



The Flood and the Fire: Creation and Apocalypse in Irish Myth and Prophecy

Anthony Murphy, Richard Moore

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Every generation since the birth of Christianity has believed that Armageddon was close at hand. The very notion of apocalyptic events which all but wipe out mankind is deeply ingrained into prophecy and myth, but also in memory. The idea of a great judgement of mankind has become an essential ingredient in religious belief systems, but could these beliefs have a sound basis? Why do we harbour apocalyptic thoughts? Is it because we fear judgement, or because we have a visceral memory of great events in the distant past? Perhaps it is both? "The Flood and the Fire" examines the ideas of cosmogony - the beginning of the human story - and eschatology - the fear of a final judgement of mankind - from a uniquely Irish perspective. Our mythology remembers Noah's flood, and our prophecy hints at cataclysmic events in the future. Saint Patrick prayed for unique blessings for Ireland's people to save us from great tribulation, and is said to have left guardians on seven mountains to watch over us. Anthony Murphy, journalist and author, takes us on a journey through Ireland's unique apocalyptic history, and examines on a scientific, spiritual and philosophical level the extraordinary potency of man's eschatological complex. That journey examines many diverse subjects, including the sanctity of the landscape, the 5,000-year-old stone monuments, the symbolism of light and fire, and of water and earth, the island paradises of myth, the ever-present belief in a cosmic otherworld, the honouring of the ancestors, the meaning of megalithic carvings, the study of the stars, the fear of the gods and of retribution through the destructive forces of fire and water. Perhaps the most significant aspect of this study is its relevance to today. We consider ourselves the masters of technology, and forgers of our own destiny, but as we face the accelerating threat posed by global warming, by the increasing challenges of feeding and maintaining the earth's seven billion inhabitants, is there an eschatological message for us? Do we stand on the brink of potential extermination? Should we incorporate ancient cosmological wisdom into our thinking as a means to save the planet - or is it already too late for that?

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