The Community of St. Cuthbert in the Late Tenth Century

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Published by The Ohio State University Press

Jolly, Karen Louise.
The Community of St. Cuthbert in the Late Tenth Century: The Chester-le-Street Additions to Durham Cathedral Library A.IV.19.
The Ohio State University Press, 2012.
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HISTORY

The Temporal and Geographic Landscape in Northumbria

In 970 A.D. a Northumbrian priest named Aldred the Provost wrote down four prayers in honor of Cuthbert, the patron saint of his religious community at Chester-le-Street, formerly of Lindisfarne. He copied these collects on a manuscript page that is now attached to a larger book of service prayers that his community had acquired, a manuscript known as the Durham Ritual or Collectar (Durham Cathedral Library A.IV.19). Although he does not tell us why the occasion was significant, Aldred does tell us exactly where and when he copied the Cuthbert prayers: far south of his northern home, in Wessex, while sitting in the tent of Bishop Ælfsige of Chester-le-Street, before 9 A.M. on St. Lawrence’s day, a Wednesday five days after the new moon. That date is now established as August 10, 970. Google Earth can take you to 50° 58’ N x 1° 58’ W where you can see Oakley Down and its Neolithic barrow mounds just south of Woodyates on a Roman road.


2. “Besuðan wudigan gæt æt áclee on westsæxum on laurentius messan daegi. on wodnes daegi ælfsige ðæm biscope in his getélde aldred se p fast ðas feower collectæ on fif næht aldne mona æt underne awrat. . . .” “Aldred the provost wrote these four collects at Oakley, to the south of Woodyates, among the West Saxons, on Wednesday, Lawrence’s feast day (the moon being five nights old), before tierce, for Ælfsige the bishop, in his tent” (T. J. Brown, Durham Ritual, 24). See chapter 2 for analysis of the colophon (QXL46).
that deviates from the A354. As the crow flies, Aldred and Bishop Ælfsige were almost 300 miles from Chester-le-Street, presently a small town just six miles north of the later seat of the bishopric at Durham (map 1). Although the details of time and place for his excursion and acquisition are unusual in their specificity, even more intriguing are his scribal activities in the Durham A.IV.19 folios at his Chester-le-Street scriptorium: Aldred added a vernacular Old English gloss to the Latin texts of the original service book while he and other scribes appended supplementary materials to the end of the manuscript and on new quires, which he also partially glossed in Old English.

The resulting compilation represents one of the most intriguing collections of ritual material from Anglo-Saxon England because of its varied contents, its unusual layout, and its multiple languages. The main body of texts consists of Latin collects and chapters for the daily office, the round of prayers, chants, and readings performed by clergy living in a religious community, as well as blessings and rituals used for pastoral care, supplemented by additions copied by a group of scribes using different styles and formats. All of the prayers, rituals, hymns, and readings were intended for oral delivery in Latin, yet Aldred has added to the original collectar material, as well as most of his own additions, a gloss translation into the vernacular speech of Old English.

As a consequence of these diverse materials, Durham A.IV.19 is difficult to label, hence the variable titles assigned to this hybrid manuscript: ritual or collectar service book, workbook or archive, commonplace book, or even classbook. The early tenth-century Southumbrian portion of the manuscript inspired the name “collectar” since it is dominated by collects adapted from the mass for the daily office, yet like many service books, it includes a number of other useful ritual materials at the end. The additions in the late tenth century by the Chester-le-Street scriptorium to the last quire of the original collectar and in the appended quires continue with more daily office materials and rituals for pastoral care as well as Aldred’s harder-to-classify “educational” materials in the back of the last quire. Hence some scholars apply the more general service book label of “ritual” in light of these additions: Corrêa’s HBS edition.


4. “Durham A.IV.19 adheres to no clear-cut definition of a service book and resists all efforts at categorization using terminology of a later period—it is more than a monastic book for the daily office, but less than a massbook for a priest or a bishop’s manual, yet it contains elements that might be found in such books” (Sarah Larratt Keefer, personal correspondence). Corrêa, *Durham Collectar*, 77–78, notes the disordered variety of materials added by all of the scribes that makes them hard to categorize, concluding that they appear to constitute a “commonplace book” for reference. She also comments that “there is a wealth of important information here concerning the liturgy at Chester-le-Street in the latter half of the tenth century.”
of the original collectar without the gloss is titled *The Durham Collectar*, while T. J. Brown’s facsimile edition of the whole manuscript is titled *The Durham Ritual*. The older critical edition of the manuscript with additions and gloss by Lindelöf and Thompson splits the difference with *Rituale ecclesiae Dunelmensis: The Durham Collectar*. To avoid the impression of dealing with a single book of one type or purpose, I use throughout this book a shortened form of the manuscript name, Durham A.IV.19, arguing in chapter 3 that the added quires originated as separate booklets and in chapters 4 and 5 for multiple uses of the texts.

This symbolic name change grants the manuscript its own voice—or voices, since it is bilingual and a collaborative compilation. The manuscript’s parts, taken collectively in relation to one another rather than as separate texts, offer a more varied view of early English religious communities than found in more complete and synthetic service books. Durham A.IV.19 provides a venue to explore Anglo-Saxon attitudes towards translation, the processes of liturgical compilation, and the varied uses of those texts within the community and in pastoral care. Most of all, it offers rare insight into the daily life and relationships within a small religious community during a period of transition and dislocation, otherwise invisible to us given the paucity of evidence.

This book focuses on the additional materials compiled by Aldred and his community that are now bound with the original southern English collectar in Durham A.IV.19. The aim is to understand the evolving nature of ritual practice and devotional life in the late tenth century, during a period of political upheaval and religious reform, but from the perspective not of one of the major centers but a smaller, seemingly more remote, yet prestigious ecclesiastical establishment, the community of St. Cuthbert at Chester-le-Street. In turn, questions about Aldred and Durham A.IV.19 raise larger issues about religious communities and their service books in Anglo-Saxon England.

- A Northumbrian religious community endeavoring to survive the sociopolitical disruptions of the viking era acquired a southern English collectar, while its bishop and provost recorded a journey to Wessex right on the eve of a massive royally sponsored church renewal. What does this transmission of ritual texts tell us about the relationships between religious centers across Anglo-Saxon England during an important period of institutional transformation, monastic reform, and liturgical renovation?

- Aldred used the vernacular Old English in relation to Latin in some unusual ways in his colophons to the *Lindisfarne Gospels*, in Durham A.IV.19, and in his glossing in both manuscripts, especially the vernacular gloss of liturgical texts that were not known to have been used for classroom teaching, and were only ever performed in Latin during church services. What does this linguistic enterprise say about the role of the vernacular in the Anglo-Saxon church?
• The way that the scribes at Chester-le-Street, and later at Durham, handled the manuscript folios—adding, marking, and collating—suggests a more flexible relationship between text, writing, and performance. How did scriptoria function in small religious communities and what can we learn about the community’s scholarly and pedagogical relationships from the manuscript evidence?
• The Durham A.IV.19 compilation was a work in progress used for a variety of purposes by the community of St. Cuthbert at Chester-le-Street; hence it shows us ongoing processes of liturgical reflection, experimentation, and scholarship in a religious community. Fragmentary as the surviving record is, how were service books used in religious communities for private devotion, study, and teaching as well as the public performance of church rituals?

Addressing these questions about the development and function of compilations like Durham A.IV.19 requires an examination of the larger historical context for Anglo-Saxon religious communities and the Northumbrian landscape in the ninth through early eleventh centuries, which this chapter aims to do. The first part examines the ninth- and tenth-century Wessex-centered trends in reform and royal centralization, highlighting Northumbria’s historic role in an emerging sense of English identity as well as its own distinctiveness apart from Wessex. The second section consequently pulls Northumbria out of the Wessex orbit and into the center, focusing on the Northumbrian environment and political developments that shaped the Chester-le-Street community and the production of Durham A.IV.19.

NORTHUMBRIA AND WESSEX:
ENGLISH IDENTITY AND CHRISTIAN REFORM

The historical circumstances of Bishop Ælfsige’s Wessex journey with Aldred may ultimately prove inexplicable, but the enigmatic note in the Durham A.IV.19 colophon remains symbolic of the intriguing relationship between Northumbria and Southumbria, the latter dominated in the ninth and tenth centuries by the rise of Wessex. Wessex is commonly the center of historical attention for the development of an English polity in the ninth and tenth centuries, with Northumbria playing a supporting role from a troubled periphery, valued primarily for its Christian legacy. And yet Northumbria not only contributed to the long history of an emergent “English” identity, but had its own distinctive locus of identity, in partnership with, and sometimes in contradistinction to, that promoted by Wessex. Reevaluating that legacy from a Northumbrian-centered view offers a different perspective on the English Christian heritage Wessex rulers and reformers sought to exploit in the ninth and tenth centuries.
Map 1 British Isles in the Tenth Century (Julius Ray Paulo)
In the long view of Anglo-Saxon historiography, English identity and its Christian heritage form one complex story, in which Northumbria played an early starring role. Cultural identity and religion were inextricably intertwined in the formation of Anglo-Saxon Christianity from its very beginnings because the processes of conversion occurred in conjunction with the development of regional kingdoms in the sixth and seventh centuries.\(^5\) As a consequence, the ethnogenesis of the “Anglo-Saxons” and the emerging concept of Englishness cannot be separated from their Christianization.\(^6\) The Venerable Bede’s *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* is itself both a product of these acculturation processes and an agent in the creation of a hybrid “English” identity. Insofar as Bede’s narrative became the base text for “Englishness” in later Anglo-Saxon polity, Northumbria emerges as its birthplace and as a valuable source of English heritage later to be tapped by the royal house of Wessex.

But that evolving Englishness collides and colludes with a distinctively Northumbrian identity colored by its Irish past and viking present. Northumbrian Christian identity was tied very closely to the heritage of Lindisfarne, itself a product of the Irish monastery of Iona through its foundation in 635 by Bishop Aidan on a tidal island off the western coast of Northumbria (image 1). Lindisfarne may have been somewhat isolated on its estuary, but it was in visual proximity to the royal site of Bamburgh (image 2) and hence an active part of the political landscape, both in the north and beyond.\(^7\) Similarly, the Wearmouth-Jarrow monastic complex—Bede’s world—was in his time and later a hub of activity as well as a retreat from the world.

What Northumbria, and by extension all of Anglo-Saxon England, inherited from the early Irish Christianization of this northern landscape were some uniquely insular patterns of acculturation. This Romano-British and Irish Christian legacy was fostered, preserved, and transmitted elsewhere by the community of St. Cuthbert. Cuthbert, trained in the Irish tradition and expelled from Ripon when it came under the Roman style of rule, went on to become the peacemaker bridging these traditions, a role he continued to fill after his death as patron saint for his community and later Anglo-Saxon kings.\(^8\)


Image 1  Lindisfarne Priory, author photo

Image 2  Bamburgh castle seen from Lindisfarne, author photo
The resulting blend of Hiberno-Saxon and Latin cultural materials is visible in distinctively insular art, as for example the Lindisfarne Gospels, perhaps the greatest relic of St. Cuthbert's community next to the saint's body itself.9 The "golden age of Northumbria" was indeed glorious; and although it inevitably came to an end, its legacy outlived the vikings, not just because of Wessex's appropriation of that heritage but also because of Northumbrian agency in its preservation at places like Chester-le-Street.

The viking impact in the ninth and tenth centuries and Northumbrian responses thus need to be measured both in terms of invasive destruction as well as settlement acculturation.10 The destructive aspects in eastern and northern England are easily visible in the attacks on Lindisfarne in 793 and the 875 flight of the community of St. Cuthbert and their subsequent settlement at Chester-le-Street. In contrast, the rise of Wessex and its renewal programs initiated by King Alfred (871–99) and his heirs through King Edgar (959–75) often figure as the success stories for overcoming the viking impact, leaving Northumbria with its fragmented ecclesiastical structure as a struggling hinterland, in need of rescuing by Wessex rulers. But in the long view, the survival of an Anglo-Saxon Christian heritage and English sense of identity was in part due to trends visible in Northumbria in the acculturation of the Scandinavian

9. To view images from the Lindisfarne Gospels, go to the British Library website Turning the Pages (http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/ttp/ttpbooks.html), “Pinnacle of Anglo-Saxon Art.” Partisanship among modern scholars over the origins of the Lindisfarne Gospels in the late seventh or early eighth century is indicative of the contested history of these cultural interactions, with some scholars claiming the book was the product of an Irish monastic foundation in Ireland or on the continent while others argue for a Hiberno-Saxon site in Northumbria. See M. Brown, Lindisfarne Gospels, 6–8, for these competing claims and 38–53 for her defense of Lindisfarne and its Northumbrian environs as the site for its production.

newcomers in relationship to royal centralization and reform emerging from Wessex.

Thus Northumbria under the watchful eyes of Cuthbert, as will be explored below, has a story of its own, separate from but also connected to the Wessex-centered narrative and sense of English identity that dominates most historical accounts. The additions made to Durham A.IV.19 in the late tenth century reflect local Northumbrian traditions and Irish connections, as well as reform trends in Wessex. Far too often, however, those Northumbrian developments in the viking era are eclipsed by and measured against a standard of Wessex progressiveness, rather than taken on their own terms.

Three aspects of these broader developments in ninth- and tenth-century Anglo-Saxon England have a bearing on our understanding of Durham A.IV.19 and the Chester-le-Street community in relation to Wessex: first, the role of the vernacular in literacy; second, the monastic reform and reorganization of religious communities; and third, the expansion of pastoral care and the emerging standards of orthodoxy.

First, the role of the vernacular in relation to reform often focuses on the role of King Alfred’s literacy program. However, Alfred’s justification in the Old English Preface to his translation of Gregory the Great’s Pastoral Care about the decline of Latin is in some ways disingenuous. Alfred aimed to revitalize and unify a fragmented society by making the Christian Latin tradition “English,” so Old English played a dynamic role in that program. But vernacular translations and written vernacular were not new in post-viking Alfredian England. Rather, Latin–vernacular bilinguality was a particular product of the Irish-rooted Northumbrian heritage, symbolized in Bede’s glorification of the rustic Caedmon’s vernacular versification of sacred history. Because the Celtic and Germanic language groups were different from Latin in syntax, vocabu-
lary, and grammar, bilingual Latin–vernacular textual traditions and translation projects emerged not necessarily as a symptom of decreased literacy but as evidence of increased literacy and demand for texts, whether translations of classic Latin authors (Boethius, Gregory the Great, Bede), glossed Gospels and Psalters, or original vernacular compositions. Aldred’s bilingual glossing and liturgical enhancements were primarily drawing on the older Irish-influenced Northumbrian traditions that predated King Alfred’s Wessex initiatives.

Second, Chester-le-Street’s location and secular status place Aldred’s vernacular liturgical project in an ambiguous relationship to the tenth-century monastic reform under King Edgar.\(^\text{14}\) Chester-le-Street was not one of those major religious centers targeted by the reformers Æthelwold, Oswald, and Dunstan, nor was it a major site of manuscript production for disseminating reformulated service books. The community remained primarily secular, seemingly remote from the centers of reform, and struggling to survive the viking upheavals. Later Norman historians accused the secular canons of practicing a monastic office, although Symeon of Durham also asserted a monastic core remained under a monk-bishop.\(^\text{15}\) It is tempting, as some scholars have done, to use the Durham A.IV.19 colophon to align Bishop Ælfsige (Bishop of Chester-le-Street 968–90) and Provost Aldred’s visit in relation to Wessex events in the early years of the 970s, whether the Council of Winchester and subsequent promulgation of the *Regularis concordia*, circa 970–73.\(^\text{16}\) Kenneth, King of Scots’ submission to Edgar and transfer of Lothian, escorted by Ælfsige,\(^\text{17}\) or Edgar’s coronation at Bath and securing of oaths from sub-kings in 973 at


\(^\text{16}\) For dating of the council, see Thomas Symons, *Regularis Concordia: The Monastic Agreement of the Monks and Nuns of the English Nation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953), xxiv, where he posits a range of 965–73, settling on the median c. 970 and speculating on the possible correlation with the Easter gathering mentioned in the *Vita Osvaldi*; but he narrowed the range and advanced the date to 973 and a correlation with the Bath coronation in “Regularis Concordia: History and Derivation,” in *Tenth Century Studies: Essays in Commemoration of the Millennium of the Council of Winchester and Regularis Concordia*, ed. David Parsons (London: Phillimore, 1975), 37–59, 214–17 (at 39–43). Bonner (“St. Cuthbert at Chester-le-Street,” in *St. Cuthbert*, ed. Bonner et al., 394–95) posits a pre-council meeting in which Ælfsige and Aldred may have been consultants.

\(^\text{17}\) See De Northymbrorum Comitibus (late eleventh or early twelfth century), in *Symonis monachi Opera omnia*, ed. Thomas Arnold, 2 vols., Rolls Series (1882–85), II, 382; Roger of Wendover, *Flores Historiarum* (Flowers of History), trans. J. A. Giles (London: H.G. Bohn, 1849), 264 under the year 975; and Thompson, *Introduction*, *Rituale*, xviii–xix, who points out that Kenneth did not become king until 971, but perhaps sought Edgar’s protection the year before via Ælfsige’s good offices, possibly at an otherwise unknown witan.
Moreover, although the liturgical materials added to Durham A.IV.19 at Chester-le-Street partially intersect with the continental and English liturgical reform, they also stand apart from it in a distinctively Northumbrian way. The Wessex-initiated reform, drawing on continental trends, aimed in part to define just how a universalizing religion could be made local as a means for creating a cohesive Christianized identity. The *Regularis concordia* not only attempted to impose uniform monastic practices on select institutions, it also established practices that were particular to the English, especially in support of the monarchy. Aldred and his colleagues updated the liturgy with some of the reform innovations noted in the *Regularis concordia* while at the same time localizing them with the Northumbrian dialect and texts. What remains unclear is the degree to which the impulse behind the additions was a response to the external stimuli of reform in the south or an assertion of consciously local Northumbrian identity in the face of it.

Third, the next wave of reform in the late tenth- and early-eleventh centuries targeting pastoral care and the standards of orthodoxy among the clergy and laity can be misapplied anachronistically to Chester-le-Street and Durham A.IV.19 in a negative way. For example, some of the local, especially Irish, heritage practices appear through the lens of later reforms as heterodox remnants of an older system in need of purifying. The homilies, letters, and law codes of Ælfric (c. 950–c.1010), abbot of Eynsham, and Wulfstan, Archbishop of York (1002–1023) envisioned purified religious communities as centers of pastoral care that should have a ripple effect throughout society. Despite the


later prominence of Ælfric and Wulfstan in the historical record, if their lives intersected with Ælfsige or Aldred, more than likely it would have been earlier in their careers when the Bishop and Provost would be their superiors in age and rank.\textsuperscript{23}

Although their aims were hardly achievable or enforceable, both Ælfric and Wulfstan expected priests to be celibate like monks, perform the daily office, and be set apart from the laity by rank, behavior, and sanctity in their performance of the mass.\textsuperscript{24} Evidence for some, though not all, of these expectations can be found in the Durham A.IV.19 additions to the daily office, and perhaps also in Aldred’s materials concerning the ranks of clergy. Aldred and Ælfsige undoubtedly missed Wulfstan’s era as Archbishop at York, but his concerns might have resonated with them. Wulfstan endeavored to restore proper church function in Northumbrian dioceses that had been seriously disrupted or destroyed by the vikings. He, along with Ælfric, fulminated against immoral practices, false gods, and pagan magic, endeavoring to replace them with Christian practices such as the sign of the cross, relics, and prayer.\textsuperscript{25} Durham A.IV.19 includes elaborations on daily prayers emphasizing the power of the cross and extensive memorials to saints. But notably the items that provide exactly the kind of apotropaic Christian ritual advocated by Ælfric and Wulfstan as an antidote to pagan magic are older Irish Northumbrian compilations, such as the John poison prayer and the five prayers for clearing birds from the field. Regardless of the heterodox elements purged by later liturgists, these prayers at the time they were copied represented a liturgical tradition of great veneration that met a very present need. Rather than dismiss these older practices as liturgical dead ends, Durham A.IV.19 allows us to see the influence they might have had on ritual development.

A similar anachronism afflicts our perception of pastoral care in the tenth century when seen through the lens of eleventh-century and later reforms. Despite its viking-induced move and seeming downgrade to secular status, the community of St. Cuthbert at Chester-le-Street continued to preside as a mother church over its Northumbrian territories and churches on

\textsuperscript{23} Ælfric was born c. 950, around the time that Aldred came as a new priest to Chester-le-Street; by 970 he was at the Winchester monastic school and by c. 987 a monk and priest, sent to Cerne Abbas. His Catholic Homilies were produced after Ælfsige’s death in 990 and he only became abbot of Eynsham in 1005. Wulfstan became bishop of London in 996 and then bishop of Worcester and Archbishop of York in 1002.


an older model of monastic bishopric, which may explain why it was left relatively untouched by the tenth-century monastic reform. The word “model” has proved contentious in the scholarly debates over parochial reorganization sparked by John Blair’s work, but his basic outline helps contextualize the situation at Chester-le-Street in the tenth century.

Blair contends that minsters—whether monastic or secular is difficult to distinguish—were the main source of pastoral care and organization circa 650–850, a pattern that was disrupted and reorganized along different lines circa 850–1100 with the growth of local churches, some continuing as daughter churches to mother houses but many independent of minster centers; other scholars question the extent of actual pastoral care delivered from episcopal or monastic churches. The establishment of local churches by lay owners dissociated from these centers is particularly evident in viking-held eastern England and visible in Domesday Book. In Northumbria, for which Domesday Book evidence unfortunately is lacking, we see both the Archbishop of York and the community of St. Cuthbert through its network of estates endeavoring to re-establish minster-centered control of religious life. Durham A.IV.19, in so far as it represents an episcopal service book, may be part of that effort to assert a Northumbrian Christian identity by tying together older and newer liturgical practices and by enhancing pastoral care for the people of St. Cuthbert. The people included in that oversight were those on the Lindisfarne-owned estates, those falling within the bishoprics’ boundaries, as well as the Scandinavian settlers whose latent heathenism needed to be counteracted.

And yet the liturgy for pastoral care remains elusive, despite the increase in service book production beginning in the ninth and tenth centuries. The emphasis of most liturgical scholarship has been on the scriptoria of major reform centers in Southumbria importing or adapting continental liturgical manuals in the latest scripts, whether the newly reformed monastic communities at Canterbury and Winchester, or at Exeter with the development of liturgy for secular clergy. Essential as these manuscripts are to our understanding of late Anglo-Saxon liturgical practice, their importance tends to overshadow the liturgical efforts of provincial clergy and scribes, often denigrated for their poor Latin skills and lack of required or up-to-date service books. Based on the fragments that have survived, it would seem that in smaller or more isolated rural communities, clergy collected every scrap of new prayer that came their


way, along with older practices and forms they treasured. For example, in the margins of an otherwise serviceable copy of Bede’s *Ecclesiastical History* in Old English (Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 41), an anonymous scribe copied Latin and vernacular prayers, formulas, and homilies for everything from liturgical celebrations and angelic protection to recovering stolen cattle and settling bees. It is far too easy to see this marginalia, like the additions to Durham A.IV.19, as evidence of degraded liturgical practice rather than as evidence of clerical self-improvement and a desire to enhance pastoral care by infusing Christian ritual into local daily life.

Combining the fragmentary evidence with the more complete service books of the ninth through eleventh centuries gives a different picture of the long history of early English liturgy. The late Saxon church drew on a rich tradition, found most deeply in Irish and Northumbrian practices, of integrating Latin texts with local vernacular traditions. Christian rituals and prayers not only invited Anglo-Saxons into the atemporal and universal world of the Roman liturgy but also addressed agricultural concerns, the needs of families, and the stresses of life in an unstable world. These pragmatic rituals, far from being superficially Christianized remnants of paganism, were part of the evolving liturgy of the early medieval church.

Thus Aldred’s field prayers and other additions to Durham A.IV.19 may appear heterodox and out of sync with liturgical and educational developments elsewhere when we view them, somewhat anachronistically, through the lens of later reformers or in comparison to major scriptoria at centers like Winchester and Canterbury. But when we see them as products of a venerable Northumbrian bicultural legacy and as a response to the expansion of liturgical life within and around religious communities, these texts form a temporal and cultural bridge. In many ways, Durham A.IV.19 shows us a community caught in the act of negotiating between various forces and concerns, past and present, Northumbrian and English, viking and Christian, clerical and lay, monastic and secular. Rather than merely asking “what are they lacking” in tenth-century Northumbria in comparison to Wessex, this chapter and book look for “what are they contributing” to late Saxon religious life and English cultural identity from a Northumbrian-centered view.

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The Northumbrian contribution to a broader English cultural and religious identity in late Anglo-Saxon England began at home, with an effort to maintain and promote a distinctive local identity, both in terms of surviving the viking incursions and in relation to the Wessex powerhouse. The history of St. Cuthbert’s community from its Lindisfarne origins to its Chester-le-Street and Durham homes shows how a sense of historic continuity was maintained despite geographic shifts, internal changes, and external pressures. Wherever it was located in Northumbria on the estates owned in continuity from Lindisfarne, the familia bearing the body and relics of St. Cuthbert acted on his behalf and at his behest to protect their lands and serve the pastoral needs of “the people of St. Cuthbert.”

The liturgical and educational materials added in Durham A.IV.19 by Aldred and the Chester-le-Street scriptorium, including the Cuthbert collects and colophon written in Wessex, need to be placed into this material, sociopolitical, and spiritual landscape.

Much of the tenth-century physical landscape is unrecoverable, but we can reconstruct some aspects of the natural world and built environments from archaeological, architectural, historical, and artifactual evidence. The temporal circumstances were shaped by local as well as larger economic, social, and political structures, whose histories also influenced Aldred’s and his community’s perceptions of their environment. The material conditions help us understand Northumbrian devotional life and pastoral care evident in the rituals and texts found in Durham A.IV.19 examined in the following chapters. Although the sociopolitical landscape overlays and is therefore secondary to the natural and built environments, the history of the Cuthbert community’s landholding offers a historical overview of Aldred’s world before turning to the land itself and how humans shaped that environment, particularly around Chester-le-Street.


Map 2 Northumbria in the Tenth Century (Julius Ray Paulo)
THE SOCIOPOLITICAL LANDSCAPE

The sources for the cult of St. Cuthbert, the history of the Lindisfarne to Durham community, and Northumbrian religious life as a whole are rich, but by comparison poor for the late tenth-century Chester-le-Street era. The early period of Northumbria’s “Golden Age” in the seventh and eighth centuries is of course well-served by the Venerable Bede and the material record of manuscripts and stonework, extending into the early ninth with continuing written production and artifacts from the Lindisfarne and Wearmouth-Jarrow communities. But one of the effects of the viking incursions was the disruption of narrative and historical sources in the ninth and tenth centuries. As a consequence, we often rely on materials surviving in eleventh- and twelfth-century compilations from the Durham era of the community looking back from an Anglo-Norman point of view that, among other things, valorizes their restoration of true monastic life to the community. The surviving sources are also distorted by the competing political interests in tenth-century Northumbria between local, Scandinavian, and Wessex rulers as the community negotiated a secure position for itself between them.

The key narrative sources are the Historia de Sancto Cuthberto (HSC), of which the main core is thought to have originated at Chester-le-Street in the tenth century, Symeon of Durham’s twelfth-century History of the Durham Church (Symeon, Libellus) and continuation chronicles, as well as the Durham Liber vitae record of names (LVD). For insights into Northumbria from outside these Durham sources, we can make use of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (ASC) D and E northern recensions, Alcuin’s writings, Asser’s Life of Alfred, and other chronicles such as Æthelwulf’s De abbatibus and The Chronicle of Æthelweard. We also have some of the manuscripts mentioned as existing at the time in the community’s library, as well as artifacts, most notably the relics of Cuthbert himself and other treasures produced by or given to the community, such as the gifts of King Athelstan in 934.

From these textual and artifactual sources, we can extract some of the events, people, and places familiar or known to Aldred and affecting his com-

munity. However, the main text of the *Historia de Sancto Cuthberto*, presumed to rely on earlier traditions and documents of circa 900–45, is silent from there to the Durham era a half century later, precisely when Aldred was resident at Chester-le-Street, circa 950 to after 970. Symeon of Durham’s chronicle, relying on the *HSC* and other traditions retained in twelfth-century Durham, is colored by its monastic reform context and efforts to sustain a thin chain of monastic life from Lindisfarne through Chester-le-Street to Durham. For example, Symeon maintains that a small group of monks continued to escort the body of Cuthbert on its travels, that a monastic office was sung, and that the bishops were all monk-bishops.  

Although the value of Symeon’s chronicle for the Chester-le-Street era remains sketchy and dubious, we should not automatically discount the oral traditions he recorded about a residual monastic community at Chester-le-Street, which might find some confirmation in Durham A.IV.  

Aldred’s scribal glosses and additions explored in subsequent chapters thus become one of the best sources for his era. We do not know why the community under Aldred and Bishop Ælfsige did not maintain historical records associated before and after with the community, such as the Durham *Liber vitae*.  

Whether the *Liber vitae* was held by another house or neglected, its absence at Chester-le-Street suggests a partial breakdown in the community’s continuity from the past.  

In addition to problematic sources, the political environment of ninth- and tenth-century Northumbria is complicated by landholding patterns, cultural and religious affiliations, and competing notions and centers of rulership. The players included the local Northumbrian aristocracy of Bernicia and Deira, Scottish kings to the north, Mercian and Wessex rulers to the south, Danish raiders and settlers direct from Scandinavia in northeast Northumbria, and Irish Norse from Dublin in northwest Northumbria. The Lindisfarne bishopric and its *familia*, virtually identical to and identified with the cult and community of St. Cuthbert, was also a player: the bishop acted as the titular landowner in control of various estates strategically located within Northumbria, while the community itself functioned as the curators for the illustrious monastic heritage from Lindisfarne, Wearmouth, and Jarrow. The community surrounding the body of St. Cuthbert and all that it represented served as a traditional center of cult worship, a rallying point for dominance of the culture, presided over by the bishop. Unsurprisingly, alliance with a local church or bishop was to the advantage of any ruler, even, or especially, a pagan invader, while it was to the bishop’s and his church’s advantage to ally themselves with the most likely successful and peaceable ruler, or better yet, to be involved in the choice.  

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34. Symeon, *Libellus*, ii.6 (pp. 102–5), ii.12 (pp. 116–17), ii.20 (pp. 140–43).  
is precisely what St. Cuthbert’s community did in a series of incidents featured in the HSC. These episodes show how the community negotiated with the prevailing local rulers, whether Northumbrian or Danish, and eventually aligned itself with Wessex.36

The HSC is a combination of both early and late sources organized more thematically than chronologically, so there is some contention about its accuracy.37 Moreover its overall purpose was, as is true with most ecclesiastical and monastic histories, to document the institution’s historic claims to land and privileges; so it is selectively biased toward the interests of preserving those properties and claims. Nonetheless, the stories it tells, sparse as they are for the tenth century, are very revealing of the sociopolitical dynamics of which Aldred would have been aware. In particular, the HSC’s record of Cuthbert’s posthumous miracles focus on royal incidents, either kings or chiefs who met a bad end for alienating the community’s lands or those given visionary support by Cuthbert because they honored him and his community’s interests.38

The thread connecting all these stories is the material and spiritual presence of Cuthbert, his body as it journeyed with the migrating community and his spirit directing temporal affairs.39 According to the HSC, they left Lindisfarne in 875 on a seven-year odyssey, attempting first to take the body to Ireland, evidence for the historic and contemporary link the community maintained with Irish monastic institutions. Then, thwarted by Cuthbert himself out of concern for his people in Northumbria, the entourage visited other religious communities in their network at Whithorn and Crayke before settling at the Chester-le-Street estate in 883 for what turned out to be a century before the final, miraculously directed, move to Durham in 995 (map 2).40

The contrast the HSC makes between good and bad rulers, and the ways in which the community of St. Cuthbert negotiated a secure place for itself in this rapidly changing political environment, are illustrated in the stories of two Danes, Halfdan and Guthred. The Danish invader Halfdan arrived in

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38. Johnson South, Historia, 77, notes seven such episodes.


40. In an earlier phase, Bishop Ecgred of Lindisfarne (830–45) had moved Cuthbert and the historical wooden church of St. Aidan to the nearby site of Norham. Cuthbert’s body was either moved from there or returned to Lindisfarne before the new journey.
Northumbria circa 874–876; his destruction of monasteries presumably precipitated the abandonment of Lindisfarne and the so-called seven years wandering of the community before their 883 settlement at Chester-le-Street. Halfdan’s odiferous end, abandoned by his followers because of his madness and body odor, is attributed to God and St. Cuthbert’s avenging hand; but other evidence suggests that few of his followers wanted to accompany him on his next adventure in Ireland, preferring instead to settle down to farming the lands he had distributed to them in Northumbria. Indeed, it appears that these Scandinavian settlers took over existing estates as overlords, leased land from the community, or cultivated it themselves as peasant farmers, in some cases filling in unencumbered lands. According to the HSC (14) and the ASC 876–78, the vikings in the Northumbrian area settled into farming, while the rulers of Wessex and Mercia, notably Alfred the Great and his daughter Æthelflæd, Lady of the Mercians, continued to struggle to hold the line against their viking threats.

The Northumbrian land settlement may be due in no small part to the active agency of the community of St. Cuthbert, as recounted in the story of Guthred, eventual Danish successor to Halfdan. According to the account in the HSC, repeated with varying details in later versions, Cuthbert appeared in a vision to Eadred, abbot of Carlisle, a monastery associated with the Lindisfarne community (and possibly a stopping place in their itinerary of wandering at the time of their aborted attempt to flee to Ireland). In Abbot Eadred’s vision, Cuthbert instructs him to go over to the Danish-controlled area; buy from a particular widow a slave named Guthred, son of Hardacnut; and make him king, conditioned on his granting the land between the Tyne and the Wear with rights of sanctuary to the community of St. Cuthbert (i.e. the Lindisfarne episcopal see). This Guthred may be the same Danish Christian king who died in 895 and was buried in York church, but little evidence survives to substantiate his existence or document the various other Scandinavian rulers who came and went in the tenth century. With Guthred, the community became the agent for the next Danish ruler, formalized in a ritual on a hill swearing oaths on the body of St. Cuthbert. The visionary plan worked amazingly well as a peacemaking device, demonstrating how much it was in the interests of both communities, the Danish and the Christian, to settle terms with one another. The HSC implies that the successful alliance was linked to the relocation

41. HSC 12; Johnson South, Historia, 86–87; see also Downham, Viking Kings, 68–78, on Halfdan and Guthred.
42. King Alfred’s settlement with Guthrum drew the line at Watling Street; Æthelflæd, even after the death of her husband Æthelred, held the northeast border of Mercia against Hiberno-Norse incursions (Wainwright, Scandinavian England, 305–24).
44. For an analogous situation with Alfred and Guthrum, see Richard Abels, “King Alfred’s Peace-
of Cuthbert and his community to Chester-le-Street, but the separate events conflated in this account were probably far more complex. What is clear is the degree to which landholding was the key to security and settlement for both communities.

The Guthred agreement is reinforced thematically, if somewhat unchronologically in the HSC, by a King Alfred story that adds the support of Wessex to the community’s claims. In another extraordinary vision, St. Cuthbert appeared as the divine agent of King Alfred’s miraculous victory over the vikings at Athelney. In this story, similar in type to one in the Life of St. Neot, Alfred and his wife, while living on limited means in their retreat from the vikings, kindly feed a hungry stranger, who, as it turns out in a subsequent vision, is actually Cuthbert. Cuthbert then tells Alfred how he will be victorious over the vikings. The HSC compares Cuthbert and Alfred to the Biblical exemplar of Samuel’s choice of King David and Bede’s story of St. Peter’s visionary appearance to King Edwin of Northumbria. And, of course, Alfred (re)grants the lands of St. Cuthbert already given by Guthred. As David Hall argues, the Guthred arrangement included rights of sanctuary (asylum and intercession) that matched Alfred’s laws—supporting the Wessex connection—and also assured the church’s status as a head-minster.45 The zones or areas may even have marked boundaries on the property delineating the physical space over which the church had spiritual jurisdiction. Such boundary marking has ritual significance as well for liturgical processions around the religious compound or the fields. Thus these grants of land not only ensured economic security but also status, control, and a measure of autonomy for the community as spiritual guardians.

The violation and alienation of land versus the cultivation and restoration of land was a continuing theme in the HSC’s record of the tenth century, with the contrasting stories of King Rægnald, a Hiberno-Norse invader of Northumbria, and the Wessex King Athelstan, a giver of gifts and patron of St. Cuthbert. Rægnald, ravaging Northumbria in several battles and capturing York, took land from the community and gave it to evil followers.46 Like Halfdan, Rægnald died during the pursuit of his rapacious interests, while his unbelieving follower Onlafald, “son of a devil” who received some of the land, was struck down while arrogantly challenging St. Cuthbert on his own territory in the church. Cuthbert answered the pleas of his people for vengeance, transfixing Onlafald with an iron bar on the threshold of the church, and the land was

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46. HSC 22–24. The identity of Rægnald (Ragnall) and the battle(s) of Corbridge are the source of much confusion. See Johnson South, Historia, 103–8; Morris, “Northumbria and the Viking Settlement,” 84–90; Wainwright, Scandinavian England, 163–79; Hudson, Viking Pirates, 20–22.
restored. By contrast, the community leased the same land and other parcels to lay lords willing to cultivate it peacefully, including one Eadred son of Ricisige who, having violated the peace by killing a Prince Earwulf and taking his wife, fled into the asylum offered within the Cuthbertine bounds of immunity. Such was the power of Cuthbert to protect his lands and people, according to the HSC.

Again in the tenth century, as in the ninth with Alfred, the community’s claims were reinforced by royal Wessex patronage, under Athelstan and his successor Edmund, while the line of Scandinavian rulers in Northumbria remains murky. Both Wessex kings made campaigns into the north solidifying their control of Northumbria and alliances with the Scots. Along the way, both stopped at Chester-le-Street to patronize a saint who was, in turn, becoming one of their patrons, Athelstan in 934 and Edmund in 945. Athelstan’s gifts and grants of land are more thoroughly substantiated in the HSC with a copy of the charter. The list of gifts is a window into the material life of the church in this period, its furnishings, ornamentation, and treasures, including books, treated below. More important, for the HSC, were the new grants of land extending the community’s control, land grants also affirmed by Edmund and reinforced by King Eadred’s visit and gifts.47

However, in the second half of the tenth century, Aldred’s period, the HSC is silent. Although the community’s economic and political security seemed stable based on royal patronage, control of land, and rights of sanctuary, the local political tensions may have persisted amidst continuing collaboration with local rulers. Archbishop Wulfstan of York (931–56) supported, apparently willingly, both Olaf Sihtricson and Eric Bloodaxe as rulers over Northumbria. He was incarcerated for a time by King Eadred (946–55), probably for this collaboration, and his irregular charter attestations suggest he was in and out of favor. The archbishop’s actions may be seen as part of a regional resistance among the Northumbrian elite to Wessex rather than just capitulation out of fear of the vikings.48

Wessex reasserted control of Northumbria in 954 with the overthrow of Eric Bloodaxe as king of York, after which no new waves of vikings occurred until 980. Nonetheless, Wessex was far away and its kingship divided for a time between King Eadwig (955–59) and his brother Edgar, who was initially King of the Mercians (957–59) controlling the north and supported by Northumbrians, before he succeeded Eadwig and ruled as king of the English (959–75).49

47. The latter recorded by Symeon, Libellus, ii.20 (pp. 140–43).
49. Bonner, “St. Cuthbert at Chester-le-Street,” in St. Cuthbert, ed. Bonner et al., 394–95. Further evidence for northern alignment with Wessex in the late tenth and early eleventh centuries is the episcopal plurality whereby the Archbishop of York also held the see of Worcester, a stabilizing factor for York during
Aldred, a native Northumbrian who arrived in the Chester-le-Street community presumably sometime in the 950s, must surely have been aware of the recent history of unrest, the insecurity of the land, and the episcopal involvement in brokering political relationships. Indeed, as noted earlier, Bishop Ælfsige is credited in later sources with accompanying Kenneth, King of the Scots, on his submission to King Edgar, 973. This is unlikely to be the same journey as that recorded in the Durham A.IV.19 colophon, but adds to the picture of a mobile and politically connected Northumbrian bishop and provost. Whether Aldred lived long enough to experience the upheavals and invasions under King Æthelred (978–1016) is unknown, although Bishop Ælfsige lived through the early, and less tumultuous, part of his reign. But for a time, at least, during the earlier part of Ælfsige’s episcopate, he, and Provost Aldred with him on at least one occasion, was secure enough to travel and be involved as a negotiator in north–south political affairs.

The other aspect that is abundantly clear in the HSC is the emphasis on the cultivation of land as a symbol of peace and stability for community life. Land and power are intertwined in medieval Europe but not in the sense of the feudalism model from which medievalists have been trying to extricate themselves. Rather, the pattern emerging in tenth-century England is one of, as Susan Reynolds titles it, “kingdoms and communities.” Kingdom-building on the scale of Wessex emerged from rulers harnessing the energy of existing networks of communities, such as the node found at Chester-le-Street powered by the legacy and territories of Lindisfarne under the patronage of St. Cuthbert.

In this context of land and heritage, the HSC’s primary concern was to establish the community’s rights over land historically granted to them by those with authority to do so, as they claimed. But the physical land itself was crucial to their survival, economically, politically, and legally and therefore claimed as their inherited right. The accent placed on cultivation in several of the HSC entries, whether as evidence of vikings settling peacefully or Northumbrians returning to a productive life, shows how arable land formed the base of the community’s economy, while negotiations over boundaries, rights, and leases show the political dynamics involved in sustaining the community’s central place in Northumbria. David Rollason makes the point that Cuthbert served

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as lord of the land and lord of men, citing the phrase “populus sancti” (Old English *haliwerfolc*) to describe those who wept when the community tried to take Cuthbert to Ireland, only to be thwarted by the saint: these were the people of the land who saw the dead saint as their lord and protector of the life of the land.\(^{52}\) One of the provost’s duties that Aldred must have inherited was ensuring the productivity of estate lands and protecting their boundaries, not just through political means but also through divine intervention in liturgical rituals. Under the circumstances, Aldred might very well have been concerned to have on hand rituals for exorcism, judicial ordeals, and protection of crops from damage, as are all found in Durham A.IV.19.

**THE NATURAL WORLD AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT**

The Northumbrian landscape exhibits diversity both regionally and across time, making it hard to map what was experienced and perceived in the tenth century. Chester-le-Street lies amidst gently rolling hills and cultivated farmlands, just north of the escarpment on which Durham was built (image 3). But north of Hadrian’s Wall and approaching Lindisfarne, the broader landscape throws elevations into sharp relief and exposes the hugeness of the horizon: the world seems larger and the sky higher, like a massive bowl over an enormous plate with far distant rims. That impression may very well have been shared by our medieval predecessors and have played a role in their religious thinking and cultural practice: on this broad expanse of creation, it is hard not to contemplate the sheer size of the universe and the nature of the God who created it, as is evident in Bede’s opening description of the richness of Britain.\(^{53}\) On the one hand, Christians in the North saw themselves on the periphery of the religious world centered in Jerusalem, connected by the whale-roads of the ocean to other Christian sites. And yet at the same time they found their isolation a fortuitous point of connection to the divine, feeding an Irish and monastic impulse for ascetic pilgrimage and retreat, of which the tidal island of Lindisfarne is a perfect image. Even from that remote isolation, St. Cuthbert felt the need to retreat further to his own offshore island where he sometimes consorted with God’s creatures (image 4).

However, the spectacular landscape of the North was not left uninhabited or unmarked by human history. Secular and religious sites arise sparsely and sometimes dramatically from this giant landscape: the ancient Yeavering Bell hillfort, the Bernician seat at Bamburgh on a coastal outcrop, and the Lindis-

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\(^{52}\) See Symeon of Durham, *Libellus*, ii.11 (pp. 114–15), n. 66, and ii.16 (pp. 132–33); Rollason, “Wanderings,” 54–56; Pons Sanz, *Analysis*, 28.

\(^{53}\) Bede, *EH* 1.1; see also remarks on this passage by Roger Ray, *Bede, Rhetoric, and the Creation of Christian Latin Culture*, Jarrow Lecture 1997 (Jarrow: St. Paul’s Church, 1997), 14.
farne complex on its tidal island (images 1 and 2). Moreover, the terrain is dotted with stone artifacts, some memorializing the cross—evidence of God Incarnate in the world—and some inscribed with local events and persons. Other markers, such as wooden structures, are more ephemeral, their traces buried under later habitations or discovered in archaeological digs.

On a more prosaic level, a scientific description offers a sense of the natural world with which the human inhabitants interacted over many centuries. Northumbria is close to the upper limit of the temperate zone and its mountainous terrain with woodlands leaves less land for farming than elsewhere in England (map 2). Upland areas were more likely to be uninhabited, sparsely settled, or used as wood or pasture resources. The best arable land was between 100–200 meters in elevation and had already been exploited for centuries by the Anglo-Saxons and their predecessors back into the Iron Age. Archaeological evidence now suggests that Anglo-Saxon plant agriculture and animal husbandry in Northumbria extended well beyond this fertile zone with the development of more marginal lands, such as those leased to Scandinavian settlers. Although obviously colder than southern England, the winters were milder at the beginning of the medieval warming period (c. 900–1300). Combined with the Gulf stream air, the ground even with frost on the surface might have allowed winter as well as spring ploughing for two harvests. Crops grown in northern England in the early Middle Ages included bread wheat, barley, oats, rye and flax, as well as peas and beans, probably alternating with each other and rotated with fallow and grazing to replenish soil and reduce pests. Fruit and nuts from woodland edges supplemented the diet, along with meat from domestic animals on grazing land and from hunting, for which Durham A.IV.19 has appropriate blessings. Unlike the Celtic dispersed settlement patterns with scattered farmsteads, however, the Anglo-Saxons began developing nucleated settlements amid open fields within this landscape. In such nucleated villages with a cluster of homes, the community shared grazing pasturage and ox-driven plough teams.


56. The medieval warming period or European Climatic Optimum is assigned to either c. 900–1200 or c. 1000–1300 (see Hudson, Viking Pirates, 7).

The villas owned by the community of St. Cuthbert as described in the HSC were large resource areas with possibly several nucleated villages. Before the viking invasions, the Lindisfarne community had already acquired a number of scattered estates in Northumbria that coalesced into large blocks of territory under their control between the Tyne and the Wear. These lands were in prime farm areas, fully cultivated and stocked, inhabited by farm laborers and perhaps leased out to individuals. Some had small monasteries or churches. In the viking era, as hinted in the HSC, Scandinavian settlers fitted themselves into this existing landscape: some tried to take over existing estates as overlords, peacefully or not, or as leases from the community of St. Cuthbert.

Among these estates, Chester-le-Street was not an unlikely choice for the eventual settlement of the St. Cuthbert community in the political geography of the time as well as their traditions. The site had a particular connection to their patron saint in the Life of St. Cuthbert, a food miracle. Although Bede’s account does not name the place, he gives more detail to the story than the anonymous account of the incident at “Kuncacester,” variously spelled. According to Bede, the youthful Cuthbert was traveling through a village where he was offered a meal by a God-fearing woman, but he refused to eat on a Friday before the ninth hour. Even though warned that he would not find another place of human habitation before nightfall on his journey, he persisted, ultimately stopping for the night at some shepherds’ summer huts, abandoned in the winter. Inside this uninhabited shelter, his horse was the discoverer of miraculous sustenance. When the animal started nibbling on the thatch, down fell a bundle wrapped in cloth containing a half warm loaf of bread and some meat. After giving thanks, Cuthbert shared the bounty with his horse. Bede identifies the location as a “solitary place” (solitudine), mirroring saintly ascetic behavior for encounters with God’s miraculous provision (Elijah is the example given). Unlike Bede, the anonymous author does not include this context of fasting for the miracle, emphasizing rather angelic assistance, but does give a
CHAPTER 1

more specific geographic description. Cuthbert was traveling north (probably on the Roman road), crossed the Wear (image 5) at a place called Kuncacester and stopped there because of the weather. He holed up with his horse in these seasonal huts, currently deserted, because there were no surrounding humans who could help supply him.

It would appear from this description that Chester-le-Street in Cuthbert’s time was no more than a spring–summer pasturage for shepherds, without a permanent settlement, although remains of the Roman fort of Concangis presumably would have been extant. County Durham was probably only sparsely inhabited in the sixth and seventh centuries, but was developed in the eighth and later centuries with Anglo-Saxon agriculture and estates, many of them coming into the purview of the Lindisfarne see in the ninth century, which also established monastic cells throughout the region. We know from the HSC that Chester-le-Street was one of a number of acquisitions the Lindisfarne see retained or recovered in the tenth century in the lease by Guthred.

Why this site for the bishop’s see after the migration from Lindisfarne in 883? Chester-le-Street controlled a large surrounding territory and was centrally located in relation to the community’s other estates, allowing the bishopric to monitor their territory north of the river Tees and retain economic and political control of their properties and income during tumultuous times. Situated on a major road, it probably served as part of a network of royal estate centers and monastic sites used as staging posts for the bishop and his familia when they traveled; as Eric Cambridge suggests, Chester-le-Street may best be conceived as a “bishop’s household.” Politically, Chester-le-Street lay in a buffer zone between the two former Northumbrian kingdoms of Bernicia and Deira, while the bishopric was also balancing somewhat precariously between the shifting control of Scandinavian rulers and the rising power of Wessex in Northumbria. Indeed, some scholars argue that the community chose Chester-le-Street and a Danish alliance over the Northumbrian elite ruling at Bamburgh over

62. “Pergenti namque eo ab austro ad flumen quod Uuir nominatur, in eo loco ubi Kuncaster dicitur, et transuadato eo ad habitacula uernalia et aestualia, propter imbrem et tempestatem reuersus est.” “Coming from the south to a river which is called the Wear, on reaching a place called Chester-le-Street, he crossed it and turned aside on account of the rain and tempest to some dwellings used only in spring and summer.” Colgrave, Two Lives, 70–71.


65. Rollason, “Cuthbert Saint and Patron,” 18–19, describes the boundaries of Bernicia between Tees and Forth and Deira between Tees and Humber; by Cuthbert’s time, Bernician kings had become kings of Northumbria, but tensions may have remained with the cult of Cuthbert serving as a unifying force. See also Anne Lawrence-Mathers, Manuscripts in Northumbria in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2003), 3–5 and 12–26.
Lindisfarne. In the tenth-century geopolitics of Northumbria, Chester-le-Street was in the center, not on the periphery, of affairs and its bishop was not only situated at a major intersection but on the road himself quite a bit.

A Chester-le-Street church still stands in the same location, but no remains of the wooden church of Aldred’s day are extant because of a series of stone churches built over the same site (image 6; fig. 1). Why the community, accustomed presumably to a stone-built church at Lindisfarne, remained in a wooden church for a hundred years has contributed to several speculations. On the pragmatic side, little stone building was taking place in the tenth century, although since the church is sited within the bounds of the Roman fort, there


67. The present church includes a medieval anchorhold that currently displays sculptural remains from as early as the tenth century. See http://www.maryandcuthbert.org.uk/content.php?page_id=65 for a plan of the church showing the phases of building.
Figure 1  Chester-le-Street Church (Julius Ray Paulo)

Image 6  Chester-le-Street and church, author photo
must surely have been hewn stone available for recycling by the community. They may have thought their stay at Chester-le-Street would be shorter than it turned out to be, but we should be wary of assuming that they perceived a wooden structure as flimsy or temporary. Indeed, the community had a tradition of wooden churches treated as relics (the Aidan church moved to Norham), perhaps related to Irish patterns of wooden church building. There may also be some echo of the thatched shelter in which Cuthbert took refuge, although it is impossible to know if those roadside shepherd’s huts were in the vicinity of the Roman fort and later church site. Nonetheless, this wooden church did not stand alone but was part of an estate that must have included dormitory or other housing facilities for the clergy and their families, if they had them, and lay servants, outbuildings for kitchen and crafts, as well as one or more villages of homes where the agricultural laborers lived and worked the fields.

Although the wooden remains of such estates have not stood the test of time, stone artifacts and fragments survived. Roman ruins, older stone crosses, boundary markers, and other monuments remained from earlier ages. Symeon of Durham, in a later account, reports that the community carried a stone cross associated with Bishop Æthelwold with them when they left Lindisfarne; in their migration through their western coastal estates, they may very well have encountered stone cross monuments like the Ruthwell cross (image 7) and been influenced by their style of liturgical commemoration. Stronger evidence suggests that contemporary stone cross remains found at Chester-le-Street do not match the style of Lindisfarne craftsmen but reflect the work of local carvers and Scandinavian influences (image 8).

The ninth-century move of the Lindisfarne community to Chester-le-Street was strategic in response to the viking threat, not a headlong flight. The archaeological report by M. C. Bishop from the 1990–91 excavations (http://www.armatura.connectfree.co.uk/concangis/acrep/reportf.htm) found no evidence for or against reuse during the Cuthbertine community’s residence there, probably due to later destruction, but speculates that given the church’s position and orientation, Cuthbert’s shrine reused the fort’s principia or main building (http://www.armatura.connectfree.co.uk/concangis/f.htm and http://www.armatura.connectfree.co.uk/concangis/photos/church.htm). Symeon of Durham, Libellus, i.12 (p. 61); Rollason, “Wanderings,” 47; Ó Carragáin, Ritual and the Rood, 146 on the Solway Firth area, site of the Ruthwell cross, and its potential links to lands held and visited by the Cuthbert community during their migration.

70. Symeon of Durham, Libellus, i.12 (p. 61); Rollason, “Wanderings,” 47; Ó Carragáin, Ritual and the Rood, 146 on the Solway Firth area, site of the Ruthwell cross, and its potential links to lands held and visited by the Cuthbert community during their migration.


72. See Higham, Kingdom of Northumbria, 151, 183; Rollason, Northumbria 500–1100, 271–72, and Cuthbert, Saint and Patron, 18, 47, 50; Cambridge, “Why,” 379–86, and Bonner, “St. Cuthbert at Chester-
Image 7  Ruthwell Cross, photograph by Lairich Rig, Creative Commons license

Image 8  Eadmund monument, Chester-le-Street Anker House, author photo
community brought artifacts with them from Lindisfarne, including the wooden coffin of Cuthbert (fig. 2) containing a Gospel book, the bodies and relics of other saints, a portable altar of wood overlayed with silver, the *Lindisfarne Gospels*, and other manuscripts and treasures used for services in the church. These relics served as symbols of their identity as a community and continuity with the past, while their transferal signaled the movement of the Lindisfarne see. Such familiar artifacts would recall their Lindisfarne home, and even the second or third generation, such as Aldred, must have recognized the stylistic differences between their own day and the golden age of Lindisfarne. But Chester-le-Street also received new treasures in the form of royal gifts that added to the community while building continuity with the past through Cuthbert. The most famous of these gifts were those from King Athelstan’s visit in 934, securing Wessex patronage for the cult of St. Cuthbert and giving the community a stronger bond to the monarchy. The charter list of gifts copied into the *HSC* specifies the following, some of which have been identified with surviving artifacts:

In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. I, King Æthelstan, give to St Cuthbert this gospel-book, two chasubles, and one alb, and one stole with maniple, and one belt, and three altar-coverings, and one silver chalice, and two patens, one finished with gold, the other of Greek workmanship, and one silver thurible, and one cross skilfully finished with gold and ivory, and one royal headdress woven with gold, and two tablets crafted of silver and gold, and two silver candelabra finished with gold, and one missal, and two gospel-books ornamented with gold and silver, and one of St Cuthbert written in verse and in prose, and seven palls, and three curtains, and three tapestries, and two silver cups with covers, and four large bells, and three horns crafted of gold and silver, and two banners, and one lance, and two golden armlets, and my beloved vill of Bishop Wearmouth with its dependencies. . . .

The liturgical furnishings and ornamentation rivaling that of the treasures brought from Lindisfarne suggest that the wooden church at Chester-le-Street, whatever its appearance on the exterior, was glorious on the interior, a ritual space glittering with gold and silver as well as tapestries and fabrics, not to mention the illuminated Gospel books.

The first Gospel book mentioned is probably London, British Library, Cotton Otho B.ix since it contained a donor portrait of King Æthelstan giving the book to Cuthbert and Old English inscriptions, dated to the late tenth

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73. A move that coincides with the mysterious end of the Hexham diocese over the area of Chester-le-Street (Rollason, *Northumbria 500–1100*, 247).
Figure 2 Cuthbert Coffin, apostles and archangels. Courtesy of C. V. Horie; J. M. Cronyn and C. V. Horie, *St Cuthbert’s Coffin: The History, Technology & Conservation* (Durham: Dean and Chapter, Durham Cathedral, 1985)
century, describing the donation. The lives of St. Cuthbert in prose and verse undoubtedly refer to the biographies by Bede and an anonymous hagiographer found in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 183, along with Cuthbert liturgy and an intact donation portrait. CCCC 183 has additions by both Chester-le-Street Scribe C and Durham Scribe M3, demonstrating its presence in the community at both locations. London, British Library, Royal 7.D.XXIV might have originally been compiled as a gift to Chester-le-Street but CCCC 183 was given instead. Royal 7.D.XXIV contains, in addition to his De virginitate, a letter of Aldhelm to a Bishop Eadfrith, possibly the Lindisfarne Gospels creator, praising English scholarship vis-a-vis the Irish while also condemning heathenism. If the manuscript was aimed initially at Chester-le-Street, the letter reinforces the perception of the community as dealing with both an Irish heritage and a Scandinavian “pagan” presence.

Other books and materials may have come to Chester-le-Street from the nearby twin monasteries of Wearmouth and Jarrow with its Bedan legacy. The eighth-century Durham Gospels of probable Lindisfarne origins include a poem honoring King Athelstan added by a late tenth- or early eleventh-century hand presumably at Chester-le-Street. These royal gifts, borrowed books, and artifacts brought from Lindisfarne suggest something of the library and visual landscape influencing Aldred and his community.

Aldred and the Durham A.IV.19 additions fit into this tenth-century picture of local and kingdom-wide forces. The fact of a literate Northumbrian provost traveling in Wessex with his bishop was not unusual or surprising. Rather, it indicates the growing sense of an English church united above and below the Humber through common liturgical concerns evident in the additions Aldred and the other scribes made in Durham A.IV.19. Aldred in particular focuses

75. This information is derived from eighteenth-century transcriptions since the manuscript was later severely damaged in the Cotton fire. Johnson South, Historia, 109; Keynes, “King Athelstan’s Books,” 175–78.
77. T. J. Brown, Durham Ritual, 32, 36; see chapter 3 and chapter 5 for additions connected to CCCC 183.
on integration of their diverse heritages in his Old English gloss to the community’s treasured *Lindisfarne Gospels* and in the multilingual vocabularies he explores in Durham A.IV.19. Although Aldred’s linguistic experiments and influence might not reach the level of Alcuin, Aldhelm, or Notker, arguably this man was thoughtfully contemplating the meaning of the Latin rituals and prayers in his native language in line with the Carolingian inspired reform. Later liturgists’ fears notwithstanding, Aldred’s seemingly heterodox prayers actually sustained an older, northern liturgical tradition of great veneration. What we find in the Durham A.IV.19 manuscript may not fit neatly into the Wessex-generated pattern of liturgical reform, but this study seeks to discover how Durham A.IV.19 functioned as a collection that was of use for enhancing devotional life and pastoral care in its community, despite modern reservations about its scholarly quality or liturgical centrality.

The following chapters explore first Aldred and what he reveals about himself in the context of his linguistic projects (chapter 2), then the community of scribes visible around him in the additions to Durham A.IV.19 (chapter 3). Subsequent chapters unravel the liturgical materials added by the Chester-le-Street scribes (chapter 4) and the scholarly and pedagogical apparatus visible in Aldred’s gloss and encyclopedic additions (chapter 5). Although the materials added at Chester-le-Street to Durham A.IV.19 need further linguistic and source analysis than is presently available, this book endeavors to draw some general conclusions (chapter 6) about the character of community life at Chester-le-Street in the second half of the tenth century as revealed in the varied parts of this fragmentary, frustrating, but ultimately fascinating manuscript.

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