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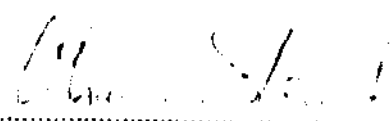
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Christianity in Viking Age Northumbria

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CONTENTS

Introduction	1
The Sources for Viking Northumbria	2
The Politics of Viking Northumbria	12
Monasticism During the Viking Period	28
The Local Church and the See of York	37
Paganism and Christianity	49
Conclusion	62
Notes	64
Bibliography	77

Introduction

There is a common misconception that the Vikings effectively destroyed the Church in northern England and displayed a great deal of hostility towards it throughout the ninth and tenth centuries. While it may be true that the Vikings were aggressive raiders who looted churches and killed members of the clergy, is it perhaps a misconception to portray the Viking conquest of the northern English kingdom of Northumbria in 867 as completely ending the activities of the Church in that region? Did monasticism, which was renowned in Northumbria during the Anglo-Saxon period for its scholarly endeavors, continue to exist during the hundred year period of the Viking kingdom in Northumbria, and if it did, to what extent was monasticism able to function? What was the effect on local sees and parishes, especially the most powerful ecclesiastical body of Northumbria, the Archbishopric of York? Were all these institutions the victims of pagan attack, or did the Northumbrian Church survive and adapt to existence in a kingdom founded by pagans?

The Vikings did have a major impact on England in the ninth and tenth centuries, and this period in English history is important to the development of England as a nation. The Vikings destroyed three of the four major Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, thus paving the way for the remaining state, Wessex, to unify the island under one rule. Northumbria is especially important because it was the last Viking kingdom to return to Anglo-Saxon hands. Thus the Vikings in Northumbria had the longest time to leave their mark and influence

there. Between the years 865 and 954, a large portion of northern England was ruled and settled by the Scandinavians. During this period, the newcomers altered their surroundings drastically; in turn, the native population of northern England affected the Vikings and their culture. Through the exchanges, new ideas developed in England about such things as commerce and law. Another effect of the invasion was in the realm of religion.

This paper will try to determine the extent of Christianity in Northumbria during the period when the Scandinavians ruled the land. While it is important to understand the effect on the Church by the Viking invasion, this study also attempts to determine the influence of the Church on the Viking settlers. Did the Vikings quickly convert to Christianity or was there a total rejection of the faith of the native population? If neither is the case, then was it possible that there was a blending of Christian and pagan ideas? Could the Viking settlers have developed a new religious tradition, one based on their past beliefs and the new ideas they found among the Anglo-Saxons?

The Sources for Viking Northumbria

The primary sources of information on Anglo-Scandinavian Northumbria are limited, but they present a wide array of information pertinent to the Viking kingdom of Northumbria. These sources prove even more valuable when one understands their individual histories, the context in which they were written, and meanings for the people who created them.

The most prominent sources and the easiest ones to interpret are the written sources. The Vikings themselves were illiterate, and thus left no written record. However, the Anglo-Saxons of the Viking period, especially the clergy, were literate, and some of their writings refer to the Vikings. The most famous of these works is the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, which is now known in a number of versions. The *Chronicle* is a compilation of brief entries concerning events occurring on particular dates. The work originally came from the kingdom of Wessex, the only Anglo-Saxon state able to withstand the Viking invasions of the ninth century.¹ Therefore, while contemporary with Viking rule in Northumbria, the *Chronicle* did not originate in the north of England. Its entries on events in the north are terse and usually only deal with the north's relations with Wessex. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* exists, however, in many variations, each associated with its transmission over hundreds of years. Two of these versions, called D and E by historians, are known to be northern in origin.² The compilers of these versions drew on annals from the city of York.³ Unlike the other versions, D and E place more emphasis on events in Northumbria. Though the exact dates of their compilation are unknown, the D version continues to 1079 while the E version records events as late as 1154. Thus, it is probable that the northern versions of the *Chronicle* were the last to be written. However, both versions are the result of copying by hand over a long period of time and probably were written hundreds of years after the events they record. Still, the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*

does provide some information about Viking rule in the north of England. When the many versions are brought together, a fairly accurate chronology of Anglo-Scandinavian history emerges.

From the kingdom of Wessex comes another source with references to the Vikings. The monk, Asser, an official in the court of King Alfred of Wessex, wrote a biography of his king and a history of his struggle with the Viking invaders. *Asser's Life of Alfred* is contemporary with the original versions of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*.⁴ However, like the *Chronicle*, it is a southern work, only concerned with the Vikings as they pertain to Wessex history. Thus it presents a picture of Anglo-Scandinavian Northumbria from an outsider's viewpoint. However, in that respect, it is a valuable source.

Other works covering this time were written later than the Viking period, and were based on either oral tradition or older sources now gone. One of these is *Ethelwerd's Chronicle*. Little is known of Ethelwerd beyond what he says in his book. Ethelwerd was probably a monk of the late tenth century. He dedicates his work to a "Matilda," to whom he claims to be related. The Matilda referred to was probably the princess by that name, the daughter of Otto the Great, the Holy Roman Emperor, and a Wessex princess, the daughter of Athelstan.⁵ The marriage between Athelstan's daughter and Otto is dated by the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* to 925. The work itself records events in northern England up to 975, which would date the time Ethelwerd wrote to the late 10th or early 11th centuries, soon after

the consolidation of England by Wessex. Consequently, Ethelwerd does not give a contemporary account of Viking rule in England. Still, his treatment of northern England appears to have been written soon after the events described.

A well-known history of Northumbria under the Viking rule is that of Symeon of Durham, a member of the chief monastic house in northern England whose history was intertwined with the Vikings. Two histories credited to Symeon have survived; one deals with the Church of Durham and the other with the kings that ruled the region. Symeon also left behind a letter listing the archbishops of York throughout Viking times. His writings are much more detailed than the other written sources and since he probably used earlier writings on the history of the region collected at Durham, Symeon can also be credited with a certain degree of accuracy. He probably drew on oral traditions regarding the see as well as previous documents and charters in the see's possession.⁶

All of the written sources have one item in common: all were written by Anglo-Saxons and members of the clergy. The clergy was the group most affected by the Vikings, so all the written sources paint a negative image of them.⁷ Surely the clergy cannot be blamed for their feelings. However, it is extremely important for a historian to distinguish history from propaganda. All of the works mentioned are filled with stories of the brutality of the pagans and the magical works of saints against them. Nevertheless, beneath the fantasy lies

a foundation of facts that can prove invaluable for a study of northern England in the Viking period.

Finally, a number of charters and decrees from Viking Northumbria have survived, although they probably represent only a small fraction of the material that once existed.⁸ Most of the charters record grants by rulers of lands and privileges to the Church, although in one charter a local Viking king took land away from the local Church.⁹ Charters are among the most important written sources because they show evidence of transactions and agreements between lay rulers and church leaders. The one fundamental problem with using charters as historical evidence is that of determining their authenticity. Most of the charters in existence today are merely copies of copies of the originals, and alterations in the original text may have occurred in the process of copying, even without the copyist's intending to falsify the document.¹⁰ Many forgeries exist, and it is difficult, without an extensive knowledge of the period, to distinguish a genuine charter from a later fabrication. However, seventeen years ago C. R. Hart of Leicester University collected all the charters of the northern regions of England that scholars consider genuine.¹¹ Fortunately, a handful of the charters from the time of Viking control over northern England were considered genuine and coincide with other historical evidence of that time.¹²

Historians of the Viking period in England also use sources that do not include the written word. Examples of these are place-names and archaeological records. However, there is the problem of

interpretation, since unlike written sources, where the meaning is clear and only the accuracy is in question, the very significance of other types of evidence is in question. Still, it is arguable that these sources are very important for the study of a period for which the written record is almost non-existent.

Place-names in northern England reflect the impact of Scandinavian settlement there. As the Scandinavians settled the north, they brought with them their language and used it in naming their settlements and the regions familiar to them. Examples of Scandinavian place-name influences include the towns across northern England ending in "-by" or "-thorpe".¹³ Other Viking influences are evident in names ending in "-waith", meaning "ford", or "-lyth", meaning "slope".¹⁴ Areas with any of these endings on their names indicate a Scandinavian influence. From place-names, a demographic picture develops which is important in determining the nature of Viking settlement and control in northern England. Pauline Stafford has even gone so far as to state that "the best evidence of Danish influence is in place-names."¹⁵ Place-names thus help present a geographic picture of Scandinavian influence which proves to be an important part in the study of the region.

Over the past two decades, archaeological endeavors have uncovered a new wealth of evidence concerning Viking rule in Northumbria. Archaeology helps to confirm the written record and sheds light on the nature of the Scandinavian settlement in England. The findings of the York Archaeological Trust since the late 1970's

have revealed what life was like in York when it was the center of a Viking kingdom in northern England. Such work is pertinent to the issues of population, daily life, and religious practices in the city. Nevertheless, interpretation of this evidence remains a problem.

Among the valuable finds at York are coins and a coin die.¹⁶ They can help to determine the age of a particular site since coins are among the easiest archaeological finds to date. Money also is helpful to the historian in that it may lead to conclusions about trade in the region as well as the wealth of the kingdom. Based on what appears on the coins, historians can evaluate the importance of various political figures as well as gaining clues to the religion of the people who issued the coins. However, historians need to make sure that a coin is local in origin since trade and plunder might have brought foreign coins into northern England.¹⁷ Despite the problems, coins are a valuable source for the historian.

Other major sources of archaeological evidence are the burials from the period. The grave sites provide artifacts and biological evidence of the people, and the location and nature of burials attest to the religious practices of the people in Northumbria in the Viking period. The burial practices of the Vikings apparently underwent a gradual change during their stay in Northumbria. By the ninth century, the Anglo-Saxons had stopped burying their dead with objects. On the other hand, the practice of intombing grave-goods was still common among the Vikings.¹⁸ About twenty to thirty Viking burial sites in England include objects.¹⁹ As the settlers stayed in England, the

practice of leaving objects with the dead seems to have faded. Evidence for this change comes from Scandinavian burials dated later in the Viking period which lack grave-goods.²⁰ The other major trend in burials is the burying of the dead in old Anglo-Saxon cemeteries associated with churches or monasteries. Both trends have been interpreted by many scholars as evidence of a quick conversion of the Vikings to Christianity.²¹

Finally, the most abundant archaeological source and the one most extensively studied by historians of Viking Northumbria is sculpture. The region of Northumbria contains thousands of fragments of sculpture from the days of Viking settlement. In the county of Yorkshire alone there are over 500 fragments of sculpture, the largest number in any English county.²² Sculpture offers the historian several distinct advantages. First of all, it is plentiful and easy to find. Whereas written works and other artifacts may be few in number, sculpture from this period is abundant; thus, one carving can be compared with others of the same type for patterns. Unfortunately, the amount of sculpture that survives is probably only a fraction of what once existed. Bede wrote of wooden carvings, but these carvings have long since rotted away.²³ Stone carvings were sometimes reused in the erection of stone buildings. In fact, many of the fragments that exist today do so because they were used in the foundations of buildings and were uncovered as those foundations were repaired or as the buildings were demolished.²⁴ Some of the sculpture depicting more pagan themes was probably the victim of

angry Christians in later medieval times who saw the work of their pagan ancestors as offensive.²⁵

Scholars have tried to use sculpture to answer a variety of questions. The distribution of sculpture has been used to show distribution of population in Anglo-Scandinavian England.²⁶ The problem with such a method is that the main factor for a sculpture's location seems to have been where the material for its construction is located.²⁷ Because of its size, sculpture is usually found at or near where it was made. Certainly, people would want their carvings where they could be viewed so location of population is important. However, it must be remembered that transportation problems prevented crosses from being put in areas where there may have been villages but no good accessible material.²⁸ Another use for sculpture is in determining the religion of the sculptor or the patron. The sculpture of the period, some of it being large and easily seen, must have reflected the beliefs of those who had to view it frequently.²⁹ Most of the fragments seem to reflect Christian beliefs, yet some of the fragments also contain pagan scenes.³⁰ Another problem is that sculpture seems to have been funded by the wealthy and not the Church. Many of the carvings are not found in churches and monasteries as was the case in the early Anglo-Saxon period, and a great deal of the subject matter on the carvings is secular in nature, such as the portrayal of warriors. Therefore, sculpture only shows the religious beliefs of wealthy patrons and not necessarily the beliefs of the majority of the population.

However, the real problem with Viking age sculpture is determining if a carving does in fact date from the Viking age in northern England. Viking sculpture has no inscriptions on it, nor are there any historical scenes which might help determine its date of origin. However, in 1977, the York Archaeological Trust found a carving which, by its relationship with its surroundings and other objects found nearby, had to be from Viking times.³¹ Also, four cross-heads and a grave cover were found in the foundation of a church known to have been built after the Norman conquest. Since the fragments were used as building material for the church, they must be older than Norman times. If Symeon was right in saying that the community of St. Cuthbert was the first to build on the site during the Viking period, the fragments must also be no older than Viking times. Therefore, the fragments have a high probability of being from the Viking period.³² This, of course, assumes that the fragments were not brought from another location for the building of the church. These two discoveries are now used as benchmarks with which other carvings are compared for style.³³ Only through the comparison of sculpture of unknown age with sculpture of known age can individual fragments be associated with Viking times. The only problem with the method of using style to date sculpture is that in cases where a series of objects exists with slight stylistic variations, the archaeologist works on an assumption about which piece in that series is oldest and which is youngest. Therefore, using this method can help determine the period from which the object came, but not

necessarily an accurate date. However, for the purposes of Viking-age study, the system is helpful and, the sculpture found and determined to be from the Viking period has proven to be extremely important for assessing the religion, wealth, and culture of Anglo-Scandinavian England.

The Politics of Viking Northumbria

The political history of Viking Age England is an important part of any study of Christianity at the time. The Church in the late ninth and early tenth centuries responded to the military struggle and was directly affected by its outcome. The only way to determine the nature of these political events is through the written record. Sculpture and other artifacts may give clues to the nature of the age, but only the written sources tell of the leaders and wars of the Viking Age. It would be easy if each written history gave the same account of the political picture. Unfortunately, while the sources agree on some issues, they vary on other stories and may even contradict one another. For this reason, it is vitally important to distinguish fact from fiction. By sorting out the various pieces of information, a more coherent history is possible which can provide a backdrop for the study of Christianity in Viking Northumbria.

The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, the oldest and most extensive of the written sources, is the best work from which to begin

studying politics in England during the Viking period. Later writers certainly were aware of the *Chronicle* and there is good reason to believe that they utilized the work in their own writings. The earliest entry about the Vikings, in any of the versions in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, is for 793, and concerns the raid on the great monastery at Lindisfarne.³⁴ From this time onward, the Vikings appear in the *Chronicle*, raiding different parts of England. The next entry of great importance regarding the Vikings appears in 865.³⁵ A great "heathen army" encamped on Thanet and made peace with the kingdom of Kent, which promised money to the invaders. Unfortunately for the Anglo-Saxons, it appears the bribe was not enough since the army ravaged the coastline of Kent anyway. A year later, a great pagan force came to East Anglia where it wintered and took horses from the local population. In 867, this Viking army rode north to Northumbria, crossing the Humber River into the city of York. The *Chronicle* states that the kingdom suffered internal strife since the people had recently deposed their hereditary king, Osbert, and replaced him with Aella. Both leaders were out of the city at the time of the Viking invasion so the invaders captured York easily. Late in the year, the two kings combined force and attacked the Vikings in York. Despite breaking into the city, the Northumbrians were eventually overwhelmed. Both kings died in the attack.³⁷

After the conquest of Northumbria, the Micel Here moved south, overwhelming Mercia and invading Wessex. In 875, Halfdan, one of the Viking commanders, took half of the army and returned to York, leaving the other half to continue the war against Wessex.³⁸ The *Chronicle* now focuses more on the war with Wessex, which one might expect of a work originally compiled by Wessex writers. Still, occasionally, Wessex would have relations with Northumbria or something would occur in the north which had an effect on Wessex, so a small number of isolated entries are found in the *Chronicle*. In 901, Alfred's nephew, Athelwold, attempted to seize the throne of Wessex. When his efforts were thwarted, he fled to Northumbria. The *Chronicle* states that when he encountered the Danish army, "they accepted him as king and gave allegiance to him."³⁹ Hostile relations with Wessex continued though in 906, King Edward of Wessex made peace with the Danish armies of East Anglia and Northumbria.⁴⁰ Five years later, the *Chronicle* accuses the Northumbrian Danes of breaking that peace and invading Mercia. The Wessex army caught the Danes on their way northward and defeated them.⁴¹

The Norsemen appear in the *Chronicle* in 921 (or 923 in the D version) when Ragnald conquers York.⁴² The next entry for the north is 926, when Athelstan, the grandson of Alfred and king of Wessex, gave his sister's hand in marriage to Sihtric, king of Northumbria.⁴³ Sihtric died a year after the marriage and

Athelstan assumed the throne of York.⁴⁴ During Athelstan's reign over York, he invaded Scotland in 934, and faced a northern coalition of Norsemen, Scots, and Strathclyde Britons whom he defeated at the Battle of Brunanburh in 937. The *Chronicle* hails this battle as the greatest ever fought by the Anglo-Saxons since they first arrived on the island.⁴⁵ Soon after Athelstan's death, the Northumbrians rose against Wessex rule and chose Olaf, a Viking from Ireland, as king. He died after ruling for only a year and was succeeded by Sihtric's son, also named Olaf.⁴⁶ In 943, Edmund, Athelstan's successor, forced Olaf and Archbishop Wulfstan to make peace at Leicester in northern Mercia. Olaf was baptised as part of the peace, but a year later, Edmund drove out Olaf and took the throne.⁴⁷ Edmund died in 946 and was succeeded by Eadred.⁴⁸ Wulfstan and the other Northumbrian leaders pledged allegiance to the king of Wessex but in 948, chose a Viking prince, Eric, as king.⁴⁹ Eadred invaded Northumbria and ravaged the land. An army from York struck him at Castleford but soon afterwards, the people deserted Eric and paid compensation for the attack. Four years later, Eric was invited back; but, in 954, he was murdered and the kingdom became a part of the new realm being formed by the kings of Wessex.⁵⁰

In terms of consistency, the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* in its many forms only suffers from occasional differences in years; some versions record events which other versions omit. The D

and E versions are by far the most detailed for events in Northumbrian history, and this may be attributed to later additions to these two northern versions. The history that is recorded is not subject to much fantasy, and no real evidence exists to destroy the credibility of the work. Other histories borrowed heavily from the *Chronicle* but also added other information.

Asser agrees with the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* on most statements about the invasion of Wessex. He also says a few things about events in Northumbria during the late ninth century. Asser dates the Viking invasion of East Anglia to 866, as does the *Chronicle*.⁵¹ He agrees with the *Chronicle* account of the invasion of York, stating that the Vikings were victorious after their opponents were within the walls of the Danish fortifications.⁵² Regarding the separation of the Viking army at Repton in 875, Asser elaborates on Halfdan's actions after he arrived in York: "in the same year Halfdan, king of one part of the Northumbrians, doled out the whole province between himself and his men, and together with his army cultivated the land".⁵³ Halfdan and his followers changed from warriors into farmers, obviously uninterested in conquering Wessex. Asser's account of the war between Alfred and the Vikings coincides with the *Chronicle* but also provides more depth and commentary. He says that Guthrum, the Viking leader who opposed Alfred, was baptised with thirty of his best men and became the adopted son

of Alfred.⁵⁴ Asser wrote around the same time as the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* was originally compiled, in the late ninth century. Both sources agree on major aspects. The only problem with Asser is in his bias towards Wessex and his distance from events in Northumbria. He does mention Northumbria as one of the regions whose monasteries were the beneficiaries of Alfred's personal wealth. Unfortunately, he wrote very little on the northern kingdom outside of its connection with Alfred, and what he did write is agreed upon by other works.

Ethelwerd, writing in the late tenth or early eleventh century, focuses more on northern history. Rather than 866, he dates the invasion of the Vikings to 865.⁵⁵ More importantly, Ethelwerd states that the Northumbrian civil war was the reason for the sudden Viking interest in that kingdom. While it is possible that the Danes left East Anglia for the easy target of a divided kingdom, Ethelwerd had no real way of knowing Viking motives; thus his reasoning was probably speculative. He also deviates from other sources mentioned when he ignores the reign of Alfred and concentrates on events in Northumbria. Ethelwerd briefly describes the reign of Guthfrith, a Christian Viking king, who died on the birthday of St. Bartholomew and was buried in the high church in York.⁵⁶ After Guthfrith, a series of kings held power for brief periods of time until 918. In 918, Danish control over York ended with the invasion of Norsemen from Ireland under Ragnald. Ragnald established his own kingdom,

taking many lands from the Church and dividing them among his followers.⁵⁷ Sihtric, succeeding Ragnald in 920, made an alliance with Athelstan defining the border between the two kingdoms.⁵⁸ Sihtric died in 926 and Athelstan was able to establish control in the north. Ethelwerd confirms the *Chronicle's* version of the Battle of Brunanburh.⁵⁹ However, he shows that Athelstan's victory was short-lived, for in 939 he died and Olaf Gothfrithson, the Norse commander at Brunanburh, recaptured York from Wessex.⁶⁰ Olaf died a year later and was followed by his cousin, also named Olaf. This Olaf invaded Mercia, only to be stopped in Leicester by Edmund, the new king of Wessex. Archbishop Wulfstan and the archbishop of Canterbury concluded a peace agreement between the two kingdoms and Olaf returned to York.⁶¹ In 948, Wulfstan and the Northumbrian nobles expelled Olaf from York and handed the kingdom over to Edmund. Eadred succeeded Edmund and became ruler of all of Northumbria.⁶²

Ethelwerd's account of the final year of the Viking kingdom of Northumbria, 954, matches the *Chronicle* on a few points. He confirms Athelstan's alliance with Sihtric and his control over York after Sihtric's death.⁶³ Ethelwerd also agrees with the *Chronicle* entries concerning the capture of York by Olaf and the invasion of Mercia by his cousin, Olaf.⁶⁴ On the other hand, Ethelwerd tells a different story on the peace arranged at Leicester, saying that the archbishops of Canterbury and York

negotiated a border settlement. Whereas the *Chronicle* depicts the Northumbrians as forced into a peace settlement, Ethelwerd shows the two sides more as equals in the process. His account of the reign of Guthfrith and the conquest of Ragnald do fill holes in the history of Northumbria left by the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. Finally, Ethelwerd omits the account of Eric Bloodaxe and attributes the final overthrow of the Vikings in York to locals and not to the West Saxons.⁶⁵ The only explanation for this discrepancy is that Ethelwerd wanted to show the Northumbrians in a different light: as Anglo-Saxons preferring the rule of an Anglo-Saxon king to that of a pagan foreigner. After all, Ethelwerd wrote in honor of Matilda, a grand-daughter of Athelstan. The view that the Wessex dynasty came to liberate and not subjugate the people of northern England may have been popular with the kings of England at this time. Clearly, the idea of the kingdom being handed to Edmund would fit such a picture better than that of a populace inviting a Norse prince to rule York. Nevertheless, Ethelwerd's work does shed light on some of the mystery of Northumbria left by the southern English writings.

Symeon of Durham, writing in the late eleventh century or early twelfth century, more than two centuries after the events he records, relied on earlier records contemporary to Viking Age England. Besides his writings on the Durham Church, the successor to Cuthbert's community, Symeon gives a brief

summary of political events in the late ninth and early tenth centuries in his *History of the Kings*. Symeon ignores the assault on East Anglia and begins with the invasion of York which he dates to 867. The people of York had violently expelled their rightful king, Osbert, and replaced him with Aella⁶⁶ Symeon sees Osbert as the true king, while the other sources are more impartial. The two kings joined forces and invaded York. The Vikings fled at first, only to trap the Northumbrian army inside the city and slaughter most of it. The survivors made peace with the Danes.⁶⁷ The Danes marched into Mercia in 868 and fortified themselves at Nottingham. The Christians were going to storm the camp but the Vikings asked for peace and a treaty. After the treaty was concluded, the Vikings returned to Northumbria where Symeon says they pillaged and killed for a year.⁶⁸ A year later, the Danes travelled to East Anglia. The East Anglians, under Edmund, were defeated and Edmund died gloriously.⁶⁹ Meanwhile, in 872, Symeon notes that the people of York expelled the puppet regime established by the Vikings before they left for East Anglia and among those expelled was Wulfhere, the archbishop of York. After a small incursion into Wessex, the Danes separated and Halfdan took one part of the army back to Northumbria. There he waged war on the northern neighbors of Northumbria: the Picts and Strathclyde Britons. Halfdan became restless and wished to invade Ireland. His men, now settled in farming, refused to go so Halfdan went with a

few followers and died in Ireland.⁷⁰ Symeon next mentions Guthfrith, who had been a slave but became king in 883, and was a Christian. Under his reign, the Church in Northumbria gained power and land again.⁷¹ In 890, Guthrum who had fought with Alfred for many years, died. He had been baptised the year before his death and taken the name, Ethelstan.⁷² Guthfrith died in 894.⁷³ Symeon goes on to recount the seizure of York by Ragnald in 919; then he skips to the invasion of Mercia in 939 by Olaf, which ended in a boundary treaty at Leicester negotiated by Wulfstan and Oda, the Archbishop of Canterbury.⁷⁴ Two years later, Olaf plundered the church of St. Balter and burned another church at Tiningham, but was killed.⁷⁵ After Olaf's death, his son, also named Olaf, became king of York.⁷⁶ Symeon states that the two kings named Olaf were father and son, while the earlier sources all agree they were cousins. However, Symeon's account of the end of Viking rule in England is similar to the *Chronicle* and only differs in the dates given. He agrees that Eric Bloodaxe was the last Viking king and came to York at the invitation of the Northumbrians, who ignored their previous oath of allegiance to Eadred. Symeon dates Eric's death to 950 but that could be a rounded figure.⁷⁷ Symeon's account agrees on a number of important issues with the other histories. Symeon adds further detail and a little fantasy to his story, and stresses the evil of the Vikings, especially against the Church. On the other hand, he

does confirm the basic chronology of the invasion, especially in its early stages.

Adding these sources together and using the studies of recent scholars, a coherent political history of the Viking age in England can be established. It appears that around 865 or 866, a Viking fleet landed on the Isle of Thanet off the coast of East Anglia. The East Angles bribed the Danes not to invade their country. However, the army broke its promise and ravaged the eastern coast of the kingdom. The Danes stayed in East Anglia for about a year. Then, the Viking army turned its attention towards Northumbria. Having acquired horses from the local populace, the army rode to the northern kingdom and its chief city, York. Modern scholars assume that the Danes probably rode on a path close to the sea and had their ships travel up the coast. This allowed the Vikings to protect their ships as well as provide a means of crossing the Humber, a natural barrier to southern invasion for centuries.⁷⁸ The Vikings, however, easily navigated its shallow waters with their vessels. None of the sources mentions any initial struggle to resist the Vikings. This leads modern scholars to assume that most of the Northumbrians' forces were engaged in the civil war when the Vikings appeared. The Northumbrian kings were slow to react to the situation but eventually combined forces and advanced on York. Initially, the Danes were driven back into the city, but they regrouped and killed both of the Northumbrian kings, as well

as a large portion of the army, after which the survivors quickly made peace. The Vikings then established a puppet regime in the city and proceeded south into Mercia. Soon, the Danish army found itself facing heavy resistance by Wessex. Meanwhile, during the absence of the Scandinavians, the Northumbrian people revolted in York, forcing the puppet ruler, Egberht, and Archbishop Wulfhere to flee the city. The Danes, rather than march north to quell the rebellion, moved south to invade Mercia in 873.

In 875, the Danish army split into two divisions. One part, under Halfdan, returned to Northumbria. The other part, under Guthrum, Oscetel, and Anwend, headed south to Wessex. Halfdan's departure is no surprise. He had been a leader of the original army and his followers were probably the group that had fought the Anglo-Saxons for ten years. A few years previous to this split, the *Chronicle* records another Viking army arriving in England. It seems possible that this was the force that continued the fight against Wessex. The group that went north probably comprised the survivors of that initial invasion force, who left the hunt for glory and wealth to the newcomers to the island. Guthrum took the newer adventurers in search of glory and wealth in the only unconquered Anglo-Saxon kingdom. However, what the Vikings found was a Wessex king who never surrendered and fought to the bitter end. Alfred even resorted to guerrilla tactics in his war against the Danes. By 878, Alfred

had achieved a major victory over Guthrum at Edington and forced the Viking lord and thirty of his captains to be baptised as part of the peace agreement. Alfred even adopted his former enemy as his son. The inability of the Scandinavians to conquer Wessex would become important later when Wessex would become powerful again and threaten the existence of the Viking kingdoms in East Anglia and Northumbria later in the tenth century.

Meanwhile, Halfdan returned to York, probably partitioning many of the lands among his followers.⁷⁹ Halfdan campaigned in the northern frontier of the kingdom especially against the Picts and Strathclyde Britons. His reasons are not known but he may have been interested in consolidating his power and securing his northern border.⁸⁰ After establishing the Vikings at York, Symeon wrote that Halfdan lost the favor of his followers, who refused to accompany him on another expedition. Therefore, he left England with the few remaining warriors loyal to him and perished in Ireland.⁸¹

The political history of Northumbria is obscure for the next six years. Then, in 883, Guthfrith, a former slave and a Christian, became king. Symeon's story is that he became king through the intervention of the abbot of the monks of St. Cuthbert, who found the boy and presented him to the Danish camp, demanding that the boy be elected king.⁸² There may be some truth to this story; because, in the same year as his

coronation, the monks of St. Cuthbert received a permanent home at Chester-le-Street, north of York.⁸³ Guthfrith ruled York for about twelve years and was buried in the York minster on St. Bartholemew's birthday, August 24, in the year 895.⁸⁴

After Guthfrith's death, the Danish kingdom of York had an internal problem in leadership. A series of rulers appeared but none ruled for any great length of time. The *Chronicle* identifies one of these kings as Alfred's nephew.⁸⁵ The modern historian, Richard Bailey, even believes that York may have been ruled by an oligarchy and not a monarchy in this period.⁸⁶ Northumbria also faced a series of external threats. By 909, Edward the Elder of Wessex had conquered Mercia and threatened Northumbria's southern border.⁸⁷ Danish Northumbria also faced a challenge from the Norsemen. In 911, Ragnald, a pagan Viking lord of Norse origin, invaded Northumbria.⁸⁸ At this time, there was a strong Norse presence in Ireland so Ragnald may have come from that island into the western shores of northern England and moved inland. Against the external pressure of Wessex and the Norsemen, Danish York weakened and finally fell to Ragnald in 918.⁸⁹ Power in York had now passed from Danish to Norse hands.

While the pagan Norse king allowed most of the Northumbrians to retain their lands, he confiscated the lands of the Church and gave them to his followers.⁹⁰ For this he receives a bad report from Symeon, who reports Ragnald's

damnation after his death.⁹¹ However, Ragnald's influence on the political history of northern England was immense. Ragnald's seizure of York allowed Viking rule in Northumbria to continue for most of the next forty-five years. Before the Norse conquest, York's lack of a strong central authority weakened the state to the point where Wessex was able to reclaim most of Mercia from the Vikings, and threaten York itself. After the Norsemen had taken York, Wessex expansion apparently halted for a while. Had Ragnald lived longer, Wessex expansion may have been halted for a longer time. Fortunately for the West Saxons, Ragnald died in 920, only a few years after becoming king. He was succeeded by Sihtric, probably a relative or Ragnald's second in command. Sihtric spent most of his reign keeping Wessex south of the Humber. By 918, Athelstan and his sister, Aethelflaed, had conquered the rest of England.⁹² Sihtric established relations with the Wessex dynasty, even marrying a Wessex princess.⁹³ His efforts failed after his death in 926 when Athelstan claimed sovereignty over York and the rest of Northumbria. Athelstan found that holding York was a difficult task. In 937, he fought and defeated a coalition of Norsemen, Scots, and Strathclyde Britons at Brunanburh.⁹⁴ These northern peoples appeared determined to keep Northumbria separate from the rest of England.

However, it was not until Athelstan's death that another Norse king marched into York. Edmund, Athelstan's successor,

was still a boy when he became king in 940, allowing Olaf Gothfrithson, the coalition leader at Brunanburh, to take the Northumbrian throne.⁹⁵ Olaf Gothfrithson died in 941 and left the kingdom to another Olaf, probably his cousin as most of the sources indicate.⁹⁶ This Olaf took the initiative, marching south into Mercia. His advance was finally halted at Leicester, where Edmund met him with the Wessex army. Rather than fight, the two sides concluded a treaty negotiated by Wulfstan, the Archbishop of York, and Oda, the Archbishop of Canterbury. Olaf also received baptism at Edmund's court.⁹⁷ The agreement between the two states did not last long. A year later, Edmund expelled Olaf from York and seized the kingdom.⁹⁸ Edmund's murder around 948 allowed the Northumbrians to break from England one last time. They invited Eric Bloodaxe to become king of York. This was soon after the Northumbrians had sworn loyalty to Edmund's successor, Eadred. Eadred immediately marched north but was pacified by the ousting of Eric by the Northumbrians.⁹⁹ Four years later, the people of York again invited Eric into the kingdom and supported him against Eadred. The king of Wessex smashed the Northumbrian resistance and Eric was killed during his escape attempt.¹⁰⁰ After 954, Northumbria was part of England and Viking rule in York was at an end.

Monasticism in the Viking Period

In the political turmoil of the Viking period, monasticism in Northumbria faced an enormous challenge. Before the Viking invasions, northern England was famous for the scholarship and prestige of its monastic houses. Monasteries like Wearmouth, Jarrow, and Lindisfarne provided Europe with some of its greatest monastic leaders, men like the Venerable Bede and Wilfrid of Ripon. Politically, the religious orders enjoyed the patronage of kings and nobles seeking the favor of God.

Some of the monasteries, such as Lindisfarne in 793, had suffered at the hands of Viking marauders. Yet, despite these occasional attacks, Northumbrian monasticism seemed relatively strong on the eve of the Viking invasion of 865. With the invasion of York in 867, Northumbrian monks faced a new and grim reality. The pagan Vikings, unconcerned about the sanctity of the monasteries, sought to plunder the wealth of Northumbria and there were few places wealthier than the monasteries. Later religious writers painted a dark picture of the Vikings for their sacrilegious deeds against monasteries; although, perhaps the conclusions of these writers about the Vikings were affected by their own personal prejudices against any threat to the Church. Some modern historians have questioned the extent of the devastation, but there is no real argument that the hundred years of Viking rule affected monasticism in the north of England. Still, the nature of that effect remains unclear.

Unfortunately, for the modern historian, the sources on this subject are minimal and most come from members of the clergy, thus presenting a biased view. The most detailed accounts come from Symeon of Durham. He has no doubts as to the Danish effect on monasticism. On the invasion of Northumbria, he writes:

They destroyed the churches and the monasteries far and wide with fire and sword, leaving nothing remaining save the bare unroofed walls; and so thoroughly did they do their work, that even our own generation can seldom discover in those places any conclusive memorial of their ancient dignity, sometimes none.¹⁰¹

Such reports do not portray the Vikings in any favorable light. Could the Viking invasion really have been that devastating to monastic houses? After all, many monks stayed with their communities despite their vulnerable position to Viking attack. For example, Bailey stated that there is evidence showing that despite repeated raids, life continued at Iona as the monks did not leave.¹⁰² Although Iona is not in Northumbria, it is plausible that the monasteries in Northumbria faced the same threats and the monks reacted in the same manner.

Nevertheless, some communities were destroyed and never rebuilt. A charter from the late ninth century divides among other churches the former properties of the monasteries of Wearmouth and Jarrow. Due to the importance of these two monasteries in Northumbria, it seems unlikely that had they survived the Viking invasion, that their properties would have been divided, as the charter commands.¹⁰³ Monasteries possessed two things the Vikings wanted: riches and land. Based on the fact that many communities survived repeated raids, the attacks appear motivated by greed only and not any particular hatred for Christians. Such a distinction is easier seen by the modern historian than by the medieval religious historian. Had the other possibility been the case, the Lindisfarne community, the community of St. Cuthbert, would have never existed past 793.

However, the community of St. Cuthbert survived the raid of 793 and went on to become an influential part of the history of Scandinavian Northumbria. Symeon gives a detailed account of the Lindisfarne monks, making this the best-documented monastic community of the Viking period. In 875, fearing the return of Halfdan from Mercia, Bishop Earwulf of Lindisfarne decided to move the whole community and its holy relics out of harm's way.¹⁰⁴ Why the community felt that such drastic measures were needed then and not during the first invasion of York ten years earlier is unknown. Symeon states that Halfdan

was returning to crush a rebellion against the regime installed by the Vikings.¹⁰⁵ Monasteries had been interfering in local politics for centuries, and Earwulf may have had a hand in the rebellion. If this was the case, getting out of Halfdan's path showed good sense. Soon after their departure, Symeon claims, Halfdan burned the churches and monasteries around the area and killed all monks and nuns left in those houses.¹⁰⁶

The monks took with them the body of St. Cuthbert, in its sarcophagus, along with other relics of saints. The monks also carried with them the Lindisfarne Gospels. The community did not travel alone; besides the monks and the bishop came other Christian refugees with their families. Seven in the group were given the honor of carrying the body of St. Cuthbert.¹⁰⁷ Eventually, Bishop Earwulf and Abbot Eadred decided to move the relics across the sea to Ireland, where they believed their safety could be guaranteed. However, according to a legend recorded by Symeon, when the relics were placed on a boat, a sudden tempest forced the craft back to the English shore and the rest of the entourage which had been left behind.¹⁰⁸ Finally, after seven years of wandering, the community of St. Cuthbert found a temporary sanctuary at Crayke, where they were received by the abbot, Geve.¹⁰⁹

Crayke is only mentioned as a place the community of St. Cuthbert stayed, so little else is known of its history. Nevertheless, it is interesting for a number of reasons. The

first and most obvious reason is that a religious house at Crayke existed at all in the 880's. Secondly, Crayke is just fifteen miles from York, the seat of Danish power in Northumbria. Either the monks of Crayke had recently returned in 882, or they had never left. In either case, Crayke's existence confirms that the Vikings had no special intolerance for monks. Otherwise, no monk would have lived just fifteen miles from York.

The situation in Northumbria in 883 differed greatly from the situation that existed in the days when the community of St. Cuthbert began its journey. According to Symeon, the Danes lacked leadership in 883. Halfdan was dead and no one seemed able to replace him. The Danish warriors had settled down as farmers.¹¹⁰ The monks of St. Cuthbert, probably a powerful political entity in the former Anglo-Saxon kingdom, saw an opportunity to regain some of their former power. Symeon writes that, in a dream, Cuthbert came to Abbot Eadred and gave the abbot instructions, saying:

"Go to the army of the Danes and announce to them that you come as my messenger; and ask to be informed where you can find a lad named Guthfrith, the son of Harthacnut, whom they sold to a widow. Having found him, and paid the widow the price of his liberty, let him be brought forward before

the whole aforesaid army; and my will and pleasure is, that he be elected and appointed king at Oswies- dune, and let the bracelet be placed upon his right arm."¹¹¹

Eadred proceeded to follow Cuthbert's orders and helped Guthfrith ascend to the throne.¹¹² The reliability of such a story is questionable, but all the sources affirm that around 883, a Christian Dane, named Guthfrith, became king of Northumbria through peaceful means.¹¹³ While little more is known of the accession of Guthfrith to the throne or of his reign as king, one thing is clear. Guthfrith's climb to power allowed the Northumbrian Church, especially the community of St. Cuthbert, to reclaim some of its former power.

According to Symeon, Guthfrith, grateful for the help of the Cuthbert community, granted them a new home at Chester-le-Street, an old Roman town directly north of York.¹¹⁴ The wandering of the Cuthbert monks was at an end. The community remained at Chester-le-Street until 995, when it moved to the church of Durham.¹¹⁵ Symeon also reports that Eadred recovered many of St. Cuthbert's estates from Guthfrith.¹¹⁶ Besides Symeon's account, charters also indicate that Guthfrith's reign was a good period for the monks of St. Cuthbert. A charter exists which documents the gift to St. Cuthbert of lands purchased by Abbot Eadred from King Guthfrith. The land

grant covered areas with Scandinavian place-names suggesting that the community of St. Cuthbert may have held lordship over a number of Danish farmers. Guthfrith also restored to the community of St. Cuthbert former rights and privileges, including the right of sanctuary.¹¹⁷

While the monks at Chester-le-Street receive the most attention from the sources, they were apparently not the only community to survive the Danish invasion. Besides the monastery the Cuthbert community visited, P. H. Sawyer argues that an abbey existed at Carlisle late in the ninth century, as well as one at Heversham in Westmorland until the early years of the tenth century, and he uses records from their successor communities as evidence.¹¹⁸ These places and others like them probably did not resemble monasteries before the Viking invasion. They were probably poor, having been stripped of many of their lands. Many suffered raids and most certainly found following a strict monastic existence close to impossible. Since monasteries had recruited primarily from the noble classes that were partially destroyed by the Danish army, the number of monks in the few monasteries probably dropped to extremely low levels. Nevertheless, by 900, twenty-four years after the settlement of Halfdan and his followers, religious communities survived; one, the Cuthbert community, even began to influence politics in Northumbria once again.

Monastic houses enjoyed peace until Ragnald's invasion in 918. Ragnald was clearly pagan and had no sympathy towards monasteries. Symeon relates that he took the lands of St. Cuthbert and divided them between himself and two of his captains, Scula and Onlafbal. Symeon pays particular attention to Onlafbal who, according to the chronicler, inflicted many injuries upon the lands of St. Cuthbert and declared himself an enemy of the saint. Afterwards, he was fixed to the ground, unable to move until he apologized and confessed his sin.¹¹⁹ A charter from the time confirms the change of ownership, beginning "Ragnald, A Viking, shares out the eastern lands of St. Cuthbert, which he has won by conquest."¹²⁰ Some monasteries which survived Halfdan's invasion may have succumbed when Ragnald took York. Heversham's disappearance from the ecclesiastical records coincides with Ragnald's invasion of Northumbria, and Sawyer sees a correlation between the two events. The Norse kings after Ragnald seemed to treat monasteries in the kingdom with a greater degree of tolerance. Another possibility is that the monasteries had little or nothing to be stolen. The succession of abbots at Chester-le-Street continued uninterrupted. Around 930, people began restoring wealth to Chester-le-Street and other monastic communities. In one charter, Scott, son of Aistan, gave a large gift of land to St. Cuthbert around 930.¹²² The largest gifts came from the Wessex kings. During Athelstan's reign over Northumbria, he

bestowed enormous gifts on monasteries in an effort to revive the Northumbrian Church. On his way into Scotland, during the campaign against the northern coalition, the Wessex king sanctioned the privileges and gifts of Guthfrith and Alfred.¹²³ His motives were twofold. First, the king of Wessex undoubtedly was interested in aiding Christianity, and giving land taken from his enemies caused him no financial burden. Second, many Northumbrians seemed to prefer Norse rule to that of Wessex and resented Athelstan's control.¹²⁴ Through gifts, the king may have been trying to gain favor and support from the Christian community in the north. Other Wessex kings tried the same tactics, although Eadred in his retaliatory campaign against the supporters of Eric Bloodaxe burned the famous abbey at Ripon.¹²⁵

Monasticism suffered greatly under the Viking rule; yet it did not die completely. Communities like that of St. Cuthbert were able to weather the Scandinavian storm and keep monasticism alive in Northumbria. At the end of the Viking period in 954, the few monastic survivors in the north were poor and had little power. The discipline in these houses certainly suffered, causing a great reform effort to be necessary in the late tenth and early eleventh centuries.¹²⁶ Still, some houses carried on the traditions of monasticism, including writing and copying former works. Symeon most likely relied on early accounts of the travels of the Cuthbert monks for his later history, accounts

written during or near the time of the Vikings. Based on the evidence, one pattern appears. The monastic houses were in the greatest peril at the very beginning of the invasions, first in 876 with Halfdan and later in 918 with the Norse invasion under Ragnald. Had the Vikings made a conscious effort to end monasticism in northern England, they would have succeeded. The survival of a few of the monasteries and the destruction of others early in the Viking period proves that the motivation behind the Scandinavian attacks was the search for wealth and not any pagan holy war. When monasteries had riches, they became targets for plunder. The survival of many of the monasteries was due to their impoverishment during this period, a period which only stifled Northumbrian monasticism for a while.

The Local Church and the See of York

The Viking conquest of Northumbria did not just affect monasticism. The secular clergy suffered many of the problems faced by the monks. While it is certain that the Scandinavians disrupted secular churches in Northumbria, the level of that disruption is not quite clear. Also, were just the bishops and their larger churches in peril or were local churches at risk as well? If our knowledge of the history of monasticism in this period suffers from a lack of sources on the subject, the evidence on bishoprics and parishes is almost nonexistent. However, the lack of information can be evidence in itself.

If wealth was on the minds of the Viking lords, then certainly the major churches, the seats of the bishops would have been logical targets for the Viking armies. But is there any evidence that episcopal sees were attacked? Before the Danes arrived, the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* mentions many northern bishops by name, mentions their churches, and records the succession of the bishops at those churches. After 865, the *Chronicle* is void of such references for northern England. Episcopal lists from the tenth and eleventh centuries do not include bishops from the Eastern Midlands, Leicester and Lindsey after the 870s.¹²⁷ The sees of Elmham, Dunwich, and Hexham also seemed to have disappeared in this period, while the succession of bishops in Lichfield was disrupted. Some of the bishops apparently fled the Vikings. In the 890s, the bishop of Leicester appeared at Dorchester on the Thames where he reestablished the see.¹²⁸

The disappearance of many of the bishops from the Northumbrian Church dramatically affected Christianity in the region in a number of ways. First of all, the bishops were needed to ordain clergy members, and to perform certain ceremonies, such as the blessing of wine and oil for baptisms. Moreover, at this time in the history of the Church, bishops were expected to travel throughout their dioceses and oversee the local parishes.¹²⁹ Without this supervision, local priests had to operate without a higher authority to guide them, and thus may have deviated from standard Church practices. Local clergy in

northern England who survived the initial invasion of the Danes may have found themselves poor and without leadership. It is also possible that they had to cooperate with local Viking lords while at the same time keep a following among the local populace. In the end, their greatest legacy came in the conversion of much of the Viking settlers.

However, not all of the northern bishoprics and parishes disappeared. King Alfred of Wessex made gifts to churches in Northumbria and other Viking controlled areas. On Alfred's grants to churches, Asser says:

he either made a grant at once or agreed to make such a grant on a subsequent occasion to churches and the servants of God dwelling within them in Wales and Cornwall, Gaul, Brittany, Northumbria, and sometimes even Ireland.¹³⁰

Alfred's generosity to the Church provides evidence of at least some religious activity in Northumbria by the secular clergy, at least enough to attract the attention of the Wessex royal court.

The best evidence for the fate of local parish churches comes from the excavations in York of a number of churches dating to Anglo-Scandinavian times. On the southwest bank of the Ouse River, the York Archaeological Trust found nine medieval

churches, five of which are from pre-Norman times. Four of these churches are found within the circle of defences thought to have existed before the Norman conquest, and two of these appear to date from the Viking age.¹³¹ Despite its name, St. Mary Bishophill Junior appears to be the oldest, dating back to the eighth century. Substantial evidence exists of activity in the church in Viking days. Excavations at the St. Mary Bishophill Junior site from 1961 to 1963, and in 1967, revealed four burials dated to Viking times, two of which contain grave goods. In one, a coin dating from the first part of the tenth century was found. Since the use of grave goods is not usually thought to conform with Christian norms, the grave was probably dug about the time of the minting of the coin, when pagan burial practices in Northumbria were ending, and not at a much later date.¹³² Other artifacts found in this grave were a schist whetstone, an iron knife, and a copper alloy buckle plate. The other grave contained an armlet and a ring. Whether the man in the grave was a Christian holding on to tradition or was buried by a younger Christian generation is not known.¹³³ At St. Mary Bishophill Senior, which also dates back to the Viking period, twenty-nine sculpture fragments were found, all of which proved to be either grave covers or cross-shaft fragments and all of which were dated to the period of Anglo-Scandinavian York.¹³⁴ The finds at St. Mary Bishophill Junior and St. Mary

Bishophill Senior seem to indicate that these churches were active early in the Viking period.

In another area of York, another church site was found and excavated. The 1974 excavation at St. Mary Castlegate yielded three cross fragments and three grave cover fragments. All of the pieces are similar in content and style, and their odd shapes dispel any idea that they were transported to the site for use as building material, since more rectangular forms would have been used in building foundations.¹³⁵ More likely, the fragments are the remains of a graveyard, and the similarity between these pieces and ones found from a Viking Age burial ground under York Minster place the graveyard at St. Mary Castlegate in Viking times.¹³⁶

All of the finds at the various church sites provide evidence of church activity at the local level in Viking Northumbria. Unfortunately, Viking-age churches have not been found in the rest of the region. This does not mean that there was no Christian activity at the local level outside of York. Churches in the country may not have had stone foundations, thus making it virtually impossible to find their locations. Still, parish activity continued in Scandinavian Northumbria. Unlike the wealthier monasteries or churches of the bishops, local churches were not attractive targets to plundering Vikings. Thus, of all the facets of Christianity in Viking Northumbria, the local church was probably the least affected.

Although many of the bishoprics and parishes disappeared during the Viking period in Northumbria, substantial evidence exists pointing to activity at the highest ecclesiastical level in the north, the See of York. From the writings of Aethelweard and Symeon of Durham, as well as the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, it appears that the Archbishop of York remained a political and spiritual leader through the years of Viking rule. In fact, this period in the history of the See of York saw a great deal of cooperation between the archbishops and the pagan Viking lords. Archbishops accompanied the Scandinavian kings on expeditions, and one of the archbishops even negotiated a treaty with Wessex on behalf of the king of York. If this is the case, then a question arises concerning the motives of this collaboration. Perhaps the archbishops of York had no choice but to cooperate, or maybe working with the Viking kings allowed the archbishops the chance to take the initiative in political matters. Besides the reasons for the cooperation between the see of York and the Vikings, what was the extent of that cooperation?

According to Symeon, when the Vikings first invaded York in 867, the archbishop, Wulfhere was in Addingham, outside of the city.¹³⁷ Bishops in this period frequently visited the churches in their see, and Wulfhere's trip to Addingham may have simply been one of these official visits. Nevertheless, while it is easy to see his absence from York as a routine visit, it is also possible that his presence outside of York was an attempt to

avoid death at the hands of the Vikings. After the conquest of York by the Vikings, Wulfhere apparently moved back to York and became involved in the Danish puppet government. The puppet king, Ecgbert, ruled for about seven years and apparently proved to be an unpopular ruler. Around 874, he and Archbishop Wulfhere were forced by the people of York to flee from the city. Ecgbert and Wulfhere are reported by Symeon and the *Chronicle* to have gone to Mercia, where they were welcomed by the Mercian king.¹³⁸ The Mercian court's welcome sheds doubt on the possibility that the rulers of York were expelled for their Danish alliances alone, since Mercia had been at odds with the Vikings only a few years before. Regardless of the reasons, Halfdan's march into York probably was the reason Wulfhere returned to York, since he returned soon after Halfdan retook the city. Even after Halfdan's death, Wulfhere continued to be the Archbishop of York and remained a political power in the north as a result.

The See of York, like the rest of the Church in the Viking realm, apparently suffered from poverty. H. R. Loyn notes that the see was held for a while in plurality with the bishopric of Worcester, presumably in an effort to pull resources together.¹³⁹ With the ascension of Guthfrith to the throne, the see, like the rest of the Northumbrian Church, began to prosper. It is interesting to note that nowhere is any credit for Guthfrith's rise given to Wulfhere. Whether the archbishop

supported the Christian candidate is not certain, and it is possible that the see and the Cuthbert community were rivals. Archbishop Wulfhere died in 895, the year of Guthfrith's death; he, like the Christian king, was buried in York minster. Symeon states that he had been the archbishop for forty-seven years.¹⁴⁰ During his time as archbishop, Wulfhere accomplished the seemingly impossible task of seeing his church through the Viking invasions and surviving politically to remain a factor in Northumbrian politics.

York did not have another archbishop until 900 when Aethelbald was consecrated in London. He did not do anything of particular interest to the chroniclers, as nothing more than his name and where he was made the archbishop appears in the sources.¹⁴¹ However, apparently the See of York continued its influence in and around York. One example of the see's continued influence is found in the coins of York from the Viking period. Besides coins, archaeologists have found a coin die, matching many of the coins, that has been dated to the first years of the tenth century. The coin die found was cylindrical in shape, with one end engraved in Latin. The inscription reads "S<an>C<t>I PETRI MO<neta>" and translated, "St. Peter's Money."¹⁴² Coins matching the die have been found at Coppergate and other locations in York. The reference to St. Peter can only refer to the cathedral at York, which was dedicated to St. Peter. The coins found also bear an inscription on the other face, "EBRAICE

CIV<itas>" or "City of York" dispelling any idea that the coins were made elsewhere.¹⁴³ The coins are an interesting find. At no other place in the Viking world were coins minted, and the use of Latin hints that they may have been made under guidance of the clergy, though the motto, "St. Peter's Money", is by far the most important indication of episcopal influence over the minting of the coins.¹⁴⁴ Besides words, the coins also bear symbols. On the "City of York" side, the coins have a Viking sword, identified by its long blade relative to its handle, and a hammer, perhaps Molnir, Thor's hammer. These two symbols possibly indicate that the civil authorities had a say in the minting process as well. The argument that the coins show cooperation between the Archbishop and the local kings of York is plausible.

The Norse invasion in the early tenth century hampered the revival of the Church in Northumbria. Ragnald seized Church property, and his pagan beliefs must not have helped the position of the archbishop at court. Nevertheless, cooperation between the See of York and the Viking kings continued, as did the succession of archbishops. Symeon records the next archbishop of York as Lotheward.¹⁴⁵ Symeon gives no account of the archbishopric under Lotheward, nor does he say when the succession took place. Still, that the succession of archbishops continued provides evidence of tolerance, at the least, on the

part of the Norse rulers. Cooperation probably also continued between the two main political forces in Northumbria.

The greatest example of this cooperation can be found in the career of Archbishop Wulfstan I, who is listed by Symeon as the successor to Lotheward.¹⁴⁶ Wulfstan, like many of the northern Anglo-Saxons, feared the growth of southern power. The last Danish kings faced the growing menace of Wessex, and the Norse invasion of York stalled Wessex expansion into Northumbria. The fear of southern England must have been great, for the Northumbrian Church appears to have sided with pagan rulers in an effort to fend off the Christian kings to the south.

The Wessex kings, for their part, must have seen the Archbishop of York as a powerful potential ally. Athelstan, Edmund, and Eadred all gave extensively to the see in order to win the favor of the archbishop. The York Church received the lands of Amounderness in 934 and Southwell in 954 to name just a few of the Wessex contributions.¹⁴⁷ Wulfstan faced the difficult task of showing friendship to both sides because, while he politically sided with the Norsemen, his church benefitted from the gifts from Wessex. The Archbishop of York may have believed that once southern kings controlled Northumbria, the powerful positions within the Church would be occupied by members of the clergy from southern England or he may have grown to dislike the notion of a foreign king. Wulfstan's difficult political position must have been particularly evident

during Athelstan's occupation of all of Northumbria. He may have been against Athelstan, but there is no evidence that he was a party to the northern coalition which was defeated by Athelstan at Brunanburh in 937.

In 940, Olaf Gothfrithson invaded Mercia, by now a part of the realm of the Wessex king, in order to extend his southern border and retake the five boroughs. Wulfstan accompanied this military expedition.¹⁴⁸ Such a move shows that soon after the resurgence in Norse power in York, Wulfstan had moved from Viking sympathizer to Viking ally. The Norse army won the first few battles of the campaign but were stopped by the Wessex army at Leicester. Wulfstan then used his office as archbishop to negotiate a boundary between the two kingdoms with Oda, the Archbishop of Canterbury, a meeting recorded by Symeon of Durham.¹⁴⁹ Unfortunately for the Northumbrians, Edmund of Wessex invaded York, only a year after standing as sponsor to Olaf at his baptism. By 944, York was once again in Wessex hands.¹⁵⁰ Wulfstan must have felt uneasy having Edmund in command of the city, but the latter took no measures against the archbishop.

After Edmund's murder in 948, the Northumbrians took measures to break from Wessex, even though they had sworn allegiance to the new king. The York invitation to Eric Bloodaxe can be seen as the last effort of Northumbria to remain free of southern rule. With his powerful position as archbishop, it is

possible that Wulfstan was among those who asked Eric to rule, since it is unlikely that such a decision would be made without the agreement of the Archbishop of York. Symeon's history of the last years of Viking-age York shows that they were full of turmoil. In 950, Eadred marched north against the Northumbrian rebels, and the people of York expelled Eric, probably fearing the Wessex army. Then, two years later, York once again welcomed Eric as its king. Eadred once again marched north in 954, and resistance crumbled upon his arrival. Wulfstan was arrested and imprisoned in his home until resistance was completely overcome.¹⁵¹ It is interesting to note that Eadred must have felt that Wulfstan was a primary cause of his troubles; although he did not kill the archbishop, he did ensure that Wulfstan could offer no leadership in any resistance. The house arrest of Wulfstan helps to support the theory that he was one of the leaders of the resistance who invited Eric Bloodaxe to Northumbria. Wulfstan died in 955, and his *see* went to Osoytel, the bishop of Dorchester in the south of England.¹⁵² In fact, many of the dioceses in Northumbria came under the charge of dioceses in southern England, and later, the Wessex kings sought to appoint Church leaders with ties and commitments to southern England.¹⁵³

What, then, was the role of the Archbishop of York in the Viking period in Northumbria? Although the archbishops, like most of the clergy in the northern part of England, suffered from

a lack of wealth, it appears that the See of York remained a strong political power in England. The archbishops proved to be shrewd politicians in cooperating with the Viking kings. There were probably two reasons for their strategy. First, the See of York sought to survive the turbulent times caused by the Viking invasions. Collaboration allowed the archbishop to have some say at Viking courts where he might otherwise have had none. Second, the archbishops of York may have seen the Vikings, as better overlords, whether Danish or Norse, than the Anglo-Saxon kings of Wessex. In this issue, the religion of an ally or enemy apparently was unimportant. The Wessex kings took the power and influence of the archbishops seriously enough to offer large gifts of appeasement, and later resorted to arrest to stop Archbishop Wulfstan.

Paganism and Christianity

With all the evidence of Church activity in Northumbria during the Viking period, one question remains. How did the initially pagan invaders and their descendents deal with and eventually accept Christianity? The Viking kings allowed Christianity within their realms and some converted to the faith; but what was the relationship between the Viking people and Christianity? In the hundred year period of Viking rule in Northumbria, Christianity went from a tolerated religion to the accepted belief among the Scandinavian settlers. However, it would be wrong to say that with conversion came the

obliteration of old pagan ideas. The Vikings never completely relinquished their former beliefs. Instead, the Viking kingdom of Northumbria allowed a mixing of two faiths and two cultures. In effect, a new Anglo-Scandinavian culture developed in the north which affected all aspects of life, including religion.

The first thing to remember about the Vikings, at this time, is that paganism, unlike Christianity, was not a highly regulated faith. There was no hierarchy nor was there any dogma which all Scandinavians were expected to follow. Instead, the paganism which the Vikings brought to Northumbria was essentially based on tradition, handed down from one generation to the next. Paganism relied on stories of the gods and their deeds. Since these stories were passed along orally, many of these tales eventually contradicted each other.¹⁵⁴ Thus the beliefs of the first Vikings in England were flexible and easily subject to change or modification. To the Vikings, the Christian god became one more deity to add to their collection of gods.

There is considerable evidence that traditional pagan beliefs remained strong among the Scandinavian settlers in Northumbria and coincided with Christianity in the same areas. Most of this evidence consists of place names and burial sites. In Appleby, pagan worship is evidenced in the place-name "Hoff Lundr", which derives from old Scandinavian words referring to a temple and a grove, which is characteristic of the pagan practice of worshipping outside in a wooded area. The site rests on poor

terrain in a large area of lowland forest. No Christian cemeteries or churches exist nearby, and this is probably the main reason that the site was chosen by the Vikings who used it, since its distance from Christian places of worship would allow for uninhibited worship.¹⁵⁵ Grave goods were found in burial sites in York and a few other locations, and although grave goods alone do not mean the person buried was pagan, they do show that pagan practices existed in Viking Northumbria. The Scandinavian poem, "Eiriksmal", also shows that pagan beliefs continued in the Viking period. "Eiriksmal", a poem about the last Viking king of Northumbria, Eric Bloodaxe, has a strong pagan tone to it. Hans Kuhn, who worked in the 1940s on the correlation between Icelandic poetry and the Viking England, believes that the poem was commissioned by Eric's widow after his murder at Stainmore in 954. Eric was never a Christian, and the poem, which depicts Eric being called to Valhalla to join the gods, demonstrates pagan beliefs still held by many of the Scandinavians in Northumbria.¹⁵⁶

The continued existence of pagan traditions among the native Christian Anglo-Saxons may lead to another conclusion; that the Scandinavians and Anglo-Saxons in Northumbria lived in peaceful coexistence. The fact that Anglian and Scandinavian place-names exist side by side could indicate that the two peoples, despite their differences in religion and culture, lived in peaceful coexistence. The peaceful relations between the

settlers and the local populace could have been possible because there was no competition for resources. Widdup's study of Cumbria indicates that the Viking settlers there were pastoralists who moved inland in search of pastureland. His conclusions were based on the evidence of place names, which locate Viking settlements further inland than contemporary Anglo-Saxon villages. The woodlands of much of Cumbria also had a lower oak pollen count from the period of Viking settlement and a higher pollen count from grasses, bracken, and heather, indicating woodland clearing for pastoral purposes.¹⁵⁷ If the Vikings were herders rather than farmers, the two populations would not have collided over the possession of the small amount of fertile land in the northern part of England. On the other hand, had competition developed for farmland, it is possible that the period of the Viking kingdom would have been filled with internal violence between farmers on both sides. Fortunately, the Anglian farmers and the Viking pastoralists were able to complement one another rather than be in competition for land. While no such study has been done for regions to the east of the Pennines, it seems likely that the same conditions existed there as well. Thus, it was possible for Anglo-Saxons and Scandinavians to peacefully exist in the same regions. Other than the York revolt against the king installed by the Vikings in 872, there were no civil wars within Northumbria in the Viking period. This is important in determining the

religious history of Northumbria in the Viking period for it may show the atmosphere that allowed assimilation between the two faiths to occur. Alfred Smyth theorized that an implied contract developed between the Danes and the people they conquered providing for Danish protection of the Northumbrians' religious liberties.¹⁵⁸

Though written sources, like the *Chronicle*, refer to the Vikings as pagans throughout this period, such generalizations seem inappropriate given the evidence of Viking Christianity in the northern kingdom. The Vikings' interaction with the Anglo-Saxons resulted in many of them converting to the Christian faith. There is a substantial body of evidence to support the hypothesis that conversion of the Scandinavian settlers started no later than one generation after their arrival. Some of the leading Scandinavian figures in Northumbria proclaimed themselves Christians. By the last decade of the ninth century, Christian kings sat on the thrones of both Viking kingdoms: Guthrum in East Anglia, and Guthfrith in Northumbria. H. R. Loyn stated that Oda, the Archbishop of Canterbury, who negotiated the border treaty with Wulfstan, was said to have been of Danish birth, and the son of one of the first Danish settlers.¹⁵⁹ Archaeological finds may be evidence for the conversion of many of the Viking settlers. Hundreds of crosses in Scandinavian styles, dating to the Viking period, have been discovered in recent years.¹⁶⁰ Furthermore, there were apparently Christian

burials and rebuilding of churches in the same period as Scandinavian settlement increased.¹⁶¹ Coins bearing Christian legends and Viking symbols are further proof of a people changing their religion.¹⁶² Finally, artifacts with Christian themes have been unearthed in Scandinavian settlements. One such item is the figurine found at the Lloyd's Bank excavation site in York. It is one and a half inches tall and crudely made. The lead figure appears to be a naked man drawing a bow that no longer exists. However, the figurine has not been interpreted to be an archer but a saint, since nakedness was associated with saints to emphasize their defencelessness.¹⁶³ All of this may indicate Christianity being maintained by the Anglo-Saxons, or Viking Christianity.

Vikings may have converted to Christianity for a number of reasons. When Viking kings were baptised, their motives may have been political. One of the most famous royal baptisms occurred in 878. After the Viking defeat at Edington, Guthrum ended his war with Alfred and as part of the settlement, was baptised along with thirty of his chiefs.¹⁶⁴ The Norse king, Olaf Gothfrithsson, received in baptism under similar circumstances in 943, as is documented in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*.¹⁶⁵ Viking merchants also became nominal Christians for reasons of expediency, since the Anglo-Saxons would only trade with Christians.¹⁶⁶

Among the lower classes of Scandinavian society, the primary motivation for conversion may have been marriage to Anglo-Saxons. It is plausible that many warriors in the Great Army married Anglo-Saxon women after settling on their lands, and they may have changed their faith either to accommodate the marriage, or were converted by their wives later on. The last major way that the Vikings could have been Christianized involved the work of the Church. The few parishes that remained after the initial invasion probably had some part in converting the Vikings. Priests and monks were also sent into the Scandinavian kingdoms as missionaries. After Guthrum's baptism, the East Anglian king allowed English priests to enter his lands and convert his subjects.¹⁶⁷ The success of the missionaries lay in the Viking faith and culture, which was adaptable to its surroundings and open to new ideas.¹⁶⁸

Conversion of the Vikings to Christianity did not necessarily mean an obliteration of their old faith; since the Vikings often adapted Christian ideas to their own set of beliefs. The blending of religions, plus the lack of a strong Church to guide the people, may have started a religious tradition distinct to the kingdom of Northumbria. Northumbria did not share the fate of East Anglia, which was conquered by Wessex soon after Guthrum's death, thus allowing the Church the opportunity to stamp-out any pagan beliefs left in that kingdom. The mixing of religious traditions in Northumbria can be first seen around the beginning of the

tenth century, and is reflected especially in the burial rites and sculpture of the period.

The Anglo-Saxons, once pagans themselves, had stopped burying their dead with grave goods by the time of the Viking invasion.¹⁶⁹ The first Viking settlers, on the other hand, did apparently follow pagan tradition and leave objects in graves for the dead to use in the next world.¹⁷⁰ However, only twenty-five to thirty of these sites have been found in Northumbria. Most of these sites are single burials, the only multiple pagan graves found were at Kildale in Yorkshire.¹⁷¹ There are two possible reasons for the lack of grave sites in Northumbria. The first explanation is that the disturbed nature of the English soil, the continuous accumulation of deposits in the lowland areas, and the few opportunities for archaeological investigation have led to a dearth of finds. The problem with this reasoning is that archaeological searches, working with these conditions, have still found artifacts and sculpture but not a large number of burial. An alternative explanation may be that the Vikings, soon after arriving in England, adopted Anglo-Saxon practices; thus their burials matched the Anglo-Saxon graves when uncovered by archaeologists.¹⁷²

The change to Anglo-Saxon ways involved the abandonment of grave goods and the use of churchyards. Two theories exist to explain the desire of Scandinavian pagans to bury their dead in churchyards. One idea is that this was done out of respect for

the existing burial ground; in other words, the Vikings believed in using the same areas for their graves. Another hypothesis is that the graves were placed where the local people would not disturb them.¹⁷³ Unfortunately, neither theory explains why the Vikings stopped burying their dead with objects. An idea that does explain both changes is that the Vikings began adopting Christian ways soon after their arrival in Northumbria, and that burial practices were one of the first Christian rituals the settlers assimilated into their culture.

While graves do shed some light on the extent to which pagan and Christian practices were combined, by far the greatest evidence for this blending of traditions may be found in the sculpture that survives from the Viking period in Northumbria. Hundreds of fragments of sculpture have been found in northern England. In Yorkshire alone, 325 carvings dispersed among 65 sites have been found.¹⁷⁴ Although there is a large quantity of sculpture in the region, what remains is probably only a tiny fraction of the sculpture produced during the Viking period. Much of the sculpture was probably destroyed by people in the later middle ages, who saw the works as pagan and offensive. Also, it appears that sculpture fragments were used as material in later buildings. This is both good and bad for historians. On the one hand, the use of sculpture in buildings has kept destroyed many of the sculptures as well as hidden pieces where archaeologists will be unable to get to them. Yet, the

restoration of many building foundations in recent years has unearthed a multitude of sculpture, protected from the outside world for centuries.¹⁷⁵

What proof is there that these fragments date from the Viking period? The Anglo-Saxons, before the Viking invasions, created sculpture themselves, so it is important to distinguish between the works of the pre-Viking and Viking periods. It is easy to determine that the sculpture came from pre-Norman days, since many of the fragments were found in the foundations of structures known to have been built after the Norman invasion in 1066. The more difficult part involves placing sculpture during the years of the Viking kingdom. The only two ways to determine the period of a piece are if the piece was found with an object known to be from Viking days, or if the fragment matches sculpture already known to be Viking in origin. In the 1970s, the York Archaeological Trust uncovered a graveyard containing objects definitely from late ninth and early tenth centuries. With these objects were fragments from sculptured grave covers. Using these fragments as benchmarks, archaeologists have now successfully linked most Northumbrian sculpture to Viking days.¹⁷⁶

Unlike Anglo-Saxon sculpture which is found mainly in monasteries, Viking-age sculpture appears in many locations.¹⁷⁷ This says something about the distribution of wealth in the region. Sculpture was an expensive endeavor, and

in Anglo-Saxon days, only monasteries held enough wealth to finance their creation. With the demise of monasticism in the north, the wealth of Northumbria was transferred to the Viking conquerors. Thus, sculpture became a secular interest.¹⁷⁸ Since only the wealthy could afford to sponsor sculpture, the religious views of the rich in Northumbria are what is seen on the fragments.

The sculpture itself consists almost exclusively of grave covers and fragments from crosses. The crosses and grave covers contain a variety of images, both Christian and pagan.¹⁷⁹ Two frequent themes on sculpture from this period are the heroes, Wayland and Sigurd, both of whom are usually identified on sculpture in the context of their stories. Wayland is the smith who, in pagan tradition, forged wings in order to escape from an evil king. Sigurd is a Viking hero who killed a powerful dragon for his treasure. The hero also cooked and ate the heart of the beast, whereby he attained the power of understanding the birds.¹⁸⁰ One speculation, as to the reason Sigurd appears on so many carvings, is that his battle with the dragon parallels God's final victory over the serpent in the final battle between good and evil.¹⁸¹ Thor's battle with the Midgard Serpent, depicted on the Fishing Stone at Gosforth, is an even greater example of this parallel. The work depicts Thor fishing for the Midgard Serpent, whose body is so long that it surrounds the world. The picture

compares with the Bible in Job 41:1 "Canst thou draw out Leviathan with a hook?"¹⁸²

Near the Fishing Stone is the Gosforth Cross, the most famous work of Viking-age sculpture, which stands about thirteen feet tall, and is covered on all four sides with elaborate designs.¹⁸³ On its east side is Christ on the cross, pouring blood from his side. A man with a spear stands under him as does a woman, possibly the Virgin Mary. This is the only scene on the cross that is clearly Christian.¹⁸⁴ The remaining three sides together portray the story of Ragnarok. Above the figure of Christ is a warrior battling a monster wolf. Bailey identifies the warrior as Victarr, the son of Odin, who fights the wolf that killed his father. According to late Norse mythology, Victarr is one of the few gods to survive Ragnarok and his depiction on the same side as Christ is no accident, for Christ also eventually survives his ordeal.¹⁸⁵ On the west side of the Gosforth Cross, a man with a horn fends off monsters. The figure holding the horn may be Heimdallr, who holds the Gjallar Horn with which he alerts the gods once the time of Ragnarok begins. Below Heimdallr is the evil god, Loki, being punished for his part in the murder of Baldr, the purest of the gods. The other two sides also depict warriors battling monsters but their identity is unknown.¹⁸⁶ The important thing here is that the crucifixion of Christ is placed in the midst of images of Ragnarok.

Other motifs are common in Viking sculpture. One has the cross sprouting leaves like a living tree or a vine.¹⁸⁷ In other sculpture, Christ is covered by a shield with five holes, symbolic of his five wounds.¹⁸⁸ The frequency of Christian motifs shows that the sculptors, who worked in Viking styles, were nevertheless familiar with Christian beliefs, as were those who sponsored the work. The mixture and parallel of pagan and Christian stories may indicate that rather than abandon their old faith completely for a new religion, the Scandinavians simply incorporated Christianity into their established beliefs. The sculpture of the times records the change from a pagan Scandinavian society to a new, Anglo-Scandinavian culture using the beliefs of both worlds in its new religion.

The Scandinavians of Viking Northumbria adapted to their new surroundings and adopted the Christian religion. Unlike their kinsmen in East Anglia, the Northumbrians were able to keep Wessex at bay long enough for the process of mixing the two religions to be complete. Although many of the Vikings may have considered themselves Christian by the last years of the Viking kingdom, the Christianity they procured was so distinctive that in 942, after Edgar conquered the whole kingdom, he referred to himself as "ruler of the pagans."¹⁸⁹ After 954, the Church still felt the need to fight paganism in the north and it is possible that they were referring to the Anglo-Scandinavian heresies as much as pure pagan beliefs. The burial

practices and sculpture of Northumbria provide plausible evidence for this blending of religious traditions in the ninth and tenth centuries.

Conclusion

The Viking invasion and settlement of Northumbria had a dramatic effect on Christianity in the region. Though a large amount of destruction was inflicted on the institutions of the Church, substantial evidence exists to refute the notion that the Vikings obliterated the Church in Northumbria for a hundred years. Monasticism, though hard hit, still continued its activities even if only a handful of the monasteries survived the late ninth and early tenth centuries. The greatest example of this was the Cuthbert community, which after leaving Lindisfarne in order to escape the Vikings, was able to rebuild at Chester-le-Street and more importantly, influence the politics of those from whom it initially fled. The secular clergy also suffered from the Vikings, since sees were regular targets of Vikings in search of riches to plunder. However, like monasticism, the local Church continued to execute its duties, even if it did so to a lesser degree than when Northumbria was an Anglo-Saxon kingdom. The succession of archbishops in York continued during this period, and it appears that the archbishops of York were able to retain some of their influence over northern England despite the new circumstances in which they found

themselves. This power probably came from a cooperation with the Viking kings of York, at least on political matters.

Among the Vikings it appears that Christianity even took the offensive. By the beginning of the tenth century, not more than a generation after the first Vikings arrived, a large number of the Viking settlers apparently adopted Christianity. The better word here is "adoption", and not "conversion", since while evidence points towards Christianity among the Vikings, it also points to the tenacity of pagan ideas. Therefore, the Vikings, rather than becoming Christians in the truest sense of the word, adopted Christian ideas to their own and, in effect, created a new religious tradition distinct to Northumbria.

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Notes to Pages 14-18

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Notes to Pages 18-21

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Notes to Pages 25-31

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Notes to Pages 31-36

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Notes to Pages 55-60

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Notes to Pages 60-61

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