



The Celtic Understanding of the Fluidity of Time

The influence at the sense. has in most men, overpowered the mind to the degree, that the walls of time and space have come to look solid, real and insurmountable; and to speak with levity of these limits is, in the world the sign of insanity.¹

- Ralph Waldo Emerson

In today's busy and hurried culture it is almost impossible to think or function apart from the constraints of time. For most of us time has become an unbearable task master controlling us far

more that we wish to admit. We either have too little time to accomplish all that we wish to accomplish, making us stressed and perhaps even frenzied; or we have too much time with little to accomplish, leaving us bored. Is our slavery to time inevitable? Are the limits of time "solid," real and insurmountable"? Is it insanity to think that perhaps there might be a way to think about time, a way that overcomes time's constraints?

In his essay on the soul. Emerson writes, "The soul circumscribes all things ... it contradicts all experience ... it abolishes time and space.... Before the revelation of the soul, time, space and nature shrink away. In common speech. we refer all things to time.... The soul knows only the soul; the web of events is the flowing robe in which she is clothed."²

Emerson, perhaps, one of the must 'Celtic thinkers' of American philosophy. echoes the traditional Celtic understanding of time: Time *is not* boundary, constraining us to linear movement. Time is boundless and liminal, allowing us to move beyond seemingly real limits, spiraling us ever outward and inward. Unfortunately. we will not find an ancient Celtic treatise to aid us in our understanding of the Celtic nature of time. To understand time from the Celtic perspective we must read between the lines of both myth and history. However, we cannot examine Celtic history and civilization in linear time as we would Western history and civilization. The ancient Celts presented their history in the cloak of myth and epic, refusing to link their history to linear time alone.

Joseph Campbell writes that myth is a "curious game of 'as if' in which the festival of the lived myth abrogates all the laws of time ... the "once upon a time" becomes the very present."³

Celtic myth is no exception. It contains numerous abrogations, or *cross-time-fusions*, of not only temporal or natural time, but also between natural and supernatural time.

In the Celtic season of Imbolc, for example. we find the feast days of St. Brigit (Feb. 1), St. Patrick (March 17), St. Tewdric (April 1), and St. Maelrubha (April "17). Each of which, if we look close enough, is an abrogation of time. At first glance it merely appears that they have been appropriated by organized Christianity to gloss over a more pagan celebration of the same date. We see this in the Feast of St. Brigit falling on the fire-festival at Imbolc, which also happens to be the festival of the insular mother-goddess of the same name, Brigit. Or in the case of Tewdric and Maelrubha their holy sites sit on older pagan holy sites.?

When we look deeper, however. we see an interesting phenomena— the saints become cross-time-fused with a more ancient time. For example, St. Patrick's life takes on pagan pre-Christian symbolism to the extent that Patrick appears as a druid. In one out of time sequence we find him conversing with the ancient Celtic epic hero, Finn.⁴ The fifteenth-century *Tripartite Life of Saint Patrick* gives us an interesting account of a natural—supernatural cross-time-fusion between the chief god of the Gaels, Cenn Cruaich (*Head of the Mound*) and Patrick. It tells us that at the approach of the saint Cenn Cruaich fled from his golden image and bowed down forward toward the earth in homage to the power that had come to counterman him (both Patrick and Jesus). Thereafter, according to *The Life*. Cenn Cruaich was known as Cromm Cruaich, *The Bowed One of the Mound*⁵

In the lives of Tewdric and Maelrubha we find more cross-time-fusing: Tewdric, while in battle at Tintern [595] receives a fatal blow to the head, although he does not die instantly.⁶ At his direction, his body is placed upon a cart drawn by two stags, which by instinct will stop at the plane where he is to finally die. As the stags bear him, legend has it, that those who gazed upon his body drew from it a great peace and Joy. The stags eventually came to a halt a few miles to the south of Tintern at a place where an ancient holy well stood [now called "Mathern" (*Ma — Teyrn*, "place of the king") A holy well stands and gives water at the spot.]?

It was here that Tewdric's wounds were washed and he dies. Nennius, a ninth-century monk from Bangor—is-y-Coed tells us that in this well floated a log which was large enough for men to stand on as they washed the saint's body. In the spring, according to Nennius, the tides would carry the log away for four days before returning it to the well.

It has been suggested that this log is linked to the wooden female fertility figures that represented the earth goddess.⁷ The wound to the skull and the peace that was imparted to all who came upon the bleeding and dying Tewdric is indicative of the Celtic severed head myth, with Tewdric taking upon himself the character of an epic hero or a Celtic god.⁸ Another connection is that, in Celtic mythology stags represent fertility and are the symbol of Cernunnos, the forest god (or "child god") who served as steward of creation for the Earth Mother (*Danu? - "mother-god"*).

Maelrubha the Hermit, provides us with a particularly interesting cross-time—fusion. Maelrubha built his hermitage at Loch Maree, a holy druidic site, after having sailed to it on a stone in the manner of a mythological inmararas. From shortly after his death until late in the nineteenth-century we find druidic-like bull sacrifices and worship in his honor. It is said that often during these sacrifices Maelrubha reappears healing those present afflicted with mental illness.

These cross—time-fusions do not happen because the ancient Celts were careless with time, ignoring fixed limits, but as Joseph Campbell says, "Myth abrogates time." Celtic myth is not a lie: it is history presented according to a time continuum that is not fixed on the linear. For instance, in the life of Brigit we find cross—time-fusions of linear time as well as between linear and spatial. Brigit is not only an early sixth-century Irish abbottess, but also the name of the mother-goddess of Insular mythology. Nor is Brigit the saint constrained to her own time frame. She is also a contemporary of Mary [the mother of Jesus] serving as her mid-wife and nursemaid to the baby Jesus, and at the same time, a contemporary of the mothers of the Hebrides, even until today, serving them as midwife and nursemaid. We cannot even limit Brigit the saint to place. She also appears in Byzantine Christian tradition, not as Brigit, but as Maia (although identical in almost every way), whom according to this tradition, never lived in Ireland.

Plato wrote that temporal time is but a shadow of *real* time.⁹ *Real* time, not temporal {linear} time, according to Plato, is what connects the individual to the whole of Creation. When we enter into real time, we become connected with all things. past. present and future. as if they are presently *alive* in temporal time. It is exactly this idea that gives sense to the Celtic understanding of time. Like Plato, for the ancient Celts *real* time was framed metaphysically,

being greater than that which is observed and measured, and like Plato, they realized that it is *real* time that connects all of creation.

The similarity stops there, however. In the Celtic conceptualization of time, temporal time is more than a shadow of *real* time. For, if temporal time is a shadow, it then follows, as it did with Plato, temporal time is less than real. Further, if it is less than real, then the worldly reality that we live in – temporal time – is also less than real. Such logic flies in the face of how the ancient Celts viewed life. Life, for the Celts, whether lived in the time of this world (temporal) or in the time of the otherworld [eternal], is fully real. Time is not an either or proposition, temporal or eternal. Nor is it a both *and* something else. In the Celtic mind all such thinking is linear and, thus, limiting. Time simply is. We are to live it liminally, i.e., living in multiple dimensions simultaneously. Its measurement is only operative and *seemingly* real to us according to the dimension in which we consciously find ourselves at any given moment. Real time is not constraining nor can it be measured linearly. Time, in the Celtic cosmic framework, is liminally spiralling and beyond all normal human measure.

Time is the Meeting of Past and Present

To paraphrase Thoreau, the present is the meeting of the two eternities, past and future.¹⁰ This understanding defines the meaning of time for the Celts. Time has no limits! Time, known as eternity, has existed from the beginning and will continue to exist after the end.¹¹ It is only when we step out of eternity that time becomes measurable. In other words, time flows from the eternity of God. To put it in the Insular mythological tradition, time is the gift of the chief god to humans. A gift that flows from his very existence.“

We humans, being finite in our logic, have need to measure time linearly. This is to our disadvantage, in that it is limiting; bestowing beginning and end on time. In the Celtic cosmic order, life is not linear. Furthermore, it is the eternity of God {the gods} that moves life, not our human drive to gain some advantage before our end. In Latin, the word for time, *tempus*, is etymologically related to the word for temple, *templum*. *Templum* designates the spatial and *tempus*, the temporal aspects of motion of the horizon in space and time.¹³ Mircea Eliade suggests that the underlying meaning of this relationship is that the world annually recovers the original sanctity of creation.

The temple, as the axis—mundi of the world is where this sanctification ritualistically takes place.¹⁴ I would suggest that, at least in the Celtic conceptualization of time, its meaning lies elsewhere: The temple — or in the Celtic tradition, the holy natural site — is the "depository" of time.¹⁵ It is in the holy site that we who are created meet our Greater. Therefore, it is in the holy site that time, which flows from the eternal energy of the Creator, is to be realized by us in its fullness. It is significant that the Celtic festival days were considered by the ancient Celts to be outside of measured time. Why? Because, it was in these festivals that the Celt experienced the real significance of time. By participating in the ritual, Creation did not become re-sanctified, rather the participant was reminded that Creation is already sanctified - created holy — and is the depository of divine time. Thus by participating in Creation, we participate in holy or real time. By participating in real time we participate with the Creator in his divine energy, and conversely

the Creator participates in our life. It is this mutual participation that gives meaning to our life. John Scotus Eriugena, perhaps the greatest theologian that Celtic Christianity ever produced, tells us that God is so closely related to his creatures that it is more proper to say that He is created in them, rather than created them. God, according to Eriugena, "descends" in all created things so that a "theophany" takes place.¹⁶ Quite simply, this means that real time is not limited to that which we call *tempus* or temporal time. More specifically, it implies that if real time flows from the Divine, it is inwardly implanted in us at creation as part of the image of the Divine. Time which flows from the image of the Divine must, in the same way that the Divine is omnipresent, be everywhere present, past, present and future—and at any given moment in time, simultaneously past, present and future. Such thinking explains, for example, how Brigit can transcend time.

The Spiral: An Ancient Mystical Symbol of Time

Emerson, almost echoing the *templum-tempus* concept of time, writes in his philosophical essay, 'Circles,' that, "The eye is the first circle: the horizon which it forms is the second, and throughout nature this primary figure is repeated without end." He goes on to say that the circle is the "highest emblem in the cipher of the world." Then, quoting St. Augustine, he tells us that the nature of God is a circle 'whose center is everywhere and its circumference is nowhere.'¹⁷ Augustine's definition of God, also serves us well as the definition of a spiral. While Augustinian theology and Celtic Christian spirituality have little in common they both agreed that it is proper to think of the Divine Force, i.e., God, as a spiral. For there is no other concept that can visually explain how God, and hence, time, can be everywhere present at any given moment in time: past, present and future.¹⁸

For the ancient Celts, life had three beginnings: The first, with the birth of the "old ones" (his ancient ancestors) and each subsequent birth thereafter. The second, with his own birth. The third, with his death, which in reality was merely the return to his place of first birth, his real beginning. Mircea Eliade writes, "Generation, death, regeneration are but three moments in a single mystery. The entire spiritual effort of archaic man was exerted to show that there must be no intervals between the moments. One cannot stay in one of the three."¹⁹ When we realize this, and expand it to include the three Celtic beginnings," then it becomes easier for us to understand the ancient Celtic Idea of time as spiral. In almost all ancient cultures the spiral has come to represent the flow of time *within* the movement of the cosmos. Archaeological evidence confirms that this was true for the ancient Celtic people also.

From Celtic-Romano Europe we have the bronze solar-wheel god discovered at Le Châtelet (Haute—Marne) which depicts the solar—god with nine free-formed double spirals hanging from a ring on his shoulder. He holds in one hand a thunderbolt comprised of several spiral-shaped strands.²⁰ The same association occurs on a pot found at Silchester (Hants), a bronze solar-wheel horn Gran-Jailly (Côte d'Or), and a sculpture of the solar-wheel god from Niedererbach, Germany; all of which seems to tie the spiral to the sun and its movement, or time. In the flowing of the spiral is seen the continuous creation and dissolution of the earth, in Insular spiral-marked entrance to a New Grange megalithic tomb in County Meath, Ireland, that seems to indicate the holiness of time, and the need to enter into this holiness by passing through the

spiral. A close look at the spiral reveals that the spirals are labyrinthine in design, without beginning or end. In Celtic art if we follow a spiral, we move both into the center of the spiral and then back out, without any thought of repetition. Only then to be once again moved back toward the center. Ritualistically "walking the spiral" mirrors the macro-cosmic order of the heavens: As we wind inward we create in ourselves a still center and experience *templum* time — holiness -- at its very core. As we unwind, we bring some of this holiness back with us into our temporal existence.?

Eriugena says that God not only *descends* in the created, He also *returns* to self, gathering the plurality of creation up into himself in a process of theosis or deification. In the process of time — as Celtic spirituality presents it — we are ever-entering into the presence of the Ever-Present, simultaneously suspending any measurement of time, creating a vacuum which is en-fused with holiness, or divine blessing. The Hebrews call this The Sabbath.²¹

It is this blessing that we continually bring back to, and en—fuse into. what we call temporal time, thus continuously raising the level of our existence to be closer to that of divinity. What The ritual "walking the spiral" is in effect saying to us, is that before we can experience the holiness at time, we must journey into our inner sanctuary — the *templum* of our soul - leaving behind old preconceptions, which more often than not, are misconceptions. It is here that we find that which draws us into God's very core, eternity, while at the same time propelling us outward into both eternal and temporal time to live that which have we found within, as we enter into God (the center of the spiral). In this way time becomes that which both draws us and propels.

Interestingly, unlike most of the other megalithic spirals, a spiral found in Lewes (East Sussex) is not cut into the rock, but into the earth herself, inviting all who stumble upon it to walk the holy path of mystical time. That this idea carried over into Christian times can be seen in the poetry of the Celtic saints, the majestic spiral on the floor of the medieval cathedral at Chartres and the archway pillars outside the great West door at Lucca Cathedral in Tuscany, as well as in the theology of Eriugena. In a more modern time we have the Shakers, whose ecstatic utterances flowed out at the frenzy of their spiraling dances, and the Sufi dervish who enters into a mystical state through frantic whirling.

Quite often we mistakenly confuse the metaphoric images of labyrinth and maze. Significantly, it is the labyrinth spiral, and not the maze, that is the ancient symbol of time. The maze speaks accurately of our modern linear understanding of time. Like in a maze, in conceptualizing time linearly we find only confusion and dead-ends, frustration and stress; ultimately Emerson spoke of. In the labyrinth we find purpose and consistency. If we persevere, we will find our center and true reality. We will find real meaning and purpose for our existence.

Time is Time-less and Place-less

It is the conceptualization of time as a spiral that gives meaning to the "meeting" between Cenn Cruaich and St. Patrick {or Patrick and Finn}. A spiralling cosmos simultaneously moves inward and outward: Two discordant symbols of continuity meet, each being absorbed into the other, without either being destroyed. That which seems to be real (Patrick) and that which seems to be

unreal (Cenn Cruaich} are only opposite ends of the time continuum on which reality and unreality – possibility and impossibility – can be stretched to include each other. It is a continuum that can be bent, curved and shaped into a spiral where the end points meet and become one, where that which seems real and that which seems unreal overlap and intertwine so that the one can not be distinguished from the other. each allowing full access to the other without any consciousness of ever having crossed a threshold. In the Celtic conceptualization of time there are no dualities. No temporal *and* eternal, as both imply measurement. limiting us to one time frame or the other.

If we accept the Celtic conceptualization of time, we then lose all sense of time being a boundary. The time continuum no longer limits us to thinking in measurable terms such as temporal time and eternal time. Temporal past, present and future, along with the everlasting—ness of eternal time cease to exist in any meaningful, or measurable, sense. And in this, our life, at any given moment, moves from being limited to a point on the time continuum to that of being liminal— multidimensional. Time no longer marks for us the border between this present moment and the next, nor does it mark the boundary between this temporal, i.e., natural, and the eternal, i.e., supernatural. The supernatural is drawn into the natural, and simultaneously the natural is drawn into the supernatural, melding both into one. The time continuum is holy, and thus ultimately spiritual; leaving us with a sense of measure-less, or time-less, time.?

If time is time-less, then it also follows that time must be "place-less." Place limits us to points of time. The spiral as movement is the dialectic opposite of "place." The spiral places us within the flow of time. In other words, thinking of time as a spiral removes the linear limitations of the time/space continuum.

In the Christian Celtic legend, *Navigatio Brendani*, we find St Brendan and his company on a voyage that moves, not linearly, but spirally: Voyaging spirally for seven years, not only around the four points of the compass, but also through the liturgical cycle. Each significant liturgical holy day is spent at same location each year, although the events change. On each visit to a specific site, Brendan learns some new aspect of the interior life, which in a spiralling fashion, he applies on each subsequent visit.^{23?}

In this, Brendan, as well as the reader, is reminded that time, with its cycle, is primarily internal and spiritual. i.e., holy; building upon itself. Whatever "place-ness" there is, in the words of Emerson is merely the "flowing tube in which a soul is clothed."²⁴ In Brendan's. voyage the places visited lose their significance in the liturgically "time-less event" (it a time that is simultaneously temporal and eternal), which being time-less loses its place-ness, i.e., place-point in a time continuum. Nor does the place any longer have significance in the spiritual lesson that the "time-less event" teaches. St. Brendan, like St Brigit, is both a historical personage and a timeless truth. In the Insular British, *Branwen, Daughter of Llyr* is an interesting tale about Bran, Brendan's mythological archetype (which makes him comparable to the Chronos²⁰) of Greek mythology.?

In the tale, Bran is mortally wounded in the heel. Dying, he requests that his head be cut off and buried at the White Tower of London. This is done. but before Bran's head is buried it is carried

about on a circular journey for eighty—seven years, all the time conversing. (Note the similarity to St. Tewdric.) During these years, those In possession of the head have no sense at time passing, of the happening of events and their sufferings, or at the places they have been. Upon reaching the tower, the head of Bran instructs its bearers not to open the door of the hall. Eventually, however, one of the number does so and they instantly become aware of the passing of time, their sufferings, and the places they have been.

We are once again reminded that real time is both time-less and place-less. In this tale, the Sacred Head motif's significance comes from the time-less and place-less quality of the journey, again testifying to the interior, holy quality of time. The motif is saying to us that our journey through time is spiral, moving both inwardly and outwardly, making our journey — our movement through time — essentially spiritual and holy. Time only limits if we allow ourselves to be controlled by it. As long as Bran's head bearers allowed themselves to be guided by the wisdom the head. e.g., wisdom which flows from the Eternity, they remained oblivious to the limiting temporal-ness of time.

The Greek Chronos, is in Greek myth, the ruler of the Golden Age - a period of everlasting joy. In British Insular tradition Chronos and Bran have become amalgamated, combining the British Blessed Islands and the Greek Golden Age, wherein the two become a place-less and time-less "place" of everlasting, otherworldly bliss. In the ritualistic "writing of the spiral" we find this same truth: In the union of self with the cosmos, we move beyond the temporal-ness of time into the time-less-ness and place-less-ness of the Divine Presence. In *Brahman Daughter of Lyr*, >/i> Chronos himself becomes Aeon, place-less, time—less cosmological time.²⁶ ?

We must be careful, however, not to follow our Western instinct and give place, i.e., location, to this place-less-ness. It Is neither "out there" or "in here." It just simply is. The recognition of that is sufficient to allow us to enter into it.

Nor is it a time different from our natural time. such as is our Western concept of eternity. It is *present moment* in all of its most imaginable and unimaginable perceptions. It is *aeon*, a state of mind, an interior attitude, that allows us to rise above the limits of temporal-ness and experience in the present, like St. Brigit and St. Brendan before us, the fullness of all time.

To say that time is place-less is not the same as saying it Is space-less. Time that finds its origins in the divine is by its very nature spatial. Hermann Usener calls this time *templum*.

Unfortunately, however, he views *templum*. as but one aspect of time.²⁷ For the ancient Celt, *templum*. was not one aspect of time, it was the whole of time. In the Celtic cosmos there exists no duality. There is no *templum* and *tempus*. There is only *templum*. This is the same as saying that here is no sacred and secular. There is not even only sacred. There is only that which is holy.²⁸ Certainly, the holy can be profaned, but that does not change the substantive character; likewise with time. In the Celtic conceptualization of time, holy time is the only time that truly exists. Further, time that is holy can no more be limited to the temporal realm than it can be limited to the supernatural realm. Time to be time must be spatial — multidimensional — simultaneously wholly natural and supernatural.?

The ancient Celts, especially the Druids, practiced the art of space-shifting. This took place in two ways: shape-shifting and time—shifting. In shape-shifting one form is exchanged for another. In time—shifting, one transforms oneself from the present to another time, either in the past or the future.²⁹ Belief in shape-shifting stemmed from the Celtic belief that humans are called to participate in holy time. Thus, even historical events can be bent and shaped around the continuity of temporal time. In space-shifting the ancient Celt could participate in events in a time continuum (or in the case of shape-shifting, in a place alien to his own). Thus, the druidic bard, Taliesin, could claim to have been present at the creation of the world, the fall of Lucifer, and the birth and death of Jesus.

While it is not in the scope of this essay to discuss the actual possibility of shape or time-shifting, it is important that we look at its underlying philosophy. Celtic mythology seems to indicate that if we are to experience the fullness of holy time we must remove ourselves from thinking of existence as time and place, in any way that limits the potential of holy time. In order to shift from our present consciousness into a more fuller consciousness, we must overcome that which limits our thinking. Psychologically speaking, we need to will ourselves to ignore that which seems to limit. Druid and saint were able to place themselves into a non-ordinary state of consciousness that reshaped normal reality, creating a temporary time-less-ness and thinking linearly. In such a state one can participate to a greater extent in the spatiality of time. It is this spatial time that the mythological Fintan calls the "continuity of existence," that gives meaning and purpose to the continuum of existence. Thus, when Taliesin makes his boast, or the modern Celtic mother claims to have been mid-wifed by Brigit, they are not guilty of telling tall—tales, but of experiencing the "continuity" of real time. In the Celtic conceptualization of time, our real ability to spatially exist in time, metaphysically pieces us within the fullness of the time continuum. It is much in the same manner that the writer at the Epistle to the Hebrews tells us that the saints in heaven are cheering us on as we "run the race."³⁰ By seeing time as metaphysically holy, the saints of old can enter into time with us, and we with them, as they tangibly cheer us on.

Holy Time is Celebrated Time

The existentialist Jaan-Paul Sartre writing on the mobiles of the French sculptor Alexander Calder makes an interesting observation which is apropos to the Celtic conceptualization of time. "In mobiles". Sartre writes. "chance plays a greater part than in any other creation of man. The forces at work are too numerous and too complicated for any human mind, even that of the creator, to foresee all possible combinations (of movements). For each of them Calder establishes a general scheme of movement, then abandons it; the time, the sun, heat and wind will determine each particular dance. *Thus the object is always midway between the servility of statues and the independence of natural events*[italics mine]." He goes on to write that, "Each of his evolutions is an inspiration of the moment. It reveals his general theme but permits a thousand personal variations!"³¹

The Celtic seasonal Festival, first and foremost a liturgical event, is in like manner suspended "between the servility of statues and the independence of natural events." We see this

echoed in Brendan's voyage which regularly returned to the previous site where the festival was previously celebrated for that liturgical celebration. This consistent return was dictated by chance, uncontrollable events and divine message. The Celtic festivals served to remind the ancient Celt, as it should us, that although the movement of life on earth is full of seemingly random natural events, the cosmic order is never random.?

Each at the four mater Celtic festivals – Samhain, Imbolc, Beltane and Lughnasadh – like the Judaic or Christian liturgical festivals, are transcendently suspended from temporal time and its fixed and random events.³² In other words, the festival was not considered to be in any part of the temporal season that it celebrated. This, however, is not to say that time was not present. The festival moved in an orderly fashion between the settings of the sun and was affected by whatever random chance events occurred during the celebration. The meaning of this is clear: The present moment of celebration lifts both the celebrant and his time from being permanently limited by the bounds of temporal time and its corresponding wants. Even the movement of natural (seasonal) time teaches this is a natural repetitive, non-linear cycle. Holy time, which is what the festival is all about, is not linear, and thus not limiting. Linear time never allows for us to be anywhere but in the present moment. Holy (Celtic) time is a cyclical spiral allowing us to revisit the past and the future, even simultaneously if we wish: for which segment of a cycle is past, and which part is present? In the movement of a cycle — circle — does not the point which we have just passed come before us again in the future? And does not that which is future, in the movement, become the past? Does it not then follow logically, that in the movement of a cycle, that what we consider the present moment, i.e., that point at the cycle that we are now experiencing, has already been and will be again? This is the Celtic conception of time. mobiles, the possibilities of such time are beyond our comprehension.

We need to move back to the spiral: The simple cyclic circle merely repeats itself, the cyclic spiral not only repeats itself. but mathematically rises above itself, providing for any number of cross-fusions. Holy Time can not only move forward and backward at will, but also shift sideways. and it can do so in an unlimited number of past moments.

In *Celtic Twilight*, W. B. Yeats presents us with a collection of Essays. on Irish mysticism, which he likens to twilight world in which day and night seemingly become one, with neither losing its distinctive character, but yet not dominating the other. It is a liminal zone in which the complementary characteristics of each dimension contribute to its existence and substance. It is a zone, according to Yeats, "(W)hat we call the unreal had begun to take upon itself a masterful reality." Liturgically the Celtic seasonal reminds us that each 'moment' is a Holy Liturgical Feast in a time continuum that is not static and brittle, but fluid and malleable. Celtic Holy Time is a gift when it gives meaning and purpose to life.

FOOTNOTES

1. "The Over-Soul," 1841. *The Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (NY: Walker J. Black, Inc. n.d.). p.185.

2 *ibid.*

3. Campbell, Joseph, *The Masks of God: Primitive Mythology* (NY: Penguin Books, 1987.) p. 21.

4. See L. Czarnowski, *Saint Patrick et le cuite des heros en Irlande*, Paris, 1919.

5. Squire, Charles, *Celtic Myth and Legend* (Newcastle, England: New Castle Publishing Co., 1975.) p.41.

6 Tewdric was a 6th=c. prince in south-coast Wales who in old age handed over his temporal duties to his son, Meurig, and became a hermit. With the Saxon invasion across the Wye, Tewdric came to the aid of the Celtic forces and was mortally wounded in the Battle of Tintern, 595.

7. A. R. Utting in a book published by the Mathern Church Council in 1985 claims that evidence indicates that this sacred washing took place well into the Christian era.

8. See, "Samhain: The Season of Dark & Us," BRIGIT'S FEAST, Samhain, 1996, Vol. 1, No. 1, p.5.

9. Plato's perspective on time finds a place, in one way or another, amid the wide-ranging discussions in Plato's various dialogues: "The Apology of Socrates," "Phaedo," "Crito of Plato," "The Golden Sayings of Epictetus," "Pythagoras," etc.

10. "To stand on the meeting of two eternities, past and present, which is precisely the present moment," Thoreau, Henry David, in *Walden* (Philadelphia: Running Press, 1967.).

11. Here we make a distinction between *eternity* and *eternal*. We use *eternal* in sense of "everlasting." Everlasting time has a starting point and is therefore measurable in that we can compare it to the linear measurement of temporal time. *Eternity* without a starting point is not measurable.

12. Professor John Rhys in his *Hibbert Lectures* of 1886 suggests that Cenn Cruaich, "Lord of the Mouns," is the Gaelic heaven-god similar to the Greek Zeus. In Insular myth he is the god most revered, one of the chief gods of the Gaels. The poem, *Dinnsenchus* (one of the oldest of Gaelic records), preserved in the *Rennes MS* puts him in the Stonehenge conceptualization as the "king idol of Erin." Around him were 12 idols made of stones, although Cruaich is made of gold. There are slightly different versions found in the *Books* of Leinster, Ballymore, and Lecan. [See: Rhys, John, *Lectures on the Origin and Growth of Religion as illustrated by Celtic Heathendom*, Lecture II, "The Zeus of the Insular Celts" The Hibbert Lectures for 1886. (London, 1898.). The *Rennes MS*, *i.e.* "Dinnsenchus" can be found Stokes, Whitley, *Revue Celtique*, Vol. 16 (n.d.)].

13. Muller, Werner, *Kreuz und Kreuz* (Berlin, 1938) p.39.

14. Eliade, Mircea, *The Sacred and The Profane* (NY: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1989) p.77

(See also chapter 2, "Sacred Time & Myths.").

15. Note that in the Celtic conceptualization it is earth, not God, that is the storehouse of time. This stands in contrast to Aleximander of Miletus (b. ca 610 BCE) who postulated that *Aperion* ("The Unlimited/Infinite") was sort of an unlimited storehouse to which qualities that now confront us when "separating off" from this confrontation return; each new quantity coming from Aperion and usurping the place of the previous, and as such must also be usurped.

16. *Periphyseon* iii. 23; 689. Migne, J. P., *Patrologie Lantini*, (Paris, 1844-80) 221 vols., [Latin text, Sheldon-Williams, I.P., critical edition, *Periphyseon Scriptore Latini Hiberniae*,) vol 7 (Dublin: Institute for Advanced Studies, 1966.) The Roman Church twice labelled Eriugena's works "heretical," in 13th and 17th-centuries for being pantheistic. 1? up. chiw. 13419.15.

17. op cit, *Circles*, 1841 p. 185.

18. A spiral, in mathematics, is any plane formed by a point that moves around a fixed center, and continually increase its distance from it. The mathematical formula, both for a logarithmic spiral and for the Archimedes spiral sheds some interesting light upon the concept of the spiral being an image of the divine. A logarithmic spiral intersects all its radiants at the same angle, and the tangent of the angle is the modulus of the system of the logarithms which the particular spiral represents. Its involute and evolute are also logarithmic spirals. The Archimedes spiral is formed by a point moving with uniform angular velocity, and receding from the center at a uniform rate. A true spiral has no beginning or end in that doubles back on itself, and unlike a circle, it has no limiting circumference. In spherical trigonometry a plane can overlap itself, thus causing many spirals from a fixed center that in itself has no bounds.

19. Eliade, Mircea, op cited. p. 197.

20. The solar-god is more than likely a Celtic-Romano version. Thys, John. op cited.

21. For an excellent study on the Hebre concept of Sabbath see Heschel, Abraham, *The Sabbath* (NY: Noonday Press, 1994).

22. "The Seasons of Dark and Us," op cited.

23. An early 9th-century Latin text of the saint's voyage, written in Ireland. See: O'Donoghue, Denis, *Brengianiana*.

24. "The Over-Soul," 1841, op cited.

25. Chronos is theb god of time in Greek mythology.

26. According to the Prsocratic Heracclitus fragment #24, time does not equal Chronos, but Aeon, which signifies cosmic time. Aeon becomes a good word for describing the Celtic concept of time as cosmological. See: Wheelwright, Philip, *Heracclitus* (Princeton: Princeton University

Press, 1959.).

27. Usener, H., *Götternamen*, 2nd. ed. (Bonn, 1920) pp. 191ff. Usener introduced the concept of a "momentary god."

28. The word "sacred" by definition needs an opposite to give it any sense of meaning, that word is, "secular." "Holy," on the other hand needs no opposite to give it meaning, something is either holy or unholy. To make something unholy is to profane the holy, i.e., to make the holy unholy. One can not make the sacred secular, or the secular sacred. To make something unholy does not negate the fact that that something is always potentially holy. To make the sacred secular implies a change of substance. To profane that which is holy does not change the substance.

29. Another aspect of time-shifting is called "bilocation." In bilocation a person is able to be simultaneously *physically present* in more than one location. For years the Church of England had a rite to assist in bringing back the two appearances into one place.

30. Hebrews 12:1.

31. Satre, Jean Paul; Basking, Wade. ed., *Essays in Existentialism* (NY: The Citadel Press, 1970.) p.420.

32. See "The Year's Journey," BRIGIT'S FEAST, Samhain, 1996, vol. 1, No. 1, p.8.

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Image: 'Melting Watch,' Salvador Dali (1954)