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The Spiritual Journey of St Patrick
Aidan J. Larkin SSC (2023)
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There is continued academic interest in the life and legacy of the early saints of Ireland and Scotland and this book on St Patrick makes a significant contribution to this endeavour. The book is divided into two parts. Part one provides an overview of the life and work of St Patrick. Larkin explores the three stages of the life of Patrick. Stage one covers his six years as a slave. The second stage is his call to ministry and his return to Ireland as a missionary. The third stage is his trial and removal from office. Larkin acknowledges that many myths and legends have grown about St Patrick and he explores the contemporary academic debates about the historicity of the events in the life of St Patrick. Larkin carefully examines the actual writings of Patrick, the *Confession* and *Letter to Coroticus* (both helpfully included as appendices). These two writings of Patrick draw extensively from scripture and, notably, Patrick makes great use of the gospel of Matthew in the Confession. The letter to Coroticus was essentially a letter of excommunication. Coroticus and his men were banned from the celebration of the Eucharist and were no longer able to receive hospitality, nor receive hospitality. This could only be lifted by rigorous penance and the freedom of the neophytes they had captured. Larkin explains that the Confession of Patrick is an account of his missionary work and reflections on his relationship with God and call from God. Larkin believes that the spiritual component of the Confession is one of the great strengths of this work.

Part two of the book discusses the legacy of Patrick. Larkin positions the writings of Patrick within the context of the patristic writers and questions if Patrick had drawn from the style and content of Augustine's Confessions, or writings based on Augustine. He extends this by comparing Patrick's writing to other patristic writers. Throughout the book there are many interesting comparisons to biblical stories and events, for example, the story of Patrick's enslavement is likened to the early part of the story of Joseph in Genesis. His call through the means of a vision in the night is reminiscent of Paul's vision that led him to Macedonia. This is further developed in the examination of the letter to Coroticus where Larkin identifies strong parallels with Paul's writings and argues that these parallels can be understood as Patrick modelling his writing on Paul, and there are biographical and spiritual similarities.

This well written book provides many insights into the life, work, writings and spiritual journey of St Patrick. This is achieved in an engaging and accessible way. *The Spiritual Journey of St Patrick* is a book that will appeal to all those who have an interest in St Patrick, the Irish Church, the history of the development of the Church and spirituality. It is highly recommended and deserves a wide readership.

Stephen J McKinney