

= Wighard =

Wighard (or Wigheard ; died between 664 and 667) was a medieval Archbishop @-@ elect of Canterbury . What little is known about him comes from 8th @-@ century writer Bede , but inconsistencies between various works have led to confusion about the exact circumstances of Wighard 's election and whether he was ever confirmed in that office . What is clear is that he died in Rome after travelling there for confirmation by the papacy of his elevation to the archbishopric . His death allowed Pope Vitalian to select the next archbishop from amongst the clergy in Rome .

= = Life = =

Wighard was a Saxon priest during the late 7th century , and a native of Kent . He served in the household of Archbishop Deusdedit of Canterbury , and was also a priest at Canterbury . The 8th @-@ century writer Bede says that Wighard was selected to be Archbishop of Canterbury , and that he was sent to Rome to visit Pope Vitalian for confirmation and to receive his pallium . How exactly he was selected , and when that occurred , is open to debate , as Bede himself had two different stories . The first one , related in his *Historia Abbatum* , stated that Wighard was selected by King Ecgbert of Kent . Fifteen years after Bede 's completion of the *Historia Abbatum* , Bede wrote the *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum* , which states that Wighard was selected by Oswiu of Northumbria and Ecgbert with the consent of all the clergy and people . Some modern historians have followed Bede 's second account , but others feel that only Ecgbert selected Wighard .

The case for excluding Oswiu from any role in Wighard 's election is based on the theory that Bede misinterpreted a letter from Vitalian to Oswiu as stating that Oswiu was involved in the selection . The historian Nicholas Brooks points out that although Bede may have indeed misread Vitalian 's letter , Oswiu had other reasons for involving himself in Deusdedit 's replacement , not least of which was a concern that the exiled Northumbrian bishop Wilfrid , who was in Kent and Mercia at the time , not be selected as the new archbishop . The historian D. P. Kirby sees Oswiu 's involvement in Wighard 's selection as an attempt to help restore the Anglo @-@ Saxon church , and perhaps as the beginning of steps to secure York as an archbishopric . Brooks points out that one reason Wighard might have journeyed to Rome was to receive his pallium . As it had been the normal practice up until then to have it sent out to England by the papacy , Wighard 's travel to Rome would indicate the papacy 's approval of his election and ensure the validity of his consecration .

Bede , who is the main source for this information , is unclear on his chronology relating to Wighard . At one point in the *Historia Ecclesiastica* , he states that Canterbury had been vacant for some time before Wighard 's election , but in other writings he implies that Wighard was appointed soon after the conclusion of the Council of Whitby , which likely took place in 664 . However Wighard was selected , he died in Rome . His death possibly occurred around 664 , but could have been as late as 667 . It may have been caused by the bubonic plague , or perhaps was due to some other disease epidemic . Like much else in his life , it is unclear if he was actually consecrated before his death . The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography entry for Wighard states that he died before consecration . The historian Peter Blair , however , states that Wighard died as he was about to head home to Canterbury , after his consecration .

Pope Vitalian wrote to Oswiu after Wighard 's death , and this letter is preserved by Bede in his *Historia Ecclesiastica* . In the letter , which also mentions that a messenger from Oswiu had been among the companions of the archbishop @-@ elect , the pope apologises that he has been unable to find a successor to Wighard yet . Wighard 's death in Rome allowed Vitalian the opportunity to choose his successor , and Vitalian chose his friend Theodore of Tarsus to become the next archbishop .