

LIFE OF CUTHBERT
(working title)

SCRIPT

23 March 2018

Cuthbert Cantata

Scene I: Cuthbert's calling by Aidan

Symeon: *[Anglo-Saxon poem, De situ Dunelmi]*
Welcome! My name is Simeon of Durham, a monk.
A historian of the Church and of Kings
like my great forbear Bede of Jarrow.

Today I shall tell you the story of Cuthbert, our founder, who lived over five hundred years ago in the Kingdom of Northumbria. He came from a noble family, but his life changed one day as he guarded sheep on the Cheviot hill and a pilgrim passed by: Aidan, the wandering Saint and Abbot of Lindisfarne. Let me set the scene.

The city of Durham is famous throughout the kingdom of the Britons,
Built high up, with amazing crags outcropping all around.
The Wear runs all around it, a river with strong currents.
In the rush of its waters live fish of many different varieties.
And there a great vastness of woods has grown up.
In those habitations live many wild animals, a multitude of creatures in the deep valleys.
It's also in this city that the glorious saintly Cuthbert was revealed to men.

[Summary of Symeon's prologue]
Our venerable church was founded in ancient times,
By kings and bishops, who were saints in waiting.
Oswald, King and martyr, Aidan, holy pastor,
And Cuthbert, God's hand in our land.
Now far from our home on Holy Island,
We are still the same church, built high by God's grace.
We keep their holy relics, and follow their holy precepts,
Our bishop is heir of all they laid there.
So come, listen now, and hear of Cuthbert, his life, and his hand in 'the origins and progress of this, the church of Durham' *[title of Symeon's work]*.

Long, long ago when the seas were green and heather grew purple on the mountainsides, Cuthbert sat herding sheep. Sturdy he was, a warrior part time: alone, of course, with his pipe, his cloak and his wandering thoughts.

Cuthbert they called him, a warrior by name,
Destined for glory but not martial fame.
Here he sits dreaming all unaware,
Of Aidan who approaches and finds him there.

[From back of nave, a tap tap tap as Aidan walks forward with his pilgrim stick.]

Aidan: Vigils, Lauds, Prime, Terce, Sexts, Nones, Vespers.
Ad medium noctis
Matutinam, Secundam, Tertiam, Sextam, Nonam, Initium Noctis!

Vigils, Lauds, Prime, Terce, Sexts, Nones, Vespers

(Mutters loudly)

O ye of little faith, why so fearful?
'And he arose and rebuked the winds and the waves
And there was a great calm.'

Cuthbert: Whoa! Pilgrim! For such a traveller you must be.
Come, sit by me, rest a while, sup sweet tasting milk.
I have plenty. Look! All my sheep, my goats!

Aidan: Why, thank you, shepherd. Fat flocks indeed!
Your charges? Whose lord? Whose hall?

Cuthbert: Yeavinging Hall, stranger, now that you ask; King Edwin's once,
No less! And you, sir pilgrim, your name? from whence do you hail?

Aidan: My name is Aidan! Where from? That's easy! From Lindisfarne, the Holy
Island, founded by King Oswald himself!
Where to? That's hard! My journey's just begun. I know not its ending.

Cuthbert: Sir, you riddle me. **Tell me your story in simple word.**

Aidan: **My story? My story is a story you can feel pulsing in your fingers.
Such a story but slow stubborn men can barely feel it.**

Cuthbert: **What meaning, stranger? What means your story?**

Aidan: **The mountain is near, the way is short. the treasure vast, the labour light
Seek and find where'er you will. Seek out all there is to know.
I saw Jesus. I saw him clear. The one and only light.
I can't deny it. Nor should I. I saw that light, that light full of glory.**

Come shepherd, young as you are. We cannot know down here in the
bottom of the valleys what is so clear on the mountain tops. The mind can
range free on the mountain's heights **and contemplate sublimely the
sublime.**

Aidan &
Cuthbert **Mons est prope Via brevis. Fructus ingens. Labor levis.
Explorare licet quaevis. Exploremus omnia!
Vidi Iesum. Vidi clare. Vidi lumen singulare.
Vidi nec est fas negare. Vidi plenum gloriae.
Quod in imis ignoratur, in monte manifestatur.
Mens in monte contemplatur..sublimis sublimia.**

Aidan: **Now let me go, brother! On my chosen way.
I must pick my path down again before the end of day.**

Cuthbert: So be it. I by you left here behind
 I'll seek. I'll strive. I'll search. I'll find.

[Pause...Silence...Broken by the low humming of the tune to "Be thou my vision"]

Cuthbert Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart,
 Naught else beside me but what thou art.
 Thou my best thought, by day or by night,
 Waking or sleeping, thy presence my light.

Cuthbert plus Riches I heed not, nor Man's empty praise.
SA Chorus: Thou mine inheritance, now and always.
 Thou and thou only, first in my heart,
 High King of Heaven, my treasure thou art!

Cuthbert plus Be thou my Battle shield, Sword for the fight.
SATB Be thou my honour, be thou my delight.
Chorus: Thou my soul's shelter, thou my high tower,
 Raise me to Heaven, O Power of my power.

Cuthbert: High King of Heaven, our Victory won,
 Bring me to Heavens joys, O bright heavens sun,
 Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
 Be thou my vision, O High King of All!

[End of Scene One]

Scene II: Cuthbert and Wilfrid on Lindisfarne

Symeon: So, the shepherd leaves to find his flock. Cuthbert goes to Lindisfarne, Aidan's community, and joins the brothers there.

[From Symeon, *Lindisfarnensis insulae descriptio*] The island of Lindisfarne is eight miles round, and home to our noble predecessors. Their bodies are buried there in peace, and their names will live forever.

A hard life. Cold walls surrounded by grey seas. Colman the abbot now. Eata the prior, learned in the Irish way. And then one of the brothers who will be his rival all his life. Wilfrid, favoured of kings, Confessor of queens, learned in the Roman way. Cuthbert had much to learn...but hush! It is the still small hour of the morning. The brothers assemble for the Benedictine Office. Lauds at this hour. Colman their Abbot leads the Roman liturgy.

Colman: *Te Deum laudamus*

Chorus: *Te Dominum confitemur*

Colman: *Te aeternum patrem omnis terra venerator*

Chorus: *Tibi omnes angeli Tibi caeli et universae potestates*

Colman: *Tibi cherubim et seraphim incessabili voce proclamant*

Chorus: *Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus, dominus deus Sabaoth,
Pleni sunt caeli et terra maiestatis gloriae tuae*

Colman: Brothers, I have an announcement to make. Today is the day on which Aidan, our founder was born. And so for Founder's day, we will sing at Primes his favourite hymn. The hymn of Saint Patrick, the Breastplate hymn.

[Pause. The brothers shuffle out, leaving Wilfrid and Cuthbert in silence. Wilfrid explodes.] **Where is Colman during the next conversation? Is there any reason for anyone to leave at this point?**

Wilfrid: This cannot be! Breaking the Rule! And the Abbot it is!
What are we doing here? All Europe follows the Rule!
No other monastery or abbey in Europe will be singing this ridiculous old Irish hymn
Of that half educated, half Briton, Patrick. Only this one!
And why this one? Because it was set up by a bunch of Irish renegades.
Yes...renegades, Cuthbert. Renegades from justice too. You knew about Columba's past?

Cuthbert: Brother Wilfrid, why all this striving and struggling? Order is order no doubt.
And perfection is perfection. But the sky above us is a broad sky!
Many are the birds that fly under it. The falcon and the sparrow.
The swan and the woodpecker. The swift and the wren.

This is the green land on which we stand. Not all alone.
With God's creatures. Cattle that low. Cocks that crow.
Bairns that roam. Women at home. On some it rains,
On some it shines. God sees all. Now he smiles. Now he frowns.

Wilfrid: Cuthbert, you simpleton! Don't you understand? The world,
The world is changing. On this island, locked up, how can you see?
Out there, kings are moving here and moving there. Kings' power
Waxes and wanes. Whence comes their power?
From order and discipline. From the concentrated power of prayer.
From the vigils of us, the soldiers of Christ. To whom do kings go?
Who can bless their power? Why only the General of all Christ's soldiers?
Is he in Lindisfarne? No! He is in Rome! His name the Pope!
Does he speak Irish? No! He speaks Latin, the language of Rome!
Does he venerate holy Brigid and sainted Patrick and tainted Columba?
No! He is himself the successor of Christ's chosen apostle, Saint Peter!
What are we doing here? To what do we aspire?

Cuthbert: Brother, less heat! Less steam! Our faith is for all...not just kings!

Wilfrid: Slow learner, brother!
Who builds abbeys? Kings do.
Who makes bishops? Kings do.
Who protects us? Kings do.

Cuthbert: Kings come. Kings go. Our Lord is always with us.

Wilfrid: Wake now, brother! Shake the sleep from your eyes.
Morning has come, the sun is rising, things are astir!

English kings look to Rome, not this Irish foolishness. **Haircuts!**
Easters all over the place. The first Monday...the second Sunday...the last
moon!
Kings rejoicing at a Roman Easter whilst their Queens still fast in Irish
Lent!

Cuthbert: Wilfrid, have a care! We are all Christians.

Wilfrid: Watch me! I read runes faster than you can carve them.
These runes will be running back to Ireland before too long!

Colman: (*Angry*)
Silence there, Cuthbert and Wilfrid! It is time for Primes.

[*Pause*]

In honour of Aidan, our Founder, whose name day it is today,
[Let us sing the hymn of Patrick, the Breastplate](#)

I bind unto myself this day, the strong name of the Trinity.
The Three in One, the One in Three!

Eata: I bind unto myself this day--by power of faith, the Birth of Christ,
His Baptism in Jordan river, his death on cross for my salvation.
His bursting from the tomb, his riding on heavens road,
His coming at the Day of Doom, I bind unto myself this day!

Cuthbert: I bind unto myself this day the glories of the starlit skies,
The brilliant sun's life giving rays, the whiteness of the moon at dusk,
The flash of lightning, the whirling winds tempestuous shocks,
The solid earth, the deep salt sea beating on eternal rocks!

Wilfrid: I bind unto myself this day the power of God to hold and lead.
(gritted teeth) His eye to watch, his might to stay, his ear to hear all I need
His hand to guide, his shield to ward, the wisdom of my god to teach
His heavenly angels to be my guard-- the Word of God to give me speech.

All Be with me, within me, behind me, before me,
Beside me, Christ to comfort and restore me.
Beneath me, above me, in quiet, in danger,
In the hearts of all, Christ, bfriend and stranger!

Colman: I bind unto myself this day the strong name of the Trinity.
The invocation of the same...the Three in One, the One in Three!

[End of scene two.]

A different mix of Narrative, Liturgy, Dramatic dialogue, and ending with the intentionally contrasted Irish Liturgy. This sets up the dramatic tension between Wilfrid's political and Cuthbert's personal vision, as well as setting the scene for the great trial of Scene Four (Synod of Whitby).

Scene III: Cuthbert's visit to Coldingham

- Symeon: From Lindisfarne Cuthbert went with Eata to Ripon but Wilfrid travelled to Rome ...
- Bede: (interrupting): Symeon, Symeon what are you doing with this history? Who told YOU what Wilfrid said? Who was YOUR witness? Not me, Not mine! I know you read my books, so see the truth in them. So ... how do you know?
- Symeon: Master, Master, forgive me. What I am telling is just a story. Full well I know what history is, as you have taught me in your books. But this a story for our times. Five hundred years have passed, and new men are now guiding Cuthbert's holy church. What you saw clear has dimmed in the darkness of time. The people of our age hear the saints and kings of former years in different ways.
- Bede: (Fading): Have a care, Symeon. Have a care! Tell your story as you put it but keep truth in it. I sleep back here, but I only sleep! If I hear false words, I shall rise and chastise you, most severely. Have a care, master Cantor. Have a care!
- Symeon: (relieved): Driven from Ripon by Wilfrid who returned in triumph from Rome with the king's favour, Cuthbert soon started his wanderings. His wandering mission to the poor and sundry, the highways and byways. Though from time to time, he rested at Coldingham where Eabba ruled her community as abbess. She was fond of him.
- Eabba: (sings) Brigit, Brigit, best of women, shining like a golden flame,
Lead us to eternal heaven, Bright as sun, Bright by name.
Brigit, keep us safe from harm. From demons, devils' evil arms.
Win for us all fearsome fights. Steer us through the darkest nights
Brigit, tear away from in us sins and longings of the flesh.
Brigit, like a tree in flower, like Jesus' Mother, give us rest.
- Cuthbert: Sister, you sing sweetly. What is the song?
- Eabba: One that I learned long ago. In the abbey at Kildare, where Brigit herself lived and taught. I was brought up there.
- Cuthbert: And you, a Northumbrian princess, singing an Irish lullaby!
- Eabba: (Blushing) Cuthbert! Stop your teasing (laughing). But listen to me now. Wilfrid is up to something again. Wilfrid! The King is with him. Watch out!
- Cuthbert: Eabba, never mind Wilfrid. He does his work in his way. I do my work in mine. God's house has many rooms. And how is yours? Tell me.
- Eabba: At peace. Restful. Contemplative. A fine set of young maidens are mine...if I could truly call them maidens...Let it be said!

Cuthbert: Then Sister, I must ensure that none of my young monks stray too close when they search for the halt, the lame, the poor and the blind! But who comes here? Riding in some state, I warrant.

Eabba: Hilda, from Whitby. She comes here for her Nameday always.

Hilda: Eabba...Cuthbert...what a surprise and delight. Two birds with one stone!
Cuthbert: You do us too much honour, my Lady Abbess.

Hilda: (imperious) D'you have your girls in tune?

Eabba: Of course!

Hilda: Then hear this music. It's new. It excites me... No, Cuthbert! It is not Latin, and Wilfrid had nothing to do with it. This hymn is Northumbrian. The very first in our language! And then a miracle. It is composed by a Caedmon, the cowman of my cowshed, a Briton of all people. He sang. We'll sing now. Listen!

(Sings as best she can CAEDMON'S HYMN)

Nu scylun hefraenrichaes ward
 Methodis maecti end his mogdibanc.
 Werc wulder fader swe he wundra gihwaes
 Echi Drychtin. Or astelidae
 He aerist scop Aelda bairnum
 Hefen to hrofe halig scyppend.
 Tha middengard mankine's ward
 Echi Drychtin. Aefter tiade.
 Firum foldun.Frea Almighty.

Cuthbert: (in awe) The mountain is near, the way is short,
 The labour light, the reward immense.

Hilda: (still imperious) You liked it? Cuthbert and Eabba, you'll like this less. King Oswiu has called his Council. The King must hear the Romans and the Irish too and then decide what he should do. Easter falls when Lent is on, the calendar has gone quite wrong.

Cuthbert: There's more to this than Calendars. But to Whitby we shall go. To see the lion and the unicorn fighting before the Crown!

Eabba: Peace be upon us all! Hilda, rest from your journey. Hear my maids sing. That they can do for sure!

Chorus: 1 O Jerusalem, Aurea Civitas,
 Ornata Regis Purpura
 O Aedificatio summae bonitatis
 Quae es lux nunquam obscurata!

2 O frondens Virga
In tua nobilitate stans
Sicut Aurora procedit
Gaude nunc et laetare!

3 Spiritui Sancto honor sit
Qui in mente Ursulae virginis
Virginalem turbam
Velut columbas collegit!

4 O viridissima Virga, Ave,
Quae in ventosa flabra
Sciscitationis sanctorum prodisti
Cum venit tempus quod tu floruisti
In ramis tuis. Ave, ave sit tibi!

[End of Scene Three]

Scene IV: The Synod of Whitby

Symeon: I Symeon, the Historian, have counted time since my youth. If we do not know the time of Easter, how can we follow the Lord's path?
No ! The time of Easter must be right.

And so .The Great Synod, hosted at Whitby by Hilda.
For the Irish came Colman, Eata ,Cuthbert.
For the Romans, Wilfrid, Stephen ,and Agilbert from the South.
From the Court, The Queen, Eanfled herself. And the King, Oswiu.
The Question? Easter the Irish way or Easter the Roman way?

Or as Oswiu saw it, IN with the Romans or OUT with the Irish.

[TRIO of Hilda, Eabba and Eanfled]

Hilda: So the day has come to gather here.

Eabba: For our Irish traditions I greatly fear
All that I learnt and love and hold so dear.

Eanfled: But the King is the King. He wants all made clear.
Our Wilfrid's an orator. He'll win the day!

Eabba: Colman or Cuthbert have still much to say

Trio/ H/E/E: Whatever is said and whatever is read
Today is the day which will put to bed
The course of this nation for better or worse
To think in Latin or to dream in Erse.

[Irish Trio of Colman, Eata and Cuthbert]

Colman: The day has come when we make our case.
We have travelled far from our Irish lands
With traditions that go back to Egyptian sands.
But remember, brothers, this is not a race.

Eata: Cuthbert, you are young and persuasive of speech
The heart of King Oswiu your words can reach.

Cuthbert: Not for me, Eata, these arguments fine.
My faith will stand the tests of Time.

Colman: So be it! God give us the strength
Of our cause. But no more. The length
Of this day, for all its noise and clatter,
Will settle once and for ever this matter.

[Roman Trio of Agilbert, Wilfrid and Stephen of Ripon.]

Agilbert: Non possum. I cannot. My English

Not good enough a sentence to finish.

Wilfrid: Agilbert, our Roman cause is mine to elaborate
Just remember: the king's keen to collaborate
With the Pope and the Kings of European lands.
In the centre of things he longs to stand!

Stephen: We'll be hymning our Antiphons this Evensong!
With Wilfrid our Advocate, the day won't be long.

Oswiu: I open this Congress. Speak now. I want to decide!

Hilda: Step forward, Colman. You are first to speak.
Make your argument clear to the King!

Colman: O King, you rightly charge us to observe just one Rule in life. We argue
that ours is the true tradition. Our Easter Rule comes from those who came
before me. Aidan and Columba. And they learnt their tradition from the
East, from John of Damascus, and that greater John the Evangelist, the one
especially beloved of Christ himself.

Wilfrid: Our Easter tradition comes from that universally observed in Rome, where
the Evangelists Peter and Paul themselves lived and died . And not just
Rome. All Italy and Gaul. Africa. Asia. Egypt. I could go on... But these
stupid Scots and their dumb cousins Britons and Picts follow their own
peculiar Rule. The inhabitants of farthest Ocean!

Colman: Wilfrid, even you cannot call the Evangelist stupid! He it was leaning on
the breast of Jesus.

Wilfrid: I do not deny your saints and holy men. John to Columba. But they did not
understand the details, the calculations. For long, this did not matter. No-
one knew a better way. But though your Fathers were holy men, do you
imagine that they few in the far corners of the furthest islands remote from
the rest are to be preferred before the Universal Church in the civilised
World? Did not Jesus say to Peter? 'I tell you. You are Peter. On this rock
I will Build my Church. The Gates of Hell will not prevail. For I give you
the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven!'

Oswiu: Colman, did Jesus say this?

Colman: Yes, it is true.

Oswiu: And did Jesus give the keys to Columba?

Colman: Not so.

Oswiu: On this, you both agree? [Pause]
Then I tell you my decision. Peter is the guardian of the gates of heaven. I
shall obey his commands to the best of my knowledge and ability. If not,

then when I come to the gates of heaven, there may be no-one to open them. Because Peter, who holds the keys, has turned away.

Symeon: And when the King had said this, all present, both high and low, Agreed. They abandoned their imperfect way for the better. Colman could not abide. He left Lindisfarne, returned to Iona. The home of his Fathers and his Faith. But Cuthbert stayed.

[End of Scene Four]

Scene V: Cuthbert's example to the brethren at Lindisfarne

- Symeon: All that drama and excitement! The King's decision coming out of the blue! Going with Rome and loosing the ties with the Irish. Wilfrid cock a hoop! And the Irish party downcast.
But not Cuthbert. No...he took it all in his stride. For shortly thereafter Eata, his old abbot, asked him to take the most difficult leader's job...Prior of Lindisfarne itself, where the feelings of disappointment and betrayal were running strongly amongst all the monks . Their first allegiance had been to Aidan. Their noviciate years spent much in Iona and Ireland. Their affection for the Irish way hard to subsume to the strict Roman rule of St Benedict.
Eata had chosen wisely. Cuthbert stood tall already as a saintly man whose mission to the poor and needy throughout Northumbria and beyond into Pictland was a legend. Cuthbert stood tall.
A granite rock, as it were, washed by the swirling surf of dissent and dissatisfaction. Unmoved!
- Cuthbert: (as Prior) Brothers, it is Lauds. The first prayer of the day in St Benedict's rule. Let us sing in antiphony the psalm of the three in the Fiery Furnace. Benedicite Omnia Opera.
- Benedicite Omnia Opera Domini, laudate et superexaltate eum in saecula
- Chorus: (Faltering) Benedicite,caeli.....domino....
(to a whisper) Benedicite,angeli.....domino.....
- Cuthbert: (alone, strongly) Benedicite aquae omnes, quae super Caelos sunt, domino
Benedicite omnis virtu tis domino
- Chorus: (silent, unwilling)
- Cuthbert: (alone, impervious): Benedicite so let Luna,domino. Benedicite stelae caeli,domino.
- Chorus: (silent, unwilling)
- Cuthbert: (alone) Benedicite omnis imber et ros domino, Benedicite omnes venti, domino.
- Symeon: So did Cuthbert soldier on. A leader without followers to begin with. The cold winds of Lindisfarne blew round him. He would stand outside on the sands as the tides swept in from the sea.
- Novice 1: Look, look! He stands. Arms outstretched. Silent. Motionless in prayer. The sea's reached his feet. But still he stands! Arms outstretched. [Pause]. The sea's reached his knees.
Still he stands. Silent. [Pause]. The sea's reached his breast. Still he stands. Motionless in prayer. [Pause] Thank The Lord! The tide is turning. Slowly the sea falls back. Still he stands.
Oh look, look! Sea creatures are playing in the waters at his feet. Splashing...Otters, I think.

Yes, otters! Leaping and twisting and squealing. Still he stands. Arms outstretched. Silent. Motionless in prayer!

Novice 2: And that's for starters! I was with him on a mission once. Starving we were, in the cold summer rain and bitter wind from the North it was. No shelter...no food...but what did Cuthbert do?
'See that there'; 'What? Where?'; 'See that eagle off far...by the river...he's got something...a fish...'
'A great big salmon, I'll be bound! He'll leave it for us. You'll see! Go now! Run down to the river bank and take us our portion. Leave him some!'
Imagine that! The servant of God...an eagle!

Novice 3: Well, I was with him in Pictland. We went by boat. A long, long way! Hugging the shore...but not much by way of welcome. And less by way of farewell! Our boat was empty. Cold it was and the sea as grey as the sky. White snow lay on the shore.
'There...there', said our Prior, 'there in the snow. You can see it...red on white...the meat of a stranded sea creature.' And there it was, indeed. Three great chunks of dolphins flesh left there on the shore. We rowed ashore and grabbed them. Heaved them into the boat, and that's how we got home alive. Through the Grace of God and the keen eye of Cuthbert. How great is the Grace of God to those who hope and trust in The Lord!

Cuthbert: Brothers, it is Lauds. The first prayer of the day in St Benedict's rule. Let us sing in Antiphony the great psalm of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego.
Benedicite Omnia Opera: Laudate et superexaltate eum in saecula.

Chorus: (faltering at first) Benedicite Caeli,domino....
(then stronger) Benedicite, Angeli,Domino...

Cuthbert: (strongly) Benedicite aquae omnes,quae super Caelos sunt, domino.

Chorus: (unreservedly): benedicat,omnis virtu tis domino.

All: Benedicite sol et Luna domino,Benedicite stelae caeli domino.

Cuthbert: (alone) Benedicite omnis imber et ros,domino.

All: Benedicite omnis venti,domino.

[End of Scene Five]

Scene VI: Cuthbert visits Ealfled

Symeon: Time passes. Kings pass. Oswiu has passed on. Ecgfrith is the new king now Hilda the Abbess has passed on. Eanfled the Queen has passed on. Ealfled her daughter has become the Abbess of Coquet. Devout, yes. Imperious, still. Cuthbert is summoned by her to the island of Coquet. She has some practical questions for him to answer. A Saint like Cuthbert with a string of proven miracles behind him should have no difficulties with these matters of state.

Ealfled: Welcome Cuthbert, Lord Prior. Welcome to our humble abbey. My sisters will hymn you in their sweetest voices!

Chorus: O Jerusalem, Aurea Civitas, Ornata Regis Purpura, O Aedificatio summae bonitatis quae es lux nunquam obscurata.
Et ita tures tuae, O Jerusalem, rutilant et candent
Per ruborem et per candorem sanctorum
Et per Omnia ornamento dei quaetibi desunt,
O Jerusalem!

Cuthbert: Greetings, Ealfled. Greetings, Abbess. Greetings, sisters.
How pleasant it is for this old man to hear the sound of women's voices!
But, Ealfled, I have come for a reason, no doubt! Tell me your problems.
I will try to answer your questions.

Ealfled: Lord Prior, first let me give you a small gift.
Here it is. Beautifully bound. And worked,
The leather cover has been finely wrought. Inside, the Holy Gospel of John, written by my careful hand. Yours now. To hold and read on your island. Fast away from the Hubbing crowd. Alone in your cell, with the winds whipping the waves around you. A haven of peace! In all humility!

Cuthbert: Great Lady, Abbess, I thank you for this treasure. For me, this little book contains the Whole World!

Ealfled: Lord Prior, you do us great courtesy and kindness in coming here to visit us. Pray, of your great well of goodness and wisdom, tell me of somethings that lie in the Future.

Cuthbert: The Future's not mine to tell.....but you have asked, and it would be churlish of me not to speak of what I can see. Albeit through the glass darkly!

Ealfled: My Brother, Lord Prior, the King. Fifteen years has Ecgfrith reigned. Not all he has done is good. Not all he has done is bad. He is a King! But I want to know if he will live long....or whether his days are numbered?

Cuthbert: How can you, so wise and knowledgeable in Scripture, ask the length of a life?
Our years, say the psalms, are like a spiders web. Spun fine, glinting in the sun. But when the gale blows.....Solomon said: 'The man that lives for

many years and prospers all that time, even he must remember that should he live for one more year, it is a very short time before Death stands waiting for him at his door.'

Ealfled: Alas...Alas..Lord Prior. Your meaning is clear to me. So, a very short time?

(Pause) And then who will succeed him in his place?

Cuthbert: It is a man who lives on an island now. He will take his place.

Ealfled: Alfrith, you mean. That king will make you Bishop!

Cuthbert: I am not worthy nor do I seek such a rank!

Ealfled: There is nothing more sublime than to be our Bishop. Yet you prefer your fastness.

Cuthbert: If God decrees it, let that be my burden for a short while. Then let me put it down, and retire to my fastness...my solitude ...my peace.

Ealfled: I will let these things be known.

Cuthbert: No, please. Be silent on them till I am gone. And now, Farewell!

Ealfled: Come, sisters. Let us sing our farewells to our Lord Prior.

Chorus: Laus Trinitati ,quae sonus et vita ac creatrix
Omnium in vita ipsorum est.
Et quae Laus angelicae turbae
Et mirus splendor arcanorum
Quae hominibus ignota sunt
Et quae in omnibus vita est.

Symeon: So, Cuthbert, back to your island and your solitary vigils.
Till the call came. Bishop for just two years. Duty done!

Then the cries of sea birds, the crashing of waves, and
whistle of the wind around your stone built cell.'

[End of Scene Six]

Scene VII: the death of Cuthbert

Symeon: Cuthbert alone in his cell on the Farne Islands offshore Northumbria. Visited often by his brothers from Lindisfarne. Not far. But a dangerous crossing by boat. Especially in the winter storms. Ofttimes impossible. On his last visit Herefrith the Abbot asked him.

Herefrith: Brother, when will you return to us?

Cuthbert: Herefrith, old friend, it will be when you bring my body back home.

Symeon: And then the winter storms began. They raged for weeks. The brothers could not visit him in all that time. Their concern mounted. Finally they made the journey, reached the island and found him in his cell. Alive but very weak. His last illness was taking him away.

Herefrith: Brother, your illness has taken you far from us.

Cuthbert: Herefrith, it has...it has indeed. It is taking me right away. I know it now. So listen to me. When The Lord does take me finally, I want you to bury me here. Here on the island, near to my oratory, towards the South, just east of the Holy Cross. Wrap me in the cloak which the blessed Abbess Verca gave me.

Herefrith: Brother I cannot do that. We need you amongst us in the Church. Your work is not yet done. We need your presence with us always. Your power to draw the faithful. Your mission continues. You know it too.

Cuthbert: Herefrith, your words have set me on the right path at the last. Not my choice alone. Not my choice. The Lords will must be done. So let my presence draw the faithful to Lindisfarne and then wheresoever my body may lie. If necessity forces you to choose one of two evils, I should much prefer it that you should raise up my bones from the grave, take them away with you, and dwell in whatever place God may provide for you, than that you should for any reason condone iniquity, and bow your neck to the yoke of the schismatics. Promise me this! No dissensions. No arguments. No hair splittings. Follow the Rule! As I have taught you all my life. Follow the Rule.
(Pause) So let me be at peace now.....
(Very quietly) Be thou my Vision, O Lord of my heart....(hums next 3lines).

Cuthbert with Herefrith and chorus: Be thou my breastplate, my sword for the fight
Be thou my whole armour, be thou my true might,
Be thou my soul's shelter, be thou my strong tower...(hums last line)
Riches I heed not, nor Man's empty praise.
Be thou my inheritance now and always.

Cuthbert: (Alone, rising) High King of Heaven, thou Heaven's bright sun
(fading) O grant me its joys after victor y's won.

Silence.....
Herefrith: Brothers, our Lord Bishop has passed on. We must now sing Psalm 59.
It is the Rule. And as it is the Rule, we sing it for him.

Chorus: O Deliver me from my enemies, my God
Defend me from them that rise against me.....

[End of Scene Seven]

Scene VIII: the journey to Durham

Symeon: Bitter times. Broken hearths. Beatings and Butchery. Brute Norsemen. Viking sea raiders. Cuthbert! Your body had to be rescued from Lindisfarne, as you had predicted it. Carried, it was, hither and hither and yon by your follower monks. Here for a year, there for two. Then ever onward. Chased and harried by the hateful Norsemen. But all this time, Cuthbert, you lay serene in your coffin. Unchanged. Unruffled. Uncorrupted. Thus did Herefrith see you when you came to Lindisfarne. Thus did I see you when you came to Durham. Still with your little book of John's Gospel, the one that Ealfled gave you. Durham! Your journeys end. Guided there by those Saxon queens and princesses. And by a cowgirl.....Listen.....

4 Queens: O pastor....
O pastor.....
O pastor.....
O pastor.....
O pastor animarum, O prima vox, per quam
Creati sumus, Nunc tibi, tibi placeat ut digneris
Nos liberare de miseriis et languoribus nostris

Symeon: The faithful monks carrying Cuthbert reach the crossing, and rest, wearied.

Cowgirl: (cheerfully) This is the place. Yes, this is the place!
Set down here those old bones. Tha mayest
Now rest tha weary arms and legs,
Wandering here, wandering there,
Never stopping, never still. Poor broken eggs!
Here set tha Cuthbert in his shrine.
Here let him rest till the end of time!
[Exits cheerfully]: Whoa there! Whoa! Shhh! Shhh!!

Monks: (recovering): Sing one by one (from Peregrini by Lawrence of Durham/SceneOne)
Mors Messie mortem stravit
Vitam vita reparavit.
Mors est vivus in via
Qui de morte nos salvavit.

Monks
(ensemble): Hosanna Filio David
Laus honor et gloria!
Hosanna Filio David
Laus honor et Gloria!

Symeon: Their weary journey done. They've found Cuthbert his home!
Come one! Come all! Brothers! Sisters! The townsfolk call!
Sing now psalms and hymns. Sing the Lords praises!
Monks, Nuns, in Latin! Good people, you sing in English phrases!

Monks: Benedicite Omnia Opera Domini, Domino.
Laudate et superexaltate eum in saecula

Nuns: Benedicite, caeli , domino, benedicite angeli Domini,domino.

Monks: Benedicite aquae omnes quae super caelos sunt, domino.
Benedicat omnis virtutis, domino.

Nuns: Benedicite sol et luna,domino. Benedicite stellae caeli,domino.

Community
Choir: Bless The Lord, ye showers and dews. Bless The Lord, all ye winds.
Bless The Lord, ye fire and heat. Bless The Lord, winter and summer.
Bless The Lord,ye dews and frosts. Bless The Lord, ye frosts and snows.
Bless The Lord, ye ice and cold, Bless The Lord, night and day.
Bless The Lord, ye light and dark. Bless The Lord, ye lightnings and
clouds
Let the Whole Earth bless The Lord. Praise him and magnify him for ever!

All: O bless The Lord, Ananias, Azariah and Misael,
Praise him and magnify him for ever!
Bless Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
Praise him and magnify him for ever!
Blessed art thou, Lord, in the firmament of Heaven
Praised and magnified for ever and ever!

Symeon: Now let us place Cuthbert in his shrine.
His life a beacon. His death sublime.
His body untouched till the end of time.

[Whilst the Installation progresses, the chorus, soloists, community choir and congregation sing Psalm 150]:

Male chorus: O praise God in his Sanctuary! Praise him in his mighty Firmament!

Female
chorus: Praise him in his mighty acts. Praise him for his excellent greatness!

Community: Praise him with the sound of the trumpets!

Soloist: Praise him with the lute and harp!

Community: Praise him with timbrels and dances!

Soloist: Praise him with strings and flutes!

Community: Praise him with loud cymbals! Praise him with clashing cymbals!

All: Let everything that hath breath..
Let everything that hath breath.....
Let everything that hath breath.....
PRAISE THE LORD!

Symeon:

(Final hymn is the Divinum Mysterium, with the words of Prudentius, "O Corde Natus..."
Monks, Nuns and Soloists in Latin. Community Choir and Congregation in English.

MNS: Corde Natus ex parentis
Ante mundi exordium
A et O cognominatus
Ipse fons et clausula
Omnium quae sunt et fierunt
Quaeque post futura sunt
Saeculorum saeculis.

CCC: From the Fathers heart begotten
Ere the World began to be.
He is Alpha and Omega
He the start, the Ending he
Of all that is and has been
and of all that is to come.
Evermore and evermore.

MNS: Dixit Ipse et facta sunt
Terra Caelum fossa Ponti
Trina rerum machina
Quaeque in his vigent sub alto
Solis et lunae globo
Saeculorum saeculis.

CCC: By his word was all created
He commanded. It was done.
Earth and Sky and boundless Ocean.
Universal Three in One.
All that sees the moons soft radiance
All that grows beneath the Sun.
Evermore and evermore.

Nuns: Ecce quam vates vetustis
Concinebant saeculis
Quem prophetarum fideles
Paginae spoponderant.
Emicat promissus olim
Cuncta conlaudent eum
Saeculorum saeculis.

CCC: This is he whom seer and sibyl
Sang in ages long gone by.
This is he of old revealed
In the page of prophecy.
Lo! He comes, the promised Saviour.
All the World his praises cry.
Evermore and evermore.

Soloists: Te senes et Te iuventus.
Parvulorum Te chorus
Turba matrum virginumque
Simplices puellulae

Voce concordēs pudicis
Perstrepat concentibus
Saeculorum saeculis.

CCC: (This closing Verse does not mirror the Soloists)
Christ to thee, with God the Father
And Holy Spirit, Thee also.
Hymn and Psalm, eternal praise,
Songs and Worship, Thanks be raised.
Honour, Virtue, Victoriously
Reigning through Eternity.
Evermore and Evermore.

(Optional Coda, sung very quietly from the Shrine. His Signature Tune).

Cuthbert: Be thou my Vision, lord of my Heart.
In all else be naught to me save that thou art
Be thou my best thought in the day and the night
Both waking and sleeping, thy presence my light..

[End of Scene Eight]

Notes

p4 For 'the shepherd' read 'Aidan' ??? (shouldn't this be Cuthbert?)

Changes affecting the score:

9. Scene 7: replace 'My Lord Bishop' with ' Brother'...x3 This has already been set to music.

10 Scene8 : replace " Aelfrith" with ' Ealfled'(see Scene 6)

The Cowgirl to speak with a strong Durham accent.

Replace 'you' 'your' ' your' with ' tha'