

Companion Guide
to accompany the program

Memorable Leaders
in Christian History

CUTHBERT

Prepared by Ann T. Snyder

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Memorable Leaders in Christian History

CUTHBERT

ABOUT THE SERIES

The film series explores the 7th century world of Celtic spirituality and the impact of the Roman church's traditions upon it and the great men and women who shaped the future of the church in northern England. Beautiful photographic images and the comments of clerics and scholars tell the story through the lives of the leaders of their time.

A Background to the Series

Christianity came to England in the 2nd or 3rd centuries. A tale in the *History of the Britons* by Nennius tells of a British king, Lucius, who accepted baptism from missionaries sent by the pope in 167. Origen and Hippolytus, both writing in the 3rd century, mention Christians in Britain. The Acts of the Council (Synod) of Arles, held in 314, state that five persons from Britain attended including Eborius, bishop of York, and Restitutus, bishop of London. St. Athanasius (c. 296-373) lists the British among those who accepted the decrees of the Council of Nicaea in 325. Traces of what are believed to have been Christian churches built around 360 have been found in Silchester, England.

Because England was a country of kingdoms, to convert a king meant to convert his people. St. Augustine (not Augustine of Hippo), the future archbishop of Canterbury, landed in Kent in 597 as papal envoy. Within six months of his arrival he converted Ethelbert, King of Kent. By July of 598, Pope Gregory could write to the Patriarch of Alexandria that on Christmas Day of that year 10,000 Britons were baptized.

Two Traditions

The Celtic Church refers to those churches which used the Celtic languages and existed before Augustine arrived from Rome on his official mission from Pope Gregory. The original center of Celtic Christianity was the Island of Iona in the Inner Hebrides off the coast of Scotland. It was the headquarters of St. Columba who arrived there from Ireland c. 565 on his way to convert Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Any doctrinal distinctions between the Celtic churches and those on the continent are speculative. Perhaps the differences could best be described as those of emphasis and tradition. Celtic monks were more in tune with the asceticism of the East. They used their own language in the liturgy and their own calendar. They were used to working within a tribal rather than a diocesan context, and they retained their affinity to the natural world.

The Scene

The stronghold of Celtic spirituality was the kingdom of Northumbria (now Northumberland County), which bordered partly on Scotland and also had a coastal plain on the North Sea. The Romans had been there and left a reminder of their presence in the remains of Hadrian's wall, which once spanned the entire kingdom. The borders have changed many times over the years. The center of Celtic spirituality in Northumbria was the monastery of Lindisfarne, while Hexam was the first Saxon bishopric and followed the Roman Calendar.

ABOUT THIS PROGRAM

St. Cuthbert (d. 687) The year St. Aidan died, Cuthbert became a monk at Melrose and in time became prior. But this did not prevent him from going among the people preaching and teaching, visiting poor and remote areas, which others had hesitated to visit.

In 664 Cuthbert moved to the Isle of Lindisfarne with his abbot. The two brought with them the Roman tonsure and the Roman way of calculating Easter.

Although he was prior here as well, Cuthbert requested and was permitted to separate himself from the community to lead a solitary life on the inner island, where he spent eight years like Aidan before him (see separate video on Aidan in the series). He was especially concerned with combating the people's lapse into pagan practices, and would sometimes stay among them teaching for weeks at a time.

He refused an appointment as Bishop of Hexam in 684, but the next year, when he was appointed Bishop of Lindisfarne, he finally submitted, but against his will. It took King Egfrid and Bishop Trumwine in person to pull him from his hermitage. He was consecrated at York. Cuthbert held the post only two years, but during that time he traveled as a missionary on the mainland. Bede tells us that he was patient, courteous, forbearing, much given to prayer and filled with the fire of divine love. He served for two years and then, forewarned of his impending death, he left for Lindisfarne.

In 689, eleven years after Cuthbert's death, his grave was opened to move his body to a more prominent place. It was found incorrupt. But Cuthbert's body traveled again when, in 998/999, his remains were moved to Durham Cathedral. It was here, in 1827, that his body was disinterred for the last time, and it was found that he had spent his life suffering from tuberculosis and ulcers of which he had never once complained. Found with him was a pectoral cross decorated with a shell that had come from the Indian Ocean, a sort of symbol of his missionary life.

Presenters

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| Robert Duncan <i>"Story Teller"</i> | Prof. David Rollason <i>Durham University</i> |
| Rosemary Cramp, Emer. Prof. <i>Archaeology, Durham Univ.</i> | Canon Kate Tristram <i>Warden, Margate House</i> |
| Prof. Gerald Bonner <i>Church Historian</i> | Canon David Adam <i>Vicar of Holy Island</i> |
| Roy Searle <i>Northumbria Community</i> | Curator Janet Backhouse <i>Manuscripts, British Library</i> |
| Eric Cambridge <i>Hon. Research Fellow</i> | Prof. Richard Bailey <i>Newcastle University</i> |
| Canon Stephen Pedley <i>Durham Cathedral</i> | |

Questions for Discussion

1. What was Cuthbert's life like before going to Lindisfarne?
2. What changes did Cuthbert bring to Lindisfarne?
3. Was Cuthbert a good successor to Aidan? Did he differ from him? If so, how?
4. Why do you think people revered Cuthbert as a saint?
5. Cuthbert served his people for only two years, but his impact was great. Can you think of other great men and women whose brief lives made a difference?
6. What message has Cuthbert for us today?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR THE SERIES

Bainton, Roland H. *Christianity*, Houghton Mifflin, Boston

Bede (*Ecclesiastical History*) *Historical Works*, 2 vols., Loeb Classical Library, Harvard, 1979

____ Martin & Hurst, Trans. , *Homilies on the Gospels*, 2 vols., Nos. 110-111

____ Martin & Hurst, Trans. , *Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, No. 117

____ Hurst, Dom David, OSB, *Commentaries on the Seven Catholic Epistles*, No. 82

(All three from Cistercian Studies Series)

Bruce-Mitford, Rupert. *Aspects of Anglo-Saxon Archaeology*, Harper's Magazine Press, 1974

Cross, F. L. *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, Oxford, 1997

Edwards, David L. *Christian England: Its Story to the Reformation*, Oxford, 1980

May-Harting, Henry. *The Coming of Christianity to Anglo-Saxon England*, London, 1972

Phillips, Rev. Andrew. *The Hallowing of England*, Anglo-Saxon Press, England

Trevor-Roper, Hugh. *Northumberland* from *The Illustrated Counties of England*, Facts on File, 1985

Wilson, David M. *The Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England*, Cambridge, 1976

Check your library and your local bookstore for the availability of these books, some of which may be out-of print and available only through inter-library loan.

Related Websites

The Celtic World

<http://www.harpanddragon.com/whoare.htm>

http://www.ealaghol.demon.co.uk/celtenc/celt_ind.htm (Ency. of the Celts)

<http://www.clannada.org/docs/theline.htm> (Celtic Timeline)

(Note: A number of "Celtic" sites are New-Age oriented.)

Anglo-Saxon Northumbria:

<http://www.users.zetnet.co.uk/bamburghproject/northland.html>

Celtic Saints

<http://freespace.virgin.net/david.ford2/saints.html>

<http://www.knight.org/advent/> (click on letter for saint's name) Catholic Encyclopedia.

Bede:

<http://cedar.evansville.edu/~ecoleweb/glossary/bede.html> (Ecole Glossary)

<http://www.bedesworld.co.uk/index.htm>

(The Museum of Early Medieval Northumbria at Jarrow)

Lindisfarne

<http://www.knight.org/advent/> (click on L) Catholic Encyclopedia.

<http://www.lindisfarne.org.uk/links/index.htm> (tourists and retreat information)

<http://www.bl.uk/diglib/treasures/lindisfarne.html> (Gospels)