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AN APOLOGETIC TO THE NEO-PAGANS

AS REPRESENTED BY DR. GUS DiZEREGA

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To

Jessica, Lisha, Rowan, and Braeleigh my truest inspirations

My parents, Bill and Linda, who have struggled alongside me all these years, and tolerated my musings.

My other Parents, Warren and Karen Kaul, who shined light into my intellectual darkness and helped me, find the paths I so often walked by.

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All my colleagues, both professors and students, at Liberty University, for being the iron that sharpened me.

Dr. Leo Percer and Dr. Ed Smither for sharpening and tuning this work, that it might be useful to someone else.

Epigraph

I am the Wind that blows across the Sea;
 I am the Wave of the Ocean;
 I am the Murmur of the Billows;
 I am the Bull of the Seven Combats;
 I am the Vulture on the Rock;
 I am a Ray of the Sun;
 I am the Fairest of Flowers;
 I am a Wild Boar in Valour;
 I am a Salmon in the Pool;
 I am a Lake on the Plain;
 I am the Skill of the Craftsman;
 I am a Word of Science;
 I am the Spear-point that gives Battle;
 I am the God who creates in the head of man the Fire of Thought.
 Who is it that Enlightens the Assembly upon the mountain, if not I?
 Who tells the ages of the moon, if not I?
 Who shows the place where the sun rests, if not I?
 Who calls the cattle from the House of Tethra?
 On whom do the cattle of Tethra smile?
 Who is the god that fashions enchantments –
 - The enchantment of battle and the wind of change?

The Song of Amairgen
Leabhar Gabhála

What is whiter than snow? – Truth
 What is swifter than wind? – Thought
 What is sharper than the sword? – Understanding

Druidic wisdom riddles from The Wooing of Ailbe.

Introduction

The Celtic church has a rich heritage both ecclesiastic and culturally. The founders and foundations of the Christian faith in the Celtic lands are veiled in the distant past. Students of history, however, are not without some information. There was another religious tradition that was contemporary with the beginning of what would become the Celtic church, the Druids.

The early Druids were the spiritual and intellectual leaders of the Celtic peoples. They were most likely the single most influential body in the Celtic lands. These were men of great power; they held the sum of all the knowledge of the Celtic people. Kings bowed to their advice, common people called on the Druids to adjudicate disputes between parties. They spoke with divine words, and all ignored those words at their own peril.

For all the Druids alleged knowledge not much hard evidence is left of them. Most knowledge of this early brotherhood is culled from historical and literary sources. This of course heightens their mystique, and over centuries has drawn many curious seekers to look deeply into that void and try to know them. The Druids while maintaining an enormous bank of knowledge, which took initiates twenty years of study to learn, did so entirely orally.¹ This seems to be their way of protecting their place in the Celtic society. There is physical evidence of their existence in the *ogham* writings on stones.² These often commemorate a person or mark a place as sacred.

As Christianity in the Celtic lands began to proliferate, the Druid culture saw great decline. They mysteriously disappear for centuries as the Christian church becomes an effective

1. John Michael Greer, *The Druidry Handbook: Spiritual Practice Rooted in The Living Earth* (San Francisco, CA: Weiser Books, 2006), 16.

2. *Ibid.*, 17.

voice in the midst of the Celts. The neatest explanation is proposed by Ellis, “When Christianity established itself, the generic term Druid became corrupt, being connected with pagan society, and only applied to wizards, magicians, prophetic poets and bards.”³ The Celtic intelligentsia classes, the real Druids, adapted to their new religious and cultural values and lived on, but no longer were they called Druids.

As the Celtic church rose in prominence, so too did some of its more famous adherents. The so called Celtic Saints came to prominence, more so in retrospect it seems. The argument for assimilation of culture, and perhaps the Druid rites, is strengthened by the tales told of these saints. It seems that the early Celtic Christian writers, having a firm belief in the magical powers of the Druids, put those same powers into the hands of the saints of the Celtic Church.⁴ Many of them seem to be in the form of myths, attributing to them supernatural powers, which one assumes are granted by their closeness to the Divine. In this way the Celtic Saints often mimic the action of characters from Irish, Scottish, Pictish, Breton, and Welsh mythology. The people have made messiahs of them, and engaged them in demagoguery.

For a thousand years the Druid way slept. Then a revival began in Europe. This revival was spawned from within the Anglican Church as a means of fraternity and for the increase in personal spirituality. The birthplace of modern Druidism, and to a great extent modern Neopaganism is the Apple Tree Tavern in the Covenant Garden section of London, August 28, 1717.⁵ It is here that the Ancient Druid Order is formed. These men, over cider and ale, sought to augment their Christian faith. Their aim seems to have been to reignite a pure and ancient

3. Peter Berresford Ellis, *The Druids* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994), 251.

4. *Ibid.*, 250.

5. John Michael Greer, *The Druidry Handbook, 18. Spiritual Practice Rooted in The Living Earth*, 16.

religious system, and perhaps to take the first steps towards a more nature minded faith; to have the creature respect the creation and by extension give greater worship to the Creator.

Also from this movement came a much more pagan minded brotherhood. These were interested in nature as God, or perhaps even the idea that God is in all things, and therefore all things are God. These pantheist and panentheists would draw this originally Christian, or church based, movement towards an intermingled approach to belief, eventually bringing out the pagan themes over and above the basic Christian ones. The central tenant of this movement is that if all things are god, then all things are sacred. If this is true then mankind has no right to use anything without the leave of the divine, since even food animals and trees would be part of that divine.

Both of these revived Druid traditions come with little physical evidence to back them, only some historical and oral traditions. These revivalists left no stone unturned in their reconstruction of the so called Ancient Druid traditions. They could in no wise make any definitive statements, just some haphazard guesses at what and how their ancient brethren might have believed. They knew that the oak was revered and so several books appear on this subject. Groves were accepted as sacred spaces and this affected the culture and literature of the day. John Toland would in 1740 publish a book that initially was titled *Critical History of the Celtic Religion*, however after the first edition all other edition have been titled *History of the Druids*.⁶

Pagan tendencies in this new Druid order is justified by an Anglican vicar Henry Rowlands picturing the ancients descended from the Old Testament patriarchal structure, the Druid were direct descendants of a Noahic line.⁷ The possibility of human sacrifice was seen

6. Ellis, *The Druids*, 258.

7. Rowlands, *Mona Antiqua Restorata*, 45; 140-41.

simply as an extension of the Old Testament sacrificial system.⁸ This incursion of belief would reemerge in 19th century paganism and would develop from there into a full blown amalgamation of paganism and the church.

As time passes the search for Druid truth continues. The pagans connect to the church in the 19th century through a Helio-Arkite cult, the tandem worship of the sun and Noah's Ark. They posit that this cult has been in place since times immemorial and that the Druids were just one of the participant cultures. The Druids used this cult to give their own belief structure greater authority than the church of the time, as it was thought to be the more pure religion.

By 1949, The Ancient Order of the Druids had splintered into no more than four groups and then reformed to only two, which then by 1955 merged to be known as The British Circle of the Universal Bond. It is here that we find two very important people, Gerard Gardener and Ross Nicols. The two men would influence each other, and the groups they in turn influenced. Nicols would refocus the Druids on Celtic lore and mythology from which it allegedly spawned. Gardener would go on to found Modern Wicca. This sets the stage for the New Age of the 1960s.

Much of the New Age belief is based on Druid concepts, and thus at its heart is Pagan. The 1960s brought a thirst for alternative religion, a revival of sorts. It is Sybil Leek, a prominent witch and friend of Aleister Crowley, who calls Wicca the "Old Religion."⁹ Increased reverence for things that have passed brought a deeper faith in the non-Christian side of religion in general, and an increase in nature and animal worship. All this is done to fill a universal need, deeper connection with the divine. One can literally reach out and touch God; the divine can be literally embraced. Out of this movement came Dr. Gus DiZerega.

8. Ibid., 140-41.

9. Sybil Leek, *Diary of a Witch* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1968), 14.

Dr. DiZerega is a third degree Wiccan Gardenerian elder, and is a renowned political theorist. He came to Neo-Paganism and Wicca almost directly after his Ph.D. studies had been completed. Not growing up religious in any way, he categorizes himself as an unrepentant child of the 60's.¹⁰ When he did choose a religion, he thought it would probably be Judaism or Buddhism because of their deep intellectual traditions. DiZerega claims that he found religion one night on a challenge from a magickal friend, a Neo-Pagan, to come to an event; which he attends and his life is changed irrevocably. He embarks on a life of esoteric studies, and eventually its defense in the academic world with the publication of his book, *Pagans and Christians: A Personal Spiritual Experience*, and continues this defense in a dialogue with Philip Johnson *Beyond the Burning Times: A Pagan and Christian in Dialogue*.

The intent of this document is to set forth an apologetic to Neo-Paganism, of whom Dr. DiZerega is an exemplar. To that end, a historical summary of the Celts and the Druids will be set forth, followed by those traditions connected to Neo-Paganism. From the outset, let us establish that the Nordic and Heathen aspects of the “Neo-Pagan” tradition will be addressed only to distinguish it from Neo-Paganism. While both are present in modern culture, they are rooted in vastly different lineages, and thus are only compatible on a cursory level. Brán and Odin may represent similar essences, but they are not the same being.

The first question that must be asked is “what is Celtic Christianity, and what distinguishes it from what might be called ‘normative’ Christianity?” Celtic Christianity is that tradition deeply rooted in the pagan culture of the *celtoi* or Celtic people, and in the contextualization undertaken by those that brought the gospel to them. It is a Christianity that focuses on Spiritual matters; above all else, it is a metaphysical faith. James Mackey, observes;

10. Gus DiZerega, “About Gus,” http://www.dizerega.com/?page_id=134 (accessed August 2, 2009).

“a new religion can never succeed except to the extent that it succeeds in embodying at least the best of the culture to which it comes.”¹¹ This seems to be the case with Celtic Christianity.

A Brief History of the Early Celtic Church and the Druids

Who were the Celts? The Celts were a tribal people, which were found mainly in Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Cornwall, and the Island of Man. Even though the Celts lacked a functional written language, they were an advanced civilization; they had a pantheon of Gods as extensive as that of the Romans.¹² The Druids, or *filidh*, were the priests and advisors in the Celtic culture, to win them was to win the ear of the tribal kings and leaders. As the gospel was brought to the Celtic people, it was to these Druids, the spiritual and political leaders of the time that it would need to be the most appealing. This is precisely what the Celtic Saints did; they brought a new spirituality to the Celtic people. First, let us look at the Druids and then we will delve into the Celtic Saints, where Patrick will be our primary exemplar.

Due to the oral nature of their culture and the secrecy surrounding their traditions, little is known about the origins of the earliest Druids.¹³ This secrecy served to protect the place of the Druid in the culture as priests of the Celtic people. Nora Chadwick points out, "The Druids are the most advanced of all the intellectual classes among the peoples of ancient Europe beyond the Greek and Roman World."¹⁴

11. James P. Mackey, "Introduction: Is There a Celtic Christianity," in *An Introduction to Celtic Christianity*, ed. Mackey, James P. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1989), 3-4.

12. Lehan, *Early Celtic Christianity*, 28.

13. Chadwick, *The Celts*, 153.

14. Chadwick, *The Celts*, 51.

The earliest known reference to the Druids is from the second century B.C., and this itself is third hand knowledge.¹⁵ Greek writings first use the word *Druidae*, which like *Keltoi* appears to have a Celtic origin even though its exact meaning is disputed. Some have thought it means, "Wise one of the oak," this is one of almost inexhaustible translations.¹⁶ Another attempt is made by combining *dar* and *gwydd*, which mean "superior" and "a priest," respectively.¹⁷ Then *dar-gwydd* becomes a superior priest or one that is superior in priestly things. It has been proposed that *deru*, "oak" and *hud*, "enchantment" are the roots of the word, this is in reference to the Druid fondness for actuating rituals in the presence of an oak tree as cited by Pliny the Elder.¹⁸ Dr. Dáithá Ó hÓgáin posits that the linking of the Druid with the oak is spurious at best, as it is certainly the:

Favorite tree of the Druids... was clearly the rowan, and it was on wattles of this tree that Irish practitioners slept in order to have prophetic visions. The hazel tree was also important, as evidenced in the Druid's Mac Cuill ('son of hazel') and by the lore concerning nine hazel trees at the source of the river Boyne, the nuts of which had a nucleus of wisdom.¹⁹

It seems trees were of ritual importance to the Druids and by extension the Celts. The foundation of the Druids is found in an age of hunter-gathers, and as a result the use of trees (specifically the oak) makes sense, since the oak was seen as symbol of plenty with its acorns easy to store for difficult times.²⁰ Beyond the issue of food the oak provided wood for fires, and thus warmth, its

15. P Ellis, *The Druids*, 37.

16. John Michael Greer, *The Druidry Handbook* (San Francisco: Weiser Books, 2006), 16.

17. Graeme K. Talboys, *Way of The Druids: The Renaissance of a Celtic Religion and Its Relevance for Today* (New York: O Books, 2005), 38.

18. *Ibid.*, 39.

19. P Ellis, *The Druids*, 38.

20. Peter Berresford Ellis, *A Brief History of The Druids* (Philadelphia: Running Press, 2002), 39.

branches provided shelter from the elements. The oak and the knowers of the oak, the Druids, by extension were venerated.²¹ This veneration of oak wood seems to be all encompassing, homes, burial structures, and ritual fires are all constructed from this wood even when there is abundance of other woods more readily available.²²

Another alternate etymological possibility is that *Dru* is derived from *dreo*, meaning “truth;” in which case the Druid would be truth seekers or knowers. “A Druid as one who sees, knows, and understands the truth certainly reflects accurately the function of Druids in society,” says Talboys.²³

The Druids use the language of the learned, *ogham*, whose namesake is the god of eloquence and the sun, as their ceremonial, ritual written language. The basis of which is tree imagery.²⁴ In modern Irish, *ogham*, means the “ancient alphabet”; however, *oghun*, a related term, seems to refer to occult sciences.²⁵ The old Irish name for the month of June is *Ogmhios* and referent to the Celtic sun god, and the god of eloquence Oghma.²⁶

The Druids were also the judges of the Celtic people. The law they upheld is called Brehon Law. This law has its basis in the ideal that men should be responsible to one another, not an impersonal establishment of the state. Within this system, crimes would not have been a civil offense, but were a violation of private rights of the individual.²⁷ This appears to be an early

21. Ellis, *The Druids*, 39.

22. Ellis, *The Druids*, 42.

23. Talboys, *Way of The Druids: The Renaissance of a Celtic Religion and Its Relevance for Today*, 41.

24. Nigel Pennick, “The Celtic Oghams and Bardic Alphabet,” in *Magical Alphabets: The Secrets and Significance of Ancient Scripts - Including Runes, Greek, Ogham, Hebrew, and Alchemical Alphabets* (York Beach, ME: Red Wheel/Weiser, LLC, 1992), 124.

25. *Ibid.*

26. Kevin Duffy, *Who Where The Celts?: Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About The Celts 1000 B.C. to The Present* (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1999), 143.

27. *Ibid.*, 140.

functional socialism, going even as far as the king ruling for the people not himself. The king would have been a *brithem*, or judge, at the very least one of his chief advisors would have been one.²⁸

These Druids are probably the *brithem* that advise the Celtic kings, who in turn uphold the Brehon law. These men would have been the guide for their people; they were the primary seekers of truth in all things for the Celts.²⁹ The Druids then are the de facto leaders of the Celtic people. They act then as judges for the people and something more than advisors to the kings of the Celts.

...The Druids are concerned with the worship of the gods, look after public and private sacrifice, and expound religious matters. A large number of young men flock to them for training and hold them in high honour. For they have the right to decide nearly all public and private disputes and they also pass judgment and decide rewards and penalties in criminal and murder cases and in disputes concerning legacies and boundaries...³⁰

In fact, the advice of the Druid was so revered that to ignore it was to give up kingship. The legacy of the Celtic thrones was in their hands. It was the Druids who decided whom would be king through their collective wisdom.

What is known of the early Druids comes from classical allusions to Celtic religious practices, as well as the occurrence of divine names in inscriptions as well as place names, and to some extent from careful reconstructions from Irish and Welsh heroic literature.³¹ It seems that

28. Duffy, *Who Where The Celts?: Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About The Celts 1000 B.C. to The Present*, 141.

29. Talboys, *Way of The Druids: The Renaissance of a Celtic Religion and Its Relevance for Today*, 41.

30. Caesar, *The Gallic Wars: Julius Caesar's Account of The Roman Conquest of Gaul*, 159.

31. Charles Thomas, *Celtic Britain*, ed. Glyn Daniels, *Ancient People and Places* (New York: Thames and Hudson, Inc., 1997), 26.

the Celtic pantheon was very similar to that of the Roman Empire's own pagan pantheon.³² Evidence from the Roman period presents a wide array of gods and goddesses who are represented by images or inscribed dedications. Certain deities were venerated widely across the Celtic world, while others were limited only to a single religion or even to a specific locality.³³ The Celts did not have temples as such; they favored nature settings, such as groves as worship sites. In addition, they did not give individual physical personhood to each of their deities; those deities simply lived with the thing, a form of panentheism. The god that would become the Green Man was the forest, and Cerrunos was the wild game of the forest and so forth. The Roman influence however seems to have changed at some point. After Roman contact with the Celts through the assimilation of Gaul and Briton, the Celtic gods began to each manifest in a particular physical form. John Mann posits that this assimilation "may for the first time have brought about the actual creation of Celtic deities as individual personalities."³⁴

The acceptance of the personality of the individual god necessitates a place of worship and residence for the personal god, and this practice marks the beginning of Celtic worship sites and temples. This acceptance of personhood for the gods, would set the stage for the introduction of Christianity, a more pervasive and complex religion that required temples and had a personified deity.³⁵ After the spread of Christianity in the Celtic nation, the Druid declined in importance, and eventually became only characters in the Celtic stories.

32. Ibid.

33. Miranda J. Green, *Exploring The World of The Druids* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2005), 26.

34. Thomas, *Celtic Britain*, 28.

35. Ibid.

Some of the characteristics of these Druids may be found in the similarly venerated Celtic Saints. An exemplar of the Celtic Saints is Patrick, whose life and work will be examined in part. History records that the man known as St. Patrick was born about 1500 years ago at the end of the fourth century in what is now Britain. The exact time and location of his birth has been lost to the annals of time, but that does not stop the speculation and presentation of new places on a regular basis. What is known, with a modicum of certainty, is that Patrick entered Irish history around A.D. 432. This was when his mission started, and is the beginning of written history in Ireland.³⁶

Patrick's story is remarkable. He was Briton born, in the town of *Bannavem Taburniae*, to an estate holding family. His father, Calpurnius, was a deacon in the Roman church and his grandfather, Pontitus, had been a priest. Young Patrick would have had some religious training, but it did not seem to influence him much. Britain at this time was on the edge of the crumbling Roman Empire. As such, they were subject to frequent barbarian invasions, in one such invasion by the Irish; sixteen year old Patrick was abducted and forced to become a slave. As a slave, Patrick was tasked to watch sheep and cattle, and in so doing to live a life of almost complete isolation. It was during this solitude that Patrick found his mission.³⁷ Of this time Patrick says in his *Confessio*:

To narrate in detail either the whole story of my labours or even parts of it would take a long time. So, lest I injure my readers, I shall tell you briefly how God, the all-holy one, often freed me from slavery and from twelve dangers which threatened my life, as well as from many snares and from things which I am unable to express in words.³⁸

36. Thomas O'Loughlin, *Saint Patrick: The Man and His Works* (Great Britain: Triangle, SPCK, 1999), 15.

37. O'Loughlin, *Discovering Saint Patrick*, 143.

38. *Ibid.*, 158.

Patrick, the redeemed shepherd, was forced to become a shepherd in Ireland. During this time in his life, the teaching of the Church which he was taught as a child, but had largely disregarded began to percolate in his soul. This forced isolation in Ireland seems to have allowed him to finally hear the call of God.

There had been no Roman Occupation in Ireland as there had been in Britain. Ireland remained free of outside influences until around the 10th century. While Patrick was from Britain, it is not what is known as Britain today. The two Germanic tribes, the Angles and the Saxons, had not yet influenced the Britain Patrick knew, in short there was not yet even the roots of 'English' culture. Patrick was in fact, a Romanized Celt.³⁹ Patrick's Ireland was Pre-historic.⁴⁰ In other words, they were a pre-writing culture. Brendan Lehane articulates, "That they did not write seems to point to a positive rejection of writing, for they were certainly in contact with races that did, and showed in other spheres that they were willing to absorb what was useful to them."⁴¹ The lack of written language would seem to have been due to Druid influence, who did not want to lose their privileged stature in the community.⁴² A stature that was only controlled by continuing oral training of their initiates, to write their rites down would have resulted eventually in the Druidic secrets passing out of their hands. In addition, the Druids and bards were entrusted with the passing down of the mythology and history of their people and would not easily lose that trust. Julius Caesar says of them:

39. R.P.C. Hanson, "The Mission of Saint Patrick," in *An Introduction to Celtic Christianity*, ed. James P. Mackey (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1989), 24.

40. Brendan Lehane, *Early Celtic Christianity* (London; New York: Continuum Books, 2005), 28.

41. Lehane, *Early Celtic Christianity*, 28.

42. Greer, *The Druidry Handbook: Spiritual Practice Rooted in The Living Earth*, 16.

... The Druids are wont to be absent from war, nor do they pay taxes like the others... It is said that they commit to memory immense amounts of poetry. And so some of them continue their studies for twenty years. They consider it improper to entrust their studies to writing...⁴³

Patrick thought himself to be going to the last people group to be reached, 'the ends of the earth.' O'Loughlin articulates about Patrick's spiritual mission, "He is the chosen vessel to bring the Gospel to the last place on earth, and so the herald of the last times."⁴⁴ The primary element of Patrick's ministry was a policy of building trust with the natives, and never violating it. Patrick seems to have seen himself as a direct representative of God, an apostle.⁴⁵ As such, he would not allow his word or deed to be representing anything other than the trust that he had in God and His plan. Patrick knew that if the people could first trust him, it would be all the more easy for them to trust in his God. Stephen R. Lawhead thinks Patrick did this by becoming a Druid and using that influence to reach the people.⁴⁶ As a Druid Patrick would have the trust that he desired from the people, as even kings would bend their ear to the words of a Druid.

Patrick was not a priest ordained by the Church. This lack of a formal ecclesiastic education concerned Patrick greatly, this in light of the fact that Patrick was at least bilingual and most likely tri-lingual.⁴⁷ Having been raised a Briton, and then forced to live and communicate in

43. Julius Caesar, *The Gallic Wars: Julius Caesar's Account of The Roman Conquest of Gaul* (St. Petersburg, FL: Red and Black Publishers, 2008), 160.

44. O'Loughlin, *Saint Patrick: The Man and His Works*, 24-25.

45. O'Laughlin, *Discovering Saint Patrick*, 58.

46. Stephen R. Lawhead, *Patrick: Son of Ireland* (New York: Harper Torch, 2003).

Lawhead quotes a passage about Patrick attributed to Muirchú "In a book belonging to Ultán, Bishop of Connor, I have found four names for Patrick: Succat, when he was born; Magonus, which means "Famous"; Patricius, when he was ordained; and Corthirthiac, when he served in the House of Four Druids."

47. O'Loughlin, *Saint Patrick: The Man and His Works* 29.

Ireland; where it is quite likely that more than one language was used as one moved from one part to another in Ireland. It seems that Patrick had some troubling presuppositions. The following passage from the *Confessio* is quite revealing.

... while I was sleeping Satan attacked me violently... and there fell on top of me as it were, a huge rock, and not one of my members had any force. But from whence did it come to me, ignorant in the spirit, to call upon 'Helias'? And meanwhile I saw the sun rising in the sky, and while I was crying out 'Helias, Helias' with all my might, lo, the brilliance of that sun fell upon me and immediately shook me free of all the weight; and I believe that I was aided by Christ my Lord, and that his Spirit then was crying out for me ... just as it says in the Gospel: 'In that hour', the Lord declares, 'it is not you who speaks but the Spirit of your Father speaking in you.'⁴⁸

When he cries “Helios,” what or who is he invoking? This is a rather ‘knotty’ problem according to O’Loughlin. He asks, “Is he [Patrick] calling on the Sun as a god or as a divine sacrament; or is he calling on Elijah ([H]elias in Latin) - some who heard Christ on the Cross thought he was calling on Elijah. (cf. Matt 27:47).”⁴⁹ It is also possible that Patrick is calling Jesus through an understanding of Celtic divinity. Iolo Morgannwg identifies Hu/Hesus/Esus as Jesus Christ, saying “Hu the Mighty, Jesus the Son of God, the least in respect of His worldly greatness whilst in flesh and the greatest in heaven of all visible majesties.”⁵⁰ Esus is linked in Druid tradition with Beli, the Sun Disk. According to Chief Nuinn, Beli can be linked can be seen as the Solar Logos, the Creative Word or Son.⁵¹

One must ask then, is this Pagan Reflex or a call for grace? Patrick was a Romanized Celt from the British Isles, although Christianity was taught to him from an early age, it is quite

48. “Confessio 20” O’Loughlin, *Saint Patrick: The Man and His Works*, 64.

49. O O’Laughlin, *Discovering Saint Patrick*, 152.

50. *The Barddas of Iolo Morgannwg*, ed. J Ithel (York Beach, ME: Weiser, 2004), 221.

51. Ross Nichols, *The Book of Druidry* (Hammersmith, London: Thorsons, 1990), 80, 126.

probable that pagan traditions were ingrained in him as well. He would certainly have been exposed to them during his time in Ireland, and probably would have at least known of some of the pagan Breton practices of his home. There is some probability that this passage is a mistranslation and Patrick intends *Eli*, “my God,” as the reading.⁵² At the very least, it demonstrates the pervasive spirituality that marks the Celtic church.

There are copious legends surrounding Patrick’s mission to Ireland. This goes with his standing in their community, the leaders of the people were the ‘blessed’ and as such had extraordinary powers. Patrick has been said to remove all the snakes from Ireland. Did he do this, or is it a metaphor? It seems likely that Patrick’s pied piper like herding and disposal of the Irish snakes never happened, as there is no evidence that there have even been snakes in Ireland.⁵³ It is possible though that the “snakes” Patrick is said to dispel are the followers of the Dagda, the primary Celtic All-Father god. His symbol is the black serpent. Those called first from his black cauldron are called his serpents; these would be the gods of Celtic religion.⁵⁴ Perhaps, these are metaphysical snakes which Patrick dispels.

There is much legend to the history of St. Patrick and the Celtic saints; they became part of the inherently spiritual backdrop for the Celtic people. The stories of the Celtic Saints often contain similar elements: they are often of royal lineage; they can sometimes do miracles as children; they go out and find disciples and powerful objects; they travel by miraculous means;

52. James Henthorn Todd, *St. Patrick, Apostle of Ireland: A Memoir of His Life and Mission, With an Introductory Dissertation On Some Early Usages of The Church in Ireland, and Its Historical Position From The Establishment of The English Colony to The Present Day* (Eugene, Or: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2003), 371.

53. Jill Locantore, “Why Ireland Has No Snakes,” Smithsonian, <http://nationalzoo.si.edu/Animals/ReptilesAmphibians/NewsEvents/irelandsnakes.cfm> (accessed November 21, 2007).

54. J. Denosky, “The Dagda - The Dark Man of the Ancestors and the Green Man of the Forest,” 2005, <http://www.fairie-world.org/tales/dagda.html> (accessed December 1, 2009).

they establish their authority by fighting magicians, monsters, or Druids, and can strike opponents with debilitating illness, like blindness.⁵⁵ The Saints of the Irish church gave them hope, and to some a physical manifestation of the semi-divine. To the Irish, Patrick was plugged into God, and through following him they too could be so connected.

That pervasive spirituality can be found in the Celtic saint, Ninian who is a good case study of the treatment of these saints. Like Patrick, Ninian, is given over to supernatural abilities. In *Vita Niniani* Ninian causes a king to become blind, only allowing him sight when the king recognizes Ninian's power; catches a pregnant girl in a lie about a priest fathering her child by having the unborn child from within the womb to reveal the real father; Ninian makes leeks appear in a garden and raises from the dead a man gored by a bull. Ninian reads his psalms out of a small book and it and he are protected from the elements, until he has an unlawful thought, and then Ninian and the book get wet. Once Ninian regains his composure and repents the protection from the elements is restored.⁵⁶ There are also a variety of posthumous miracles attributed to being in the presence of his body. Most of what is known of Ninian's actual life is contained in the work of Bede. Ninian is a bishop of Briton ancestry and he trained in Rome. He lived in *Candida Casa*, a white stone house that might have been strange to the Britons of the time, and is said to be the singular cause of the Southern Pictish people ceasing their idol worship.

Another pillar of the Celtic Church who needs to be addressed is Saint Columcille. Columcille is also one of the 12 apostles of Ireland.⁵⁷ December 5, 521 A.D. Colum is born into

55. Donald E. Meek, *The Quest for Celtic Christianity* (Edinburgh: The Handsel Press LTD, 2000), 168-69.

56. Alan MacQuarrie, "St. Nynia," in *The Saints of Scotland: Essays in Scottish Church History* (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers, 1997), 109-17.

57. W.H. Gratton-Flood, "The Twelve Apostles of Erin," in *Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: Appelton Company, n.d.).

an aristocratic family in the Gartan Lough of northeastern Donegal in Ulster. As was the custom of the time, he was fostered out to Cruithnechan, who incidentally is the priest that baptizes and educates Colum in the church. His name means "dove," however originally he was named after the "fox." These two polar opposites well illustrate the duality of Columcille; the fox implying sly ruthlessness and the dove a creature of warmth and tranquil demeanor.⁵⁸ It is thought that his affection for the church is the stem from which the moniker Columcille rises, the name meaning "dove of the church." Young Colum was of noble blood and had a possible claim to the throne at Tara, but instead chose a monastic life.⁵⁹ Colum's early adult life is mysterious and difficult to chase. One can imagine Colum's early life was similar to other Irish princes of the day. It is known that Colum was involved in a bloody confrontation over a Psalter which he had illegally copied. As penance for the death he had caused Colum was instructed by his friend St. Molaise that he should depart from Ireland with the task of converting to Christ as many souls as the number slain in the battle.⁶⁰ At the age of forty-two, Colum leaves Ireland for Pictish Scotland seemingly by his own decision. It is possible that when Colum went to Scotland it had been evangelized partly by Ninian.⁶¹ In Scotland, Colum would come to the place most associated with him, Iona.

Colum would spend thirty-four years of his adult life on the small three mile island of Iona in the Inner Hebrides. Here, he would become as Adomnan said of him, "...an exile for

58. Malachy McCourt, *Malachy Mccourt's History of Ireland* (Philadelphia: Running Press, 2004), 36.

59. McNeil, *The Celtic Churches: A History A.D. 200 to 1200*, 87.

60. James F. Kenney, *The Sources of The Early History of Ireland: Ecclesiastical* (New York: Columbia University Press, Octagon Press, 1929, 1967), 135.

61. Nora Chadwick, *The Celts*, new R ed. (London, New York: Penguin Books, 1997), 210.

Christ.⁶²” The monastery Colum founded at Iona around 565 became a prosperous settlement of the Irish Church in Scotland. In the next century under St. Aidan, it would be instrumental in the conversion of northern England.⁶³

Iona at the time of Colum’s arrival was land disputed between the Scots and the Picts. The king of the Pictish people, Brude mac Maelchon, granted Colum the island as a Christian sanctuary.⁶⁴ This land is also said to have been granted to Colum by Conall, who was vassal of Brude. There is really no problem with both giving ownership, as it entirely possible that Brude gave Iona to Colum through Conall. Brendan Lehane proposes that Iona is subject to Conall, and Conall is a royal cousin to Colum, thus happily granting him the land.⁶⁵ Conall, under vassalage to Brude, would not necessarily have the right to give such a gift independently. Iona had already been a sacred place to the pagans and had been consecrated to the Christian faith before Colum’s arrival there, perhaps by Ninian or one the many missionary soldiers whose name are lost to history.⁶⁶

Iona was a most industrious place; there was farm work done here so that the monks might eat. Of course there was also much scribal activity of which there are only two extant examples, the *Cathach*, Colum’s psalter; and the Book of Kells. The Kells document is certainly from Iona, but most likely was not completed during Colum’s lifetime, as it seems to show a

62. McNeil, *The Celtic Churches: A History A.D. 200 to 1200*, 90.

63. Chadwick, *The Celts*, 210.

64. McNeil, *The Celtic Churches: A History A.D. 200 to 1200*, 91.

65. Lehane, *Early Celtic Christianity*, 125.

66. Lehane, *Early Celtic Christianity*, 125.

later style of art.⁶⁷ The workdays here stretched from dawn on Monday until deep in the night Friday evening. Colum saw that there was little time for distraction. The monks even sleeping in their meager habits to always be ready to go to services.

A story about Colum (shortly after his arrival in Scotland) going to Inverness to meet Brude reveals a magic duel of sorts between Colum and Brude's magicians. Colum is able to open a locked gate with only the sign of the Cross. "Establishing for himself a personal spiritual overlordship of Pictland so that he was given a place of great honor," surmises Meek.⁶⁸ The Druid theme continues in writings attributed to Colum, where he claims, "Christ ...is my Druid."⁶⁹ As has been seen above, the Druid was of no little importance. They were seen as ultimate guides of knowledge even to the ruling kings. For Colum to identify Christ so is rather telling of the importance of both in his mind. It would seem when Columcille makes this statement that the idea of Druid supremacy is still on the minds of the people and would be readily understood, as there is not further explanation.

Women were also of importance in the Celtic Church, and Brigid is a good example. She is born at Faugart in County Louth about 450. This would place her sometime before the death of Saint Patrick, but it would seem that any association with him is fictitious.⁷⁰ Miracles are attested to her as a child, among them the multiplication of milk and butter as a relief for the poor. She is

67. Lehane, *Early Celtic Christianity* 126.

68. Meek, *The Quest for Celtic Christianity*, 182.

69. "I do not hold to the voice of birds, or any luck on the earthly world, or chance or a son or a woman. Christ the Son of God is my Druid; Christ the Son of Mary, the great Abbot; the Father the Son and the Holy Spirit. My estates are with the King of Kings; my order is at Cenacles and Moen." Lady Gregory, "A Book of Saints and Wonders - BOOK TWO: COLUMCILLE, THE FRIEND OF THE ANGELS OF GOD," <http://www.sacred-texts.com/neu/ce/saw/saw02.htm> (accessed December 10, 2007).

70. McNeil, *The Celtic Churches: A History A.D. 200 to 1200*, 79.

said to have been the daughter of Dubhthach, the poet to King Loeghaire. Brigid was born to Dubhthach by his concubine, Brotsech; and was raised in a Druid house, where she took part in the running the farm and fields.⁷¹ In short, she was of noble blood, but spent her childhood as a servant. When she returns to her parents as a teenager, she it told that she must marry. She refuses, mutilating her face and taking vows of celibacy and virginity.

Her greatest accomplishment is the founding of a “double house” monastery in Kildare.⁷² This monastery allowed for sanctuary for both men and women and was the only one of its type at this time in Ireland.⁷³ This institution enjoyed the patronage and support of the royalty of that day.

The site of Kildare is important since it is situated near Knockaulin, which was a sacred pagan site that seems to have been associated with the Irish pagan goddess Brigit. The word Kildare, *Cill Dara*, means church of oak tree/ wood. It is likely that a *bile*, a pagan sanctuary, existed here that was composed of a sacred oak tree.⁷⁴

Meek goes as far as to speculate, “Saint Brigit is a Christianized version of the pagan goddess, Brigid the daughter of the Dagda.⁷⁵” Nineteen nuns maintain a perpetual sacred fire at Kildare until at least 1186. The sacred flame at Kildare was said by Giraldus Cambrensis and other chroniclers to have been surrounded by a hedge, which no man could cross. Men who attempted to cross the hedge were said to have been cursed to go insane, die, and/or to have had

71. Ibid.

72. Meek, *The Quest for Celtic Christianity*, 147-48.

73. M McNeil, *The Celtic Churches*, 79.

74. Meek, *The Quest for Celtic Christianity*, 152.

75. Meek, *The Quest for Celtic Christianity*, 152.

their penis ("lower leg") wither.⁷⁶ This perpetual fire could have sprung from the worship of the goddess, Brigit.⁷⁷

The Celtic Saints were greatly revered, even almost deified. They had god-like powers, but this was due in no small part to their nearness to God. It seems common that an already sacred place to the people was used to further the work of the Gospel. Iona and Kildare, as we have seen are two such places. Like the confrontation between Elijah and the prophets of Ba'al, the profane was asked to produce and comes up wanting; the sacred saint is able to succeed beside the pagan's failure. This is the story of the early Celtic Church seen through the eyes of the saints, and those who saw or knew them.

It seems that the ancient Druids disappear off the landscape of history around the same time of the rise of the Celtic Church. The Celtic people did not seem terribly interested in the new Christian religion, remaining content in their folk religion that was administered by the Druids. It is interesting to note that it is not until the decline and eventual disappearance of the Druids that a Christian faith begins to take hold in the Celtic lands. Perhaps then, the Druids do not disappear at all, but rather don new robes as leaders of the Celtic Church, and through this leadership live on in a 'new' faith. The people simply follow their leaders to a new place and formulation of worship. In any event both the Druids and the original Celtic Christianity pass away. It seems that around the time of Patrick or shortly thereafter the Celtic church disappears into the larger confines of the Roman Catholic Faith.⁷⁸ It seems probable that like the Greek gods in the belly of their father, Chronos the Titan, that Celtic Christianity was swallowed and

76. "Celtic Deities - Brigid," 2009, <http://www.celticmythmoon.com/deities.html#Brigid> (accessed December 1, 2009).

77. M McNeil, *The Celtic Churches*, 80.

78. Peter Berresford Ellis, *The Druids*, 251.

lived on a effecting that larger body of the Church. Celtic Christianity and Druidry would rise again almost two millennia later.

Revival Druids and the Rebirth of Celtic Christianity

The first resurgence of the Celtic Church occurred in about the eighth century with the founding of the *Céli Dé*, which stands for servants/clients/friends of God. This movement, *Céli Dé*, started from Southern Ireland around the area of Munster, eventually settling into the area around Dublin and spreading out from there.⁷⁹ The original iteration of this movement was severely hindered in the ninth century by Viking attacks, but a single document of the age the Stowe Missal has survived. It is likely the modern day Celtic Church is an outgrowth of this movement.⁸⁰

The English Druid orders count November 28, 1717 as the first serious step towards Druid revival. On this day at the Apple Tree Tavern in Covent Garden, London, a meeting of Druid enthusiasts occurred where they formed the Ancient Druid Order. This order would be the first Druid organization of modern times.⁸¹ While some have romanticized these events with visions of men in white robes from all corners meeting to reunite, it was actually a dozen or so men in a private room of a middle-class pub, taking the first and uncertain steps towards the revival of the Druids between draughts of cider and ale.⁸² We will never know with certainty, as there is no

79. *Celtic Spirituality*, ed. Bernard McGinn, trans. Oliver Davies; collaboration with Thomas O’Laughlin, The Classics of Western Spirituality (New York: Paulist Press, 1999), 19.

80. Kevin Knight, “The Celtic Rite,” 2009, Catholic Encyclopedia, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03493a.htm> (accessed July 14, 2009).

81. Greer, *The Druidry Handbook*, 18.

82. *Ibid.*

solid documentary evidence to prove the meeting even happened. It is not all that unlikely though, as Eighteenth Century England was rife with societies, clubs, and secret or semi-secret orders, the bulk of which were poorly documented. With this in mind, it is not unreasonable in the least that an organization could exist with little to no evidence to substantiate it.

This revival had a real effect on Christianity. During this revival of Druidry in the seventeenth century, there were divergent agendas. Some groups rejected Christianity out of hand and sought a different faith altogether. There were also those that sought to cast Christianity in a “greener” form.⁸³ The former would have drawn attention, since the challenge of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity and the belief in more than one god was against British law until early in the nineteenth century.⁸⁴

Those who chose to move to a different path from Christianity had the central theme of pantheism, the idea that the universe itself is a living, divine being, all is god; an idea the ancient Druids might have held to as well.⁸⁵ The idea that nature was itself literally divine, the very body of God made material, would have been “explosive stuff” in the rigidly moral and formal England in the 1700s.⁸⁶

Since there is so very little source material from the original Druids, the revivalists were forced to make “stone soup,” they filled the pot of their new-found faith with elements as they became available, thus making a hearty stew that was filling to the mind and soul. They became innovators assimilating anything and everything they encountered into their composite take on Druidry. No clue was left un-researched from sacred geometry of Pythagoras to astronomy and

83. Greer, *The Druidry Handbook*, 18.

84. Ibid.

85. Greer, *The Druidry Handbook*, 19.

86. Ibid.

astrology. Of course the association with groves and glens as worship places was so thoroughly assimilated into the English culture that when a book on growing oak trees was published in 1743, it was called *the Modern Druid*.⁸⁷ The growing industrial revolution and its effects on the landscape of Britain stimulated these eager would-be Druids. Seeing a better way through the supposed ancient wisdom of the Druids, they opposed this desecration of the planet, and in turn helped start modern ecological thought.⁸⁸ Historical scholarship was a boon to these revivalist Druids, they devoured books about past Pagan traditions, comparative religions, myth and folklore. These works became the crucial building block for their reconstruction of ancient Druidic teachings.

The term “pantheist” was coined by John Toland, but he would not agree with it as an ‘-ism’ as such, never using the word “pantheism” in any of his own works.⁸⁹ To Toland, the belief of a pantheist could not be excised from the methodology and attitudes of the possessor.⁹⁰ This could not be blind religion; it must be a learned philosophy and should be represented as such. Toland would also write the first English language book on Druids, *History of the Druids*, in 1726 as a series of three letters to his patron, Lord Molesworth. This transcript would eventually become *History of the Druids*, but was first published in 1740 as *Critical History of the Celtic Religion*, after this first edition, all subsequent editions were published as *History of the Druids*.⁹¹

87. Ibid., 24.

88. Greer, *The Druidry Handbook*, 24.

89. Stephen Hartley Daniel, *John Toland: His Methods, Manners, and Mind*, ed. Phillip J. Cercone, vol. 7 of *McGill-Queen's Studies in the History of Ideas* (Quebec and Montreal: Queen's Press, McGill, 1984), 211.

90. Stephen Hartley Daniel, *John Toland: His Methods, Manners, and Mind*, ed. Phillip J. Cercone, vol. 7 of *McGill-Queen's Studies in the History of Ideas* (Quebec and Montreal: Queen's Press, McGill, 1984), 212.

91. Ellis, *The Druids*, 258.

Toland is of course not the only important figure in the Druid revival. Reverend Henry Rowlands, a vicar in Anglesey, wrote *Mona Antiqua Restorata*, in which he talked about the Druids and specifically their human sacrifices and the idea that the isle of Anglesey is the Mona referred to by Tacitus. Thus it might be considered the birthplace of the Druids, at least from a classical source. Rowlands is important for this, but primarily he seems to be largely responsible for the modern romantic image of the Druid, as well, he has the Druids descended directly from Noah.⁹² Rowlands says:

I may presume to affirm, that some of the First Planters of this Island, being so near in descent, to the Fountains of true Religion and Worship, as to have one of Noah's Sons for Grandsire or Greatgrandsire, may be well imagin'd, to have carried and convey'd here some of the Rites and Usages of that true Religion, pure and untainted, in their first propagating; tho' I must confess they soon after became, as well as in other Countries, abominably corrupted, and perverted into the grossest heathenish Fictions and Barbarities.⁹³

Rowlands apparently made of the Druids “patriarchal Old Testament figures, worshipping in the accepted Celtic/Druid fashion with cairn and cromlechs used as their altars. He did not seem to see the human sacrifice as a problem, just an extension of the Old Testament system of sacrificing on stone altars to the Jewish God.⁹⁴ In defending the primacy of ancient Noahic “Christianity” against the incursion of the Roman Catholic Church he goes so far as to say “[that despite their] *Human Sacrifices* and *Diabolical Magick* [the Druids were] as to Life and Conversation in many Points, almost half Christians to their hands.”⁹⁵ This idea would re-emerge in 19th century paganism, and would certainly be bolstered by these earlier claims.

92. Ellis, *The Druids*, 258.

93. Rowlands, *Mona Antiqua Restorata*, 140-1.

94. Ellis, *The Druids*, 258.

95. *Ibid.*, 140-1.

The second division of the Druid revival was attached to the Latitudinarian movement of the Anglican Church. This movement hoped to move the Church away from squabbles over doctrine, urged religious tolerance, and set forth a personal spirituality based on meditation and individual study. Within this tradition, many found that Druid mysticism was compatible entirely with this form of non-dogmatic personal Christianity. Both sides of this division borrowed freely from the extensive literature of Anglican meditation and spiritual exercise.⁹⁶

The Ancient Order of Druids was founded in England in 1781; the founder was a carpenter, Henry Hurle. Hurle used the precepts of Freemasonry to form this new organization. By 1833, however, there was difficulty between two factions within the Order, those who saw it simply as a gentlemen's club with Masonic rituals, and those that adhered to the underlying theosophical ideas. Those who did not share the theosophist beliefs broke away, and in 1839, formed the 'United' Ancient Order of Druids.⁹⁷ This event would begin the worldwide spread of Druid belief, which heretofore had been limited to the England, Ireland, Scotland, and parts of France. This organization nominally exists today. The esoteric parent group, the Ancient Order of Druids would count Winston Churchill as one of its members at the Albion Lodge of the Ancient Order of the Druids, at Blenheim Place.⁹⁸ This organization would eventually splinter forming at least 5 sects, by 1949 only two remained, from 1955 onward would be known as The British Circle of the Universal Bond.

96. Greer, *The Druidry Handbook*, 19.

97. Ellis, *The Druids*, 273.

98. *Ibid.*, 273-4.

Modern Druids

The “modern” Druids are a product of their Revival age brethren and the continued search for knowledge of the ancients. As was mentioned earlier, Rowlands’ proposal that the Druids could be traced back to Noahic times is expanded by the 19th century Pagan community. The Pagans make the connection through a Helio-Arkite cult worship structure, one that worships both the Sun and Noah’s Ark. They further posit that this cult is already in place and that the Druids co-opted it and melded it with Welsh mythology and their own rituals and teachings, this then giving their religion greater authority than the current church, due to greater age and higher purity.⁹⁹

By the end of the 19th century, it was argued that all Pagan religions are descended from ritual worship of the penis and vagina as life and fertility symbols. The Druids had applied these ideas to Christianity, in turn “proposing calmly that Jesus was a phallic symbol and churches were immense stone vaginas;” during the Victorian era no less.¹⁰⁰

During the period of 1946-47, certainly no later than 1949, Gerard Gardener joined the British Circle of the Universal Bond.¹⁰¹ Gardener is important for two reasons. First, he is the founder of modern Wicca, the tradition of which Dr. Gus DiZerega is a part. Secondly, this would place Gardener and Ross Nicols in position to influence each other. Nicols is responsible for refocusing Druidism on concerns of Celtic lore and mythology.¹⁰²

99. Ibid., 25.

100. Greer, *The Druidry Handbook*, 25.

101. Ronald Hutton, *The Triumph of The Moon: A History of Modern Pagan Witchcraft* (London: Oxford University Press, 1999), 224.

102. Jean Markale, “The History of Modern Druidism,” *The Order of Bards, Ovates, and Druids*, http://Druidry.org/modules.php?op=modload&name=PagEd&file=index&topic_id=1&page_id=114 (accessed December 7, 2008).

With the dawn of the sixties and the desire for alternative religion, Druidism became an archetype. Many of the “New Age” ideas and Spirituality were based on Druid concepts. The most outspoken spawn would be Witchcraft, or Wicca. Sybyl Leek, a prominent witch and family friend of Aleister Crowley and H. G. Wells, referred to Witchcraft as the Old Religion, and called it “very closely allied to Celtic witchcraft;” in her *The Complete Art of Witchcraft*.¹⁰³ The influences of Celtic witchcraft, Druid ideals, and Gardnerian Wicca would ultimately produce what is referred to as Neo-Paganism.

Druid influences seem to have had an impact on high church through the ages. The Pagan community claims an origin lost to the depth of time, while the Church seems to only have a heritage of a scant few millennia to its credit. The Pagan community proposes that they are our, the Christian Churches, mother culture. It seems likely that they have influenced Church tradition to some extent, as J. A. MacCulloch says:

No Celt left us a record of his faith and practice, and the unwritten poems of the Druids died with them. Yet from these fragments, we see the Celt as the seeker after God, linking himself by strong ties to the unseen, and eager to conquer the unknown by religious rites or magic art. For the things of the spirit have never appealed in vain the Celtic soul, and long ago classical observers were struck with the religiosity of the Celts. They neither forgot nor transgressed the law of the gods, and they thought that no good befell men apart from their will. The submission of the Celts to the Druids show how they welcomed authority in matters of religion, and all Celtic regions have been characterized by religious devotion, easily passing over to superstition, and by loyalty to ideals and lost causes.¹⁰⁴

At this point one must take issue with MacCulloch on the issue of monotheism within the Druid religious structure. The pre-Christian Celts were almost certainly polytheists; monotheism would

103. Ellis, *The Druids*, 277.

104. John Arnott MacCulloch, *The Religion of The Ancient Celts* (Edinburgh: T & T Clarke, 1911), 18.

have been an inordinately foreign concept to them. MacCulloch's intent seems to be to show the Druids as the scholars and truth seekers of their culture could have concluded that there is a singular God, but there is simply no historical evidence that such a thing happened on a large scale within the pre-Christian Celts. This supposition seems to have come from a quotation of Origen, in his textual criticism of the book of Ezekiel. In this book is a claim that the Druids of Britain had "worshipped the one god...previous to the coming of Christ... [The Celts] had long been predisposed to Christianity through the doctrines of the Druids...who had already inculcated the doctrine of the godhead."¹⁰⁵

As the Druid role changed within the Celtic world, they seemed to disappear. This is true to a point. As the term "Druid" acquired other esoteric and pagan connotations that were not originally associated with it.¹⁰⁶ It seems that there are Druid elements mixed with Christianity by 1820 at the latest. George Henry Law, the Bishop of Bath and Wells, erected a 'Druidic Temple' with the inscription:

Here where once Druids trod in times of yore
And stain'd their altars with a victim's gore
Here now the Christian ransomed from above
Adores a God of mercy and of love.¹⁰⁷

This structure was a semi-circular and roofed, with five arches and containing a circular wooden table and was placed in Bishop Law's gardens in Avon.¹⁰⁸ This structure is certainly not alone nor is the sentiments of its inscription.

105. Ellis, *The Druids*, 114.

106. *Ibid.*, 251.

107. John Chilcott, *Chilcott's Descriptive History of Bristol* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1849), 371.

108. Ellis, *The Druids*, 272-3.

Alexander Blair-Ewart helped to bring about a “New Age Christianity,” through the usage of Druid precepts and Celtic culture. He argued, “because of its Druid past, Celtic culture was... the most advanced spiritually and best equipped in an inner sense for the encounter with Christianity.”¹⁰⁹

This started a trend of sorts, others would bring Druids and Christians back together as it was during the 18th century revival. They would call for a ‘new’ form of Christianity what seems to be a revitalization of an old Celtic Christianity.¹¹⁰ Two books by Shirley Toulson *The Celtic Alternative: A Study of the Christianity we have Lost* and *The Celtic Year*, of 1987 and 1993 respectively, brought Druid ideas squarely back into Christianity. She says,

From their Druid forbears the Celtic Christians also inherited a love of the land, and a feeling of the unity of all creation. In this aspect, the philosophy embedded in the Celtic Church bore a strong resemblance to that of the Orthodox Church today, which emphasizes the sanctity of the matter.¹¹¹

Ms. Toulson apparently intends something else entirely since there is no mention of the “unity of all creation” in the Christian canon, and the concept is foreign to Christian doctrine in general. One must disagree with the statement, in that it resembles more like Buddhism than Christianity. This is illustrated by a later passage, “Above all, we will come close to Celtic thinking as, inspired by the obvious threats to the survival of our planet, and we learn to be constantly mindful of *the part we play* in the divinity of the universe.”¹¹² It seems that the idea is that mankind is directly responsible for not only, the earth, but that mankind are simultaneously

109. Alexander Blair-Ewart, “The Celtic Spirit in The New Age: An Astrologer's View,” in *The Celtic Consciousness*, ed. Robert O'Driscoll (New York: George Braziller, 1981), 590-1.

110. Ellis, *The Druids*, 278.

111. Shirley Toulson, *The Celtic Year* (Dorset: Element, 1993), 25.

112. Emphasis mine Toulson, *The Celtic Year*, 30.

stewards of the divinity of which it is part. In effect, humans are the caretakers of that which is god.

Out of all of these influences comes Dr. Gus DiZerega, who posits that one can have fruitful dialogue between Christians and Pagans since they are brother religions. Through cooperation each of us can find deeper faith and a more fulfilling truth. Dr. DiZerega seems to feel that Christianity is the wayward child of religion, filled with bitterness and hate. He does not see all Christians as bad. Those Christians who are “real” and not “Sauronic” frauds can be tolerated and even respected. Dr. DiZerega delineates between the two in this manner; “the dividing line between ‘real Christians’ and the Sauronic frauds masquerading as such is whether Jesus' teachings are primary, with his reported death and resurrection underlining them, whatever else they might do, or whether his life is largely ignored, and attention is mostly on his reported death and resurrection. One focuses on life, the other is a death cult.”¹¹³ Earth-based religions have only been filled with love or necessary violence. DiZerega goes on to say that Christianity goes wrong when, “[f]ighting 'Satan' becomes more important than attending to Jesus' message, or his message is reinterpreted so as to downplay most of what he said.”¹¹⁴

Dr. Dizerega sees Christ as “as an important spiritual teacher.”¹¹⁵ His Neo-Pagan beliefs do not allow him to see Christ as “the only begotten son of God, nor that believing in him is necessary for the remission of sins, nor do we believe in sins in the ways many Christians think of the term.”¹¹⁶ This is because the Pagan has a different perspective on evil.

113. Gus DiZerega, “Real Christians - A Pagan Perspective - A Pagan's Blog,” October 22, 2009, <http://blog.beliefnet.com/apagansblog/2009/10/real-christians---a-pagan-perspective.html> (accessed November 13, 2009).

114. Ibid.

115. Gus DiZerega, “Twelve Things You Probably Didn't Know About Pagans,” November 9, 2009, <http://blog.beliefnet.com/apagansblog/2009/11/twelve-things-you-probably-didnt-know-about-pagans.html> (accessed November 10, 2009).

116. Ibid.

Pagans believe our world is a manifestation of the Sacred, and is not fallen. As a consequence, its spiritual powers are worthy of veneration and honor. While because in human beings freedom and ignorance exist together bad things inevitably happen, Pagans do not think there is any need to posit an ultimate source of evil, or even that such an idea makes much sense.

Essentially, that there is something like the Christian evil, but it is caused by the exercise of one's own free will, and therefore there is no necessity for a being that is itself wholly evil, thus the Pagan rejects the Christian conception of Satan as ultimate evil. From the Pagan perspective then, they cannot be Satan worshippers, since such a being has no existential purpose.

The Pagans do not believe in a singular personal God that created and controls the universe, and who communicated through a succession of prophets and other sources of divine command. They rather see such a god as one among many, and not all-powerful. According to the Pagan tradition down through the ages, most Pagans will agree that there is a singular source from which everything, including the gods, originates.

Some Wiccans call this Source the Dryghton. Our view closely resembles descriptions of the Godhead as reported by many mystics. While many Pagan traditions honor it, all focus mostly on "intermediate" spiritual powers, the Gods, elements, spirits of place, and ancestors, most closely involved with this world wherein we live.¹¹⁷

Pagan spirituality is based on personal experience. It is only through this experience that one can have an ultimate standard of validity. It is one's own encounter with the divine that renders one's practice as valid in the Neo-Pagan paradigm.¹¹⁸ Thus one can only speak in broad

117. Ibid.

118. Gus DiZerega, *Pagans & Christians: The Personal Spiritual Experience* (Woodbury, MN: Llewellyn Publications, 2006), xv.

statements about the overarching beliefs of the Pagan community, of which the Neo-Pagans are a part.

Apologetic Solutions to the Druid/Wiccan Neo-Pagan

This leads to addressing the concerns of the Neo-Pagan position. Dr. Gus DiZerega, a Third Degree Wiccan Gardnerian Elder, a representative of Neo-Paganism has posed a variety of concerns with Christianity. He will do so from the perspective of Gardnerian Wicca, a Neo-Pagan tradition with Druid overtones. In his book, *Pagans & Christians: the Personal Spiritual Experience*, Dr. DiZerga posits that Christians and Pagans are two aspects of the same tradition. To him it seems that Christians have gotten many of the spiritual lessons completely wrong and he wishes to correct them, as Christians and Pagans are related and seem to do nothing but injure each other repeatedly and needlessly.

The approach this paper takes is to answer a variety of questions that the Neo-Pagans are asking. The first of these is “Does God exist?” From the Christian perspective, yes God exists. Scripture as well as the Creation itself attests to such a Creator. In the Christian faith, there is a designer of some sort, and this designer is apparently involved in the running of its design.

The Neo-pagan does not seem to have trouble with this issue as such but would tend to elicit the truth that they are still somehow involved in the development of that design. Further, they see the Creation as being the god(s), and in this sense they are pantheistic, believing that God is contained within everything, that there is a divine spark in all things. The various gods of their pantheon are seen as purpose driven manifestations of the divine essence contained within all parts of the creation, including every living being. William Lane Craig articulates that from a

philosophical standpoint God must exist, because there is a creation, “If the universe came into being, it must have come from something that is outside of time and space (since they are part of the universe) and that something must have a mind to determine to create.”¹¹⁹

Can this be? It seems so. Genesis 1:1-2 says, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. And the earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep; and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters.”¹²⁰ This passage, and in fact the entirety of Genesis chapters one and two, very clearly illustrate that there is in fact a Creator. The issue of Creator has seen much contention. Augustine certainly seemed to think man needed God saying in his *Confessions*, “You made us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You.”¹²¹

William Rowe sums up the western conception of God as “The dominant idea of God..., is the idea of a supremely good being, creator of but separate from and independent of the world, all-powerful (omnipotent), all-knowing (omniscient), eternal, and self-existent.”¹²² The neopagan would take issue with this definition. They might say, “A loving and creative Divine Source might offer paths emphasizing spiritual immanence and loving harmony with the world, along with paths emphasizing spiritual transcendence, and loving separation from the world.”¹²³ That is to say that God, as Divine Source, will allow one to transcend the mundane. Neopaganism is primarily anthropocentric. God does not act in man, so much as man acts towards a

119. William Lane Craig, Transcription of Craig/Hitchens Debate At Biola University, 4/4/2009, <http://doesgodexistdebate.blogspot.com/> (accessed April 13, 2009).

120. “Genesis 1:1-2,” in *The New American Standard Bible* (n.p.: The Lockman Foundation, 1977).

121. St Augustine, *The Confessions of Saint Augustine* (Springdale, PA: Whitaker House, 1996), 11.

122. William L. Rowe, *Philosophy of Religion: An Introduction*, fourth ed. (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, Thomson, 2007), 6.

123. DiZerega, *Pagans & Christians*, 211.

higher spiritual good. In some ways the Divine Source, often referred to as the Goddess, assists in this journey through being the object of ritual. To a Pagan, the issue of God's existence or non-existence is moot. There is no battle here. There is a Divine; it is in the details that there is difference.

The second issue that will be addressed is "God is all goodness, in spite of the fact of evil in the world." This is a classic statement, if God is Creator, and evil exists, then God must have caused evil along with the good. There are a myriad of ways in which religious believers reconcile this. The Muslim sees Al'lah as indifferent, neither good nor evil, he is just non-caring. The Baha'i sees God through the Great Manifestations, of which there are nine, including Jesus Christ and culminating in Baha'u'llah. Each manifestation brings the gospel for their present age, but with the same core truth that equality in all things is the key.¹²⁴

Neo-pagans see their pantheon as aspects of the Divine, and evil is part of that understanding. To them the Divine is detached from the world. Good and evil are two sides of the same coin, and they must exist in balance. Evil is only extraordinarily apparent because humankind has upset the balance.

This idea has invaded the church as J. Phillip Newell articulates in *Christ of the Celts: The Healing of Creation*. Here he claims that Christians need to work through our remembrances of Christ, and by extension God, so that humankind can heal creation. The idea here is that one can return to the Garden of Eden since it is not destroyed just forgotten. That the

124. Winfried Corduan, *Pocket Guide to World Religions* (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 20.

ideals of Eden are still accessible if one can only come to an understanding of how to get to them.¹²⁵

This leads to the next issue; Mankind is part of nature, and thus not a special creation. Neo-Paganism denies that there is a chasm that separates Mankind from nature, that mankind and nature are one and the same. Man is just another animal.

Christianity holds that Mankind is a special creation of God, not the product of evolution or of impersonal forces in the universe. The problem is that the Neo-Pagan finds divinity in the same Nature of which they claim to be a part, thereby excluding any idea of a singular transcendent God. One of the Christian arguments that Neo-Pagans suggest is ludicrous is that God only made man in his image, not the rest of the creation, and further, that it is claimed by Christians that man alone is described as receiving the breath of God, not just the breath of life.¹²⁶ Genesis 2:7 states "Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being."¹²⁷ This is the first mention of *breath* of any kind in the Bible. It seems that all of the rest of Creation just came to be at God's word. It is also interesting to note that God took the stuff of Creation, the dust from the ground, and formed man from it. It seems that the Neo-Pagan would agree with the Christian structure, but not the Christian concept. The Neo-Pagan will say that even though man is inspired with the breath of God, he is constructed of the stuff of Earth and therefore made of Nature. They have come full circle. DiZerega goes as far as to ask if those creatures created before man may be even more directly connected to God. Since God creates the whales and birds directly, apparently

125. J. Philip Newell, *Christ of The Celts: The Healing of Creation* (San Fransisco, CA: Bass, Jossey, 2008), 2-3.

126. DiZerega, *Pagans & Christians*, 178.

127. *The New American Standard Bible*.

ex nihilo, while dust of the earth is required for man's creation.¹²⁸ He goes on to claim that according to the Bible animals have souls (Job 12:7-10), and that all life on Earth received in the same manner through the "breath of life"(Genesis 7:21-22).¹²⁹

While this appears to be the case in the English text, at the very least the Hebrew texts seem to tell another story. The root word used in Genesis 2 is *naphah* which means "blow, breathe, sniff at, give up or lose (life), seethe."¹³⁰ There is a phrase used in Genesis 7:22, *nishmat-ruah hayim*, which in this context means literally "breathing of breath" and can be translated as "breath of life."¹³¹ This is to say that the intention here seems to be that all things that were alive are no longer so. There is no intention here to show that the same "breath of God" that was inspired and animated man is the exact same breath of life that animated the rest of the created creatures. In Job 12:10 the word is *nephesh* which seems to be a synonym of the phrase used in Genesis 7:22, it is used to denote the physical action of breathing, both inspiration and expiration. In fact *nephesh* is present in Genesis 2:7 as well, and it shows the action of God imparting a particular kind of breath, that does not seem to be given to the animals.¹³² This is also true of the usage of both *nephesh* and *ruach* in Job 12:10. Here the first term denotes the soul of man and the second is his continued literal breathing, his literal life. Job is saying that God is in control of everything, and even all created things know this.

128. DiZerega, *Pagans & Christians*, 179.

129. Ibid.

130. R Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, eds., *Theological Wordbook of The Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 586.

131. Ibid., 605.

132. Ibid., 588.

Dr. DiZerega suggests that Psalms 104:27-30 gives further proof that God does not play favorites with mankind, that all of creation is equal in the eyes of the Lord.¹³³ He continues that in Psalms 104:15-18, "it is clear that God cares for far more than just the human race, and is actively involved with all other forms of life."¹³⁴

This passage is taken out of context; it is very obvious that the Psalmist's intent is to show the necessity of God's continued attention to all of Creation. It just shows that God still cares for his work, and addresses him in what appears to be the language of kingship. There is no intention here to imply equality of man and beast. With regard to the comments on Psalms 104:15-18 the intention is to show that God is still interested in His creation, there is no command here to "preserve wilderness areas extensive enough to provide for all forms of life."¹³⁵ There is a claim that the destruction of wilderness in Jeremiah 9:10 is proof that in God's intended world there is no such destruction. Again, I must claim contextual issue with Dr. DiZerega. Jeremiah 8:18-9:16 is very clearly a lament over Judah and the judgments it will face because of its idolatrous actions. There is no naturalistic or ecological agenda here. God is saying that he will take his blessing from them, and they will suffer. His people of the promise, the Jewish people, have gone astray and taken of the religions of the earth, what might be referred to as Pagan idol worship. It is clear in this passage as well as many others that God frowns on the worship of anything other than Himself.

This brings us back to Job 12:7-10. There are two further issues in play here, which allegedly strengthen the argument for enhanced spirituality through communing with nature.

133. DiZerega, *Pagans & Christians*, 179.

134. *Ibid.*, 180.

135. *Ibid.*

First, it is suggested in Job 12:8 that the earth has a soul, and that when approached properly is responsive.¹³⁶ This claim is confounding, one can see no proof textually or otherwise to assume this claim is true. It does seem that nature has a presence, but that is a function of it following set out laws. Not any trait of personhood or awareness. Any response to proper address is because one has also followed those laws. If one plants and tends, crops will grow with the help of the weather and the soil. This is not because the Earth cares about us, but because God does and made it so it would produce.

Secondly, DiZerega espouses that Job 12:7-10 is "direct scriptural agreement with a core Pagan insight that the world of nature, the living earth and all upon it, are reliable sources of spiritual wisdom."¹³⁷ Matthew Fox writes, "Mother Nature is a special word for God, a unique expression of divine wisdom, of divine maternity and caring, of divine creativity and fruitfulness."¹³⁸

One cannot agree wholly with this. Job 12 is clear in its intention, that even the dumb animals know that God is good and will take care of them. There is a sliver of truth in the proposed thought, the concept that the Creation can tell us of the goodness of God or can give us general revelation of Him. This, one can agree with, but not the notion that God is within nature to be known, that he is imminent and not transcendent. DiZerega apparently cannot reconcile this either, "The Divine is imminent as well as transcendent. And everywhere the Divine is, awareness is."¹³⁹ There is no confluence here with the ideals of the Neo-Pagan, in fact, the following chapter 13 of Job refutes that there possibly could be, as Job is redressing his companions' ignorance at speaking for God. The idea

136. Ibid., 181.

137. Ibid.

138. Matthew Fox, *The Coming of The Cosmic Christ* (San Francisco: Harper, 1988), 147.

139. DiZerega, *Pagans & Christians*, 182.

that Mother Nature is another, special word for God cannot be correct. If one subscribes to this it becomes just another hat that God wears and thus espouses a modalistic mindset.

What then does the Bible say about Humanity? It seems that one of the most powerful arguments for Christianity is found in humanity. The wonder of the human body points to the creativity of the Creator in a way that should evoke awe. (Psalm 139:14) Genesis 1:26 shows that mankind is given dominion over the Earth as a reflection of God's position of kingly dominion over all of Creation. Jesus' coming as human and mediator completes this picture (Ephesians 1:10). Psalms 8:5-8 illustrates how God thinks of man.

You made him less than God and crowned him with glory and honor.
You made him lord over the works of Your hands; You put everything
under his feet: all the sheep and oxen, as well as the animals in the wild,
birds in the sky, and fish in the sea passing through the currents of the
seas.¹⁴⁰

This clearly states that God have given man dominion over the whole of creation, and that mankind is not to become God. Humanity is seen as distinct from those that it will govern. According to Scripture then, man cannot be just a component part of a generic creation. He must be something more. Only man is allowed to act freely according to his nature (Joshua 24:15), or is held responsible for his actions before Christ (Revelation 20:12-13), or is created able to be like Christ and be a joint heir with Him in the new creation (Romans 8:17, 29).

The next issue to be addressed is: Jesus is the only way to heaven, to peace with God; as well as the idea that faith in Christ is necessary for one to be “right” with God. These exclusive claims cause a stumbling block for the Neo-Pagan, claiming that Christians from a position of power have caused untold legions of people to stray from the path of salvation. In so doing the whole of Christianity, which is seen as being spiritually deluded, has become unknowing agents

¹⁴⁰ *The New American Standard Bible.*

of evil.¹⁴¹ DiZerega poses a quandary for contemporary Christians, "Are we showing love to our fellow human beings if we allow them to be swayed into eternal damnation by those who are leading them into error? We are to turn the other cheek when we are attacked, but are we to be similarly meek when we believe our passivity may injure others?"¹⁴² The Neo-Pagan sees this as horrible for the Christian to love God and also be commanded to love those that are lost, even if they will not turn away from their lost-ness and become damned for all eternity. The Christian Heaven must be a terrible place to reside, knowing that you have eternity with God and that there are those you cared for that are inextricably lost and suffering for all eternity, and to possibly be cognizant of that suffering. The solution that the Church has rendered over the years are no less appalling, namely the bloody persecution of non-believers and the undertaking of various Crusades. It is this very exclusivity that resulted in the Pagan community being absorbed into the Church. Many Pagans "converted" to Christianity, for public as well as eternal reasons, with the possibility in mind that the Christians might be right. This was easy to do, since Pagans have no issue with multiplicity of gods.¹⁴³

Pascal said, " I should be much more afraid of being mistaken and then finding out that Christianity is true than of being mistaken in believing it to be true."¹⁴⁴ It seems these persecuted Pagans had the right idea. While Pascal and the assimilation of Pagans into the Church are not necessarily contemporary, the famous Wager still makes sense. If there is a God, and one is wrong then one loses everything, and if there is no God and you think that there is no God then

141. DiZerega, *Pagans & Christians*, 191.

142. *Ibid.*, 191-92.

143. *Ibid.*

144. Blaise Pascal, "387," in *Pensées*, trans. A.J. Krailsheimer (London: Penguin Classics, 1966).

one also gains nothing. However, if there is a God, then one gains everything. This is by far the wisest choice. As Peter Kreeft explains, "The Wager is not just about there being some sort of God, but the God of Christianity, the God who promises salvation and threatens damnation. In other words, the Wager is not just about God but about Christ, the man who claimed to be God and said that if and only if we believe in him will we be saved."¹⁴⁵ In essence, there is no reason to assume that there is no God, or that the Christian God claims are moot, since to do so would present one with an intense probability of complete loss. In this way the Pagans that integrated into the Church were most assuredly hedging their bets.

John 14:6 is referred to by DiZerega as "a big stumbling block."¹⁴⁶ What is meant by the words "no man comes to the Father except by me," is it right to interpret this as Christians often do, as a claim of exclusivity? DiZerega does not think so. He mentions that it has been noted that the words of Christ in the Bible are at best "other's recollections of Jesus' sayings" as well as that these recollections are recorded long after the fact.¹⁴⁷ He further posits that if Jesus did in fact mean this passage to tout exclusivity through himself, then due to the extremity of human suffering that it has caused through the years it would, in fact, contradict the intentions of his teachings. Dr. DiZerega posits that not only would this contradict what he sees as a peaceful message in Jesus' teachings, but would render them by Jesus' personal standard to be "absolutely worthless."¹⁴⁸

145. Peter Kreeft, *Christianity for Modern Pagans: Pascal's Pensées Edited, Outlined and Explained* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993), 292.

146. DiZerega, *Pagans & Christians*, 204.

147. DiZerega, *Pagans & Christians*, 204.

148. *Ibid.*

The important issue then is to whom "me" corresponds in the John 14:6 passage. Dr. DiZerega gives a few options, the historical man or more timeless dimension or aspect of Jesus Himself.¹⁴⁹ DiZerega seems to think that the latter is more likely, that there is a timeless element that Christ is necessarily thinking of, and that this ethereal other is some sense resident in all of us. To prove this point he cites Matthew 25:31-45, and say "it is clear that, from a biblical perspective, Jesus could speak in this latter way when making very important theological points."¹⁵⁰ Why does he claim this? The Neo-Pagan viewpoint here is explicit that in treating others with kindness and charity one is actually treating Jesus with kindness and charity. Thus it is kindness and not belief or faith that is the most important factor in salvation or being chosen.¹⁵¹ According to Scripture, there is no evidence that suggests that Jesus was impressed by deep theological learning, in fact, those who in His time were deepest of knowledge could not seem to understand Jesus, but a Pagan centurion, a common Roman soldier was able to in Luke 7:9.¹⁵²

The first issue, who is "me", in John 14:7, "If you know Me, you will also know My Father. From now on you do know Him and have seen Him." As one reads through this chapter, and its composite descriptions of the Father and Jesus' connection to Him, it is very apparent, that the "me" of 14:7 is intended to be Jesus' person. This is an overt revelation to the disciples that Jesus is in fact part of the Godhead, he is the Messiah that has come. He is referring to the historical concrete Jesus, as He is standing there talking to His disciples. There is no doubt that

149. Ibid.

150. Ibid.

151. Ibid., 205.

152. Ibid., 206.

the Neo-Pagan would be confounded by John 14:10-20, as DiZerega claims to be, if Jesus is not telling the truth that his is the conduit by which salvation is possible it simple does not make sense.

Regarding the usage of Matthew 25:31-45, Dr. Harold Wilmington says; "The good works are not the basis but the proof of salvation - note that neither the sheep nor the goats were aware of their good works or lack thereof."¹⁵³ The Neo-Pagan interpretation of this passage would lead to a works based salvation, and clearly this is not the case. If all those assembled are not certain of their category beforehand, then there is no call here for a works based belief system. It seems that this passage illustrates a sovereign blessing or cursing His nation. Jesus came as sacrifice and exemplar, those who followed him and have come to know Him will be blessed, those who turned Jesus away will be cursed. Christians are to care for people and to do so in love. Part of this love is to lead them to Christ and away from those things that the Bible and Christ speak against.

A life lived so as to please God is better than a secular lifestyle. There is great contention here, even in the Christian church. It is certainly the case that the Church espouses this ideal with their collective mouths, but the action upon this ideal does not seem to follow through.

The next issue that will be addressed is the idea that All Religions lead to the same god. The most common aspect of the divine in Neo-Paganism is the "Goddess." This being is the giver of life that is responsible for forming and shaping heaven and earth.¹⁵⁴ This entails the creation of human as well as animal life, both are equally important to the "Goddess". Neo-

153. Harold L. Willmington, "Matthew 25:21-46," in *Willmington's Bible Handbook*, Electronic ed. (Wheaton, Ill: Tyndale House Publishers, 1997).

154. Brandon Toropov, and Father Luke Buckles, *The Complete Idiots Guide to World Religions* (New York: Beach Brooks Productions, 2004), 296.

Paganism is a religion of personal responsibility, the "Goddess" resides in all things, and thus all things are sacred. In fact, the Pagan community would trace what they would call Christian blindness back to "the Church putting down firm roots in the countryside where...people's daily connection to natural forces reinforced spiritual practices with Pagan sensibilities."¹⁵⁵ For the Pagan it is still the ideal that the spiritual can be accessed through natural phenomenon, but there is still a focus on salvation, of a sort. To the Pagan salvation comes not from a rejection of the world, but an escape from the ties of fate.¹⁵⁶ Dr. DiZerega, a practicing Neo-Pagan and one of their stronger academic voices notes with regard to the divide between Pagans and Christians that, "The doctrine of the Fall as interpreted through Saint Augustine's conception of Original Sin created a deep gulf between two spiritual worlds. For Christians, misfortunes were evidence the world was a truly defective place. Misery was so great in those [medieval] times that, for many, the Christian view seemed reasonable."¹⁵⁷

Of course there is also the charge that Neo-Pagans are worshippers of Satan, and by extension that they are evil. Starhawk answers this charge at length.

...most of the iconography of the Devil was put forth by the Medieval Church to discredit our old Horned God: the deity of animal life, wild nature, and the hunt - the stag who allows himself to be killed so that we can eat, the Green Man of the trees, vines, and nature's regeneration.
 ...Does evil exist? Or more specifically, does it exist as an independent, volitional force?
 Our philosophy and theology say no, there is no independent power of evil out there trying to make us do bad things. Human beings have free will, and the universe includes randomness and chance, without which there would be no freedom. Because we are free, we can choose to do great harm. In Wiccan theology, the Goddess and the Gods are not

155. DiZerga, *Pagans & Christians*, 173.

156. *Ibid.*

157. *Ibid.*, 173-74.

omnipotent -- they need human help to create health, beauty, abundance, and justice. We may offer that help, or we may choose selfishness and destructive behavior and fall out of balance.

Having said that, there are certain behaviors and choices -- torture, genocide, mass murder, callousness, lies -- that go beyond imbalance. If they aren't evil per se, but they sure feel that way. I am always wary of the term and the concept of 'evil,' for it seems to me that the worst abuses are done by those who have convinced themselves that their victims embody evil, and deserve their fate.¹⁵⁸

The problem with what Starhawk is saying here is that the Neo-Pagan lives without evil in his life, at least not of the kind of Christian definition. There is only talk of balance, and of what one must do to attain this. There is no doubt that Christianity like other religions had atrocities done in its name. We all have blood on our collective hands. Many of the early Biblical accounts are bloody there is no denying this. However, most if not all of those accounts show God directing Israel to act as his instrument. This type of *holy war* was used to cleanse places for habitation as well as to punish absolutely those that had raised themselves up against God. It is unfortunate that this example was taken by those who claimed Christianity throughout history and used it to justify similar destruction.

The cry of the Neo-Pagan is for tolerance, so that all may worship the same divine essence that is as much a part of us as the skin on our bodies. This leads to the claim that God is too loving to ever send anyone to Hell.

For the Neo-Pagan there is no such thing as Hell.

[Neo-Pagans] don't have a hell per se. We like to say that your soul travels to the Isle of Apples, the mystic place outside of time where you walk with the Goddess, reviewing your life, learning your lessons, and planning your next life, until you grow young enough to be reborn again.

158. Starhawk, "Better Question: Why Does Evil Exist?," *The Washington Post*, March 27, 2009, http://newsweek.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/panelists/starhawk/2009/03/better_question_why_does_evil_exist.html.

If you make a huge mistake, if you fail to learn a soul lesson, the Goddess simply keeps presenting you with the same lesson over and over again in more extreme forms. How do we keep from doing harm? Choose courage over fear, compassion over intolerance, and love over hate.¹⁵⁹

The message here is very clear. Be a good person, try your best, and you will find yourself further down the path. There is no terminal place, just more learning. It seems that one could place the whole argument in a single nutshell. Religion is humanity's attempt to get to or become God. Christianity is God's attempt to get to humanity through His Son, Jesus Christ.

Conclusions

If one assumes that Religion is essentially a system of beliefs and practices relating to the divine; then a spiritual journey in the Celtic Christian tradition is a journey taken by a believer in order to gain a greater understanding of God.¹⁶⁰ This is similar to what the Neo-Pagans believe and is a good place to start. Certainly some have taken the liberties that the similarities seem to encourage. However, if one does not grasp that there are hand and footholds to scale the divide, then building a bridge is impossible. Without doubt building a bridge across a chasm is a laborious task, one that is fraught with dangers of all sorts. One must be willing to climb down from one's pinnacle into the valley and be likewise willing to scale the other face to reach the opposite pinnacle.

Like all bridges this one is not perfect, but it is usable. There is without a doubt a chasm between Pagans and Christians. Celtic Christianity can be the bridge between them. The emphasis in

159. Starhawk, "Better Question: Why Does Evil Exist?" On Faith.

160. Randy Sly, "Lenten Commentary: Jesus as Religion and Relationship," 3/1/2008, Catholic Online, http://www.catholic.org/national/national_story.php?id=27034 (accessed March 12, 2009).

Margery Furnell Monsma, *A Spiritual Journey in The Celtic Tradition* (Alberta, Canada: National Library of Canada, 1998), 54.

love for one another in the Celtic mindset is what allows this connection. This love, while often seen through the eyes of environmental issues goes far beyond just keeping things green.

There is certainly danger in the spiritual end of the Celtic Christian spectrum. The ideal of the journey is a good one though. One must always keep one's eye to Christ, as it is His love that we must model. Christ did not hug a tree, he hung from one. His blood fed the proverbial soil of existence. J. Philip Newell's liberal interpretation of what a Celtic Christ is and does is a bit disturbing. What he sees is Christ becoming Cerrunos, the Pagan god of the forest and hunt. His Christ is accepting of all faiths as equal and leading to the same paradise.¹⁶¹

This idea resonates as well with the Neo-Pagan community. They very much want to echo Fox's word about divinity; "Mother Nature is a special word for God, a unique expression of divine wisdom, of divine maternity and caring, of divine creativity and fruitfulness."¹⁶² To give into these tendencies weakens the witness of Christ; it turns Him into nothing more than a Kabuki mask for God. To make an all-inclusive religious expression of a singular god essence it is necessary to fall into modalism.

The allure of Neo-Paganism is the ease of worship. There is no exclusivity and no judgmental practitioners. Worship is done by feel and is individual. There are some set high days, but none that are required. One need not even believe in a literal Goddess or gods. That which is divine is within one and around one, one is always part of it. There is no physical manifestation, all there is love in varying levels. The only prerequisite is that one be capable of love, and of shedding one's judgmental nature. While there have been countless pages written as instruction for Pagan worship, these are just illustrations at most, records of how one individual or one's group has found the divine before.

161. Newell, *Christ of The Celts: The Healing of Creation*, x, 1-15.

162. Fox, *The Coming of The Cosmic Christ*, 147.

In forming a Christian apologetic to the Neo-Pagan there are two fundamental questions that must be clarified for them. First, one must deal with the special nature of mankind. The idea that mankind is different from all other parts of creation. This separation is key when speaking with a Neo-Pagan. One must separate man from animals and nature, that God intended mankind to be part of nature, and to have dominion over it. This must include both flora and fauna of all types; the Bible certainly makes these distinctions as well.

Secondly, one must deal with the exclusivity claim of Christ. This is also paramount. Without this claim, there is no Christianity. Everything else one might say will ring completely hollow. Christ went to great lengths to illustrate this necessity. One must ask the question, if Christ was just a man and not in fact God incarnate, then why the sacrifice for all of mankind? Further, why the resurrection then? It is interesting that the Neo-Pagans have no issue with the resurrection, but with the idea that Christ was God incarnate they take issue. They posit that we are all part of God as the god essence is part of all things. Christ had simply achieved perfect balance.

In dealing with the issue of exclusivity it might be helpful to address the issue of balance in one's life. Christians use this in their vernacular, but they intend something different. What one must illustrate for the Pagan is that if there was once an issue of balance, Christ's sacrifice makes this issue moot. A person, who knows Christ and is claimed likewise by Him, is balanced, all bad or evil is forgotten.

I believe that one of the most effective tacks one can take with these is to show them a genuine Christ-like life. To show them the love talked of in John 4, good Christian love. Christ's love does conquer all, and it is our most effective tool with the Pagan community.

There is no doubt that this study has only scratched the surface of the issues in play. My intent was to try to start discussion and in some way begin to build a bridge between the two communities. I primarily worked with Druid and Wiccan source materials. These are prominent types

of Pagans, but many groups were left out. All nature worship and ancestor worship are contained within this scope. There is much room for work in Native American cultures, and other originally nomadic dwelling cultures. Within the Wicca and Druid movements in Neo-Paganism there are innumerable sects. This work was centered on the Celtic-Druid-Gardnerian connections; there are certainly many others that require attention.

Appendix I¹⁶³

	Celtic Church Holy Days	Pagan Holy Days
November 1 st	All Hallows Eve St. Peter the Apostle	Samhuinn/Samhain 1) Ceridwen, goddess of wisdom and keeper of the sacred cauldron. 2) Morrigan, raven-goddess of war 3) Llyr, god of the sea
December 25 th	Christmas St. Uriel the Archangel	Alban Arthuan – December 21 st 1) Hu the Mighty, the great Druid god and master of solar current. ¹⁶⁴ 2) Dagda Mor, king of the gods. 3) Taranis, god of lightning and thunder
February 2 nd	Candelmas St. Brigid of Kildare	Imbolc 1) Ana, ancestress of the gods and mistress of the telluric current. 2) Brighid, goddess of crafts. 3) Sirona, goddess of rivers
March 25 th	Annunciation St. Gabriel the Archangel	Alban Eiler – March 21 1) Coel or Celi, god of the life force and master of animals. 2) Aenghus Og, god of youth and love. 3) Dalon ap Landu, god of groves
May 1 st	Our Lady's Day St. John the Evangelist	Belteinne/Beltaine 1) Niwalen or Elen, goddess of dawn, dusk, and the old straight track 2) Eriu, goddess of sovereignty 3) Grannos, god of healing springs
August 15 th	St. Mary's Day St. Raphael the Archangel	Lughnasadh – August 1 st 1) Sul, healing goddess of the Sun and sacred springs. 2) Tailtiu, goddess of agriculture 3) Bracacia, god(dess) of malt and brewing
September 29 th	Michaelmas St. Michael the Archangel	Alban Elued – September 22 nd 1) Esus, chief of tree spirits, who sits in the first fork of the oak. 2) Mannanan, god of the sea 3) Danu, goddess of fertility
June 21 st		Alban Heruin 1) Beli or Belinus, hero-god of fire and the Sun. 2) Lugh, the divine Sun-hero 3) Belenos, god of the Sun

163. J Greer, *The Druidry Handbook*, 77.

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