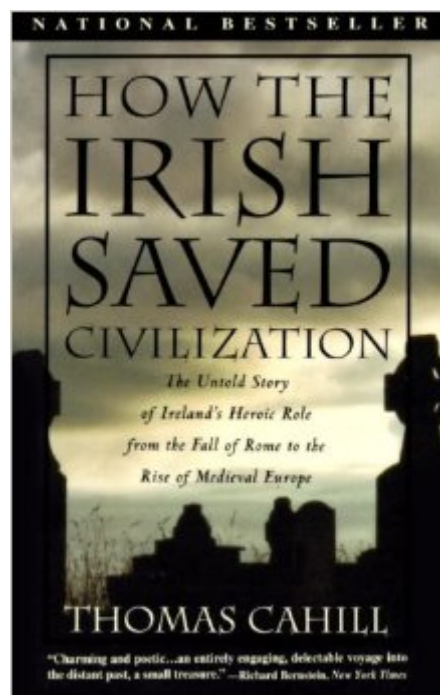


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How The Irish Saved Civilization: The Untold Story Of Ireland's Heroic Role From The Fall Of Rome To The Rise Of Medieval Europe (The Hinges Of History)



Synopsis

The perfect St. Patrick's Day gift, and a book in the best tradition of popular history -- the untold story of Ireland's role in maintaining Western culture while the Dark Ages settled on Europe. Every year millions of Americans celebrate St. Patrick's Day, but they may not be aware of how great an influence St. Patrick was on the subsequent history of civilization. Not only did he bring Christianity to Ireland, he instilled a sense of literacy and learning that would create the conditions that allowed Ireland to become "the isle of saints and scholars" -- and thus preserve Western culture while Europe was being overrun by barbarians. In this entertaining and compelling narrative, Thomas Cahill tells the story of how Europe evolved from the classical age of Rome to the medieval era. Without Ireland, the transition could not have taken place. Not only did Irish monks and scribes maintain the very record of Western civilization -- copying manuscripts of Greek and Latin writers, both pagan and Christian, while libraries and learning on the continent were forever lost -- they brought their uniquely Irish world-view to the task. As Cahill delightfully illustrates, so much of the liveliness we associate with medieval culture has its roots in Ireland. When the seeds of culture were replanted on the European continent, it was from Ireland that they were germinated. In the tradition of Barbara Tuchman's *A Distant Mirror*, *How The Irish Saved Civilization* reconstructs an era that few know about but which is central to understanding our past and our cultural heritage. But it conveys its knowledge with a winking wit that aptly captures the sensibility of the unsung Irish who relaunched civilization.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I might as well state it plainly: this book is the stupidest scholarly work I have ever read. I gave it up halfway through, and thus read twice as much as I should have. As a kid growing up in Ireland I remember our primary school teacher telling us about the important work carried out by Irish monks beginning in the sixth century, where they preserved and copied many important works of the ancient Western canon and slowly helped to re-illuminate Europe during the Dark Ages. Since then I've always preserved a certain curiosity about the story at the back of my mind. As a colonized people, Ireland's indigenous culture was suppressed for centuries, so could it be true that in a pre-colonial period the Irish had helped to save Western civilisation? When I saw this book on the shelf I bought it straight away. In fairness, I should have been more circumspect. The reviews on the back cover used phrases like "shamelessly engaging, effortlessly scholarly" [Thomas Keneally]; "lyrical, playful ... entirely engaging" [NY Times]; "entertainingly told" [Sunday Telegraph] which should have rung all sorts of warning bells. Keneally (who should know better) is accidentally correct when he uses the term "effortlessly scholarly" since it's plain as day that no scholarly effort at all went into this researchless mess. I have not the space here to describe the crazed prose flowing from Cahill's out-of-control pen, nor the arm-chancing shallowness of his unbearable pseudo-intellectualism. With little of any substance to comment on, much of the book's intellectual pedigree can be judged from the prose style alone. Cahill plainly takes himself quite seriously as a scholar, but the mask just keeps slipping. The following are some examples.

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