

POINT OF VIEW

[The burden of two letters to the Editor]

WITH reference to *Scotland of the Saints*, I have just finished writing a companion book for Ireland, taking the idea of 'a more natural indigenous type' of holiness further, and also trying to link up the development of the Celtic Church with the main stream of Church history. It does appear that the Celtic saints succeeded in achieving a complete integration of work and study and liturgy which we lack today. I think it was partly because of the rural basis of life in Celtic Ireland, that the nearer you are to essential things like ploughing and harvesting, the easier it is to achieve that kind of integration. I suppose there are many and different ways to God; writing about the Celtic saints has given me the impression that the way of St John of the Cross was vastly different from St Columba's, and that though they both finished up with the same degree of contemplation and so on, Columba's route was, so to speak, the more natural and integrated. The Celts do seem to have brought the business of seeing and living life as a whole and in the presence of God to a fine art.

One of the most striking things about the Celtic period in Ireland is the extreme poverty of the material background as indicated by recent excavation reports of metal-workers' sites, etc., set against the things these people produced, like the Book of Kells and the Ardagh chalice. But we seem to be so busy making and watching television that we have no time for art or inspiration of that sort!

It was with this idea at the back of my mind that I suggested putting more philosophy into *THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT*, even though I realise that its proper place is in *Blackfriars*. It does seem to me that one way to break out of the present departmentalised and technological mess in which we appear to be and achieve some sort of integration is to develop a co-ordinating Catholic philosophy, and that the philosophical background ought to be stressed in any writing on spiritual matters. . . .

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