

Religion Essay – Celtic

The Celts of Europe were an Indigenous, polytheistic religion and culture with a very distinctive worldview. They had an understanding of the world around them and their meaning of life and death both came from their core beliefs and rituals. This was also linked to their myths and stories.

Celts believed that the earth had spiritual powers. They believed it was especially evident in trees and water. As a consequence Celts worshiped in natural areas such as springs, water beds. They carried objects or amulets to ward off evil spirits. They also believed that this world was situated between other worlds and natural places were rich with portals into these other worlds. The Celts had shrines which were situated in remote areas like hilltops, groves and lakes.

Celts believed in the existence of another world which was a domain of Celtic deities or supernatural beings such as the “Fairy People”. The other world was considered to be a Celtic version of heaven. There were portals to these places which were situated in all types of areas. They could be located on dunes, islands, dun-hills, forests, rivers and lakes. Normal time would not pass in the other world, a year may seem to pass in the other world but centuries had passed in the real world. Time seemed to have stood still – people who went to these other world seemed to stay forever young. The other world also acted as a paradox being only one place but existing everywhere. It could be close by or very far away.

The Celts had a number of Gods and deities. They believed that they need to stay on the right side of them. The Celts did not normally see their Gods as having a human like shape until the late Iron Age. The Celts had hundreds of deities, some unknown outside a single family or tribe, while others were popular enough to have been followed by others. For example the Irish God Lugh (who was associated with storms) is also seen as the God Lugos (from Gaul) and Lleu (from Wales). Many other Gods such as Epona have been known by many different Celtic groups. The Celts worshipped both male and female gods (gods and goddesses). Gods were multi skilled such as Lugh and Goddesses were normally associated with natural features such as rivers, and example of this is the goddesses Boann of the river Boyne.

The Celts organized their society around beliefs – the role of the Druids was to act as some sort of priest. They performed rites, rituals and sacrifices. They also performed a variety of roles not only as religious officiates but also as judges, sacrifices, teachers and lore-keepers. They were basically “Celts with Degrees”. They organized and ran the religious ceremonies as well as remembering and teaching the Celtic calendar. Because of the slight inaccuracy of the Celtic calendar amendments were needed approx every forty years and thus knowledge of mathematics was needed. Other classes of Druids performed ceremonial sacrifices of crops and animals for the perceived benefit of the community.

The Celts showed a unique understanding of the world as they incorporated magic and other supernatural happenings. With their beliefs and rituals creating a solid understanding, and being such a primitive religion the Celts sure did have most aspects of life down pat.