

Approaching Celtic Christianity

Frank A. Mills

I come to Celtic Christianity wearing one hat on many colors:

As a Christian (1)

As an academic (2)

As a skeptical inquirer--Everything is held in speculative abeyance.

Wearing this hat ...

I approach Celtic Christianity not to debate its merits, not to debate how Roman Catholic it was, nor to recreate some imagined Celtic Church based on some notion or other. I approach Celtic Christianity to glean what it has to offer to a fragmented world.

I approach academically. Not to justify some preconceived idea, but to explore what makes Celtic Christianity so appealing.

As a skeptical inquirer, I hold each observation lightly, knowing that given more information, I may see things differently.

That's the gist of it. However, to put it in the context of research:

Thomas O'Loughlin writes, "To search for the distinctly Irish within the common Christian inheritance is to ask in what ways that society produced a picture of the world that made sense in their situation, but where other groups of Christians would have reacted differently (3)."

This line of research can be applied to any tradition of Christian thought, including Celtic, or Celtic influenced in places other than Ireland. It can also be applied to the study of Celtic pre-Christian myth and to Celtic culture and history. Each of which exerted an influence on what we call "Celtic Christianity."

While I am persuaded that this is the way to approach Celtic Christianity if we are to fully understand and grasp what she has to offer (as well as not offer) to a fragmented world, I realize that not everyone approaches in the same way. My hope, is that this post to help you think about how you approach Celtic Christianity.

(1) Progressive Christian Universalist, minister, theologian and mystic.

(2) Before retirement, for several years I taught Celtic Studies in the Cultural Studies Department at Marylhurst University.

(3) O'Loughlin, Thomas, "'A Celtic Theology': Some Awkward Questions and Observations," 12/2/02, *CSANA Yearbook 02*