

ABSTRACT

This study explores two ancient approaches to spirituality, together with the cultural contexts in which they developed.

Spirituality is a popular concept today among people of widely differing religious traditions, and among those who espouse no religious tradition. Spirituality defines the way in which people relate to what concerns them ultimately, and ways in which this concern is manifested in their daily lives. This popular interest has resulted in the rise of spirituality as an academic discipline.

An in-depth study of Celtic and African Spirituality is presented in this study. Celtic Spirituality dates from the fifth century CE onwards, whereas African Spirituality predates written history. Few examples of African Spirituality are recorded in writing before the twentieth century, although some have existed for centuries in oral form. Many Celtic poems, and other examples of traditional oral literature were collected and recorded in writing by medieval monks, and thus preserved for later generations in writing.

Both Celtic and African Spiritualities have a healthy, integrated approach to the material world and to the spiritual world. They acknowledge a constant interaction between the two realms, and do not dismiss or devalue either the physical or the spiritual. Art and oral literature also play an important role in enabling communication and expression of ideas. Power and powerlessness emerges as a dominant theme in African thought and spirituality, especially where African peoples perceive themselves to be powerless politically or economically.

Areas of relevance of Celtic and African Spiritualities to the life of the church today are identified and discussed, such as ecological spirituality; oral and symbolic communication; the role of women in church and society; and the theme of power. These are areas from which the world-wide church has much to learn from both Celtic and African Spiritualities.

The findings of this study are then discussed in terms of their relevance and helpfulness to church and society. Insights from Celtic and African spiritualities should be used in the

future to deepen devotional life of individual Christians and of congregations, and ideas such as ecological responsibility and recognition of the value and gifts of women should permeate the teaching and practice of the church in the future.