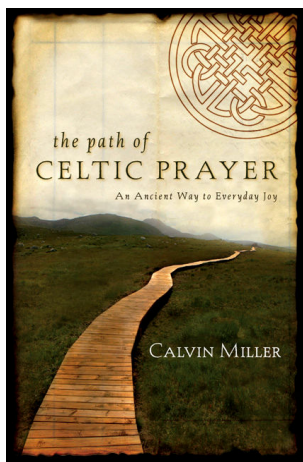


*The Path of Celtic
Prayer: An
Ancient Way to
Everyday Joy*



"I have written this because I am convinced that these ancient lovers of God understood how to strip away the institutional business and formal liturgies that often increase the distance between ourselves and Christ."

—Calvin Miller

"This book is aimed at ending our amputated feelings for and separateness from God. I believe that God's seeming remoteness can be partially healed by looking backward to a distant, vital day. . . .

"The Celts prayed in ways that were most natural and contextual in their society. Like all 'unmissionized' people, the Celts were not just sitting and idly waiting for missionaries to dump their new theologies on the world so everybody could get on with cathedral building. The 'unconverted souls' of the pre-Christian Celts were not without their Baals and icons. They had their own pantheon and natural theologies. They, like Israel in Exodus, lived outside a lot. They worshiped their own gods as they found them in their natural world. People who live outside much of the time often write a lot of poetry and have a rather natural inclination to sing. Because nature is vast and cosmic and too gigantic for humans to grasp, though, the Celts looked to the gods of nature for help. They thought nature could be manipulated with prayers and incantations. A dry cow, a sick sheep, a toxic well, a fevered child, the advance of plague: all of these things had to be dealt with. So they appealed to their pantheon of gods with songs and prayers and incantations that they believed would bend divine favor in their direction.

"Into this mix of nature and faith, the good news of Christ, brought by Patrick and Columba, swelled like new music among the natives of Ireland and Scotland. Patrick and Columba were saints in the best sense of the word. We sometimes get the feeling that saints are heavenly minded Christians who fast and pray until they are interrupted by someone needing a miracle. After performing the miracle, they go right back to praying. But in truth, Patrick and Columba were pastors in touch with the communities they served. They lived among unconverted people groups, preached evangelistically and shaped their cultures with the faith of the apostles.

"When Patrick, Columba and other Christian missionaries brought the gospel to Ireland and Scotland, the Celts ceased being insecure pagans and became secure Christians. And because they remained rural peoples, they now saw the Christian God as the King of nature. Having made the world and all that was in it, God had displayed himself in every aspect of his creation. . . .

"We can learn much from Celtic spirituality."