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# Review of Celtic Theology: Humanity, World and God in Early Irish Writings, by T. O'Loughlin

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same)? What continuity and connections were there between Medieval and Reformation thought and between Reformation thinkers and writers and later Protestant Scholasticism? One essay, for example, presented a Puritan Divine as an example of a Reformed Scholastic. In all, the articles ask historians and theologians to re-examine the traditions of the Medieval, Reformation, and Post-Reformation eras as reflected in the writings and interactions of different authors. Specialists on the various writers studied and the questions that they asked as well as all interested in that world of thought prior to the Enlightenment will be stimulated by one or more of the essays to look again at their own assumptions. The articles vindicate the conviction of the late Heiko Oberman that we need to see the three eras (late Medieval, Reformation, Post-Reformation) as a unity that only came apart in the late eighteenth century. It is good also for our American world to hear what questions and ideas are being debated by the Reform tradition in Europe, especially in the Netherlands, but with contributions from Scotland and Sweden.

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*Celtic Theology: Humanity, World and God in Early Irish Writings.* By **Thomas O'Loughlin**. New York: Continuum, 2001. xviii + 235 pp. \$74.95 cloth; \$28.95 paper.

The phrase "Early Irish" means the period from the fifth to the tenth century. Much theological material survives from then, but scholars have mostly used it for historical purposes, such as determining which church fathers the Irish knew. In this welcome, indeed overdue, volume, O'Loughlin examines theological themes. Throughout the book he struggles against modern perceptions of an idiosyncratic Celtic Church, "an eco-friendly, Augustine-free zone without formal theology or law" (19). This phenomenon has many parents from Irish Protestants who portrayed a national church that maintained its independence from Rome to contemporary New Age types who simply resent formality—and usually intellectuality—in religion. O'Loughlin argues for a distinctive Irish theology in the sense that every society has brought its cultural values to the understanding of Christianity. The Irish considered themselves part of the Western Church.

Two examples will show O'Loughlin's method. Adomnán of Iona (625–704) wrote *De Locis Sanctis*, about the Holy Land that he had never seen, yet this book became popular in the early Middle Ages. Adomnán applies Augustine's exegetical principles to his subject, and, "teasing out references to places in the Fathers," he established the theological significance of specific sites. His description of salt "fulfill(ed) a need, expressed by Augustine, for book on minerals mentioned in the Scriptures" (80). O'Loughlin similarly demonstrated how the *Collectio Canonum Hibernorum* embodied not just a collection of legal decisions but also a particular theological stance, such as exalting virginity over marriage. All in all, a fine book by a leading scholar.

**Joseph F. Kelly**

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