

Record of the fifteenth conference of the International Society of Anglo-Saxonists, at the University of Wisconsin–Madison (Madison, Wisconsin), 1–5 August 2011

I The general theme of the conference was ‘Anglo-Saxon England and the Visual Imagination’.

Three keynote addresses were delivered.

Michelle P. Brown, University of London, ‘Imagining the Exotic: Insular Attitudes to the Cultures of the Eastern Mediterranean and Near East’.

Anna Gannon, University of Cambridge, ‘A Debt and an Honour: New Approaches to Coin Studies’.

Leslie Webster, British Museum, ‘Image, Identity, and the Staffordshire Hoard’.

The following thirty-seven papers were delivered.

Christopher A. Jones, The Ohio State University, ‘The Text of the “Exeter Benedictional” (London, British Library, Add. 28188)’

Andrew Rabin, University of Louisville, ‘Holy Bodies, Legal Matters: Law, Gender, and the Anti-Monastic Reaction’

Robert Upchurch, University of North Texas, ‘Ælfric’s Pastoral Imaginary: Shepherding the Shepherds in the Ways of Pastoral Care’

Alice Jorgensen, Trinity College Dublin, ‘Historicizing Emotion: Two Old English Saint’s Lives and the “Shame–Rage Spiral”’

Leslie Lockett, The Ohio State University, ‘Models of Mental Activity in Old English and Old Saxon Poetry’

Colin Mackenzie, University of Glasgow, ‘Comparing Anglo-Saxon and Old Norse “Minds”’

Peter Darby, University of Leicester, ‘“Living Scriptures”: Visual Images for Instruction in the Age of Bede’

Rosalind Love, University of Cambridge, ‘The Consolation of Diversity: Reading Glossed Boethius in Tenth-Century England’

Mercedes Salvador-Bello, University of Seville, ‘Visualizing the Animal World in Eusebius’s *Enigmata*: The Isidorean Classification Method Disclosed’

Thomas Hall, University of Notre Dame, ‘Consonance in Old English Poetry’

Brian O’Camb, Indiana University Northwest, ‘Christ’s *peoden-stol* in *Advent Lyric XI* and the Illustrated Frontispiece of King Edgar’s Privilege for New Minster, Winchester’

Karin Olsen, University of Groningen, ‘Earthworms, Fire Serpents and Visual Poetics in Old English Poetry’

Julia Crick

- Eileen Joy, Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville, 'Not Wanting to Escape out of the Snare as a Sparrow: The Importance of Being Embodied in the Old English *Seven Sleepers*'
- Mo Pareles, New York University, '*Maccabees* and the Problem of Meat in Ælfric'
- Carol Braun Pasternack, University of California, Santa Barbara, '*Seo gemengnes þæs flæsces: The Responsa of Gregory the Great and the Junius Genesis*'
- Daniel C. Remein, New York University, '*Fell ne flæsc: Flæsc* and the Poetics of Visibility in the Exeter Book Riddles'
- Helen Foxhall Forbes, University of Leicester, '*O Domine libera animam meam!* Visualizing Purgatory in Anglo-Saxon England'
- Johanna Kramer, University of Missouri–Columbia, 'Coming Back to the "Disappearing Christ": The Liminal Theology of Christ's Ascension in Anglo-Saxon Literature and Art'
- Alessandra Molinari, Università degli Studi "Carlo Bo", Urbino, 'Visualizing the Invisible: Somatic Cosmology in MS Junius 11'
- Matthew Hussey, Simon Fraser University, 'Scarlet Letters: The Old English *Daniel* and the Materiality of Writing'
- Nathan Mertes, University of Wisconsin–Madison, 'Letters of Lore: Runic Materiality and Linguistic Atavism in the First *Dialogue of Solomon and Saturn*'
- Annina Seiler, University of Zurich, 'Factual and Fictional Inscriptions: Literacy and the Visual Imagination in Anglo-Saxon England'
- Rory Naismith, Clare College, University of Cambridge, 'Kings, Moneyers and Royal Imagery in the Late Eighth Century: Offa's Coinage in Context'
- Philip Shaw, University of Leicester, 'Early Anglo-Saxon Letter-Forms: The Evidence of Coin Epigraphy'
- Nicole Guenther Discenza, University of South Florida, 'Fruitful Wastes in *Beowulf*, *Guthlac A*, and *Andreas*'
- Martin Foys, Drew University, 'Hearing the Bell in Anglo-Saxon England'
- Catherine Karkov, University of Leeds, 'The Nunburnhome Cross: a Visual Palimpsest'
- Paul Cavill, University of Nottingham, '*The Battle of Brunanburh* in Ancient and Modern Imagination'
- Carole Hough, University of Glasgow, 'Bottoms and Buttocks: Place-Names and Semantic Change in Old English'
- Margaret Scott, University of Salford, 'Place-Names, Politics and Patronage: Scotland's "Old English" Onomastic Heritage'
- Craig Davis, Smith College, '*Beowulf*, Jordanes, and the Statue of Theoderic at Aachen'
- Jay Gates, John Jay College of Criminal Justice, CUNY, 'Display or Dumping: the Visibility of Eadric Streona's Execution'
- Nicole Marafioti, Trinity University, 'Translating a Conqueror: Svein Forkbeard's Posthumous Homecoming in the *Encomium Emmae Reginae*'
- Mary Blanchard, Western Michigan University, 'The Wisdom of Whiskers: Visual Signs of Disobedience in Clerical Dress'
- Herbert Broderick, Lehman College, CUNY, 'Visualizing Moses in the Illustrated Old English Hexateuch (London, BL, MS Cotton Claudius B.iv)'

The 2011 conference of the International Society of Anglo-Saxonists

Kathryn Lowe, University of Glasgow, 'Sight and Sound: the Visual and the Vernacular in Anglo-Saxon Charters'

Peter Stokes, King's College London, 'Measuring the Immeasurable? A New Approach to the Study of Medieval Script'

Two project reports were given.

George Hardin Brown, Stanford University and Joshua A. Westgard, Marco Institute, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, 'The Revision of Laistner-King, *A Handlist of Bede Manuscripts*'

Gale R. Owen-Crocker and Mark Zumbuhl, University of Manchester, 'The Lexis of Cloth and Clothing Project'

The conference was preceded by a pre-conference graduate-student workshop on 'Making (and Theorizing) the Early Medieval Book'. A poster session was held in which the sixteen participants in the workshop reported on their projects. Their work was exhibited in the Alumni Lounge of the Pyle Center and viewed by conference delegates at the reception held there on 2 August.

II General Business Meeting held at the Pyle Center, University of Wisconsin-Madison on 5 August 2011, at 15.30, President John D. Niles presiding.

A The President reported on behalf of the Executive Committee:

- 1 The sixteenth conference of the Society is to be held at University College Dublin and Trinity College Dublin, 29 July to 2 August 2013, hosted by Mary Clayton. Its theme will be 'Insular Cultures'.
- 2 The seventeenth conference of the Society will be held at the University of Glasgow, hosted by Carole Hough.
- 3 Gratitude was expressed to all those who had assisted in making the Madison conference such a success.

B The Executive Director reported on behalf of the Executive Committee:

- 1 Membership dues and related interest have generated revenues of \$12,478.23. The total assets as of 30 June 2011 were \$41,763.03. Of this amount, \$29,894.46 is retained in mutual funds.
- 2 Officers of the Society. In accordance with the Society's constitution, John D. Niles concludes as President on 31 December 2011, after which Mary Clayton will assume the post of President. Carole Hough will assume the post of First Vice-President. Following the resignation of Mary Swan as Second Vice-President in July 2011, Julia Crick will serve as Interim Second Vice-President until 31 December 2011. Susan Irvine will then assume the post of Second Vice-President. Stacy S. Klein concludes as Executive Director on 31 December 2011, after which Martin Foys will assume the post of Executive Director.
- 3 Membership of the Advisory Board. The term of office expires on 31 December 2011 for the following Board members: Julia Crick, Catherine Cubitt, Martin Foys, Ursula Lenker, Jonathan Wilcox, and Charles Wright.

Julia Crick

- 4 Honorary Membership of the Society. The Honorary Membership consists of Nicholas Brooks, George Hardin Brown, Martin Carver, †Peter Clemeos, Margaret Clunies-Ross, Rosemary Cramp, André Crépin, René Derolez, Alger N. Doane, Helmut Gneuss, †Stanley B. Greenfield, Joyce Hill, †Edward B. Irving Jr, Kevin Kiernan, Matti Kilpiö, Anne Klinck, Tadao Kubouchi, Michael Lapidge, †Henry Loyn, †Bruce Mitchell, Éamonn Ó Carragáin, Sigeru Ono, Marijane Osborn, Richard Pfaß, †John Pope, Barbara Raw, Mary Richards, Matti Rissanen, Jane Roberts, Fred. C. Robinson, Ute Schwab, Donald G. Scragg, Tom Shippey, Joseph B. Trahern and Leslie Webster. At the Madison conference, honorary memberships were awarded to George Clark, Patrick Conner, Mechthild Gretsch, Hugh Magennis, Audrey Meaney, Geoffrey Russom, Hans Sauer, and Paul Szarmach.
 - 5 The Advisory Board has established procedures for the publication of themed volumes arising substantially from ISAS conferences. Following publication of the first and second volumes, the third, edited by Hans Sauer and Joanna Story, based on the 2005 conference at Munich, appeared in 2011. The fourth, edited by Jane Roberts and Leslie Webster and based on the 2007 London conference, is published and will be circulated to members in August 2011. The fifth, based on the 2009 St John's conference and edited by Stacy S. Klein, William Schipper, and Shannon Lewis-Simpson, is in an advanced state of preparation. The sixth, to be edited by John D. Niles, Stacy S. Klein, and Jonathan Wilcox, will draw on papers presented at Madison. The Executive Committee oversees and monitors the production of the volumes. The ISAS regular membership package includes receipt of any volume based on a conference that has taken place when that person's membership is current, with the exception of the first volume. Life members and Honorary members do not receive copies as part of their membership, since they do not pay regular dues, but receive a 20 percent discount on all volumes.
 - 6 ISAS Publication Prizes, 2011. The panel on prizes, consisting of Julia Crick, Haruko Momma and Jonathan Wilcox, and chaired by Julia Crick, announced the winners of this cycle's awards. Best First Book: to be awarded jointly to Francesca Tinti, *Sustaining Belief: The Church of Worcester from c. 870 to c. 1100* (Ashgate, 2010) and Renee R. Trilling, *The Aesthetics of Nostalgia: Historical Representation in Old English Verse* (University of Toronto Press, 2009). Best Edition/Translation: *The Old English Boethius: An Edition of the Old English Versions of Boethius's De Consolatione Philosophiae*, ed. Malcolm Godden and Susan Irvine (Oxford University Press, 2009). Best Article: Andrew Rabin, 'Female Advocacy and Royal Protection in Tenth-Century England: The Legal Career of Queen Ælfthryth', *Speculum* 84 (2009).
- C The Executive Director reported on behalf of the Executive Committee:
- 1 The thanks of all participants for a very successful conference.

The 2011 conference of the International Society of Anglo-Saxonists

- III The conference opened with a reception on the rooftop terrace of the Pyle Center, the University of Wisconsin–Madison conference center where all regular sessions were held. The Department of Special Collections, Memorial Library, mounted an exhibition entitled ‘Reflections of Anglo-Saxon England’, including printed books from the sixteenth century to the twentieth.

The conference banquet was held at the University Club. Mid-week excursions to Taliesin and to Little Norway and House on the Rock took place on Wednesday 3 August. A post-conference excursion took members on a trip to the Chicago and Milwaukee areas.

- IV Registration forms for the ISAS biennial conference in 2013 will be posted on the conference website. Payment of membership dues may be made by cheque or postal money order for \$50.00 or £30.00 sterling (regular members) or for \$35.00 or £20.00 (student and retired members) for a two-year cycle, or alternatively, for a four-year cycle, \$100.00 or £60.00 sterling (regular members) or \$70.00 or £40.00 (student and retired members) and should be sent to Professor Stacy S. Klein, Executive Director, ISAS, Dept. of English, Rutgers University, 510 George Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901-1167, USA. Payment may be made to the Executive Director by Visa or MasterCard or by personal cheque. For members outside the USA, transfers in sterling may be sent to the ISAS account, HSBC Bank plc, City Office Cambridge Branch, Cambridge, CB2 3HZ; sort code 40-16-08, account no. 21241605. Payment forms are available from the Executive Director and on the ISAS website (www.isas.us).¹

¹ This report was prepared by Julia Crick.

Disputed episcopacy: Bede, Acca, and the relationship between Stephen's *Life of St Wilfrid* and the early prose Lives of St Cuthbert

CLARE STANCLIFFE

ABSTRACT

This article investigates the relationship of the Wilfrid and Cuthbert Lives, confirming that Bede re-presented the life of Cuthbert in response to Wilfridian criticism. It then examines why that was necessary c. 720, arguing that it fits not just with a probable episcopal interregnum at Lindisfarne after Eadfrith's death, as suggested by Kirby, but also with Acca's promotion of St Oswald and Heavenfield, which undercut Lindisfarne's cult of St Cuthbert and status as the mother church of Bernicia. At stake were both Lindisfarne's survival as an episcopal see and its distinctive type of monk-bishops. These represented a different model of episcopacy, championed by Bede, from that espoused by the Wilfridians.

Bede's productive adult lifetime spanned the first three decades of the eighth century, culminating in his *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* of c. 731.¹ Unlike Gregory of Tours, however, Bede's *History* becomes sketchier when he is covering the years that he lived through as an adult. The whole period from St Cuthbert's death in 687 to the time of writing is covered in just one book; and this is in any case little concerned with what modern historians would regard as the key historical events, instead bifurcating into miracles of John of Beverley, Willibrord's mission to Frisia, visions of the punishments awaiting people after their death, and such like. When we hear of the doings of kings, it is principally of those who abandoned their rule to go on pilgrimage to Rome. The two exceptions are a lengthy account of Bishop Wilfrid (albeit omitting the synod of Austerfield), and the story of how the Irish, the Picts, and finally

¹ Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, ed. B. Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors, *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (Oxford, 1969), hereafter abbreviated as Bede, *HE*. Other abbreviations used in the course of this article are Bede, *VCP* for Bede's prose *Vita Sancti Cuthberti*, ed. B. Colgrave, *Two Lives of Saint Cuthbert* (Cambridge, 1940); *VCA* for the anonymous Lindisfarne *Vita Sancti Cuthberti*, ed. B. Colgrave, *Two Lives*; *VW* for Stephen, *Vita Sancti Wilfridi*, ed. B. Colgrave, *The Life of Bishop Wilfrid by Eddius Stephanus* (Cambridge, 1927).

Clare Stancliffe

Iona itself were converted to the canonical Easter. This last was achieved by Egberht in 716, and by then jumping to Egberht's death on Iona on Easter day, 24 April 729, here seen as a providential coincidence, Bede skilfully skips to his own time of writing.² It is only in the terse chronicling of key events at the very end of his *History* that we learn of the assassination of King Osred in 716, and Bede just hints at the temporary deposition of his own king, Ceolwulf, and at the problems that might arise from so many Northumbrians adopting the monastic life.³ Given the unsavoury nature of Osred's rule and death, the ensuing power struggle between two different Northumbrian dynasties,⁴ and the abuses in the church of which we hear elsewhere, it is easy to understand Bede's reticence: he 'withheld dangerous material', and also material that reflected badly on the contemporary church.⁵ This understanding, however, still leaves the modern historian with two problems: the first is how to work out what was, in fact, going on in the early eighth century; the second is how, despite Bede's reticence, we may gain a better understanding of the context in which his *History* was written. For that will help to alert us to the rationale underlying his skilful shaping of his material: so skilful, that it can still mislead even the seasoned student of his work.

The present study seeks to contribute towards the solution of both problems by focusing not so much on the *Ecclesiastical History* itself, but rather on the Lives of St Cuthbert and St Wilfrid that were produced in the early eighth century. Although these Lives are of churchmen who died in 687 and 710, respectively, their authors arguably geared them for very contemporary exigencies. This general approach was pioneered by David Kirby, who in 1983 published a study of Stephen's *Life of St Wilfrid* in which he argued that the tensions between the Wilfridians and the anti-Wilfridians had persisted after Wilfrid's death. Indeed, he even suggested that a revised edition of Stephen's *Life of St Wilfrid* might have been produced as late as the early 730s in support of Bishop Acca, Wilfrid's successor at Hexham, who had been driven from his see in 731.⁶ This article, in turn, inspired Walter Goffart's more wide-ranging study, 'Bede and the Ghost of Bishop Wilfrid', published in 1988.⁷ Although

² Bede, *HE* V. Iona's conversion and Egberht's death occur in *HE* V.xxii.

³ Bede, *HE* V.xxiv and xxiii.

⁴ M. Lapidge, 'Bede's Metrical *Vita S. Cuthberti?*, *St Cuthbert, his Cult and his Community to AD 1200*, ed. G. Bonner, D. Rollason, and C. Stancliffe (Woodbridge, 1989), pp. 77–93, at p. 78; B. Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms of Early Anglo-Saxon England* (London, 1990), pp. 86–8.

⁵ J. Campbell, *Essays in Anglo-Saxon History* (London, 1986), p. 19; and, for the quotation, J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, *Early Medieval History* (Oxford, 1975), p. 104.

⁶ D. P. Kirby, 'Bede, Eddius Stephanus and the "Life of Wilfrid"', *EHR* 98 (1983), 101–14, esp. 106–10.

⁷ W. Goffart, *The Narrators of Barbarian History* (Princeton, 1988), pp. 235–328. The inspiration of Kirby's penultimate sentence, 'the key to unlocking the process of writing the *HE* may

Bede, Acca, Stephen's Life of St Wilfrid and the early prose Lives of St Cuthbert

Goffart's main concern lay with Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*, one significant aspect of his study was his thesis about the context out of which this and other Northumbrian works of the early eighth century arose. Goffart argued that first Wilfrid's career, and then the account of it given by Stephen of Ripon in his *Life of St Wilfrid*, had presented a view of what was to be celebrated and what deplored in the history of the seventh-century Northumbrian church that ran counter to the convictions of a great many in the Northumbrian ecclesiastical establishment. It thus stimulated them to produce their own accounts to contradict the Wilfridian one. At the heart of these opposing views, argued Goffart, lay the role of the Irish missionaries to Northumbria: should Wilfrid be celebrated as the man who had rid Northumbria of 'the poisonous weeds planted by the Irish' and re-established close links with Rome, as Stephen argued?⁸ Or should one rather sideline Wilfrid's Northumbrian achievements and instead celebrate the Irish contribution to Northumbria, playing down their divergence from Roman norms, and focusing upon the achievement of their main foundation, Lindisfarne, and its monk-pastors, as the Cuthbert Lives and Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* implied? Goffart saw Bede's friendliness towards the Irish as necessary for wooing the Irish in north Britain, so that they might agree to form part of a new ecclesiastical province under the leadership of a newly established metropolitan see at York. This last, he thought, was the goal and provided the immediate context for Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*.⁹

Our concern in this article is not with Goffart's thesis as such, but rather with one significant question which he and Kirby have raised: that of whether the early-eighth-century Lives of Cuthbert and Wilfrid testify to continuing factionalism in the early Northumbrian church, and, if so, what the issues were. The view that Lindisfarne and the Wilfridians formed opposing factions in the last part of the seventh and at the beginning of the eighth century is reasonably well attested and widely accepted. It is, after all, reflected in the excommunication of Wilfrid and his followers at the synod of Austerfield, c. 703. But at the papacy's

still lie concealed in the tensions of the time in which Bede wrote' (Kirby, 'Bede', p. 114) is acknowledged by Goffart, *Narrators*, p. 240, in his 'Bede's History in a Harsher Climate', *Innovation and Tradition in the Writings of the Venerable Bede*, ed. S. DeGregorio (Morgantown, 2006), pp. 203–26 at 211, and again by him in his 'L'Histoire ecclésiastique et l'engagement politique de Bède', *Bède le vénérable entre tradition et postérité*, ed. S. Lebecq, M. Perrin and O. Szerwiniack (Lille, n.d.), pp. 149–58 at 155.

⁸ *IV*c. 47.

⁹ Goffart, *Narrators*, pp. 325–7. 'North Britain' is my wording: Goffart confusingly talks about 'the Irish to the east' (*ibid.* p. 327), but this seems to be glossed in the following sentence: 'An English Church broadly welcoming to the Irish and Picts, and accepted by them.' For a recent evaluation of Goffart's views, see N. J. Higham, *(Re-)Reading Bede* (London, 2006), pp. 58–69. For an alternative explanation of why Bede and the Wilfridians handled the Irish so differently, see C. Stancliffe, *Bede, Wilfrid, and the Irish*, Jarrow Lecture, 2003.

Clare Stancliffe

insistence and after Aldfrith's death, a compromise had been worked out at the beginning of Osred's reign (c. 706): the excommunication had been lifted, Wilfrid had been given back his two key monasteries of Ripon and Hexham and installed as bishop of the latter, and he and his followers had been accepted within the ranks of the Northumbrian church once more.¹⁰ Should we not assume that after a few years had passed, and with the death of Wilfrid himself, the trouble had died down? That conclusion is surely the one that Bede intended readers of his *Ecclesiastical History* to draw, and some contemporary scholars continue to do so.¹¹ Goffart, however, argued that the extraordinary way in which Stephen's *Life of St Wilfrid* plagiarized the anonymous *Life of St Cuthbert* rendered the latter 'soiled and devalued' in Lindisfarne's eyes, and so led them to commission Bede to replace it with his prose *Life of St Cuthbert*.¹² Kirby then followed up this and his earlier work and explored the context in which Bede wrote both his prose *Life of St Cuthbert* and his *Ecclesiastical History*.¹³ Between them, Kirby and Goffart have argued the case for seeing the rival parties that had crystallized around the emblematic figures of St Cuthbert and St Wilfrid as persisting into the early eighth century and lying behind Lindisfarne's commissioning of Bede to produce a new *Life of St Cuthbert* c. 720. Yet Goffart provided little evidence to back up his claim, and even Kirby's more detailed studies have failed to win universal support. Meanwhile the question of why Bede wrote his prose *Life of St Cuthbert* has been tackled from a variety of viewpoints, reducing the factionalism argument to one among many suggestions.¹⁴

Alongside Goffart and Kirby a third scholar, Alan Thacker, has made an equally significant contribution to understanding the factors that led Bede to produce his prose *Life of St Cuthbert*. He wrote at almost the same time as Goffart and after hearing and discussing Goffart's ideas; and he took from him the idea that tension in the Northumbrian church lay behind the production

¹⁰ Stephen, *VW* cc. 60–1; Bede, *HE* V.xix, and cf. also xx.

¹¹ Bede, *HE* V.xix; Higham, *(Re-)Reading Bede*, pp. 96–7.

¹² Goffart, *Narrators*, p. 284.

¹³ See D. P. Kirby, 'The Genesis of a Cult: Cuthbert of Farne and Ecclesiastical Politics in Northumbria in the Late Seventh and Early Eighth Centuries', *JEH* 46 (1995), 383–97; and D. P. Kirby, *Bede's Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum: its Contemporary Setting*, Jarrow Lecture, 1992.

¹⁴ In addition to Thacker (see the following note), see W. Berschin, 'Opus deliberatum ac perfectum: Why did the Venerable Bede write a second Prose Life of St Cuthbert?', *St Cuthbert*, ed. Bonner *et al.*, pp. 95–102; B. Ward, 'The Spirituality of St Cuthbert', *ibid.* pp. 65–76, and *The Venerable Bede* (London, 1990), pp. 89–91, 98–9; W. T. Foley, 'Suffering and Sanctity in Bede's Prose Life of St Cuthbert', *Jnl of Theological Stud.* ns 50 (1999), 102–15; C. Cubitt, 'Memory and Narrative in the Cult of early Anglo-Saxon Saints', *The Uses of the Past in the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 29–66. All these studies are convincing in terms of highlighting diverse ways in which Bede consciously 'improved' upon the account in the anonymous *Life of St Cuthbert*; but they do not to my mind adequately explain why the Lindisfarne community commissioned a second prose Life so soon after the production of the original anonymous Life.

Bede, Acca, Stephen's Life of St Wilfrid and the early prose Lives of St Cuthbert

of so many saints' Lives in such a short timespan, coining the term 'pamphlet war', and viewing this as an important factor in calling forth Bede's prose *Life of St Cuthbert*.¹⁵ Yet he had a far more nuanced view of Bede's work, seeing this as equally motivated by Bede's concern for reform of the church, with his presentation of St Cuthbert as a model pastor of the type that he wished to see becoming widespread in the Northumbrian church. In this, Thacker was following on from his own important study published in 1983.¹⁶ The general accuracy of this interpretation of Bede seems to be borne out by the study of Bede's exegesis, which in the 720s can be seen to be increasingly concerned with reform of the Northumbrian church.¹⁷ Yet there is an unresolved puzzle here: if Bede's prose *Life of St Cuthbert* was needed not just because of Bede's reform ideals, but also because of continuing tension between different parties within the higher echelons of the Northumbrian church, where was this tension coming from if not from Acca, who, as bishop of Hexham, must have been the most influential Wilfridian after Wilfrid's death? But in that case, how can we square Bede's readiness to answer Lindisfarne's request for a new *Life of St Cuthbert* with Bede's dedication of so many of his biblical commentaries to Acca and with his apparent affection for his bishop, which Thacker believes was 'genuine and profound'?¹⁸

What, then, should our understanding of the early-eighth-century Northumbrian church be? Rather than focus on the interpretations of Goffart, Kirby, and Thacker, this article seeks to re-examine the sources in the light of the issues that they have raised. What has hitherto been lacking is research to test the hypotheses that have been put forward, and the thinking through of their implications. There are four questions that will be addressed here: first, and most fundamental, is there evidence to support the theory that Bede's prose *Life of St Cuthbert* was, in fact, written in response to Stephen's *Life of St Wilfrid*? Secondly, since most scholars would date Stephen's *Life of St Wilfrid* to shortly after Wilfrid's death in 710, yet Bede's prose *Life of St Cuthbert* was not written till c. 720, why should a response to Stephen's *Life* not have been needed on the latter's publication, but then required several years later? Thirdly, what role does Acca play in all of this, and what was the nature of his relationship

¹⁵ A. Thacker, 'Lindisfarne and the Origins of the Cult of St Cuthbert', *St Cuthbert*, ed. Bonner *et al.*, pp. 103–22, at 115–22.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* pp. 117, 119, 122; A. Thacker, 'Bede's Ideal of Reform', *Ideal and Reality in Frankish and Anglo-Saxon Society*, ed. P. Wormald (Oxford, 1983), pp. 130–53.

¹⁷ See S. DeGregorio, "'Nostrorum socordiam temporum': the Reforming Impulse of Bede's Later Exegesis", *EME* 11 (2002), 107–22.

¹⁸ Thacker, 'Lindisfarne', p. 121, reaffirmed in A. Thacker, 'Acca', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Mathew and B. Harrison (Oxford, 2004), <http://www.oxforddnb.com>, accessed on 3 June 2011.