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Peter Darby, Faith Wallis (ed.), Bede and the Future, Farnham, Surrey (Ashgate Publishing) 2014, XIV–269 p. (Studies in Early Medieval Britain and Ireland), ISBN 978-1-4094-5182-2, GBP 63,00.

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The series to which this volume belongs, according to the General Editors Joanna E. Story and Roy Flechner, »illuminates the history of Britain and Ireland from the start of the fifth century to the establishment of French-speaking aristocracies in the eleventh and twelfth centuries«. This is a broadening of focus for the *ci-devant* Studies in Early Medieval Britain, under which banner Darby had published »Bede and the End of Time¹« in 2012. Bede, though consciously an Englishman, was a product of a Northumbrian culture whose double nature, Irish and English, is evident precisely in his best-known writings and justifies his inception of the reconceived series.

The two editors jointly introduce the volume with an essay on »The Many Futures of Bede«, extracting from the several essays (arranged, as they remark, chronologically and not thematically) the many ways in which Bede thought about the future and in which his thoughts may be thought about by others. One of his chief concerns was to combat the millenarian expectations encouraged by the Eusebian chronology by controversially refuting it; Faith Wallis, »Why did Bede Write a Commentary on Revelation?«, places Bede's work in the context of »De temporibus« and »De natura rerum«, but also considers its role in his self-defence against the charge of heresy that his »Hebraica veritas« had brought upon him. Yet Bede himself was a campaigner against heresies and even more so against heresy, which he regarded as an ever-present threat; Alan Thacker, »Why did Heresy Matter to Bede? Present and Future Contexts«, attaches particular significance to the polemics in his Old Testament commentaries, relating them to the turmoil of 716 and 731–732 as it endangered the Northumbrian church. This danger Christopher Grocock, »Separation Anxiety: Bede and Threats to Wearmouth and Jarrow«, finds extending even to Bede's own monastery; but the outside interference the »Historia abbatum« was designed to forestall becomes virtuous when directed against laxer institutions.

Calvin B. Kendall, »Bede and Islam«, considers the extent and possible sources of Bede's knowledge, and his change of outlook when his expectation of worldwide Christian triumph was falsified. (»Saracens«, far from being »a term unique to Christian writers«, p. 95, is already found in Strabo, though for a people distinct from the Arabs.) Bede could not tell Islam apart from paganism; but neither could he envisage that

¹ Peter Darby, *Bede and the End of Time*, Farnham, Surrey 2012 (Studies in Early Medieval Britain).

its spread in Europe was about to reach its limit and that the heathens who would strike against Northumbria were not Saracens but Danes.

Peter Darby, »Bede's History of the Future«, demonstrates the coherence of Bede's treatise in discharging the task laid upon him, ›*de temporum statu, cursu, ac fine disserere*«, and in particular his identical principles for imposing order on the past and the future, adopting one opinion out of the many on record. However, as James T. Palmer, »The Ends and Futures of Bede's ›*De temporum ratione*««, shows, he could not control his reception; in the eighth century the last six chapters might be omitted as a second part of no great interest or even replaced by Eusebian matter more acceptable than his much-resisted »Hebrew truth«.

Máirín Mac Carron, »Christology and the Future in Bede's ›*Annus Domini*««, examines Bede's reasons for dating events in his history (other than those concerning persons who knew the correct Easter yet wilfully persisted in the error of the Latercus) by Dionysius' era of the Incarnation. An open-ended chronology – not essential for a history – implied that the story was not over; unlike the Year of the World, Dionysius' era uncoupled the present from the unknowable end of the Sixth Age, and in emphasizing the Incarnation insisted on Christ's full humanity against those heresies, most recently the Monothelete, that seemed to deny it. (One might wonder, in view of the Incarnation dates in Willibrord's calendar, whether Bede was extending for a general readership a usage already established in Northumbria.)

Paul C. Hilliard, »›*Quae res Quem sit Habitura Finem, Posterior Aetas Videbit*‹: Prosperity, Adversity and Bede's Hope for the Future of Northumbria«, examines Bede's heightened notion of a constant struggle between Church and World, in which adversity might be not only a punishment for worldliness or even an admonition to repent, but also a test of faith, and in which the Church needed a champion such as Bishop Ecgberht or indeed himself. Scott DeGregorio, »Visions of Reform: Bede's Later Writings in Context« finds the reform programme of the letter to Ecgberht, and the complaints about Northumbrian backsliding, in Bede's other writings even before the 720s, but not expressed with such prophetic urgency.

These essays illustrate Bede from many different perspectives, especially those not natural to modern readers; thus (DeGregorio, p. 220–223) the story of Cædmon was told not for its literary interest but to contrast the illiterate peasant turned learned teacher with the noble but negligent monks of Coldingham. Although the Irish background is not uniformly relevant, Palmer shows an awareness of it not shared by the indexer: the »Hebrew« chronology came from Ireland (p. 145), as did his threefold division of time-reckoning (p. 146–147), and his implicit acceptance (against Augustine) that time was related to celestial motions (p. 149); it was Irish computists who denied a lune to the *bissextus* instead of filling lunar February (p. 146, n. 37). By contrast, Mac Carron, in her list of rejected chronologies, fails to include the

Irish chroniclers' dating by lune and feria of 1 January according to whichever computus was in use. This is no mere quibble: whereas the Irish computists adapted the Dionysian tables to those arguments in accordance with the Roman tradition preserved by both the Latercus and Victorius, Bede retained the Alexandrian epact and concurrent, albeit as redefined for the Roman calendar in Spain and Ireland respectively. Even if he simply continued a Northumbrian practice instituted by Wilfrið, he must have seen that this path led away from Ireland as well as from the rival reckonings.

A few other faults must be noticed. Misprints in English and Latin, albeit emendable, are not absent. Not all will be pleased to see quoted passages in (often borrowed) English translations with the original relegated to footnotes. As the carpenter's door is always badly hung, so it is a volume editor who on page 124 quotes in note 29 a passage other than that translated in the main text and on page 125 describes Cyneberht of Lindsey (also absent from the index) as »the contemporary bishop of that region at the time of writing«. La Palisse lives.