ENGLAND AGAINST THE CELTIC FRINGE: A STUDY IN CULTURAL STEREOTYPES

MEDIEVAL England was bounded on the North and East by three Celtic societies which had, in some respects, preserved relatively unchanged their archaic cultures of the early Iron Age.[1] Resembling each other, the cultures of the Irish, the Scots, and the Welsh were qualitatively different from that of the English, and these differences were evident as late as the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Frederic W. Maitland was probably the first modern historian to apply the term, "Celtic Fringe", to these peoples, who never experienced, in the usual sense of the words, a "middle ages" and who as late as Francis Bacon's day were thought to be distinguished by the primitivism and archaism of their cultures.[2] From the time of the Norman Conquest forward these tribal, pastoral, politically decentralized, and economically marginal societies of oats-and barley-growing, meat-eating, and milk-drinking cattle-raiders stood in marked contrast with the agrarian, feudalized, town-and village-dwelling, politically consolidated, and more affluent society of wheat-growing and wine-drinking Englishmen. Nestled in their mountain hideaways, where they had been shoved by Norman conquerors and English colonists, the highland Celtic world looked down angrily on the settled and more orderly society of the lowlands, which repaid Celtic belligerency with contempt and derision.

The clash of cultures has often been portrayed historically as the struggle of "civilization" with "barbarism". Such a characterization of their relationship was immensely satisfying to advocates of the dominant life-style, who thereby assured themselves of their own superiority and of the desirability of the conquest or conversion of their rivals. To the Norman and the Angevin, the medieval Celt was the true barbarian— the representative of a type that had terrified and tormented civilized man for thousands of years. Since the first appearance of civilization in the ancient Middle East, civilized man had been accustomed to draw a vivid distinction between his own style of life and that of several competing societies, which always threatened and occasionally overwhelmed him. In antiquity the Romans followed the lead of the Greeks in expressing

[1] Myles DILLON and Nora K. CHADWICK, *The Celtic Realms* (New York, 1967), p. 33.
[2] Quoted in A. L. ROWSE, *The Expansion of Elizabethan England* (New York, 1955), p. 90.

their dislike for barbarians, who seemed to show a distressing lack of civility, cultural excellence, and even moral probity, and who were often the source of considerable annoyance and some anguish to civilized man. This was how the Romans viewed the Germanic invaders who destroyed their Empire. The reordering of the frontiers between civilization and barbarism caused by Rome's fall eventually brought about the substitution of a new meaning for the word, *barbarus*, which from the seventh century on was used to identify the heathen and the Christian heretic. [3] Irish and Anglo-Saxon missionaries and Carolingian militarists succeeded in converting the European heartland to Roman Christianity and in pushing back pagan barbarism to the frontiers. During the later middle ages the word came to imply a cultural rather than a religious distinction. Social and economic changes during the eleventh and twelfth centuries differentiated some parts of Europe from others and prompted some Europeans to apply the pejorative word, "barbarian", to their neighbors, who seemed to differ from or be inferior to them in respect to economic organization, institutional development, and cultural attainment.

In pre-Conquest England the Anglo-Saxon farmers had feared and fought the marauding "Scots" from Ireland, the fierce Picts, and the "Britons" of Wales. [4] The Norman Conquest accentuated differences between the Celtic and English worlds by importing into England the Norman feudal regime, continental urban institutions, and the reformist ideals of Roman Christianity. [5] The tribal, mobile, disaggregative societies of the Irish, the Scots, and the Welsh seemed irreconcilable with the richer, more highly centralized, feudal and manorial regime of Anglo-Norman and Angevin England. Invariably the Celtic societies were condemned as hopelessly backward and underdeveloped. Feelings of contempt and hostility that were engendered seemed to justify English aggression; and the libel of the Celt provided, as it had since the Roman era, a rationale for various attempts to dominate or annihilate them. [6]

On several occasions in world history civilized man has sheltered himself behind real or imagined barriers. Ch'in dynasts built the Great Wall to protect the Middle Kingdom from rampaging steppe nomads. Roman Britain hid from Scots and Picts behind the Hadrianic and

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[3] E. EWIG, "Volkstum und Volksbewusstein im Frankenreich des 7. Jahrhunderts," *Caratteri de Secolo VII in Occidente... Settimane di Studio del Centro Italiano di Studi sull' alto Medioevo*, II (Spoleto, 1958), 609–620. I examine the changing meaning of "barbarism" in an article forthcoming in *Comparative Studies in History and Society* (1971).

[4] BEDE, *Opera Historica*, ed. J. E. KING (2 vols.; London, 1930), I, 55, 69; II, 373.

[5] For a survey of the relations of Norman and Angevin England with the Celtic fringe, see Austin Lane POOLE, *From Domesday Book to Magna Carta* (Oxford, 1951), pp. 265–317.

[6] For Roman notions of the Irish, see SOLINUS, *Collectanea Rerum Memorabilium*, ed. T. MOMMSEN (Berlin, 1895), p. 100; POMPONIUS MELA, *De Chronographia Libri Tres*, ed. G. PARTHEY (Berlin, 1869), p. 75.

Antonine Walls; and Offa's Dyke defended Anglo-Saxon farmers from the depredations of Welsh raiders. During the later middle ages, when fortifications did not suffice to assure Europe's safety against Tartars and Turks, Christian myth resurrected the image of the legendary Alexander, who had allegedly inclosed the terrible tribes of Gog and Magog behind stout walls somewhere in Transcaucasia, whence they threatened to break loose to wreak havoc on the Christian world. [7] Dividing the two cultures in medieval England were fortified zones, bristling with castles, towns, knights' fees, and manors—the instruments of English cultural aggression—which constituted the no-man's-land disputed between them. Raid and counter-raid, punctuated by uneasy peaces and savage reprisals, produced a normal state of anarchy in the Welsh marches, the Scottish lowlands, and on the edges of the English Pale in Ireland. The bitterness generated by actual experiences along these frontiers reinforced the animosity which the English traditionally exhibited toward their Celtic neighbors.

In the protracted struggle of civilization with various kinds of barbarism, the advantage always lay with civilized man. His superiority in numbers and wealth and his more sophisticated systems of communication and control assured his eventual triumph over poorer, diffused, and decentralized societies. In England the Anglo-Norman state early pushed the Celts into remote corners of the land, where they were more or less effectively quarantined by a network of castles, manors, and towns. In the long range of things, the English prevailed, although in the short run the three Celtic peoples inflicted some rather uncomfortable blows on their common foe. The Irish, Scots, and Welsh lashed out fiercely in ways difficult to foresee and impossible to forestall; the English pressed forward deliberately like, it has been said, a "joint-stock company out of which profits were expected." [8] The independent principality of North Wales, loosely united and besieged by marcher lords and English kings, succumbed to Edward I in 1283. Welsh cultural identity survived in legal, literary, and linguistic memories, which were, however, sufficiently compelling to stimulate Owen Glendower's revolt at the beginning of the fifteenth century and pride in the succession of the Tudors at the end of the century. In Scotland the intrusion of English conquerors and colonists from the South and the Anglicization of the Scottish government during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries won most of the lowlands for English civilization. From the reign of King David I, who had "rubbed off the tarnish of Scottish barbarism", the Scottish state was fashioned

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[7] Andrew R. ANDERSON, *Alexander's Gate, Gog and Magog, and the Inclosed Nations* (Cambridge, Mass., 1932).

[8] Edmund CURTIS, *History of Ireland* (London, 1968), p. 49. An excellent recent analysis of the competition of cultures in Wales is Lynn H. NELSON, *The Normans in South Wales, 1070–1171* (Austin and London, 1966).

after the English model. [9] Nonetheless, the awareness of being Scottish was sufficiently strong during the later middle ages to unite the mixed population of both mountains and plain in opposition to the English. Pure Gaelic culture retreated into the far Northwest and the islands. In the fourteenth century the Scottish chronicler, John of Fordun, pointed out the important differences between the Anglicized (and civilized) lowlands and the Scots of the North, who were "a savage and untamed nation, rude and independent, given to rapine, ease-loving, of a docile and warm disposition, comely in person, but unsightly in dress, hostile to the English people and language, and, owing to diversity of speech, even to their own nation, and exceedingly cruel." [10] This portrait was very much like that offered by Lord President Duncan Forbes, who spoke of the mid-eighteenth century highlanders as "barbarous" and "warlike". [11] Before Henry II's conquest of Ireland the Irish were known only as occasional visitors to the South and as the descendants of the fierce "Scots", who had endowed northern England with its reputation for savagery. Gerald of Wales had composed in the twelfth century the first informed and intelligent description of Irish society, although, conforming to English bias, he scorned them as "rude" and "barbarous". Through indifference, inactivity, and indecision the boundaries of the English outpost in Ireland fluctuated under attack from the Irish clans; and the incorporation of Ireland into the English state was delayed for centuries. It was doubtlessly here that bitterness and misunderstanding were most intense. The extent of the Pale—the area securely under English rule—contracted under assault from the Celtic tribes without and the resurgence of the native sub-culture within. The English masters or would-be masters of Ireland drew a vivid distinction between the "land of peace" that they inhabited and the lawless region beyond, where pure Celticism prevailed; and they vehemently denounced their brethren, the "degenerate English", who effaced the distinctive attributes of English civilization by adopting the manners, language, and dress of the "wild Irish". [12]

Civilized man has been more eloquent and persuasive than his various barbarian antagonists; and the continuing struggle between them has usually been seen through the eyes of the former. Although the prejudices of the English are better known than the counter-opinions of the Irish, the Scots, and the Welsh, the hatred of one side was repaid by the other.

[9] WILLIAM OF MALMESBURY, *De Gestis Regum Anglorum*, ed. William STUBBS, Rolls Series (2 vols.; London, 1887–1889), II, 477. Cf. WALTER OF COVENTRY, *Memoriale*, ed. William STUBBS, Rolls Series (2 vols.; London, 1872–1873), II, 206.
[10] *Source Book of Scottish History*, ed. William Croft DICKINSON et al. (2 vols.; 2d ed. rev.; London, 1958), I, 15.
[11] Quoted by Stuart PIGGOT, *Ancient Europe from the Beginnings of Agriculture to Classical Antiquity* (Chicago, 1965), p. 229.
[12] See sources cited below in footnotes 82, 83.

An English source from Edward II's reign assured its readers that the Welsh and the Scots were united in their detestation of the English. [13] During the same reign certain Irish magnates complained to Pope John XXII that the Irish "have been depraved, not improved by intercourse with the English, who have deprived them of their ancient written laws." [14] The Scots posted defamatory verses about the English on church doors in York after leaving the city at the beginning of the border wars of Edward III's reign. [15] Prince Llywelyn of Wales, writing to Archbishop John Pecham in Edward I's reign, denied that the Welsh had committed atrocities, while he lodged similar accusations against the English. [16] These were not, of course, the words of barbarians but of literate, sophisticated advocates of the Celtic point of view. Although most of the evidence from the literary debate between the two cultures is of English provenience, these remarks indicate that the ethnocentric prejudices of one side were matched by equally intense feelings on the other.

English literary sources from the later middle ages portrayed the Celt as the perfect barbarian exhibiting all of the characteristics of his savagery—poverty, sloth, incontinence, treachery, brutality, and cruelty. The excitability and belligerency of the Irish, Scots, and Welsh was a cliché of English racial opinion, which was widely quoted in chronicle and song. [17] The epithet, "wild Irish", stuck fast in popular and official English usage, and the Scots and Welsh were criticized in similar fashion. [18] Only occasionally did English commentators transcend these clichés whereby they expressed their suspicion and hostility. Especially perceptive and well-informed about the medieval Celt was the twelfth-century author and cleric, Gerald of Wales.

Gerald was a product of the dynastic and cultural conditions of the Welsh marches and was related both to Norman nobility and Welsh royalty. [19] Twice a candidate for the bishopric of St. David's and an

[13] *Vita Edwardi Secundi Monachi Cuiusdam Malmesberiensis*, trans. N. DENHOLM-YOUNG (London, 1957), p. 61.
[14] May McKISACK, *The Fourteenth Century, 1307–1399* (Oxford, 1959), pp. 44–45. The complaint of Donnell O'Neill, quoted by JOHN OF FORDUN, *Scotichronicon Genuinum*, ed. T. HEARNE (5 vols.; Oxford, 1722), III, 908–926, commented on the relations of the two peoples (p. 921): "*Quandam enim naturalem inimiciciam habemus invicem, ex mutua.*"
[15] Ranald NICHOLSON, *Edward III and the Scots* (Oxford, 1965), p. 23.
[16] Decima L. DOUIE, *Archbishop Pecham* (Oxford, 1952), p. 239.
[17] See J. S. P. TATLOCK, *The Legendary History of Britain* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1950), pp. 18, 80, 396–402; and *Political Songs and Poems relating to English History, composed during the Period from the Accession of Edw. III. to that of Ric. III.*, ed. Thomas WRIGHT, Rolls Series (2 vols.; London, 1859–1861), II, 185–191. For an anti-Scottish poem of the fourteenth century, see *ibid.*, I, 45–46; and for Alexander Neckham's characterization of the Irish, see his metrical version of *De Naturis Rerum*, ed. Thomas WRIGHT, Rolls Series (London, 1863), p. 461.
[18] Edward D. SNYDER, "The Wild Irish: A Study of Some English Satires against the Irish, Scots, and Welsh," *Modern Philology*, XVII (April, 1920), 147–185.
[19] See the biographical essay by Maurice POWICKE, *The Christian Life in the Middle Ages and Other Essays* (Oxford, 1935), pp. 107–129.

ardent advocate of Welsh ecclesiastical independence, he was particularly well acquainted with Welsh culture and society. Thoroughly Norman in his education, tastes, and loyalties, Gerald was a dedicated servant of the English church and state in Henry II's reign. He wrote two books on Ireland after his visit there in the train of its new lord, Prince John. He also composed a detailed geographical and ethnographical description of Wales—the *Descriptio Kambriae*. His wellknown egotism, naïvete, and verbosity have, perhaps, obscured to modern critics the author's considerable astuteness, which enabled him to look beyond the prejudices of his class to attempt an explanation of the institutional reasons for the deficiencies of Welsh society.

Gerald saw the native Irish as typical barbarians, whose life, lived so close to nature, promoted vigor, hardiness, and courage but denied them the "arts" of civilization.[20] Drawing upon classical ideas about the progress of civilization, he speculated on the causes of their poverty and backwardness. Unlike most peoples who progressed from pastoralism to agriculture to urban life, the Irish had remained wedded to the pastoral pursuits of their ancestors. This accounted for their sloth and poverty and for their dependence on imported manufactures. Punning on their barbarous dress and manners and their uncouth hair-style and beards (*barbis*), Gerald described them as barbarous in every respect. The seclusion of Ireland from the benevolent influence of more advanced societies left them hopelessly and helplessly wrapped in the cocoon of their antiquated and limited way of life.

Gerald was much better acquainted with Welsh culture and institutions than with Irish, although his loyalty was to the Cambro-Norman aristocracy rather than to the native Welsh, whom he regarded as barbarous like the Irish. In the *Descriptio Kambriae* he analyzed the institutions of Welsh society and the social and moral implications of them.[21] On the positive side, Gerald found the Welsh to be frugal, liberty-loving, hospitable, and sharp-witted; on the negative, he indicted them for their idleness, fractiousness, treachery, and lack of cultivation. Their "sinewy and supple" way of life instilled in them a certain natural manliness, but denied them the graces and accomplishments of civilized men. Gerald's moralistic description of Welsh society was widely circulated in the later middle ages in works such as Ralph Higden's *Polychronicon* and John of Trevisa's English translation of it.[22] His comment concerning the Welsh

preference for death in battle rather than in bed was often quoted and was once mistakenly associated with the Scots by Bartholomew Anglicus.[23] Gerald concluded the *Description of Wales* with an interesting excursus—a bit of "Machiavellian" theorizing wherein he proposed ways for subduing and pacifying the Welsh.[24] The fact that the English conqueror of North Wales, King Edward I, applied tactics similar to these testifies to Gerald's perceptiveness and good judgment.

English critics of the Celts were fond of moralizing about the faults of the medieval Irish, Scots, and Welsh and were quick to accredit stories of Celtic depravity and cruelty. Tales of Scottish atrocities and acts of sacrilege perpetrated during the border wars were frequently repeated; and the Scottish highlanders sometimes shared with the Irish the notoriety of being "wild" and "savage". The English chronicler, Richard of Hexham, compared the invading Scots of 1137 with the heathen insofar as their cruelty toward non-combatants was concerned; and Richard of Cirencester in the fourteenth century assured his readers that the English reputed the Scots to be the vilest (*vilissimos*) of men.[25] The image of the Scot as the ferocious barbarian, arsonist, and rapist was so firmly implanted in English opinion that chroniclers quoted verbatim the lurid descriptions of Scottish atrocities committed during the invasion of 1173 in reciting events of the invasions of 1138, 1174, and 1297.[26] Scottish cruelty was taken for granted, and Englishmen naturally assumed that they had done the worst. The Scottish penchant for taking the heads of their enemies—a curious survival of an archaic Celtic enthusiasm for decapitation—reinforced English fear and detestation of these wild and woolly people.[27] The other Celtic peoples were susceptible, according to English opinion, to the same fits of rage. Archbishop John Pecham, the self-appointed mediator between the rebellious Welsh and Edward I on the eve of the last Welsh war of independence, accepted the veracity of reports of Welsh atrocities while excusing the alleged misconduct of the English soldiery.[28] The Irish were so well known for their cruelty and

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[20] GIRALDI CAMBRENSIS, *Opera*, ed. James F. BREWER *et al.*, Rolls Series (8 vols.; London, 1861–1891), V, 149–153.

[21] *Opera*, ed. BREWER, VI, 179 ff.

[22] Higden's and Trevisa's descriptions of the Irish and Welsh are conveniently printed in *Social Life in Britain from the Conquest to the Reformation*, ed. G. G. COULTON (Cambridge, 1919), pp. 10–20.

[23] *Mediaeval Lore from Bartholomew Anglicus*, ed. Robert STEELE (New York, 1966), p. 98; see also John of Fordun in *Source Book of Scottish History*, ed. DICKINSON, I, 15.

[24] *Opera*, ed. BREWER, VI, 218 ff.

[25] RICHARD OF HEXHAM, *Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II, and Richard I*, ed. Richard HOWLETT, Rolls Series (4 vols.; London, 1882–1886), III, 151–152; RICHARD OF CIRENCESTER, *Speculum Historiale de Gestis Regum Angliae*, ed. John E. B. MAYOR, Rolls Series (2 vols.; London, 1863–1869), II, 184.

[26] Herbert Eustace MAXWELL, *The Early Chronicles relating to Scotland* (Glasgow, 1912), pp. 169–170.

[27] PIGGOT, *Ancient Europe*, p. 230. For some late and lurid examples of the practice, see ROWSE, *Expansion of Elizabethan England*, pp. 130–131; William Croft DICKINSON, *Scotland from the Earliest Times to 1603* (London, 1961), p. 58; Wallace NOTESTEIN, *The Scot in History* (New Haven, 1947), p. 36.

[28] DOUIE, *Archbishop Pecham*, pp. 236–237.

brutality that later ages naturally compared them with the savages discovered by European explorers of the New World.[29]

Civilized men often denounced the faithlessness of barbarians; and the accusation of treachery was a stock-in-trade libel of the medieval Celts. What seemed to English eyes to be willful turpitude may have had an institutional basis. The absence of an effective agency of central authority in Ireland and Wales and the guerilla-style of warfare customary to the marches made it difficult if not impossible to hold the rambunctious Celtic clans to the solemn treaties cherished by the English. Their pastoral way of life, which freed them for martial pursuits, and the fierce pride, which vented itself in blood-feuds and razzias, created an atmosphere in which "Oaths and promises were lightly broken; the keenly felt present wrong overshadowed and dwarfed the past engagement".[30] A Scottish statesman, John Balliol, who should have been painfully aware of his countrymen's failing in this respect, swore before the bishop of Durham in 1298 concerning the "malice, deceit, treason, and treachery" of the Scots, who had rejected him in preference for his rival to the throne, Robert Bruce.[31] After the outbreak of the Scottish wars in 1327, Edward III of England exploited for propaganda purposes the evil reputation of the Scots for treachery, and referred to their rebelliousness and faithlessness in the writs calling the English forces to oppose the Scottish invasion.[32] The cattle-rustling and sheep-stealing, prompted by hunger and sportsmanship, to which the Celts were especially prone was often the cause of the border wars that troubled relations between the English and Celtic nations and made their coexistence impossible. It would seem that thievery was so much a part of Celtic nature that St. Columba's disciples did not hesitate to try to steal the sheep of St. Kentigern during a meeting of the two holy men.[33] This was the same weakness to which a Scottish retainer, accused of stealing the crown of England on the eve of the battle of Bosworth Field, confessed when he reminisced on the penchant of his forebearers for absconding with the sheep, cattle, mares, and horses of others.[34]

The barbarian, whoever he happened to be, was always regarded by civilized man as suffering a moral as well as a cultural deficiency. English

[29] David Beers QUINN, *The Elizabethans and the Irish* (Ithaca, 1966), p. 27; Margaret T. HODGEN, *Early Anthropology in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Philadelphia, 1964), pp. 343–344, 365.
[30] John Edward LLOYD, *History of Wales* (2 vols.; London, 1911), II, 611.
[31] *Anglo-Scottish Relations, 1174–1328: Some Selected Documents*, trans. E. L. G. STONES (London, 1965), p. 79.
[32] NICHOLSON, *Edward III and the Scots*, pp. 3, 23, 112. For an example of a royal writ emphasizing Scottish treachery, see *Rotuli Scotiae in Turri Londoniensi et in Domo Capitulari Westmonasteriensi Asservati*, ed. Record Commision (2 vols.; London, 1814–1819), I, 214.
[33] MAXWELL, *Early Chronicles relating to Scotland*, p. 60.
[34] NOTESTEIN, *Scot in History*, p. 3.

critics usually attributed the vices of Celtic society to its primitive lifestyle, which seemed to promote indolence, immorality, and ignorance. The easy and exuberant ways of Celtic buccaneers, productive only of ballads, bastards, and vendettas, was particularly offensive to such sober and serious observers as Archbishop John Pecham, who was scandalized by Welsh disregard of the canon laws of marriage and their willingness to allow bastards to inherit coequally with legitimate offspring. Such loose morals seemed, to thirteenth-century English clerics, a natural result of the mythical Trojan ancestry of the native Welsh—descendants of a race of notorious adulterers.[35] Occasionally English suspicions of Celtic depravity were confirmed by a glimpse of an especially outrageous example of mischief such as the disgusting Irish coronation ceremony described by Gerald of Wales or the horrifying bloodrite of the Galloway Scots narrated by the English chronicler, Matthew Paris.[36] Such stories confirmed, of course, English belief in Celtic brutishness.

The existence within medieval Europe of isolated and inconspicuous communities of sheep-herders and cattle-breeders has been relatively ignored by modern historians, preoccupied with the village, manor, and town. Yet such societies did cluster in remote parts of the Pyrenees, the Alps, and the British highlands, where geography and history promoted the survival of a style of life almost unchanged since Hallstatt and La Tène. Although their contribution to the making of "classic" medieval civilization may have been negligible, by their very existence they posed an alternative and a challenge to the dominance of manorial Europe. English critics frequently alluded to the material and technological deficiencies of Celtic societies, which were revealed by their primitive economies, the absence of trade and industry, their need for imports, and even their dietary habits. Gerald noted the dependence of the Welsh on meat, milk, and oats—the staples of a pastoral economy; and in the next century Bartholomew Anglicus observed that the Scots seldom ate bread.[37] The chronicler, William of Malmesbury, astutely contrasted the productivity of urban societies like those of England and France with the poorer rural society of Ireland, which imposed upon the latter its economic dependence on England.[38] The anonymous biographer of Edward II described the interdependence of pastoral and agrarian economies, which modern students of pastoralism have likewise observed:

[35] DOUIE, *Archbishop Pecham*, pp. 250, 265; see also a partisan document purporting to be a history of the Welsh, which probably issued from Pecham's circle, printed in Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Report on Manuscripts in Various Collections* (London, 1901), I, 246–250.
[36] GERALD OF WALES, *Opera*, ed. BREWER, V, 169; Matthew Paris, *Chronica Majora*, ed. Henry Richards Luard, Rolls Series (7 vols.; London, 1872–1883), III, 365.
[37] GERALD OF WALES, *Opera*, ed. BREWER, VI, 179–180; *Mediaeval Lore from Bartholomew Anglicus*, ed. Steele, p. 98.
[38] WILLIAM OF MALMESBURY, *De Gestis Regum*, ed. Stubbs, II, 485. Gerald had made a similar observation about the Welsh. See *Opera*, ed. BREWER, VI, 180.

"the Irish are woodland people and dwell in the mountains and forests of their country; they do not cultivate the land, but live on their flocks and the milk thereof; and if from time to time they need bread, they come down to the English towns on the coast, selling livestock and buying corn." [39] Both Gerald and his contemporary, Walter Map, another member of the Anglo-Welsh *literati*, commented on the extravagant hospitality of the Welsh in dispensing their meager possessions. [40] The papal collector, Lawrence Sumercote, wrote to Pope Innocent IV of his inability to collect the crusading tax of 1254 because of the Irish custom of consuming everything during the course of their long winters and of distributing whatever remained as largesse. [41] Such sentiments coincide perfectly with Froude's assessment of the Irish as being a "spendthrift" lot.

The image of the wild, quarrelsome, and treacherous Celt was as firmly implanted in continental opinion as in English. Pope John XXII showed only limited sympathy for the plight of the Irish as described in the "Remonstrance" of the Irish magnates in 1317, and he denounced their falsities of belief and their rebelliousness. [42] During the course of the Hundred Years' War and the visit of a French army to Scotland, the French chronicler, Froissart, expressed his countrymen's suspicion and dislike for a mean, rude, and grasping people that history and a common foe had made allies; and other foreign visitors sometimes reflected the uncomplimentary views of the English sources. [43]

The three medieval Celtic peoples showed signs of their common ancestry and the affinity of their social, economic, and legal traditions. Their pastoralism, their tribalism, their monastic Christianity, their personal law codes, their penchant for fosterage of sons, equality of inheritance, blood-feuding, and cattle-rustling, plus their inveterate hatred of the English—all gave them a common identity as against Anglo-Norman and English civilization. Their English critics were aware of resemblances and occasionally the Irish, Scots, and Welsh tried to exploit these cultural affiliations in their long struggle with the common foe. Gerald of Wales, for instance, noted similarities between the Scots and the Irish in his day; and in the middle of the thirteenth century Bartholomew Anglicus described certain common failings of the "wild

Scots and Irish". [44] The biographer of King Edward II observed that the Scots and the Welsh were very much alike in their rebelliousness and hatred of the English. [45] On several occasions the three representatives of medieval Celticism sought aid and comfort from each other. In the Norman era Welsh chieftains were accustomed to seek military assistance in Ireland. [46] The marcher lords of South Wales repaid this debt by rushing to the aid of an offended Irish chieftain in 1170, thereby launching the invasion of Ireland by Henry II in 1171. In 1258 Llywelyn the Great of Wales entered into an alliance with certain Scottish magnates. [47] During the reign of Edward III the Scottish king, Edward Bruce, invaded Ireland in order to extend the war against the English and possibly contemplated an expedition into Wales. [48] Early in the fourteenth century it briefly appeared that England might be forced to confront a Celtic "grand alliance". [49] As late as the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries Irish chieftains were accustomed to hire military retainers, their gallowglass, across the Irish Sea in Scotland; [50] and the Welsh rebel, Owen Glendower, negotiated with both the Irish and the king of Scotland for aid in his struggle with the English. [51] The occasional unity of purpose and action, never long sustained, which the Celts achieved was, however, more the result of the common enmity than of the pull of a common heritage.

When they speculated on the reasons for his backwardness, poverty, and lack of civility, the English critics of the medieval Celt usually attributed them to his isolation from the benign influence of higher cultures. Gerald of Wales, for instance, saw this as the cause of Ireland's ignorance of commerce and technology. [52] Almost a century later Bartholomew Anglicus was heartened by signs of the civilizational process at work in southern Scotland as the result of contacts with the higher culture of England. [53] Toward the end of the thirteenth century Archbishop John Pecham wrote Edward I, the conqueror of North Wales, to express his hope that the old enemies, English and Welsh, might someday be reconciled through devotion to a common faith. [54] Yet Pecham realized that more needed to be done to raise the Welsh to

[39] *Vita Edwardi Secundi*, ed. DENHOLM-YOUNG, p. 61. Cf. the remarks of Arnold J. TOYNBEE, *Change and Habit: The Challenge of Our Time* (New York and London, 1966), pp. 61–62.

[40] GERALD OF WALES, *Opera*, ed. BREWER, VI, 182–183; Walter MAP, *De Nugis Curialium*, ed. Thomas WRIGHT, Camden Society (London, 1850), pp. 94–95.

[41] *Royal and Other Historical Letters Illustrative of the Reign of Henry III*, ed. Walter Waddington SHIRLEY, Rolls Series (2 vols.; London, 1862–1866), II, 118–119.

[42] J. A. WATT, "Negotiations between Edward II and John XXII concerning Ireland," *Irish Historical Studies*, X (1956–1957), pp. 15, 19–20.

[43] *Source Book of Scottish History*, ed. DICKINSON, I, 11; also II, 2, 4.

[44] In the *Topographia Hibernica*, *Opera*, ed. BREWER, V, 147; *Mediaeval Lore from Bartholomew Anglicus*, ed. STEELE, p. 99.

[45] *Vita Edwardi Secundi*, ed. DENHOLM-YOUNG, p. 61.

[46] POOLE, *From Domesday Book to Magna Carta*, p. 284.

[47] F. M. POWICKE, *King Henry III and the Lord Edward* (2 vols.; Oxford, 1947), I, 381; II, 620–621.

[48] NICHOLSON, *Edward III and the Scots*, p. 17, citing *Vita Edwardi Secundi*, ed. DENHOLM-YOUNG, p. 61.

[49] McKISACK, *The Fourteenth Century*, p. 42 and n. 1.

[50] ROWSE, *Expansion of Elizabethan England*, p. 113.

[51] William REES, *Historical Atlas of Wales* (Cardiff, 1951), p. 48.

[52] *Opera*, ed. BREWER, V, 153.

[53] *Mediaeval Lore from Bartholomew Anglicus*, ed. STEELE, p. 99.

[54] DOUIE, *Archbishop Pecham*, p. 265.

the civilized condition of his fellow countrymen. He urged Edward to promote the resettlement of the Welsh in towns.[55] Urbanization, Pecham argued, had accomplished the pacification of the wild Burgundians, whom the Romans had forced to take up residence in cities. Further, Welsh children should be sent to England for their education; and the reformation of the Welsh clergy, which he quickly took up after the conquest, and the subordination of the Welsh church to Canterbury were other means for the moral, spiritual, and cultural regeneration of this people.

English criticism of the Celt extended even to his dress and manners, which were often the target of complaint or derision. English reporters often commented on the light armaments of the Welsh infantry; but Gerald of Wales was alone in seeing that the uniform and weaponry of the Welsh, which greatly enhanced their maneuverability, held the secret of the conquest of North Wales.[56] As regards the Irish, however, their unkempt beards were a sure sign of their barbarity. In the sixth century the English Jeremiah, Gildas, had sneered at the hairy faces of the Scots, which he said were better concealed than their bodies.[57] Much later another Englishman, Ailred, was shocked by the indecent kilts of the Galloway Scots.[58] The various Celtic languages had, of course, always sounded uncouth and barbarous to French- and Latin-speaking Englishmen;[59] and toward the end of the fifteenth century the English forbade by statute the shouting of the war-cries, "Butleraboo" and "Cromaboo", whereby riot had often been raised.[60] Occasionally during the later middle ages the English had legislated prohibitions against the adoption by their countrymen in Ireland of the attributes of Celtic culture—their laws, language, dress, and names.[61] The purpose of this legislation was both to eliminate spies and, by making a vivid distinction between the two cultures, to eradicate Irish "barbarism" within the Pale.

Since the Synod of Whitby anti-Celtic prejudice had encompassed the religious life of the three nations. Celtic Christianity, once so dynamic, expansive, and creative, suffered the effects of prolonged insularity and

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[55] The letter to Edward I is printed, *Registrum Epistolarum Fratris Johannis Peckhan, Archiepiscopi Cantuariensis*, ed. Charles Trice MARTIN, Rolls Series (3 vols.; London, 1882–1885), III, 776–777.

[56] Cf. HENRY OF HUNTINGDON, *Historia Anglorum*, ed. Thomas ARNOLD, Rolls Series (London, 1879), p. 273; GIRALDI CAMBRENSIS, *Opera*, ed. BREWER, VI, 219–220.

[57] *Gildae De Excidio Britanniae*, ed. Hugh WILLIAMS, Cymmrodorion Record Series (London, 1899–1901), p. 45.

[58] POOLE, *From Domesday Book to Magna Carta*, p. 272 and n. 1.

[59] MAXWELL, *Early Chronicles relating to Scotland*, p. 56.

[60] Richard BAGWELL, *Ireland under the Tudors* (3 vols.; London, 1885–1890), I, 111–112.

[61] *Statutes of the Realm* (11 vols.; London, 1810–1828), I, 359–360; II, 192–198. Cf. also the Statute of Kilkenny (1366) discussed below.

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isolation. The Irish, Scottish, and Welsh churches had been bypassed by waves of reformism and revivalism that had energized and transformed the continental and English churches. Institutionally and intellectually the religion of the Celtic peoples was old-fashioned, provincial, and impoverished, although it is doubtful that it deserved the scorn that it elicited from English critics. Whenever English colonists or conquerors encountered it, however, they denounced such intolerable Celtic deviations as the monastic organization of their churches, the weakness of the diocesan and parochial systems, hereditary benefices, and several clerical vices which reformers had begun to eliminate from the continental and English churches. In the twelfth century Gerald of Wales could appreciate both the virtues and vices of Welsh and Irish Christianity.[62] His contemporary, Walter Map, poked fun at the faith of his fellow Welshmen, which was practiced so ostentatiously and yet was actually so ineffective in altering their bellicose habits.[63] Shortly after the invasion of Ireland by Henry II the council of Cashel was convened to undertake the reformation of the Irish church along English lines and in compliance with the papal mandate, *Laudabiliter*, which had called upon Henry and his lieges to extirpate the "filthy abominations" and "enormous vices" of the Irish.[64] Bernard of Clairvaux preserved the strictures of Bishop Malachy of Connor concerning the intolerable conditions prevailing within his Irish see. The native Irish, barbarous, stubborn, and profligate, "not men, but beasts", exhibited their depravity by their refusal to pay tithes and to attend confession and by their disregard of the canon laws of marriage. Bernard took pride in Malachy's efforts to bring the Irish church into conformity with true religion and exulted over the bishop's eventual success: "the barbarian laws are abolished, those of Rome introduced".[65] The English continued to criticize Celtic Christianity and to change it whenever the opportunity arose. The Norman occupation of South Wales during the twelfth century entailed also the subjugation of the Welsh church, which was accomplished by the appointment of foreign prelates, the dissolution of its monastic organization, and even the substitution of more orthodox saints for some of the dubious ones venerated locally.[66] Archbishop John Pecham fully accepted the desirability of an English victory over the Welsh as a necessary prelude to a thorough reformation of the Welsh church and clergy.[67] The reform of the Scottish church, which Margaret inaugurated and David I continued, aimed at

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[62] *Opera*, ed. BREWER, V, 170 ff.; VI, 202–204, 214.

[63] *De Nugis Curialium*, ed. WRIGHT, p. 75.

[64] *Foedera, Conventiones, Litterae et Cujuscunque Acta Publica*, ed. Thomas RYMER (4 vols.; London, 1816–1869), vol. I, part i, p. 45.

[65] Goddard H. ORPEN, *Ireland under the Normans* (4 vols.; Oxford, 1911–1920), IV, 284.

[66] LLOYD, *History of Wales*, II, 458–459.

[67] DOUIE, *Archbishop Pecham*, p. 236.

its complete organizational and observational "modernization" along English lines.

Racial antagonism intruded itself into the appointment of the clergy and the distribution of ecclesiastical offices. Gerald of Wales was convinced that he had twice been denied the bishopric of St. David's because of English fear of Welsh nationalism. The Irish church was as much a victim of English colonialism as its land and people. The fear of espionage led one bishop in Edward I's reign to suggest the removal of religious persons with Irish sympathies from "dangerous districts", i.e. the marches, and their replacement by loyal Englishmen.[68] Subsequently, English policy encouraged the exclusion of native Irish clergy from churches within the Pale, which were reserved to the English.[69] On one occasion the king gave the deanery of a royal free chapel and the right to collate to its prebendal canonries to the archbishop of Dublin, so long, that was, as the archbishop was not an Irishman;[70] and religious orders like the Franciscans purged themselves of Irish brothers.[71] On the other side, the English government complained in Edward II's reign that Englishmen were excluded from Irish religious houses.[72] Although such discriminatory practices were never condoned by the papacy, papal objections never eliminated them.[73]

English scorn of the institutions of Celtic society often focused on their system of law and justice. The divergence of the various Celtic laws from English common law in respect to such matters as the commutation of murder for cash payment, the succession of bastards to the estates of their fathers, the coequal inheritance of male heirs, and the willful disregard of the canons touching consanguineous marriages was condemned by English jurists and judges as irrational and unscriptural. Celtic law was usually viewed as inferior to English justice. In 1277 King Edward I replied to the request from certain Irish leaders that they be judged by English law to the effect "that because the laws of the Irish are detestable in God's sight and are contrary to all right, they ought not to be considered to be laws at all."[74] Both those Irishmen who purchased the privilege of being judged by English law and the crown that sold these privileges obviously considered English justice to be superior to Irish. The native Irish also suffered definite disabilities in English courts.

In 1317 the Irish magnates complained to Pope John XXII against the escape from retribution of the slayers of Irishmen, the denial of justice to Irish plaintiffs, the testamentary incapacity of the native Irish, and the refusal of dower to Irish widows.[75] Irish legal custom had long permitted the commutation of murder for a money fine; and the English judges were simply perpetuating an ancient Celtic usage. On the other hand, this exception and the other disabilities of the native Irish at common law clearly exhibited their inferior and disadvantageous status.[76] During Edward II's reign the Irish magnate, Donnell O'Neill, complained to Rome against the heretical teaching of an English prelate, who had allegedly preached that the killing of an Irishman was not a sin.[77] The very name of Irishman signified servile status according to English legal opinion. *Hibernicus* was used interchangeably as a synonym for villein and for the native Irishman. The pejorative term, "wild Irish", was regarded as sufficiently defamatory as to be actionable as slander in an English court; and a person falsely accused of being "wild Irish" could sue for clarification of his status and exoneration in a common law court.[78]

The English regarded Welsh law with the same suspicion and scorn. Archbishop Pecham denounced it as contrary to reason and Scripture. It represented, he insisted, the sort of evil law which the English king had sworn in his coronation oath to abolish.[79] The primate was especially disturbed by those allowances of the laws of Hywel Dha, which permitted bastards to inherit and the commutation of felonies. Immediately after the conclusion of the conquest of North Wales, Edward I caused the enactment of the Statute of Wales (1284), whereby Welsh law was carefully examined against the standard of English law and was "abolished", "allowed" and "corrected" in accordance with this higher model of justice.[80] As in the case of Irish law, the native law of Wales was regarded as a sign of inferiority; and after the conquest the Welsh were subjected to real legal disabilities, which were even augmented early in the fifteenth century following the revolt of Owen Glendower.[81]

Anti-Celtic prejudices, aggravated by territorial competition and the frequent clash of arms, shaped official English policies toward the Celtic fringe. Edward II apparently exploited Scottish notoriety for treachery in order to rally English defenders against them; and English chroniclers

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[68] Maurice POWICKE, *The Thirteenth Century, 1216–1307* (Oxford, 1953), p. 569.
[69] *Statutes of the Realm*, II, 192–198.
[70] D. STYLES, "The Early History of the King's Chapels in Staffordshire," *Birmingham Archaeological Journal, Transactions and Proceedings*, LX (1936), 71.
[71] *Materials for the History of the Franciscan Province of Ireland, A.D. 1230–1450*, ed. E. B. FITZMAURICE and A. G. LITTLE (Manchester, 1920), pp. xxii–xxiii.
[72] WATT, "Negotiations between Edward II and John XXII concerning Ireland," p. 8.
[73] John A. WATT, "English Law and the Irish Church: the Reign of Edward I," *Mediaeval Studies presented to Aubrey Gwynn*, ed. J. A. WATT et al. (Dublin, 1961), p. 138.
[74] *Foedera*, ed. RYMER, vol. I, part ii, p. 540.

[75] G. J. HAND, *English Law in Ireland, 1290–1324* (Cambridge, 1967), pp. 187–213.
[76] Frederick POLLOCK and Frederic William MAITLAND, *A History of English Law before the time of Edward I* (2 vols.; 2d. ed.; Cambridge, 1898), I, 90.
[77] The letter is quoted by JOHN OF FORDUN, *Scotichronicon*, ed. HEARNE, III, 920.
[78] Theodore F. T. PLUCKNETT, *Concise History of the Common Law* (5th. ed.; Boston, 1956), p. 485 n. 2.
[79] DOUIE, *Archbishop Pecham*, p. 242.
[80] *Statutes of the Realm*, I, 55. For an excellent discussion of the conflict of laws in Wales, see POWICKE, *King Henry III and the Lord Edward*, II, 618–685.
[81] R. R. DAVIES, "The Twilight of Welsh Law, 1284–1536," *History*, LI (1966), 151–153; and J. E. LLOYD, *Owen Glendower* (Oxford, 1931), pp. 55–56.

perpetuated the reputation of the Scots for cruelty, which likewise had the effect of strengthening the English will to resist. English imperialism was sometimes portrayed as a civilizing mission to be achieved through the introduction into these lands of English laws, institutions, and religion. The extension of English influence over the Irish, Scots, and Welsh invariably entailed the substitution of the common law and royal justice for Celtic law, which was relegated to remote corners of the conquered territories or barely tolerated within the area of English domination as a badge of inferiority imposed on a subject people. The English church despised Celtic religion as an inspiration of the Devil and as an encouragement to immorality; and English reformers struggled to bring it into conformity with English organizational and devotional practices. Racial antagonisms, heighted by the fear of espionage and subversion, even affected the distribution of ecclesiastical offices and the appointment of persons of Celtic descent to churches of their own lands.

Whenever acculturation to the dominant life-style of the English was impossible, as was the case in Ireland, the English tried to separate the two cultures and to eradicate the signs of a resurgent Celtic sub-culture which posed a threat to the integrity of English civilization and the security of English rule. The Irish reputation for belligerency prompted the Dublin parliament of 1297 to distinguish between the district under English administration, "the land of peace", and the marches which were continually subject to infiltration and attack.[82] On the same occasion the government condemned those "degenerate English", who adopted Irish customs and dress and thereby effaced the essential differences between the two cultures. The thirteenth century had fashioned the attitudes toward the Irish exhibited by the Statute of Kilkenny in 1366, which forbade the English of the Pale to intermarry with the Irish, to use Irish law or names, to speak Gaelic, or to admit the native Irish to monasteries or ecclesiastical benefices.[83] The reputation of the Irish for idleness was implied by the statute's injunction that they should accept free lands from the English government, and their fractiousness was noted by the distinction drawn between the domesticated Irish, who were at peace (*Irroies esceantz a la pees*), and the rest of the population to whom warfare and brigandage were a way of life. Precautions were taken to eliminate the lairs of bandits and to disarm the Irish within the Pale. Subsequently, the English in Ireland were threatened by an aggressive Celticism that took both a cultural and military form. Despite various efforts by his proconsuls in Ireland and two visits there by King Richard II, the English were hard pressed to defend the Pale. The English bias against the Irish was clearly revealed in a letter of

[82] *Statutes and Ordinances, and Acts of the Parliament of Ireland (King John to Henry VI)*, ed. Henry F. BERRY (2 vols.; Dublin, 1907–1910), I, 199 ff.
[83] *Ibid.*, I, 430–469.

February 1, 1395, from the king to the duke of York, the regent in England, wherein the monarch distinguished three groups in the island— "the wild Irish, our enemies, the rebel Irish and the obedient English (*Irrois savages noz enemis Irroix rebelx et Engleis obeissantz*)".[84] Richard expressed the hope that by remedying the grievances of the "rebel Irish", his former lieges, he might regain their allegiance against the "wild Irish", who were irreconcilable. To the end of the middle ages, however, the most that could be achieved was the creation and defense of an outpost of "Englishry" on the edge of Gaelic barbarism.

English bias against the Celts was simply a medieval rendition of a continuing theme of world history—the competition of rival cultures, which advocates of one of them dramatized into a collision of "civilization" with "barbarism".[85] The anti-Celtic attitudes of medieval and modern England had their origins in real institutional and cultural differences, which were, however, sharpened, exaggerated, and moralized by English critics attempting to justify efforts to dominate or destroy the Celtic world. This libel of Celtic culture, with its roots deep in the middle ages, became a major component of English cultural nationalism. English hostility toward the "barbarous Scots", the "wild Irish", and the "lazy and fatuous Welsh" survived into the modern era.[86] Dr. Johnson's distaste for the Scots of his day was the source of considerable pain to his loyal biographer. Froude was not above calling the eighteenth-century Irish "wild", "boastful", "spendthrift", and "unclean".[87] The foolish family pride of the Welsh observed by Gerald of Wales and Walter Map in the twelfth century was still a target of English satirists in the Hanoverian period.[88] The medieval and modern Celt was, of course, never so bad as his English critics alleged. Nevertheless, image was more compelling than reality; and the picture of the fierce, brutish, unpredictable, and thoroughly detestable foe, deprived of a reasonable law and a rebel against good morals and the true faith, circulated widely in English literature and helped shape public and private, official and popular attitudes toward the Celtic fringe.

[84] *Proceedings and Ordinances of the Privy Council of England*, ed. Harry NICOLAS (7 vols.; London, 1834–1837), I, 55. See also Edmund CURTIS, *Richard II in Ireland, 1394–1395 and Submissions of the Irish Chiefs* (Oxford, 1927), p. 25.
[85] An interesting examination of the Celtic fringe in the age of the emerging nation-state is David MATHEW, *The Celtic Peoples and Renaissance Europe* (London, 1933).
[86] For anti-Celtic bias in later English history, see ROWSE, *Expansion of Elizabethan England*, pp. 1–157; QUINN, *Elizabethans and the Irish*; Edward M. HINTON, *Ireland through Tudor Eyes* (Philadelphia, 1935); L. P. CURTIS, Jr., *Anglo-Saxon and Celts: A Study of Anti-Irish Prejudice in Victorian England* (Bridgeport, Conn., 1968).
[87] J. A. FROUDE, *The English in Ireland in the Eighteenth Century* (3 vols.; New York, 1897), I, 22–23.
[88] David LEWIS, "The Welshman of English Literature," *Y Cymmrodor*, V (1882), 224–260; W. J. HUGHES, *Wales and the Welsh in English Literature from Shakespeare to Scott* (London, 1924), pp. 38 ff.