

## How the Irish Saved Civilization



From the fall of Rome to the rise of Charlemagne - the dark ages - learning, scholarship, and culture disappeared from the European continent. The great heritage of Western civilization - from the Greek and Roman classics to Jewish and Christian works - would have been utterly lost were it not for the holy men and women of unconquered Ireland. 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 Wests written treasury. With the return of stability in Europe, these Irish scholars were instrumental in spreading learning. Thus the Irish not only were conservators of civilization, but became shapers of the medieval mind, putting their unique stamp on Western culture. Thanks to Thomas Cahill, this pivotal era is brought back to vibrant life, its personages portrayed in all their seemingly contemporary humanity, its issues simply and compellingly spelled out. How the Irish Saved Civilization will change forever the way we look at our past, and ourselves.

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