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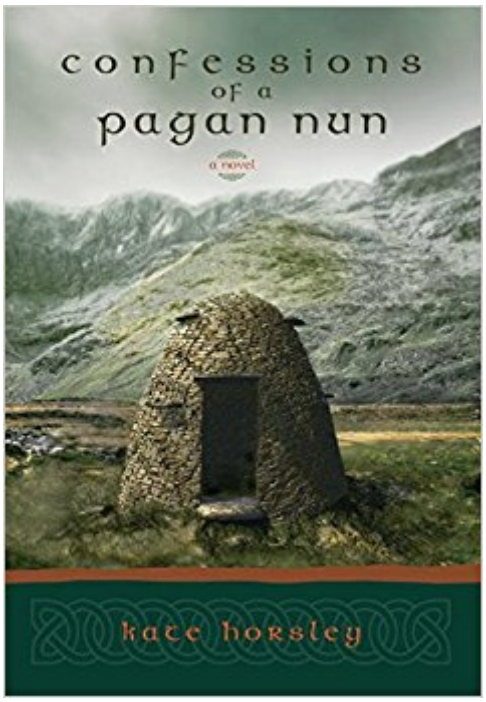
Confessions Of A Pagan Nun: A Novel



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Synopsis

Cloistered in a stone cell at the monastery of Saint Brigit, a sixth-century Irish nun secretly records the memories of her Pagan youth, interrupting her assigned task of transcribing Augustine and Patrick. She also writes of her fiercely independent mother, whose skill with healing plants and inner strength she inherited. She writes of her druid teacher, the brusque but magnetic Giannon, who first introduced her to the mysteries of written language. But disturbing events at the cloister keep intervening. As the monastery is rent by vague and fantastic accusations, Gwynneve's words become the one force that can save her from annihilation.

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Customer Reviews

When we think of the Dark Ages, we often think of a dim, primitive society where people struggled just to stay alive, with no room for spirituality or philosophy. The cool, clear, gemlike precision of Horsley's (Crazy Woman) new novel tells another tale. Gwynneve is born into a world suspended between paganism and Christianity: Ireland circa 500 C.E. While the rest of Europe was well on its way toward Christianity, at this time Ireland remained much closer to its pagan traditions. After losing her mother, Gwynneve trains as a druid and practices as one for many years. By the time she sets her story down, though, she has converted to Christianity and become a nun. The book is written as a memoir detailing her journey from her birth into a pagan tribe to her end as a Christian with near-saintly status. Her story is not just that of a strong woman making her way in a hostile world. It is also the story of what happens to a country when a new religion takes the place of the

old. A beautifully written and thought-provoking book; recommended for all fiction collections.Wendy Bethel, Southwest P.L., Grove City, OH Copyright 2001 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This brief but vivid novel presents itself as a recently discovered manuscript composed by 1 of the 19 nuns of Saint Bridget in Kildare, at the dawning of Ireland's Christian era. Gwynneve was a druid before the tonsured clerics began to convert her people, offering them new technologies in exchange for conversions. When her druidic teacher and lover, Giannon, is kidnapped, apparently by followers of the new god, Gwynneve falls into despair that is lifted only when she hears of a community that keeps the old Celtic ways under the guise of Christian ritual. In it, she is set to a task that suits her perfectly: copying manuscripts of the church fathers, especially Augustine, with whom she has a running intellectual battle. As she records her life's story, she also relates the melodramatic doings of her convent, which include the abbot's fall from chastity and later self-mutilation. Poetically written and marvelously researched, the novel offers complex theological arguments wrapped in a compelling story about memorable characters. Patricia MonaghanCopyright Â© American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I enjoyed the comparisons and contrasts of Druids to early Irish christianity. Women's power as a Druid was eventually whittled away as they were forced to become Christian. The ancient religion is closely tied to many older cultures in the world where people were much closer to the earth as "mother" and protector. Thanking an animal when making a meal of it instead of thanking god for the animal was an interesting aspect. "If one does not have knowledge of what to do or think, he will be told by another what to do or think... Knowledge often spoils devotion." "Will eternal bliss in heaven be tedious?" What happened with the expansion of Christianity? 1- improvements in tools and methods of husbandry. 2- increase in the varieties and hardiness of plants and domestic animals. 3--decrease in the violence of the native populations and the taking of hostages 4 -increase in literacy and knowledge of the world 5- increase in the distance between rich and poor 6- decrease in the influence and freedom of women, property rights and their choice to reproduce 7- increase in cruelty to the land and disregard for its power and beauty. She said " it seems curious to me that those who condemn this earth and its goods most vehemently are the ones who greedily amass those goods and wealth."

One of the virtues of this novel is that it is blessedly short, as I had only two days in which to read it. It is pithy, poetically written, and contains a philosophy with which I solidly agree. Kindness, perhaps it is Christ's kindness which immortalized his message, and then was hardened into cold doctrine. Her little summary of the good and bad effects of Christianity rings true. Much was lost when we abandoned paganism. And it's taken too long for women to start regaining their former power.

What can I say? I am in tears at what I have just finished reading. From the first time I saw its cover, I was captured by its beauty. I wondered if the tale was true. I bought it a few days ago, and I hate that like all books, it had to end.A few nights ago, it was in the early hours of the morn when I began to read the first pages in lavender scented water. I read by candelight, in the sweet smell of honeysuckle, with a taste of wine now and then. I was only a few paragraphs into it, and my heart was captured.I was thinking that this was a novel based on true events. The parchment would have been found near County Kildare, Ireland, if it were so...and dating to at least 500 A.D.Her words are so profound, so intimate and beautiful. It was written by someone in love with life and all that was around her, though it was not always given to her in return. Sadness came, and perhaps it stayed with her until the moment of her death. But still, she did not forsake her love and hope of anything. A faith always persisted, no matter what occured before her eyes or in her heart.The difference between religion and spirituality can also be seen and felt in this book. If you cannot see it today in the East, I do not know what will provide you the vision.And most important, is our divine connection with everything that surrounds us. We are seperate from nothing. All of life is sacred. Each herb, each flower, even one thin paper bark of a great or simple tree. Each creature that lives in the forest, in the water, and in the sky. We were given these companions by a love so strong. Can we not reach out to it once again?This should be read by every soul, whether you are Christian, Pagan, or anything other than these...Let it be known that it will open something within you, and a great blossom will come forth

Gwynneve loved words. That is what started her on her path to becoming a nun. "Confessions of a Pagan Nun" is the first person account (written during breaks while copying St. Augustine and the classics of Western Literature) of her life as the unwanted daughter of a pig farmer, a woman in love with a man who cannot love as she wants, a druid, and finally a nun. As Ireland changes from the wild Pagan land of Finn MacCumhal to Patrick's repository of Western Civilazation Gwynneve struggles to change with it.This is a fascinating look at the fictional life of an intelligent pagan who tries her hardest to convert to Christianity, but in the end cannot change her own heart. This book

echoes of "Augustine's Confessions" and Anne Rices first person Vampire novels. It chronicles a life and spiritual journey, but the prose is so vivid that you can see it. As a convinced Christian I was especially struck by the author's take on the transition from paganism to Christianity in Ireland. It is definitely fiction with all the biases that authors bring to historical fiction. There are a few cliches like tyranical, sex crazed abbots and love starved nuns, pagans being persecuted into extinction and hiding, etc, but Gwynneve's questions about the faith are so pertinent and precise that I found myself reflecting on my beliefs again and I find my faith stronger.This is thought-provoking fiction. Enjoy it and keep your brain turned on.

I loved how credible this story felt. Kate Horsley makes you believe this story was recovered from an actual manuscript. I love the detail and realism portrayed about life and religious conflict at the time of Pre-Early Christian Ireland. Quick read. Well done. Good transaction. Happy with item. Thanks.

This is a beautiful story, beautifully written, about the struggle between two worlds of faith in which we each need to find the wisdom to ask questions, find the truth and more importantly, have the courage to live accordingly.The old world style of writing took a couple chapters to get used to but once I did, the chapters flowed and all I wanted to do was be left alone to read this book from start to finish. I slowed down toward the final chapters as I did not want the book to end. I was left wanting more and wish there was a companion book that picks up where this left off. While I had an inclination to the book's ending, I tightly clung to Gwynneve's humble, yet larger-than-life spirit. I will keep this book and read it again as I found it inspiring.

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