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# Review of The Life and Writings of the Historical Patrick, by R.P.C. Hanson

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R. P. C. HANSON, *The Life and Writings of the Historical Saint Patrick*. New York: Seabury Press, 1983. Pp. 138. \$11.95.

BISHOP R. P. C. HANSON first made his scholarly reputation by studies of Origen's exegesis and fourth-century theology. In the mid-1960s, just prior to becoming a bishop in Ireland, he began to investigate the career of his most famous predecessor in the Irish episcopate, a subject long dominated by the "orthodox school" of J. B. Bury (*The Life of Saint Patrick*, 1905) and Ludwig Bieler (*The Life and Legend of Saint Patrick*, 1948). In 1962 the tenets of this school were vigorously attacked by Daniel Binchy (*Studia Hibernica* 2 [1962], 7–173) — it was he who coined the phrase "orthodox school" — and it was widely feared that Binchy had closed the door for some time on important new studies. After a few preliminary efforts, Hanson dispelled this fear in 1968 with his *Saint Patrick: His Origins and Career*, still the best book-length biography of the saint and the first to deal heavily with Patrick's Latin in a British context.

When Hanson published this book, the critical text of Patrick's works was that of Bieler (*Classica et mediaevalia* 11 [1950], 1–150). But Bieler's conservative approach to the text, an approach which supported his historical views, had been criticized by Douglas Powell (*Analecta Bollandiana* 87 [1969], 387–409). Although Hanson argued against Powell (*Studia Patristica* 12 [1975], 91–95), he recognized the need for a new text and so produced one for *Sources chrétiennes* (1978). The present volume contains the first translation made from the SC text.

This is a very useful book. Its contents can be divided *in tres partes*. There is an introduction (pp. 1–55) which provides the historical setting, an account of Patrick's career, and an analysis of "St. Patrick's Character and Mind," one of the few attempts to reach Patrick the person rather than just Patrick the historic missionary. The second part is a translation of the only two works universally accepted as authentically Patrician, the *Confessio* and, to use the common title, *Epistola ad milites Corotici*. Third, on opposite pages from the translation is a running commentary.

The combination of Patrick's historical importance and the fragmentary nature of the evidence about him has produced a plethora of competing and strenuously argued theories. In the historical sections of the introduction, Hanson has naturally presented his own views, and those who disagree with him — a group which does not include this reviewer — will continue to do so. But he has made the introduction a general one, acknowledged the debt of all scholars to Ludwig Bieler, and has tried to avoid controversy in order to make the book accessible to a wide readership. Only the pettiest of critics could take issue with the book as a whole.

The sole awkward part of the book is Hanson's attempt to explain the problem of Patrick's Latin to readers he presumes will have no knowledge of the language (p. 27). The difficult nature of Patrick's Latin demanded an entire book from Christine Mohrmann (*The Latin of Saint Patrick*, 1961), which gives an idea of the problem Hanson faced. Only one who does not read Latin at all, for example, the average American college student, can say if he succeeded, but he has certainly made clear to such a reader the importance of philology for understanding Saint Patrick. The running commentary on the text also includes historical and philological notes.

The translation is readable, natural, and rigorously honest. The commentary on paragraph 10 of the *Confessio* reads: "The final sentence of this chapter can only be translated by inspired guesswork because — as if to demonstrate finally his incapacity in Latin — his language is so vague and muddled that we cannot be sure of his exact

meaning. It is particularly when he is trying to describe his own feelings that Patrick's grasp of Latin fails him" (p. 83). Amen.

This book is made for classroom use, and those who teach the history of the British Isles in the ancient and medieval periods will welcome it. We must hope that a paperback edition will soon be available.

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RICHARD HELLIE, *Slavery in Russia, 1450–1725*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1982. Pp. xix, 776; 8 maps, 10 figures, numerous tables. \$45.

ALTHOUGH HISTORIANS have been aware of the existence of slavery in early modern Russia, few have understood it and most have underestimated its importance. But no longer. Professor Hellie's definitive study rests on a data base built through quantitative analysis of about twenty-five hundred slave documents. Adopting a comparative perspective, Hellie has little trouble demonstrating that Russian slavery falls within common definitions of slave systems worldwide. He also shows that it was a major social phenomenon which influenced the development of Russian serfdom.

The environment within which Russian slavery developed, as Hellie sees it, was bleak. The Eastern Slavs had long been victims of the Eurasian slave trade. Internally, labor was scarce and grain yields low. Natural and man-made catastrophies, a harsh climate, and constant wars strained Russia's resources and social bonds. Moreover, Russia's legal heritage offered little protection of individual or group liberties and the church was not especially noted for its charity. In the first section of the book Hellie guides the reader through the large body of Russian slave law. Although it owed something to Byzantine tradition and to Lithuanian codes, 85 percent of Russian slave law in the code of 1649 was of native origin. What makes the second section, "The Sociology of Slavery," so successful is the survival of records of the Slave Chancellery as a result of the slave code of 1597 (others argue for 1586), and Hellie's creative use of this information. The code required that contracts be made on all slaves and that they be registered with the chancellery. Thenceforth the chancellery adjudicated cases of ownership and related matters. Although surviving documents are weighted to the Novgorod area and to scattered and limited periods, they contain a wealth of prosopographical information. Hellie has identified about two thousand owners and over fifty-five hundred slaves. Also, he has chosen to relate at length case records, together with pertinent information from other sources. They offer rare and moving firsthand testimony about Russian life and the functioning of government.

Russian slavery was of the type known as household slavery. Although some slaves helped middle service-class owners farm their demesne, their numbers and economic significance remained negligible. Slave society, initially, mirrored "free" society. There were elite slaves in bureaucratic, manorial, and military positions as well as the more numerous tradesmen, menials, and domestics. Unusually large numbers of slaves served in the army because the middle service class equipped slave soldiers to fill its quota of cavalrymen and to protect its baggage train. In the seventeenth century, after elite military slaves participated in rebellions of the Time of Troubles and Russia developed a professional bureaucracy and new model military formations,