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Review of Patrick Saint World, by L. Depaor

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ter a set of traditions to which we are still deeply and problematically indebted.

Columbia University CAROLINE WALKER BYNUM
New York, New York

Saint Patrick's World. By LIAM DE PAOR. Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993. x + 335 pp. $36.95.

Best known as the inspiration for ethnic parades, Saint Patrick holds an important place in the church history of the British Isles. He is the only Romano-British bishop to leave any writings, though scholars still know very little about him. His writings are among the oldest in Ireland, preceded only by the ogham lapidary inscriptions from Ireland. Indeed, for both Britain and Ireland, Patrick's are the only texts from the fifth century; recall that Pelagius and Faustus of Riez made their careers on the continent. Regrettably Patrick remains notoriously difficult to study. The *vitae Patricii* date from the seventh century and later, and the saint's own two brief writings, both intended for fellow Romano-Britons, do not provide many clues to times or dates.

In the study of the historical Saint Patrick, scholars have utilized a "kitchen sink" approach, that is, throwing in everything they can find from Britain, Ireland, and continental Christian Europe to establish a background against which Patrick's career might be highlighted. This approach has illuminated much, especially the nature of Patrick's Latinity. What de Paor has done here is to assemble in one place all the major relevant texts, though only in English translation.

The reader must note, however, the title of the book. De Paor does not use this material to offer a substantive life of Patrick but rather a collection of documents which bear on the saint. Furthermore, de Paor has helpfully included some texts which illustrate Patrick's role in early medieval Ireland. The parallels to contemporary New Testament study are obvious—the historical Patrick and the Patrick of the earliest communities.

De Paor starts with an introduction (pp. 3–50), which gives a brief account of Latin Christianity, then Christianity in Ireland, and finally of women founders of Irish churches. The rest of the book consists of translations of Latin and Irish documents with useful introductions; a select bibliography (pp. 311–312) lists the original sources, although the author inexplicably leaves out the places of publication and he lists the entire work (for example, Prosper of Aquitaine's *Contra Collatorem*) rather than the pages on which the two paragraphs relating to Patrick can be found. The documents range from the earliest references to British bishops (at the council of Arles in 314) through the first notices of Christianity in Ireland (by Prosper), excerpts

from Patrick's own writings and finally to the medieval accounts, including those with possible historical information about the saint.

All of this is very useful to the scholar, even with the texts in English. To be sure, scholars must go to the originals, but they will still be grateful to have all this material in one convenient place. Furthermore, this material can now be easily made available to students who read only English. A book this specialized will probably appeal to few of *Church History*'s readers, but those interested in Patrick or in early Christianity in Britain and Ireland will find it handy, indeed valuable.

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Anglo-Saxon Women and the Church: Sharing a Common Fate. By STEPHANIE HOLLIS. Woodbridge, England: The Boydell Press, 1992. 323 pp. $79.00.

Determining the position of Anglo-Saxon women in the church of the eighth and ninth centuries is no easy task. Few records remain, so conclusions have to be based primarily on literature that clerics wrote to, for, or about women—sources often more indicative of churchmen's attitudes than the situation of real women. Ascertaining the activities even of a prominent woman like the missionary nun Leoba, Boniface's coworker on the Continent, entails deconstructing the account of her life written almost a half-century after her death. Deciding whether Leoba's enclosed sisters in England shared any of her prerogatives is still more problematic. Knowing these many difficulties, Stephanie Hollis uses a hermeneutic of suspicion to discern what the sources reveal about the actual status of women in Anglo-Saxon church and society. Her perceptive reading of the sources leads her to challenge widely-held assumptions and conclude that in England there was "a gradual erosion in the position of women, particularly monastic women, from at least as early as the eighth century" (p. 7).

Presuming that the reader is familiar with the eighth- and ninth-century texts, Hollis does not rehash their content. Instead, she devotes her attention to when and how the position of women declined in the Anglo-Saxon church. Each chapter examines a different text and emphasizes a prominent theme—the conversion dynamic in Pope Gregory I's replies to Augustine of Canterbury, irregularities of marriage in *Theodore's Penitential*, women as soldiers of Christ and brides of the lamb in Aldhelm's *De Virginitate*, women advisers in Eddius's *Life of Wilfrid*, queens and abbesses in Bede's writings, and attitudes toward double monasteries in Rudolph of Fulda's *Life of Leoba*. Hollis skillfully comments on the authors' perspectives, the reliability of their claims, and the development of these themes in other Anglo-Saxon literature.