

PATRICK OF IRELAND: A BAPTIST?

by

Seth A. Folkers

December 26, 2013

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
THE SOURCES	2
Patrick's Own Writings.....	3
Patrick's Biographers.....	5
THE COMMISSION	8
The Romanist View	8
The British View	10
THE CANONS	11
THE DOCTRINE AND PRACTICE.....	15
THE TIME	20
Traditional.....	20
Ardill's Theory.....	20
CONCLUSION	23
BIBLIOGRAPHY	25
APPENDIX A: ST. PATRICK'S BREASTPLATE	27
APPENDIX B: TRANSLATION COMPARISON.....	29
APPENDIX C: PATRICK'S MISSIONARY METHODS	30
APPENDIX D: ST. PATRICK'S CREED	32

INTRODUCTION

Patrick of Ireland is a lightning rod for historical controversy. There seem to be very few facts about his life that are not questioned by some one—not even his existence! From the place of his birth to where he was buried, and all things in between—his nationality, his names, his education and commission, the translation of the Bible he used, the nature and success of his ministry—and above all the dates for everything—are hotly debated among historians. Nor does time seem to be helping in establishing a consensus; rather, the opposite is true. The causes for this wide divergence of opinion will be examined in more detail, as we pursue answers to some of these many questions.

There is one question specifically (though it involves many others) that we will seek to answer, insofar as possible: Was Patrick a Baptist? This is the explicit claim of some, and the implicit affirmation of many others. One Baptist historian, W. A. Jarrel, writes, “St. Patrick was a Baptist, and the first Irish churches were Baptist churches.”¹ The well-known modern Baptist historian James Beller implies as much in his *Collegiate Baptist History Workbook*.² The 19th century Baptist William Cathcart wrote a book entitled *The Ancient British and Irish Churches, including the Life and Labors of St. Patrick*; as one might surmise by the title, he devotes a large amount of copy to the development of this thesis.³

¹W. A. Jarrel, *Baptist Church Perpetuity* (Dallas: published by the author, 1894), 479. He is quoted by James Edward McGoldrick, *Baptist Successionism* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2000), 23. McGoldrick’s statement that Jarrel merely “[gives] a brief description of Patrick’s career and [scorns] all Roman Catholic claims” before concluding with his dogmatic assertion, is in my opinion misleading. Jarrel spends an entire chapter (472-79) setting forth briefly the reasons for his claim, referring the reader to the basis for his work, a much more detailed study by William Cathcart (see below) [whom he oddly calls Dr. *Catchcart*].

²James R. Beller, *The Collegiate Baptist History Workbook* ([Arnold, MO?]: Prairie Fire Press, 2005), 68-71. Beller also refers to Cathcart, but primarily quotes J. A. Wylie, *History of the Scottish Nation*, and William P. Grady, *Final Authority* (Schererville, IN: Grady Publications, 1994).

³William Cathcart, *The Ancient British and Irish Churches* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1894), 59-164.

On the other hand, the Roman Catholics are by no means willing to let *Saint Patrick* go! Charles H. H. Wright, who helped produce an English translation of the writings of Patrick, relates in the introduction his unsuccessful effort to make it a joint project of Protestants and Roman Catholics.⁴ Archbishop John Healy published in 1905 a biographical defense of the Roman Catholic position (of which we shall speak more), referenced by McGoldrick.⁵

Nor is it likely that any Protestants would go so far as to concede the Baptists' argument. Some have, perhaps inadvertently, lent many helpful arguments to the Baptist side⁶; but others are like J. B. Bury, the renowned scholar who in the preface to his monumental work on Patrick declares, "My conclusions . . . tend to show that the Roman Catholic conception of St. Patrick's work is, generally, nearer to historical fact than the views of some anti-Papal divines."⁷ James McGoldrick was professor at the Baptist Cedarville College when he penned his attack on the "Baptist Successionist" portrayal of St. Patrick.⁸

This controversy, then, will be the focus of our study. Are the Baptists right in claiming Patrick as one of their own? Are Bury and McGoldrick right in surrendering him, for the most part, to the Catholics? Is it possible to know the truth? This is what we will seek to determine.

THE SOURCES

As we examine the evidence, we will look first at the greatest factor in the differing conclusions concerning Patrick: the ancient sources from which we obtain our knowledge of him. These are twofold: the writings attributed to Patrick himself, and the many ancient biographies passed down to us.

⁴Charles H. H. Wright, *The Writings of Patrick: the Apostle of Ireland* (London: Religious Tract Society, n.d.), 6-7.

⁵McGoldrick, 29. The book by Archbishop John Healy is *The Life and Writings of St. Patrick* (Dublin: Gill & Son, 1905).

⁶An example is James Henthorn Todd, *St. Patrick, Apostle of Ireland: A Memoir of His Life and Mission* (Dublin: Hodges, Smith & Co., 1864). His lengthy and very scholarly work is quoted as an authority to be reckoned with by all subsequent writers whom I have encountered, whether they agree with his conclusions or not.

⁷J. B. Bury, *The Life of St. Patrick* (London: MacMillan and Co., 1905), vii-viii.

⁸McGoldrick, 23-30, "St. Patrick: A Baptist?" He now teaches at a Presbyterian church and seminary near Greenville, SC.

Patrick's Own Writings

In his translation, Dr. Charles H. H. Wright presents three writings as probably genuine: St. Patrick's *Hymn*, also known as St. Patrick's *Breastplate*, or *Lorica*⁹; the *Epistle to Coroticus*; and his *Confession*.

Notable in the latter two writings is their "barbarous Latin." Indeed, the author of the *Confessions* continually apologizes for it. According to Todd, "the learned Casimir Oudin" felt strongly that Patrick did not write these letters because he could not believe the Roman pontiffs would have been "*so stupid*" as to appoint such an unlearned man bishop of Ireland (with all the teaching responsibility involved).¹⁰ However, to Todd that was rather indisputable evidence of their genuineness, for who would have tried to pass off such forgeries? If Patrick was believed to be "a man of learning and celebrity," how would they ever be accepted? Also, to what purpose would such forgeries have been produced?¹¹ In addition, the outline received from these letters is "as it were the skeleton which [all the subsequent] biographers have clothed with miracle and legend."¹² R. P. C. Hanson, writing in 1968, says that "all scholars today confidently believe" in the genuineness of these two letters.¹³ Very recently, Philip Freeman takes their authenticity entirely as granted.¹⁴ There are many evidences to support this conclusion.

Concerning the *Lorica*, Dr. Wright quotes Dr. Todd that "it may be difficult, if not impossible, to adduce *proof* in support of the tradition that Patrick was its author";¹⁵ however, Dr. Wright is inclined to accept it because it portrays Patrick more realistically as one who is relying upon the help of God, rather than as a powerful miracle worker (as

⁹ *Lorica* is Latin for "Breastplate," so called because it was "supposed to guard a traveller like a breastplate from his spiritual foes" (Wright, 13). Wright's translation of this beautiful poem is fully reproduced in Appendix A.

¹⁰ Todd, 349. Todd quotes Oudin: "Who can believe, if Patrick was a man of learning and celebrity in the fifth century, that he could have written in a half Latin and barbarous style?"

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 350. Dr. Todd argues with persuasive logic that if these are forgeries, then at the very least that indicates that Patrick must not have been popularly thought of as a very learned man at the time they were forged. In that case, why could he not have written them?

¹² *Ibid.*, 351.

¹³ R. P. C. Hanson, *Saint Patrick, His Origins and Career* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), 72.

¹⁴ Philip Freeman, *St. Patrick of Ireland: a Biography* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004), xvii-xix. He is professor of Classics at Washington Univ. This is more of a popular, than scholarly work.

¹⁵ Wright, 11.

even the earliest biographers portray him).¹⁶ Nevertheless, while acknowledging that the *Lorica* is “certainly of great antiquity,” Hanson appeals to the strong consensus of scholarly experts in ancient Irish that Patrick probably did not originate it.^{17, 18}

The importance of the two genuine letters cannot be overestimated. They provide a glimpse into the very soul of the man—through them the true Patrick can be known—and in them the spiritual beauty of his soul shines forth in his deep humility and sincerity. Wright witnesses, “A simple unaffected piety, wholly devoid of ostentation, breathes forth in every paragraph of his writings. He ‘walked by faith,’ and therefore his works were done in love.”¹⁹ Even such presumably secular historians as Hanson and Freeman are drawn to the man. Hanson says of Patrick, that he was “perhaps the most honest of all who ever wrote Christian Latin,”²⁰ and feels that his very simplicity (and even awkwardness) of expression, his freedom from rhetorical influences, in a sense enhances, rather than hindering his effectiveness.

Several things stand out when reading Patrick. Patrick’s love for lost souls, especially the Irish people, is evident in both letters. With what tenderness he regarded his children in the faith, and how solicitous he was for their welfare!

Patrick also loved the Bible. He alludes to it and quotes from it constantly. Hanson writes that “the one book which we can be absolutely certain that Patrick has read is his Latin Bible.”²¹ It had taken powerful hold of Patrick’s heart. Particularly meaningful to Patrick were such verses as Isa 49:6; Jer. 16:19; and Matt. 8:11—verses about the light of Christ reaching to the ends of the world, to the uttermost part of the earth (which Ireland seemed to be). A closely related thought is Patrick’s belief that he is in *the last days*, in

¹⁶ Wright, 12.

¹⁷ Hanson, 74-75. Freeman agrees (161), but he seems largely to follow Hanson (198), so he probably should not be considered an independent witness. In any case, its antiquity most likely means it fairly closely reflects the beliefs of St. Patrick, as Dr. Todd assures us (432).

¹⁸ In addition to these, there are attributed by legend to Patrick certain proverbs and sayings, a vision of Ireland, and a number of ecclesiastical canons. The latter will be dealt with separately because of their importance, but it will suffice to say of the rest that scholars are agreed on their spuriousness.

¹⁹ Wright, 27.

²⁰ Hanson, 206. His more extended discussion on pp. 205-8 is worth reading.

²¹ Hanson, 202.

view of which he has been specially chosen by God as one of His hunters and fishers for souls (Jer. 16:16). He was motivated strongly by a realization that he had the authority of God's Word—that *it was being fulfilled in him!* He writes that God's call was so powerful to him, that he resisted the pleadings of family and friends, gave up his noble birth, and chose instead to endure the displeasure of senior ecclesiastics, the dangers and insults of unbelieving heathen, and the hardships of wandering from home, in order to obey.

There is also a heartfelt desire to praise and magnify God, which he does repeatedly; yet not in a stilted, unnatural way, but with evident simplicity and sincerity. He writes:

Before I was humbled I was like a stone lying in deep mud; and He who is mighty came, and in His own mercy raised me, and lifted me up, and placed me on the top of the wall. And hence I ought loudly to cry out, to return also something to the Lord for His so great benefits, here and in eternity, which benefits the mind of men cannot imagine.²²

The closing words of the *Confession* aptly illustrate his spirit: “But judge ye, and let it be most truly believed that *it has been the gift of God*. And this is my Confession before I die.”²³

Patrick's Biographers

The contrast between the Saint Patrick of the biographers and the Patrick we have just seen manifests the importance of studying his own writings. These subsequent traditions about Patrick are the battlefield on which the historians fight. Hanson writes that their “presuppositions about the later traditions” determine the different accounts of Patrick's life produced by each scholar²⁴—and each one is different!

The earliest known composition on Patrick is the Hymn of Secundinus, traditionally ascribed to his collaborator and nephew. Dr. Todd believed it could be genuine, for it contains none of the ridiculous miracles seen in later works.²⁵ Hanson dates it to the sixth

²¹ Wright, 40. Wright's translation is highly recommended. It is much to be preferred over Freeman's modern rendering. Though Patrick's rude Latin makes translation difficult, Wright seeks to be as *literal* as possible, while also maintaining a simple dignity. Freeman tends to be more *dynamic* in his approach, and often produces a childish or simple-minded tone. See Appendix B for two brief quotations offered side-by-side, so that the reader may see the difference for himself. It will be evident.

²³ *Ibid.*, 66. Emphasis added.

²⁴ Hanson, 82.

²⁵ Todd, 312.

century, earlier than any of the biographical records, but still subsequent to Patrick.²⁶

The earliest biographies date from at least two centuries after Patrick's life. These are the biographies of *Muirchu Maccu-Mactheni* (c. 690) and *Tirechan* (early eighth century). A look at these abundantly displays the difficulties historians encounter. Muirchu was a monk, who heavily borrowed from Scripture in his accounts of Patrick's doings. He was apparently the first to attempt to gather the legends of Patrick into a single history. In his preface he relates his difficulties, complaining of "little skill ... uncertain authors ... frail memory... obliterated meaning and barbarous language."²⁷ The result was what one might expect. As for *Tirechan*, Hanson gives this picture:

Tirechan ... launches into a narrative which brings Patrick to Ireland with a large escort of 'bishops, presbyters, deacons, exorcists, ostiaries, readers and boys whom he had ordained,' causes him during the course of his ministry to ordain 350 bishops (the names of forty-one of whom Tirechan records), ... and then conducts him on a carefully planned round tour of Ireland, during which the saint, always master of the situation, founds a great number of churches, performs several miracles, and shows a remarkable interest in the future disposition of Church properties."²⁸

Evidently, Tirechan was ideologically motivated by the purpose of establishing the supremacy of the see of Armagh among the monasteries of Ireland, as opposed by the successors of Columba of Iona.²⁹

Among the most prominent of the subsequent works were the *Book of Armagh* (A.D. 807), Colgan's *Lives* (containing seven biographies), Probus' *Life* (tenth century), the *Vita Tripartita* ("Tripartite Life," eleventh century) and Jocelin's *Life* (1100s). Each one, of

²⁶ Hanson, 77. This was for two reasons: first, tradition also says that Secundinus died before Patrick, yet the Hymn evidently borrowed from the *Confession*, which gives sure indications of being written toward the close of Patrick's life; second, it "suggests a Patrick without trials and without set-backs or vicissitudes," thus foreshadowing the later legends. While the first reason would seem to preclude part of the tradition, neither seem to *require* any great distance from Patrick's own lifetime.

²⁷ Todd, 402. The entire quote gives a helpful snapshot of the style of his work and the difficulty he faced: "Forasmuch as many, my lord Aidus, have taken in hand to set forth in order a narration, namely this, according to what their fathers, and they who from the beginning were ministers of the Word, have delivered unto them; but by reason of the very great difficulty of the narrative and the diverse opinions and numerous doubts of very many persons, have never arrived at any one certain track of history; therefore ... I have brought down the boyish row-boat of my poor capacity into this dangerous and deep ocean of sacred narrative ... an ocean never attempted or occupied by any barks, save only that of my father Cogitosus. But lest I should seem to make a small matter great, with little skill, from uncertain authors, with frail memory, with obliterated meaning and barbarous language, but with a most pious intention, obeying the command of thy belovedness, and sanctity, and authority, I will now attempt, out of many acts of Saint Patrick, to explain these, gathered here and there with difficulty."

²⁸ Hanson, 79.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 80. Hanson indicates that there is no doubt about this motive.

course, is based on those that go before, and the miraculous elements continue to build. Todd writes, “On comparing these narratives, no unprejudiced mind can doubt that the writers of these collections allowed themselves the utmost license in dealing with their authorities.”³⁰

The legends basically give this story. Patrick being with St. Germain in Gaul, he received the vision of Ireland. St. Germain then sent him forth accompanied by Segetius. Patrick went to Rome to receive a commission from St. Celestine the pope; after the death of Palladius,³¹ he was commissioned in his place. Some put him spending years in Italy with St. Martin of Tours. While in the Mediterranean region awaiting his commission, he received the “staff of Jesus” (from a young man who had lodged the Lord, or from a hermit), and personally spoke with the Lord on a rocky island. After receiving his commission, he was sent forth with relics (of Peter and Paul) to Ireland.³²

How much these accounts are to be considered history can be seen from some of the miracles recorded in Jocelin’s *Life* (as told by Wright):

Patrick was baptized by a blind priest who obtained water for the purpose by causing the infant to make the sign of the cross over the earth, out of which issued at once a well of water, which cured the priest of his blindness, and enabled him to read the order of baptism ‘without knowing until then his letters.’ ... A goat bleated out of the stomachs of the men who had eaten it up, and according to a later embellishment, came out alive out of their mouths. When a tooth fell out of Patrick’s head, the tooth shone in the ford like a sun Coroticus, the king of the Britons, was changed into a fox.³³

These accounts fit far better into the category of Irish hagiography than biography. Yet, while some historians are inclined to throw out these histories as completely worthless, insofar as knowing the truth about Saint Patrick, others believe there are many kernels of truth underlying the legends (what they are and how many is another problem). One example of the latter is Archbishop Healy, who wrote concerning the *Vita Tripartita*, that it is “far the most valuable and complete of all the extant Lives of the Apostle.”³⁴

³⁰ Todd, 332.

³¹ Palladius was sent by pope Celestine to Ireland in 431. The ancient biographers concur that Patrick succeeded Palladius after the latter’s death in 432.

³² Todd, 321-24.

³³ Wright, 16.

³⁴ John Healy, *The Life and Writings of St. Patrick* (Dublin: M. H. Gill & Son, 1905), 15.

(John Roche Ardill relates some of the legends characteristic of this “valuable” document.³⁵) Healy also commended the veracity of Jocelin, the biographer cited previously by Wright.³⁶ It will be seen that the Roman Catholic view of Patrick relies heavily upon these ancient biographers.

THE COMMISSION

One of the fiercest fights in the controversy over Patrick is the question of his commission: was he commissioned as bishop of Ireland by the pope Celestine, or merely by the Gallic or British churches? Though some Protestant writers vigorously protest that the matter is really insignificant from a religious point of view,³⁷ both Catholics³⁸ and Baptists strongly disagree.

The Romanist View

The essence of the Romanist view, stripped (it is believed) of the legendary baggage, is that Patrick, having returned to Britain, and desiring theological training in preparation for the ministry, went to Gaul to study with Germanus at Auxerre. During his stay with Germanus, Palladius was commissioned by St. Celestine, the pope, as bishop of Ireland in 431. For unknown reasons (conflicting accounts), Palladius’ ministry there was very shortlived, and Patrick was duly appointed in his place in 432. Some variations have Patrick studying also with St. Martin of Tours, claimed by biographers to be his mother’s brother. Other accounts say that Patrick went first to Ireland as a deacon, but feeling his

³⁵ John Roche Ardill, *St. Patrick, A. D. 180* (London: John Murray, [1931?]), 13-15. Patrick encounters a young man and woman on an island in the Mediterranean. They had been visited by Jesus during his life on earth, and blessed with eternal youth (their aged children and grandchildren didn’t have this blessing!). They offer him the Staff of Jesus, but he refuses it until it is given him by the Lord Himself on Mount Hermon. He also asks three things before going to the Irish: “to be on his right hand in the Kingdom of heaven, [to] be the judge of the Gael on doomsday, and as much gold and silver as the nine companions could carry to be given to the Gael for believing.” This account gives other stories equally laughable, such as the three choirs which sang at Patrick’s commissioning by the pope—the heavenly choir, the Roman choir, and a choir of the children from the wood of Foelut (the home of those in Patrick’s vision); and a leper who accompanied the boat on the journey to Ireland, sailing round and round it on an altar cast down for him by St. Patrick. Also the Roman Catholic bias is most evident.

³⁶ Healy, 15.

³⁷ Wright, 7; Todd, vi. Both men argue against the commission on historical grounds.

³⁸ Wright, 7. One Catholic journal objected to Wright’s work because of his omission of any discussion of Patrick’s alleged commission from Rome, stating that that was in effect “the suppression of everything in the shape of argument on the Catholic side!”

need for more authority he took a trip to Rome, where he received his commission as bishop, and managed to obtain relics which he brought back with him to Ireland. The basis for this view is the overwhelming consensus of the ancient biographers.³⁹

A semi-Romanist view is espoused by Bury, McGoldrick, and no doubt others. McGoldrick adopts the view that Germanus commissioned Patrick for Ireland with the pope's approval, as he himself prepared (with a papal commission) to assail Pelagianism in Britain. Thus, Patrick went to Ireland "in the service of Rome."⁴⁰ Bury, whom McGoldrick cites frequently as an authority, suggests that the Irish Christians probably requested a bishop from Rome, most likely because of Pelagian controversy there⁴¹ (the fact that Pelagius was accused by Jerome of being Irish helps support the last point).

In opposition to this view are Todd, Wright, Hanson and Ardill. The first objection is the complete silence of Patrick himself on the subject. Wright notes that "if ... he did receive a commission from Rome ... the silence of Patrick himself on the subject certainly proves that he attached no such importance to such a commission as his mediæval biographers were disposed to affirm."⁴² This silence is *very* significant in light of the nature of his *Confession*. He was evidently under the necessity of defending his position and ministry to the bishops of Britain. Patrick repeatedly and strongly emphasized his calling by God to the Irish, and insisted that he would remain with them until his death. Dr. Todd argues convincingly that he would *certainly* have appealed to his papal commission under these circumstances if he indeed had been given one.⁴³

Not only is there complete silence by Patrick, but also by all other writers of that period and for the next two hundred years—not only about Patrick's commission, but even Patrick himself! Yet, Ardill describes that age as abounding in historical materials.⁴⁴

³⁹ According to Cathcart, Tirechan was the first to assert Patrick's commission from Celestine, implying that Muirechu must not have (77). Nor did the earlier Hymn of St. Fiacc (Todd, 313).

⁴⁰ McGoldrick, 25. McGoldrick also states authoritatively that Patrick "went to Ireland after being inducted into the hierarchy of the Catholic church through episcopal consecration" (28).

⁴¹ Bury, 52.

⁴² Wright, 7.

⁴³ Todd, 310.

⁴⁴ Ardill, 10-13.

Cathcart quotes the boasting of Gregory the Great on behalf of Augustine of Canterbury after his successful conversion of the English, and wonders why the first Roman Catholic to mention Patrick would have been Cumman in 634, “an obscure but learned Irish Romanist.”⁴⁵ It is also noteworthy that the ancient Hymn of Secundinus (discussed earlier) lauds Patrick as the foundation of the Irish church, and emphasizes his *divine* commission from *God*, but offers no thanks to the pope for sending him.⁴⁶

As to what factual basis could have originated this story, Todd again provides a sensible answer. It is acknowledged by all that there was more than one *Patrick*. In fact, Tirechan records that *Palladius* was also called Patrick. Of Palladius’ papal commission there is no question (as recorded by his contemporary, Prosper of Chronicle). Todd believes that, in their desire to magnify Patrick, his Romanist biographers attributed to him the commission truly held by Palladius.⁴⁷

The British View

There are two primary views among those who do not accept the commission from Rome. The first, propounded by Todd, is that Patrick was trained in Gaul (probably under Germanus), but that his commission as bishop was entirely unrelated to Palladius, and was performed by a bishop of the Gallican church. This seems to have been on the basis of his call to Ireland by God. Todd believes Patrick was still a slave when Palladius came to Ireland in 431, and that Patrick returned around 440.⁴⁸ Cathcart and Wright (both 19th century historians) agree more or less with this view.⁴⁹ Ardill also accepts the Gallic training,⁵⁰ with a significantly different twist on the dates (more on this later).

The main thesis of Hanson’s book is that Patrick did not go to Gaul at all. He was completely trained and sent forth by the British church. It would be outside the purpose

⁴⁵ Cathcart, 83.

⁴⁶ Cathcart, 88-90; Todd, 312.

⁴⁷ Todd, 320. In his discussion, Todd supports this “mix-up” theory with many excellent evidences.

⁴⁸ Todd, 399.

⁴⁹ Wright, 23; Cathcart, 82.

⁵⁰ Ardill, 171.

of this study to examine his reasons—one primary evidence is the unique Latin he used.⁵¹ Not surprisingly, Freeman agrees with Hanson, briefly developing Patrick’s lack of education, his family ties and the availability of British training as evidences.⁵² However, whether trained in Britain alone, or also in Gaul, the important point here is that both camps agree that Patrick did not look outside the churches of that region for his commissioning.

THE CANONS

In regards to the canons attributed to Saint Patrick, once again we find Todd and Bury in opposition. The works of Dr. Todd and J. B. Bury on Patrick have both had considerable influence, as can be seen by the frequent references to them in subsequent works on the subject. Whether in agreement or not, future writers have felt the need to acknowledge and grapple with their arguments. It is interesting that they reached such different conclusions! Bury himself, writing forty years later, praises Todd’s work highly in his preface for its “learning and critical acumen.”⁵³ His criticism is that it left him “doubtful about every fact connected with Patrick’s life.”⁵⁴ He also chides Todd for a lack of impartiality, in that he desired a certain outcome of conclusions, though Bury takes care to note that Todd would not have intentionally twisted facts⁵⁵ (it is evident that Todd was probably an evangelical Anglican).

Bury’s biography of Patrick has had considerable influence. In fact, it was recently edited and reissued by a Catholic writer.⁵⁶ Though Bury was not a Catholic—and in fact appears to have been more atheistic in his leanings⁵⁷—unsurprisingly his conclusions have been highly acclaimed by them. Yet, later historians have not failed to point out Bury’s own biases. Ardill writes that “he had certain preconceived ideas as to the kind

⁵¹ Hanson develops this point at length (158-170).

⁵² Freeman, 63-64.

⁵³ Bury, vi.

⁵⁴ Ibid. This is an overstatement, as can be seen from the conclusions drawn from Todd in this paper.

⁵⁵ Ibid., vii.

⁵⁶ <http://www.inhisname.com/product.php?product=51047#.Urqr41Q3T->

⁵⁷ Oliver St. John Gogarty, *I Follow St. Patrick* (London: Constable, 1950), 60. This was written by a former student of Bury. Whether he is entirely in earnest or not, I cannot tell, but there is clearly at least a grain of seriousness.

of religion which Patrick came to propagate in Ireland, and these ideas may have been a hindrance to a fair statement of Patrick's life and work."⁵⁸ As an accomplished historian of the late Roman Empire, Bury consistently assumed that Patrick would not have differed from the common beliefs and practices of his time, even where there is no evidence for such conclusions, or even contradictory evidence.⁵⁹ Hanson calls it "surprising" how much of the later tradition Bury accepted as genuine, and says that this influenced "a large number of later scholars."⁶⁰ He also notes that "all the external dates upon which Bury relied have proved deceptive."⁶¹

The Irish historical tradition attributed a number of canons to Patrick and bishops associated with him by legend. Thirty of these canons were contained in a circular letter, known as *Synodus I*, supposed to have been produced by Patrick and two fellow-bishops; there was also a document called *Synodus II*, and several independent canons. In an appendix, Bury argues for the authenticity of the circular letter (also called *Hibernensis*).⁶² Todd, as well, allows that this Synod may be genuine, and is at least more ancient than

⁵⁸ Ardill, 17.

⁵⁹ Ardill provides several very important examples of this error. For example, Bury's "evidence" pointed to Patrick making a visit to Rome in the midst of his Irish labors, when Leo the Great became pope, and a motive given is this: "It is certain that Patrick could not have helped sharing in this universal reverence for relics, and could not have failed to deem it an object of high importance to secure things of such value for his church. The hope of winning a fragment of a cerement cloth or some grains of dust ... would have been no small inducement to visit Rome, the city of many martyrs" (Bury, 157).

However, as Ardill says, Patrick's writings give *not a trace* of support for this "certainty" (Ardill, 18). In fact, they flatly *contradict* it. Patrick wrote: "Wherefore, though I could wish to leave them [his Irish converts], and had been most willingly prepared to proceed to the Britains, as to my country and parents; and not that only, but even (to go) as far as to the Gauls, to visit the brethren and to see the face of the saints of my Lord. God knows that I greatly desired it. But I am 'bound in the Spirit' who 'witnesseth to me,' that if I should do this, He would hold me guilty; and I fear to lose the labour which I have commenced; and not I, but Christ the Lord, who commanded me to come, and be with them for the rest of my life" (Wright, 57). If Patrick would not even take a trip to Britain to see his family, or go to Gaul to see, perhaps, his former colleagues-in-training, because of a conviction that the Holy Spirit wanted him to remain in Ireland, would he venture on a journey to Rome?! Hanson writes, "That Patrick never left Ireland once he had set foot in it as bishop seems certain" (138). In addition, no Bible-believer should be quick to accept without evidence Bury's admitted *assumption* that a diligent Bible student like Patrick "could not have helped" venerating relics: we know full well that not every man is in step with "the spirit of the age."

Bury also states as fact that Patrick was accompanied about Ireland by an order of Exorcists (Bury, 77); but the only evidence of this is his Lives, written at least two hundred years after his death, and consisting of almost nothing but superstition and miracles (see Ardill, 18).

Further examples could be given from the twelve pages Ardill spends on Bury's errors, but some of them will be dealt with more later. The truth is that Patrick's writings present a picture of the man widely at variance with the caricature drawn of him by Bury (Ardill, 27-28).

⁶⁰ Hanson, 82.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 171.

⁶² Bury, 233-45.

the others.⁶³ However, in its present form he takes it to be a work of the ninth or tenth century, most likely, and only partially authentic. Bury answers several of Todd's arguments concerning specific questionable canons (it is difficult for this writer to judge the merits of the arguments from his knowledge base), but does not mention the canon in which offerings made to the bishop are referred to as an "ancient custom"—Todd says this could not possibly have been written by Patrick, because no such custom could yet have been "ancient" in Ireland at that time.⁶⁴

Bury finds fourteen "items" contained in the circular letter in an eighth century manuscript, probably compiled by the monk Adamnan.⁶⁵ This manuscript attributes the canons from *Synodus I* to Patrick, but not those of *Synodus II* (with one partial exception), which is clearly unauthentic—Bury thinks the latter was from the Acts of seventh century Irish synods which were held to introduce Roman reforms [*Sinodus Romana*]⁶⁶—thus providing evidence that the compiler of the manuscript may have known which were genuine and which were not. However, even though Bury clearly wants to accept *Synodus I* as a whole as authentic,⁶⁷ and *even as an authoritative document to be used in discovering Patrick's teachings*,⁶⁸ he also seems to allow for the possibility of interpolations during the eighth century⁶⁹ (the example given by Todd seems obvious). A plain indication of such interpolations is found in Bury's own comments, for he notes that one of the thirty canons of the *Synodus I* is cited by *Hibernensis*[?] as from the *Sinodus Romana*: his explanation is that it was *adopted* at that synod.⁷⁰ In addition, in light of the multiplicity of manifest interpolations in the ancient Patrician manuscripts, it appears rather credulous to assume that this document would have none—in fact, it would seem to be far easier to insert them undetected into a collection of individual canons than into a continuous historic text.

⁶³ Todd, 485.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 488.

⁶⁵ Bury, 236.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 239.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 245.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 240.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 237.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 238-39.

The most important and controversial is the canon of appeal to Rome. Concerning this canon, Bury writes:

One of them, not the least important, is a provision which, *without any express evidence, we might surmise* that Patrick would have ordained. It required no special discernment to foresee that in a young church difficult questions would inevitably arise which might lead to grave controversy and dissension. How were such to be decided? Could they safely be left to local councils, with no higher court of appeal? The obvious resource was to follow the common practice of other western churches and request the Bishop of Rome to lay down a ruling. For Patrick, *as for his contemporaries*, this was simply a matter of course.⁷¹

McGoldrick states Bury's "surmise" as certain historical fact. He writes, "In his episcopal office [Patrick] followed the practice of submitting difficult matters to the judgment of Rome in order to obtain *decretals* from the bishop presiding there."⁷² He then adds, in accordance with Bury's line of thinking, "This was typical procedure for bishops of the Latin church by that time."⁷³ Of course he cites Bury for this information.

Interestingly, this particular canon is *not* one of those included in the circular letter, but is attributed to Patrick in the eighth century manuscript of Adamnan[?],⁷⁴ where it apparently first appears. Considering that there was a known movement at that time (even referred to by Bury with the *Sinodus Romana*) to bring in Roman customs upon the Irish churches, would it not make sense for such a canon to be invented then? Cathcart asks why the Archbishop Malachi in the 12th century did not have recourse to this canon of Patrick when making his risky and potentially unpopular appeal to Rome, if not that everyone knew it was a fraud.⁷⁵ Hanson concludes, with fellow-historian Binchy, that *all* of the canons "bear the clear marks of having been composed to meet the needs and serve in the controversies of the Irish Church of the seventh or later centuries."⁷⁶ Here is another case where Bury's conclusion rests solely upon his assumptions about Patrick—and McGoldrick uncritically receives it and authoritatively preaches it as gospel truth.

⁷¹ Bury, 168-69. Emphases added.

⁷² McGoldrick, 28.

⁷³ *Ibid.* Of course, the *differences* between the Irish and Latin church *are* matters of historical fact.

⁷⁴ Bury, 239. This information is somewhat buried in Bury's discussion, but it is included.

⁷⁵ Cathcart, 100.

⁷⁶ Hanson, 74.

THE DOCTRINE AND PRACTICE

As we have seen, the links connecting Patrick to Rome are frail: essentially they are his papal commission, as recorded by much later biographers whose works can hardly be deemed reliable; his establishment of an appeal to Rome, based upon a canon bearing evident marks of later composition; and the age in which he lived. The first two have been proved (it is hoped decisively) to be more than unlikely; the last point, though touched upon, will be covered in the next section.

Concerning the doctrine and practice of Patrick, there is little direct evidence to go on. We must reject Bury's decision to accept the canons as any kind of authority in this matter. The most reliable sources are his own writings: though they provide little to work with, what they do tell us should be regarded as the most weighty evidence. Above all, they show a man who loved, studied and obeyed the Word of God. While we cannot draw many specific inferences from this, it should certainly provide a background in which to view him.

It is to be expected that the Catholics would portray Patrick as a full-blown Romanist bishop of the fifth century: teaching sacramental grace, venerating relics, baptizing infants, honoring the papacy, and whatever else that entailed. In fact, this view is typical of *most* historians, regardless of their position on the previous arguments. It is in this matter that the Baptists depart from most of their erstwhile allies.

Bury attributes to Patrick a number of representative Romanist distinctives that were in fact rejected by the early Irish church, but finally brought in over time: the timing of the Easter observance; the supremacy of the see of Armagh; the Roman tonsure (as opposed to the Druidic); and the appeals to Rome.⁷⁷ Ardill questions these "failures" of Patrick (from Bury's perspective). Bury insists that Patrick must have introduced the Roman system in each case, and the Irish churches rejected his reforms in favor of traditions received from British Christianity prior to Patrick⁷⁸—yet, what basis does he have for

⁷⁷ Ardill, 20-25. My independent research bears out Ardill's contention here.

⁷⁸ Ardill, 21.

his assumptions about Patrick's teachings? Certainly nothing whatsoever from Patrick's writings—in fact, they give no hint of support—and Patrick is not mentioned at all in any history prior to the end of the seventh century (when these reforms were introduced). Why then is Bury so insistent that the practice of the Irish must have fallen away from Patrick's teaching? This matter highlights his preconceptions.

Todd's contribution to the subject of Patrick's doctrine and practice is mostly incidental. He engages in a very interesting and profitable discussion of the causes for Patrick's success. However, because it has little to do with the topic of Patrick's doctrine and practices in connection with the Baptists, it must be relegated to an appendix.⁷⁹ He does note, relevant to this discussion, that the biographers have Patrick destroying the pagan idols wherever he went, in contrast to the Columban monks, who Christianized the heathen relics and practices.⁸⁰ He also strongly argues against the view that Patrick ever intended to exalt the see of Armagh over the others.⁸¹ Nor does Todd ever seem to have Patrick teaching or practicing anything that would be completely out of line with Baptist doctrine.

Hanson, however, is both helpful and harmful to the Baptist position. His conclusion on Patrick is that he had “a truly evangelical understanding of the Christian faith,” but was neither “a Roman Catholic bishop” nor “a Protestant evangelist” in the modern understanding: he was simply a typical fifth-century bishop.⁸² He thinks Patrick would have gone along with the veneration of relics, supported the primacy of the papacy in some way, believed in a form of the “real presence,” and favored monastic life. Strangely, he speaks of Patrick celebrating the Eucharist,⁸³ apparently citing this passage: “But hence I ought to give thanks without ceasing to God ...”⁸⁴ However, it makes much more sense to take Patrick's quote in reference to literal giving of thanks, rather than “celebrat-

⁷⁹ See Appendix C, “Patrick's Missionary Methods.”

⁸⁰ Todd, 127.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 94.

⁸² Hanson, 203.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 137, n. 1.

⁸⁴ Wright, 59. The meaning of “eucharist,” of course, is “thanksgiving,” so no doubt that is the source of Hanson's statement.

ing the eucharist.” In fact, Hanson himself comments later that Patrick never mentioned the eucharist!⁸⁵

Hanson’s view of Patrick, like Bury’s, is based on the time in which Patrick lived. Their thinking seems to be, “Why would Patrick believe or practice anything different?” Perhaps they are right, but there are also strong evidences that Patrick was something of an anachronism, that he was *not* a typical fifth-century bishop. Perhaps also their idea of the typical fifth-century bishop was not as universal as they think. One conclusion Hanson makes from this premise (he first spends eleven pages proving the existence of monasticism in England in the fifth century) is that Patrick was almost certainly a monk.⁸⁶ Yet, earlier Hanson refers to the work of a modern historian who writes: “there is not a single indication or clue in [Patrick’s] language that he personally had anything to do with monasticism.”⁸⁷ He refers to her research again: “His vocabulary, she says, is quite uninfluenced by monasticism. Any words which suggest this ... have an apostolic and not a specifically monastic sense. Patrick quotes the Psalms very rarely, in contrast to monastic writers; she points out that there are only five literal quotations from the psalms and ten allusions to texts of the Psalms in his work.”⁸⁸ In the end, Hanson seems to respect her scholarship, but to feel that Patrick’s writing needs to be interpreted in light of the strong evidence for monasticism in England at that time.

William Cathcart, in his book *The Ancient British and Irish Churches*, gave the fullest argument of anyone for the Baptistic doctrine and practice of Patrick. This was in several points. He gives an argument from silence on pp. 151-54 that Patrick’s baptism was *for believers only*. However, it does seem to have some merit. In every mention of the thousands he baptized, by himself and his ancient biographers, they always speak of baptizing men and women, *never* infants. He also consistently is said to preach to them, and then to baptize them after they believe.⁸⁹ It indeed would seem that some mention of

⁸⁵ Hanson, 203.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 157.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 141. He is quoting Christine Mohrmann, *The Latin of Patrick*, 27.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 141-42.

⁸⁹ Cathcart, 151. Quite surprisingly, the *Vita Tripartita* includes a commentary on Matt. 28:18-20

the baptism of numerous infants would be found if that were his practice, especially by his later biographers tainted by Roman “Christianity.” McGoldrick argues that “by the fifth century pedobaptism had become common across Christendom, and it is very unlikely that a bishop *approved by Rome, as Patrick was*, would have disavowed it.”⁹⁰ He says that Bury’s view that Patrick believed in baptism as “the sacramental means for cleansing one of original sin ... *although also without evidential support*, is more probable than the view advanced by Cathcart.”⁹¹ We have already seen, though, that Patrick was *not* approved by Rome, and McGoldrick admits that Bury’s view has no evidence to support it. Why then assume that Patrick’s practice was contrary to that taught in the Bible, which he knew and loved?

Cathcart’s argument for immersion is twofold: first, Patrick baptized in “wells”; second, immersion was still the common practice at that time.⁹² The first point is indisputably in accordance with the record of his biographers (and it does not appear what reason there might be to question it); and for the second, documentary proof is provided by Cathcart. Since immersion is conceded by all to be the original mode of baptism, it should not be surprising that the practice lingered still, as the evidence seems to indicate.

Cathcart’s next point is weaker. He argues that Patrick rejected the authority of councils, creeds and canons.⁹³ Patrick’s creed is definitely not Nicene, nor derived from any other of the councils.⁹⁴ Ardill devotes fifteen pages to the curiosity of Patrick’s creed—strikingly dissimilar to every other creed. The timing for Patrick’s originality is curious: when he was under attack by the ecclesiastics in Britain, why would he have presumed to tamper with the creeds? Also, as Ardill points out, in the *Confession* he is clearly leaving a legacy for his Irish followers.⁹⁵ He is supposed to have been in Gaul

containing these words: “Meet is the order, teaching before baptism. For it cannot be that the body should receive the sacrament of baptism before the soul receives the verity of faith ...”

⁹⁰ McGoldrick, 28. Emphasis added.

⁹¹ Ibid. Emphasis added.

⁹² Cathcart, 154-57

⁹³ Ibid., 158-61.

⁹⁴ This creed has been reproduced for the reader in Appendix D, copied from Wright, 37.

⁹⁵ Ardill, 36, 38.

(some say even in Rome) in 431 or 432, immediately following the Council of Ephesus, yet he makes no mention of the Virgin Mary in his creed at all! Ardill's conclusion, thoroughly and convincingly developed, is that Patrick *knew no creed*⁹⁶—that he appears “to be oblivious to everything about the doctrines of the Church, *except as he read them in the Bible for himself*.”⁹⁷ This rings true. Truly, his creed does have the freshness of truth drawn straight from Scripture; it has none of the hair-splitting of the credal councils. This theory is also wholly in accordance with the close familiarity with Scripture exuded in his writings. “It is in form a single affirmation of a series of articles of faith, not a negation of error or heresies; the Creed, in a word, not of a controversialist but of an evangelist.”⁹⁸

However, to say that Patrick *knew* no creed is not the same as saying he *rejected* them. The latter is certainly an inference on Cathcart's part, and one that cannot be proclaimed as fact on the basis of the evidence provided. It is possible that Patrick could have rejected some of the accepted Roman canons—the Irish church in the following centuries did have practices and beliefs in discord with them—however, Ardill presents another possibility, which will be discussed more.

Finally, Cathcart is perfectly right in saying that Patrick *appeals to nothing but the authority of the Bible* in his extant writings,⁹⁹ but he seems a bit presumptuous when he tries to link Patrick to Martin of Tours as an advocate of non-persecution of unbelievers (though Patrick may have held that position, the evidence is lacking).^{100, 101}

In conclusion, this writer believes that Cathcart makes at least a plausible case for baptism by immersion for believers only. The scornful dismissal by McGoldrick is unwarranted, and based upon flawed sources.

⁹⁶ Ardill, 38.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 39. Ardill relies upon McGiffert's work on creeds. McGiffert was a professor at Union Theological Seminary around 1900.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 40. Here he is quoting a Dr. Gwynn.

⁹⁹ Cathcart, 161-62

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 162-63.

¹⁰¹ For an ancient document that may reflect some of Patrick's teachings, see Wright, 84-89.

THE TIME

Traditional

The commonly held dates for Patrick are approximately: birth, A.D. 379; commission, 432; death, 461. There is, however, variation within this general time frame. Todd produces a variety of independent witnesses that seem to point to c. 440 as the time of Patrick's arrival in Ireland;¹⁰² he agrees with Ussher that his death was probably in 493.¹⁰³ Of course the date of his birth should also then be later: Todd thinks about 410.¹⁰⁴

A fifth century framework has been accepted since the earliest known biographers, so essentially all of the scholarly research that has been done on Patrick has attempted to understand his writings in light of the fifth century world. However, one historian developed a different theory about when Patrick lived.

Ardill's Theory

John Roche Ardill's book, *St. Patrick, A.D. 180*, attempts to place Patrick nearly three hundred years earlier than tradition says. He does substantiate his argument with persuasive internal evidence from Patrick's own writings.

Ardill begins his argument with Patrick's creed.¹⁰⁵ A study of Patrick's writings gives no indication that he was familiar with the theological battles of the fifth century. At that time the Augustinian-Pelagian controversy was raging right there in Britain, and the Nestorian controversy was decided at the council of Ephesus in 431. The Nicene creed had been developed (325) in defense against Arianism long enough in the past to become universally used. Yet, Patrick seems to have been ignorant of all these! His creed bears no trace of influence by them, and it lacks the precision that is wrought out by controversy. When one considers that most scholars have accepted the idea that he studied theology in Gaul for a number of years before going to Ireland, it appears incredible that he could

¹⁰² Todd, 399.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 497.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 394.

¹⁰⁵ Ardill, 30-44.

have been so isolated. (This is one reason for Hanson's contention that Patrick never left Britain, but that does not go nearly far enough in solving the conundrum.) Therefore, Ardill proposes that Patrick *predates* the creeds and controversies.

Some have tried to determine Patrick's date by proving him to be anti-Pelagian.¹⁰⁶ However, the particular words which supposedly betray this are all found in Scripture. Such evidence would make Paul, Origen and the Psalmists anti-Pelagians also.¹⁰⁷ Hanson concludes that "he did not move in circles intellectually advanced enough to become embroiled in this controversy, and we cannot therefore date him by it."¹⁰⁸ It is hard to believe, though, that as duly appointed bishop of Ireland (from whence Pelagius came!), and having obtained theological training in England in the early fifth century, he could have avoided this controversy. Could it be that he predated it?

Another interesting point brought out by Hanson is Patrick's use of the term *mensura fidei*, also used by Victorinus in his Commentary on the Apocalypse. Someone tried to show that Patrick took his profession of faith from Jerome's revision of Victorinus, but according to Hanson "the evidence does not support the conclusions."¹⁰⁹ What Hanson does conclude is very interesting: "The fact that Victorinus as late as about 300 can still use this expression shows how conservative a theologian he was, and the fact that Patrick can reproduce it also shows in what conservative circles he moved."¹¹⁰ In other words, *this term belonged to an earlier era*. Patrick supposedly wrote almost two centuries after Victorinus! Could his use of this term actually be a tip that he lived far earlier than imagined?

Of the same sort is the argument mentioned earlier about Patrick's relationship to monasticism. We again have a situation where according to his times it is to be expected that he would be heavily influenced by it, yet his own writings do not demonstrate that.

Another proof set forth by Ardill is that Patrick's writings convey the distinct

¹⁰⁶ See Hanson, 173.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 174.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 175.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 173.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

impression that he was the first missionary in Ireland.¹¹¹ The humility he conveys would be a farce if he so completely ignored brethren laboring there before him. He clearly saw the *entire* Irish nation as his mission field, as his responsibility. When, at the end of his captivity, he traveled two hundred miles to find his ship in the south of the island, there is no hint that Christianity was already well-established there, as scholars believe was the case by the 400s.

Another evidence Patrick went to Ireland by A.D. 200 is that early writers indicate the gospel had spread that far by the end of the second century; Tertullian, for example, stated that Christianity had already reached places in Britain the Romans couldn't.¹¹²

At length¹¹³ Ardill argues that the status of a decurion like Patrick's father would have fit Patrick's description far closer in A.D. 200 than than in the 400s. By the fifth century, he says, Patrick's claim of having given up nobility to go to the Irish would have been arrogant boasting.¹¹⁴

Another evidence is the Easter custom practiced by the Irish church, which was unique throughout the world. It was the last remnant of the custom practiced by the Western Church before 197.¹¹⁵ If Patrick was trained in Gaul in the late *second* century, it is understandable why he would have brought the ancient custom with him to Ireland.

Much more could be said on the matter (and Ardill does), but this touches upon what seem to be the most weighty points. In his view, Patrick fits the image of a second century missionary far better than a fifth century, and his book convincingly supports his thesis. He does not appear to be motivated by a "Baptist Successionist" agenda at all—they would move in entirely different worlds.¹¹⁶ However, this writer was unable to find any mention of Ardill or his work in subsequent authors—not even the slightest hint of it. Perhaps they deemed his argument so outlandish as to be unworthy of consideration?

¹¹¹ Ardill, 45-56.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 63.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 70-81.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 80.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 111.

¹¹⁶ Max Muller; McGiffert.

Nevertheless, it seems cogent enough to merit at least an attempt at solving the problems he presents. Francis Crawford Burkitt, professor of divinity at Cambridge, writes that Ardill “has made out a strong case which deserves serious consideration.”¹¹⁷

There is one argument against him that shows up online occasionally that may be the basis for the entire disregard he receives—and if it is true, by itself it would completely demolish his thesis—Hanson writes, though without mentioning Ardill at all, that a 1947 study found that Patrick “undoubtedly does reproduce some of the readings of the Vulgate version of the New Testament which was made by Jerome in the year 383.”¹¹⁸ Patrick was no prophet, so quotations from the Vulgate would certainly date him. One wonders, in light of all the evidence for an early date, if there is any possibility of another explanation for these quotes, such as later modifications by a scribe? It would be nice if some historian would address this matter.

Regardless of the conclusion concerning Patrick’s date, this whole controversy reveals how difficult it is to fit Patrick into the mold of the fifth century. In many ways, he himself is an anachronism, a relic of a bygone era. Those like Bury, McGoldrick and Hanson who assume that what he taught and practiced can be known simply from what was prevalent in Europe in the fifth century are presuming greatly upon the evidence.

CONCLUSION

As for our question, then, we must conclude with a measure of uncertainty. It is possible to be quite sure that Patrick was *not* the Romanist bishop portrayed by the Catholics and by Bury, and in fact had no connection with the Roman papacy.¹¹⁹ Yet, we cannot quite concur with the dogmatic statement of Cathcart that “the denomination of Carey and Judson may justly claim Patrick, the illustrious foreign missionary, as hold-

¹¹⁷ William Butler Yeats, *The Collected Works of W. B. Yeats, Vol. V: Later Essays*, ed. William H. O’Donnell (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1994), 411.

¹¹⁸ Hanson, 182. These are only quotes from the book of Acts. Hanson says, “There are no certain traces of the Vulgate text in use in the Celtic Church before the sixth century, except in the case of the Acts of the Apostles” (181). Most of the time Patrick’s text is clearly from an old Italic version (180).

¹¹⁹ McGoldrick’s choice of sources betrays his leanings. He attempts to give the impression of authoritative consensus by noting that Archbishop Healy, a Catholic, and Bury, “a Protestant,” agree on Pat-

ing *all* their leading doctrines, and as being substantially a Baptist.”¹²⁰ A good case can be made that he baptized only believers by immersion, and if indeed he was a second century missionary the likelihood of him being a “Baptist” through and through is all the greater. However, we cannot be certain.

He certainly is a man whom all Baptists can admire and imitate, and with whom they can feel a close bond of kinship. Dr. Wright sums up very well the godly character of Patrick:

The modesty and humility exhibited by him in the account presented of the marvellous success of his mission is most remarkable. There is, moreover, in his writings a display of genuine missionary spirit, which as it has roused many a Christian worker to action in the past, may well stir up many in our day also. Patrick everywhere displays an earnest trust and faith in the constant protection of a gracious Providence. His love for the souls of the men among whom he laboured, notwithstanding the ill-treatment he received as their hands, is remarkable. His honest simplicity and the contempt everywhere displayed for the riches of the world deserve far more general recognition than they have yet received. *His acquaintance with the Holy Scripture, with the phraseology of which his Writings are thoroughly imbued, and his desire to conform his doctrine to their teaching, are significant.*¹²¹

In conclusion, if anything at all can be known of Patrick it is surely this, that in his love for and appeal to the Word of God his spirit is the spirit of a Baptist.¹²²

rick’s commission (29-30, endnote 7). Yet, as we have seen, Bury can hardly be considered very Protestant in his thinking, and many Patrician historians, both Protestant and secular, find fault with his conclusions. The air of certainty with which McGoldrick makes statements with little or no evidential support is entirely unjustified. McGoldrick had “an axe to grind,” and these were the sources that would best produce his desired results.

¹²⁰ Cathcart, 164. Emphasis added.

¹²¹ Wright, 26-27. Emphasis added.

¹²² We cannot fail to mention, before ending, that McGoldrick’s accusation that Patrick’s “repeated claims to having received extra-biblical revelations through dreams and visions place Patrick in strong opposition to the Baptist insistence on *sola scriptura*” (29) may be true of some Baptists, but not nearly all. Patrick experienced communications of the same sort as Paul in his missionary journeys—not an addition of authoritative revelation for God’s people, but a means of personal guidance in God’s will. Most of these visions were fully in accordance with the revealed will of God through the Scripture. The writer personally knows an extraordinary Baptist missionary in Peru who claims to have had a similar experience on more than one occasion, when walking closely with the Lord. We ought not seek such experiences, but maybe it wouldn’t hurt us to be more like Patrick.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Ardill, John Roche. *St. Patrick, A.D. 180*. London: John Murray. [1931?]
- Beller, James R. *The Collegiate Baptist History Workbook*. [Arnold, MO?]: Prairie Fire Press. 2005.
- Bury, J. B. *The Life of St. Patrick*. London: MacMillan and Co. 1905.
- Cathcart, William. *The Ancient British and Irish Churches*. Philadelphia, American Baptist Publication Society. 1894. PDF Google e-book.
- Freeman, Philip. *St. Patrick of Ireland: A Biography*. New York: Simon & Schuster. 2004.
- Gogarty, Oliver St. John. *I Follow St. Patrick*. London: Constable. 1950. Google e-book.
- Hanson, R. P. C. *Saint Patrick, His Origins and Career*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1968.
- Healy, John. *The Life and Writings of St. Patrick*. Dublin: Gill & Son. 1905.
- Jarrel, W. A. *Baptist Church Perpetuity*. Dallas: published by the author[?]. 1894. PDF Google e-book.
- McGoldrick, James Edward. *Baptist Successionism*. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press. 2000.
- Todd, James Henthorn. *St. Patrick, Apostle of Ireland: A Memoir of His Life and Mission*. Dublin: Hodges, Smith & Co. 1864. PDF Google e-book.
- Wright, Charles H. H. *The Writings of Patrick: the Apostle of Ireland*. London: Religious Tract Society. N.D.
- Yeats, William Butler. *The Collected Works of W. B. Yeats, Vol. V: Later Essays*. Edited by William H. O'Donnell. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1994.

APPENDIX A

St. Patrick's Breastplate¹

I bind myself today,
To a strong power, an invocation of the Trinity,
I believe in a Threeness with confession of a Oneness in the Creator of Judgment.

I bind myself today,
To the power of the birth of Christ, with His baptism,
To the power of the crucifixion, with his burial,
To the power of His resurrection, with His ascension,
To the power of His coming to the judgment of Doom.

I bind myself today,
To the power of the ranks of cherubim,
In the obedience of angels,
In the service of the archangels,
In the hope of resurrection unto reward,
In the prayers of patriarchs,
In the predictions of prophets,
In the preachings of apostles,
In the faiths of confessors,
In the purity of holy virgins,
In the acts of righteous men.

I bind myself today,
To the power of heaven,
The light of sun,
The brightness of moon,
The splendour of fire,
The speed of lightning,
The swiftness of wind,
The depth of sea,
The stability of the earth,
The firmness of rocks.

I bind myself today,
To the power of God to guide me,
The might of God to uphold me,
The wisdom of God to teach me,
The eye of God to watch over me.
The ear of God to hear me,

¹ Wright, 31-34.

The word of God to speak for me,
 The hand of God to protect me,
 The way of God to lie before me,
 The shield of God to shelter me,
 The host of God to defend me,
 Against the snares of demons,
 Against the temptations of vices,
 Against [the lusts] of nature,
 Against every man who meditates injury to me,
 Whether far or near,
 Alone and in a multitude.

I summon today around me all these powers,
 Against every hostile merciless power directed against my body and my soul,
 Against the incantations of false prophets,
 Against the black laws of heathenism,
 Against the false laws of heretics,
 Against the deceit of idolatry,
 Against the spells of women, and smiths, and Druids,
 Against all knowledge which hath defiled man's body and soul.

Christ protect me today,
 Against poison, against burning,
 Against drowning, against wound,
 That I may receive a multitude of rewards.

Christ with me, Christ before me,
 Christ behind me, Christ within me,
 Christ beneath me, Christ above me,
 Christ at my right, Christ at my left,
 Christ in breadth, Christ in length, Christ in height.

Christ in the heart of every man who thinks of me,
 Christ in the mouth of every man who speaks to me,
 Christ in the eye of every man that sees me,
 Christ in the ear of every man that hears me.

I bind myself today,
 To a strong power, an invocation of the Trinity,
 I believe in a Threeness with confession of a Oneness in the Creator of Judgment.

Salvation is the Lord's,
 Salvation is the Lord's,
 Salvation is Christ's,
 Let Thy Salvation, O Lord, be ever with us.

APPENDIX B

Wright

“Wherefore, I thought of writing long ago, but hesitated even till now; because I feared falling into the tongue of men; because I have not learned like others who have drunk in, in the best manner, both law and sacred literature in both ways equally; and have never changed their language from infancy, but have always added more to its perfection. For our language and speech is translated into a foreign tongue” (38).

“Hence I blush to-day, and greatly fear to expose my unskilfulness, because, not being eloquent, I cannot express myself with clearness and brevity, nor even as the spirit moves, and the mind and endowed understanding point out” (39).

Freeman

“I have thought about writing this letter for a long time, but I kept putting it off until now. I have been afraid that people would laugh at the way I write. You see, I don’t have much education compared to other people. I was not able to study both literature and theology year after year as they did. They never had to learn to speak any new language but could steadily improve their own Latin until it was practically perfect. But I write Latin as if it were a foreign language...” (178).

“Even so, today I am very ashamed and afraid to show just how awkward my writing is. I am not able to explain things in just a few words like those who can write briefly. My mind and my spirit can’t even work together so that my words say what I really feel inside” (178).

APPENDIX C

Patrick's Missionary Methods

First, Todd states that Patrick “appears to have always addressed himself in the first instance to the kings or chieftains.”¹ The Irish were very clannish and extremely loyal to their kings. Thus, he thinks the people may have not understood much of Christianity at first, but simply followed their converted leaders; however, this permitted Christian institutions to be established among them, which in time would lead to a growth in the knowledge of the faith and have a civilizing influence.² Dr. Todd takes this as the secret of Patrick's success in Ireland.

Patrick also practiced the “indigenous principle.” He spoke their language. The Irish church was self-supporting: ministers of the gospel were raised up from among the people and the financial support came from their chieftains.³ He placed native Irishmen, often leaders, into leading ecclesiastical roles; thus Christianity grew national roots, rather than appearing as a foreign imposition. He was constantly accompanied by “priests-in-training.”⁴ Patrick seems to have instructed those chosen to be church leaders in the alphabet (hence in reading).⁵ Especially in light of his close familiarity with Scripture, this makes sense. Whereas previously the art of writing was probably confined to the Druidic class, Patrick encouraged his students to teach others, and spread the knowledge around.⁶

Patrick apparently placed a high value on intercessory prayer in the salvation of men.⁷ His monasteries were founded for two purposes: teaching letters and offering up intercessory prayers.⁸

In the centuries after Patrick, the Irish churches were able to send a steady stream of missionaries throughout Europe. Todd believes that this was the direct result of Patrick's wise missionary methods in the establishment a solid indigenous work.

¹ Todd, 498. The following quote from Cathcart is an excellent development of Todd's thought: "He showed much wisdom in conducting his work in Hibernia. The people were in clans or tribes, with a chief or petty king at the head of each; then came provinces, with a king governing this larger community; and then the supreme king, supposed to exercise sovereign dominion over the whole island. Knowing the vast influence which these kings possessed in opening the ears of their people to listen to the gospel, Patrick sought an opportunity first to preach to them; and he did not hesitate to address the supreme king of Ireland. When a leading chief received the gospel, his entire subjects became interested in its examination, and many of them soon after accepted the Redeemer. And when Dubthach Maccu-Lugair, 'king-poet of Ireland, and of the supreme king,' received the Saviour by faith, Patrick's gospel obtained a victory over the culture and intelligence of Ireland, the tidings of which would reach and influence in some measure the most ignorant herdsman in the "Green Isle." While one soul was as precious to Patrick as another, one man's salvation might influence thousands toward Jesus; but such an extensive blessing for others attends the conversion of few. By presenting the blood of atonement at the earliest opportunity to the civil, literary, and legal chiefs of Hibernia, Patrick's labors were greatly facilitated" (102-3). This appears to fit very well with the "persons of peace" concept being taught in some evangelism methodology.

² Ibid., 499. On 499-500 he discusses his view that Patrick skilfully imposed Christianity upon the existing pagan practices of Ireland, making it more easily acceptable, but also resulting in the admixture of paganism with Christianity seen in the medieval Irish stories and even modern superstitions of the peasants. In 501-503, he says that Patrick's "complete" success has been overstated by some: there were those who resisted and rejected his message; attempts were made on his life; his "ecclesiastical establishments" had to have fortifications around them; and the conversions were too often shallow.

³ Ibid., 515.

³ Ibid., 506; Cathcart, 103-5. **Cathcart's description sounds like "multiplication discipleship"!**

⁴ Ibid., 507-11.

⁵ Ibid., 512.

⁶ Ibid., 503-4.

⁷ Ibid., 513.

APPENDIX D

St. Patrick's Creed¹

Because there is no other God, neither ever was, neither before, nor shall be hereafter, except God the Father, unbegotten, without beginning. From whom is all beginning; upholding all things, as we have said; and His Son Jesus Christ, whom indeed with the Father, we testify to have always been, before the origin of the world, spiritually with the Father; in an inexplicable manner begotten before all beginning; and by Himself were made the things visible and invisible; and was made man; (and), death having been vanquished, was received into the heavens to the Father. And He has given to Him all power 'above every name of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth, that every tongue should confess' to Him that Jesus Christ is Lord and God, in whom we believe, and expect [His] coming, to be ere long 'the Judge of the living and of the dead,' 'who will render to every one according to his deeds.' And He hath 'poured upon us abundantly' the Holy Spirit, a gift and pledge of immortality; who makes the faithful and obedient to become 'sons of God, and joint-heirs with Christ'; whom we confess and adore—one God in the Holy Trinity of the sacred name.

¹ Wright, 37.