

# Letter to the Soldiers of Coroticus

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Key: vocabulary = **bold** geography = *italics* personages = ***bold italics***

¶1

I, **Patrick**, a sinner, unlearned, resident in *Ireland*, declare myself to be a bishop. Most assuredly I believe that what I am I have received from God. And so I live among **barbarians**, a stranger and **exile** for the love of God. He is witness that this is so. Not that I wished my mouth to utter anything so hard and harsh; but I am forced by the zeal for God; and the truth of Christ has wrung it from me, out of love for my neighbors and sons for whom I gave up my country and parents and my life to the point of death. If I be worthy, I live for my God to teach the **heathen**, even though some may despise me.

¶2

With my own hand I have written and composed these words, to be given, delivered, and sent to the soldiers of **Coroticus**; I do not say, to my fellow citizens, or to fellow citizens of the holy **Romans**, but to fellow citizens of the demons, because of their evil works. Like our enemies, they live in death, allies of the **Scots** and the **apostate Picts**. Dripping with blood, they welter in the blood of innocent Christians, whom I have begotten into the number for God and confirmed in Christ!

¶3

The day after the newly baptized, anointed with chrism, in white garments (had been slain) — the fragrance was still on their foreheads when they were butchered and slaughtered with the sword by the above-mentioned people — I sent a letter with a holy **presbyter** whom I had taught from his childhood, clerics accompanying him, asking them to let us have some of the booty, and of the baptized they had made captives. They only jeered at them.

¶4

Hence I do not know what to **lament** more: those who have been slain, or those whom they have taken captive, or those whom the devil has mightily ensnared. Together with him they will be slaves in Hell in an eternal punishment; for who commits sin is a slave and will be called a son of the devil.

¶5

Wherefore let every God-fearing man know that they are enemies of me and of Christ my God, for whom I am an ambassador. **Parricide! fratricide!** ravening wolves that "eat the people of the Lord as they eat bread!" As is said, "the wicked, O Lord, have destroyed Thy law," which but recently He had excellently and kindly planted in Ireland, and which had established itself by the grace of God.

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¶6

I make no false claim. I share in the work of those whom He called and **predestinated** to preach the Gospel amidst grave persecutions unto the end of the earth, even if the enemy shows his jealousy through the **tyranny** of Coroticus, a man who has no respect for God nor for His priests whom He chose, giving them the highest, divine, and **sublime** power, that whom "they should bind upon earth should be bound also in Heaven."

¶7

Wherefore, then, I plead with you earnestly, ye holy and humble of heart, it is not permissible to court the favor of such people, nor to take food or drink with them, nor even to accept their **alms**, until they make **reparation** to God in hardships, through **penance**, with shedding of tears, and set free the baptized servants of God and handmaids of Christ, for whom He died and was crucified.

¶8

"The Most High disapproves the gifts of the wicked ... He that offers sacrifice of the goods of the poor, is as one that sacrifices the son in the presence of his lather. The riches, it is written, which he has gathered unjustly, shall be vomited up from his belly; the angel of death drags him away, by the fury of dragons he shall be tormented, the viper's tongue shall kill him, **unquenchable** fire devours him." And so — "woe to those who fill themselves with what is not their own;" or, "What does it profit a man that he gains the whole world, and suffers the loss of his own soul?"

¶9

It would be too **tedious** to discuss and set forth everything in detail, to gather from the whole Law testimonies against such greed. **Avarice** is a deadly sin. "Thou shalt not **covet** thy neighbour's goods." "Thou shalt not kill." A murderer cannot be with Christ. "Whosoever hates his brother is accounted a murderer." Or, "he that loves not his brother abides in death." How much more guilty is he that has stained his hands with blood of the sons of God whom He has of late purchased in the utmost part of the earth through the call of our littleness!

¶10

Did I come to Ireland without God, or according to the flesh? Who **compelled** me? I am bound by the Spirit not to see any of my **kinsfolk**. Is it of my own doing that I have holy mercy on the people who once took me captive and made away with the servants and maids of my father's house? I was freeborn according to the flesh. I am the son of a **decursion**. But I sold my noble rank I am neither ashamed nor sorry for the good of others. Thus I am a servant in Christ to a foreign nation for the unspeakable glory of life everlasting which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

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¶11

And if my own people do not know me, a prophet has no honor in his own country. Perhaps we are not of the same fold and have not one and the same God as Father, as is written: "He that is not with Me, is against Me, and he that gathers not with Me, scatters." It is not right that one destroys, another builds up. I seek not the things that are mine.

¶12

It is not my grace, but God who has given this **solicitude** into my heart, to be one of His hunters or fishers whom God once foretold would come in the last days.

¶13

I am hated. What shall I do, Lord? I am most despised. Look, Thy sheep around me are torn to pieces and driven away, and that by those robbers, by the orders of the hostile-minded Coroticus. Far from the love of God is a man who hands over Christians to the Picts and Scots. Ravening wolves have devoured the flock of the Lord, which in Ireland was indeed growing splendidly with the greatest care; and the sons and daughters of kings were monks and virgins of Christ — I cannot count their number. Wherefore, be not pleased with the wrong done to the just; even to hell it shall not please.

¶14

Who of the saints would not shudder to be merry with such persons or to enjoy a meal with them? They have filled their houses with the spoils of dead Christians, they live on plunder. They do not know, the wretches, that what they offer their friends and sons as food is deadly poison, just as **Eve** did not understand that it was death she gave to her husband. So are all that do evil: they work death as their eternal punishment.

¶15

This is the custom of the Roman Christians of *Gaul*: they send holy and able men to the **Franks** and other heathen with so many thousand sold to **ransom** baptized captives. You prefer to kill and sell them to a foreign nation that has no knowledge of God. You betray the members of Christ as it were into a **brothel**. What hope have you in God, or anyone who thinks as you do, or converses with you in words of flattery? God will judge. For Scripture says: "Not only them that do evil are worthy to be condemned, but they also that consent to them."

¶16

I do not know why I should say or speak further about the departed ones of the sons of God, whom the sword has touched all too harshly. For Scripture says: "Weep with them that weep;" and again: "If one member be grieved, let all members grieve with it." Hence the

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Church mourns and **laments** her sons and daughters whom the sword has not yet slain, but who were removed and carried off to faraway lands, where sin abounds openly, **grossly**, **impudently**. There people who were freeborn have been sold, Christians made slaves, and that, too, in the service of the **abominable**, wicked, and apostate Picts!

¶17

Therefore I shall raise my voice in sadness and grief — O you fair and beloved brethren and sons whom I have begotten in Christ, countless of number, what can I do you for? I am not worthy to come to the help of God or men. The wickedness of the wicked hath **prevailed** over us. We have been made, as it were, strangers. Perhaps they do not believe that we have received one and the same baptism, or have one and the same God as Father. For them it is a disgrace that we are Irish. Have ye not, as is written, one God? Have ye, every one of you, **forsaken** his neighbor?

¶18

Therefore I grieve for you, I grieve, my dearly beloved. But again, I rejoice within myself. I have not labored for nothing, and my journeying abroad has not been in vain. And if this horrible, unspeakable crime did happen — thanks be to God, you have left the world and have gone to Paradise as baptized faithful. I see you: you have begun to journey where night shall be no more, nor mourning, nor death; but you shall leap like calves loosened from their bonds, and you shall tread down the wicked, and they shall be ashes under your feet.

¶19

You then, will reign with the apostles, and prophets, and martyrs. You will take possession of an eternal kingdom, as He Himself testifies, saying: "They shall come from the east and from the west, and shall sit down with **Abraham**, and **Isaac**, and **Jacob** in the kingdom of heaven." "Without are dogs, and **sorcerers**, ... and murderers; and liars and **perjurers** have their portion in the pool of everlasting fire." Not without reason does the Apostle say: "Where the just man shall scarcely be saved, where shall the sinner and ungodly **transgressor** of the law find himself?"

¶20

Where, then, will Coroticus with his criminals, rebels against Christ, where will they see themselves, they who distribute baptized women as prizes — for a miserable **temporal** kingdom, which will pass away in a moment? As a cloud or smoke that is **dispersed** by the wind, so shall the deceitful wicked perish at the presence of the Lord; but the just shall feast with great **constancy** with Christ, they shall judge nations, and rule over wicked kings for ever and ever. **Amen**.

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¶21

I **testify** before God and His angels that it will be so as He indicated to my ignorance. It is not my words that I have set forth in Latin, but those of God and the apostles and prophets, who have never lied. "He that believes shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be condemned," God hath spoken.

¶22

I ask earnestly that whoever is a willing servant of God be a carrier of this letter, so that on no account it be **suppressed** or hidden by anyone, but rather be read before all the people, and in the presence of Coroticus himself. May God inspire them sometime to recover their senses for God, repenting, however late, their **heinous** deeds — murderers of the brethren of the Lord! — and to set free the baptized women whom they took captive, in order that they may deserve to live to God, and be made whole, here and in eternity! Be peace to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. Amen.