

## Columba (521-597) - Lecture 4 – ‘Theologian and Evangelist’

### 1. Claiming Columba ...

- (a) *Roman Catholic claim*
- (b) *Protestant claim*
- (c) *Liberal/Green/New Age claim*

### 2. Columba’s Traditional Theology

‘Whatever else he was, Columba was no liberal. The emphasis in [Columba’s] poem, *Altus Prosator* ... is on the sovereignty of God, the reality of human sin, the depth of the fall of humanity, the power of divine judgement, the terrible apocalyptic nature of Christ’s second coming, and the reality of Hell.’<sup>1</sup>

- (a) *The Concept of Judgment.*
- (b) *The Nature of God.*
- (c) *A Fallen Creation*

### 3. The ‘Celtic’ view of Nature

- (a) *Harmony with nature?*
- (b) *Conquest of nature?*

### 4. A ‘Christus Victor’ Theology [Christ triumphant over the demonic]

- 4 stories of spiritual battles.
- Each soul contested for by God and the demonic.
- Monks’ role as ‘front-line’ troops in the spiritual battle.
- Fundamental axiom of Celtic theology: the need to release men and women from Satan.
- Souls are especially vulnerable at point of death.
  - Need help from a great saint.
  - Ancient Irish Law concept of ‘escorting’ to a new territory.
  - Iona as a ‘thin place’ [Evelyn Underhill, George MacLeod, etc.]

### 5. Atonement and the Eucharist

- The mass is a ‘noose’ to Satan.
- *Bangor Antiphonary* [same as worship service on Iona]
- In the Eucharist a soul is brought under Christ’s dominion.

### 6. Certainty or Uncertainty?

- ‘Once saved, always saved’?
- Adomnan’s weak use of the term ‘predestination’.
- Reformed Theology – Predestination is God SEALING our destiny.
- Columban Theology – Predestination is God’s INTENTION for our destiny.
- A soul’s salvation could still be lost.
- Paradigm of the people of Israel fleeing from Egypt – recapture?

### 7. Columba as Evangelist

- Romantic Legend – save as many souls as perished at Battle of Cul Drebene.
- Focussed on saving souls from lost eternity.
- Liberal thought wants to reinterpret Celtic mission only in terms of ‘peace and justice’.
- Theology of Evangelism underpinned by ‘Christus Victor’ basis.

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<sup>1</sup> Iain Bradley, *Argyll: The Making of a Spiritual Landscape*, p. 58f.

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### 8. Evangelism ‘from below’

- (a) Erroneous assumption of a ‘top-down’ model:
  - First, individual conversion of a potentate.
  - Second, communal conversions with mass baptisms.
- (b) ‘Not many noble’
  - Story One: The Glen Urquhart Family:
  - Story Two: The Skye Family:

### 9. Evangelism as the Victory of Christ

- (a) The Reality of the Demonic.
  - The devil as the ‘strong man’ of Scripture.
  - His hold must be broken before conversions take place.
  - St. Patrick’s Breastplate.
- (b) The Conquest of the Demonic
  - Boar of Skye story – powerful pagan Pictish symbol
  - Missionary involved in vanquishing evil spiritual powers.

### 10. The ‘Method’ of Evangelism

- (a) Prayer and Praise.
  - Psalm 44 outside King Bridei’s fort.
  - Public worship of the true God is itself a spiritual weapon.
- (b) The Power of the Word
  - First, Preaching HERALDS Christ, which puts the demonic to flight.
  - Second, Preaching ENGAGES the mind and emotions.
  - Only AFTER the demonic is put to flight CAN the mind be engaged.
  - Cf. Neil Anderson ‘The Bondage Breaker’
  - Two Stages which need to be reversed
    - Sin brings: (1) Separation from God – (2) Bondage to Satan
    - Salvation brings: (1) Freedom from Satan – (2) Fellowship with God.
- (c) The Sign of the Cross
  - ‘Signum Salutare’
  - A sign of deliverance.
  - Like preaching it primarily heralds the presence of Christ.

### 11. Conversion as Release and Response

- Celtic understanding was that an evangelistic activity, faith does not come primarily because individuals become *intellectually* convinced of Christian truth, although though consent of the mind eventually becomes part of this.
- Much more importantly, faith comes because the power of Satan over mind, heart, and soul has been *broken*, meaning that men and women will now, in their new freedom, respond eagerly to the triumphant Christ.
- The breaking of the rule of the powers of Evil is critical in the Celtic Christian mid-set in both evangelism and discipleship.
- The understanding of the Celtic missionary monk was that if the power of Satan over a group or family was broken, then a *corporate* response to Christ was to be expected.