

The Spirituality of the Celtic Church



by Fr. Richard Woods

A great deal of foolishness goes by the name “Celtic.” Anything that features harps, knotwork, and a starry-eyed “creation spirituality” is claimed as part of popular “Celtic” spirituality. For a refreshing contrast, in this article, Father Richard Woods looks at the history of the real Christians who actually lived in ancient Ireland and Britain.

The Celtic church, which flourished for many centuries, was a vigorous expression of Christian faith and offers us lessons for dealing with today’s critical issues.

Only in relatively recent years have scholars been able to recover the history of the Celtic churches in what should be called Early Christian Britain and Ireland rather than simply the Dark Ages. For the centuries between the fall of the Roman empire and the so-called Middle Ages were hardly dark for the millions of Christians living at the periphery of northwestern Europe. In many respects, the Renaissance began there six hundred years before the reflowering of scholarship, art, and literature in Italy and France.

If the rich history of the Celtic churches is a fairly recent discovery, their spirituality may be an even more surprising resource for a life-affirming, holistic, and faithful way of life for Christians in this “postmodern” world and, more importantly, the world of the future. Celtic spirituality may in fact be “newer” and more valuable than many better known spiritual traditions of later ages.

The word *keltoi* was first used by historians of the sixth century before Christ to describe a welter of people sharing a family of languages rooted in a lost ancestral tongue remotely related to Greek. Perhaps significantly for understanding Celtic character, Professor John T. McNeill notes that “Plato mentions them in a list of nations addicted to drunkenness, and Aristotle notes their reckless indifference to danger, even of earthquake and raging seas.”

By the beginning of the Christian era, Celtic tribes had migrated west, occupying Gaul and part of Spain. There were British tribes, Irish tribes, and the outlandish Picts of the north. But with the partial exceptions of the short-lived alliances formed in the first century before Christ by Vercingetorix, and in the first, fifth, and eleventh centuries afterwards by Caradoc (Caracticus), Arthur, and Brian Boru, there never developed a pan-Celtic movement or even much national sentiment.

Celtic peoples have never been much taken with system and structure. The Christian churches they established reflected that irreducible independence of spirit as long as they endured. And by any standards that was a very long time, ending officially with the Synod of Kells in 1152 following the Norman invasion of Ireland. Even at the time of its absorption into full Anglo-Roman character in 664, the British church was older than any Protestant denomination today and claimed to be as venerable as any patriarchate of East or West. By the Middle Ages, it was commonly held that the faith had been established there by none other than Joseph of Arimathea.

Yet the Celtic churches did come to an end and in that respect can be considered the only fully extinct Christian tradition in the world. Such a distinction would be misleading, however, if it failed to recognize two perhaps startling facts. First, the missionaries and scholars from Ireland and Britain who revitalized the continental church after the barbarian invasions thereby inaugurated the chain of events that not only ended their own tradition but ushered in the great era of Christendom in the High Middle Ages. Second, the Celtic churches did not simply die out. They melded fairly smoothly, if not without resistance, into the mainstream church of Western Europe,

once again whole and now embraced in a precariously fragile spiritual and political body called The Holy Roman Empire.

Celtic Christianity

In 410 the last legions were withdrawn from Britain to protect Italy from the Vandals and Huns, leaving that largely Christian Britain open to increasing attack from the pagan Irish, Saxon, and Picts. And to no avail: with the deposition of the Emperor Romulus Augustulus in 476, the Western empire came to its inglorious end. The Western church also began a long winter of organizational decline, largely because it had adopted the legal and governmental structures and even the territorial divisions of the empire. • The term diocese itself originally referred to an administrative unit of civil government.

But the ensuing ecclesiastical disintegration, political chaos, and disrupted communication indirectly brought about two events which were to transform the Celtic churches structurally and forever change the history of Western Europe. In 431, as an aspect of a counteroffensive against heresy in the British church, Pope Celestine sponsored a minor mission to Ireland. Shortly afterwards, monasticism was introduced into the Celtic churches.

Like other Western churches of the ancient world, the Celtic churches had their differences with Rome. Only one heresy gained much of a following, however, and then only in Britain. It took its name from an itinerant teacher, lay preacher, and pamphleteer living in Italy, a well-born Briton who had come to the study of theology from law.

Pelagius's teachings were propagated in his native church by influential friends and were finally extirpated only through the evangelical efforts of papal emissaries, Sts. Germanus and Lupus, in 429 and 447. The decision, or even the afterthought, of Pope Celestine to authorize a simultaneous but less ambitious mission to Ireland also produced success — one far more spectacular than he could have expected.

There were Christians and possibly even bishops in Ireland before Palladius, the first Roman missionary bishop, arrived there around 431. But there was as yet no recognizable church. At that time Patrick was still a half-educated expatriate British monk living in Gaul. Having been a captive in Ireland for many years as a teenager, he

had become obsessed with the desire to return as a missionary. When Palladius's mission faltered, Patrick was presented by sympathetic British clergy to St. Germanus, who had been commissioned to oversee the Celtic churches.

Even though Patrick still lacked much of even the rudimentary theological training of the clergy of his time, Germanus ordained him deacon, priest, and finally bishop. At first his mission, like that of Palladius, was hardly a triumph. But with the assistance of several companions, probably monks ordained and functioning as secular clergy, he eventually managed to organize a stable community.

Eventually Patrick set up diocesan structures, including a hierarchy of bishops, priests, and deacons.³ He did not found monasteries. Nevertheless, within a century, the dominant form of Irish and British Christianity was not diocesan but monastic in form. As a consequence, its spirituality was more familial, personal, and democratic rather than curial, legal, and republican. This was not only because of the direct influence of the Gallican monks, but because their monastic spirituality was more richly compatible with the structure and values of Celtic culture than was the legalistic diocesan form.

Although monastic spirituality came to Britain and then Ireland from Gaul, particularly Lérins, Tours, and Auxerre, its original home and character were Egyptian.⁴ The familial, democratic, and decentralized character of African Christianity surely endowed its monasticism with some of its particular appeal to the Celts. And for six hundred years, their churches would be typified by this distinctive monastic spirit.

Elements of Early Celtic Spirituality

At the height of their development in the eighth and ninth centuries, Celtic monasteries extended from Iceland to Italy. More like settlements or small villages, many monasteries admitted both men and women, married lay persons as well as celibates, and a variety of support personnel. Many abbots were married, and leadership was often handed down through families for generations.⁵

The life-style tended to be cenobitical, that is, the monks lived in separate cells or huts but participated in common prayer, meals, and other functions. However, there was also a tendency among the more austere ascetics to become hermits in the strict sense, separating from others to undergo what came to be called the "green martyrdom," living in remote, isolated places alone with God.

This quest for an intense, self-sacrificing form of testimony was further expressed by the “white martyrdom,” voluntary exile and death in an alien land out of love for the homeless Christ. In its extreme form, the white martyrdom meant a life of perpetual pilgrimage. The renunciates who undertook such a discipline came to be known as *peregrini*. Sometimes these wanderers would set themselves adrift at sea in rudderless boats to go where the winds and fates would carry them. ⁶

Because the roots of British and Irish monasticism were largely Eastern, it contained rich philosophical and theological elements as well as a profound mystical tendency. It is not surprising that in the ninth century an itinerant Irish scholar, John Scottus Eriugena, would introduce the mystical theology of Gregory of Nyssa, Maximus the Confessor, and Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite into the Latin west.

This mystical and scholarly tradition produced other outstanding figures in medieval theology, philosophy, and spirituality: Alcuin, Sedulius Scottus, Duns Scottus, and Richard of St. Victor among them. Their spirituality, like that of their predecessors, was nevertheless first and foremost a biblical spirituality.

All the early literature of the Celtic churches, particularly in Ireland, is filled with biblical citations. For instance, St. Patrick’s confessional apologia is heavily punctuated with quotations and allusions.⁷ Primarily, however, Scripture was used for liturgical celebration, private devotional purposes, and especially study.

The great Gospel Books, undisputed masterpieces of the world’s greatest art, may have been used for liturgical celebrations, although missals were created for this purpose at a very early period. At any rate, the magnificently illuminated Gospels of Kells, Durrow, Lindisfarne, and elsewhere not only represent the artistic genius of the Celtic church at its pinnacle, but testify to the outstanding importance of the word of God in their calligraphy, portraiture, and abstract designs.

In addition to the role of Scripture as the liturgical and artistic focus of Celtic spirituality, there were several forms of private devotional use. One of the most interesting of these uses was the development of small Pocket Gospels which could be taken on journeys or pilgrimage. Finally, and importantly, Scripture was also subject to critical study, exegesis, and commentary by the monks, for whom love of study was next only to love of God. “it is beyond doubt,” Fr. Martin MacNamara writes, “that the study of the Bible was intensely pursued in the early Irish monastic schools.”⁸ James Kenney states that Bible study was in fact their chief subject. ⁹

Public and private prayer was hardly of less importance in Celtic spirituality than devotion to Scripture. The formal liturgy consisted of the Mass, the sacraments, and, at least in the monastic settlements, psalmody-the divine office.¹⁰ In addition to official books, there is a vast literature illustrating the private, intensely personal devotion and informal liturgies of the monks and people at large. ¹¹ Long litanies or *loricae* were composed, for instance, probably for processional usage. A superb and famous example is the *lorica* attributed to St. Patrick. It begins:

I arise today
Through a mighty strength,
the invocation of the Trinity,
Through belief in the threeness,
Through confession of the oneness
Of the Creator of Creation.

Devotion to the angels and saints, and in particular to Mary, seems always to have been of cardinal importance in Celtic spirituality, especially in Ireland, where Jesus was often referred to simply as “the Son of Mary.” Its own great saints appeared in the beginning, during its flowering, and at the decline of the Celtic church, among them Patrick, Illtyd, David, Bridget, Ita, Brendan, Kevin, Columcille, Columban, Malachy, and hundreds more.

Much of our knowledge of the early period of the Celtic church comes from the many biographies of these saints written from the sixth to the tenth centuries. Place names in Wales, Ireland, and Scotland still testify to the enduring importance of areas associated with favorite saints. In fact, often little else is now known of these revered men and women but their names, thousands of which have been preserved in various lists and especially the Celtic martyrologies.¹²

In its most developed form, the vigorous asceticism that typified the spirituality of many of the early Celtic saints may strike us now as extreme. In those heroic and demanding times it would have appeared less so. While the majority of Celtic Christians did not, engage in severe austerities, some ascetical practice was a common feature of everyday spirituality. Significantly for our times, such asceticism was more a willing acceptance of poverty and natural hardship than a pursuit of refined artificialities in the social and psychological orders.

The Celtic Monks

While often attracted to the wilderness and “diserts” of solitary communion with God, the monks were hardly antisocial and even their fiercer forms of asceticism accomplished an evangelical function by the force of its example. The great missions to pagan areas of Pictland, England, and the Continent began as a form of solitary witness rather than attempts at direct evangelization.

As Christianity spread northwards and eastwards from Ireland and Wales, however, a true missionary impulse developed. By the ninth century, wandering scholars with a different kind of discipline had succeeded the missionaries, returning the light of learning as well as faith to much of postimperial Europe.

Monastic scribes and court scholars did not only copy, study, and comment upon Scripture, but also pursued grammar, rhetoric, and even the works of classical pagan poets, especially Virgil and Horace. While they copied and preserved the writings of the Latin Fathers — Ambrose, Augustine, Jerome, Cassian, and Gregory, among others — the monks also recorded the pre-Christian myths and sagas of the Celts from the oral versions of the bardic schools. Thus they preserved for subsequent generations in the Book of Invasions the Ulster Cycle, the Fenian Cycle, and the Four Branches of the Mabinogi, the earliest of all nonclassical European mythologies.¹³

The monks' great scholarly achievements were matched by an equally great love of beauty, especially in nature, which was brilliantly expressed in a variety of artistic forms. There the mystical element of Celtic spirituality became manifest with its paradoxical tensions between the sense of the nearness and farness of God, the melancholy fleetingness of all life, and the vanity of the world, yet the grandeur and wonder of creation in all its ecstatic and myriad loveliness. Such opposition may reflect a fundamental ambivalence in the Celtic temperament as well as the character of the land itself: uncommonly beautiful yet frequently harsh, poor, rocky, and sea-washed, blessed with a mild but wet climate, and therefore also boggy.

The earliest Christian Celtic art is poetry, the bardic elegies and lyrics of the poets of the British courts in the sixth century. In Ireland, scarcely later, epigrammatical poems by often anonymous scribes begin to appear in the margins of Gospels and other books:

To go to Rome

is much of trouble, little of profit:

The King whom you seek there,
Unless you bring him with you,
you will not find. ¹⁴

Even the more severe saints are known for their poems. Four are ascribed to Columban, and many more to the lyrical favorites such as Columcille. The scribes also sometimes broke through their scholarly tedium to etch the margins of their manuscripts:

A stream of wisdom of blessed God
Springs from my fair-brown shapely hand:
On the page it squirts its draught
Of ink of the green skinned holly. ¹⁵

Artistic accomplishment soon extended far more brilliantly to graphic and plastic expression, such as the great stone crosses that punctuate Ireland like rubrics and are found to a lesser extent in all the Celtic lands. But surely the greatest of all artistic achievements of the Celts are the illuminated manuscripts of the seventh and eighth centuries and the metalcraft from the same period.

As mentioned earlier, the calligraphy, illuminations, and portraiture of the famous Gospel Books rank among the supreme art treasures of the human race. Perhaps even greater works were irretrievably lost to time, piracy, and the deliberate destruction of ancient materials by fanatical Puritans in the seventeenth century. Great masterpieces of metal art which have been preserved or recovered likewise testify eloquently to the genius of the craftworkers who expressed their native genius by concentration and miniaturization rather than by expansion to heroic proportion. Typically, neither architecture nor civic design were of interest or perhaps even possible to the Celtic artist in a land where necessary materials were scarce.

Music was also part of the spirituality of the Christian Celts, some little of which was recorded on paper or even in stone. ¹⁶ Later hymnals and antiphonaries exist, however, some describing examples of instruments developed by the Celts, the favored being the harp. St. Patrick's own bell and several other handbells have been preserved as well.

Social Action

An outstanding feature of Celtic spirituality concerns its active political character, which is to say, its commitment to social justice. Because of the tribal nature of the monastic

settlement and indeed of Celtic life in all aspects, involvement in social life was as inescapable for the monks as it had been for the druids before them. This social dimension of Celtic spirituality was largely expressed in its devotion to pastoral care and spiritual development.

Such active ministry included extensive preaching, sacramental administration, and spiritual direction. Fully thirteen sermons of St. Columban survive in manuscript.¹⁷ According to legend, preachers often summoned congregations at bridges and crossroads by their enticing playing on the small harp.

The emergence in Irish monasticism of the *anamchara*, the “soul-friend,” was an important step in the evolution of the practice of spiritual direction. Both confessor and advisor, the spiritual authority of the soul-friend approached that of the abbot or abbess. It was a role earned by dedication and could be exercised by both women and men.

The Irish monks’ development of penitentials, more or less uniform codes of penances and ecclesiastical penalties, similarly advanced common spiritual welfare. For, rather than a legalistic mortmain, they represented a liberal effort to ensure some measure of equality in pastoral practice. But even the penitentials were characterized by the irreducible Celtic tendency toward independence of spirit.

Justice and charity were the main hinges of Celtic social action. Despite exceptions, distributive justice was especially prominent in the Celts’ dealings with one another. Social justice was no less important. Thus, women occupied a position not only equal to that of men but, in some instances, such as those of Bridget and Ita, far surpassing it. Irish deaconesses and abbesses exercised ecclesial authority, sometimes unimpeachably so. Children, too, were not only highly valued, but fostering was widely practiced lest orphans or the poor lack access to material and spiritual benefits. Prisoners and hostages were normally treated with sacred respect, and warfare among the tribes was conducted with surprising equanimity.

Similarly, a strong emphasis on kindness and hospitality pervades early Christian literature. Fr. Diarmuid O. Laoghaire describes an ancient series of proverbs which begin with the word *eochair*, “key.” There we learn that if the key to justice is distribution, the key to miracles is generosity.¹⁸ He cites two short poems that treat typically of the importance of hospitality:

O King of Stars!

whether my house be dark or be bright

it will not be closed against anybody;
may Christ not close his house against me. ¹⁹

Again, with regard to an unfit guest house:

Great the sorrow!

Christ's guest-house is fallen into decay;
if it bears the name of Christ the renowned,
it means that Christ is without a home. ²⁰

Lessons for Our Times

The uniqueness of our own era is not so much challenged by comparison with earlier ages as it is demonstrated, even when we are able to find striking similarities. Even a brief survey of Celtic spirituality suggests both theological and spiritual implications for our own time and time to come.

In an age dominated by war and militarism, increasing global poverty, social injustice, and environmental deterioration, we will learn, for example, that no nation which relies primarily on military strength for its security will endure long nor will it leave to coming civilizations a heritage much worth preserving. We will likewise learn that justice for some is ultimately injustice for all, and that to ignore the intimate implications of the social, biological, and physical systems that constitute our environment, and the delicate balance that prevails between them to make this a habitable planet, is to court disaster for life on earth.

And perhaps most significantly, we will learn that it is possible to live peaceably in the face of terror.

Beginning in 795, coping with terrorism became a recurrent, almost routine challenge for Celtic Christians as, for over two hundred years, Viking raiders plundered the coasts and navigable river areas. Sometimes the Irish, British, and Christian English were able to repel pirate attacks. The Scandinavian thrust westwards was even temporarily halted by military resistance led in Saxon England by Alfred the Great in 878 and again in 895, and in 1014 by Brian Boru in Ireland. However, Christian Celtic and Anglo-Saxon realms still remained prey to raids, whose major targets were usually the monasteries. Overall, tens of thousands of monks and nuns as well as countless lay persons were massacred by the Vikings, for whom terrorism operated as an informal but highly effective policy.

Terrorism has of course become a major, almost formal policy of revolutionary guerillas as well as established and often dictatorial governments throughout the world. Directly or indirectly, even the major powers, while themselves often the target of terrorist attacks, support political terrorism by supplying arms, ammunition, matériel, training, and money to terrorist groups of the right and the left. So widespread and entrenched has terrorism become in world politics that it has not only grown into a major industry but even, as Clare Sterling has argued, a professional international network.

What can a Celtic spirituality teach us about living with terrorism? Fundamentally, that the resort to terror ultimately defeats itself if met with patience, firmness, and nonviolence. The Vikings were not ultimately stopped by the armies of Brian Boru and Alfred, but by the force of civilization, enculturation, and conversion. Inter-marriage and relative harmony among Scandinavian settlers and their unwilling hosts eventually came to prevail. Significantly, the last and most sophisticated period of Celtic art in Ireland incorporated the enriching influence of both Saxon and Scandinavian design. In a word, the important lesson we can learn from our Christian brothers and sisters of that far distant time is one far older yet: not to render evil for evil. For it is only in patience that we shall possess our souls.

Originally published in *Spirituality Today*, Fall 1985, Vol. 37 No. 3, pp. 243-255

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Notes

1. John T. McNeill, *The Celtic Churches* [Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1974], p. 1.
2. “The organization of the Gallic Church of the fourth century was based on the orderly system of Roman civil administration: bishops had their sees in important provincial centres; ecclesiastical law and administration took as their models the imperial legal code and civil service procedure” [J. F. Webb, *Lives of the Saints* [New York: Penguin Books, 1965], p. 11].
3. For the existence of deaconesses in the Irish church, see Père Grossjean, *Analecta Bollandia*, LXXIII, 298, 322.
4. Cf. Webb, *Lives*, p. 11.

5. For a concise history of Celtic monasticism, see Jeremiah O’Sullivan, “Old Ireland and Her Monasticism,” in Robert McNally, ed., *Old Ireland* [New York: Fordham University Press, 1965], pp. 90-119; and Kathleen Hughes and Ann Hamlin, *Celtic Monasticism* [New York: Seabury, 1982].
6. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle for the year 891 recounts the story of three Irish *peregrini* who may be taken as a possibly typical example: “And three Scots came to King Alfred from Ireland in a boat without oars. They had left home bent on serving God in a state of pilgrimage, they cared not where. Their boat was made from two and a half hides and contained enough provisions to last them seven days, and within a week they landed in Cornwall and shortly afterwards came to King Alfred. They were called Dubslane, Macbeth and Maelinmum” [Webb, *Lives*, p. 19].
7. Patrick relied largely on the translation known as the *Vetus Latina*, which was eventually replaced by St. Jerome’s superior version of 384, commonly called the Vulgate. Significantly, as Charles Thomas observes, “the oldest extant MS of the complete Vulgate is British, the early eighth century Codex Amiatinus, written around 700 at Jarrow-Monks-wearmouth, sent as a gift by Abbot Coelfrith to the pope. Its textual standing is such that it has formed the basis of post-medieval recensions of the Vulgate” [*Christianity In Roman Britain to AD 500* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981], p. 82].
8. Martin MacNamara, “The Bible in Irish Spirituality,” in Michael Maher, ed., *Irish Spirituality* [Dublin: Veritas Publications, 1979], p. 35.
9. Cited, *ibid.* So important was scriptural study, that the following epigrammatical protest usefully reminds us that, by the eighth century, most people could neither read nor write, particularly Latin, but were not on that account to be accorded second-class status among the saints: ” ‘Tis sad to see the sons of learning/ in everlasting Hellfire burning/ While he that never read a line/ Doth in eternal glory shine” [Robin Flowers translation, in David Greene, ed., *An Anthology of Irish Literature* [New York: Modern Librarian, 1954], p. 14].
10. For a variety of reasons, British liturgical documents are almost wholly lacking. On the other hand, early Christian Irish liturgical sources include the Stowe Missal, the Book of Armagh, the Book of Deer, the Book of Dimma, and the Book of Mulling. One of the treasures of the continental church is the famous Sacramentary, of Rheinau, ca. 800. Less a source for the Irish liturgy, it rather testifies to Celtic influence on the

development of liturgy elsewhere, mainly through the work of missionaries such as St. Columban. See also J. H. Bernard and R. Atkinson, eds. and trans., *The Irish Liber Hymnorum*, 2 vols., [London: Harrison and Sons, 1898] and Hugh Jackson Lawlor, ed., *The Rosslyn Missal* [London: Harrison, 1899]. For an overview of this subject, see John Hennig, "Old Ireland and Her Liturgy," in McNally, ed., *Old Ireland* pp. 60-89.

11. Some of the earliest sources, all from about the year 800, include the Book of Nunnaminster, the Book of Cerne, the Hadeian Prayer Book, the Royal Library Prayer Book, and the Durham Ritual.
12. Several of these fascinating books have been edited and translated since the turn of the century, including the Martyrology of Oengus [*Féilire Óengusso*], ed. Whitley Stokes [London: Harrison, 1880, 1905]; the Martyrology of Gorman [*Féilire Húi Gormáin*], ed. Whitley Stokes [London: Harrison, 1895]; the Psalter and Martyrology of Ricemarch, ed. H. J. Lawlor, 2 vols. [London: Harrison, 1914]; the Martyrology of Tallaght, ed. R.I. Best and H.J. Lawlor [London: Harrison, 1931], and the Martyrology of St. Jerome, ed. Dom Henry Quentin, O.S.B. [London: Harrison, 1931]. For lives of the saints, see W. W. Heist, *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae*, *Subsidia Hagiographica* 28 [Brussels, 1965]; the now classic editions by Charles Plummer of the Latin and Irish versions, *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae*, 2 vols. [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910] and *Bethada Náem nÉrenn*, 2 vols. [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968; repr. 1922 ed.]; Sabine Baring-Gould and John Fisher, *The Lives of the British Saints; The Saints of Wales and Cornwall and Such Irish Saints as Have Dedications in Britain*, 4 vols. [London: C. J. Clark, 1907-13]; and J. F. Webb, *Lives of the Saints* [New York: Penguin Books, 1965].
13. Nora Chadwick, *The Celts* [New York: Penguin Books, 1971], p. 255. See among other versions, H. d'Arbois de Jubainville *The Irish Mythological Cycle* and *Celtic Mythology* trans. from the French with additional notes by Richard Irvine Best [New York: Lemma Publishing Corp., 1970; original: Dublin, 1903].
14. Meyer's translation modernized, in Green, ed., *Anthology*, p. 18.
15. Eleventh century. Meyer's translation, in Greene, ed., *Anthology*, p. 33.
16. See James Travis, *Miscellanea Musica Celtica*, *Musicological Studies* 14 [Brooklyn N.Y.: The institute of Mediaeval Music, Ltd., 1968], and Séan O'Boyle, *Ogam: The Poet's Secret* [Dublin: Gilbert Dalton, 1980].
17. See G.S.M. Walker, ed., *Sancti Columbani Opera*, *Scriptores latini Hiberniae* 2 [Dublin, 1957].

18. "Old Ireland and Her Spirituality," in McNally, ed., *Old Ireland*, p. 47.

19. Ibid.

20. Ibid., p. 48.

(Cf. <http://silouanthompson.net/2011/03/spirituality-of-the-celtic-church/> November-15-2016 (Date of Access))

Products of the Celtic Church: Strong Personalities: St.Patrick, "Axe Head""reptile slayer"= the deer, Mongonus Secatus Patricius, actually a Romanized Brit. St.Bridget,"bright shining one" Abbess of Kildare = BrÁd, Goddess of Knowledge and Life, protector of the family against want and need, heroic generosity. St.Kevin of Glendalough "Valley of the two lakes"=in touch with the earth and the elements. Schmiel, Mary Aileen, The Finest Music in the World: Exploring Celtic Spiritual Legacies from Western Spirituality, edited by Matthew Fox, Bear and Company, Santa Fe, New Mexico. Á Tuama, Sean and Kinsella, Thomas, An Duanaire-- An Irish Anthology Poems of the Dispossessed 1600-1900, The University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia. Ancient Celtic Church. 1,087 likes Á 74 talking about this. The Ancient Celtic Church is a mystical community of nature connection, open, inclusive and... Á The Ancient Celtic Church is a community of nature connection and is part of the reconstruction move See more. CommunitySee all. Á Water from an Ancient Well: Celtic Spirituality for Modern Life. Book. The Celtic Catholic Church. Religious organisation. The Celtic Christian Tradition. Religious organisation. Liberal Catholic Church. Religious organisation. Liberal Catholic Church International. Religious organisation. Christian Mystic.