As the major writer and thinker of the Anglo-Saxon period, the Venerable Bede is a key figure in the study of the literature and thought of this time. This Companion, written by an international team of specialists, is a key introductory guide to Bede, his writings and his world. The first part of the volume focuses on Bede’s cultural and intellectual milieu, covering his life, the secular-political contexts of his day, the foundations of the Latin learning he inherited and sought to perpetuate, the ecclesiastical and monastic setting of early Northumbria, and the foundation of his home institution, Wearmouth-Jarrow. The book then considers Bede’s writing in detail, treating his educational, exegetical and historical works. Concluding with a detailed assessment of Bede’s influence and reception from the time of his death up to the modern age, the Companion enables the reader to view Bede’s writings within a wider cultural context.

Scott DeGregorio is Associate Professor of English Literature at the University of Michigan – Dearborn. He has published extensively on Bede as a biblical exegete and Church reformer. His books include, as editor, *Innovation and Tradition in the Writings of the Venerable Bede*, and, as translator, *Bede: On Ezra and Nehemiah*, which won the International Society of Anglo-Saxonists’ prize for best edition/translation published in Anglo-Saxon studies, 2005–7.

A complete list of books in the series is at the back of this book.
THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO
BEDE

EDITED BY
SCOTT DEGREGORIO
University of Michigan – Dearborn
CONTENTS

List of maps ............................... page vii
List of illustrations ......................... viii
Notes on contributors ....................... ix
Note on editions and translations ........ xii
Preface ................................... xv
Chronological table ........................ xviii
Maps ................................... xxi

PART I BEDE’S LIFE AND CONTEXT 1

1 Bede’s life in context
MICHÈLLE P. BROWN .............................. 3

2 Secular and political contexts
JAMES CAMPBELL .............................. 25

3 The world of Latin learning
ROSALIND LOVE ............................ 40

4 Church and monastery in Bede’s Northumbria
SARAH FOOT .............................. 54

5 British and Irish contexts
CLARE STANCLIFFE ......................... 69

6 The foundation of Bede’s Wearmouth-Jarrow
IAN WOOD ................................ 84
## CONTENTS

**PART II  BEDE’S WRITINGS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Bede and education</td>
<td>Calvin B. Kendall</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Bede and science</td>
<td>Faith Wallis</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Bede and the Old Testament</td>
<td>Scott Degregorio</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Bede and the New Testament</td>
<td>Arthur G. Holder</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Bede and preaching</td>
<td>Lawrence T. Martin</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Bede and history</td>
<td>Alan Thacker</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**PART III  RECEPTION AND INFLUENCE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>The cult of Bede</td>
<td>David Rollason</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Bede and the continent in the Carolingian age and beyond</td>
<td>Joshua A. Westgard</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Bede in later Anglo-Saxon England</td>
<td>Sharon M. Rowley</td>
<td>216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>The Englishness of Bede, from then to now</td>
<td>Allen J. Frantzen</td>
<td>229</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Further reading*  
*Bibliography*  
*Index*  

Page vi
MAPS


Map 4  Wearmouth and Jarrow, and the lower reaches of the Tyne and Wear. Map © Ian Wood xxv

ILLUSTRATIONS

1 The West Tower, St Peter’s Church, Wearmouth (lower two stages and
the nave wall date from the 670s). Photo by the author \page 6
2 St Paul’s Church, Jarrow. Photo by the author \page 7
3 The Codex Amiatinus (Florence, Biblioteca Medicea-Laurenziana,
Amiatino 1, f. 485r), Wearmouth-Jarrow, early eighth century (pre-716).
Reprinted from R. Marsden, The Text of the Old Testament in Anglo-
Saxon England (Cambridge University Press, 1995) \page 13
4 A leaf from the Book of Kings, from one of the Ceolfrith Bibles, The
Middleton Leaves (London, British Library, Add. MS 45025, f. 2r),
Wearmouth-Jarrow, early eighth century (pre-716). Photo courtesy of
the British Library Board \page 14
5 The St Petersburg Bede, Wearmouth-Jarrow, mid eighth century
(St Petersburg, National Library of Russia, Cod. Q.VI.18), f. 26v. Photo
courtesy of National Library of Russia, St Petersburg \page 15
6 The Tiberius Bede, a copy of the Ecclesiastical History made at
Canterbury, early ninth century (London, British Library, Cotton MS
Tiberius c.ii, f. 5v). Photo courtesy of the British Library Board \page 16
7 Ezra the Scribe, Codex Amiatinus (Florence, Biblioteca Medicea-
Laurenziana, Amiatino 1, f. v), Wearmouth-Jarrow, early eighth century
(pre-716). Photo courtesy of the Biblioteca Medicea-Laurenziana \page 17
8 The opening of St Matthew’s Gospel, The Lindisfarne Gospels (London,
British Library, Cotton MS Nero d.iv, ff. 26v–27r). Photo courtesy of the
British Library Board \page 20
9 Stained-glass window depicting an evangelist, St Paul’s Church, Jarrow,
680s (Bede’s World Museum, Jarrow). Photo courtesy of the PCC,
St Paul’s Church, Jarrow, and of Bede’s World Museum, Jarrow \page 22
10 Inhabited vine-scroll, St Paul’s Church, Jarrow, 680s. Photo by the
author, courtesy of the PCC, St Paul’s Church, Jarrow \page 23
NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

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JAMES CAMPBELL retired in 2002 as Fellow of Worcester College where he had taught medieval history since 1957 and as Professor of Medieval History in the University of Oxford. He works on Anglo-Saxon history and urban history. Writings of his on the former subject are collected in *Essays in Anglo-Saxon History* and *The Anglo-Saxon State*. He is a Fellow of the British Academy.

SCOTT DEGREGORIO is Associate Professor of English Literature at the University of Michigan – Dearborn. He has published extensively on Bede as a biblical exegete and Church reformer. His books include, as editor, *Innovation and Tradition in the Writings of the Venerable Bede*, and, as translator, *Bede: On Ezra and Nehemiah*, which won the International Society of Anglo-Saxonists’ prize for best edition/translation published in Anglo-Saxon studies, 2005-7.

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NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

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ROSALIND LOVE is a senior lecturer in the Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic at the University of Cambridge, with responsibility for Insular Latin. She has edited two volumes of Anglo-Latin hagiography in the series Oxford Medieval Texts, the second of which, on the saints of Ely, jointly won the International Society of Anglo-Saxonists’ prize for best edition published in Anglo-Saxon studies, 2003–5. She has published a number of articles on Latin hagiography in England. Her work for the Fontes Anglo-Saxonici project (http://fontes.english.ox.ac.uk/) catalogued the sources for many Anglo-Latin texts, including two of Bede’s commentaries.

LAWRENCE T. MARTIN is Professor Emeritus at the University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire, where he works on Ojibwe language revitalization. He has published articles on Bede and on medieval sermon literature, as well as an edition of The Verona Homily Collection in the Corpus Christianorum Scriptores Celtigenae series, a translation of Bede’s Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles and, with Dom David Hurst, a translation of Bede’s Homilies on the Gospels.

DAVID ROLLASON has taught history at Durham University since 1977. His most recent research has been on the history of early medieval Northumbria and on early medieval books of life, for one of the most interesting of which, the Durham Liber Vitae, he is the co-editor of the edition and linguistic and prosopographical commentary. He maintains his earlier research interest in early medieval hagiography and the cult of saints and is developing further his research interest in the histories and chronicles of northern England.

SHARON M. ROWLEY is Associate Professor of English at Christopher Newport University. She has published on Bede’s Ecclesiastical History and the Old English version of it, as well as on Old English homilies and textual studies. She received a
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Joshua A. Westgard is Adjunct Lecturer at The Catholic University of America in Washington, DC. He is author of several articles on medieval historical writing, and on the manuscripts and transmission of Bede’s works. He is currently completing an edition and study of the set of annals known as the Continuatio Bedae, and is also preparing a monograph on the transmission and reception of the Ecclesiastical History.

Ian Wood is Professor of Early Medieval History at the University of Leeds. He has published extensively on early medieval history, especially on the Burgundians, Franks and Anglo-Saxons and on the history of mission. Recently he was one of the co-authors of Fragments of History: Rethinking the Ruthwell and Bewcastle Monuments. He is currently working on a new edition of Bede’s Historia Abbatum and the Vita Ceolfridi.
Bede’s works are usually cited in modern scholarship by their abbreviated Latin titles. In this volume, the following English titles (most of them employed by their published English translation) are used for the Latin. Titles marked by asterisks designate works not yet available in English translation; for the sake of uniformity, English titles have been devised for these works too and are utilized throughout the volume. For complete bibliographical details on English translations and Latin editions, see the Bibliography.

Commentary of Bede the Priest on the Canticle of Habakkuk, trans. Connolly = Expositio Bedae presbyteri in Canticum Habacuc, ed. Hurst
*Commentary on the Gospel of Luke = In Lucae euangelium expositio, ed. Hurst
*Commentary on the Gospel of Mark = In Marci euangelium expositio, ed. Hurst
Commentary on the Seven Catholic Epistles, trans. Hurst = In epistola VII catholicas, ed. Hurst
Ecclesiastical History of the English People, trans. Colgrave and Mynors = Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum, ed. Colgrave and Mynors
NOTE ON EDITIONS AND TRANSLATIONS

The Figures of Rhetoric, trans. Kendall = De schematibus et tropis, ed. Kendall
History of the Abbots (published as Lives of the Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow), trans. Farmer = Historia Abbatum, ed. Plummer
Homilies on the Gospels, trans. Martin = Homiliae euangelii, ed. Hurst
Letter to Albinus, trans. Meyvaert = Epistola ad Albinum, ed. Plummer
Letter to Bishop Egbert, trans. McClure and Collins = Epistola ad Ecgbertum Episcopum, ed. Plummer
Letter to Pleguin, trans. Wallis = Epistola ad Pleguinam, ed. Jones
Letter to Wicthed, trans. Wallis = Epistola ad VVichthedum, ed. Jones
Life of Saint Cuthbert, trans. Colgrave = Vita Sancti Cuthberti, ed. Colgrave
Life of Saint Felix = Vita Sancti Felicis, ed. Mackay
Martyrology, trans. F. Lifshitz = Martyrologium, ed. DuBois and Renaud
Metrical Life of Saint Cuthbert = Vita metrica Sancti Cuthberti, ed. Jaager
On Eight Questions, trans. Holder = De octo quaestionibus, ed. Gorman
On Ezra and Nehemiah, trans. DeGregorio = In Ezram et Neemiam, ed. Hurst
*On First Samuel = In primam partem Samuhenis, ed. Hurst
On Genesis, trans. Kendall = In principium Genesis, ed. Jones
*On the Day of Judgement = Versus de die judicii, ed. Fraipont
On the Holy Places, trans. Foley = De locis sanctis, ed. Fraipont
*On the Nature of Things = De natura rerum, ed. Jones
*On Orthography = De orthographia, ed. Jones
*On the Proverbs of Solomon = In proverbia Salomonis, ed. Hurst
On the Resting-Places of the Children of Israel, trans. Holder = De mansionibus filiorum Israel, ed. Migne
*On the Song of Songs = In Cantica Canticorum, ed. Hurst
On the Tabernacle, trans. Holder = De tabernaculo, ed. Hurst
On the Temple, trans. Connolly = De templo, ed. Hurst
*On Times = De temporibus, ed. Jones
On Tobias, trans. Foley = In librum beati patris Tobiae, ed. Hurst
On What Isaiah Says, trans. Holder = De eo quod ait Isaias, ed. Migne
Passion of Saint Anastasius = Passio S. Anastasii, ed. Franklin
The Reckoning of Time, trans. Wallis = De temporum ratione, ed. Jones
Thirty Questions on the Book of Kings, trans. Foley = In Regum librum XXX quaestiones, ed. Hurst
The Cambridge Companion to Bede is only the second volume of the many yet published in this series that focuses on the Anglo-Saxon period. The status of Bede in the Anglo-Saxon literary and historical tradition is fully evident in The Cambridge Companion to Old English Literature (1991), but that collection focuses on the vernacular tradition, and while Bede’s influence is present there, the magnitude of his work merits a volume devoted to it. Because he wrote in Latin, Bede remains a somewhat obscure figure in literature departments, invariably linked to the story of the first Old English Christian poet Cædmon told in Book 4 of Bede’s best-known work, the Ecclesiastical History of the English People. Scholars have always recognized the Ecclesiastical History’s importance as a masterful specimen of historical prose narrative, without which Cædmon and much else about early Anglo-Saxon England would remain unknown. But Bede’s achievements reach far beyond that work. He is, in fact, the most prolific author of early medieval England, a writer who excelled in all the main genres of his age, a major literary personality in an age riddled with anonymity, an authority whose views were sought by later writers, and, without question, one of the intellectual giants of the Middle Ages.

This book, designed to introduce his life and writings, seeks to highlight the distinctive achievements and strains of thought that together make Bede an imposing and rewarding figure. The contents of the volume fall into three parts. Part I covers Bede’s life and the social, political, religious and intellectual contexts of his environment that are necessary for in-depth study of his writings. Part II turns to the writings themselves, with individual chapters on the scientific works, the educational treatises, the biblical commentaries, the Gospel homilies and the historical writings. Part III ranges chronologically from Bede’s death in the early eighth century to the modern era in order to sketch the historical contexts in which his writings were received and his influence and reputation determined. A brief selection of recommended readings follows; this is supplemented, at the end of the volume, by a complete
bibliographical listing of all the scholarly works cited in the individual chapters. The specialists who wrote the chapters have geared them towards an audience of students and non-specialists, directing their coverage to received paradigms of understanding rather than new points of view. The hope nevertheless remains that more advanced readers too might find in the pages that follow something to stimulate their thinking about Bede, early Anglo-Saxon England and early medieval literary culture in general.

Readers may be surprised to find no individual chapter or chapters devoted exclusively to the *Ecclesiastical History*, surely the work most likely to be encountered by the students whom this book is meant to serve. Scholarship has always privileged the *Ecclesiastical History*, and it is now time to see Bede’s works in a more integrated and holistic way, recognizing in his collective output a carefully structured body of knowledge whose interconnections are deliberate and therefore essential for interpreters to grasp. Perceiving the intricacies of this larger design depends on a careful and sensitive reading of all its interrelated parts, and so on appreciating the various points of contact between the *Ecclesiastical History* and other Bedan compositions. Accordingly, in the chapter entitled ‘Bede and History’, readers will find a general discussion of the *Ecclesiastical History* that attempts at the same time to situate the work alongside his other historical writings, while the chapters devoted to his scientific, educational and exegetical writings also make an effort to underline notable intersections with the *Ecclesiastical History*.

Today, most of Bede’s Latin writings can be read in modern English translations. This is a fairly recent development, and one that certainly bespeaks the need for a comprehensive companion to help guide the wider audience of readers now able to encounter the full range of his work for the first time. As more than one contributor will emphasize, it is striking not only how much Bede wrote but how much he wrote about, moving as he did through nearly all the realms of Christian Latin learning known in his day. But for too long, the only way into his vast literary corpus was via mastery of the original language in which it was composed, not to mention acquiring access to the costly editions in which the Latin texts are printed. The availability of competent, inexpensive English translations of Bede’s writings is thus an important advance that should significantly augment his modern readership. This volume makes use of those translations, and a word of explanation is necessary on the procedure of reference and quotation followed. The reader is advised to begin with the list of Bede’s writings on pp. xii–xiii. Provided here is an alphabetized listing of English and corresponding Latin titles with the last names of the translators and editors (complete citations are provided in the Bibliography, pp. 246–8). Where
an English translation is available, its title has been used in the list and employed throughout the volume; this is the case for most titles. In the handful of instances where English translations have yet to appear, an English rendering of the work’s Latin title has been devised for the list and for use throughout the book; for ease of identification, these titles are marked in the list by an asterisk. Where these untranslated works are cited in the book, the authors have supplied their own English translations where necessary.

Bede was himself a great lover of books, blessed as he was with access to perhaps the greatest library of his age. From the multiplicity of textual roles he would fulfil over the course of his literary career, he knew full well that book-making was a collective effort, predicated on the work of many. And so it is with this volume, whose contributors I wish to thank for their enthusiasm for the project and the learning they devoted to its realization. As editor I especially wish to thank Calvin Kendall, Arthur Holder, Larry Martin, Allen Frantzen, Sharon Rowley and Joshua Westgard for their careful reading of various sections of the manuscript and their helpful recommendations for improving it. My thanks are also due to the University of Michigan – Dearborn for sabbatical leave in the fall 2008 semester when work on the project was in fullest swing. Finally, Sarah Stanton, Rebecca Jones and the others at Cambridge University Press are hugely deserving of my gratitude for all their assistance and encouragement in bringing this book to publication.
### CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE OF IMPORTANT DATES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>449</td>
<td>The date ascribed by Bede (<em>EH I. 15</em>) to the arrival of the Angles and Saxons in Britain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. 540</td>
<td>The British monk Gildas writes <em>On the Ruin of Britain</em>, a major source for Bede’s <em>Ecclesiastical History</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>597</td>
<td>Augustine of Canterbury and his companions arrive in Kent to convert the English (<em>EH I. 25</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>604</td>
<td>Death of Pope Gregory I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>625</td>
<td>The date ascribed by Bede (<em>EH II. 9</em>) to Paulinus’s mission to Northumbria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>627</td>
<td>Edwin king of Northumbria accepts Christian faith; he and his people receive baptism from Paulinus on Easter Day (<em>EH II. 12–14</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>628</td>
<td>Benedict Biscop born</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>633</td>
<td>Edwin slain at Hatfield Chase on 12 October by Penda, pagan king of Mercia (<em>EH II. 20</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>635</td>
<td>King Oswald invites Irish monk Aidan to Northumbria to teach the Christian faith; grants him island of Lindisfarne as his episcopal see (<em>EH III. 3</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>653</td>
<td>Benedict Biscop makes first of his five trips to Rome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>664</td>
<td>Synod of Whitby rules in favour of Roman method of Easter reckoning (<em>EH III. 25</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Benedict Biscop’s second visit to Rome</td>
</tr>
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</table>
# Chronological Table of Important Dates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>665</td>
<td>Benedict Biscop travels from Rome to the monastery of St Honorat on the island of Lérins in southern Gaul, where he takes monastic vows.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>667</td>
<td>Benedict Biscop’s third visit to Rome.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>669</td>
<td>Theodore of Tarsus and the African Hadrian arrive; Theodore takes up office of archbishop of Canterbury (EH iv. 1–2).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>671</td>
<td>Benedict Biscop’s fourth visit to Rome.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. 673</td>
<td>Bede born, probably somewhere near Wearmouth-Jarrow (EH v. 24: ‘in the territory of this monastery’).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>674</td>
<td>King Ecgfrith grants land to Benedict Biscop to build monastery of St Peter at Wearmouth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>679</td>
<td>Benedict Biscop’s fifth visit to Rome.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>680</td>
<td>Bede, at age seven, becomes an oblate under Benedict Biscop’s charge at Wearmouth.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| c. 681 | Ecgfrith grants land to Biscop to build sister monastery of St Paul at Jarrow.  
At Benedict Biscop’s request, Ceolfrith moves from Wearmouth to Jarrow to serve as abbot. |
| 685  | Dedication of the church at Jarrow on 23 April.  
King Ecgfrith slain at the Nechtansmere on 20 May.  
Aldfrith succeeds.  
Cuthbert induced to accept episcopal orders, becomes bishop of Lindisfarne.  
Benedict Biscop’s sixth and final journey to Rome. |
| 687  | Cuthbert dies on 20 March. |
| 690  | Benedict Biscop dies on 12 January; Ceolfrith takes charge of Wearmouth, presiding over both houses. |
| 692  | Bede, at age nineteen, ordained deacon (EH v. 24).  
Archbishop Theodore dies. |
<p>| 702  | Bede, at age thirty, ordained priest (EH v. 24). |
| 703  | Bede writes <em>On Times</em> and <em>Commentary on the Apocalypse</em>, his first works. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>705</td>
<td>Aldfrith dies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eadwulf usurps throne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Osred, Aldfrith’s son, restored to throne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>709</td>
<td>Wilfrid dies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>716</td>
<td>Abbot Ceolfrith unexpectedly resigns abbacy of Wearmouth-Jarrow and departs for Rome, taking with him the Codex Amiatinus. He dies en route at Langres on 25 September</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Osred dies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cenred succeeds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>718</td>
<td>Cenred dies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Osric succeeds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>729</td>
<td>Osric dies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ceolwulf, to whom Bede dedicates <em>Ecclesiastical History</em>, succeeds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>731</td>
<td>Bede completes <em>Ecclesiastical History</em>, though work on the text may have continued hereafter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ceolwulf is deposed but quickly restored</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>734</td>
<td>Bede writes to Bishop Egbert of York on 5 November about abuses in Northumbrian Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>735</td>
<td>Bede dies on 25 May</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bishop Egbert receives pallium, becomes archbishop of York</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>793</td>
<td>Vikings sack Lindisfarne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>794</td>
<td>Vikings sack Jarrow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. 900</td>
<td>Earliest extant manuscript evidence for Old English translation of Bede’s <em>Ecclesiastical History</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1563</td>
<td><em>Editio princeps</em> of Bede’s works printed in Basel</td>
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<tr>
<td>1899</td>
<td>Bede declared Doctor of the Church</td>
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MAPS
Map 1 Anglo-Saxon England
Map 2 The making of Northumbria: Bernicia, Deira and their neighbours in the early seventh century
Map 3 The Church in early Anglo-Saxon Northumbria
Map 4 Wearmouth and Jarrow, and the lower reaches of the Tyne and Wear
Map 5 Carolingian schools, scriptoria and literary centres.