

Accounting for Bede's ostensibly antiquarian interest in consecrators is apparently simple, with two basic interpretations suggesting themselves. The first is that in possessing some evidence for the succession of bishops, Bede sought to be consistent. The second focusses on Bede's interest in chronology; the intellectual exercise of reconciling different episcopal lists and so establishing in theory which metropolitan bishop of Canterbury could have consecrated which suffragans (and vice versa) may have been attractive to him. However, the interest shown by the anonymous author of the *VSG* in the consecration history of early bishops of Canterbury suggests that this was more than a matter of academic interest in the cloisters of Wearmouth-Jarrow. Compiling a table of the bishops for whom Bede provides information (see table above) reveals certain important themes.

There are two points to draw out that are particularly striking. The first is that Bede says very little about the consecration of bishops associated with the Ionan mission centred on Lindisfarne; most obviously none of the consecrators of the bishops of Lindisfarne is identified prior to the Synod of Whitby (664) and the resolution of the Easter Controversy in Northumbria. The second is that Bede's interest in consecrators declines markedly in the last half century covered by the *HE*. While this does match a general decline in historical information, it would seem that Bede chose to describe unusual consecrations, focussing on those associated with the Frisian mission, the archbishopric of Canterbury and the canonically-dubious consecration of Wilfrid II at York.

²⁰ An act of dubious legality because John consecrated Wilfrid as his successor.

Both seem to relate to the issues surrounding the Easter Controversy of the seventh century. The early Church had been divided on how closely Easter should be related to Passover and whether Easter should be celebrated on Nisan-14. The first Council of Nicaea in 325 had established that Easter should be distinct from Passover and always celebrated on a Sunday. Those who adhered to the tradition of celebrating Easter on Nisan-14 were condemned for the heresy of Quartodecimanism. The problem resurfaced in the seventh-century insular world due to the Irish calendar, the *Latercus*.²¹ Nicaea had left unclear whether Easter could be celebrated on Nisan-14 if it fell on a Sunday and the *Latercus* assumed this was acceptable. This diverged from the rest of western Christendom, which would delay Easter by a week in such a situation. The matter was resolved in Northumbria at the Synod of Whitby, where Wilfrid of York (c. 635–710) championed the Dionysiac Easter against the Ionan *Latercus* and, at the same time, replaced the older and less accurate Roman calendar, which had been developed by Victorius of Aquitaine.²² Adherents of the *Latercus* were viewed (erroneously) as Quartodecimans and so as schismatics and heretics and not to be received into communion with the see of Rome.²³

In the first instance, not identifying ‘tainted’ Ionan consecrators is not a universal rule, more of a trend. Bede seems only to have known general details about some ‘orthodox’ bishops, such as Agilbert and Felix, noting that they were ordained in Ireland and Burgundy respectively.²⁴ Likewise Bede either knew or assumed that Diuma and Cedd were consecrated by Finan of Lindisfarne. It is interesting that Tuda, the bishop of Northumbria for a few months in 664, is carefully described as being from southern Ireland, in other words the area of Ireland that had ceased to use the *Latercus* about three decades earlier.²⁵ This care on Bede’s part further underscores the relationship between Bede’s inclusion of consecrators and the Easter Controversy; an ironic state of affairs, given the lack of information about Tuda’s consecrators.

The question at the heart of the matter seems to have been the concept of Apostolic Succession. Apostolic Succession rests in the person of the bishop and

²¹ Mayr-Harting, *The Coming of Christianity*, pp. 103–4; C. Corning, *The Celtic and Roman Traditions: Conflict and Consensus in the Early Medieval Church* (Basingstoke, 2006), pp. 4–13, 83–4; Stancliffe, *Bede, Wilfrid and the Irish*, pp. 4, 7–10.

²² E. T. Dailey, ‘Reappraising the Synod of Whitby’, *Hist. Stud.* 10 (2009), 31–44, at 36–38; E. T. Dailey, ‘To Choose One Easter from Three: Oswiu’s Decision at the Northumbrian Synod of AD 664’, *Peritia* 26 (2015), 47–64, at 49–56; Warntjes, ‘Victorius vs Dionysius’, pp. 38–9.

²³ The *Latercus* did not conform to ‘true’ Quartodecimanism, which celebrated Easter on Nisan-14 irrespective of the day of the week. Stancliffe, *Bede, Wilfrid and the Irish*, pp. 4–5; Corning, *The Celtic and Roman Tradition*, pp. 84, 91, 119–20, 127–8.

²⁴ Bede, *HE* ii. 15, iii. 7 (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 188–90, 232–6).

²⁵ Bede, *HE* iii. 26–7 (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 308–14); Stancliffe, *Bede, Wilfrid and the Irish*, pp. 10–11.

is the idea that he is part of an unbroken chain running back to Christ himself. As a result, they are uniquely empowered to conduct certain rites, such as confirmation and, far more importantly, ordination.²⁶ If a bishop is corrupted or his orders somehow invalid, it can have significant ramifications that can ripple out across a Church, theoretically for generations.²⁷ This anxiety is visible in both the *HE* and the *Vita Wilfridi (VW)* in the events surrounding the Synods of Whitby. Wilfrid's request to receive consecration in Francia revolved around the fact that the adherents of the *Lateranus* were viewed as heretics, who were not received into communion by Rome and whose orders were consequently invalid.²⁸ This attitude is replicated in the *Penitentials of Theodore*, which relates the need to ordain adherents of the *Lateranus*, indicating that their orders were not accepted by the Roman Church.²⁹

Bede displays this concern from both a clerical and a lay angle. When describing the history of the Easter controversy in the run-up to Whitby, he observed: 'movit haec quaestio sensus et corda multorum, timentium ne forte accepto Christianitatis vocabulo in vacuum currerent aut cucurrissent'.³⁰ The dispute was apparently causing the laity concern that salvation was inaccessible to them precisely because they were in schism with Rome. From a clerical angle, the appeal of Oswiu and Ecgberht to Rome to consecrate Wigheard was mediated through the thought that 'quatinus accepto ipse gradu archiepiscopatus catholicos per omnem Britanniam ecclesiis Anglorum ordinare posset antistites'.³¹ The need for this reinvigoration of the clergy may have partly been caused by the plague that swept through Britain in 664, but the reference to catholic bishops suggests a desire to guarantee the

²⁶ C. Rapp, *Holy Bishops in Late Antiquity: the Nature of Christian Leadership in an Age of Transition* (London, 2005), pp. 24–32; J. Barrow, 'The Bishop in the Latin West, 600–1100', *Celibate and Childless Men in Power: Ruling Eunuchs and Bishops in the Pre-Modern World*, ed. A. Höfert, M. M. Mesley and S. Tolino (Abingdon, 2019), pp. 50–74, at 51–7.

²⁷ If an invalid bishop conducted ordinations, those priests would not be legitimate and their sacraments would themselves be invalid.

²⁸ Stephen, *VW* 12 (ed. B. Colgrave, pp. 24–6); Bede, *HE* iii. 28 (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 314–16).

²⁹ A. W. Haddan and W. Stubbs, ed., *Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents relating to Great Britain and Ireland*, 3 vols (Oxford, 1869–78), III, 180, v 1. Theodore did moderate this view later, probably realising the *Lateranus* was not Quartodeciman and simply required that adherents have their orders 'topped up' by a Catholic bishop. *Ibid.* III, 197, ix 1.

³⁰ Bede, *HE* iii. 25 (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, p. 296). 'This dispute...troubled the minds and hearts of many people, who feared that, though they had received the name of Christian, they were running or had run in vain'.

³¹ Bede, *HE* iii. 29 (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, p. 318). 'When he had received the rank of archbishop, he could himself consecrate catholic bishops for the English churches throughout the whole of Britain'.

authority of the episcopal orders of the English Church and so, through the bishops' roles in ordaining clergy, that of the rest of the Church.³²

This conceptualization of Wigheard's Roman consecration and Tuda's consecration in southern Ireland demonstrates a concern with proving the orthodoxy of the English Church and the orders of its clergy. This helps to clarify the second theme in Bede's identification of consecrators. Theodore is overwhelmingly present in the consecrating and reordering of the English episcopate, after which references to episcopal consecration decline precipitously. Bede is showing that the aim of Oswiu and Ecgberht was fulfilled, that the English Church of his day was entirely orthodox and the ordinations of bishops, priests, deacons and so on principally derived from Theodore and, beyond him, Pope Vitalian and the see of Peter itself. After Theodore's death there was little need to describe the consecration, because there was no schism within the English Church and no need to identify the legitimate bishops.

This may have been one of the motivating factors behind Bede's attempts to identify the consecrators of those associated with the Gregorian mission. The description Bede gave of people's anxieties is generalized. He does not specify that it was those evangelized by the Lindisfarne mission that were anxious, rather he states that many people were anxious. Bede included an acerbic debate between Finan and Ronan at Lindisfarne concerning the Easter question in the *HE*. That Bede states Ronan's actions turned Finan into an open adversary of truth might suggest that Finan attacked Canterbury's traditions, an interpretation given credibility by Aldhelm of Malmesbury's (c. 639–709) description of Ionan students at Canterbury aggressively debating the same subject with Theodore.³³ Furthermore, Wilfrid queried (presumably rhetorically) at the Synod of Austerfeld whether he was the first to challenge the *Latercus* since the first Gregorian missionaries.³⁴ The reference to the first elders of the Gregorian mission suggests that Wilfrid saw a break in Canterbury's history, which if it did not illegitimise the see nonetheless allowed Wilfrid to claim a degree of primacy within the English Church. Whether Bede was directly responding to Wilfridian claims or a more general concern is unclear. Either way, his work to identify consecrators allowed him to prove a continuous history of legitimate bishops operating within the English Church in unbroken succession to Augustine and his consecration in the Frankish Church. Bede could reassure readers that there was continuous

³² Bede, *HE* iii. 27 (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 310–14); R. Shaw, 'Bede, Theodore and Wigheard. Why Did Pope Vitalian Need to Appoint a New Bishop for the English Church in the 660s?', *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique* 113 (2018), 521–43, at 538–40.

³³ Bede, *HE* iii. 25 (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 294–308); Aldhelm, *Aldhelmi et ad Aldhelmum epistolae* 5, in *Aldhelmi Opera*, ed. R. Ehwald, MGH Auct. antiq. 15 (Berlin, 1919), 486–94.

³⁴ Stephen, *VW* 47 (ed. Colgrave, p. 98).

legitimate episcopal rule extending from the earliest days of the mission to the Synod of Whitby and then reinvigorated and extended by Theodore. The English people had not been running the race in vain.

In addition to these two themes, there is a final point to draw out and that concerns the last consecration in the *HE*: Tatwine's. It arguably closes a narrative arc begun in the first book with Augustine. Augustine, as the first bishop in the English Church, was consecrated outside of it.³⁵ Furthermore, when he consecrated his fellow missionaries, Mellitus and Justus, bishops, he was forced to do so alone.³⁶ Both of these issues appear in Gregory's letters concerning the organization of the English Church. Firstly, in the *Libellus Responionum* Gregory told Augustine that necessity forced him to consecrate bishops alone but that as more bishops became available that oddity should be rectified and three or four bishops used for consecrations.³⁷ Secondly, in his infamous letter discussing the structure of the English Church, Gregory stated that in future the bishop of London was to be consecrated by his own synod.³⁸ Tatwine's consecration by four of his suffragans is essentially the last historical point mentioned by Bede, who then proceeded to describe the current ecclesiastical and political state of affairs in 731 before providing a summary chronicle and giving a brief autobiography and bibliography.³⁹ While the English Church did not perfectly match Gregory's vision, as the *HE* closes the new metropolitan of Canterbury is consecrated by four bishops of his own synod. It is very rare for Bede to state that more than a single bishop was present at a consecration (the exceptions are Chad, Wilfrid and Cuthberht). The focus on Tatwine's consecration as an end to the *HE* completes a theme running throughout the *HE*. It shows that Gregory's aims had been fulfilled.⁴⁰ From beginning with a single bishop consecrated by the Franks, the English Church in 731 was now so well established that it was able to have multiple bishops present to consecrate their own

³⁵ Gregory, *RE* viii. 29 (ed. Ewald and Hartmann, II, 30–1).

³⁶ Bede, *HE* ii. 3 (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 182–6).

³⁷ Bede, *HE* i. 27 (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 78–102).

³⁸ Bede, *HE* i. 29 (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 104–6). A state of affairs that presumably also applied to the bishop of York.

³⁹ Bede, *HE* v. 23–4 (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 556–70).

⁴⁰ Neither Berhtwold nor Theodore were consecrated by their suffragans. Laurence could have been consecrated by three bishops (Augustine, Justus and Mellitus), but his association in the see of Canterbury during Augustine's life was canonically dubious anyway. Honorius might have had three bishops available to him (Paulinus, Felix and Birinus) but he may have been consecrated before Birinus arrived. More to the point, how the West Saxon bishops related to Canterbury is unclear and they may have regarded themselves as independent. Whether Deusdedit had access to three bishops (Agilbert, Ithamar and Berhtgisil) is also unclear. Furthermore, it is arguably significant that Bede never tries to suggest earlier bishops had multiple consecrators and it could imply that Bede knew that there was a tradition of one bishop consecrating another in the seventh-century English Church.

metropolitan. Perhaps, in Bede's mind, Tatwine's consecration marked the end of the missionary period amongst the English.

The consecration of bishops, specifically catholic bishops, was of intense importance to Bede and forms a significant theme across the five books of the *HE*. It allowed him to demonstrate the orthodoxy of the English Church and that this orthodoxy was extant from its first days and continued unbroken in kingdoms such as Kent, East Anglia and Wessex to his own day. Theodore's importance revolves around the renewal of contact with Rome and the guarantee his papal consecration placed on his orthodoxy and so the legitimacy of his actions in ordaining clergy and consecrating other bishops. Bede was arguably responding to concerns that English Christianity was corrupted, specifically by the Easter Controversy, and thus sought to demonstrate a continuous orthodox history, even if he could not hide the problems with the Lindisfarne mission and its bishops. Finally, and rather neatly, episcopal consecration allowed Bede to demonstrate the success of English Christianity in 731, contrasting Tatwine's consecration with the situation in which Augustine found himself in 597.

THE SYNOD OF HERTFORD (672)

It is Bede's concern to identify individual bishops' consecrators and to stress Theodore's role in the reordering of the English Church after both the Synod of Whitby and the plague that led him to make quite a significant mistake. Theodore of Canterbury, Bisi of East Anglia, Wilfrid of York, Putta of Rochester, Leuthere of Wessex and Winfrith of Lichfield: this is the order of bishops given at the Synod of Hertford. Bisi's precedence over Wilfrid is unexpected. Based on the eighth canon – 'Ut nullus episcoporum se praeferat alteri per ambitionem, sed omnes agnoscant tempus et ordinem consecrationis suae'⁴¹ – the natural implication is that Bisi was consecrated before Wilfrid. Wilfrid's own consecration occurred before Theodore's arrival; indeed, he carried out episcopal duties in Kent during the interregnum after Deusdedit's death and before Theodore's arrival.⁴² Yet Bede is explicit that Bisi was consecrated by Theodore.⁴³ This is a significant problem. Not only does it render doubtful Plummer's chronology (see introduction), but it also exposes a potential contradiction within the *HE*, between the record of the Synod of Hertford and the statement made by Bede about Bisi's consecrator. If Bisi was consecrated before Wilfrid, Theodore had not yet arrived

⁴¹ Bede, *HE* iv. 5 (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, p. 352). 'That no bishop claim precedence over another bishop out of ambition; but all shall take rank according to the time and order of their consecration'.

⁴² Stephen, *VW* 14 (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, p. 30).

⁴³ Bede, *HE* iv. 5 (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 348–54).

in Canterbury, nor, for that matter, even been selected by Pope Vitalian to occupy the see.

The Synod of Hertford was the first meeting of the English Church in which the authority of the metropolitan see of Canterbury was acknowledged by the various Anglo-Saxon kingdoms. Theodore, appointed by Vitalian to root out errors and heresies, sought to ensure the obedience of his bishops to the ancient canons and selected ten that he felt were in particular need of stressing.⁴⁴ The conciliar record is a contemporary document that Bede embedded into the *HE*. It was dictated to Titill the notary by Theodore, seemingly at the council itself, and may have been approved by all the bishops present with their signatures.⁴⁵ The text of the document fits so neatly with the charter record that begins to survive from the 670s that in the broader debate on the origins of the charter amongst the English it has been cited as the archetype for those first charters.⁴⁶ This being said, the copying of a document still gives cause for concern; minor omissions or confusions can alter the reading significantly. However, Bede's copying ability can be tested with the papal letters and the *Libellus Responionum*. While he was willing to edit a document to remove elements that he perceived to be inaccurate or unedifying, he did not forge evidence.⁴⁷ Overall, Bede seems to have been an accurate copyist.⁴⁸ With all of this in mind, it is reasonable to have confidence in the text of the Synod of Hertford. As a result, choosing between Bede's account and the implications of the record of the Synod of Hertford is quite straightforward. The latter is a contemporary document, drawn up by the leader of the synod and (possibly) checked by those also present. Bede, for all his ability, was writing nearly six decades later and, as the introduction makes clear, evidently had very little information concerning East Anglian chronology and history.

The information contained within the conciliar record therefore needs to be considered carefully. The apparent mis-ordering of the bishops has been noted by Arthur Haddan and William Stubbs, who suggested that Wilfrid's placement second related to the intrusion of Chad and the fact that it was only when Theodore arrived in Northumbria that Wilfrid was formally installed in his

⁴⁴ Bede, *HE* iii. 29, iv. 5 (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 318–22, 348–54).

⁴⁵ Bede, *HE* iv. 5 (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 348–54).

⁴⁶ B. Snook, 'Who Introduced Charters into England? The Case for Theodore and Hadrian', *Textus Roffensis: Law, Language and Libraries in Early Medieval England* (Turnhout, 2015), pp. 257–90, at 279–83; Cubitt, *Anglo-Saxon Church Councils*, pp. 86–7.

⁴⁷ Bede, *HE* ii. 19, iii. 29 (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 198–202, 318–22).

⁴⁸ Harrison, *Framework of Anglo-Saxon History*, pp. 78–9; P. Meyvaert, 'Bede's Text of the *Libellus Responionum* of Gregory the Great to Augustine of Canterbury', *England before the Conquest*, ed. Clemons and Hughes, pp. 15–33, at 32; P. Meyvaert, 'The Registrum of Gregory the Great', *Revue bénédictine* 80 (1970), 162–6, at 166.

see.⁴⁹ In their account, Theodore consecrated Bisi before he resolved the Northumbrian situation, giving him precedence at Hertford. Such an argument has some merit in seeking to resolve the apparent contradictions between the conciliar record and Bede. However, it forces an unnatural reading of both sources.

Taking Bede first, there is no clear order to Theodore's consecrations in the wake of his arrival in Kent. However, Bede observes that 'Theodorus perlustrans universa ordinabat locis oportunis episcopos'.⁵⁰ The problem this poses for Haddan's and Stubbs' suggestion is that it implies that Theodore consecrated bishops as he arrived in kingdoms during his tour of his province. Consequently, one would expect Theodore to have consecrated Putta as bishop of Rochester first.⁵¹ Bede digresses in the chapter to describe Theodore settling the dispute between Wilfrid and Chad concerning the Northumbrian see. The chapter then closes with Putta's consecration and so could imply that Theodore came to Rochester last. However, Bede described Wilfrid's episcopal work in Kent before Theodore arrived, which included ordaining deacons and priests.⁵² The shift to Theodore's arrival and the consecration of Putta probably relates to that statement, with Theodore completing the restoration of the Kentish Church upon his arrival in 669, which had been begun by Wilfrid in *c.* 667. In short, Bede's account does not preserve any clear evidence for the order in which Theodore consecrated bishops during his visitation of 669 and so putting Bisi first in his consecrations is no more than guesswork.

Turning to the Synod of Hertford, the crucial point is that the statutes themselves stress consecration as marking the seniority of a bishop: 'Ut nullus episcoporum se praeferat alteri per ambitionem, sed omnes agnoscant tempus et ordinem consecrationis suae'.⁵³ Such a statement sits poorly with the suggestion that Wilfrid was bumped down the pecking order simply due to lacking a diocese. More to the point, there was clearly a distinction between election, consecration and enthronement. Bede's description of Berhtwold's succession to the see of Canterbury after Theodore's death includes the date of each stage, with Berhtwold elected (*electus est*) 1 July 692; consecrated (*ordinatus*) 29 June 693 and enthroned (*sedit in sede*) 31 August 693.⁵⁴ What is significant about these stages in Berhtwold's accession to the episcopate is that Bede evidently regarded his consecration as the significant event, dating the length of Berhtwold's episcopate by his consecration.⁵⁵ What both the Synod of

⁴⁹ Haddan and Stubbs, ed., *Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents*, III, 121, n. b.

⁵⁰ Bede, *HE* iv. 2 (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, p. 334). 'Theodore journeyed to every district consecrating bishops in suitable places'.

⁵¹ Bede, *HE* iv. 2 (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 332–6).

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ Bede, *HE* iv. 5 (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, p. 352).

⁵⁴ Bede, *HE* v. 8 (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 472–4).

⁵⁵ Bede, *HE* v. 8, v. 23 (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 472–4, 556–60).

Hertford's eighth canon and Bede's description of Berhtwold's episcopate confirm is that the possession of a see itself was not regarded as particularly important in the making of a bishop. Furthermore, Wilfrid had clearly undertaken episcopal responsibilities in both Kent and Mercia; it is not compelling to suggest that Wilfrid's episcopal status was somehow not recognized until he achieved the Northumbria see, thereby placing him below Bisi in the Church's hierarchy.⁵⁶

One possible interpretation is that Theodore sought to constrain and control Wilfrid. Focussing on his restoration, rather than his consecration, would have emphasized his subordination to Theodore. It would have allowed Theodore to present himself as the senior bishop, not simply as metropolitan but according to consecration. However, there is nothing to suggest that Theodore objected to Wilfrid's orders and it is difficult to see what he could have objected to in a Frankish consecration.⁵⁷ Furthermore, there is a good chance that Theodore knew of Wilfrid before his arrival in Kent. His winter sojourn with Agilbert of Paris, formerly bishop of Wessex and Wilfrid's mentor and consecrator, would have provided him with ample time to discuss the state of the English Church and hear of the merits of Wilfrid.⁵⁸ Given Wilfrid's expertise in *computus* and canon law, it is likely that Wilfrid was a useful ally in the early years of Theodore's episcopate as he sought to bring the English Church firmly in line with Roman practice.⁵⁹ Certainly, Stephen of Ripon, Wilfrid's hagiographer, presents Wilfrid and Theodore as acting together to reconsecrate and translate Chad to Lichfield, who had originally been intruded by King Oswiu of Northumbria into Wilfrid's see while Wilfrid was being consecrated in Francia.⁶⁰ Furthermore, Wilfrid only objected to Theodore's decrees made during the middle part of his episcopate: a time of dispute.⁶¹ This dispute was most likely caused by Theodore's deposition of Wilfrid in the latter half of the 670s, the division of his diocese and the aftermath of these actions.

There is one possible source of tension between Theodore and Wilfrid and that is the question of York's status as a metropolitan see.⁶² Wilfrid's absence from the

⁵⁶ Stephen, *VW* 14 (ed. Colgrave, p. 30); Bede, *HE* iv. 2 (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 332–6).

⁵⁷ Stancliffe, *Bede, Wilfrid and the Irish*, pp. 4–5; H. Mayr-Harting, *The Coming of Christianity to Anglo-Saxon England*, 3rd ed. (London, 1991), pp. 129–30.

⁵⁸ Bede, *HE* iv. 1 (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 328–32).

⁵⁹ Stephen, *VW* 5 (ed. Colgrave, pp. 10–12).

⁶⁰ Stephen, *VW* 15 (ed. Colgrave, p. 32).

⁶¹ Stephen, *VW* 45–6 (ed. Colgrave, pp. 90–4).

⁶² M. Gibbs, 'The Decrees of Agatho and the Gregorian Plan for York', *Speculum* 48 (1973), 213–46, at 219–24; A. Thacker, 'Gallic or Greek? Archbishops in England from Theodore to Ecgberht', *Frankland: the Franks and the World of the Early Middle Ages: Essays in honour of Dame Jinty Nelson*, ed. P. Fouracre and D. Ganz (Manchester, 2008), pp. 44–69, at 56–60; A. Thacker, 'Wilfrid, his Cult and his Biographer', *Wilfrid: Abbot, Bishop, Saint*, ed. Higham, pp. 1–16, at 6–7; C. Platts, *Competing Influences: Francia, Rome and the English in the Seventh Century* (unpubl. PhD dissertation, Cambridge Univ., 2021), pp. 196–204.

Synod of Hertford has been interpreted as Wilfrid trying to prove his independence from the province of Canterbury.⁶³ However, pinning down the details of Wilfrid's aspirations is nigh on impossible. Neither Bede nor Stephen provides any significant details concerning the dispute between Theodore and Wilfrid.⁶⁴ Hypothetically, Wilfrid could only have raised the issue in 679 in Rome in an effort to nullify Theodore's actions against him by claiming one metropolitan could not interfere in the affairs of another. Theodore's resolution of the dispute over the Northumbrian Church between Wilfrid and Chad suggests Wilfrid recognized Canterbury's authority early in his episcopacy.⁶⁵ Serendipitously, if such an argument was playing out in 672, it actually lends credence to reading the list of Theodore's suffragans according to their consecration. Theodore (and Berhtwold) rejected any suggestion of York's metropolitan status. As a result, Theodore would have been concerned to treat Wilfrid as just another suffragan. Limiting Wilfrid in this regard would not involve manipulating the order of bishops to Wilfrid's detriment, rather simply including him as one of Theodore's bishops, as Wilfrid does indeed appear.

Naturally, this renders the pertinent question whether the list of bishops given should be read as indicating the order of their consecration. The list is as follows:

Theodorus, quamvis indignus ab apostolica sede destinatus Doruvernensis ecclesiae episcopus, et consacerdos ac frater noster reverentissimus Bisi, Orientalium Anglorum episcopus, quibus etiam frater at consacerdos noster Uilfrid, Nordanhymbrorum gentis episcopus, per proprios legatarios adfuit. Adfuerunt et fratres ac consacerdotes nostri Putta episcopus castelli Cantuariorum quod dicitur Hrofaescaestir, Leutherius episcopus Occidentalium Saxonum, Uynfrid episcopus provinciae Merciorum.⁶⁶

The starting point is that after asserting the principle of the eighth canon the same logic is being applied within the document's list of attendant bishops put together by the notary Titill at Theodore's dictation. The first bishop, Theodore, and the last, Winfrid, give some sense of security that the list is indeed dictated by seniority. Theodore, as metropolitan of the province, naturally would take precedence (irrespective of the date of his consecration). Putta and Leuthere were both amongst the first tranche of bishops consecrated by Theodore. Chad had also

⁶³ Thacker, 'Archbishops in England', p. 57.

⁶⁴ Bede, *HE* iv. 12–13, v. 19 (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 368–76, 516–30); Stephen, *VW*24, 29–30 (ed. Colgrave, pp. 48–50, 56–62).

⁶⁵ Thacker, 'Archbishops in England', p. 56; Brooks, *Church of Canterbury*, p. 72.

⁶⁶ Bede, *HE* iv. 5 (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 348–50). 'Theodore, though unworthy, appointed bishop of the Church at Canterbury by the Apostolic See, and our fellow bishop and brother, the worthy Bisi, bishop of the East Angles; while our brother and fellow bishop Wilfrid, bishop of the Northumbrian race, was represented by his proctors. There were also present our brothers and fellow priests Putta, bishop of the Kentish town known as Rochester, Leuthere, bishop of the West Saxons and Winfrith, bishop of the Mercian kingdom'.

been part of this group, being set over Mercia and succeeded after his death by Winfrid in 672.⁶⁷ Whether Putta and Leuthere are in the correct order is difficult to ascertain but seems likely. Leuthere died in 676 having held the West Saxon see for six years, making 670 the likely year of his election and consecration.⁶⁸ Furthermore, Bede states that Leuthere was consecrated in Kent by Theodore, which would imply that it took place after Theodore's return from his inspection of the English Church.⁶⁹ This in itself makes it likely that his consecration occurred after Putta's, which appears as taking place during Theodore's provincial visitation. Moreover, if the reading above is correct that Theodore consecrated Putta upon his arrival in Kent, this would certainly place Putta's accession to the episcopate in 669. Consequently, Putta (c. 669), Leuthere (670) and Winfrid (672) are most likely ordered by date of consecration.

There is an additional element to the list which makes consecration plausible as defining the order. 'Wilfrid, Nordanhymbrorum gentis episcopus, per proprios legatarios adfuit'⁷⁰ – why Wilfrid chose to send legates is a matter of debate with suggestions including that he knew the division of diocese was going to be discussed; that he sought to behave as an independent metropolitan (see above); and, more prosaically, that he was ill.⁷¹ A convenient explanation to the ordering of the list would be that Wilfrid lost his primacy due to the fact that he was not present in person and had sent legates. However, if the legates were influencing the order of precedence, it is difficult to explain why they do not stand at the foot of the list. The fact that Wilfrid appears second, despite sending representatives, strengthens reading the list of bishops by order of consecration.

In addition to these considerations, there is contextual evidence that would account for Theodore's and Titill's concern to record the bishops according to their consecration. The need for the eighth canon, as Catherine Cubitt has observed, was probably to establish a system of episcopal precedence in principle and thereby avoid bishops arguing about their relative rank at synods.⁷² There was also a practical need. The bishops were arranged *in xta ordinem*⁷³ and Theodore asked each bishop *per ordinem*⁷⁴ to consent to the ancient canons of the Church;

⁶⁷ Bede, *HE* iv. 3 (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 336–46).

⁶⁸ Bede, *HE* iv. 12 (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 368–70).

⁶⁹ Bede, *HE* iii. 7 (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 232–6).

⁷⁰ Bede, *HE* iv. 5 (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, p. 350). 'Wilfrid, bishop of the Northumbrian race, was represented by his proctors'.

⁷¹ Colgrave and Mynors, ed., *Ecclesiastical History*, p. 350, n. 1; Brooks, *Church of Canterbury*, p. 74; A. Thacker, 'Wilfrid, his Cult and his Biographer', *Wilfrid: Abbot, Bishop, Saint*, ed. Higham, pp. 1–16, at 7.

⁷² Cubitt, *Anglo-Saxon Church Councils*, p. 9.

⁷³ Bede, *HE* iv. 5 (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, p. 350). 'according to order.'

⁷⁴ *Ibid.* 'by order'.

acts presumably defined by the order of their consecration.⁷⁵ Imposing an order on the bishops on where they sat and the order in which they spoke allowed Theodore to control the synod in an efficient and straightforward manner.⁷⁶ Titill and Theodore mention the *ordo* of the bishops twice in the introduction to the canons, following immediately on from the list of bishops present. The stress placed upon the order of the bishops lends credibility to the idea that care would be taken to record it accurately in the council document itself.

In short, the council document asserts that order is defined by consecration. There is a reasonable amount of focus in the synodal record itself on the order defining proceedings, which would explain a need to record the order accurately. Moreover, the order of the bishops around Wilfrid and Bisi in the list accord with the order of their consecration. Rather than seek to reconcile the two accounts, which requires special pleading concerning Wilfrid's placement that contradicts the principles of the Synod of Hertford, it is necessary to acknowledge the strictly contemporary and reliable nature of the conciliar document. It is reasonable to believe that the Synod of Hertford accurately records the precedence of the bishops in 672. The question that still needs to be answered is how Bede made his mistake in assuming that Bisi was consecrated by Theodore.

Much of the primary material that Bede used to write his history cannot now be reconstructed and this necessarily makes any assessment more difficult and any conclusion must be given cautiously. The most straightforward explanation lies in Bede's description of Theodore's actions after his arrival in 669: 'Theodorus perlustrans universa ordinabat locis oportunis episcopos'.⁷⁷ It is a very general statement that suggests that Bede understood Theodore's first task as being the reconstitution of the English episcopate, with *universa* implying a general need throughout the English Church.⁷⁸ Northumbria alone had Chad, whose orders were invalid.⁷⁹ Wilfrid, by contrast, was a legitimate bishop but had no see.⁸⁰ Jo Story has demonstrated that Frankish annals preserve material from Kent and

⁷⁵ Cubitt, *Anglo-Saxon Church Councils*, p. 88.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ Bede, *HE* iv. 2 (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, p. 334). 'Theodore journeyed to every district, consecrating bishops in suitable places'.

⁷⁸ It is unclear whether Wine of London was still alive. Theodore is not known to have appointed a bishop of London until after the Synod of Hertford. However, no bishop of London was present at the Synod of Hertford or sent representatives. Theodore would probably have disapproved of Wine's purchase of his see from Wulfhere of Mercia and the lack of any evidence that the two engaged may suggest that Wine had died before or shortly after Theodore's arrival. The complicated position of London as the East Saxon see but under Mercian control could account for a delayed appointment. Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 133; Keynes, 'Appendix II', p. 545; R. Naismith, *Citadel of the Saxons: the Rise of Early London* (London, 2019), pp. 62–6.

⁷⁹ Bede, *HE* iv. 2 (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 332–6); Stephen, *VW* 15 (ed. Colgrave, p. 32).

⁸⁰ Bede, *HE* iv. 2 (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 332–6); Stephen, *VW* 14 (ed. Colgrave, p. 30).

Northumbria, suggesting that a written record of some form may have been preserved in seventh-century Canterbury.⁸¹ If Bede's comments on Theodore's visitations were based upon a similarly general comment in such a source, it is easy to understand the logic that led Bede to assume there was a vacancy in East Anglia in *c.* 669/70. Combined with his desire to prove the orthodoxy of the English episcopate, Bede would probably not have looked too closely at the question of whether Theodore consecrated Bisi. Therefore, the question of when Bisi was consecrated and by whom is necessary to answer, a question that begins with the consecration of Wilfrid.

TWO EPISCOPAL CONSECRATIONS: BISI AND WILFRID

If Bisi was consecrated before Wilfrid, the logical first step to redefining East Anglian chronology is to pin down the date of Wilfrid's consecration. This is more complicated than it first appears. Walter Goffart has commented that, despite different details, the accounts of Wilfrid's advancement match, as written by Bede in the *HE* and by Stephen of Ripon in the *VW*.⁸² There is some truth to this, but there is a crucial difference. Setting the two accounts alongside produces this:

Table 2:
Wilfrid's consecration: Bede's and Stephen's accounts compared.

<i>Vita Wilfridi</i> (chapters 10–12, 15)	<i>Historia Ecclesiastica</i> (iii. 25–28, v. 19)
The Synod of Whitby (664) meets and Colmán resigns his see, returning to Ireland.	The Synod of Whitby (664) meets and Colmán resigns his see, returning to Ireland.
An interval followed the synod.	Tuda's brief appointment as bishop of Northumbria.
The Northumbrian kings and counsellors meet and elect Wilfrid.	Alhfrith (possibly with Oswiu's consent) chooses Wilfrid as his bishop.
Wilfrid requests to be consecrated in Francia.	Alhfrith sends Wilfrid to Francia for consecration. Wilfrid lingers in Francia for his consecration.

(Continued)

⁸¹ J. Story, 'The Frankish Annals of Lindisfarne and Kent', *ASE* 34 (2005), 59–110, at 81–4.

⁸² Goffart, *Narrators of Barbarian History*, p. 315.

Table 2 (Continued)

<i>Vita Wīlfridi</i> (chapters 10–12, 15)	<i>Historia Ecclesiastica</i> (iii. 25–28, v. 19)
Wilfrid is immediately consecrated by twelve bishops.	Wilfrid is consecrated by twelve bishops.
Spends some time in Francia, before being sent back by the Frankish bishops.	
Wilfrid returns to Northumbria three years before Theodore's arrival in the kingdom (presumably Northumbria).	Wilfrid returns.

It is clear that the process begins in 664. However, as Berhtwold's career makes clear, election and consecration cannot be elided and it is the latter that matters.⁸³ The most significant difference between the two accounts is Wilfrid's interaction with the Frankish Church and how swiftly its bishops consecrated him. Stephen claims that upon his arrival a synod of the Frankish Church immediately met and consecrated him. Bede implies that such rapid arrangements were not forthcoming, noting that Wilfrid lingered in Francia to receive his consecration. This immediately complicates the question because rather than being able to rely on both Bede and Stephen, the two need to be set against each other.

There is an additional point that is worth considering in this context. The period from the Synod of Whitby to Wilfrid's return to Northumbria is probably two years. This hinges on Theodore's arrival, deposing Chad and installing Wilfrid in his place. This almost certainly occurred in 669, placing Wilfrid's return in 666, three years before Theodore's arrival.⁸⁴ Bede does not specify Wilfrid's return as carefully as Stephen does. However, he does note that Chad ruled the Northumbrian see for three years.⁸⁵ This provides a similar (although not quite the same) time parameter as Stephen. In other words, the time covered by Wilfrid's election, consecration and return is roughly 664–6. Bede implies that Wilfrid returned immediately or shortly after his consecration.⁸⁶ Consequently, in Bede's chronology, Wilfrid's consecration occurs towards the end of the 664–666 period.

⁸³ Stancliffe, 'Dating Wilfrid's Death', p. 18. Bede does not say that Wilfrid was consecrated in the same year as Tuda, simply that he went abroad in the same year. This is also governed by an *interea*, which is not a reliable means of establishing relative chronology. Shaw, *The Gregorian Mission to Kent*, pp. 59, 90.

⁸⁴ Stephen, *VW* 15 (ed Colgrave, p. 32).

⁸⁵ Bede, *HE* v. 19 (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 516–30).

⁸⁶ Bede, *HE* iii. 28 (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 314–16).

Stephen, who had Wilfrid remaining in Francia after his consecration, implicitly places the consecration earlier in this two-year period.

Bede's and Stephen's accounts do not quite match and there is a relatively large window of time in which Wilfrid could have been consecrated. Both authors, however, provide the length of Wilfrid's episcopate. Stephen claims forty-six years, while Bede gives forty-five.⁸⁷ This discrepancy is normally accounted for owing to Bede placing Wilfrid's death a year early in 709, whereas it is reasonably certain that Wilfrid died in 710. This apparently provides the simple solution that Wilfrid became a bishop in 664. There is, however, a problem with Stephen's account. The relevant figures for the length of Wilfrid's episcopate are that he died in 710 aged seventy-five and that he was a bishop for forty-six years and that he was thirty when elected.⁸⁸ The simple reading is that Wilfrid, aged seventy-five in 710, was born in 635, meaning he turned thirty in 665. If he had been a bishop for forty-six years in 710, he became one in 664 aged twenty-nine. Even going into greater depth fails to overcome this problem. Wilfrid probably died on 24 April 710. If he were seventy-five when he died, he must have been born between 25 April 634 and 23 April 635. Therefore, he would have turned thirty between 25 April 664 and 23 April 665. To have been a bishop forty-six years on 24 April 710 he would have had to have been consecrated before 24 April 664. Overlooking the fact that this latter date is implausibly early, Stephen's figures again do not synchronise. Stephen's timings should not be given much weight.

The forty-six years cited in *VW* probably lie in Stephen's desire to prove Wilfrid's responsibility for the restoration of the Northumbrian Church to orthodox belief. That Stephen constructed Wilfrid's authority at least in part around this is demonstrated by the plea at the Synod of Austerfeld (c. 703): 'Necnon et ego primus post obitum primorum procerum, a sancto Gregorio directorum, Scotticae virulenta plantationis germina eradicarem'.⁸⁹ Wilfrid's great triumph was the Synod of Whitby, in which he argued that the Dionysiac method of calculating Easter should be preferred to Rome's older Victorian method and, more importantly, the Ionan *Latercus*, erroneously deemed to conform to the Quartodeciman heresy.⁹⁰ Communion with the 'schismatics' was also unacceptable, as is made clear in Wilfrid's desire to seek consecration from the Frankish bishops.⁹¹ Clare Stancliffe's Jarrow Lecture discusses the election of Tuda and Wigheard. She suggests that Oswiu sought to pursue a

⁸⁷ Bede, *HE* v. 19 (ed. Cogrove and Mynors, pp. 516–30); Stephen, *VW* 66 (ed. Colgrave, pp. 142–4).

⁸⁸ Stephen, *VW* 11, 66 (ed. Colgrave, pp. 22–4, 142–4).

⁸⁹ Stephen, *VW* 47 (ed. Colgrave, p. 98). 'Was I not the first, after the death of the first elders who were sent by St Gregory, to root out the poisonous weeds planted by the Scots?'

⁹⁰ Stancliffe, *Bede, Wilfrid and the Irish*, pp. 4–5; Dailey, 'To Choose One Easter from Three', p. 50.

⁹¹ Stephen, *VW*, 12 (ed. Colgrave, pp. 24–6).

middle-ground of tolerating the *Latercus*.⁹² Not only would Wilfrid have found this unacceptable, but this also undermines the triumphal images that Stephen creates. Wilfrid failed to carry all before him; the Northumbrian king was still willing to tolerate ‘Quartodecimans’ in his kingdom, even if he personally would follow Roman practice. By associating Wilfrid’s election with the Synod of Whitby, Stephen could enhance Wilfrid’s victory and, at the same time, hide its limitations.

Evidently, the timings of Wilfrid’s election and consecration are fraught with difficulties. Bede is clearly wrong in Wilfrid’s date of death, while Stephen’s own numbers make little sense. There are two pieces of information, independent of the difficulties of both accounts, that may be brought to bear upon this conundrum. Firstly, there is Wilfrid’s own epitaph, copied into the *HE* by Bede, which gives the figure of forty-five years.⁹³ Secondly, there is the calendar evidence, which allows Wilfrid’s death to be calculated as falling in 710.⁹⁴ This places Wilfrid’s consecration in 665, the year he probably turned thirty.

This may allow the other discrepancy between Bede and Stephen, the delay or lack thereof before Wilfrid’s consecration, to be explained. Bede and Stephen both suggest Wilfrid was elected in 664, with Bede possibly placing it after Tuda’s death.⁹⁵ Wilfrid was probably twenty-nine, a very young age for a bishop; Boniface of Mainz seventy years later, when Willibrord offered him episcopal consecration at the age of forty-seven, felt that the canonical age was fifty.⁹⁶ This was probably an extreme view. Gregory of Tours was aged thirty-four.⁹⁷ Caesarius of Arles was about thirty-two.⁹⁸ The age of a bishop is rarely defined by the canons, but priests were expected to be thirty.⁹⁹ Thus, it is possible that Wilfrid arrived in Francia seeking episcopal consecration not yet at the canonical age for the priesthood, something Stephen would want to obscure given his desire to suggest that Wilfrid

⁹² Stancliffe, *Bede, Wilfrid and the Irish*, pp. 10–11. See also: Dailey, ‘To Choose One Easter from Three’, pp. 62–3; Dailey, ‘Reappraising the Synod of Whitby’, pp. 38–40.

⁹³ Bede, *HE* v. 19 (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 516–30); cf. Stancliffe, ‘Dating Wilfrid’s Death’, p. 20; Harrison, *Framework of Anglo-Saxon history*, p. 91.

⁹⁴ Stancliffe, ‘Dating Wilfrid’s Death’, pp. 17–21.

⁹⁵ Bede, *HE* iii. 27 (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 310–14).

⁹⁶ Willibald, *Vita Bonifatii*, in *Vitae Sancti Bonifatii Archiepiscopi Moguntini*, ed. W. Levison, MGH SS. Rer. Germ. 57 (Hannover, 1905), 1–58, no. 1. Boniface’s view might have been influenced by the Apostolic Canons, which specify that a bishop should be fifty. A. Roberts and J. Donaldson, ed., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers, Translations of the Writings of the Fathers down to AD 325*, 10 vols (Edinburgh, 1885), VII, 396.

⁹⁷ L. Thorpe, ed., *The History of the Franks* (Harmondsworth, 1974), p. 9.

⁹⁸ W. E. Klingshörn, ed., *Caesarius of Arles: Life, Testament, Letters*, Translated Texts for Historians 19 (Liverpool, 1994), xi.

⁹⁹ G. D. Mansi, ed., *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio*, 53 vols (Florence, 1758–98), X, 625; J. S. Barrow, ‘Grades of Ordination and Clerical Careers, c. 900–c. 1200’, *ANS* 30 (2008), 41–61, at 45.

consistently obeyed canon law.¹⁰⁰ Bede's comment that Wilfrid delayed in Francia for consecration therefore makes more sense: the Frankish episcopate were arguably uncertain whether they should (perhaps could) consecrate such a young colleague. It is interesting that Agilbert was present at Wilfrid's consecration; perhaps he had to vouch for his protégé and wait for Wilfrid's thirtieth birthday before his fellow bishops would consent to act. It is, therefore, reasonable to think that Wilfrid was consecrated in 665, returning after a slight delay (perhaps caused by winter), to Northumbria the following year.¹⁰¹

This gives us the parameters for Bisi's consecration: it occurred in or before 665. Interestingly, there might be a clue in the *HE* and the *VW* that provides a rough date. Wilfrid's justification for going to Francia was that he could not be consecrated legitimately by heretics. He could not even receive consecration from those who had fellowship with them.¹⁰² This latter point is significant because of Bede's description of the English episcopate at this point in time. He commented when describing Chad's consecration that 'non enim erat tunc ullus, excepto illo Uine, in tota Brittanica canonice ordinatus episcopus'.¹⁰³ Bede seems to be stressing Wine's legitimacy and that there were exceptional circumstances that resulted in Chad's consecration being corrupted by the presence of the British bishops, as opposed to suspicions about Chad's orthodoxy.¹⁰⁴ There are two points to draw out. Firstly, at the time of Chad's consecration at roughly the same time as Wilfrid there was only one canonically-ordained bishop in Britain. As Bertram Colgrave observed and according to the traditional East Anglian chronology, Berhtgisl of East Anglia should have been available to both bishops, as well as Wine.¹⁰⁵ Secondly, Wine's willingness to consecrate with two British bishops would render him unsuitable in Wilfrid's eyes: 'nec apostolica sedes in communionem recipit neque eos qui scismaticis consentiunt'.¹⁰⁶ As far as is known, there is nothing about Berhtgisl or the East Anglian bishops in general to which Wilfrid could have objected. Hence, Wilfrid's claim that no catholic bishop was available to him accords with Bede's account, which allows for the presence of Wine but nonetheless demonstrates why he would have been unsuitable in Wilfrid's eyes.

¹⁰⁰ *VW* 5, 10, 24, 30, 36, 43 (ed. Colgrave, pp. 10–12, 20–2, 48–50, 60–2, 72–4, 86–90).

¹⁰¹ For Hadrian and Theodore being delayed in Neustria by winter: Bede, *HE* iv. 1 (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 328–32).

¹⁰² Stephen, *VW* 12 (ed. Colgrave, p. 24–6).

¹⁰³ Bede, *HE* iii. 28 (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, p. 316). 'There was not a single bishop in the whole of Britain except Wine who had been canonically ordained'.

¹⁰⁴ Bede, *HE* iv. 2 (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 332–6).

¹⁰⁵ B. Colgrave, ed., *The Life of Bishop Wilfrid by Eddius Stephanus* (Cambridge, 1927), p. 159.

¹⁰⁶ Stephen, *VW* 12 (ed. Colgrave, p. 24). 'Nor does the Apostolic See even receive those who have fellowship with schismatics'.

The failure of both authors to mention an East Anglian bishop is an interesting silence.

There is also circumstantial evidence that would explain the death of Berhtgisl and an interregnum in East Anglia in *c.* 664. A plague devastated Britain and Ireland and it certainly caused the death of Tuda of Northumbria and Cedd of Essex and may have killed Deusdedit of Canterbury and his nominated successor, Wigheard, as well.¹⁰⁷ Richard Shaw has suggested that the scale of the devastation wrought by the epidemic prompted the appeal to the papacy for a new bishop of Canterbury because the English episcopate and wider Church had essentially been wiped out.¹⁰⁸ Consequently, it is not surprising that there may have been no East Anglian bishop when Wilfrid was elected and seeking consecration.

If this re-reading of Bede is correct, it does raise an interesting question and that is the identity of Bisi's consecrator. The ostensibly simplest explanation, that Bisi was consecrated by Wine, has a major problem. The *VW* suggests that Wine would have invalidated his orders by ordaining Chad with two British bishops. Wine was also a simoniac, having purchased the see of London, although, as Bede observes, his orders were legitimate; he had not paid to be ordained. In short, Wine was a controversial figure for several reasons and there is no suggestion that Theodore objected to Bisi's orders. Bisi's consecration ahead of Wilfrid makes it likely that he was consecrated before Chad. It is, therefore, just possible that Wine was not yet corrupted by association with schismatics. It is noteworthy that Bede presents the Gregorian missionaries and their successors as consecrating with only a single bishop, a state of affairs allowed by Gregory the Great in the *Libellus Responsonum* owing to the small size of the English Church.¹⁰⁹ If Bisi received consecration from Wine alone, his orders would have been valid. An additional point to consider is that Bisi, unlike Chad, did not have Wilfrid complaining to

¹⁰⁷ Bede, *HE* iii. 23, 27–9 (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 286–8, 310–32); Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 130.

¹⁰⁸ R. Shaw, 'Bede, Theodore and Wighard', pp. 538–40. On the plague in seventh-century England: J. R. Maddicott, 'Plague in Seventh-Century England', *Plague and the End of Antiquity: the Pandemic of 541–750*, ed. L. Little, (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 171–214. The scale of the devastation wrought by the Justinianic plague has inspired debate. A classic account is P. Sarris, *Empires of Faith: the Fall of Rome to the Rise of Islam, 500–700* (Oxford, 2011), pp. 158–60, 200–1, 295–6. A recent assertion of a maximalist view, including a useful historiographical survey, is: M. Meier, 'The "Justinianic Plague": the Economic Consequences of the Pandemic in the Eastern Roman Empire and its Cultural and Religious Effects', *EME* 24 (2016), 267–92, esp. 270–82. A firm push back and reassessment of the methodologies of the scholarship on the Justinianic plague (and later outbreaks) has appeared recently: L. Mordechai and M. Eisenberg, 'Rejecting Catastrophe: the Case of the Justinianic Plague', *Past and Present* 244 (2019), 3–50; M. Eisenberg and L. Mordechai, 'The Justinianic Plague and Global Pandemics: the Making of the Plague Concept', *AHR* 125 (2020), 1632–67.

¹⁰⁹ Bede, *HE* i. 27 (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 78–102).

Theodore about him. To an extent, therefore, Bisi's orders could have hinged on how closely Theodore enquired about them, as opposed to Bisi's general practices and where they sat in relation to orthodoxy.

There are a lot of 'ifs' in this reading of events and an alternative explanation is available (although similarly hypothetical). Bisi, like Wilfrid, could have sought Frankish consecration. East Anglia had strong links with the Frankish kingdoms and these are particularly visible in its early Christian history. Sigiberht, the king under whom Christianity took a firm hold, was baptized in Francia.¹¹⁰ Felix, the first bishop of East Anglia, was from Burgundy.¹¹¹ St Hilda's sister, Herewith, who was mother of the East Anglian king Ealdwulf, entered the Frankish monastery of Chelles.¹¹² The daughter and step-daughter of King Anna of East Anglia, Æthelburh and Sæthryth, both entered Faremoutiers as nuns.¹¹³ As a result, it may have been logical for the East Anglians to look to the Frankish Church when the English Church was in a state of turmoil and dislocation as a result of plague. Both solutions lack direct evidence, but at the very least they provide the means for Bisi to have been ordained in c. 664/665 in such a way that Theodore would have accepted his episcopal rank.

In summary, Wilfrid's own consecration places Bisi's consecration in or before 665. The general context of Wilfrid's election in 664, specifically his inability to be consecrated in the English Church, provides corroborating evidence that there was an interregnum in East Anglia caused by Berhtgisl's death. This year also saw Britain hit by a devastating plague that seems to have crippled the English Church. Despite this, there are ways in which an East Anglian bishop could have been consecrated and accepted by Theodore, when he arrived in 669. Overall, it is plausible to think that Berhtgisl died in 664 and Bisi was elected and consecrated a few months before Wilfrid, perhaps in late 664 or early 665.

REVISING EAST ANGLIA'S ECCLESIASTICAL CHRONOLOGY

One of the few East Anglian sources to which Bede does seem to have had access is an East Anglian bishops' list, with the lengths of their episcopates: Felix, seventeen years; Thomas, five years; Berhtgisl, seventeen years.¹¹⁴ He also has three years separating the death of Eorpwald and the succession of Sigiberht, associating Sigiberht's arrival with Felix's.¹¹⁵ With the revised date of Bisi's consecration, certain problems arise. Berhtgisl and Thomas could both still be

¹¹⁰ Bede, *HE* ii. 15 (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 188–90).

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² Bede, *HE* iv. 23 (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 404–14).

¹¹³ Bede, *HE* iii. 8 (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 236–40).

¹¹⁴ Bede, *HE* iii. 20, iv. 5 (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 276–8, 348–54); Shaw, *The Gregorian Mission to Kent*, p. 191.

¹¹⁵ Bede, *HE* ii. 15 (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 186–8).

consecrated by Honorius of Canterbury in 647/648 and 642/643 respectively. Significantly, this would make Thomas, rather than Ithamar of Rochester, the first native English bishop.¹¹⁶ The issue comes with Felix arriving in 625/626, three years after the death of Eorpwald in 622/623. This latter date is certainly implausible because Bede associates Eorpwald's conversion with Edwin's; Edwin persuaded Eorpwald to convert as well. While Bede's narration of Edwin's conversion is quite protracted, suggesting it may have occurred over some time, he does provide the date of Edwin's baptism: Easter Sunday (12 April) 627.¹¹⁷ Even if Bede overstated the association between Edwin's and Eorpwald's conversions, 622/623 is an implausibly early date for the East Anglian king to have converted.

The obvious question is whether any of Bede's timings can be trusted. His source for the length of the bishops' episcopates could have been Canterbury. In his preface, he noted that he had material on various kingdoms from Canterbury, especially when it concerned conversion.¹¹⁸ Given that Bede's material does go beyond that dealing strictly with conversion, the transmission of material from Abbot Esi, known only as Bede's East Anglian source, is still a possibility. However, Honorius of Canterbury's role in consecrating both Berhtgisl and Thomas means that Canterbury may well have had records relating to the East Anglian see. A convenient solution would be to suggest a copyist error. However, the manuscript tradition is clear and without positive evidence to the contrary, the episcopate lengths should be taken as read.¹¹⁹

One detail, however, gives cause for concern. This is the three years of error that separated Eorpwald's and Sigiberht's reigns in East Anglia.¹²⁰ One can of course question whether Sigiberht, probably with Frankish support, would have waited three years to reclaim East Anglia after the death of his brother. However, there is a more cogent argument based upon the evidence to which Bede had access. That Bede could supply this information is surprising, because he was unable to supply the regnal dates of any East Anglian king.¹²¹ Essentially, the only concrete time-parameter that Bede had for East Anglian rulers supposedly applied to a period of pagan rule, possibly the reign of Ricberht. That Bede had a source for this and no other aspect of East Anglian reigns seems unlikely. Moreover, Bede

¹¹⁶ Bede, *HE* iii. 14 (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 254–60); Haddan and Stubbs, ed., *Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents*, III, 93; Shaw, *The Gregorian Mission to Kent*, p. 165; N. Higham and M. J. Ryan, *The Anglo-Saxon World* (New Haven, CT, 2013), p. 160.

¹¹⁷ Bede, *HE* ii. 14 (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 182–6).

¹¹⁸ Bede, *HE* Preface (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 2–6); Shaw, *The Gregorian Mission to Kent*, p. 143.

¹¹⁹ Cambridge, University Library Kk. 5. 16 ff. 40r, 59r, 76v; St Petersburg, National Library of Russia, lat. Q. v. I. 18 ff. 44r, 64r, 87r.

¹²⁰ Bede, *HE* ii. 15 (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 188–90).

¹²¹ Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, p. 58.

is vague as to whether Ricberht did assume the rule of East Anglia, raising further questions as to what lies beneath his claims in this part of the *HE*. As a result, it is probable that the three years of pagan error that Bede mentioned derived from his own calculations. If he knew Eorpwald converted and was assassinated in *c.* 627 and believed Bisi was consecrated by Theodore in *c.* 669, using the forty-nine years of Berhtgisl's, Thomas' and Felix's episcopates, he would have calculated that Felix arrived in *c.* 630. It is plausible, therefore, to think of the three years of East Anglian pagan error as Bede's own inference, reconstructed from his belief that Theodore consecrated Bisi and a rough date for Eorpwald's conversion.

Discounting Bede's calculation, which derives from his error concerning Bisi's consecration, allows for a slightly different set of dates. Felix would arrive in East Anglia in *c.* 625/626 during Eorpwald's reign. Sigiberht would then immediately succeed his brother, rather than delay three years. There are certain points to consider with such a redating, the first, and arguably most problematic, being that Bede presents Edwin as the driving force in Eorpwald's conversion. It is logical to think that Edwin's pressure would only have been applied after his baptism in 627. However, it is worth noting the curious confluence of dates between the episcopal consecration of Paulinus, evangelist of Northumbria and bishop of York, in 625 and the redating of Felix's East Anglian mission.¹²² Furthermore, both Bede's account of Edwin's conversion and the anonymous *VSG*'s suggest his time in East Anglia had a Christianizing influence upon him and the *VSG* even suggests, perhaps fancifully, that Paulinus was present at Rædwald's court.¹²³ There is a surprising amount of circumstantial evidence that binds Edwin's conversion narrative to East Anglia and which might hint at a deeper connection in the religious histories of the two kingdoms. Furthermore, baptism and conversion are easily conflated but are not necessarily the same thing.¹²⁴ To receive baptism as an adult, an individual should (in theory) be committed to the Christian faith and willing to undertake a public ritual to mark his or her entry into the Christian Church.¹²⁵ As a result, seeing Edwin as a Christianizing influence only after baptism may be reductive. Indeed, the tale of Edwin's meeting with his nobles

¹²² Bede, *HE* ii. 9 (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, 162–6).

¹²³ Bede, *HE* ii. 12–13 (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 174–86); Anon., *VSG* 16 (ed. Colgrave, pp. 98–100).

¹²⁴ E. James, *The Franks* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 121–3; J. C. Russell, *The Germanization of Early Medieval Christianity: a Sociobistorical Approach to Religious Transformation* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 35–6, 38–9; S. Stofferahn, 'Staying the Royal Sword: Alcuin and the Conversion Dilemma in Early Medieval Europe', *The Historian* (2009), 461–80, at 464–7.

¹²⁵ James, *The Franks*, pp. 121–3; B. Yorke, *The Conversion of Britain, 600–800* (Abingdon, 2006), p. 98. For the difficulties with this notion, see: G. Le Bras, 'The Sociology of the Church in the Early Middle Ages', *Early Medieval Society*, ed. S. Thrupp (New York, NY, 1967), pp. 47–57, at 52.

stresses that Edwin sought to bring his nobles to the font at his side.¹²⁶ Eorpwald's Christian journey therefore need not have begun only after Edwin received baptism in 627.

The second point actually resolves a rather unusual feature about Eorpwald's conversion: the lack of a bishop. The traditional East Anglian chronology suggests that no formal mission was undertaken to East Anglia. Paulinus could have provided episcopal oversight, but this is a point never stated by Bede, who appears to have been unaware of Eorpwald's religious milieu as he converted. This can just be accounted for by claiming that Eorpwald was firmly subordinated to Edwin's authority. There is also plenty of evidence for the Ionan mission based at Lindisfarne preferring to send priests to evangelize initially, only consecrating bishops when Christianity was secure. To that end, Peada of Mercia's conversion allowed priests to be sent, but Diuma was only consecrated bishop after Oswiu seized control of the kingdom.¹²⁷ Equally, Cedd evangelized Essex as a priest and according to Bede was only consecrated bishop after the mission there experienced significant success.¹²⁸ Only Aidan and his unnamed predecessor were sent as bishops to Northumbria, to evangelize at Oswald's request.¹²⁹ Missions standing in a Roman tradition, however, seem more inclined to consecrate bishops as the evangelist. Augustine arrived in Kent as a bishop.¹³⁰ Mellitus was consecrated to evangelize the East Saxons, as was Birinus for his independent mission, which ultimately focused upon the West Saxons.¹³¹ There is some debate about the chronology of Paulinus' Northumbrian mission and his consecration, but he may have gone north as a bishop and was certainly consecrated well before Edwin's baptism.¹³²

The only example of some sort of Roman evangelism that did not occur under the auspices of a bishop is Rædwald of East Anglia, who accepted some form of Christianity while acknowledging Æthelberht of Kent's sway.¹³³ However, there seems to be a reason for this. Bede's account reads: 'Redwald iam dudum in Cantia sacramentis Christianae fidei inbutus est'.¹³⁴ Rædwald's conversion, therefore, took place in Kent itself under the oversight of Augustine or Laurence and

¹²⁶ Bede, *HE* ii. 13 (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 182–6).

¹²⁷ Bede, *HE* iii. 21 (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 278–80).

¹²⁸ Bede, *HE* iii. 22 (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 280–4).

¹²⁹ Bede, *HE* iii. 3, iii. 5 (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 218–20, 226–8).

¹³⁰ This is derived from Gregory's letters, rather than Bede, who thought Augustine sought consecration only after experiencing success in Kent. Gregory, *RE* viii. 28 (ed. Ewald and Hartmann, II, 28–9) cf. Bede, *HE* i. 27 (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 78–102).

¹³¹ Bede, *HE* ii. 3, iii. 7 (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 142–4, 232–6).

¹³² Bede, *HE* ii. 9; (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 162–6); Kirby, *English Kings*, pp. 33–4; Mayr-Harting, *The Coming of Christianity*, pp. 66–7.

¹³³ Bede, *HE* ii. 15 (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 188–90).

¹³⁴ *Ibid.* 'Rædwald had long before been initiated into the mysteries of the Christian faith in Kent'.

possibly under pressure from Æthelberht. On his return home, Rædwald's wife and counsellors convinced him to abandon Christianity, presumably frustrating any formal mission that Canterbury may have intended to send after him.

The particularly pertinent example is that of Sæberht and Mellitus in Essex. To suggest that Eorpwald was subordinate to Edwin and so either did not need or was denied a bishop is contradicted by the first attempt to evangelize Essex.¹³⁵ Bede's account of the mission to Essex is not particularly detailed, but there is no evidence to suggest Mellitus was only sent after Sæberht converted. Æthelberht was in the background of the entire mission, founding St Paul's Cathedral himself, rather than leaving it to Sæberht.¹³⁶ Essex, of all the kingdoms supposedly subordinate to him, seems to have been most firmly under his control. Geography and marital ties between him and Sæberht may have created such a state of affairs.¹³⁷ Whatever the precise details, the example of Essex demonstrates that the Gregorian missionaries believed bishops to be the central figure of evangelization in a kingdom, even if another kingdom had control over it. Nicholas Higham compares Paulinus' activities in the subkingdom of Lindsey to the conversion of Eorpwald in East Anglia, but this is tenuous. In the seventh century, Lindsey never appears as an independent kingdom in its own right, often shifting between Mercia and Northumbria in the protracted warfare between those two kingdoms.¹³⁸ East Anglia, by contrast, seems to have had periods not only of independence, but dominion over other kingdoms, including Northumbria, in the seventh century.¹³⁹

Pulling the arrival of Felix in the East Anglian kingdom earlier fits more neatly with the general strategy that Roman missionaries seem to have adopted. Every kingdom saw a bishop sent to spearhead the work of evangelization, even if, as in Essex, an overlord already had a bishop in his kingdom. To an extent, this explains why Felix was in Canterbury to be sent (possibly by Honorius early in his episcopacy) when Sigiberht took control shortly after his brother's assassination. Rather than being a random Frankish bishop who had shown up in Kent, he was a bishop already involved with the mission, seeking sanctuary after a pagan reaction. This does still leave the question of why Felix was involved in the Gregorian mission at all unresolved and, with the earlier dating, the suggestion that he was the

¹³⁵ N. J. Higham, *The Convert Kings: Power and Religious Affiliation in Early Anglo-Saxon England* (Manchester, 1997), p. 182.

¹³⁶ Bede, *HE* ii. 3 (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 142–4).

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

¹³⁸ B. N. Eagles, 'Lindsey', *The Origins of the Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms*, ed. S. Bassett (London, 1989), pp. 202–12, at 210–12.

¹³⁹ Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, pp. 62–4.

bishop of Châlons-sur-Marne, forced out by the succession of Dagobert II in 629 to the whole Frankish kingdom, is no longer valid.¹⁴⁰

There is a possible explanation in the nature of the English episcopate in the 620s. There seems to have been a policy of appointing Roman missionaries to the Kentish sees.¹⁴¹ By the mid-620s the number of missionaries still alive seems to have been limited. It is likely that Romanus of Rochester died in the mid-620s (perhaps *c.* 625) on a mission to Rome for Justus of Canterbury.¹⁴² His successor in the see was Paulinus after his return from Northumbria in *c.* 633.¹⁴³ The long interregnum suggests that there was no obvious successor for Romanus and it was opportune for the see that Paulinus was forced to flee York. Both Paulinus at Rochester and Honorius at Canterbury were the last Roman bishops in their respective sees. Given the apparent problems in replacing Romanus, it is likely that no Roman missionary could be spared in *c.* 625/626 to lead a mission to East Anglia. Furthermore, the interregnum at Rochester suggests the Roman missionaries were reluctant to consecrate a Kentish ecclesiastic bishop. The logical place for the Kentish Church to have turned for support at this point would have been the Frankish Church.

The extent of Frankish involvement in the English conversion narrative has inspired protracted debate.¹⁴⁴ The Prittlewell burial in Essex suggests some degree

¹⁴⁰ R. Collins and J. McClure, ed., *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 381–2.

¹⁴¹ Brooks, *Church of Canterbury*, pp. 66–7.

¹⁴² Bede, *HE* ii. 20 (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 202–6). Richard Shaw has suggested that he might have died *c.* 633, when Pope Honorius sent letters and *pallia* to Paulinus and Honorius. This only works, as Shaw admits, if Bede erroneously inferred a link between Romanus' mission and Justus. It is best to take Bede at his word here, as there is no evidence to suggest he was wrong. Shaw, 'When Did Augustine of Canterbury Die?', *JEH* 67 (2016), 473–91, at 483, n. 47, 484, n. 52.

¹⁴³ Bede, *HE* ii. 20 (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 202–6).

¹⁴⁴ The classic position on Frankish involvement in the evangelization is that it was virtually non-existent. Work by scholars, such as James Campbell, Ian Wood and Michael Wallace-Hadrill, means that Gregory's desire for Frankish aid must be acknowledged, even if the nature and scale of that aid is debated. Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 61, 104–16; J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, *The Frankish Church* (Oxford, 1983), pp. 114–15, cf. J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, 'Rome and the Early English Church: Some Questions of Transmission', *SettSpol* 7 (1960), 519–48, at 526–30; J. Campbell, 'Bede', *Latin Historians*, ed. T. A. Dorey (London, 1966), pp. 159–90, repr. as and cited from his 'Bede I', *Essays in Anglo-Saxon History* (London, 1986), pp. 1–27, at 3–4; J. Campbell, *Bede. The Ecclesiastical History of the English People and Other Selections*, (New York, NY, 1968), pp. vii–xxxii, repr. as and cited from 'Bede II', in his *Essays in Anglo-Saxon History* (London, 1986), pp. 29–48, pp. 43–5; J. Campbell, 'Observations on the Conversion of England: a Bede Commemorative Review Article', *Ampleforth Jnl* 78 (1973), 12–26, repr. as and cited from 'Observations on the Conversion of England' in his *Essays in Anglo-Saxon History* (London, 1986), pp. 69–84, at 72–3; Mayr-Harting, *The Coming of Christianity*, pp. 63–4, 129–39, 178–81; I. Wood, 'The Mission of Augustine of Canterbury to the English', *Speculum* 69 (1994), 1–17, at 5–9.

of religious osmosis between the English and the Continent before Augustine's mission began and the Franks are the most likely point of Christian contact, although it is worth noting that the remarkable gold foil crosses are unknown in a Frankish context.¹⁴⁵ The Frankish coins in the burial show the importance of Frankish economic ties, but whether they can speak to deeper religious links for the individual buried at Prittlewell is uncertain.¹⁴⁶ What is certainly the case in the context of Augustine's mission is that Gregory sought help for his missionaries as they progressed through Francia and that this was forthcoming. His letters of thanks suggest that the courts of Soissons, Burgundy and Austrasia all involved themselves with the mission to some extent.¹⁴⁷ The translators he referred to in several letters do also appear in Bede's history (although whether this is independent knowledge is difficult to know).¹⁴⁸ It is also worth noting the presence of Justus of Rochester and Peter of Canterbury at the Council of Paris in 612.¹⁴⁹ One of the curious features of Canterbury's relationship with other Churches is that two bishops, Augustine and Berhtwold, were consecrated by Frankish bishops.¹⁵⁰ Only one, Theodore, was consecrated by the Pope in Rome.¹⁵¹ Richard Shaw has demonstrated that Canterbury maintained regular contact with Rome to obtain the *pallium* and a natural corollary of this link is that ecclesiastics of the Kentish

¹⁴⁵ L. Blackmore, I. Blair, S. Hirst and C. Scull, *The Prittlewell Princely Burial: Excavations at Priory Crescent, Southend-on-Sea, Essex*, MOLA 73 (London, 2019), 138, 285–6. On the tradition of gold foil crosses: E. Riemer, 'Zu Vorkommen und Herkunft italischer Folienkreuzer', *Germania* 77 (1999), 609–36; S. Burnell and E. James, 'The Archaeology of Conversion on the Continent in the Sixth and Seventh Centuries: Some Observations and Comparisons with Anglo-Saxon England', *St Augustine and the Conversion of England*, ed. R. Gameson (Stroud, 1999), pp. 83–106, at 95–6. Curiously, the specialist who studied the crosses for the MOLA report felt the Occam's razor solution to explaining their appearance in the grave was contact with Augustine's mission: Blackmore *et al.*, *The Prittlewell Princely Burial*, p. 145, although cf. p. 337.

¹⁴⁶ G. Williams, 'The Circulation and Function of Coinage in Conversion-Period England, c. AD 580–675', *Coinage and History in the North Sea World: c. AD 500–1250: Essays in honour of Marion Archibald*, ed. B. J. Cook (Leiden, 2006), pp. 145–92, at 161; G. Williams, 'The Circulation, Minting and Use of Coins in East Anglia, AD 580–675', *East Anglia and its North Sea World in the Middle Ages*, ed. D. R. Bates and R. Liddiard (Woodbridge, 2013), pp. 120–36, at 125–28; R. Naismith, *Medieval European Coinage: with a Catalogue of the Coins in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge. 8, Britain and Ireland, c. 400–1066* (Cambridge, 2017), p. 43; Blackmore *et al.*, *The Prittlewell Princely Burial*, p. 112.

¹⁴⁷ Gregory, *RE* xi. 47–51 (ed. Ewald and Hartmann, II, 319–24).

¹⁴⁸ Bede, *HE* i. 25 (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 72–6); Gregory, *RE* vi. 49, vi. 57, xi. 48 (ed. Ewald and Hartmann, I, 423–4, 431–2, II, 320–1).

¹⁴⁹ *Concilia aevi Merovingici* (511–695), ed. F. Masson, MGH Conc. I (Hannover, 1893), 185–92.

¹⁵⁰ Gregory, *RE* viii. 29 (ed. Ewald and Hartmann, II, 30–1); Bede, *HE* v. 8 (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 472–4).

¹⁵¹ Bede, *HE* iv. 1 (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 328–32).

Church were moving through Francia.¹⁵² Royal and noble women, with political, as well as religious, motivations, entered the religious life in Neustria.¹⁵³

This sits alongside palpable political connections. Even if one does not go as far as Ian Wood and suggest that Kent was politically subordinated to the Merovingian rulers of Francia, Kent was closely tied to them.¹⁵⁴ Bertha, wife of Æthelberht of Kent, was a Merovingian princess.¹⁵⁵ Eadbald, her son, married Ymme, a relation of Erchinoald, a Neustrian noble who ultimately became the *maior domus* of Neustria – mayor of the palace and right-hand man of the king.¹⁵⁶ To this may be added the significant economic connections evidenced in Kentish and East Anglian archaeological deposits, alongside the more focussed evidence of Quentovic, an English founded *emporium* that came to sit in the Neustrian kingdom.¹⁵⁷

The connections of both the early English Church in Kent and the Kentish kingdom provide a context in which the Frankish Church might be asked for support. The evidence of Sigiberht's Frankish exile and Frankish economic links to East Anglia further bolsters the idea that a Frankish bishop would have been acceptable at the East Anglian court. This would admittedly be exceptional evidence of Frankish missionary involvement in the Gregorian mission. The

¹⁵² Shaw, 'When Did Augustine of Canterbury Die?', pp. 475–87.

¹⁵³ Bede, *HE* iii. 8 (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 236–40); I. Wood, 'The Continental Connections of Anglo-Saxon Courts from Æthelberht to Offa', *SettSpol* 58 (2011), 443–78, at 456–67; R. Le Jan, 'Convents, Violence and Competition for Power in Seventh-Century Francia', *Topographies of Power in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. M. de Jong, F. Theuvs and C. van Rhijn (Leiden, 2001), pp. 243–69 at 254–5.

¹⁵⁴ I. Wood, *The Merovingian North Sea* (Alingsås, 1983), p. 12.

¹⁵⁵ Bede, *HE* i. 25 (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 72–6); Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum* iv. 26, ix. 26, in *Gregorii Turonensis Opera* I, ed. B. Krusch and W. Levison, MGH SS. rer. Merov. 1.1 (Hannover, 1951), 157–9, 445.

¹⁵⁶ Wood, 'Continental Connections of Anglo-Saxon Courts', p. 456.

¹⁵⁷ Naismith, *Medieval European Coinage*, p. 43; G. Williams, 'The Circulation and Function of Coinage in Conversion-Period England, c. AD 580–675', *Coinage and History in the North Sea World*, p. 161; G. Williams, 'The Circulation, Minting and Use of Coins in East Anglia, AD 580–675', *East Anglia and its North Sea World in the Middle Ages*, ed. D. R. Bates and R. Liddiard (Woodbridge, 2013), pp. 120–36, at 125–8; J. Dhondt, 'Les Problèmes de Quentovic', *Studi in onore di Amintore Fanfani*, 6 vols (Milan, 1962), I, 183–248 at 200–1; M. Rouche, 'Les Saxones et les origines de Quentovic', *Revue du Nord* 54 (1977), 457–78, at 457–8; J. Soulat, 'La presence saxonne et anglo-saxonne sur le littoral de la Manche', *Quentovic: Environnement, Archéologie, Histoire*, ed. S. Lebecq, B. Béthouart and L. Verslype (Lille, 2010), pp. 147–64; S. Lebecq, 'La Neustrie et la mer', *La Neustrie: Les pays au nord de la Loire de 650 à 850*, ed. H. Atsma, 2 vols (Sigmaringen, 1989), I, 405–40, at 419–20; S. Lebecq, 'Pour une Histoire Parallèle de Quentovic et Dorestad', *Villes et Campagnes au Moyen Âge: Mélanges Georges Despy*, ed. J.-M. Duvosquel and A. Dierkens (Liege, 1991), pp. 415–28, at 419–21; V. Zedelius, 'Zur Münzprägung von Quentovic', *Studien zur Sachsenforschung* 7 (1991), 368–77, at 369–70.

two Frankish bishops of Wessex were not deliberately sought by Canterbury. Agilbert obtained the see of Wessex independently of any bishop of Canterbury and Leuthere was part of a negotiated reconciliation between Agilbert, by then bishop of Paris, and Cenwalh of Wessex.¹⁵⁸ However, Felix is already exceptional in that by the traditional chronology he arrived in Canterbury as a bishop seeking to support the mission.¹⁵⁹ Slightly modifying that narrative to include Canterbury needing aid is not a significant development.

Thus, rejigging the early history of East Anglian Christianity, placing Felix's arrival in *c.* 625/626, has a lot to commend to it. There is sufficient context, both in terms of Canterbury's links with Francia and Northumbria's links to East Anglia to suggest that a Frankish bishop would have been asked to lead a mission to the kingdom at around the same time as that to Northumbria. Furthermore, it removes some of the odd features of East Anglian history. Firstly, East Anglia was unique for receiving Christianity from Canterbury but only receiving a bishop long after royal conversion. Placing Felix's arrival slightly before Edwin's baptism sits more comfortably with the general trends visible in the missionary strategy developed by Gregory, Augustine and Augustine's successors. Secondly, it allows Bede's three years of pagan error to be identified as his own calculation. These three years stand out as the only chronological information that Bede could supply concerning East Anglian royalty and regarding it as his own calculation makes this surprising 'knowledge' of pagan events (and comparable lack of knowledge of Christian ones) far more explicable.

CONCLUSION

There is, ultimately, little evidence with which to approach East Anglian chronology in the seventh century. As a result, this analysis relies to an extent upon balance of probabilities. The traditional derivation of the ecclesiastical chronology of East Anglia prioritises Bede's description of Bisi's consecration by Theodore over the implications of a contemporary document embedded into the *HE*. In reality, the contemporary document should be preferred to the narrative written over fifty years later. The principles espoused in the eighth canon, combined with the order of the bishops in the introduction to the canons, would suggest that Bisi was the senior bishop (after his metropolitan, Theodore) in 672, ahead of Wilfrid, known to have been consecrated before Theodore's arrival. The revised history of East Anglian Christianity would consequently be thus.

¹⁵⁸ Bede, *HE* iii. 7 (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 232–6).

¹⁵⁹ Bede, *HE* ii. 15 (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 188–90).

As part of a negotiated marriage agreement, Paulinus was sent north with Æthelburh of Kent, with a duty to minister to Æthelburh's spiritual needs and to evangelize her husband, Edwin of Northumbria. Either at the same time or as Paulinus started to experience some success with Edwin, Canterbury prevailed upon Edwin to persuade the king of East Anglia, Eorpwald, to allow a bishop into his kingdom too. Eorpwald, subordinated to Edwin's authority, consented and arrangements were made to send a Frankish bishop, owing to a lack of suitable candidates within the Kentish Church and long-standing connections between the East Anglian and Frankish kingdoms. Felix, perhaps consecrated specifically for this task, was sent by the Franks. Felix experienced at least some success, perhaps even getting Eorpwald to the font, by 627. A pagan named Ricberht disliked the religious changes at the royal court and assassinated Eorpwald. A brief pagan reaction followed, forcing Felix to flee to Canterbury, perhaps arriving at the start of Honorius of Canterbury's tenure. Sigiberht, Eorpwald's brother and baptized in Francia, returned from exile, took control of the kingdom and recalled Felix. Felix died after seventeen years in East Anglia in *c.* 642/643 and Honorius consecrated Thomas as his successor, probably making Thomas, rather than Ithamar of Rochester, the first English bishop. When Thomas died five years later in *c.* 647/648 Berhtgisl was elevated to the episcopate by Honorius. Seventeen years later Berhtgisl died in his turn and Bisi was chosen to succeed him in *c.* 664/665. With seven or eight years in office, Bisi was second in the order of precedence at the Synod of Hertford, the senior of Theodore's suffragans.

This reveals what is perhaps one of the most difficult problems when analysing Bede's historical work: how to distinguish between a 'fact' from a source and a 'fact' from inference. Bede's East Anglian episcopal list, including tenures, was presumably a source. His identification of consecrators was an inference, based on reconciling relative chronologies and another inference that Bisi was consecrated by Theodore. However, it also reveals the intricacies in the design of the *HE*. Bede inferred consecrators because it allowed him to prove the orthodoxy of the English episcopate and consequently the English Church, deriving from Augustine and being reinvigorated and expanded by Theodore. Furthermore, it allowed him to prove the completion of Gregory's plan. In the Gregorian letters, Gregory and Augustine spoke of the need of the missionary Church to consecrate with a single bishop and the ideal of multiple consecrators. Gregory also hoped for a Church where the metropolitan could be consecrated by his own synod. Bede shows the shift from Augustine's Church of one bishop on a missionary frontier, consecrated by a foreign Church, to Tatwine's Church, where Tatwine was consecrated by four of his suffragans. Episcopal consecration allowed Bede to show how far the English Church and English Christianity had come. Tatwine's

consecration matched Gregory's outline for the English Church; perhaps to Bede's mind the mission ended in 731 and the English could begin to move forwards in the Christian faith, secure in the knowledge of the orthodoxy and authority of their bishops. Thus, he had his great historical work end in the same year.¹⁶⁰

¹⁶⁰ Cf. Colgrave and Mynors, ed., *Ecclesiastical History*, p. xxix; W. Goffart, 'The "Historia Ecclesiastica." Bede's Agenda and Ours', *The Haskins Soc. Jnl* 2 (1990), 29–46, at 41–3; Peter Darby *Bede and the End of Time* (Farnham, 2012), pp. 211–14; R. Shaw, *How, When and Why Did Bede Write his Ecclesiastical History?* (Abingdon, 2022), pp. 141–6.

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