

- 17 William L. Rowe, 'The Problem of Evil and Some Varieties of Atheism', *American Philosophical Quarterly* 16 (1979), reprinted in Marilyn McCord Adams and Robert Merrihew Adams (ed.), *The Problem of Evil* (Oxford, 1990).
- 18 Cf. Stephen J. Wykstra, 'The Humean Obstacle to Evidential Arguments from Suffering: On Avoiding the Evils of "Appearance"', *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 16 (1979), reprinted in Adams and Adams (ed.), *op.cit.*
- 19 J.L. Mackie, 'Evil and Omnipotence', *Mind* 64 (1955), reprinted in Adams and Adams (ed.), *op.cit.*, p.33.
- 20 *The Presumption of Atheism*, p.88.
- 21 *The Future* (Oxford, 1989), p.229.
- 22 *Summa Contra Gentiles* III,67.
- 23 Herbert McCabe O.P., *God Matters*, p.14.
- 24 McCabe, *op.cit.*, p.15. For the same view, see James F. Ross, 'Creation II', in Alfred J. Freddoso (ed.), *The Existence and Nature of God* (Notre Dame and London, 1983), and Germain Grisez, *Beyond the New Theism* (Notre Dame and London, 1975), Chapter 18.
- 25 *God Matters*, p 36
- 26 C.J.F. Williams, 'Knowing Good and Evil', *Philosophy* 66 (1991), p.238.
- 27 Cf. Richard Swinburne, *The Coherence of Theism*, chap.11.
- 28 Cf. Walter Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, Vol.1 (London, 1961), p.240.

Early Irish 'Feminism'

Gilbert Márkus OP

There is a tendency among critics of 'patriarchal' culture or religion to point to the high status of women in early Irish or other Celtic societies as a model for change, suggesting that these societies displayed what one might call 'actually existing feminism'. The assumption appears in otherwise scholarly works. Thus Dillon and Chadwick:

It is indeed impossible to have any true understanding of either Celtic history or Celtic literature without realizing the high status of Celtic women.'

Elsewhere we are invited to 'think of the superior place of women in early Celtic society'². But what is the evidence for these claims?

What the Myths do *not* reveal

The case made by Dillon and Chadwick for the high status of women in Irish society rests largely on the roles played by women in mythic literature:

The high prestige of women is a feature characteristic of early Celtic civilisation, and especially of mythology. ... In the Heroic Age of Ireland, Medb, Queen of Connacht, is the reigning sovereign. (p. 153)

Yet what this paragraph shows is in fact how *little* evidence there is of early Irish feminism. The first 'powerful woman' who springs to the mind of the author is not a woman at all, but a goddess of sovereignty. Medb is 'she who makes drunk', the one to whom the king is wedded at his inauguration or *feis*. Her whole dossier is dependent not on any historical figure, but on her mythical and divine function vis à vis the very male historical institution of kingship. Medb's promiscuous nature in the tales is simply a function of the myth of the 'goddess who slept with many kings.'

Dillon and Chadwick also point out that 'in Irish mythology the woman, not the man, is the spiritual vehicle who conveys the soul of the dead to rebirth in a later generation.' This still tells us nothing of the place of women in society. We are still in the realm of religion and mythology, and goddesses are not women.

What the Myths *do* Reveal

Mythical literature does reveal something, but it is not the most obvious narrative features of the tales that reveal the social status of women, as much as the 'asides', the flavour of the language and the circumstantial details. No one would regard the *Vita Columbae* as an accurate historical account of the sixth century saint's life, miracles and all. But the detailed background information about the monastic culture of the late seventh century in which it was composed, which it reveals as if by accident, is of enormous use to the historian. Similarly, the 'background noise' of the mythic literature gives us important clues about the social status of women, as long as we look beyond the main features of the narrative.

The Unstable Woman

A striking aspect of the literature is the interchangeability of women. One of the most variant elements of early Irish tales is the name of the hero's wife or mother. In other words, the identity of any real woman in a tale is often lost and, significantly, it does not really matter as the woman is so often simply playing a supporting role as the hero's wife or mother, a function of his story.

Gormlaith is a prime example: she is in fact an historical figure, recorded in the Annals as dying in 947. Strangely, though the annalist

says nothing of this woman's marriages, she is elsewhere said to be daughter of Flann Sínná, betrothed to Cormac mac Cuilennáin and then married to Cerball Mac Muirecáin who stole her from Cormac after his defeat. Then after Cerball's death, Gormlaith was briefly married to the high king Niall Glúndub. Finally, 'after all these royal marriages, she begged from door to door, forsaken of all her friends and allies; and glad to be relieved of her inferiors.' Thus the historical Gormlaith has become nothing but the old familiar goddess of sovereignty, partner to one king after another, and then the mythical hag The real-woman of the annals disappears behind the myth.

Another historical woman who behaves in this way is Mór Muman, whose obit is recorded in Annals of Innisfallen at 632. She also marries a whole series of kings, one after the other, historical figures of the Eóganacht who actually succeeded each other in power in Munster. Once again, a historical woman has become a mythical function. Final evidence of this is surely that the Annals of Innisfallen, in spite of the fact that the historical Mór Muman was said to have died in 632, record her composing a verse on the death of her king, Cathal mac Finguinne:

Emly
which Ailbe ennobled with his crozier:
one thing for which it is famous —
its clay over Cathal's face.

Cathal died in 742, by which time the historical Mór Muman would have been over one hundred and forty years old. Evidently, the woman has disappeared again behind the goddess of a king-myth.

We see historical female figures elsewhere in the tales disappearing behind mythic archetypes. In the *Ban Senchas*, all the 'great women' of Ireland who might have been expected to appear and give evidence of Celtic feminism disappoint us. Most of them turn out to have fabricated names, and all of them are 'wives, daughters and families of reputed high kings of Ireland.' The women's function is primarily to establish their menfolk's legitimacy.

The Honour of Women

Philip O'Leary⁷ has shown that the all-important concept of honour in Irish literature is a highly masculine one. The Irish term *fir fer*, the highest expression of this sense of honour, means 'the truth of men'. Though women have a place in this world of honour, it is hardly one that indicates a high estimate of their sex. When women boast, it is not of their own prowess or virtues, but those of their menfolk. They 'define

their honour as virtually a reflection of that of their husbands.’⁶ This emerges in *Fled Bricrend*, with the praises of Cú Chulainn resulting in honour offered to his wife, Emer.

‘Now yours is the feast of a champion,’ said Medb, (to Cú Chulainn) ‘and may you enjoy it one-hundred-fold for one hundred years before the youths of all Ulaid. . . It is our judgement, moreover, that, just as no Ulaid youth is your equal, so no Ulaid woman is the equal of your wife, and it is our pleasure that Emer always be the first woman of Ulaid to enter the drinking house.’⁷

No insult is being offered to Emer by defining her honour thus, for she bases her own claim to honour on the *glóire* of her husband:

‘It is fitting for me, Sencha, for I am the wife of a handsome hero who exhibits both beauty and wisdom. . . . There will not be found a man who can equal, for his age, his growth and his splendour . . . his prowess, his battle ardour, his valour.’

Even praise of a woman’s beauty is displaced praise of her husband. We find the same mechanism in early Welsh poetry:

Praise of Welsh noblewomen was merely a displacement of the eulogies directed at the lord in whose court they lived. By honouring a patron’s wife or daughter, a poet was honouring the patron himself, and therefore fulfilling part of his obligation as court poet.⁸

Praise of female beauty is not necessarily an indication of female power, then.

Another aspect of the honour-code which runs contrary to any claim of Irish feminism is that so many women are prepared to sacrifice their own welfare and happiness, even their lives, for the sake of the honour of their husbands. Thus Nes is prepared to die in order to delay the birth of Conchobar until the day on which his birth will bring him glory, and other women do much the same for the honour of their menfolk.

In other places women do not so much as sacrifice themselves as find themselves sacrificed by others, all to preserve the male honour code, with no concern at all for their own honour. Thus Finnabair, in the *Táin bó Cuailnge* is used by those who seek to destroy Cú Chulainn to persuade warriors to go and confront him.

Give wine to anyone who comes . . . then put Finnabair at his right hand and say: ‘She is yours if you bring us the head of the warped one.’⁹

There is one area in which it seems that women have a way to earn honour on their own account: their chastity. When women boast of anything of their own, rather than of their husband's, they boast of their chastity. But there is no symmetry between men and women in this matter. When Cú Chulainn and Emer part, they make a promise:

Each of them promised to stay pure until they met again! unless the other died. Then they took leave of each other and he turned toward Alba.

While he is away, Emer is propositioned by Lugaid, but 'Emer held his cheeks and swore on his life and honour that it was Cú Chulainn she loved . . . and that for anyone else to take her would be a crime against honour'—not hers, but Cú Chulainn's. Meanwhile, Cú Chulainn wastes no time in bedding Scáthach, Uathach and Aife in his Scottish adventure, but on his return to Emain Macha finds that Emer is expected to sleep with Conchobor, his king, before he can do so himself: 'The first forcing of girls in Ulster is always his' [this *ius primae noctis* also suggests less than equality of respect for women]. The possibility that she might be 'forced' by someone else enrages him—'he would destroy any man who slept with his wife':

Cúchulainn grew wild at this and trembled so hard that the cushion burst beneath him and the feathers flew around the house. He rushed out.

It is clear first of all that a double standard is operating here, and secondly that the function of female chastity is not one which relates to the value of a woman in her own right. A woman's chastity is seen as a 'vital component of male honour,'¹⁰ typical of patriarchal societies, where the women's chastity is central to the legitimacy of male inheritance. Even beauty of form and speech, such as Emer's, is for the pleasure of men. As the 9th century Triads make clear, a woman's beauty is not for *her* enjoyment: The three glories of a gathering are 'a beautiful woman, a good horse and a swift hound.'¹¹

Dangerous Women

Finally, when mythic women do wield power or influence, the myths make it clear that this is a Bad Thing. The *Táin Bó Cuailnge*, in which female characters play such a vital role, is evidence against the Celtic feminist thesis. Medb, whose pillow talk with Ailill has caused all the trouble in the first place, suggests the killing of her own allies to avoid trouble.

'Kill them,' Medb said. 'That is a woman's thinking and no mistake!' Ailill said. 'A wicked thing to say.'

Women, appealing to men's fear of dishonour, urge them to their own destruction. Thus Medb incites Loch to fight Cú Chulainn by an attack on his honour. The promise of a woman's favours persuades men to do what their judgement might otherwise have dissuaded them from doing. Thus Finnabair is used by her mother to tempt men to die at Cú Chulainn's hands:

Medb's daughter Finnabair
— whatever beauty she may have—
was not promised you for love,
but so that you would use your strength.

. . . Yours is the blame for what must come,
son of Damán mac Dáiri
coming *at a woman's word*, [my emphasis]
to cross swords with your foster-brother.

The moral of the whole *Táin* is best stated by Fergus:

'We followed the rump of a misguiding woman,' Fergus said. 'It is the usual thing for a herd led by a mare to be strayed and destroyed.'

Such passages in the *Táin* prompted Frank O'Connor to write, 'The purpose of the original author would seem to have been to warn his readers against women, especially women in positions of authority.'¹²

Who Needs Goddesses?

It has been suggested that the prominence of goddesses in these myths may reflect their origin in more ancient, even Pre-Celtic, society. But why should the presence of powerful mythical females echo a golden age of 'actually existing feminism', in Celtic Ireland or in a culture even more ancient? The question might be better put: 'Why should we imagine this to be the case?'

A good deal of recent feminist scholarship . . . has assumed that the presence of female deities or prominent female symbols in a religion correlates with cultic opportunity for women, or even with improved social conditions. . . . [But] the gender of the deity or of leaders of cult does not determine the presence or absence of either religious or social opportunities for either gender.'¹³

In fact, women have in the past relied very heavily precisely on *male* images of God for the imaginative expression of their faith. It is often the all too masculine humanity of Jesus which has seemed to women the most powerful way of expressing their devotion. Sometimes this has taken an erotic tone, while at other times the woman has played mother (or foster-mother in Irish terms) to the Christ-child, as we find in the Irish poem *Isucán*:

Isucán is at home on high
even though he be in my bosom.

The development in later medieval Christianity of feminine images of God, and images of the Blessed Virgin as vehicles of devotion is, according to Walker Bynum, largely a product of the male imagination.

We should also note that in Indo-European religions, goddess worship, far from being associated with a high social standing for real women, has been linked to deeply anti-women practices. Temples to goddesses often employed sacred prostitution as the principle form of male worship and there is no reason to suppose that this should enhance women's status in society. Modern Hindu devotion to the goddess Yellama involves the 'marriage' of thousands of young Indian girls every year to the goddess. Subsequently, the priest having taken her virginity, each girl is rented out to sleep with prosperous men of the area and, when her value decreases, to anyone who can pay a few rupees.¹⁴

Other instances of a connection of female, cult imagery with misogyny are found in quite different contexts. The founder of the Brotherhood of the Blessed Virgin in the fifteenth century was a man whose religious devotions had resulted in a personal encounter with herself in a vision: yet he is also co-author of the *Malleus Maleficarum*, the handbook on witch-hunting which was used across Europe in the systematic persecution, torture and judicial murder of thousands of women. Such examples are not adduced as evidence of attitudes in early Irish society, but they do discourage making facile connections between feminine cult-language and real status for women. 'Actually existing feminism' cannot be inferred from early Irish literature on this basis.

Women and the Laws

There are other texts where we can discover a good deal about the position of early Irish women, in particular the early Irish laws, whose material as it now stands originates in the 7th–8th centuries. While mythic products were often unstable and genealogies were positively volatile, the legal texts have enjoyed a comparative stability, and it is

possible within these texts to distinguish earlier laws from later laws. When Irish lawyers made changes in the Laws they did so by the *addition* of new material rather than by changing the old. Later additions and glosses were used to set the old law in a new context without changing the original, thereby ensuring a real change in social life.

A good example of this 'change by addition' occurs where the *Senchas Már* states that 'contracts to be dissolved according to Irish law' include contracts made 'by a woman without her husband'. Instead of changing the original text, a later gloss adds, that this only applies:

for the subordinate wife without children, except five contracts which she makes without her husband which are lawful.¹⁵

Thus, on two fronts, the old law is altered in its effect. First, the old law is reduced in scope, from all women to a woman who is a 'subordinate wife'— a form of marriage far less common by the time of the glossator's addition. (Interestingly, the 'subordinate wife' is here called *adaltrach*, deriving from the Latin *Adultrix*, 'adulteress', confirming the later, Christian provenance of the addition.) Secondly, by intruding five contracts as 'exceptions' to the old law, women's capacity is greatly extended.

Binchy has shown that Irish law can be chronologically stratified, and that the earlier laws generally give least power to women, while the later laws and glosses manifest a 'progressive' tendency. In the earliest forms of Irish law, women have absolutely no independent legal capacity. Woman is listed as among those who are 'senseless' in law, including captives, drunkards and slaves, and cannot escape from one form of male control or another:

'For a woman is not capable of alienating anything without the authorisation of one of her 'heads'. Her father watches over her when she is a girl; her husband watches over her when she is a wife; her sons watch over her when she is a [widowed] woman with children; her [male] kin watch over her when she is a woman of the kin [i.e. with no other natural guardian].'

This dependent legal position of women is most evident in the earliest Irish texts, but between the earliest period and the eighth century, as new layers of law are laid on top of the old, women were given more power and autonomy. After their original total incapacity at law, women were granted limited capacity, or at least *some* women were. Women who had entered into the higher grades of sexual union (and there were ten grades) were the first to benefit. The earliest form of regular

marriage, the *lánamnas for ferthinchur*, entailed no legal capacity for the woman, but by the time of the writing of the *Cáin Lánamna* the normal form of marriage had become the 'marriage of equal dominion', or *comthinchuir*, which had been impossible under the earlier system. The later law tracts deal at such great length with the marriage of equal dominion precisely because it *is* a novelty, and so stands in need of legal explanation.

By the last stage of legal development, wives of equal dominion and subordinate wives with sons were enabled to alienate the amount of their own honour price, with or without their husbands' presence. Furthermore,

They may alienate the entirety of their surplus, in order to release their friends from lock and chain and [for the same purpose] they may alienate their entire marriage contribution to the point of overburdening [the household] or utter poverty.

Even subordinate wives without sons, in the later laws, can alienate property—'the whole of their surplus to save their friends from lock and chain.'

Christian Subversion

This theme of liberating people from 'lock and chain,' this special capacity of a woman to dispose of her goods even 'to the point of utter poverty', is noteworthy. It is probably one of the clearest illustrations of what Kelly regards as a specifically Christian influence in Irish Law:

The influence of the Church must have helped to raise the status of women in early Irish society.¹⁶

The ability of women to free people 'from lock and chain' represents part of the Church's campaign against the hostage system. The old laws stated that 'He is no king who has no hostage in chains.' The practice of exchanging hostages as a guarantee of good behaviour had gone on for centuries, yet kings had for centuries slain the sons of their enemies, and sacrificed the lives of their own sons held hostage by their enemies, in the pursuit of victory. The Church very early on began to attempt to stop the practice.

The First Synod of Patrick urged clergy to use their own money to liberate captives rather than simply kidnapping them. Certainly by the sixth century, in the Penitential of Finnian, it is clear that Christian clergy are by now making a habit of collecting money to redeem captives. From the beginning, the Church sought to undermine the

practice of hostage exchange, as well as the taking of slaves.

The hagiography of the founding saint of a monastery, which acted as a social manifesto for the monks who belonged to it, often depicted the saint freeing a captive or slave. The prestige of the monastery depended on the continuance of such activities by the monks who followed their saint, but it would be unnecessarily cynical to assume that monks acted solely out of monastic self-interest, and not out of a genuine alternative moral vision.

From the beginning, women were encouraged and empowered to share in this task of liberating captives, to free them 'from lock and chain.' It is clear that the thin end of the wedge of women's capacitation at law was associated with the progressive Christianisation of Ireland in other respects, too. Not least in the matter of donations of property to the Church. In Irish law it was practically impossible for any man to permanently alienate land from the possession of his kindred. For a woman to do this was unthinkable. Yet the Church seems to have been able to claim exemption from this restriction, even for women. The eighth century additamenta to Tírechán's Life of Patrick claim that three women made over lands to Patrick 'until doomsday.'

In the seventh century lives of Patrick by Tírechán and Muirchú, we have glimpses of several women being received into the Church by Patrick, and some becoming nuns. This represents a thickening of the 'wedge', since it meant that there were options open to women which had hitherto been denied them: here was a way of life which did not subject them to the authority of father, husband or sons. The *Bretha Nemed déidenach* states that 'at a proper age a girl should be betrothed to God or to a man.' There was, for the first time, an alternative: 'betrothal to God', which meant that a woman was betrothed to no man at all, and even freed from her father's authority. Patrick's *Confessio* describes women becoming nuns 'not with the will of their fathers... though they are forbidden.' Brigit's brothers are similarly displeased about her religious vocation:

Her brothers grieved at her depriving them of the bride-price. ...
Bacéne said: 'The beautiful eye which is in your head will be betrothed to a man though you like it or not.' Thereupon she immediately thrusts her finger into her eye. . . .¹⁷

Breaking out of the old *tutela mulierum* was only one aspect, of monastic life which women must have welcomed. Though other women were unable to give legal evidence (except in a few instances, largely gynaecological in nature), a nun could, against the evidence of a cleric. The Irish Synod of the seventh century envisages the possibility of a

woman going surety (a vital part of Irish law from which most women were excluded) as long as she is *domina, virgo sancta*. Nuns ran their own farms and they treated with local rulers for the release of hostages as the monks did. Women's monasteries were places where men and women sought support and guidance. King Enda relinquished his rule of the Airgialla at the command of his sister, Fainche, and went to live in her community as a monk. The abbess and her sisters were also involved in political life: they negotiated for the relief of their people from the burden of excessive tribute, and the glossator identifies the evidently powerful 'woman who turns back the streams of war' as the abbess of a monastery.

The Columban Contribution

Finally, the positive impact of the Church on the lives of Celtic women may be examined in the light of the *Cáin Adomnáin* and the project of Adomnán's monastery of Iona, in general. A late seventh century production, the final legal section of the *Cáin* is the original text as adopted by the Synod of Birr in 697. This law was a complete innovation, bearing no relation to the old Celtic laws, either in its content or its administration. Nevertheless it attracted a wide acceptance throughout Ireland and parts of Scotland and even Pictish Britain, as is suggested by the guarantor-list. It should, therefore, not be seen in isolation from the processes that we described above, but perhaps as a particular crystallisation of a wide-spread change, working alongside other social and religious pressures in favour of women — their protection in times of war, their protection from sexual assault and abuse, from being abandoned by the fathers of their children, and from insult.

It is clear from other sources that Adomnán, abbot of Iona from 679 until his death in 704, has the condition of women on his mind in general, and sees one task of his monastery as the protection and advancement of their rights. The fact that the hagiography of a founding saint operates conventionally as a manifesto for his monastery should alert us to these aspects of Adomnán's *Vita Columbae*. One of the distinctive marks of this work is the place of women in the holy man's miracles, most dramatically in the story of a young girl who, pursued across a field by 'a certain cruel man, a pitiless oppressor of the innocent', took refuge under Columba's cloak. Anything more like a manifesto for a monastery's right to protect women would be harder to imagine. The man, showing no reverence for Columba's 'sanctuary', nor for the life of the girl, speared her under the saint's cloak and left her dead. Naturally 'sudden and dreadful vengeance' befell her slayer.

Elsewhere the *Vita* takes up the theme of protection of women slaves, the help of women in the pain of childbirth, and the delightful tale of the relief of a woman unhappily married to an ugly man whom she cannot love.

The 'Guardian Devil'

In spite of these advances, early Christian Ireland was still far from a feminist paradise. The social advances were slow and gradual. The property laws which forbade women from permanently alienating property from the kin-group were never completely dissolved or bypassed in pre-Norman Ireland, which meant that many women inherited only a life-interest in land. This meant that women's monasteries were often to dissolve when the abbess died, as her life-interest also expired and the monastery with it. Women by this time could be given land, but such permanent alienation of land from a kin-group was frowned upon, and this may just have made it even harder for women to obtain grants of land for monastic life.

There is also a good deal of misogyny in some of the Christian literature, especially of the monastic reformers. It is probably, by and large, less suspicious of women than much of the earlier mythical literature, but we still find women regarded as temptresses, dangerous to men, impure. The story of the nun Canaire, in the *Betha Shenain* in the Book of Lismore,¹⁶ miraculously achieving a 'place of resurrection', a place to die, in the all-male Innis Cathaig community, is probably a story told precisely to undermine such gynophobic monastic attitudes. The fact that the story was told indicates both that there was a problem about fear of women, and that the Church sometimes tried to allay such fears. Though the early saints had allowed and encouraged the ministrations and participation of women, misogyny soon crept back in: the Culdee reformer Máel-ruain spoke of woman as man's 'guardian devil.'

Yet alongside this there was also a continuing Christian culture of acceptance. The ascetic urge was not necessarily connected with a distaste for sex, but rather with the instinct to loose oneself from the network of kinship, which was why the ascetic should not only leave his family but also his homeland. As in the case of Canaire of Innis Cathaig, monks also recited stories to affirm the goodness of the presence of women in their lives. The Life of Senán includes tales of his friendship with holy women at Cluain Infide, and at Cell Eochaille he promised to supply the body of a holy monk as a relic to some nuns who were his friends. Rescue miracles by saints include rescues of pregnant women from unwanted pregnancies, so that both Saint Ciarán and Saint Brigit

are recorded as saving young nuns from disgrace by performing miraculous abortions. We have seen how Columba prayed for a kinswoman in labour, and when Colmán told his mother that she could either look at him or speak to him while separated by trees, but not both, she chose to speak, whereupon God kindly removed the trees from her line of vision, so that she was able to commune happily with her son, and thus also help the more anxious monks come to terms with the presence of women.

Celtic and other Myths

The claim that women had a high place in traditional Celtic society seems to be unsubstantiated by the evidence. It seems, in fact, that they had a higher place following the introduction of Christianity. Against the myth of 'Celtic feminism', Christine Fell¹⁹ has pointed out both the advantages of Anglo-Saxon women over Celtic women, and the role of the Church in ensuring and expanding the advantages they enjoyed.

The statements that are made about the subordination of Saxon women, and the relative freedom of 'British' (i.e. Celtic) ones, are blatant misrepresentations of such evidence as we have. Early Celtic law shows women in a far less favourable position than Anglo-Saxon law. (page 11)

As to the place of the Church in the empowerment of women, she comments:

'In the first enthusiasm for Christianity we not only see men and women engaging as equals in the challenge of a new religion and way of life, we also see women specifically asked to take a full and controlling part.' (page 13)

In this the parallels with the early Irish situation are obvious, though Christian equalisation of the sexes seems to have been more solidly established in Anglo-Saxon law and society than in the Irish. Bede, an admirer of Adamnán (though not of much else in the Celtic church), speaks for women in a way that I have not found in any contemporary Irish text:

Fittingly are men's voices joined with the singing of women, for among women also there are those who, not only by their lives but even by preaching, can set fire to the hearts of others in praise of their creator, no doubt on account of their feminine nature, as though by the very sweetness of their holy voices they assist in the work of building the temple of the Lord.²⁰

- 1 Dillon and Chadwick, *The Celtic Realms*, London, 1967. p. 25.
- 2 J.P. Mackey, *An Introduction to Celtic Christianity*, Edinburgh, 1989. p. 19.
- 3 Francis J. Byrne, *Irish Kings and High Kings*, London, 1973, page 164.
- 4 Muireann Ní Bhrolcháin, *The Manuscript Tradition of the Banshenchas*, Eriu 33, 1982, page 110.
- 5 Philip O'Leary, *The Honour of Women in Early Irish Literature*. Eriu xxxviii (1987), pp 27–44.
- 6 O'Leary, page 28–9.
- 7 Bricriu's Feast, in *Early Irish Myths and Sagas*, Jeffrey Gantz [Ed.], London, 1981. p. 240–1.
- 8 Helen Fulton, *Dafydd ap Gwilym and the European Context*, Cardiff, 1989, page 77.
- 9 Kinsella, *Táin Bó Cuailnge*, Oxford, 1969, page 131
- 10 O'Leary, page 38
- 11 Triads, 88. Quoted in Fergus Kelly, *A Guide to Early Irish Law*, Dublin, 1988, page 69.
- 12 Frank O'Connor, *A Short History of Irish Literature: a backward look*. New York, 1967. p. 40
- 13 Caroline Walker Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion*. New York, 1991. page 153.
- 14 Peter Hillmore, in *The Observer*, 26 January 1992.
- 15 All the following legal materials are from D.A. Binchy, *The Legal Capacity of Women* in regard to Contracts, in *Studies in Early Irish Law*, Thurneysen (ed.) Dublin, 1936, pages 212 ff.
- 16 Fergus Kelly, *A Guide to Early Irish Law*, Dublin, 1988, page 77
- 17 *Bethu Brigte*, ed. Donncha O hAodha, Dublin 1978, p. 23.
- 18 *Lives of Saints from the Book of Lismore*, ed. Whitley Stokes, Oxford, 1890. 219–220.
- 19 Christine Fell, *Women in Anglo-Saxon England*, Oxford, 1984.
- 20 Bede, *Treatise on Old Testament Books of Esdras*, quoted in Walsh and Bradley, *History of the Irish Church*. Dublin 1991 page 72.

Forces And Divisions that Contribute to Violence in South Africa

John Dzimba OP

Very few people in South Africa are satisfied with the present socio-political scene and its prevailing violence; most people agree that change is necessary. But that is the limit of their agreement. There are great internal differences amongst both black and white people about the means to be used in bringing about change. These differences amongst people of the same race, national group and even political party complicate the problem, generate further conflict, and could contribute