

## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF THE RELEVANT LITERATURE

#### 2.1 Introduction

This investigation makes reference to two groups of scholars – those who have made a study of African Spirituality and Theology, and those who have studied Celtic spirituality. A vast volume of literature on the subject of both Celtic and African spirituality has been produced in recent years, and therefore only a representative selection of literature is discussed here. The problem is more acute in the case of Celtic spirituality, where a popular movement in Europe has produced an incredible volume of literature in recent years. Therefore, more of the works surveyed in this chapter deal with Celtic than with African spirituality.

#### 2.2 Important works on Celtic Spirituality

##### 2.2.1 Ian Bradley (1999)

*Bradley* (1999:viii) has done an in-depth study of different roles played by Celtic spirituality in the history of the church. He has identified six movements in history which were characterised by a nostalgic, idealised view of the ancient Celts as followers of a pure, original form of Christianity. He traces each of the six movements, or waves, with their socio-historical context, and the reasons why people of different historical periods looked to the ancient Celtic Church for guidance and inspiration. It is interesting to note how each age of the church looked for an image of itself, or a justification for its actions, in the Celtic churches.

The first of the six waves took place in the eighth and ninth centuries, when many of the lives of the saints were written. People of this time felt that the church of their day had lost the vision embodied in the early Celtic saints and pioneers, who had lived two to three hundred years earlier. They sought to recover this by researching and writing inspiring stories about the lives of the Celtic saints. For instance, Adamnan's life of St. Columba dates from this era. The radical Celtic monastic movement known as the *Celi De*<sup>1</sup> began in Ireland in the eighth century and was another attempt to recover a level of dedication and

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<sup>1</sup> *Celi De* means servants, friends or clients of God.

spiritual purity which the members of the movement believed had been lost in their own day.

The second wave was in the twelfth century, following the Anglo-Norman invasions, which was obviously a time of uncertainty, causing the existing inhabitants of Britain to look back to their glorious past. The experience of being colonised and dominated by another race also led to a search for national identity, including religious identity. Celtic peoples were able to find comfort and encouragement in the lives and works of their ancestors, especially the Celtic saints, and their unique contribution to the history of the church.

During the time of the Reformation, once again, Christians looked back to the early Celts. The underlying motive for many early protestants was to show that, in the earliest centuries of the church's history, churches existed which were not under the dominance and control of Rome. The independence of the Celtic churches was stressed, as well as their teaching, in so far as it matched that of the Reformers. Of course, any teachings of the ancient Celtic saints which did not match those of the Reformers were ignored or minimised.

More recent waves took place in the early nineteenth century, the later nineteenth century, the early twentieth century and the present wave, dating from the 1980s. The Celtic movement in the early nineteenth century was associated with the Romantic Movement, and emphasised the pagan Celtic tradition. The ancient Celts and their art works were understood as examples of 'the noble savage', uncorrupted by Western civilisation. Just as many contemporary people who have been influenced by the New Age Movement, the Romanticists of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries ignored the contribution of the ancient *Christian* Celts and the important role which *Christianity* played in Celtic thought and culture.

The moralists of the late nineteenth century saw the lives of Celtic saints as fine examples of moral living to be followed. They ignored the miraculous elements in these stories, which did not fit their world view and values, and concentrated on the lives and teachings of exemplary Celtic Christians. The most recent wave of interest in Celtic Spirituality has been characterised by sentimentality and idealisation of the ancient Celts. Christians, in particular, have tended to see the Celtic saints and the early Celtic Christians as an ideal

church and community, and then to compare their own church experience unfavourably with this idea.

In each age, there has been a tendency to read into Celtic spirituality something of the spirit of that age. For example, in the eighteenth century, the Celts were seen as being half pagan. However, one must realise that this was not a negative characteristic for many people at the time. The pagan and syncretistic tendencies ‘fitted with the broad deist outlook of the eighteenth century’ (Bradley 1999:107).

Bradley shows how the traditions of Celtic literature were read with the eyes of romanticism and deism in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries: “...the idea developed of Celtic Christianity as being much closer than other inculturations of the Christian faith to the values of pagan and primal religions” (Bradley 1999:107) The same idealistic view of the pagan past is found in our own era, combined with a similar rejection of Christian values and teaching.

Present day scholars, too, must be aware of their own tendency to read back the values and norms of our age into the spirituality of the ancient Celtic Christians. While we can learn much from the early Celtic Christians, we must distinguish between what is real and what is born of a romantic nostalgia and wishful thinking” (Bradley 1999:189). If the sources are approached taking probable biases into account, however, much can be learned which is applicable to present day Church life. The great value of Bradley’s work is that he sees Celtic spirituality over a wide sweep of history, and allows present-day scholars to see that the present interest in Celtic spirituality is part of a long legacy of revivals.

### ***2.2.2 Oliver Davies (1999)***

Oliver Davies’ book is part of the series entitled “The Classics of Western Spirituality”. It contains a number of original documents translated into English by Davies, as well as a discussion of the historical background to Celtic Spirituality. The accent is placed heavily on original historical documents, making it a useful and valuable collection. He gives a lengthy introduction, in which he gives his reasons for selection of the texts, and breaks down the texts into categories, such as poetry, works of theology, and liturgy.

In the second part of his work, he arranges the texts under the sub-headings hagiography<sup>2</sup>, monastic texts, poems, devotional texts, liturgy, apocrypha, exegesis, homilies, and theology. He states that his aim in selecting those particular examples was to present as representative a picture of Celtic tradition as possible. However, he reminds the reader that there are many other texts which could have been included, but do not differ sufficiently from the mainstream medieval European Christian tradition. Contemporary thinkers often forget that the Celtic Churches were not isolated from the rest of Europe, but were in dialogue with other thinkers of the period (Davies 2000:60). While they made a unique contribution to the Christian tradition, in general the Celts were not hostile to fellow Christians of other cultures.

Davies' work includes writings of leading Celtic Christians such as *Patrick*. Patrick's two extant writings are included in full (in English translation). His *Confessio* is entitled in this work "Patrick's Declaration of the Great Works of God". The main focus of this work is Patrick's account of his conversion. His second work is the "Letter to the soldiers of Coroticus". Coroticus was a military invader from the British mainland whose troops were causing havoc in Ireland. Some of the victims were Patrick's followers, and he writes to convince the perpetrators of the errors of their ways, and that they are subject to God's judgement for their actions. This text is a reminder of the turbulent times which formed the backdrop to Patrick's life and ministry. Davies has also included three sayings attributed to Patrick by the *Book of Armagh*, which dates from 807 CE and a *Life of Patrick* written by *Muirchu*<sup>3</sup> which dates from the late seventh century.

Davies includes two accounts of Brigid's life, the first written by a certain Cogitosus which is dated 650 to 690 CE. Cogitosus emphasises Brigid's power and virtue, and is conventional in attributing the virtues expected of a Christian saint to Brigid. The second, later "life" is dated between 774 and the ninth century CE. The influence of pagan tradition can be seen in her association with animal husbandry and fertility and with metal craft, both of which are associated with the pagan goddess Brigid.

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<sup>2</sup> That is, accounts of the lives of saints.

<sup>3</sup> Muirchu was a seventh century Irish writer, who believed strongly that Celtic paganism was a preparation for the gospel, not merely spiritual darkness to be eradicated. Muirchu was one of the Celtic scholars, known as the Romani, who advocated adopting the method for dating Easter used by the Roman Church.

The ancient story *The Voyage of Brendan* follows the Brigid documents. This story fits into Irish tradition in the genre called *Immram*<sup>4</sup>. The historic Brendan lived during the sixth century CE, according to the Annals of Ulster, and founded the monastery of Clonfert in Connaught. In the story, he sets out with his companions to find the “Promised Land of the Saints”. Davies includes in his collection *Rhigyfarch’s Life of David*, dated 1095. The description of monastic life under David may reflect an actual rule of St. David. Davies then includes ‘Lives’ of two lesser known saints, *St. Beuno* and *St. Melangell*. The Celtic tradition is filled with local saints associated with certain places and pilgrimage sites.

Davies includes a sample of *monastic* texts, including *The Rule for Monks by Columbanus*. Davies records that this document may be dependant on a Rule written by Comgall of Bangor, which is no longer extant. It is influenced by the work of Jerome, Cassian and Basil the Great. *The Rule for Monks by Columbanus*, in turn, influenced later monastic writers.

After the sample of monastic writings, Davies includes examples of Celtic poetry. The two main sub-sections are Irish poems and Welsh poems. The Celtic churches gave a recognition to vernacular poetry which was not found in continental Europe. In most of the European churches, poets were marginalised in the church. In Ireland and Wales, the *ollam*, the highest grade of poet in Ireland, and the *pencerdd* in Wales, was equal in status to a bishop or a minor king. As Christianity gained influence in the Celtic lands, increasingly the Christian poets took over social functions previously performed by druids. Celtic poets often claimed divine inspiration for their work, and some also claimed the power to perform miracles. The author of *The Advice of Addaon* is probably influenced by the *Ceŵg Deŵ* or *Culdee* movement.<sup>5</sup> This can be deduced because he refers to Psalm 118 (the *Beati*<sup>6</sup>) which played an important role in *Culdee* devotions.

Davies then groups a number of writings under the heading ‘Devotional Literature’. This includes a number of poems composed for public recitation, although they may also have been used privately. Many of these writings appear from the eighth century CE onwards in collections of prayers. *May Your holy angels* and *O God, Lord of Creation* were probably

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<sup>4</sup> Voyage Literature or travellers’ tales.

<sup>5</sup> A radical movement of Celtic monks in the middle ages.

<sup>6</sup> The *Beati* is Psalm 118 in the Vulgate, but Psalm 119 in the Hebrew text.

both used as evening prayers. *Loricæ* were probably used in the morning. *The Breastplate of Laidcenn* is an early example of such a *Lorica* and would have been written some time before 661CE, as this is the date of Laidenn of Clonfert's death. The detailed listing of body parts bears a resemblance to early Celtic exorcism formulas, and may be influenced by Irish medical tracts which circulated around this time.

Davies then includes a number of texts under the heading 'Liturgy'. Many of these examples are associated with the *Ce ði ð De ð*. The first is taken from the *Stowe Missal*, which was produced at the Irish monastery at Tallaght and Finglas, founded by St. Maelruin in 774 CE. The *Stowe Missal* includes a Mass liturgy, prayers for Masses for the saints, living penitents and the dead. It also includes an essay on the nature of the Mass, which Davies includes in his collection. It contains the statement that the bread was broken into many different pieces, representing the orders of the church, and arranged in the shape of a Celtic cross.

Additional chants (not part of the usual liturgy) were added by *Moel Cai ð h*<sup>7</sup>. These *catenæ* probably also reflect a *Ce ði ð De ð* influence. The two chants included in Davies' work are *Cognouerunt Dominum* 'They recognised the Lord' and *Pacem Meam* 'My peace'. Two further hymns have been included; *Communion Hymn (Sancti Venite)* and *Hymn at the Lighting of the Pascal Candle (Ignis creator igneus)*.

A strong tradition of biblical commentary and exegesis existed in the Irish church from very early times. There was a school of biblical exegesis in Southern Ireland during the late seventh century CE, which produced important writings including the earliest Latin commentary on the general epistles. Irish biblical scholarship in the early period largely reflected an Alexandrian influence with strong allegorical tendencies. Davies includes in his collection a mystical interpretation of Psalm 119 dating from the tenth century. This is a text which was popular with those of the *Ce ði ð De ð* movement and was known as the *Beati*. The commentator stresses the acrostic<sup>8</sup> nature of the psalm, and sees the recitation of the 176 verses as a journey intertwined with the cycles of the passing year.

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<sup>7</sup> An otherwise unknown liturgist of the seventh century CE.

<sup>8</sup> An acrostic Hebrew poem begins either each line or each stanza with successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet.

The second text included in this section is a commentary on Psalm 103 from *Glossa in Psalmos*, which dates from around 700 CE. It follows the Irish style of commentary which appears to have begun with Pelagius, with short extracts from biblical texts sandwiched between short sections of commentary. It also contains many references to the natural world. Numerous collections of sermons from Celtic churches survive. The most important of these is a group of sermons by Columbanus, four of which have been included in Davies' collection. They emphasise the virtues of asceticism and the monastic life, seeing earthly life as a preparation for another life.

The final section of texts in Davies' collection is headed 'Theology'. In this section, he includes *On the Christian Life* by Pelagius, who lived in the fourth century CE, the life and teaching of whom is discussed in 4.4. A number of writings have been attributed to Pelagius, which were not written by him. Others survive in the works of theologians whose thought was more acceptable to the established church than Pelagius. The Pelagian corpus consists of exegesis, theology and letters, one of which is *On the Christian Life*. This is a letter addressed to a Christian widow. Pelagius' writings should be understood against the fifth century Roman environment, in which the church was engaged in a struggle against Manicheism<sup>9</sup>. Pelagius' teaching on the goodness of creation and on the need for spiritual disciplines brought him into direct conflict with Augustine. The teaching of Pelagius on asceticism should be understood as a protest against the increasingly worldly church of his day, where political and social acceptance had led to compromise of the values of the gospel.

The second document under 'Theology' is *The First High Sower*, traditionally attributed to Columba. It dates from the late sixth or early seventh century CE, and was probably written on Iona<sup>10</sup>. This poem follows the idea of the Hebrew acrostic poems, each stanza begins with successive letters of the Roman alphabet. It sets out the history of salvation "the uncreated Trinity; the creation of angels, humans and matter; the fall and the effects of disobedience and sin; the redemption; and the final times" (Davies 2000:57).

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<sup>9</sup> A gnostic, ascetic sect of the third century CE.

<sup>10</sup> Columba was forced to leave his native Ireland and settled with twelve monks on the island of Iona, off the West coast of Scotland, which he established as a monastic community and a base for evangelism.

Davies then includes the *Homily on the Prologue to the Gospel of John* by the distinguished Celtic theologian John Scottus Eriugena (c810-c977 CE). Eriugena's *Homily on the Prologue to the Gospel of John* was probably originally written for a Christmas Day service. It reflects a theology of light and his understanding of the created world as a theophany, as God's self-revelation, as well as deep influences of Pseudo-Dionysius (sixth century CE)<sup>11</sup> and Maximus the Confessor (c580-662 CE).

Davies has thus compiled a comprehensive collection of Celtic literature in one volume. He has brought together samples of a wide variety of literary forms, all of which are associated with and express Celtic Spirituality.

### **2.2.3 Mary Condren (1989)**

Mary Condren (1989) has made a study of religion and power in ancient Ireland, especially as it has affected the role and status of women. She shows convincingly that men used religion to subjugate women in pre-Christian and Christian Ireland. Instead of seeing Celtic Christianity as liberating for women, Condren argues that women's power and autonomy was closely linked with goddess worship in Ireland, which was suppressed, first in favour of the religion of the Celtic invaders of Ireland, and later by Christianity.

Her reading of history has been selective, so that she compares Ireland before the Celtic invasions with Christianity. Her concept of Christianity is, however, not the specific form of expression which developed in the Celtic world. A comparison of Celtic Christianity in the Middle Ages, and Christianity elsewhere in Europe, would give a different and more holistic reading of the history of the Church in Ireland.

In an effort to lay all the ills of gender discrimination at the door of early Christianity, Condren argues that men consciously replaced women's status as child bearers with the male role of life takers, particularly in war. The real power was placed in the hands of those who made war and offered sacrifice, both of which came to be a male preserve. Her argument that therefore, Christianity must be seen as a death-centred religion certainly does not apply to Celtic spirituality, in which the celebration and affirmation of life and of the natural world holds an important place. This argument derives from the Christian

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<sup>11</sup> Pseudo-Dionysius is thought to have been a Syrian monk, but as his precise identity is unknown, it is

focus on the crucifixion of Christ, but forgets that this is followed by the resurrection in which Christ overcomes the forces of death.

#### ***2.2.4 Alexander Carmichael (1960)***

Alexander Carmichael was a British civil servant in the late nineteenth century, who made a most valuable contribution to the study of Celtic tradition and oral literature by setting up a comprehensive record and collection of poems, songs and blessings from the remote communities of the Outer Hebrides and the Highlands of Scotland<sup>12</sup>. His research method is described as follows: “He would visit men and women in their own homes, spend long hours with them, listening while they intoned in a low, recitative manner and their voices rose and fell in slow modulated cadences, sounds which reminded him of the moaning of the waves or the sighing of the wind on the sea shore” (De Waal 1988:3)<sup>13</sup>.

Carmichael’s many months spent among the people of these remote regions allowed him to win their trust, so that they allowed him to see and record more of their wealth of oral literature than they would normally divulge to an outsider. His work was published in six volumes between 1900 and 1961.

Much of Carmichael’s collection consists of prayers: “They gave him the prayers whose daily and yearly rhythms marked their lives: prayers from birth to death, from dawn to dusk, from the start of the year until its close, for they lived quite naturally in a state of prayer” (De Waal 1988:4). These poetic prayers reflect a typically Celtic characteristic of being in tune with nature, as well as a consciousness of the presence of God in daily life. Children in these societies were taught to say their morning prayers and that in so doing they were joining in a chorus of praise involving the whole of nature, birds, animals, sun, wind, etc.

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impossible to give exact dates for his life.

<sup>12</sup> He was born on the 1<sup>st</sup> December 1832 on the island of Lismore. He developed an interest in folklore as a young boy, and was able to indulge this interest as an adult. He was able to collect much of his material before the Education Act of 1872, which brought about great cultural changes in the area and started the gradual erosion of Gaelic oral tradition. During his time among them, Carmichael was able to form deep friendships with the people of Skye, Oban and Uist. Carmichael also travelled to more remote islands in the Outer Hebrides. He married Mary Frances MacBean in 1868 and moved with her to Edinburgh in 1882. She would sometimes travel with him to islands, but made a valuable contribution in helping to support his work, so that he was able to continue for sixty years.

<sup>13</sup> Carmichael is responsible for collecting the original oral works. Esther de Waal has selected a number of these works and placed them in thematic categories, each preceded by an introduction. Her contribution is discussed in 2.2.5.

In many cases, Carmichael's collected material was contributed by elderly people who had learnt the poems from those who were elderly when they were children. It therefore can be said to date at least from the early seventeenth century, and is probably far older. The ideas expressed are typical of Celtic thought, especially the recognition of God as creator of all good things, and of God's presence in every aspect of their lives.

There is no divide between this world and the next. Heaven and earth are interconnected and interacting. So Mary is there at the start of the day when the peats have to be lifted from the earth. St Bridget will help with the making of the butter. Gabriel and the Angels can be summoned for the sowing of the seed. St. Columba will protect the cattle on the way to the fields. There are prayers and poems for each labour of the day and for each event in the passing year (De Waal 1988:8).

Many Celtic prayers are addressed to saints, who were felt to be approachable and able to relate to human needs. Brigid was the one on whom women in childbirth called for help, and Mary's experience of human suffering was emphasised. However, God the Trinity is also easily approached, perhaps because of an emphasis on the incarnation of Christ, so that God has shared fully in human experiences of joy and sorrow.

#### *2.2.5 Esther De Waal (1988)*

Esther de Waal published a selection of the works of oral literature collected by Carmichael, under the title *The Celtic Vision*, together with brief notes at the beginning of each thematic section.

De Waal has grouped her selection of literary works under the following headings: *Creation, Morning Prayers, Farming and Fishing, Household, Night Prayers, Birth and Death, The Hearth, Journeys, Prayers for Protection, Mary, Saints and Angels, Christmas Carols, Sun and Moon, Invocations and Good Wishes, Short Blessings*. Her stated aim is to make Carmichael's work easier for a contemporary reader to understand and use. Carmichael's work was extremely comprehensive, including pagan as well as Christian literary works.

The poems included under the 'Creation' section celebrate God as creator and giver of all, and reflect an integrated view of the universe and of each individual. "These prayers and poems bring a powerful sense of the unity of the whole created order, God and the

universe, saints and angels, men and women – and not least the unity within each individual person” (De Waal 1988:19). In the same way, the morning prayers reflect a holistic and joyful attitude to life, and a dedication of the new day to the worship and service of God.

The section headed ‘Farming and Fishing’ consists of prayers around the subject of the chief occupations of their composers. These prayers were recited before or during work, including sowing and reaping, herding cattle or sheep, launching a boat and catching fish. There were often accompanying rituals, some of which continued from pagan times. For example, the seed corn was ritually sprinkled with water before sowing, in the name of the Trinity. While doing the sprinkling, the farmer would walk around the corn sunwise, and this custom was probably originally associated with sun worship. A similar ritual was performed at harvest. The whole family would gather in the fields, dressed in their best clothes. The father would cut a sheaf of corn and swing it three times above his head, reciting the reaping salutation (De Waal 1988: 49).

Closely related to the prayers associated with daily occupations are prayers connected with household tasks performed by the women. Prayers were offered during occupations such as kindling a fire. Fire was acknowledged as God’s gift and believed to have miraculous properties. Therefore, quenching the flames of the fire at night was also accompanied by rituals. Other prayers are associated with weaving, which was mainly a winter occupation, and with milking cows. Young girls would sing a mixture of religious and secular songs until each cow had been milked. These milking croons<sup>14</sup> are impressive in their number and variety. After cloth had been woven, it would be waulked<sup>15</sup> and several women would join together to accomplish this communal task, singing together as they worked. All weaving stopped on a Saturday night, and every woman would tie up her loom and hang a crucifix on it (De Waal 1988:72). There was also a *quern*<sup>16</sup> blessing to be said while grinding corn.

Specific prayers were also said while preparing for bed. There were also rituals to be performed, such as making the sign of the cross on the door when closing it for the night,

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<sup>14</sup> Milking ‘croons’ are songs sung while milking.

<sup>15</sup> Waulking a piece of cloth was stretching it on a frame to strengthen and thicken it.

<sup>16</sup> A *quern* is a hand mill for grinding corn.

as a prayer for protection from dangers of the night (De Waal 1988:93). Birth and death were accompanied by appropriate prayers and rituals. A newborn child was passed across fire three times and then carried sunwise around the fire three times. The midwife would then place three drops of water on the forehead of the child, as a sign that the child is dedicated to the Trinity. After eight days, the child would be baptised publicly and formally received into the church. This was 'great baptism' as opposed to 'birth baptism' conducted by the midwife.

De Waal has also included a sample of death blessings, also called 'soul-leading' or 'soul peace'. The 'soul friend' or *anam cara* of the dying person, usually a lay person, would sing or chant the death blessing, and all present would join in the prayer, asking God to receive the departing person. During the prayer, the soul friend would make the sign of the cross with his or her thumb, over the lips of the dying person (De Waal 1988:111).

A selection of verses is grouped around the theme of the hearth, including blessings over the home, family and shared food. Another important theme is partings, as often young people would have to leave their homes and travel long distances to find work. They would leave with gifts from friends and neighbours, who would often recite a parting blessing, or a prayer for the coming journey. There are many of these journey prayers, some for protection on a sea voyage, others for a journey on land.

Some of these prayers were carried on the person as a protective charm "to safeguard the wearer against drowning at sea, against disaster on land, against the evil eye, against being lifted by the hosts of the air, against being waylaid by fairies"(De Waal 1988: 143). The words of the prayer, or a verse from one of the gospels, were written on paper or parchment, placed in a linen pouch and sewn into the bodice of a woman or the waistcoat of a man under the left arm. For a child, they would be hung around the neck from a linen chord.

De Waal groups another set of verses under the heading 'Prayers for Protection'. The ancient Celts were conscious of many dangers, and their need for protection from God and from the angels and saints. A special ritual of *caim* or encompassment was practised, and is described as follows:

The caim was an imaginary circle which anyone in fear, danger or distress made by stretching out the right hand with the forefinger extended and turning sunwise, as though on a pivot, so that the circle enclosed and accompanied the man or woman as they walked, and safeguarded them from all evil, within and without (De Waal 1988: 159).

Prayers addressed to Mary and the saints form another grouping in De Waal's collection. They reflect a consciousness of the closeness of the spiritual world, and the participation of spiritual beings in daily life and work. Many prayers for protection and help are addressed to the saints, especially Brigid, Mary and Michael.

De Waal includes a selection of Christmas Carols, as well as a collection of short (one paragraph) blessings and good wishes. While placing these poems and prayers in one volume has involved rigorous selection, De Waal has captured the spirit of Celtic life and spirituality successfully. In De Waal's introduction she acknowledges that she has had to leave out much that is of value. In particular, she has left out pre-Christian blessings and spells, as these are of historical and literary interest only.

De Waal (1988: 12) has suggested that "in a society in which household, family and kin were central realities, perhaps men and women felt themselves at home with a Godhead whose very essence was a harmonious relationship of persons". The nature of God as Trinity therefore resonated with the Celtic sense of family and community, and reinforced their sense of community within the Church, so that they were less aware of hierarchical structures, and more open to an egalitarian view of Christian community.

#### **2.2.6 John Matthews (1997)**

John Matthews compiled and edited *The Druid Source Book*. The title is self-explanatory, it is a collection of literary source material for those who wish to study the druid tradition. Matthews has collected a sample of relevant articles and other material on the subject of druidry, ancient and modern. His literary survey begins with ancient writers' accounts of the druids. This section includes descriptions of the ancient Celtic druids by Julius Casear, Cicero, Tacitus, Lucan and other ancient Roman authors, as well as the early Christian writers Hippolytus and Clement of Alexandria.

The second section of Matthews' book contains a selection of writings about the druids which date from the druid revival of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. They reflect research on the origin of the druid tradition, as well as discussion of the teachings and practices of the ancient druids. Many of these writings are difficult to understand because of their unusual style and unfamiliar vocabulary. The romanticist tendencies of this time were clearly a major influence on these writers, so that their view of druid tradition is idealistic. The romanticists sought to recover pure religion from the contamination of institutional Christianity.

In his introduction, Matthews says that the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries CE mark the most productive era to date of study of the druid tradition. A great number of writings were produced, some of which expressed very fanciful ideas. Others contained material of scholarly value. This revival of interest in the druids and their teachings coincided with, and was influenced by, the Romantic Movement. Scholars of this era were motivated by a desire to discover a romantic or heroic past in the history of Britain.

Matthews traces the history of the study of druidism from John Aubrey's work on Stonehenge, which was published in 1689. He then mentions the work of John Toland (1670-1722) who studied the druids, but whose work was never published except as a series of letters to his patron, Viscount Molesworth. The first of these letters is included in this volume. Toland established the modern Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids.

*The Druid Source Book* concludes with a discussion of the druid movement in the twentieth century. Matthews identifies a number of independent movements in Europe and in the United States, which claim to promote a return to druid rituals, beliefs and values. He presents a collection of writings, which represent a wide spectrum of views on the nature of druidism, in an attempt to reflect the diversity of approaches to this subject found today. A brief discussion of a selection of included articles follows.

#### **2.2.6.1 P.W.Joyce (1997)**

P.W. Joyce's article is entitled *The Druids: Their Functions and Powers*. He discusses druidism in Gaul and in Ancient Britain and Ireland, focusing primarily on the social functions of druids. He sees druidism in these regions as having a common origin, but later diversifying in practice and belief. He identifies druids as 'men of learning', which

included knowledge of history, literature, religion and medicine. Druids were found all over Ireland, but there were more druids at Tara, the seat of the High King than anywhere else. He describes the supernatural powers attributed to ancient druids, including the much feared ability to cause madness, the power to give supernatural protection, divination and healing.

He also briefly describes customs and practices associated with the druids. These include the druid tonsure, which was perpetuated in the Celtic churches, wearing of white robes, and reverencing of trees, especially the oak. Druids were also appointed as counsellors to kings and educators of their children. According to Joyce, druids were known by that name in both Gaul and Britain. In all areas where they were found, they practised magic and divination, and were the learned people of their societies. They were all counsellors to kings and educators of royal and noble children. Druids in both Gaul and Britain included men and women, and they worshipped a number of gods.

The differences between Gaul and Ireland are also documented. The druids of Gaul were under one head druid, whereas there was no such formal leadership structure in Ireland. In Gaul, the druids believed in the immortality of the soul and reincarnation. In Ireland, some believed in the immortality of the soul, others believed that exceptional individuals lived on among the fairies. It seems that human sacrifice was part of the rituals in Gaul, but not in Ireland. In Gaul, committing traditions to writing was forbidden; the Irish druids were less strict about this rule. The Gaulish druids revered the oak, especially if mistletoe grew on it, whereas the Irish druids revered the yew, the ash and the rowan tree. In Gaul, druids formed a priesthood, whereas in Ireland, druids were learned people, but not priests. Joyce finally points out that the source of information about the druids of Gaul is Latin writers, but in Ireland our sources are indigenous writers.

#### **2.2.6.2 Julius Pokorny (1997)**

Matthews includes *The Origin of Druidism* by Pokorny. Pokorny states that his central purpose is to discover the historical origins of the druid caste. He mentions theories that they were Pythagoreans, Phoenicians, or even Buddhists, or that their religion can be traced to India. He also mentions the claim that the Irish druids had no fixed structure and head, and endorses this, believing that there was a primacy of respect and reputation rather than a fixed position.

Pokorny records that the druids clearly had wives and families, as attested by the earliest classical sources. He mentions their doctrine of the transmigration of the soul and presents the argument that druidism has a pre-Celtic origin: “For the Druids were the priests of the pre-Celtic aborigines of the British Islands, and it is from them only that the Celts received them” (Pokorny 1997:63). He records a series of taboos which Irish kings were required to observe and argues that this may be evidence that kings were at one time priests in these cultures. He discusses briefly the existence of matriarchal societies among the Celts and the unusual freedom and influence of women in these cultures. He also summarises various superstitious beliefs and unusual practices and festivals. Pokorny characterises the aboriginal inhabitants of Britain as ‘savages’ and discounts them, their culture and their religion. In this, he is a man of his time and later generations should be careful not to judge him too harshly.

#### *2.2.6.3 T.Rice Holmes (1997)*

This article is followed by *The Druids* by T. Rice Holmes. In this short article, he argues that the druid tradition began in Britain, among the pre-Celtic inhabitants of this region. Holmes notes that the druids in Ireland had both ritual and political power. He discusses the extent of druid influence in Britain and Gaul.

Generally, scholars today would discount his findings on the origin of druidism. The fact that this tradition is only found among Celtic peoples points to a Celtic origin. It seems that the Celts originated in central Europe, and drifted West to Gaul, Britain and Ireland. Holmes has a clear understanding of the power and influence exercised by druids.

#### *2.2.6.4 Writers of the Romanticist Druid Revival*

William Stukeley published *Stonehenge, a Temple restored to the British Druids* in 1740. He was one of the founders of the ‘Society of Antiquaries’. He claimed that druids worshipped a serpent named ‘Dracontia’ in white robes at Stonehenge. He continued in the same vein with a later book *Abury, a Temple of the British Druids*, about Avebury in Wiltshire. His claims have no historical basis, but influenced later writers, including the poets William Blake (1757-1827) and Thomas Gray, who wrote a poem entitled *The Bard* in 1757. Other Romantic writings on the druids were produced by John Ogilvie (*Fane of the Druids* published in 1787), Evan Evans (*Specimens of the Poetry of the Ancient Welsh*

*Bards*, 1764) and Edward Jones (*Mythological and Poetical Relics of the Welsh Bards and Druids*, 1784 and *The Bardic Museum*, 1802).

These works influenced Edward Williams, who wrote under the pseudonym *Iolo Morgannwg*. He was motivated by a nationalistic desire to show Celtic literature to be the equal of similar forms of literature from other parts of the world. He is responsible for reviving druid practices in England. In 1792 he held a ritual gathering on Primrose Hill in London, traditionally associated with druidism and he held the first *Gorsedd* or assembly of bards, since the Middle Ages.

Matthews has included two works by Iolo Morgannwg in his book. Iolo produced no coherent volume of work, but his son, J. Williams ab Ithel, collected and edited his writings under the title *Barddas*. Matthews has included a dialogue between a druid and a pupil and *The Gorsedd Prayer*, which is still used at druid gatherings. The ‘Celtic Revival’ began with the work of Iolo, and continued with W.B. Yeats, G. W. Russell and William Sharp, writing as ‘Fiona Macleod’ who “produced a series of brilliant works that captured the romance and mystery of the Celtic traditions and helped to enshrine them, in the consciousness of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries” (Matthews 1997:89).

Another authority on the subject of druidry was Edward Davies, who published *Celtic Researches* in 1804 and *Mythology and Rites of the British Druids* in 1809. He, too, had a lasting influence on the popular perception of the druids. Samuel Rush Meyrick and Charles Hamilton Smith published *Costumes of the Original Inhabitants of Britain* in 1815, in which druids are described as white robed figures carrying sickles, led by an arch-druid in a golden breastplate. This has become a familiar picture in the minds of many.

### **2.2.7 Ray Simpson (1995)**

Ray Simpson is a founding member of the Community of Aidan and Hilda, a modern Celtic Christian community. It is not monastic in the strict sense of the word, but is a community of people, married or single, who live according to a particular understanding of Celtic spirituality. In *Exploring Contemporary Spirituality (1995)*, he has written a simple guide to different aspects of Celtic Spirituality, aimed at the contemporary reader. The topics covered include: communities of faith, contemplative prayer, rhythm in work and worship, holy places, hospitality, families, creation, sacraments, the Holy Spirit, the

Trinity, miracles, the nature of the church, social responsibility, angels, healing, evangelism and preparing for death.

Simpson aims to relate the Celtic tradition to the lives and concerns of contemporary Christians. His approach has been criticised for lacking academic depth and thorough research, but it must be borne in mind that his intended audience is not the academic community. He is one of a number of authors who have contributed to popularising Celtic spirituality among contemporary Christians.

### **2.2.8 Michael Mitton (1997)**

Michael Mitton's book *Restoring the Woven Cord. Strands of Celtic Christianity for the Church Today (1997)* is another successful attempt to popularise Celtic Christianity. Mitton writes for Christian readers who do not necessarily have an academic background, but who seek to understand more of the Celtic Christian tradition and how applying that tradition to their daily lives will enrich their Christian faith. Picturing elements of Celtic Christianity as strands of a chord, each linked to a Celtic saint, Mitton explains their relevance to Christians today.

The topics and saints discussed are: Authenticity and Holiness (Aidan), The Bible (Boisil), Children (Cuthbert), Community (David), Creation (Columba), Death and the Dead (Drythelm), Evangelism (Columbanus), Healing and Miracles (John of Beverley), Ministry of Women (Brigid), Prayer (Patrick), Prophecy (Furse), Spiritual Battle (Illtyd), and the 'Wild Goose' (Holy Spirit) (Brendan).

Each chapter concludes with a Bible reading and a meditation, to allow the reader to see the application of that material to daily life. These books written by Simpson and Mitton have been widely read by the Christian public and have played an important role in stimulating interest in Celtic spirituality among Christian lay people.

### **2.2.9 Juliette Wood (2000)**

Juliette Wood has produced a valuable anthology of Celtic tradition, including poetry, legend and myth, as well as examples of visual art. Her book is entitled *The Celtic Book of Living and Dying. An Illustrated Guide to Celtic Wisdom (2000)*. Her research sheds

valuable light on obscure traditions, such as the legend of the ‘Wise Children’<sup>17</sup>, talismans, fairies and other mythical creatures. She writes in a simple, easy to read style, intended for contemporary readers.

Wood does not write from a Christian or a scholarly perspective, but has acted as a compiler of traditional material. However, in the process, she has produced a comprehensive source of background knowledge, which explains the beliefs and customs of the ancient pagan Celts and the druid tradition. This material, in turn, gives valuable background information to explain Celtic Christian practices and beliefs. The legends and traditions are narrated as they have been told through the ages, without criticism or assessment as to any basis in fact. They are simply recorded as tales which may be of interest to the reader, and reveal truths about Celtic history and culture.

#### **2.2.10 John O’Donohue (1998)**

The title of O’Donohue’s work (1998) is *Anam Cara*, which means ‘soul friend’ in Gaelic. He explores aspects of Celtic, and specifically Irish, spirituality. He emphasises the holistic approach to life and the world, which is a strong feature of Celtic spirituality. O’Donohue reflects a concern for building inter-personal relationships and friendships as well as a desire for individuals to experience solitude as something life-affirming, so that they are not afraid of being alone.

O’Donohue also focuses on the need to enjoy creation and to experience the world around us using all the senses. This is seen as an essential component to Celtic spirituality. He also includes chapters on work and on the value of solitude. He also discusses ageing and death, in which he explores ways to help people to develop a healthy attitude to these often-unpleasant realities.

O’Donohue aims to help contemporary people, facing contemporary problems, to use the insights of Celtic spirituality in order to make life today more meaningful. He is a poet rather than a theologian in the normal understanding of this word. As such, he emphasises Celtic poetry and art, seeing this as the essential expression of the values of the ancient

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<sup>17</sup> Wise children are those born with special wisdom and abilities which fit them for a leadership role in their community. They “are associated with water at birth or soon after, and undergo a ‘second birth’ from which they emerge precociously knowledgeable, gifted with supernatural powers.” (Wood 2000:10).

Celts. This approach makes Celtic thought accessible to contemporary readers, who can relate to it as expressed in poetry and song as well as in the visual arts.

### **2.2.11 Philip Carr-Gomm (2002)**

Carr-Gomm is the present Chief Druid and head of the Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids in the United Kingdom. His book entitled *Druid Mysteries. Ancient Wisdom for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (2002) attempts to explain various druid teachings and their application for contemporary living. He has a similar approach to Simpson (1995), except that Carr-Gomm is not writing from a Christian perspective, and at times displays an antipathy to Christian teaching and especially to the institutional church.

He is writing to promote druid teachings and practices, and sees the m as a philosophy more than a religion, appropriate to all people, regardless of their religious beliefs, and including those with no religious beliefs at all. Carr-Gomm begins by summing up his own spiritual development, and experiences which led him to the Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids. He displays a thorough knowledge of the history of the druid tradition and a personal experience of founding members of the modern Order. In seeking to attract people to “the druid path”, Carr-Gomm emphasises the element of mystery and magic in druid thought, as well as the need to recover a sense of wonder in interaction with creation. His writing style is simple and appealing, and he communicates an obvious excitement in his philosophical beliefs and a desire to share that excitement.

## **2.3 Important Writings on African Spirituality**

### **2.3.1 Jacob K. Olupona (2000)**

*African Spirituality. Forms, Meaning and expressions*, edited by Olupona, is part of the ‘World Spirituality’ series of books, published by Crossroad Publishing Company. This comprehensive volume includes articles by a wide range of scholars of African traditions, from around the world, and discusses the beliefs, practices and authority structures of traditional African religion. African religious phenomena from all over the continent are discussed, as well as traditional African religion's relationship to Christianity and Islam. Finally, examples of African-American spirituality are included, as well as the spirituality of inhabitants of the Caribbean, whose beliefs are of African origin.

In selecting his material, Olupona has been very inclusive, geographically, in terms of subject matter and in using writings of a wide variety of authors. He has used material from Northern, Southern and Central Africa, as well as from peoples of African origin in the United States and the Caribbean. Topics discussed include traditional gods, spirit powers and ancestral spirits, divination, witchcraft, African kingship, and syncretistic African beliefs, either in combination with Islam, Christianity, or other foreign religious influences. A brief discussion of those articles which have a direct bearing on Southern African spirituality follows.

#### ***2.3.1.1 Dominique Zahan (2000)***

Dominique Zahan has written an article entitled *Some Reflections on African Spirituality*. He argues with the assumption that traditional African theology has no concept of original sin and redemption, and therefore is in conflict with Christian theology. For Zahan, the major difference with Christian concepts of redemption is that in African tradition, the individual is responsible for his/her own redemption, whereas in Christian teaching, salvation is the gift of God.

Pre-Christian tradition in Africa tends to see God as occupying the top position in a hierarchy of beings, rather than being completely transcendent. This affects the way that traditional Africans approach God. He describes their attitude to God as a combination of respect, fear, adulation and pity. He discusses in detail this relationship, under the headings: 'Creator and Creation', 'Spirituality and the Cult of the Ancestors' and 'Shrines, priests and Prayers'. His focus is on the ways in which Africans relate to the High God, and the use made of ancestors and other intermediaries, out of respect or fear. It is generally not considered acceptable to approach the high God directly.

Zahan has a clear grasp of the ways in which traditional Africans relate to God. It is strange that he sees Africans as feeling pity towards God. This does not seem to correlate with their view of God as remote, or as so great that he has to be approached through intermediaries. Fear and respect seem to accord better with this belief.

#### ***2.3.1.2 Benjamin Ray (2000)***

Benjamin Ray's article focuses on one aspect of African spirituality and is entitled *African Shrines as Channels of Communication*. He discusses the different kinds of shrines found

in traditional African religious traditions, as well as the ways in which they are used to communicate with the divine. He shows the importance of maintaining a reciprocal relationship between gods or ancestors and humans in traditional African religion. The gods or ancestors must be placated through offerings, and in return give blessings to those who venerate them.

Ray's article emphasises the magical aspect of African traditional religion, where the purpose of religious acts is to manipulate the divine in order to bring about good results for the worshipper. This attitude is often present in more 'refined' approaches to God, but is not usually consciously acknowledged.

#### ***2.3.1.3 Ogbu Kalu (2000)***

Ogbu Kalu discusses ancestral veneration and its role in traditional African spirituality in his article *Ancestral Spirituality and Society in Africa*. He focuses on the cyclical nature of most African world views, where life is a cycle including birth, death, ancestorhood and rebirth. Death is therefore only a step on a cycle or never-ending journey. He discusses the conflict of this view with the Christian view of salvation and the new covenant, and speculates about whether the two can be held together indefinitely.

Kalu's concern with the basic conflict of world views between traditional African thought and Christianity is legitimate. It is true that most Africans have a cyclical view of human life, rather than a biblical, linear view. The cyclical view is also dominant in the literature generated by the New Age Movement, so that Africans who read this literature have the traditional view reinforced. There is clearly a great need for teaching on this subject in our churches.

#### ***2.3.1.4 David Westerlund (2000)***

David Westerlund's article is entitled *Spiritual Beings as Agents of Illness*. He discusses the African view of illness and its causes, and their relationship to religion and spirituality. Three causes of illness are identified in the traditional African world view: some diseases have a purely physical or biological cause, others are the result of social problems and still others have a supernatural cause. African peoples differ as to the nature of involvement of spiritual beings in causing and curing illnesses. Generally Africans believe that God is the ultimate cause of health or sickness and no cure can succeed without his enabling.

Westerlund has concentrated on an important and valuable aspect of African tradition, the ascription of various causes to illness and misfortune. These causes include human agents, who act to bring harm to their enemies by ritual means. His observation that God is the ultimate cause of good or ill, and that nothing happens without his permission, is an interesting aspect of African tradition which is not generally understood.

#### **2.3.1.5 M.F.C. Bourdillon (2000)**

A related article is M.F.C. Bourdillon's *Witchcraft and Society*. He states that there is a widespread view among traditional African peoples that witchcraft is associated with disorder in society. It is also associated with moral outrage, immorality, death, dangerous animals and darkness. Accusations of witchcraft are often the result of tensions within a family or a society. He shows that confessions of guilt by those accused of witchcraft are often the result of coercion or psychological problems.

Bourdillon presents useful insights on the subject of accusations of witchcraft and their underlying causes. His analysis, using sociology and psychology, makes the phenomenon of African witchcraft easier for westerners to understand.

#### **2.3.1.6 Wyatt MacGaffey (2000)**

Wyatt MacGaffey's article is entitled *Art and Spirituality*. He argues that both concepts, *Art* and *Spirituality* are Western abstractions which do not exist as distinct categories in traditional African thought. He shows that traditional African art and literature were despised in Western academia until African countries began to gain independence from colonial powers, in the 1960s. His discussion focuses on traditional African masks and their role in African dramas.

An important aspect of MacGaffey's work is his argument that the feminine is portrayed as more powerful than the masculine in African art and drama. Femininity is associated with the sunrise and with life, while masculinity is associated with the sunset and with death. This may reflect traditional roles of women as child bearers and nurturers and men as warriors, thus takers of life.

### **2.3.1.7 Gerhardius C. Oosthuizen (2000)**

Olupona's collection includes an article by Gerhardius C. Oosthuizen entitled *The Task of African Traditional Religion in the Church's Dilemma in South Africa*. Oosthuizen writes from the perspective of a life time spent studying the African Initiated Churches in Southern Africa, and here presents a discussion of the relationship between these churches and pre-Christian African tradition. He says that African traditional religion should be recognised as a world religion, on a par with other religions from different parts of the world. This tradition needs recognition, which it has long been denied by Western academics. Oosthuizen stresses the importance of community in African tradition, which plays a greater part in this tradition than any theological premise.

Olupona's approach has largely emphasised scholarly discussion rather than simply a compilation of traditional and other African material. In this, he differs from Davies, who has concentrated on traditional Celtic sources, and included a minimum of scholarly comment. Olupona's work is valuable because of the range of material included and also because he records African religious phenomena as they exist, without recourse to emotionalism or to a frenzied defence of African cults, or even to emotive accusations against the colonial powers and the Western churches.

### **2.3.2 Harold Courlander (1996)**

Courlander's book is entitled *A Treasury of African Folklore*, and is a compilation of African oral literature from a wide variety of geographical and historical contexts. He has also collected a wide variety of types of literature, including songs, epic poems, proverbs, riddles, religious poetry, myths and legends. Courlander has not included a large amount of scholarly discussion and analysis in his book. Instead, he has opted to compile an anthology of literature, with very little explanation. The advantage of this approach is that the material is allowed to speak for itself. The disadvantage is that less discerning readers may miss subtle meanings in the texts.

Courlander sees African oral tradition as a reflection on the lives and world views held by those who compose and recite African poetry, proverbs and traditional stories.

The myths, legends, epics, tales, historical poems and countless other traditional oral literary forms of African peoples have been woven out of the substance of human experience: struggles with the land and the elements, movements and migrations, wars between

kingdoms, conflicts over pastures and waterholes, and wrestlings with the mysteries of existence, life and death (Courlander 1996:1).

Courlander sees African folklore as the means by which African peoples relate to the past and also to the future, as well as to the problems and issues faced by contemporary African people. Traditional beliefs everywhere provide people with ways of relating to the past and the future as well as their environment, but Africans tend to be more focussed on the past than on the future.

Courlander states that contemporary scholarship has come to appreciate African tradition as a valuable source of literature, whereas previous generations of scholars viewed African thought as “primitive” and inferior to Western literature. He emphasises what human beings have in common, rather than their differences. Common values extend to deeply held beliefs about the nature of good and evil. He also cautions against grouping all African thought together, recognising the diversity of cultures which are called African. This shows a balanced view, a recognition that, while African cultures may have common elements, there is also a great divergence over a wide geographical area. He also reminds the reader that there has been much interaction between African peoples as a result of migrations and trade.

Courlander (1996:2-3) describes beliefs which are common to the majority of African peoples as follows:

Throughout much of West, Central, East and Southern Africa there prevails (except where vitiated by European influence) the concept of a total world made up of the seen and the unseen, of forces that for all their invisibility are none the less real and which must be coped with through rituals and magico-religious means. The goodwill of the ancestors is vital to the well-being of the living, and the dead are therefore supplicated and placated by an unending series of individual acts and prescribed rituals.

Courlander consciously aims to include traditions from all over sub-Saharan Africa, from Sudan, Ethiopia, Nigeria and Kenya, as well as from Southern Africa, in particular, the Hottentots, the Zulu and the Tswana. His anthology includes poems and prose narratives about myths, such as ‘How the Spider won and Lost Nzambi’s Daughter’, and also about practical matters such as ‘Litigation among the Fiote People’ or ‘How Bronze Castings were made at Benin’. He has also included a selection of African proverbs, riddles and

songs, including a collection of Ganda, Yoruba, Hausa<sup>18</sup>, and Tswana proverbs, Zulu riddles and a Shona walking song.

Courlander (1996:7) states that many of his sources are professional African researchers, and other material originates from people who were anxious that their particular oral traditions be included in the collection. His focus is on collecting a wide range of African oral literary pieces. His work is an anthology, and does not attempt to include in depth analysis or evaluation of the material. African tradition is seen as an object of curiosity, rather than a valuable source for understanding African thought and life.

### **2.3.3 Robert Schreiter (1995)**

Schreiter has written and edited a number of books and articles on the subject of African theology and African Spirituality. The book which makes a most significant contribution to these twin fields is a compilation of articles entitled *Faces of Jesus in Africa*. Schreiter believes that the question of who Jesus is for Africans today is crucial to the nature of the Church, as well as to the sense of identity of Africans, and especially African Christians. This book makes an important contribution to the discussion of African Spirituality as any Christian African Spirituality must centre on the person and work of Christ.

There is a strong emphasis throughout Schreiter's collection on inculturation and on presenting Christ as the victor over evil powers which are still believed to enslave contemporary Africans. Christ is also seen as the one who identifies with human beings in a situation of suffering, especially as a result of poverty and powerlessness, which are the experience of many people in African today.

Articles are written by African scholars, and include the following topics: Christ as Priest, Prophet and Potentate, Christ and the experience of African women, Christ as Chief, Ancestor, Healer, Master of Initiation, fellow sufferer and Liberator.

#### **2.3.3.1 Charles Nyamiti (1995)**

The collection begins with an article by Charles Nyamiti entitled *African Christologies Today*, which categorises different approaches to Christology in Africa. The approaches

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<sup>18</sup> West African peoples

that Nyamiti identifies range from those which emphasise African traditions, and thematic approaches to Christology, for example, to Christologies of liberation, exemplified by Black theologians of North America and South Africa. He has made a thorough study of the works of many African writers, and gives a good introduction to contemporary African approaches to Christology.

#### **2.3.3.2 Efoe & Julien Pe Ŋnoukou (1995)**

Pe'noukou argues that African categories may provide more acceptable ways of expressing the reality of Christ than European ones. He attempts to integrate orthodox Christology with the traditional African world view, in particular the world view of his own people, the Ewe-Mina of Togo. As traditional Africans see life as a cyclical process from birth to death to rebirth, so Pe'noukou pictures Christ's life as a process encompassing his birth as one of us and his death, which is a precondition to entering a new kind of life, and becoming the mediator between God the Father and creation.

Pe'noukou's comparison between the traditional African concept of the cyclical nature of human life and the life of Christ is interesting, but clearly there is not a real correlation between these two ideas. Christ did not die in order to be reincarnated, he overcame death in his resurrection, and made possible resurrection for those who believe in him. This is not a cyclical view of human existence.

#### **2.3.3.3 Douglas W. Waruta (1995)**

This article is followed by a contribution from Douglas W. Waruta entitled *Who is Jesus Christ for Africans Today? Priest, Prophet and Potentate*. Waruta begins with the Christian tradition of Christ as Prophet, Priest and King and attempts to apply these categories to African tradition, and shows how the church can meet the needs of contemporary Africans by presenting Christ in African terms. All of these figures are well known in African tradition, and are intermediaries between God and humans. Therefore, Waruta urges the church to develop a relevant African Christology, using the incarnation as a starting point.

Waruta's concern for a relevant approach to evangelism in Africa is good. Unless the church is able to communicate with Africans in African terms, the message will be lost.

Waruta has attempted to use African traditional concepts and marry them with conventional categories derived from the Bible, and this is of great value.

#### **2.3.3.4 Zablon Nthamburi (1995)**

This is followed by *Christ as Seen by an African: A Christological Quest* by Zablon Nthamburi. Like Waruta, Nthamburi strongly emphasises the incarnation of Christ. He emphasises Christ's identification with human beings, particularly the poor and weak, relating this to the life experience of many Africans. He says of African Christians: 'We need Christ who in his humanity suffers with us, is deprived with us, fights with us, and identifies wholly with our situation.

Nthamburi, like Waruta, has a deep concern to communicate the Christian gospel in terms relevant to African life and thought. He goes a step further than Nthamburi in emphasising contemporary African needs, for the basics of life, for peace and for empowerment.

#### **2.3.3.5 Anne Nasimiyu-Wasike (1995)**

Anne Nasimiyu-Wasike writes from an African woman's perspective. She reflects on life as an African woman, particularly the experience of poor, rural women in Africa, forced to work sixteen to eighteen hours per day to provide for their families. She relates Christology to women's experience in the areas of bearing and nurturing life, and "their profound sense of the union between the supernatural and everyday life" (Schreiter 1995:xi), as well as the experience of the women in the gospel stories.

Nasimiyu-Wasike states that African women typically work sixteen to eighteen hours a day, and have little time for theological reflection, but they have much to contribute to an experience-based theology. A strong emphasis on Jesus as healer is also present, and this is a dominant theme in African theology and spirituality.

Nasimiyu-Wasike makes an important contribution to this discussion in writing as an African woman, and relating Christology to the practical needs of African women, especially the need for healing and for integration of faith and life.

### **2.3.3.6 Francois Kabasele (1995)**

Francois Kabasele's first article is entitled *Christ as Chief*. In this article, he answers the objections of those who reject the picture of Jesus as a chief on the grounds that the position of chief has lost its power in many urban or modernised African communities. For Kabasele, the concept of a tribal chief still has meaning for the majority of Africans, and may be used to communicate truths about Jesus, together with ideas such as Christ as ancestor or older brother. Kabasele says that the concept of Jesus as chief includes the ideas of conquering hero, strong and victorious leader, a wise and generous king and one who reconciles opposing factions.

Each of these images has a deep Christological significance, for Christians in Africa and in the rest of the world. Kabasele's presentation of Christ brings a new perspective which emphasises Christ as reconciler and bringer of peace, as well as being a conqueror of evil. This message is vital for Africa today, and is deeply relevant to all the nations of the world.

### **2.3.3.7 Ce'ce' Kolie' (1995)**

Ce'ce' Kolie' explores the picture of Jesus as healer, especially in the gospel narratives, and shows that his methods do not conform to Western medicine. Kolie' asks the question, how can we proclaim Jesus as healer to peoples in Africa who are suffering from starvation, political oppression and disease? Kolie' says that the numerous healing miracles recorded in the gospels must be interpreted in the light of the death and resurrection of Christ. For Africans, health is viewed holistically and is a general state of peace and well-being, not only for individuals but also for communities. To have meaning in this context, theology must demonstrate that Christ brings about holistic health in the context of Africa today.

Kolie' deals with one of the most important issues facing the church in Africa and in the world. The Christian gospel is relevant to the needs of all people, and to all their needs. The church needs to communicate this message by word and by action.

Therefore, in the light of the foregoing, Schreiter has made a valuable collection of articles written by African theologians, primarily for African readers, and for others who seek to understand African life and thought. His work is especially noteworthy because it takes into account the practical problems and life situations of contemporary Africans and seeks

to relate Christology to these existential concerns. It is not merely a romantic work concerned with the African past.

#### **2.3.4 K.C. Abraham & Bernadette Mbuy-Beya (1994)**

*Spirituality of the Third World*, edited by Abraham and Mbuy-Beya, is a compilation of papers presented at the Nairobi Assembly of the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT) in 1992. These papers explore the meaning of spirituality for peoples of the so-called third world – Africa, Asia and South America, particularly for those peoples who are politically and economically disadvantaged. Therefore, while it is not exclusively concerned with African Spirituality, this book discusses themes which African Spirituality has in common with other forms of spirituality, as well as discussing African Spirituality itself.

Both African Spirituality and Black Spirituality are featured in this collection. The overall theme is the nature of spirituality and its relationship to the world economy, and the concerns of the poor Southern nations. African Spirituality was clearly more prominent at the conference, especially in the articles by Bernadette Mbuy-Beya and Elizabeth Amoah, two women theologians.

##### **2.3.4.1 Bernadette Mbuy -Beya (1994)**

Bernadette Mbuy-Beya's paper is entitled *African Spirituality: A Cry for Life*. She shows the centrality of 'life' as a theme and desire in African Spirituality, and relates this to contemporary experiences of Africans, especially African women. She identifies the themes of power and powerlessness, often intertwined with the issue of colonialism, as essential elements of an African spirituality, as well as the central importance of community in African thought.

Mbuy-Beya includes two life stories of African women and their influence on life and spirituality in Africa, Shepherdess Regine Citamba and Mama Anto, leaders in the charismatic renewal in the Catholic Church at Lubumbashi. Mbuy-Beya's approach is intrinsically African, relying on story telling in order to communicate truth, rather than attempting to communicate abstract concepts in a vacuum. Her holistic definition of life, and the implication that many Africans are deprived of life in the fullest sense of the word, is a challenge to the wealthy and powerful of the world.

#### **2.3.4.2 Elizabeth Amoah (1994)**

Elizabeth Amoah's paper is entitled *A Living Spirituality Today*. In her short contribution, Amoah searches for a meaningful expression of spirituality in a time of change and conflict, principally in the economic sphere of life. She argues for a holistic approach to spirituality, encompassing all of human life and experience, as opposed to those who attempt to confine human experience of God to overtly religious experiences.

Amoah attempts to relate spirituality to the daily lives and concerns of Africans, and the situations in which many find themselves, affected by wars and other conflicts, facing disruptions and uncertainties. In this, her work is very valuable.

#### **2.3.4.3 Dwight N. Hopkins (1994)**

Dwight N. Hopkins writes an article entitled *Spirituality and Transformation in Black Theology*, discussing how spirituality relates to socio-political change. Black Theology is primarily concerned with seeking social justice, whereas African Theology expresses a desire to recover cultural identity and express Christianity in African ways. The church would profit from a similar discussion of the relationship between Black Spirituality and African Spirituality.

Hopkins identifies Black Spirituality as a subversive reading of the scriptures, so as to determine their underlying message of liberation: "Black theological spiritual practice fundamentally means social transformation of demonic structures and systems" (Hopkins 1994:78). He specifically relates Black Spirituality to the experience of Black women, and to physical, bodily expressions of spirituality, and to the historic background of slavery in America. In this he reflects his American background.

Hopkins' emphasis on social justice as a result of developing a Black spirituality is valid. Spirituality cannot be divorced from political life and concerns. Perhaps at times he is guilty of a tendency to over correct what he sees as the faults and shortcomings of the traditional approach to spirituality.

## **2.4 Conclusion**

In recent years, a vast volume of literature on Celtic art, culture and spirituality has been produced. This has been stimulated by the revival of interest in Celtic spirituality in the

past ten years and, in turn, has fuelled the revival movement. Much of this literature has been secular, or identified with the New Age Movement, but a large amount of Christian writing on the subject has also resulted. This literature either consists of an anthology of ancient Celtic writings, or a popular discussion of the beliefs and religious practices of the ancient Celts and ways in which these can be related to life in the twenty-first century. More needs to be done in terms of academic and theological study of the ancient Celtic churches and their contribution to the contemporary church. It is hoped that this thesis is able to make a contribution in this regard.

At the same time, much has been written on African culture and traditions, reflecting a fascination in the West with African culture and history. Literature on African spirituality is found far less often, and although the Church in Africa is seeking to recover spiritual roots in Africa, and relate these to Christian teaching, there has been less popular support for this endeavour than there has for the recovery of Celtic spirituality. Once again, there is a need for theological analysis of African Spirituality and its relevance to the contemporary church.

The two forms of spirituality have much in common, as will be seen. It will therefore be helpful to study them together, in order to identify common themes and values which may be used to deepen and strengthen the lives and worship of contemporary Christians.