

Maranatha Baptist Seminary

SAINT PATRICK: MISSIONARY TO IRELAND

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by

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## SAINT PATRICK: MISSIONARY TO IRELAND

The extraordinary life and ministry of Saint Patrick turned Ireland upside down, resulting in one of the greatest spiritual awakenings in world history. Although numerous myths and legends surround the life of Patrick, one can catch a glimpse of his ministry by examining two documents that Patrick wrote – the *Confession* and the *Letter to Coroticus*. A brief study of Patrick's writings exposes the depth of deception, myth, and misunderstanding enveloping Patrick's testimony. It is imperative to understand the importance of rejecting the numerous false hagiographic writings about Patrick's life and ministry in Ireland. Once these writings are dismissed, one may piece together the truth by studying Patrick's writings.

Before examining Patrick's writings, it is important to wade through the abundant opinions regarding Patrick. Upon reading any secondary source about Patrick, one must realize the source most likely has a bias. The two primary opinions regarding Patrick hold to the firm belief that he practiced Roman Catholic or Protestant theology. It is both amusing and infuriating to read publications from both sides that use the same quote from Patrick's writings to support their respective theological beliefs. While discovering the theology of Patrick is important, it is imperative to realize that most of the denominations and movements that exist today did not exist during Patrick's lifetime.

One of the greatest deceptions in world history occurred when the Roman Catholic Church adopted Patrick as a saint, thereby, manipulating his impact to spread their power to Ireland. Historian Ruth Tucker states, "His promotion to sainthood was bestowed at the Council of Whitby some two centuries after his death, most likely as an incentive for bringing the Celtic

church under Roman Catholic domination.”<sup>1</sup> The Catholic Church claimed the deceased Patrick; thus the Irish turned to the traditions and false doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church. One historian states the following about this deception: “He [Patrick] is also ignored by Columba and by the Roman Catholic writers, until his mediaeval biographers from the eighth to the twelfth century Romanized him, appealing not to his genuine Confession, but to spurious documents and vague traditions.”<sup>2</sup> In order to develop an accurate picture of Patrick, faulty biographies should be examined and rejected.

Most biographies about St. Patrick are written by Roman Catholics or from a Roman Catholic perspective. These biographies contain material not only from Patrick’s own writings, but also from unreliable secondary sources or sources which are falsely attributed to Patrick. These unreliable sources include *Synodus I S. Patricii*, *Synodus II S. Patricii*, the “Sayings of Patrick,” *Hymn of St. Secundinus*, *Hymn of Fiacc*, the “Breastplate of Patrick,” the lives of Patrick in the *Book of Armagh*, and the mentions of Patrick in the *Irish Annals*.<sup>3</sup> Roman Catholic publications draw heavily from these records, resulting in a vast amount of confusion about Patrick. It should be noted that Patrick lived and conducted most of his ministry during the 400s and these sources were written after the year A.D. 632.<sup>4</sup> The Roman Catholic Church began gaining power in Ireland throughout the 7th and 8th century through the decrees of the Pope and

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<sup>1</sup>Ruth A. Tucker, *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 37.

<sup>2</sup> Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church, Volume IV: Mediaeval Christianity. A.D. 590-1073* (Grand Rapids: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, ua) <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/hcc4.titlepage.html?highlight=volume,iv#highlight> (accessed January 10, 2012), 49.

<sup>3</sup> R. P. C. Hanson, *The Life and Writings of the Historical Saint Patrick* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1983), 13-17.

<sup>4</sup> R. P. C. Hanson, *The Life and Writings of the Historical Saint Patrick*, 12.

the influence of England.<sup>5</sup> As Rome gained control in Ireland, these unreliable secondary sources about Patrick were written, thereby spreading false traditions and confusing the truth of Patrick's ministry. The following is an excerpt from an article written about one of Patrick's ancient biographers named Muirchú:

Relics of Peter, Paul, Stephen, and Lawrence were even acquired in Rome and brought to Armagh to further the church's claim. It is likely that Muirchú created this episode in its entirety to portray the apostle-hero of his own composition as an Irish equivalent of St. Peter; he communicated this to his readers through his deployment of apostolic apocryphal stories. By likening Patrick in the wizard episode to the apostle Peter, the first head of the church of Rome, and by dwelling on his affection for Armagh, Muirchú implied that the church of Armagh was the Rome of the Irish people, with the Irish national apostle at its helm.<sup>6</sup>

Muirchú designed his biography of Patrick in a way that would yield the Roman Catholic Church more control over the Irish. The Christianity that was taught by Patrick became twisted by the Roman Catholic Church, which sought to rewrite history resulting in the obscurity of the real Patrick.

Another problem with the majority of Catholic writings regarding Patrick is the numerous legends intermingled throughout their writings. The only reliable data available about Patrick's life and ministry are found in his writings. Much of the same material Catholic biographies draw upon can be found in books of legend and lore. Just a few of these books include *Ancient Legends, Mystic Charms, and Superstitions of Ireland*, *Legendary Fictions of the Irish Celts*, and *A Book of Saints and Wonders*. These books are rampant with ridiculous tales about Patrick. After reading many of these Irish fairy tales, one might pick up a Catholic biography of Patrick

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<sup>5</sup> Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church, Volume IV: Mediaeval Christianity. A.D. 590-1073*, 55.

<sup>6</sup> Aideen O'Leary, "An Irish Apocryphal Apostle: Muirchú's Portrayal of St. Patrick," *Harvard Theological Review* 89 (1996): 295-296.

and read many of the same exact fairy tales! Anyone desiring to learn the truth about Patrick must study the original writings of Patrick rather than be deceived by false biographies and ludicrous stories.

Not only do most Catholics have a distorted perspective of Patrick's ministry, but many Protestants are guilty of making erroneous claims regarding Patrick. Various Protestant denominations claim Patrick as one of their own. Numerous Baptists claim that Patrick immersed his converts and must have been a Baptist. These claims should be reconsidered. Historians and theologians across the spectrum agree that the only reliable sources about Patrick are the two letters written by him; therefore, the claim that Patrick was Baptist is just as faulty as claiming he was Catholic.<sup>7</sup> Patrick's writings state that he baptized believers, but do not specify whether he immersed or sprinkled them. One might speculate as to what Patrick practiced, but his writings do not confirm either speculation. Based on his personal testimony, Patrick was a genuine believer, although he did not adhere to a certain modern denomination. Patrick never mentioned the Pope or Rome in his writings, and he did not look to church tradition for authority; rather, he placed his faith in God and obeyed the Bible. Scripture was Patrick's sole authority and he quoted from it at least twenty-five times in his writings.<sup>8</sup> After wading through the various controversies that envelop Patrick and detailing some of the attacks and assumptions made about him, one should study Patrick's letters and learn from the life of a truly remarkable missionary.

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<sup>7</sup> R. P. C. Hanson, *The Life and Writings of the Historical Saint Patrick*, 18.

<sup>8</sup> Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church, Volume IV: Mediaeval Christianity. A.D. 590-1073*, 45.

The *Confession* of Saint Patrick gives the reader a glimpse of Patrick's life and ministry in Ireland. Historians believe that Patrick wrote his *Confession* in response to his critics.<sup>9</sup> Patrick begins by telling his readers about his rebellion as a youth growing up in Britain. Although his father was a deacon and his grandfather a priest, Patrick rejected the one true God. At the age of sixteen, Irish raiders captured Patrick and sold him as a slave in Ireland. Patrick reveals what he learned during such a tumultuous part of his life, "For after chastisement from God, and recognizing him, our way to repay him is to exalt him and confess his wonders before every nation under heaven."<sup>10</sup> Patrick believed that he was being punished for rejecting God. After his conversion, he sought to exalt God with his life and spread the gospel to all people.

The next incredible portion of Patrick's *Confession* contains an excellent summary of Patrick's theology. He writes,

For there is no other God, nor ever was before, nor shall be hereafter, but God the Father, unbegotten and without beginning, in whom all things began, whose are all things, as we have been taught; and his son Jesus Christ, who manifestly always existed with the Father, before the beginning of time in the spirit with the Father, indescribably begotten before all things, and all things visible and invisible were made by him. He was made man, conquered death and was received into Heaven, to the Father who gave him all power over every name in Heaven and on Earth and in Hell, so that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord and God, in whom we believe. And we look to his imminent coming again, the judge of the living and the dead, who will render to each according to his deeds. And he poured out his Holy Spirit on us in abundance, the gift and pledge of immortality, which makes the believers and the obedient into sons of God and co-heirs of Christ who is revealed, and we worship one God in the Trinity of holy name. He himself said through the prophet: 'Call upon me in the day of' trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me.' And again: 'It is right to reveal and publish abroad the works of God.'<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> E. A. Thompson, *Who Was St. Patrick?* (Rochester: Boydell Press, 1985), 105.

<sup>10</sup> Patrick, *The Confession of St. Patrick*. Grand Rapids: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, ua. <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/patrick/confession.html> (accessed January 10, 2012), 1.

<sup>11</sup> Patrick, *The Confession of St. Patrick*, 2-3.

Here Patrick clearly defines some foundational beliefs to his readers. It is clear that Patrick studied the Bible diligently and passionately desired to walk with God and know Him better.

In the next section of his letter, Patrick admits his poor writing skills. Because he was captured at a young age, he missed much of the schooling he would have received in Britain. His awkward Latin might have been mocked by the educated elitists he wrote to. He writes to clear his name of attacks made by these critics, possibly attacks aimed at his motivation for going to Ireland. Patrick declared that it was God who directed him to Ireland. He boldly states,

Therefore be amazed, you great and small who fear God, and you men of God, eloquent speakers, listen and contemplate. Who was it summoned me, a fool, from the midst of those who appear wise and learned in the law and powerful in rhetoric and in all things? Me, truly wretched in this world, he inspired before others that I could be—if I would—such a one who, with fear and reverence, and faithfully, without complaint, would come to the people to whom the love of Christ brought me and gave me in my lifetime, if I should be worthy, to serve them truly and with humility.<sup>12</sup>

Patrick humbly gave God the honor and glory for all that was accomplished through his ministry. Catholic biographers falsely claim Patrick was sent by the Pope to Ireland. Not only does Patrick never mention the Pope in his writings, but he clearly tells his readers God called him as a missionary to Ireland. The calling of Patrick to Ireland was an extremely important moment of his life, which he would detail later in his *Confession*.

One must pause to examine Patrick's fascinating personal testimony of salvation. He joyfully states,

But after I reached Ireland I used to pasture the flock each day and I used to pray many times a day. More and more did the love of God, and my fear of him and faith increase, and my spirit was moved so that in a day [I said] from one up to a hundred prayers, and in the night a like number; besides I used to stay out in the forests and on the mountain

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<sup>12</sup> Patrick, *The Confession of St. Patrick*, 4.



and I would wake up before daylight to pray in the snow, in icy coldness, in rain, and I used to feel neither ill nor any slothfulness, because, as I now see, the Spirit was burning in me at that time.<sup>13</sup>

Patrick turned to the Lord and put his full faith in Him as he watched a flock in the wilderness of Ireland. His fervent prayer life sustained him during his slavery which ruthlessly exposed him to the elements.

After spending six years in slavery, Patrick suddenly had a dream in which God told him that it was time for him to return home. The next day Patrick boldly left his master and followed the Lord's leading. As a fugitive slave, Patrick was in constant danger of being discovered. Finally, he arrived at the ship that would take him home. When he approached the sailors, they recognized he was a slave and they rejected him. Patrick must have been shocked as he turned to leave, then suddenly the captain called him and permitted him to travel with them. After sailing for three days, the men reached shore and began to travel on foot. After recounting this instance to his readers, Patrick mentions a similar instance in which he was held captive for two months before he was released.<sup>14</sup> Through both of these traumatic experiences, Patrick courageously depended on God.

After reuniting with his family in Britain, Patrick tells his readers of a dream he had in which an Irishman named Victorious brought him countless letters. Victorious handed a letter to Patrick entitled "The Voice of the Irish." In this letter the Irish "were crying as if with one voice:

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<sup>13</sup> Patrick, *The Confession of St. Patrick*, 6.

<sup>14</sup> There are numerous debates regarding this portion of Patrick's writings. The primary disagreement centers on location. Where was Patrick born? Britain or Gaul? Where was Patrick a slave in Ireland? County Antrim or western Ireland? Where did the sailors and Patrick land? Britain or Gaul? In his book, Philip Freeman logically develops answers to these and other questions about Patrick's life by examining the history and culture of ancient Ireland. See his book for further study on these issues, Philip Freeman, *St. Patrick of Ireland: a Biography*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2004).

‘We beg you, holy youth, that you shall come and shall walk again among us.’”<sup>15</sup>In the depths of his heart, Patrick knew the Lord wanted him to return to Ireland, to be a minister and a witness to the people who once enslaved him.

Perhaps, Patrick wrote his *Confession* in defense of his ministry after a boyhood sin was made public. As he writes this portion of his *Confession*, Patrick mentions his embarrassment and anguish over the sin he committed as a youth before he accepted Christ. Eventually, Patrick realized that God had forgiven him and could still use him. Patrick boldly continued his ministry despite facing imprisonment, death, persecution, and many other trials. He writes, “if I should be worthy, I am ready [to give] even my life without hesitation; and most willingly for His name. And I choose to devote it to him even unto death, if God grant it to me.”<sup>16</sup> This portion of the *Confession* closes with Patrick quoting a number of key passages of Scripture related to the gospel.

One might wonder about the scope and success of Patrick’s ministry. This thought is addressed in the following portion of his *Confession*: “So, how is it that in Ireland, where they never had any knowledge of God but, always, until now, cherished idols and unclean things, they are lately become a people of the Lord, and are called children of God; the sons of the Irish [Scotti] and the daughters of the chieftains are to be seen as monks and virgins of Christ.”<sup>17</sup> As one ponders the ministry of Patrick, one must marvel at the tremendous spiritual awakening that took place. The cult of Druids kept the Irish people in horror of their pantheistic beliefs. This

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<sup>15</sup> Patrick, *The Confession of St. Patrick*, 9.

<sup>16</sup> Patrick, *The Confession of St. Patrick*, 13.

<sup>17</sup> Patrick, *The Confession of St. Patrick*, 15.

atmosphere of spiritual darkness loomed in the face of Patrick. A missionary named Palladius is known to have visited Ireland before Patrick. Upon reaching the shores of Ireland, Palladius experienced intense persecutions and setbacks; his ministry dwindled and in less than a year he abandoned Ireland altogether.<sup>18</sup> When faced by similar opposition, especially from the Druids, Patrick persevered and trusted in God for help, guidance, and protection. The Lord worked mightily in Ireland bringing an awakening to people who for ages were blinded by the wickedness of the Druid's mysticism and pantheism.

In the next portion of his Confession, Patrick continues describing his ministry. He mentions numerous baptisms and opportunities to train precious converts. Patrick vehemently denies taking people's money and gifts for himself, thus leading some to believe that his critics accused him of financial corruption. He tells about his relationship with the kings and judges of Ireland, "From time to time I gave rewards to the kings, as well as making payments to their sons who travel with me...to those who were administering justice in all the regions, which I visited often."<sup>19</sup> As he ministered throughout Ireland, Patrick would bring the gospel to the king's court and often ask for permission to promulgate the truth among the Irish people. It seems he was on good terms with the kings of Ireland, who allowed him to continue his ministry.

Patrick humbly closes his *Confession* with the following statement:

"But I entreat those who believe in and fear God, whoever deigns to examine or receive this document composed by the obviously unlearned sinner Patrick in Ireland, that nobody shall ever ascribe to my ignorance any trivial thing that I achieved or may have expounded that was

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<sup>18</sup> Michael O'Farrell, *The Life of Saint Patrick* (New York: P. J. Kennedy and Sons, ua), 30-31.

<sup>19</sup> Patrick, *The Confession of St. Patrick*, 17.

pleasing to God, but accept and truly believe that it would have been the gift of God. And this is my confession before I die.”<sup>20</sup> Patrick humbly dedicated himself to ministering among the Irish.

Patrick’s *Letter to Coroticus* is extremely bold and demonstrates the genuine love Patrick had for the Irish. Historian Philip Freeman summarizes the impact of Patrick’s letter; he says the letter is “at the same time a decree of excommunication, a heartfelt plea, a carefully argued sermon, a word of comfort to his Irish followers and a powerful prayer to God for divine justice.”<sup>21</sup> A British tyrant named Coroticus sent his pirates to raid the coast of Ireland. When a band of Patrick’s recently baptized followers were ruthlessly murdered or taken captive by the supposed Christian king, Patrick could not help but pour out his righteous wrath against the wicked king for his brutality towards unarmed Irish Christians. Throughout the letter, Patrick quotes numerous passages of Scripture condemning the brutal actions of Coroticus. No one knows the outcome of the letter, but Patrick hoped that believers across Britain would read his letter and shun Coroticus. Although Patrick was infuriated with Coroticus, he realized that he would see his beloved believers again in Heaven.

It is difficult for one to critique Patrick’s ministry because the only valid sources about his ministry are written by Patrick. Probably the two primary areas in which one might find fault with Patrick center on his acceptance of monasticism and lifelong virginity. These two issues were practiced by many churches and believers in ancient Britain and Ireland. While commendable in some aspects, the monastic life is not supported by Scripture. Some passages

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<sup>20</sup> Patrick, *The Confession of St. Patrick*, 20.

<sup>21</sup> Philip Freeman, *St. Patrick of Ireland: a Biography* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2004), 133.

written by the Apostle Paul encourage believers to remain virgins for their entire life if possible, but it is not a biblical mandate.

The ministry and testimony of Patrick is incredible and should be faithfully studied by believers. Scripture naturally flowed from Patrick's pen as he wrote. Thus Patrick spent much time studying the Scriptures and applying them to his life and ministry. In order to have a successful ministry, one must walk closely with God. Another principle from the testimony of Patrick was his love for a people who mistreated him. Believers today ought to show the love of Christ to even their enemies, just as Patrick loved the people who once enslaved him. The Gospel was the central theme of Patrick's message, he humbly served God faithfully and the Lord rewarded him for his passionate service in Ireland. Zeal, courage, and perseverance are characteristics of Patrick's life that ought to be embraced by believers today. Christians have much to learn from the life and testimony of Patrick as they seek to spread the Gospel around the world.

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## THE *CONFESSION* OF SAINT PATRICK

1. I, Patrick, a sinner, a most simple countryman, the least of all the faithful and most contemptible to many, had for father the deacon Calpurnius, son of the late Potitus, a priest, of the settlement [vicus] of Bannavem Taburniae; he had a small villa nearby where I was taken captive. I was at that time about sixteen years of age. I did not, indeed, know the true God; and I was taken into captivity in Ireland with many thousands of people, according to our deserts, for quite drawn away from God, we did not keep his precepts, nor were we obedient to our priests who used to remind us of our salvation. And the Lord brought down on us the fury of his being and scattered us among many nations, even to the ends of the earth, where I, in my smallness, am now to be found among foreigners.
2. And there the Lord opened my mind to an awareness of my unbelief, in order that, even so late, I might remember my transgressions and turn with all my heart to the Lord my God, who had regard for my insignificance and pitied my youth and ignorance. And he watched over me before I knew him, and before I learned sense or even distinguished between good and evil, and he protected me, and consoled me as a father would his son.
3. Therefore, indeed, I cannot keep silent, nor would it be proper, so many favours and graces has the Lord deigned to bestow on me in the land of my captivity. For after chastisement from God, and recognizing him, our way to repay him is to exalt him and confess his wonders before every nation under heaven.
4. For there is no other God, nor ever was before, nor shall be hereafter, but God the Father, unbegotten and without beginning, in whom all things began, whose are all things, as we have been taught; and his son Jesus Christ, who manifestly always existed with the Father, before the beginning of time in the spirit with the Father, indescribably begotten before all things, and all things visible and invisible were made by him. He was made man, conquered death and was received into Heaven, to the Father who gave him all power over every name in Heaven and on Earth and in Hell, so that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord and God, in whom we believe. And we look to his imminent coming again, the judge of the living and the dead, who will render to each according to his deeds. And he poured out his Holy Spirit on us in abundance, the gift and pledge of immortality, which makes the believers and the obedient into sons of God and co-heirs of Christ who is revealed, and we worship one God in the Trinity of holy name.
5. He himself said through the prophet: 'Call upon me in the day of' trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me.' And again: 'It is right to reveal and publish abroad the works of God.'
6. I am imperfect in many things, nevertheless I want my brethren and kinsfolk to know my nature so that they may be able to perceive my soul's desire.
7. I am not ignorant of what is said of my Lord in the Psalm: 'You destroy those who speak a lie.' And again: 'A lying mouth deals death to the soul.' And likewise the Lord says in the Gospel: 'On the day of judgment men shall render account for every idle word they utter.'
8. So it is that I should mightily fear, with terror and trembling, this judgment on the day when no one shall be able to steal away or hide, but each and all shall render account for even our smallest sins before the judgment seat of Christ the Lord.
9. And therefore for some time I have thought of writing, but I have hesitated until now,



for truly, I feared to expose myself to the criticism of men, because I have not studied like others, who have assimilated both Law and the Holy Scriptures equally and have never changed their idiom since their infancy, but instead were always learning it increasingly, to perfection, while my idiom and language have been translated into a foreign tongue. So it is easy to prove from a sample of my writing, my ability in rhetoric and the extent of my preparation and knowledge, for as it is said, ‘wisdom shall be recognized in speech, and in understanding, and in knowledge and in the learning of truth.’

**10.** But why make excuses close to the truth, especially when now I am presuming to try to grasp in my old age what I did not gain in my youth because my sins prevented me from making what I had read my own? But who will believe me, even though I should say it again? A young man, almost a beardless boy, I was taken captive before I knew what I should desire and what I should shun. So, consequently, today I feel ashamed and I am mightily afraid to expose my ignorance, because, [not] eloquent, with a small vocabulary, I am unable to explain as the spirit is eager to do and as the soul and the mind indicate.

**11.** But had it been given to me as to others, in gratitude I should not have kept silent, and if it should appear that I put myself before others, with my ignorance and my slower speech, in truth, it is written: ‘The tongue of the stammerers shall speak rapidly and distinctly.’ How much harder must we try to attain it, we of whom it is said: ‘You are an epistle of Christ in greeting to the ends of the earth . . . written on your hearts, not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God.’ And again, the Spirit witnessed that the rustic life was created by the Most High.

**12.** I am, then, first of all, countryfied, an exile, evidently unlearned, one who is not able to see into the future, but I know for certain, that before I was humbled I was like a stone lying in deep mire, and he that is mighty came and in his mercy raised me up and, indeed, lifted me high up and placed me on top of the wall. And from there I ought to shout out in gratitude to the Lord for his great favours in this world and for ever, that the mind of man cannot measure.

**13.** Therefore be amazed, you great and small who fear God, and you men of God, eloquent speakers, listen and contemplate. Who was it summoned me, a fool, from the midst of those who appear wise and learned in the law and powerful in rhetoric and in all things? Me, truly wretched in this world, he inspired before others that I could be—if I would—such a one who, with fear and reverence, and faithfully, without complaint, would come to the people to whom the love of Christ brought me and gave me in my lifetime, if I should be worthy, to serve them truly and with humility.

**14.** According, therefore, to the measure of one’s faith in the Trinity, one should proceed without holding back from danger to make known the gift of God and everlasting consolation, to spread God’s name everywhere with confidence and without fear, in order to leave behind, after my death, foundations for my brethren and sons whom I baptized in the Lord in so many thousands.

**15.** And I was not worthy, nor was I such that the Lord should grant his humble servant this, that after hardships and such great trials, after captivity, after many years, he should give me so much favour in these people, a thing which in the time of my youth I neither hoped for nor imagined.

**16.** But after I reached Ireland I used to pasture the flock each day and I used to pray many times a day. More and more did the love of God, and my fear of him and faith increase, and my spirit was moved so that in a day [I said] from one up to a hundred prayers, and in the night a like number; besides I used to stay out in the forests and on the mountain and I would wake up before daylight to pray in the snow, in icy coldness, in rain, and I used to feel neither ill nor any slothfulness, because, as I now see, the Spirit was burning in me at that time.

**17.** And it was there of course that one night in my sleep I heard a voice saying to me: ‘You do well to fast: soon you will depart for your home country.’ And again, a very short time later, there was a voice prophesying: ‘Behold, your ship is ready.’ And it was not close by, but, as it happened, two hundred miles away, where I had never been nor knew any person. And shortly thereafter I turned about and fled from the man with whom I had been for six years, and I came, by the power of God who directed my route to advantage (and I was afraid of nothing), until I reached that ship.

**18.** And on the same day that I arrived, the ship was setting out from the place, and I said that I had the wherewithal to sail with them; and the steersman was displeased and replied in anger, sharply: ‘By no means attempt to go with us.’ Hearing this I left them to go to the hut where I was staying, and on the way I began to pray, and before the prayer was finished I heard one of them shouting loudly after me: ‘Come quickly because the men are calling you.’ And immediately I went back to them and they started to say to me: ‘Come, because we are admitting you out of good faith; make friendship with us in any way you wish.’ (And so, on that day, I refused to suck the breasts of these men from fear of God, but nevertheless I had hopes that they would come to faith in Jesus Christ, because they were barbarians.) And for this I continued with them, and forthwith we put to sea.

**19.** And after three days we reached land, and for twenty-eight days journeyed through uninhabited country, and the food ran out and hunger overtook them; and one day the steersman began saying: ‘Why is it, Christian? You say your God is great and all-powerful; then why can you not pray for us? For we may perish of hunger; it is unlikely indeed that we shall ever see another human being.’ In fact, I said to them, confidently: ‘Be converted by faith with all your heart to my Lord God, because nothing is impossible for him, so that today he will send food for you on your road, until you be sated, because everywhere he abounds.’ And with God’s help this came to pass; and behold, a herd of swine appeared on the road before our eyes, and they slew many of them, and remained there for two nights, and the men were full of their meat and well restored, for many of them had fainted and would otherwise have been left half dead by the wayside. And after this they gave the utmost thanks to God, and I was esteemed in their eyes, and from that day they had food abundantly. They discovered wild honey, besides, and they offered a share to me, and one of them said: ‘It is a sacrifice.’ Thanks be to God, I tasted none of it.

**20.** The very same night while I was sleeping Satan attacked me violently, as I will remember as long as I shall be in this body; and there fell on top of me as it were, a huge rock, and not one of my members had any force. But from whence did it come to me, ignorant in the spirit, to call upon ‘Helias’? And meanwhile I saw the sun rising in the sky, and while I was crying out ‘Helias, Helias’ with all my might, lo, the brilliance of that sun fell upon me and immediately

shook me free of all the weight; and I believe that I was aided by Christ my Lord, and that his Spirit then was crying out for me, and I hope that it will be so in the day of my affliction, just as it says in the Gospel: 'In that hour', the Lord declares, 'it is not you who speaks but the Spirit of your Father speaking in you.'

**21.** And a second time, after many years, I was taken captive. On the first night I accordingly remained with my captors, but I heard a divine prophecy, saying to me: 'You shall be with them for two months.' So it happened. On the sixtieth night the Lord delivered me from their hands.

**22.** On the journey he provided us with food and fire and dry weather every day, until on the tenth day we came upon people. As I mentioned above, we had journeyed through an unpopulated country for twenty-eight days, and in fact the night that we came upon people we had no food.

**23.** And after a few years I was again in Britain with my parents [kinsfolk], and they welcomed me as a son, and asked me, in faith, that after the great tribulations I had endured I should not go anywhere else away from them. And, of course, there, in a vision of the night, I saw a man whose name was Victoricus coming as if from Ireland with innumerable letters, and he gave me one of them, and I read the beginning of the letter: 'The Voice of the Irish'; and as I was reading the beginning of the letter I seemed at that moment to hear the voice of those who were beside the forest of Foclut which is near the western sea, and they were crying as if with one voice: 'We beg you, holy youth, that you shall come and shall walk again among us.' And I was stung intensely in my heart so that I could read no more, and thus I awoke. Thanks be to God, because after so many years the Lord bestowed on them according to their cry.

**24.** And another night—God knows, I do not, whether within me or beside me— . . . most words + . . . + which I heard and could not understand, except at the end of the speech it was represented thus: 'He who gave his life for you, he it is who speaks within you.' And thus I awoke, joyful.

**25.** And on a second occasion I saw Him praying within me, and I was as it were, inside my own body, and I heard Him above me—that is, above my inner self. He was praying powerfully with sighs. And in the course of this I was astonished and wondering, and I pondered who it could be who was praying within me. But at the end of the prayer it was revealed to me that it was the Spirit. And so I awoke and remembered the Apostle's words: 'Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we know not how to pray as we ought. But the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for utterance.' And again: 'The Lord our advocate intercedes for us.'

**26.** And then I was attacked by a goodly number of my elders, who [brought up] my sins against my arduous episcopate. That day in particular I was mightily upset, and might have fallen here and for ever; but the Lord generously spared me, a convert, and an alien, for his name's sake, and he came powerfully to my assistance in that state of being trampled down. I pray God that it shall not be held against them as a sin that I fell truly into disgrace and scandal.

**27.** They brought up against me after thirty years an occurrence I had confessed before becoming a deacon. On account of the anxiety in my sorrowful mind, I laid before my close friend what I had perpetrated on a day—nay, rather in one hour—in my boyhood because I was not yet proof against sin. God knows—I do not—whether I was fifteen years old at the time, and

I did not then believe in the living God, nor had I believed, since my infancy; but I remained in death and unbelief until I was severely rebuked, and in truth I was humbled every day by hunger and nakedness.

**28.** On the other hand, I did not proceed to Ireland of my own accord until I was almost giving up, but through this I was corrected by the Lord, and he prepared me so that today I should be what was once far from me, in order that I should have the care of—or rather, I should be concerned for—the salvation of others, when at that time, still, I was only concerned for myself.

**29.** Therefore, on that day when I was rebuked, as I have just mentioned, I saw in a vision of the night a document before my face, without honour, and meanwhile I heard a divine prophecy, saying to me: ‘We have seen with displeasure the face of the chosen one divested of [his good] name.’ And he did not say ‘You have seen with displeasure’, but ‘We have seen with displeasure’ (as if He included Himself). He said then: ‘He who touches you, touches the apple of my eye.’

**30.** For that reason, I give thanks to him who strengthened me in all things, so that I should not be hindered in my setting out and also in my work which I was taught by Christ my Lord; but more, from that state of affairs I felt, within me, no little courage, and vindicated my faith before God and man.

**31.** Hence, therefore, I say boldly that my conscience is clear now and hereafter. God is my witness that I have not lied in these words to you.

**32.** But rather, I am grieved for my very close friend, that because of him we deserved to hear such a prophecy. The one to whom I entrusted my soul! And I found out from a goodly number of brethren, before the case was made in my defence (in which I did not take part, nor was I in Britain, nor was it pleaded by me), that in my absence he would fight in my behalf. Besides, he told me himself: ‘See, the rank of bishop goes to you’—of which I was not worthy. But how did it come to him, shortly afterwards, to disgrace me publicly, in the presence of all, good and bad, because previously, gladly and of his own free will, he pardoned me, as did the Lord, who is greater than all?

**33.** I have said enough. But all the same, I ought not to conceal God’s gift which he lavished on us in the land of my captivity, for then I sought him resolutely, and I found him there, and he preserved me from all evils (as I believe) through the in-dwelling of his Spirit, which works in me to this day. Again, boldly, but God knows, if this had been made known to me by man, I might, perhaps, have kept silent for the love of Christ.

**34.** Thus I give untiring thanks to God who kept me faithful in the day of my temptation, so that today I may confidently offer my soul as a living sacrifice for Christ my Lord; who am I, Lord? or, rather, what is my calling? that you appeared to me in so great a divine quality, so that today among the barbarians I might constantly exalt and magnify your name in whatever place I should be, and not only in good fortune, but even in affliction? So that whatever befalls me, be it good or bad, I should accept it equally, and give thanks always to God who revealed to me that I might trust in him, implicitly and forever, and who will encourage me so that, ignorant, and in the last days, I may dare to undertake so devout and so wonderful a work; so that I might imitate one of those whom, once, long ago, the Lord already pre-ordained to be heralds of his Gospel to

witness to all peoples to the ends of the earth. So are we seeing, and so it is fulfilled; behold, we are witnesses because the Gospel has been preached as far as the places beyond which no man lives.

**35.** But it is tedious to describe in detail all my labours one by one. I will tell briefly how most holy God frequently delivered me, from slavery, and from the twelve trials with which my soul was threatened, from man traps as well, and from things I am not able to put into words. I would not cause offence to readers, but I have God as witness who knew all things even before they happened, that, though I was a poor, ignorant waif, still he gave me abundant warnings through divine prophecy.

**36.** Whence came to me this wisdom which was not my own, I who neither knew the number of days nor had knowledge of God? Whence came the so great and so healthful gift of knowing or rather loving God, though I should lose homeland and family?

**37.** And many gifts were offered to me with weeping and tears, and I offended them [the donors], and also went against the wishes of a good number of my elders; but guided by God, I neither agreed with them nor deferred to them, not by my own grace but by God who is victorious in me and withstands them all, so that I might come to the Irish people to preach the Gospel and endure insults from unbelievers; that I might hear scandal of my travels, and endure many persecutions to the extent of prison; and so that I might give up my free birthright for the advantage of others, and if I should be worthy, I am ready [to give] even my life without hesitation; and most willingly for His name. And I choose to devote it to him even unto death, if God grant it to me.

**38.** I am greatly God's debtor, because he granted me so much grace, that through me many people would be reborn in God, and soon after confirmed, and that clergy would be ordained everywhere for them, the masses lately come to belief, whom the Lord drew from the ends of the earth, just as he once promised through his prophets: 'To you shall the nations come from the ends of the earth, and shall say, "Our fathers have inherited naught but lies, worthless things in which there is no profit."' And again: 'I have set you to be a light for the Gentiles that you may bring salvation to the uttermost ends of the earth.'

**39.** And I wish to wait then for his promise which is never unfulfilled, just as it is promised in the Gospel: 'Many shall come from east and west and shall sit at table with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob.' Just as we believe that believers will come from all the world,

**40.** So for that reason one should, in fact, fish well and diligently, just as the Lord foretells and teaches, saying, 'Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men,' and, again, through the prophets: "'Behold, I am sending forth many fishers and hunters," says the Lord,' et cetera. So it behoved us to spread our nets, that a vast multitude and throng might be caught for God, and so there might be clergy everywhere who baptized and exhorted a needy and desirous people. Just as the Lord says in the Gospel, admonishing and instructing: 'Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always to the end of time.' And again he says: 'Go forth into the world and preach the Gospel to all creation. He who believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he who does not believe shall be condemned.' And again: 'This Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached throughout the whole world as a

witness to all nations; and then the end of the world shall come.’ And likewise the Lord foretells through the prophet: ‘And it shall come to pass in the last days (sayeth the Lord) that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions and your old men shall dream dreams; yea, and on my menservants and my maidservants in those days I will pour out my Spirit and they shall prophesy.’ And in Hosea he says: ‘Those who are not my people I will call my people, and those not beloved I will call my beloved, and in the very place where it was said to them, “You are not my people,” they will be called ’Sons of the living God.’”

**41.** So, how is it that in Ireland, where they never had any knowledge of God but, always, until now, cherished idols and unclean things, they are lately become a people of the Lord, and are called children of God; the sons of the Irish [Scotti] and the daughters of the chieftains are to be seen as monks and virgins of Christ.

**42.** And there was, besides, a most beautiful, blessed, native-born noble Irish [Scotta] woman of adult age whom I baptized; and a few days later she had reason to come to us to intimate that she had received a prophecy from a divine messenger [who] advised her that she should become a virgin of Christ and she would draw nearer to God. Thanks be to God, six days from then, opportunely and most eagerly, she took the course that all virgins of God take, not with their fathers’ consent but enduring the persecutions and deceitful hindrances of their parents. Notwithstanding that, their number increases, (we do not know the number of them that are so reborn) besides the widows, and those who practise selfdenial. Those who are kept in slavery suffer the most. They endure terrors and constant threats, but the Lord has given grace to many of his handmaidens, for even though they are forbidden to do so, still they resolutely follow his example.

**43.** So it is that even if I should wish to separate from them in order to go to Britain, and most willingly was I prepared to go to my homeland and kinsfolk—and not only there, but as far as Gaul to visit the brethren there, so that I might see the faces of the holy ones of my Lord, God knows how strongly I desired this—I am bound by the Spirit, who witnessed to me that if I did so he would mark me out as guilty, and I fear to waste the labour that I began, and not I, but Christ the Lord, who commanded me to come to be with them for the rest of my life, if the Lord shall will it and shield me from every evil, so that I may not sin before him.

**44.** So I hope that I did as I ought, but I do not trust myself as long as I am in this mortal body, for he is strong who strives daily to turn me away from the faith and true holiness to which I aspire until the end of my life for Christ my Lord, but the hostile flesh is always dragging one down to death, that is, to unlawful attractions. And I know in part why I did not lead a perfect life like other believers, but I confess to my Lord and do not blush in his sight, because I am not lying; from the time when I came to know him in my youth, the love of God and fear of him increased in me, and right up until now, by God’s favour, I have kept the faith.

**45.** What is more, let anyone laugh and taunt if he so wishes. I am not keeping silent, nor am I hiding the signs and wonders that were shown to me by the Lord many years before they happened, [he] who knew everything, even before the beginning of time.

**46.** Thus, I should give thanks unceasingly to God, who frequently forgave my folly and my negligence, in more than one instance so as not to be violently angry with me, who am placed

as his helper, and I did not easily assent to what had been revealed to me, as the Spirit was urging; and the Lord took pity on me thousands upon thousands of times, because he saw within me that I was prepared, but that I was ignorant of what to do in view of my situation; because many were trying to prevent this mission. They were talking among themselves behind my back, and saying: 'Why is this fellow throwing himself into danger among enemies who know not God?' Not from malice, but having no liking for it; likewise, as I myself can testify, they perceived my rusticity. And I was not quick to recognize the grace that was then in me; I now know that I should have done so earlier.

**47.** Now I have put it frankly to my brethren and co-workers, who have believed me because of what I have foretold and still foretell to strengthen and reinforce your faith. I wish only that you, too, would make greater and better efforts. This will be my pride, for 'a wise son makes a proud father'.

**48.** You know, as God does, how I went about among you from my youth in the faith of truth and in sincerity of heart. As well as to the heathen among whom I live, I have shown them trust and always show them trust. God knows I did not cheat any one of them, nor consider it, for the sake of God and his Church, lest I arouse them and [bring about] persecution for them and for all of us, and lest the Lord's name be blasphemed because of me, for it is written: 'Woe to the men through whom the name of the Lord is blasphemed.'

**49.** For even though I am ignorant in all things, nevertheless I attempted to safeguard some and myself also. And I gave back again to my Christian brethren and the virgins of Christ and the holy women the small unasked for gifts that they used to give me or some of their ornaments which they used to throw on the altar. And they would be offended with me because I did this. But in the hope of eternity, I safeguarded myself carefully in all things, so that they might not cheat me of my office of service on any pretext of dishonesty, and so that I should not in the smallest way provide any occasion for defamation or disparagement on the part of unbelievers.

**50.** What is more, when I baptized so many thousands of people, did I hope for even half a jot from any of them? [If so] Tell me, and I will give it back to you. And when the Lord ordained clergy everywhere by my humble means, and I freely conferred office on them, if I asked any of them anywhere even for the price of one shoe, say so to my face and I will give it back.

**51.** More, I spent for you so that they would receive me. And I went about among you, and everywhere for your sake, in danger, and as far as the outermost regions beyond which no one lived, and where no one had ever penetrated before, to baptize or to ordain clergy or to confirm people. Conscientiously and gladly I did all this work by God's gift for your salvation.

**52.** From time to time I gave rewards to the kings, as well as making payments to their sons who travel with me; notwithstanding which, they seized me with my companions, and that day most avidly desired to kill me. But my time had not yet come. They plundered everything they found on us anyway, and fettered me in irons; and on the fourteenth day the Lord freed me from their power, and whatever they had of ours was given back to us for the sake of God on account of the indispensable friends whom we had made before.

**53.** Also you know from experience how much I was paying to those who were administering

justice in all the regions, which I visited often. I estimate truly that I distributed to them not less than the price of fifteen men, in order that you should enjoy my company and I enjoy yours, always, in God. I do not regret this nor do I regard it as enough. I am paying out still and I shall pay out more. The Lord has the power to grant me that I may soon spend my own self, for your souls.

**54.** Behold, I call on God as my witness upon my soul that I am not lying; nor would I write to you for it to be an occasion for flattery or selfishness, nor hoping for honour from any one of you. Sufficient is the honour which is not yet seen, but in which the heart has confidence. He who made the promise is faithful; he never lies.

**55.** But I see that even here and now, I have been exalted beyond measure by the Lord, and I was not worthy that he should grant me this, while I know most certainly that poverty and failure suit me better than wealth and delight (but Christ the Lord was poor for our sakes; I certainly am wretched and unfortunate; even if I wanted wealth I have no resources, nor is it my own estimation of myself, for daily I expect to be murdered or betrayed or reduced to slavery if the occasion arises. But I fear nothing, because of the promises of Heaven; for I have cast myself into the hands of Almighty God, who reigns everywhere. As the prophet says: 'Cast your burden on the Lord and he will sustain you.'

**56.** Behold now I commend my soul to God who is most faithful and for whom I perform my mission in obscurity, but he is no respecter of persons and he chose me for this service that I might be one of the least of his ministers.

**57.** For which reason I should make return for all that he returns me. But what should I say, or what should I promise to my Lord, for I, alone, can do nothing unless he himself vouchsafe it to me. But let him search my heart and [my] nature, for I crave enough for it, even too much, and I am ready for him to grant me that I drink of his chalice, as he has granted to others who love him.

**58.** Therefore may it never befall me to be separated by my God from his people whom he has won in this most remote land. I pray God that he gives me perseverance, and that he will deign that I should be a faithful witness for his sake right up to the time of my passing.

**59.** And if at any time I managed anything of good for the sake of my God whom I love, I beg of him that he grant it to me to shed my blood for his name with proselytes and captives, even should I be left unburied, or even were my wretched body to be torn limb from limb by dogs or savage beasts, or were it to be devoured by the birds of the air, I think, most surely, were this to have happened to me, I had saved both my soul and my body. For beyond any doubt on that day we shall rise again in the brightness of the sun, that is, in the glory of Christ Jesus our Redeemer, as children of the living God and co-heirs of Christ, made in his image; for we shall reign through him and for him and in him.

**60.** For the sun we see rises each day for us at [his] command, but it will never reign, neither will its splendour last, but all who worship it will come wretchedly to punishment. We, on the other hand, shall not die, who believe in and worship the true sun, Christ, who will never die, no more shall he die who has done Christ's will, but will abide for ever just as Christ abides for ever, who reigns with God the Father Almighty and with the Holy Spirit before the beginning of time and now and for ever and ever. Amen.



**61.** Behold over and over again I would briefly set out the words of my confession. I testify in truthfulness and gladness of heart before God and his holy angels that I never had any reason, except the Gospel and his promises, ever to have returned to that nation from which I had previously escaped with difficulty.

**62.** But I entreat those who believe in and fear God, whoever deigns to examine or receive this document composed by the obviously unlearned sinner Patrick in Ireland, that nobody shall ever ascribe to my ignorance any trivial thing that I achieved or may have expounded that was pleasing to God, but accept and truly believe that it would have been the gift of God. And this is my confession before I die.

## ***LETTER TO COROTICUS***

### *Part I*

1

I am Patrick, yes a sinner and indeed untaught; yet I am established here in Ireland where I profess myself bishop. I am certain in my heart that "all that I am," I have received from God. So I live among barbarous tribes, a stranger and exile for the love of God. He himself testifies that this is so. I never would have wanted these harsh words to spill from my mouth; I am not in the habit of speaking so sharply. Yet now I am driven by the zeal of God, Christ's truth has aroused me. I speak out too for love of my neighbors who are my only sons; for them I gave up my home country, my parents and even pushing my own life to the brink of death. If I have any worth, it is to live my life for God so as to teach these peoples; even though some of them still look down on me. *I Cor. 15:10 Phil. 2:30*

2

I myself have composed and written these words with my own hand, so that they can be given and handed over, then sent swiftly to the soldiers of Coroticus. I am not addressing my own people, nor my fellow citizens of the holy Romans, but those who are now become citizens of demons by reason of their evil works. They have chosen, by their hostile deeds, to live in death; comrades of the Scotti and Picts and of all who behave like apostates, bloody men who have steeped themselves in the blood of innocent Christians. The very same people I have begotten for God; their number beyond count, I myself confirmed them in Christ.

3

The very next day after my new converts, dressed all in white, were anointed with chrism, even as it was still gleaming upon their foreheads, they were cruelly cut down and killed by the swords of these same devilish men. At once I sent a good priest with a letter. I could trust him, for I had taught him from his boyhood. He went, accompanied by other priests, to see if we might claw something back from all the looting, most important, the baptized captives whom they had seized. Yet all they did was to laugh in our faces at the mere mention of their prisoners.

4

Because of all this, I am at a loss to know whether to weep more for those they killed or those that are captured: or indeed for these men themselves whom the devil has taken fast for his slaves. In truth, they will bind themselves alongside him in the pains of the everlasting pit: for "he who sins is a slave already" and is to be called "son of the devil." *Jn. 8:34, 44 (O.L.)*

5

Because of this, let every God-fearing man mark well that to me they are outcasts: cast out also by Christ my God, whose ambassador I am. Patricides, they are, yes and fratricides, no better than ravening wolves devouring God's own people like a loaf of bread. Exactly as it says: "the wicked have scattered your law, O Lord," which in these latter days he had planted in Ireland with so much hope and goodness; here it had been taught and nurtured in God's sight. *Eph. 6.-20 Acts 20.-29 Ps. 14:4 Ps. 119.126*

## Part II

6

I do not overreach myself, for I too have my part to play with "those whom he has called to himself and predestined" to teach the gospel in the midst of considerable persecutions "as far as the ends of the earth, even if the enemy reveals h's true envy through the tyranny of Coroticus, who fears neither God nor the priests whom he has chosen and to whom he has given the highest divine power, namely that "those whom they bind on earth are bound in heaven." *Rom. 8:30 Matt. 16:19*

7

Accordingly, I beseech especially you "holy and humble in heart," that it is unlawful to flatter men like these, nor should you eat or drink in their company, neither should anyone feel any obligation to receive alms from such men; not until the time comes when they do penances so harsh that their tears pour out to God, and that they agree to free those servants of God and the baptized handmaids of Christ. For these did he die, for them was he crucified. *Dan. 3:87*

8

"The Almighty turns away from the gifts of wicked men." "He who offers sacrifice from the goods of the poor, is like a man who sacrifices a son in the sight of his own father." "Those riches," it is written, "which he has gathered in unjustly will be vomited out of his belly." "And now the angel of death comes to drag him away. He will be mauled by angry dragons, killed by the serpent's tongue. Moreover, everlasting fire is consuming him." So, "Woe to those who feast themselves on things that are not their own." Or, "What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and suffers the loss of his own soul?" *Ecclus. 34:19-20 Job 20.15-16, 26 Hab. 2:6 Matt. 16.-26*

9

It would take too long to discuss or argue every single case, or to sift through the whole of the Law for precise witness against such greed. Sufficient to say, greed is a deadly deed. You shall not covet your neighbor's goods. You shall not murder. A homicide may not stand beside Christ. Even "He who bates his brother is to be labeled murderer." Or, "He who does not love his brother dwells in death." therefore how much more guilty is he, who has stained his own hands in the blood of the sons of God, those very children whom only just now he has won for himself in this distant land by means of our feeble encouragement. *Rom. 13:9 Exod. 20:13, 17 I Jn. 3:15, 14*

## Part III

10

Could I have come to Ireland without thought of God, merely in my own interest? Who was it made me come? For here "I am a prisoner of the Spirit" so that I may not see any of my family. Can it be out of the kindness of my heart that I carry out such a labor of mercy on a people who once captured me when they wrecked my father's house and carried off his servants? For by descent I was a freeman, born of a decurion father; yet I have sold this nobility of mine, I am not ashamed, nor do I regret that it might have meant some advantage to others. In short, I am a slave

in Christ to this faraway people for the indescribable glory of "everlasting life which is in Jesus Christ our Lord." *Acts 20:22 Rom. 6:23*

11

And if my own do not want to know me, well and good, "a prophet is not honored in his own country." Indeed, perhaps we are not "from the same sheepfold," or possibly we do not have "one and the same Father for our God." As he says, "He who is not with me, is against me" and he who "does not gather with me, scatters." We are at cross purposes: "One destroys; another builds." "I do not seek things that are mine." Not by my grace, but it is God "who has given such care in my heart," so that I should be among "the hunters or fishers" whom God foretold "in those final days." *Jn. 4:44 Jn. 10:16 Eph. 4:6 Matt. 12:30 Ecclus. 34:23 I Cor. 13:5 II Cor. 8:16*

12

They are jealous of me. What am I to do, Lord? How bitterly they despise me! just see how your sheep are torn apart and despoiled, and by those gangsters I have named, bound to the last man by the inimical mind of Coroticus. Far away from the love of God is the man who betrays my Christians into the hands of the Scotti and Picts. "Ravenous wolves" have gulped down the Lord's own flock, which was flourishing in Ireland and tended with utmost care. Now I have lost count how many sons and daughters of the kings of the Scotti have become monks and virgins of Christ. For which reason, "may these injuries done to the just not find favor in your sight," even "to the lowest depths of hell may you not be pleased."

13

Which of the saints would not refuse to feast and decline the company of such men? See how they have filled their houses with the spoils of dead Christians? Why, they devote their lives to plunder! Miserable men, they have no idea how they feed poison, food that surely kills, to their friends and even to their own children; just as Eve never realized that she was handing out certain death to her own man, her husband. It is always the same with those who do evil: they labor long only to yield death as their everlasting punishment.

14

Roman Christians in Gaul behave quite differently: it is their custom to send holy, capable men to the Franks and other nations with several thousand soldiers so as to redeem Christian prisoners, yet YOU would rather kill or sell them on to a far-off tribe who know nothing of the true God. You might as well consign Christ's own members to a whorehouse. What kind of hope can you have left in God? Can you still trust someone who says he agrees with you? Do you listen still to all those flatterers who surround you? God alone will judge. For it is written, "Not only those who do evil, but also all those who agree with them, are to be

15

For myself, I do not know "what I shall say," or how "I may speak anymore" of those who are dead of these children of God-whom the sword has struck down so harshly, beyond all belief. For it is written, "Weep with those that weep, and again "If one member grieves, then all members should grieve together." Because of this, the whole Church "cries out and for its sons and

daughters" who so far have not been killed by the sword. For they have been taken far away and abandoned in a land where sin abounds, openly, wickedly, impudently; there freeborn men are sold, Christians are reduced to slavery, and worst of all among the most worthless and vilest apostates, the Picts. *Jn. 12:49 Rom. 12:15 1 Cor. 12:26 Matt. 2:18,- Jer. 31:15*

16

Because of all this, my voice is raised in sorrow and mourning. Oh, my most beautiful, my lovely brethren and my sons "whom I begot in Christ," I have lost count of your number, what can I do to help you now? I am not worthy to come to the help of God or men. "We have been overwhelmed by the wickedness of unjust men," it is as if "we had been made outsiders." They find it unacceptable that we are Irish. But it says "Is it not true that you all have but one God? Why then have you, each one of you, abandoned your own neighbor?" *1 Cor. 4:15 Ps. 65:3 Ps. 69:8 Eph. 4:5, 6 MaL 2:10*

#### **Part IV**

17

And therefore I grieve for you, how I mourn for you, who are so very dear to me, but again I can rejoice within my heart, not for nothing "have I labored," neither has my exile been "in vain."

And if this wicked deed, so horrible, so unutterable, had to happen, thanks be to God, as men, believing and baptized, you have left this world behind for paradise. I can see you all clearly: you have set out for where "there will be no more night," "no more lament, neither death."

"There your hearts will leap, like calves let free from the tether, and you will trample down the wicked underfoot, and they will be like dust under your feet." *Phil. 2:16 Apoc. 22:5, 21:4 MaL 4:Z 3*

18

Therefore will you reign with the apostles and the prophets and all the martyrs. You will attain the eternal kingdoms. just as he testifies, exactly as he declares: "They will come from East and the West, and they will rest with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven."

"While outside howl the dogs, the poisoners, the homicides," and "Their fate, with liars and perjurers, is the lake of everlasting fire." Where, says the Apostle, not without reason, "The 'Just man will scarcely be saved, yet the sinner and the flagrant lawbreaker, where shall he stand?"

*Matt. 8:11 Apoc. 22:15 Apoc. 21:8 1 Pet. 4:18*

19

And so, now you, Coroticus-and your gangsters, rebels all against Christ, now where do you see yourselves? You gave away girls like prizes: not yet women, but baptized. All for some petty temporal gain that will pass in the very next instant. "Like a cloud passes, or smoke blown in the wind," so will "sinners, who cheat, slip away from the face of the Lord. But the just will feast for sure" with Christ. "They will judge the nations" and unjust kings "they will lord over" for world after world. Amen. *Wisd. 5:14 Ps. 68:2, 3; 3:8*

20

27

I bear witness before God and his angels that this will come about, just as he has revealed my lack of learning. To repeat: these are not my words, but God's own words-and the apostle's and the prophets', which I have merely chiseled out in Latin: and they have never lied. "He who is found to have believed will be saved; but he who did not believe will be condemned, God has spoken." *Mk. 16:15, 16*

21

My chief request is that anyone who is a servant of God be ready and willing, to carry this letter forward; may it never be hidden or stolen by anyone, but rather, may it be read aloud before the whole people-Yes, even when Coroticus himself is present.

May God inspire these men sometime to come to their senses in regard to God again, so that they may repent, however latter day, of their grave crimes, namely homicide against the brothers of the Lord, and that they free these baptized women whom they have taken, so that then they may deserve to live to God and be made whole once more, here, now and for eternity.

Peace to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. *AMEN.*

*Translated by John Skinner in his book The Confession of St. Patrick.*