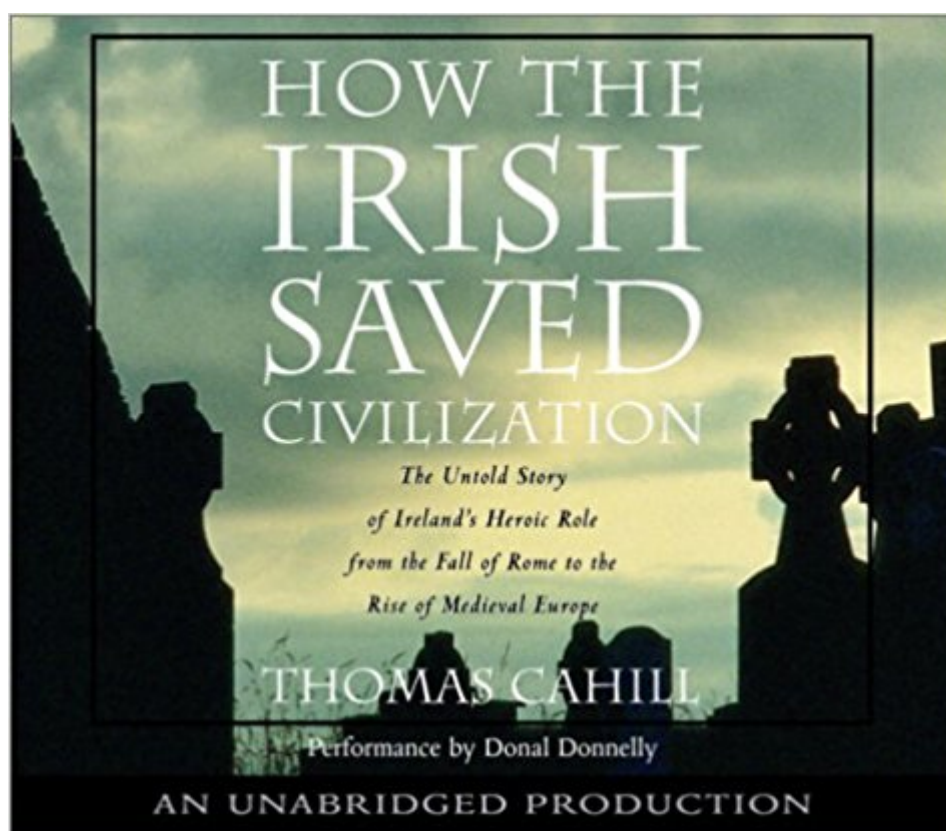


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# How The Irish Saved Civilization: The Untold Story Of Ireland's Heroic Role From The Fall Of Rome To The Rise Of Medieval Europe



## 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. From the Hardcover edition.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

In this delightful and illuminating look into a crucial but little-known "hinge" of history, Thomas Cahill takes us to the "island of saints and scholars," the Ireland of St. Patrick and the Book of Kells. Here, far from the barbarian despoliation of the continent, monks and scribes laboriously, lovingly, even playfully preserved the West's written treasury. When stability returned in Europe, these Irish scholars were instrumental in spreading learning, becoming not only the conservators of civilization, but also the shapers of the medieval mind, putting their unique stamp on Western culture. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

With the fall of the Roman Empire in the fifth century, Ireland, according to the author, "had one moment of unblemished glory"-when Irish monks copied almost all of Western classical poetry, history, oratory, philosophy and commentary. But this book is more than the story of monks preserving manuscripts; it is an irreverent look back at how Ireland came to be. Celts who had traversed Europe, Irish warriors and their women were primitive and blatantly sexual. Next came a taming of the land with the help of St. Patrick, who hated slavery and loved scholarship. Patrick was followed by St. Columcille, a great lover of books who became embroiled in a war and, as penance, exiled himself to the island of Iona, off Scotland. It was here that Ireland became "Europe's publisher," as other warrior-monks followed Columcille's example and began to colonize barbarized Europe. They put Ireland in the vanguard of intellectual leadership, a position the Irish would not surrender until the Viking invasion of the 11th century. Cahill (A Literary Guide to Ireland) has written a scholarly, yet cheeky, book that will have strong appeal to Celtophiles. Illustrations not seen by PW. Copyright 1995 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Thomas Cahill's history of Ireland during the middle ages is so well and cleverly written that you will never know you are reading nonfiction. The theme running through is as engrossing as "Vikings" on the History Channel. It is grounded in solid facts, many of which are not well known, making it a fascinating read. The author is a scholar, whose prose is not only lyrical and learned, but paints word pictures of western civilization after the fall of the Roman Empire. You will have a whole new regard for the contributions of the "Emerald Isle."

Thomas Cahill deserves more respect and recognition. In addition to his ability to write engagingly and clearly, his views on Western Civilization's key turning points are, in my view, spot-on. Reading all of this series is like getting a Masters in Liberal Arts (without having to read everything from

Homer through Dante).

Fascinating story, which gave me insight into a dark period of Christian history. Puzzled by the seemingly gratuitous descriptions of sexual misconduct. Maybe a book needs such stuff in order to sell better? Overall a very illuminating work, however. I would recommend for mature readers.

A well written account of a lost identity of the Irish heritage. Going as far back as the origins of the Irish people, to their contributions to Catholicism as we know it today, to how Saint Patrick came to be the man an figure he was. Also the contribution the Irish had in preserving the literary works of the classical era. An excellent read for those who enjoy learning about the history and origins of individualized heritage. The first book in a series of such types of historical accounts and I plan to continue on with said series. Thumbs up to the author for an easy to read and enjoyable writing style.

An amazing, beautifully written history of Ireland...no tears in the Guinness - just the facts m'am, just the facts! A great read. I have set my friends presents of Ho the Irish Saved Civilization and they all LOVE IT.

"How the Irish saved civilization" ? ,.....beats me !They should have stayed in their pubs and drink their ale, instead of fighting those Vikings.'Just kidding !A very good book with clear descriptions of their country.Super !

How the Irish Saved Civilization Thomas Cahill published this slender essay in 1995. It stayed on the New York Times best seller list for two years, which gives us a reason to read it. Other reasons abound. Cahill has an accomplished background in the ancient languages of Latin and Greek. He spent two years studying Hebrew and theology at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America. He also reads English, Italian and French, more modern languages. Cahill must be considered a complete and focused scholar. He has taught at several famous colleges and universities. His style is fluid and erudite without being pretentious and never becomes boring. This volume begins a so far six volume series he calls 'The hinges of History Series', all works on key elements of Western Civilization. In *How the Irish Saved Civilization* he outlines the Western World as it existed around the year 400, its political structure, its religious basis in its magnificent achievements literature and philosophy. Then he shows us how this world disappeared

under the waves of the Barbarian invasions. Literacy declined, books vanished into the fires of illiterate warriors and cities emptied. The Dark Ages overcame classical civilization. But in Ireland there was no fall. It had never been built up in the first place. The Irish squabbled happily among themselves, content with their bards and poets. Saint Patrick changed all that with his missionary conversion of the Irish. They took to Christianity at once, and once introduced to the idea, became not just literate but scholarly. Isolated monks gathered here and there to pray and study. And to copy. They had a fierce delight in the written word. Most importantly, they copied everything they could get their hands on from saintly lives to the works of Livy. A generation later, the monkish monasteries began to send out missionaries of their own. They colonized first Scotland then Northern England, planting monasteries in their mode, complete with scriptoriums. In another generation, Irish monks spread across Europe founding astonishing numbers of monasteries. Irish monk-scholars popped up everywhere, in France, in Germany, in the Alps and all the way to Italy. Some of the most famous and important monasteries in Europe were founded by Irish holy men. And in every one of these dozens, scores of holy retreats, young monks copied madly everything that they could get their hands on. Without the holy dedication and patience of these men much of the ancient lore of the classic age would be forever lost, as much was in spite of their efforts. This book, for all of its scholarly intent, is a fast read. And a fascinating one.

As an Australian with Irish heritage I found this to be a culturally and historically fascinating journey into my own culture... It is such a well written and easily digestible read that I bought a copy for my Mum and sister too!

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