

Celtic Christian Spirituality  
March 3, 2021  
Chapters 1 and 2

**Opening Prayer**

Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart,  
Be all else but naught to me, save that thou art;  
Thou my best thought in the day and the night,  
Both waking and sleeping, thy presence my light.

Be thou my wisdom, be thou my true word,  
Be thou ever with me, and I with thee, Lord;  
Be thou my great Father and I thy true child,  
Be thou in me dwelling, and I with thee one.  
*(Irish, 8<sup>th</sup> century)*

**Chapter 1 – Creation**

The created order, from the smallest particle to the furthest star, is recognized as an active agent of God's own goodness and mercy. God's blessing, majesty, and creativity are revealed through earth, sea, sky, wind, plants and creatures. This spirituality directly refutes any splitting of matter and spirit. Celtic spirituality is notable for its supreme confidence that this cosmos is in God, and that if it were not in God, it simply could not, would not, exist. *Introduction pgs 11-12*

Further, this is a spirituality that confidently affirms that matter is of God—every speck of it, every quark, every not-yet-named particle. *Introduction pg 12*

This is prayer rooted in an unshakable confidence that the world is of God, that the world is in Christ, and that the deep-down goodness of this world is the true reality. God is the world's origin and destination...Celtic Christianity is grounded in the keen vision that perceives all matter as evidence of the creative activity of God. *Chapter 1 pg 19*

**Review of Optional Homework Assignment**

Contemplate the prologue to the Gospel of John and the excerpt from JSE's homily on the prologue. *Pg21*

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. *John 1:1-5 NSRV*

Now the eternal light manifests itself to the world in two ways, through the Bible and creatures. For the divine knowledge cannot be restored in us except by the letters of scripture and the sight of creatures. Learn the words of scripture and understand their meaning in your soul; there you will discover the Word. Know the forms and beauty of sensible things by your physical senses, and see there the Word of God. And in all these things Truth itself proclaims to you only he who made all things, and apart from whom there is nothing for you to contemplate since he is himself all things. He himself is the being of all things.

*John Scotus Eriugena, Homily on the Prologue to the Gospel of John*

Note 3 The Celtic Christians discerned that divine revelation is offered to humanity through two different books: the book of scripture and the book of the creation. In order to live in such a way that our lives mirror God's own life, we humans need to attend to both of these texts. Reading scripture without attention to the book of creation results in distortion. Reading creation without attention to scripture results in distortion. Only when the two are read together and allowed to speak in our hearts and souls, as well as our minds, do we begin to walk in a path of life. *Chapter 1 pg 20*

We should not therefore understand God and creation as two different things, but as one and the same. For creation subsists in God, and God is created in creation in a remarkable and ineffable way, manifesting Himself, and though invisible, making Himself visible, and though incomprehensible, making Himself comprehensible, and though hidden, revealing Himself, and though unknown, making Himself known. *Chapter 1 pg23*

*John Scotus Eriugena, Periphyseon: On the Division of Nature*

Note 7 God indwells all that has been brought forth by divine love and intent. The creation exists because it is in God, in the risen Jesus, in the Holy Spirit. The creation would not be if it were not in God, because the eternal light and life are the essential foundation of all that is. God is immanent within the creation, but is in no way limited to the creation.

## **Chapter 2 – Prayer**

Following the prayer and practice of the Christian East, with which the Celtic churches had early ties, this spirituality affirms that “there is no place where God is not.” *Pg 12*

These prayers challenged me to shift my gaze, to stop seeking God's presence in the spectacular or the unusual. *Pg 12*

This Celtic way of prayer, marked by distinctive cultural expressions (Hebridean, Welsh, Irish), leads us to the commonality of our human experience. We are reminded to pray through the ritual actions of our day. When we read of a woman blessing the kindling of the fire, that might lead us to offer a morning prayer as we prepare coffee. When we read of the blessing of the

herd, that might lead us to pray more deeply for the creatures in our household and throughout the world. *Pg 49*

An Encircling Prayer pg 53

My Christ! My Christ! My shield, my encirler, Each day, each night, each light, each dark:

My Christ! My Christ! My shield, my encirler,

Each day, each night, each light, each dark.

Be near me, uphold me, my treasure, my triumph, In my lying, in my standing, in my watching,  
in my sleeping.

Jesus, Son of Mary! My helper, my encirler,

Jesus, Son of David! My strength everlasting:

Jesus, Son of Mary! My helper, my encirler,

Jesus, Son of David! My strength everlasting.

*The Carmina Gadelica, III, 77*

**Optional Homework**

1. Practice trying to connect with/pray to God during everyday activities.
2. Read some of the writings/poems/prayers from Chapter's 3 and 4. Come prepared to speak on any that resonated with you.

Closing Prayer

<https://www.northumbriacommunity.org>