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**Universidad de Valladolid**

FACULTAD de FILOSOFÍA Y LETRAS  
DEPARTAMENTO de FILOLOGÍA INGLESA  
Grado en Estudios Ingleses

TRABAJO DE FIN DE GRADO

**Philip Perry's *Sketch of the Ancient British History*  
(c.1772) and the Two Patricks Controversy**

Ainhoa Calzada Mina

Tutor: Anunciación Carrera de la Red

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## ABSTRACT

The life and mission of St. Patrick are at the heart of any understanding of early Christian Ireland. In this respect, historiography cannot ignore Thomas F. O’Rahilly’s lecture *The Two Patricks* (1942) and its breakthrough theory that there were in fact not one, but two Patricks: Palladius and the Patrick of the *Confessio*. This paper examines Patrician tradition and controversy in order to locate Philip Mark Perry and his *Sketch of the Ancient British History* (c.1772) within it and duly acknowledge his contribution. To that effect, those sections in the *Sketch* pertaining Ireland and Patrick are closely analyzed and compared to the evidence forwarded by O’Rahilly. It can be concluded that although Perry is able to identify the problem of the Two Patricks, he fails to provide a convincing answer, probably biased by a desire to substantiate his claim for the Roman Catholic origin and continuity of British and Irish ecclesiastical history.

KEYWORDS: Philip Mark Perry (1720-1774) - *Sketch of the Ancient British History* - Saint Patrick - Palladius - Early Christian Ireland - Religious Controversy.

La vida y carrera de San Patricio resultan esenciales para nuestra comprensión de los primeros siglos de la historia del Cristianismo irlandés, y desde la publicación en 1942 de la revolucionaria conferencia de Thomas Francis O’Rahilly -que defendía que no existió uno, sino dos Patricios- el discurso tradicional sobre el apóstol cambió radicalmente.

Éste ensayo pretende exponer la teoría tradicional y la ruptura de O’Rahilly con la misma, para así poder situar a Phillip Perry y su obra, *Sketch of Ancient British History*, en el marco de la historiografía sobre San Patricio y reconocer su contribución. Para ello, se han analizado los fragmentos del *Sketch* que tratan sobre Irlanda y San Patricio y se han comparado con lo que O’Rahilly presenta en su conferencia.

De este modo se ha concluido que a pesar de que Perry prevé el problema de los dos Patricios, lo resuelve de manera errónea, probablemente debido a su ímpetu en demostrar la unicidad de la historia de la Iglesia Católica de las Islas Británicas desde sus orígenes.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Philip Mark Perry (1720-1774) - *Sketch of the Ancient British History* - San Patricio – Palladius - Historia del Cristianismo Irlandés - Controversia Religiosa.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

This dissertation discusses several facts and events pertaining to the early history of the British Isles, and in particular the history of Ireland at a period encompassing the years 431 AD and 492 AD.

These events are then framed within a very obscure and uncertain period in history and thus, they generate a great deal of interest and controversy, as proved by the reception given to T.M Charles Edwards's *Early Christian Ireland* that recounts the history of Ireland from the 4<sup>th</sup>-century AD to the 9<sup>th</sup>-century AD, and it is very thoroughly appreciated.

Surely the historian of Christianity in fifth-century Ireland faces many difficulties, as for instance the scarcity of documentation and the excess of conjectures and yet, our focus will be Irish Christianity in fifth-century AD Ireland; more precisely, the issue of the spread of Christianity. In spite of the obscurity of this period we can still extract information about crucial facts.

Although it is unknown when exactly Christianity entered Ireland, there is enough evidence to support the idea that by the second quarter of the fifth century there was already a large Irish Christian community, as Prosper claimed in his *Chronicle*, which was in all likelihood the reason for the first mission beyond the frontier of the Western Roman Empire. Likewise, it can be asserted that in Rome they knew about the existence of that community, probably the reason why an apostle called Palladius was sent out to become the first bishop of the Irish, concerned as they were with the spread of Pelagian ideas, and unwilling to accept the formation of Pelagian parties anywhere.

But if there is something that has been generally agreed, both within and outside the academia, concerning the arrival of Christianity to Ireland, this has been the attribution of it to a missionary named Patrick.

There is a big quantity of works about St. Patrick, although many of them are of no particular significance because they simply retell the story of the life of the Saint by interpreting the information in his own writings *Confessio* and *Epistola*. It cannot be ignored that the Irish historian John Bagnell Bury produced a very complete work on

Saint Patrick of Ireland called *Life of Saint Patrick and His Place in History* (1905) that everyone at his time took as the actual truth until 1942.

The historian Thomas Francis O’Rahilly with his pamphlet on the *Two Patricks* (1942) broke up with the established traditional discourse. Drawing on evidence hitherto unattended, which was mainly written in Irish, O’Rahilly assured that there was not one, but two apostles who went on a mission to Christianize Ireland, and that both men happened to bear the name Patrick. His theory could have been easily undermined had it not been for the support of an authority like Bishop Tírechán, who in the ninth century had already pointed out the existence of two Patricks, and the documentary assistance of Irish Annals. It was thought that the belief that there was another Patrick could have been a consequence of learned struggles in seventh century Ireland with Prosper’s annal about Palladius’s appointment and dispatch in AD 431. It was thanks to O’Rahilly that the identity or existence of the other Patrick came out.

No doubt O’Rahilly was immediately contested by scholars like John Ryan (1942), Gerald Murphy (1943), E. MacNeill and above all Ludwig Bieler who heated the debate. Even today, the discussion is still opened, and new texts emerge that contribute to the open ended character of this controversy, as it is the case of Philip Mark Perry’s *Sketch of the Ancient British History* written about 1772 and only recently come to light (carrera, 2002).

This dissertation will analyze Philip Perry’s contribution to the controversy and aims to examine his intentions and motivations in the production of this work. First we will introduce the state of the issue by explaining what Patrician historians had traditionally said and how O’Rahilly’s version contrasted the existing discourse. Then, we will move on to introduce the figure of the English Catholic priest Phillip Mark Perry and explain what his *Sketch* says in comparison to O’Rahilly’s essay. And finally, we will try to interpret the hidden intentions under Perry’s *Sketch*. This study aims to be a descriptive comparison of two opposing theories, but at the same time it also seeks to find a place in Patrician historiography for Phillip Mark Perry’s contribution, as his work has for several centuries remained unknown. Therefore, we want to give this piece of writing the importance it deserves, and by examining its contents, we would like to learn on the intentions and motivations of the author.

An attempt will be made to show that although Perry foresees the problem of the Two Patricks, he provides an erroneous answer to it, probably to ensure the projection of the unity of the history of the Catholic Church in the British Isles since its origins.

### **1. A STATE OF THE ISSUE: THE BREAK WITH TRADITION**

From the annals of the 7th century until Thomas Francis O’Rahilly wrote his pamphlet on *The Two Patricks* a result of the study of the issue he carried out in the years 1934 and 1935, there was an established and well known theory about Saint Patrick’s identity. Someone called Palladius had been sent to Ireland by the bishop of Rome, as the renowned historian Bede, in the 8<sup>th</sup> century, remembered, as the first missionary bishop of the Irish.

However, the dominant traditional narrative would defend that in the year 431 AD, following the death of Palladius, whose mission in Ireland resulted in failure, Patricius entered the island and stayed there until his death in 491 AD. The 8<sup>th</sup>-century hagiographers and biographers like, Columbanus, or Muirchú all recounted this traditional version. It was also supported by *The Hymn of Secundinus* which described him as the Irish St Peter, the chief apostle of the country, around the year 600AD, who converted the Irish. For the vast majority of people, from the seventh century onwards, the apostolic of the Irish was the Briton, Patrick.

In fact, *The Life of Saint Patrick and His Place in History* written by the Irish historian John Bagnell Bury in 1905 defended this tradition fervently, and it became the unquestionable model to follow, as it was supposed to be one of the most remarkable and complete works on the topic.

O’Rahilly, however, broke with this long established tradition. He began his research about the Saint, and once he had a deep knowledge on the topic, he read Bury’s work. He realized that although the quality of his work was undeniable, there were a number of assumptions and assertions that according to his data were incorrect, mainly because he was totally ignorant of Irish language. In fact, when referring to Bury, O’Rahilly claims; “Also, as he had no knowledge of Irish, he was not in a position to profit by the evidence afforded by the different strata of Latin loan-words in Old Irish.”(8) There is

something particular about O’Rahilly and his sources, and that is that his command of Irish enabled him to reach information that others had ignored and therefore he considered himself to be in advantage.

The main objective of Thomas F. O’Rahilly’s *The Two Patricks; A Lecture of The History of Christianity in Fifth-Century Ireland* (1942) was to differentiate two apostles, breaking with a long tradition that had united them into one single person, and in order to do so, he focuses on chronology.

The first historical event dated in the history of Ireland was when Palladius was consecrated bishop by Pope Celestine and he was sent to Ireland, where they were already Christians but needed a bishop. It seems that Prosper’s *Chronicle* is the source everyone unanimously trusts, probably because the testimony of a contemporary chronicler adds credibility to his data. However, already in the 7<sup>th</sup>-century Murichú, one of the very earliest biographers of St. Patrick, complained about the difficulty of finding his way amid “the conflicts of opinions and the very many conjectures of very many persons” (O’Rahilly).

O’Rahilly studies, analyzes, discovers and he is able to justify and defend a different chronology. According to the Irish Annals of the fifth and sixth centuries we can see that during the period 488-544 the death of many bishops who were supposed to be contemporaries of St. Patrick were recorded. It is not possible that St. Patrick could have died in 461 and his contemporaries so many years later. And this, according to O’Rahilly suggests the impossibility of the existence of one single Patrick. He reached two conclusions; the first is that the mission of Palladius lasted from 431-461 and the second that Patrick, the successor of Palladius, died about the year 492.

After studying various collections of Irish annals, the writings of St. Patrick in White’s edition, and the documents by Stoke O’Rahilly suggests there has been a long lasting problem with the dates, and that the division of Patrick in two different apostles would better fit the chronology.

All this was in reaction to the best known 19<sup>th</sup>-century biographers of Saint Patrick, and especially Bury. He treats as a fiction the annalistic record of the death of Patrick 491-492. So, he could still support the claim that there was one single Patrick, because as he

does not take this date into account, his “Patrick” did not have such a long life, and thus, he could still be real. Another of his arguments is based upon onomatology because this supports the theory that there were two Patricks, and that the one known as the first did not die as early as they have claimed for years.

In any case, since the publication of O’Rahilly’s pamphlet in 1942, there has been a major shift on the way to conceive Saint Patrick’s history and despite all criticism, there have been several historians who have taken O’Rahilly’s theory as the valid one, and have developed it further, as in the case of Charles Edwards’ *Early Christian Ireland* (2004). This book recounts the history of Ireland and the Irish between the fourth and ninth centuries AD, and treats the issue of Saint Patrick in a deep way, following O’Rahilly, Edwards fully exposes the different theories about the saint.

## **2. PHILIP MARK PERRY (1720-1774), HIS *SKETCH*, AND THE FIGURE OF SAINT PATRICK**

As we have seen, there has always been a diversity of opinions with regards to the figure of Saint Patrick and at this stage it is important to mention that between the early writings about Saint Patrick which must have begun to be written in the 6<sup>th</sup> century and the 20<sup>th</sup>-century pamphlet by O’Rahilly, a work had been produced which remained unseen until very recently and which is of a very different nature than the previous ones. This was Phillip Mark Perry’s *Sketch of the Ancient British History* (c.1772).

Philip Mark Perry was an English Catholic secular priest who was appointed rector of St Alban’s College in Valladolid at the age of 47, and held this status from 1768 to his death in 1774. Apart from being a religious man, he was also a devoted historian and writer. Indeed, he wrote extensively on the lives of ancient British and Irish saints, biographies of figures such as Thomas Cranmer, Thomas Wolsey, Erasmus, John Fisher and Robert Grosseteste; as well as historiographical documents as the summary of the church history of England between 1531 and 1608, his continuation of Bede’s *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, and the *Sketch*, which was written during Perry’s stay in Valladolid, and it was probably a first draft, as there are several indicative signs that suggest so, as for example; the lack of a title, complete pages crossed out and its general appearance (Carrera,xi-xii).



Before analyzing Perry's Sketch, we should briefly mention some aspects of his life and career as these are transcendental in order to understand his motivations to write the Sketch and the arguments given on it. As it has already been said he was rector of St Alban's college was one of the many institutions created all over Europe during Elizabethan times to prepare young Englishmen for the commitment of predicating the catholic faith back in their country. As it is very well known, England was getting converted to Protestantism, and due to the religious persecution that Catholics suffered at their native country, exile was their only alternative.

During the reign of the king Carlos III of Spain, which lasted from 1759 to 1788, the Jesuit order suffered a great repression and there was a general reform of the Spanish universities and colleges. The Jesuits were expelled from St Alban's and Perry was called to reorganize the English seminaries in Spain by collecting and preserving the documents and possessions that had formerly belonged to the English Colleges of St Gregory in Seville and St George in Madrid. During the entire process Perry had to deal with the Irish and Scottish who were undertaking their own reorganization.

Perry's relation with the Irish and Scottish colleges was diplomatic in appearance. The truth is that Perry did not trust the intentions of the Irish who were residing in the colleges in Alcalá and Salamanca, because he thought they wanted to take for them the Scots College that had been empty in Madrid since 1734. And in fact, the Scots college in Madrid got united to that of the Irish in Alcalá. However, Perry had been told by the Principals of the Scottish colleges in Duai and Paris, to look after the Scottish property in Madrid, and thus, he was given permission to act as a representative of the Scottish. This claim failed, but Perry decided to talk to the Scots agent, and he enabled the moving of the Scots College from Madrid to Valladolid. It can be inferred, that Perry did not consider Scottish and Irish on equal terms, and that he distrusted the Irish intentions. (Williams, 1986: )

The *Sketch of the Ancient British History*, as most of the English Catholic historiography of the time, wanted combat the affirmation of the Protestants, that the Reformation had led to the recovery of the real essence of the Christian faith, that it had restored its original roots. Thus, Catholic historians began to emphasize the idea that their tradition had remained faithful to its true sources, and that is possibly what motivated Perry as well. The topic this sketch deals with is of a particular importance

especially for a Catholic seminar in exile because its main objective is to emphasize the origins of a unified history of the Roman Church in the British Isles, in order to face what were considered Protestant manipulations of history. What is of our concern regarding the *Sketch* are those fragments that talk about Ireland and Saint Patrick.

According to the *Sketch of Ancient British History* at that early stage the Scots the Irish and the Scotti were considered enemies of Britain. In Perry's narrative they are depicted as the reason for the misfortune of the British and even their physical appearance is described negatively. In the section discussing events in the 4<sup>th</sup>-century, the sketch claims that these people were long-haired individuals who were half-naked and had a frightful aspect. His exact words are; "They went half naked, and had less care to cover their bodies than to shade their faces with their long wild hair, which rendered them from frightful aspect, but their genius was more terrible than their figures."(81)

Moreover, it states, that their intelligence or genius, was even worse; apparently they were wild and savage people; barbarous, inhuman, inhospitable, ignorant of all virtue, and with no moral sense of what is right and what wrong (81). It is important to mention that Perry argues that this was the general description given of the Irish and *Scotti*, at least before their conversion. Later, when presenting the raidings of Scots, Perry makes the *Scotti* responsible for the lack of provisions of the country, and therefore, from spreading famine all over the nation. He claims there was no way to obtain foreign aid, as in the year 446 AD there was general scarcity all over the empire. As a consequence, the Britons were forced to fight each other for subsistence. In other words, it had been the Irish who provoked that fratricide (81).

This contemptuous description of the a Irish people given by Perry was not an obstacle for the glorification of the figure of Saint Patrick and the depiction of the Roman Catholic Church as the unified one and only converter of the British Isles.

A whole section is devoted to Patrick, from his first captivity to the end of his converting mission, with a brief discussion on the canons attributed to Saint Patrick, his *Epistle* to Coroticus and his *Confessio* (95-115).

### 3. PERRY VS. O'RAHILLY AND THE STAGES OF THE LIFE OF SAINT PATRICK

#### a) A QUESTION OF NAMES

In the following pages, we will discuss the main points in which Perry's and O'Rahilly's theories differ with regards to the life and mission of Saint Patrick. First, we will be looking at the issue of the naming, because it is the only matter in which they agree. Then, we will have a close look to their arguments to justify the existence of one or two Patricks, and afterwards we will analyze what they both say about the life of the apostle in three separate stages: before his arrival in Ireland, during his missionary expedition throughout the country, and his death.

It is of our particular interest to analyze what Perry's *Sketch of the Ancient British History* says about Saint Patrick, and how this relates or differs from O'Rahilly's theory in order to see Perry's contribution to the two Patricks controversy.

We will begin by analyzing the issue of the naming. In spite of their radically different versions on the identity of the apostle of Ireland -while Perry argued there was one single apostle, O'Rahilly identified two different men- they both agree in the issue of the naming. They both used as a source Tirechán's 9<sup>th</sup>-century manuscript known as *Memoir of Patrick* in the Book of Armagh, where he wrote the following statement "*Paladius qui Patricius alio nomine appellabatur*" which could be translated into English as "Paladius, whose other name was Patricius".

From this, Perry infers that Palladius and Patricius might have been the same person but with a name composed of two different names: Palladius Patricius (97). Thus, Perry considers that the fact that the apostle had two names and that he had done two voyages to Ireland could be sufficiently misleading for historians to think that he was not one single person. He believes it was rather logical to fall in the error of thinking that one single person with two different names constituted in reality two different people. However, he firmly assures that 'Palladius' and 'Patrick' are the two names of the apostle Palladius Patricius, better known as Saint Patrick of Ireland. As we can clearly read:

But leaving the reader to his choice in this point of criticism, I shall make but one of them, as being seriously convinced for the reasons of above that Palladius and Patrick are but one and the same person whose true and adequate name was Palladius Patricius, as Tirechanus signifies. (97)

In the case of O’Rahilly, he begins by suggesting that the name ‘Palladius’ never took root in Ireland, mainly because in all the Irish documents we just find its Latin form, and had it not been for Prosper’s *Chronicle*, the name ‘Palladius’ would have been completely unknown for Irish annalists and hagiographers. However, he considers that although the name ‘Palladius’ had been forgotten, the actual details of the life of the apostle were preserved under the name ‘Patricius’. Using Tirechán as a reference too, O’Rahilly concludes that it was highly probable that the original name of Palladius was ‘Patricius Palladius’.

So, while Perry refers to the apostle’s full name as ‘Palladius Patricius’, O’Rahilly does it the other way around, and calls him ‘Patricius Palladius’. But the relevant issue here is that although Perry concludes that there is one single apostle of Ireland with two names and O’Rahilly reveals that they were in fact two -one called Patricius Palladius and the other Patricius- both agree on the idea that one of the apostles had these two names.

#### b) ONE OR TWO PATRICKS?

Nonetheless, the issue of the naming is just a short-lived agreement, because as we will be able to appreciate, discrepancies abound among the authors’ theories, mainly concerning whether there were two, or one apostle of Ireland.

We know that Perry recognized the problem of the two patricks, as he claims;

But eer we enter any farther in St Patrick’s history, it may not be amiss to clear up a point of criticism regarding him, and the want of which has hitherto, at least in later times, robbed him of part of his glory (94-95).

So he understands that there is an existing confusion around the figure of Saint Patrick, and he identifies Tírechán as the source of that confusion when he asserts;

Now the unity of Palladius and Patrick appears not only from St Prosper and Bede, who knew but one Apostle of Ireland, viz. Palladius, and by the vestige of this double name preserved by Tirechanus, but is confirmed by the identity of characters and conexions in Palladius and Patrick (96).

In order to solve this problem, Perry claims that there was one single Patricius and he justifies his opinion by saying that there are too many coincidences in what is known of the two of them. As he points out, the main connections that tradition gives between Palladius and Patrick were that both were deacons and were willing to preserve the Catholic faith in Britain and propagate it in Ireland. Moreover, both Palladius and Patrick were sent to Ireland by Pope Celestine and therefore, they were closely linked to him and also to St German of Auxerre. A third coincidence is that the two saints, Palladius and Patrick had been attributed the conversion of Ireland to Christianity; Prosper and Bede assigned it to Palladius and later historians to Patrick (96).

Perry considers it is impossible that all these are mere coincidences, and believes that those who made of Saint Patrick two different people were seriously mistaken, as it was the case of several 17<sup>th</sup>-century historians and biographers like Francis Colgan and James Ussher.

On the other hand, O'Rahilly points out that in the annals from the seventh to the ninth centuries we can easily see how the two Patricks were distinguished; in fact, they were mentioned together in various texts as for example the Stowe Missal, the Martyrology of Oengus, the hymn known as Fiacc's Hymn, and the treatise on the Law of Adamnan. (10). Nevertheless, inexplicably, after the ninth century the distinction fades away. According to O'Rahilly the second Patrick was attributed some of the achievements and chronology of the first one. Additionally, as Patricius was a common name in 5<sup>th</sup>-century Ireland it was very probable that there were two apostles called like this.

The revolutionary conclusion that O'Rahilly reached was that there were in fact two different Patricks. One was Palladius Patricius who arrived in Ireland in 431, as external authorities like Prosper and Bede supported, and who in Ireland was known by his other name, Patricius. And he also identified a second Patrick who may have arrived in 461 or 462, at the time of the death of his predecessor, and who stayed in Ireland until his own death in 491. The problem was that in the Irish annals there was an entry under the year 432 that said that Patricius had arrived in Ireland, immediately after Palladius' arrival

had been registered in 431. As a consequence, there was a tendency among hagiographers to blend together the two apostles and claim that Palladius stayed in the island just for one year, and thus, they attributed his missionary action to Patrick, extending his biographical record in a way that it was almost impossible, as they suggested he worked in Ireland from 432 to 491.

### c) EVENTS ON THE LIFE OS SAINT PATRICK

#### BEFORE ARRIVING IN IRELAND

As both O’Rahilly and Perry distinguish a different number of Irish apostles, it is rather common that when they describe the various events on the life of the saint their versions do not coincide. We will be comparing what each of them says about the three stages of the life of Saint Patrick: his life before going to Ireland, his life during his stay in Ireland and finally, the date of his death.

Drawing on Ussher, Perry introduces Saint Patrick as a Briton born in the year 386 and who descended from a Roman family (96). This matches with the description of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Patrick given by O’Rahilly which suggests that Patrick was a Briton from a village at the province of Nentria, close to the Irish Sea (32). The Irish historian also says that chances are that he belonged to a civilian area of Roman Britain, and although the official language might have been Latin, his command of it suggests that British was the common language among the people of his village (32).

This coincidence of facts would not have been a problem if O’Rahilly would not have pointed out the existence of the 1<sup>st</sup> Patrick, or Palladius, who was native of Gaul and was ordained deacon by Amator, the bishop of Auxerre.

On the one hand, Perry recounts that at the age of 15 Patrick committed an unspecified public fault for which he paid penitence for the rest of his life. He says that although he was Christian by birth it was not until he was taken captive for 7 years by the Irish pirates that infested Britain, which was an event supported by historians of the time like St Gildas and other Roman historians, that he became a really devoted person. Following Patrick’s own writing, *Confessio*, Perry states that after his first captivity he

managed to return to Britain, but soon he experienced a second period of captivity. When that ended he travelled abroad to improve himself in virtue and learning, according to what Nennius' and Herrick of Auxerre's 9<sup>th</sup>-century writings said. In fact, when Pelagian heresy was rising, he was residing in Rome, and he was probably ordained deacon while he was there or if not, right at his return to Britain (99).

Yet, we find a point of contrast when it comes to dealing with the fight against Pelagian heresy in Britain and Patrick's role on it. According to Perry, the Pelagian heresy started on East Africa and Rome and it was threatening Patricks' land. Pelagius was a Briton whose ideas were opposite to those of the theologian Augustine of Hippo, the former related grace, with human merit and salvation while the latter believed that meritorious acts were provoked by god. The Pelagian controversy rose mainly in the Western Mediterranean, and Britain was not at first directly influenced, at least until Honorius, a Western Roman Emperor, enacted a law in the year 418 by which any follower of Pelagian ideas was instantly sent to exile. Although this law did not include Britain, because his authority did not reach this territory, the pope sent Germanus of Auxerre in order to persuade the Britons. Although in Britain they did not reject Augustinian ideas consciously, it is likely that Pelagian ideas had considerable support. The problem was that when Honorius forced Pelagians to exile, what he actually was promoting was their return to their native land, which in most of the cases was Britain. Thus, many of the Pelagian Britons who had been living in other places took refuge back in their country and as a consequence, a Pelagian Party was created.

This was a theory St Patrick repudiated. The British sent over to Gaul several deputies to implore the assistance of Gallican prelates, and one of these deputies appears to have been Palladius (Perry:100). Palladius convinced Celestine to send St German in to Britain, and at that time he stayed in Italy and France, because as Perry puts it:

Palladius seems to have remained in France or Italy after exciting St Celestine to send over St German into Britain; or if he accompanied this last saint hither, he must have returned back with him into Gaul, for there or in Italy, where he also appears to have been made deacon, he was promoted to the episcopacy. (105)

The holy prelates did a great effort to extend their belief and undervalue the new ideas, and they seemed to have controlled the situation. Nevertheless, fear existed that the

effect resulted to be quite similar to the previous one, and that those exiled from Britain would now sought refuge in the neighboring island, Ireland.

On the other hand, O’Rahilly also supports the idea that in the year 429 Britain sent a deputation to ask for help to Amator in order to combat the Pelagian heresy, which was rapidly spreading in the island, he also claims that as a consequence of it, Pope Celestine sent Germanus; the new bishop of Auxerre, to Britain as a representative of the Catholic faith (14). However, he does not say anything about Palladius staying in Italy or France; he rather defends the position that Palladius fought Pelagianism in Britain together with Germanus.

With regards to the reason why he was sent to Ireland, Perry goes on telling that some years later, Pelagianism began to rise again and that Palladius supposedly received a letter and had apparitions that encouraged him to leave his native country and head for Ireland where they needed him. At the age of 45 he was ordained bishop and he was sent to Ireland by Pope Celestine (106). O’Rahilly, however, describes this in a very different way and he states that while Germanus was in Britain together with Palladius, fighting Pelagian heresy, he might have received certain information of the state in which Christianity was in Ireland, and recognized the need to send someone. When Germanus returned from Britain he advised the Pope to send Palladius as the first bishop of the Irish Christians (20).

All these details narrated by Perry, belong with no doubt to the Patrick who wrote the *Confessio* and the *Epistle to Coroticus*; because that Patrick is the one who lived those events. Therefore, the Patrick or Palladius Patricius Perry refers to, is obviously that who died in 492. He mixes the events of the life of the second Patrick with the chronology of the first, which is exactly the same mistake made by the historians to whom O’Rahilly had corrected with his methodical study.

## HIS MISSIONARY EXPEDITION

Philip Perry defends that St Patrick landed in Ireland around 431 AD or 432 AD and continued his mission within the space of sixty years (107). Among his achievements,



he highlights that he founded several churches, erected several monasteries, and he baptized and converted many people. Additionally, he ordained people to help him in the ministry, and trained up others to the severity of the evangelical counsels. According to him, Saint Patrick had a disinterested and generous spirit which was the principal reason of his success. He did everything for nothing; he did not accept presents, and gave out his own possessions. It was his austere life and poverty which magnified his figure and gave him glory. Perry claims: “His unbounded charity often stripped him of all he had, but his poverty was his greatest glory, and he rejoiced in his conformity with his divine master” (110).

As Perry identifies one single Patrick, and he does not recognize the existence of a second one, he assigns all the previous facts to the one and only saint he takes into account.

In the case of O’Rahilly, he does not give many concrete details on the life of the first Patrick, or Palladius, as he seems to be more documented on the biographical details of the second one. He makes reference to Prosper and says that from his words in *Contra Collatorem* it can be inferred that Palladius’ mission had been a success (20). Later historians, as it is the case of Bury, tried to take Palladius out of the scene before 431 AD claiming he had died and therefore concluding that his mission was a failure. O’Rahilly argues that the death of Palladius in 431 AD was a mere fiction, and this is justified by the absence of such a record in Prosper’s writings. So what O’Rahilly tells us about Palladius’ life while he was in Ireland is actually nothing, except for the statement that he did not die in 431 AD.

What we know about Patrick, Palladius’s successor is what he tells us in his own writings but as O’Rahilly claims, “the *Confessio* when it does touch on biographical matters is vague and unsatisfying” (30). From the *Confessio*, we do not get any information about his mature years, and although it has often been suggested that Patrick spent part of these missing years in Gaul, this will remain a mystery.

In the Irish annals Patrick is only mentioned once; when he dies about 492 AD. So, it is unknown when he began his mission. O’Rahilly claims that Patrick was sent to Ireland

after the death of Palladius, and that he was meant to be his successor as head of the Irish Church. But when did Palladius die then?

#### ON THE DEATH DATE OF THE SAINT

With regards to the death of the saint, Perry says that the apostle never left Ireland since he first entered it as a bishop and died there in the year 493 at the age of 107 (115). By contrast, we know from O’Rahilly’s account that the Patrick who died around 491 is the Patrick of the *Confessio* and the annalistic records of 457 AD and 461 AD date the death of the first Patricius or Palladius Patricius.

All sources agree in the veracity of the death of Patrick the Briton around 491 AD or 492 AD. However, while Perry defends that Patrick fulfilled a missionary period of sixty years, O’Rahilly distinguishes two missions and two apostles respectively; which means that he acknowledges two obits, one for Palladius Patricius, and another one for Patrick.

The annals of Ulster contain two entries referring to the death of Patrick: one in the year 457 AD and another in the year 461 AD. As O’Rahilly presents it, the entry of 457AD in the Annals of Ulster says “Quies senis Patricii, ut alii libri dicunt” which he translates as “The death of the elder Patricius according to some books”(24). In the entry of 461 AD it could be read “Hic alii quietem Patricii dicunt” which means “others say that Patricius died this year”(24). The explanation for this is that sometimes events were dated in connection to the reign of kings, and in this case the year in which Loegaire became king was a reference. O’Rahilly suggests that Patricius Palladius died in 461 AD, that is, 30 years after his arrival (431 AD), and that early authorities could have confused this and claimed that he died 30 years after the accession of Loegaire which occurred in 427 AD; and thus, this would explain where the date 457 AD comes from.

A later annalistic entry also defends the idea that Patricius died in 461 AD, as in the entry of the year 664 AD which says that “203 years had elapsed since the death of Patricius”(24). In addition, Tírechán also assigned this date to the death of Patricius.

If we would consider Perry’s theory that Palladius Patricius lived 107 years and died in 493 AD we could consider mysterious or rather intriguing, as O’Rahilly points out, that

Palladius's contemporaries, those who went to Ireland with him, died around thirty years earlier than him (26). Auxilius died in 459 AD or 460 AD, Inernius in 468 AD or 469 AD, and Secundinus in 447 AD or 448 AD. Moreover, Benignus, a bishop who as a youth had accompanied Palladius to Tara, died in 467 AD or 468 AD. As Dumville states, these bishops were normally associated with Palladius and a so called "Continental mission" to Ireland, both by those who accepted the theory of "Two Patricks" and those who defended the existence of one (89). It would certainly be irrational to believe that in 5<sup>th</sup>-century Ireland someone could live for so long, but when we have specific evidence that proves that his contemporaries died decades earlier than him, it seems that ignoring the annalistic record of the years 457 AD and 461 AD is not the most sensible option.

With regards to Patrick's obit, meaning the second Patricius, O'Rahilly draws on the Irish annals, Fiacc's Hymn, *Vita Tripartita* to support his idea that Patrick's missionary period lasted 30 years from 432 AD to 462 AD. What actually causes no doubt is that the second Patrick died at the end of the fifth century, because sources like the obits of his disciples and the local traditions of Tírechán and others that connect him to the flourishes of kings and nobles give enough evidence to support this idea.

#### **4. AN INTERPRETATION OF THE EVIDENCE: READING BETWEEN THE LINES**

Perry's arguments to justify the existence of one single Patrick have already been exposed here, and it is important to mention that before the Irish scholar O'Rahilly, there had been others who had questioned the issue of the existing number of 'Patricks'. The truth is that Perry himself was conscious of the two Patricks problem, as he clearly states;

To this difficulty I see no other issue than by saying that the converter of Ireland having had two names, Palladius and Patricius, a thing not uncommon, and having made two voyages to Ireland-one without, the other with success; the one under the name Palladius, the other under the name of Patrick- has given occasion to posterior authors to split him into different persons and two different Apostles of Ireland (96).

Perry's intention was therefore, to correct the mistake made by those who distinguished two apostles, even those who considered Palladius's mission a failure and made him

vanish in a period of time of one year. However, he resolved the issue in a wrong way transferring the events of the life and mission of the second Patrick to that of Palladius, extending the life of the one who arrived in 431 AD until the year 492 AD. Surely, had his *Sketch* been known before, he would have been corrected by O’Rahilly too, whose theory clashes with Perry’s “one and only Patrick” as well as with the previous authors who distinguished two apostles but who shortened Palladius’ mission.

The *Sketch of the Ancient British History* expands upon the early Church history of the British Isles and it gives information that Bede’s *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum* did not touch. As a late 18<sup>th</sup>-century work it is framed within the debate over the role of Christianity in history, mainly because of the Reformation and the spread of rationalist ideas. In the sixteenth century a conflict between Catholic and Protestant historians broke out as a result of the declarations of Protestants who claimed that the Reformation had restored Christianity to its primitive roots, and rewrote the history of the Church as one independent from Rome. Catholic historiography by revising the history of the church, tried to prove that their tradition had remained faithful to its true sources, and thus, to Roman canon and doctrine (Carrera: xvii). After the enlightenment Christianity started to be disregarded and therefore, Catholic historians tried to revive hagiography and ecclesiastical history.

As a Catholic Recusant historian, the intention of Perry’s narrative is to sustain the idea of a true successful Saint Patrick, who was sent to Ireland by the Roman Church to convert the barbaric island, and who in fact achieved to do so. This is convenient for the Roman Catholic Church because it symbolizes unity and it glorifies the figure of a man, whose religion was supposed to be the “true one”. And that was the reason why God transferred him the talent to make such a prodigious work.

In fact, as we can see, Perry often does not give solid argumentation to defend his position. When he claims that Palladius and Patricius might have been the same person because there are too many coincidences on the details of their lives, he is not taking into account that if one had been the other’s predecessor it would not be strange at all that they both shared the same vocation, commitment, charge and connections.

In addition, Perry defended that Palladius Patricius was a Briton, but his mission had been commanded from Rome by St Celestine, and therefore he perfectly fitted the image of unified, one and only church that Perry wanted to project with his *Sketch*.

By contrast O’Rahilly states that the Palladian missionaries were Gauls and Italians and they brought Ireland into direct contact with the continent; whereas the later Patrick and his fellow-workers were Britons. O’Rahilly’s pamphlet, *The Two Patricks*, could also be understood under the frame of the ongoing Catholic-Protestant conflict, and although O’Rahilly, may have been as interested as Perry on building a unified image of the Church, he sees no problem on acknowledging the existence of two Irish missionaries.

At the moment, the debate is still open, and scholars agree that Palladius’s was a papally directed enterprise and Patrick’s was a British supported mission. According to Dumville, scholars have already abandoned the medieval notion of Patrick’s Roman or Gaulish tradition and they now defended that a British hierarchy was responsible for directing and supporting Bishop Patrick’s activities in Ireland.(133) Nowadays, the general belief is that Britons would have played a large part in the building of the Irish Church, even to the extent that the British church was involved in the government of the Irish Church, and therefore, it could be supposed that significant numbers of British clergy were committed to pastoral work in Ireland.

## 5. CONCLUSION

As we have briefly commented in these pages, historians of Early Christian Ireland had to deal with a great number of difficulties. Already in the first half of the tenth century the complications in Patrician hagiology and chronology were admitted, mainly because the annalistic records did not match. But also, the additional difficulty caused by the controversial character of the issue of the two Patricks was kind of a drawback. Moreover, regarding this precise topic, it is difficult not to be biased by the sources we consult because our conception of history could radically change depending on what we rely on. Sometimes even our expectations or our anxiety to find the answer we need, can also provoke that the information is somehow altered, or interpreted and exposed as

we wish. Thus, looking at facts with pre-conceived ideas is something every historian should avoid. I would suggest that Phillip Mark Perry, in the *Sketch* had a clear aim, and he was so determined to prove the unity of the Catholic church that often he ignored or undermined relevant sources of information, as for example the Irish annals.

However, it is not my intention to undervalue the work of the rector of St. Alban's College, but rather the opposite; to stand out its existence. The intention was to highlight the laborious work Perry took on building a solution for the problem of the two Patricks, in spite of its theory's erroneous outcome.

Although, since the publication of O'Rahilly's pamphlet, his theory of the Two Patricks has widely been accepted as the most likely to be the true one, no writing on this field can be considered uncontroversial, and incredibly the debate is still opened. Questions have been left in an unsatisfactory condition according to many authors, and there seems to be certain unwillingness to actually find a solution to the discussion. In Ireland they continue to praise and celebrate only one of the apostles, the Patrick of the *Confessio*, completely disregarding Palladius and his missionary work.

During the investigation process, there have been times when I even considered the possibility that Saint Patrick had actually been a fictional character, simply a myth. Had it not been for the nonsense this hypothesis would have meant regarding historical records and data I would have certainly consider it.

In spite of failing to make any substantial discovery, we have achieved to link O'Rahilly's and Perry's ideas, two authors that never got to know the work and ideas of the other, but whose contrasting ideas greatly enrich and contribute to the debate over the two apostles of Ireland.

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