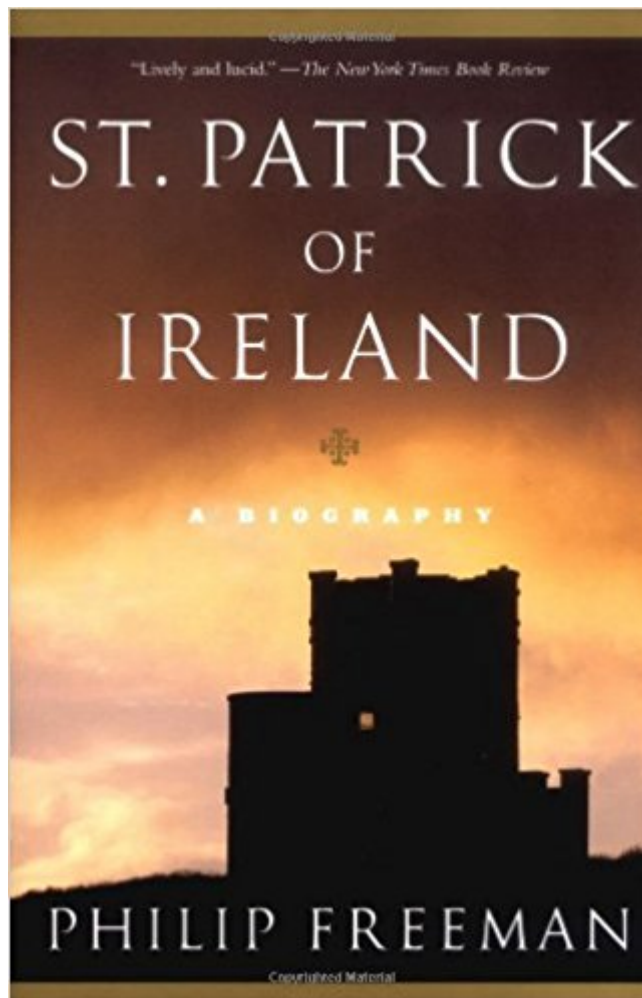


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# St. Patrick Of Ireland: A Biography



## Synopsis

Ireland's patron saint has long been shrouded in legend, but the true story of St. Patrick is far more inspiring than the myths. In *St. Patrick of Ireland*, Philip Freeman brings the historic Patrick and his world vividly to life. Patrick speaks in his own voice in two remarkable letters he wrote about himself and his beliefs, new translations of which are included here and which are still astonishing for their passion and eloquence. Born late in the fourth century to an aristocratic British family, Patrick's life was changed forever when he was abducted and taken to Ireland just before his sixteenth birthday. He spent six grueling years there as a slave, but the ordeal turned him from an atheist into a true believer. After a vision in which God told him he would go home, Patrick escaped captivity and, following a perilous journey, returned safely to Britain to the amazement of his family. But even more amazing to them was his announcement that he intended to go back to Ireland to spend the rest of his life ministering to the people who had once enslaved him. Set against the turbulent backdrop of the British Isles during the last years of the Roman Empire, *St. Patrick of Ireland* brilliantly brings to life the real Patrick, shorn of legend, a man whose deep spiritual conviction and devotion helped to transform a country.

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## Customer Reviews

Born to an aristocratic British family in the fifth century, Patrick was kidnapped by slave raiders at age 15 and sold to an Irish farmer. After six years of tending sheep he escaped, walked 200 miles to a port city he had seen in a dream, and sailed for home. Years later, as a priest or bishop, he returned to Ireland. Bribing petty kings for safe passage through their rural domains, he preached,

baptized and established churches in his beloved adopted land. This information about the saint's life is known from two lengthy letters he wrote late in life, both included in a lively translation by Freeman, a classics professor and author of three previous books about the Celtic world.

Dismissing many familiar tales as myths, he relies on archeological discoveries as well as Greek and Roman writers to create a colorful picture of Ireland at the end of the Roman Empire: its kings and headhunting warriors, gods and human sacrifices, belief in the Otherworld. "I am a stranger and an exile living among barbarians and pagans, because God cares for them," Patrick wrote. Besides, time was running out: As Freeman observes, "The gospel had been preached throughout the world and was even then, by [Patrick's] own efforts, being spread to the most distant land of all. There was simply no reason for God's judgment to be delayed once the Irish had heard the good news." In the storytelling tradition of popular historian Thomas Cahill, this small book offers a fascinating and believable introduction to Ireland's patron saint. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Adult/High School — Readers will be drawn into the story of St. Patrick by the short preface that tells how the teen Patricius, accustomed to a life of ease and luxury in Roman Britain, was surprised and subdued in his parents' villa by Irish slave traders who led him and household servants in chains to boats that took them to the feared barbaric island. Freeman has based his biography on medieval copies of two letters written by Patrick near the end of his life. Each chapter opens with a few lines from one of them. The author has fleshed out the story using information from archaeological finds, Roman and medieval records, and Papal documents. When discussing Patrick's home, education, or experiences in Ireland, Freeman notes that he is describing what was typical in the fifth century. As readers learn about Patrick's captivity, servitude, and escape, they also find out about life in Roman Britain and Ireland. Marriage, fostering, the role of kings, and the practices of the druids are only a few of the topics covered. This is not a heavy academic tome; explanations are simple and clear. A time line, pronunciation guide, and 13 black-and-white photographs of archaeological sites and artifacts are included. — Kathy Tewell, Chantilly Regional Library, VA Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

The author does an excellent job harmonizing history with the letters of St. Patrick. He brings in noteworthy, historical data that really fill in some of the gaps missing from the historical accounts of St. Patrick's life...given that the details of St. Patrick's life are largely shrouded in mystery. This book

was not so much a biography as it was a historical accounting of the church, that happened to lean on the story of St. Patrick (really only his letters and what the man himself wrote of his life). My one criticism of this work is that it was wrought with speculation. Well the author doesn't excellent job unpacking the details that are known of Patrick's life he consistently filled in historical details with his own speculations about what Patrick, his family, and others may have been thinking throughout the book. It was highly distracting, in an otherwise well-written book. That said I rated it four stars for a reason. It was a well-composed work, easy to read, and chock-full of accurate historical data verified by multiple sources. Definitely worth your time as a student of history. Further the translations of St. Patrick's letters in the back of the book, are worth the price of admission alone.

I am enjoying this book because at the end he has a translation of one of St. Patrick's lasting letters and his Confessions. But I truly find it a little arrogant that he went to the trouble of translating these himself. I was surprised that he was able to fill a book this size about St. Patrick. It is said over and over throughout the book about how little is truly known about him. With a Title like "St. Patrick of Ireland," I had anticipated finding out so many of the beautiful truths about the story of this saints life. And all in all I am disappointed. In my estimation, the miracle that he is remembered at all and that the conversion of Ireland is accredited to him; and, in the likelihood of the power and nature of sainthood, he did convert the mind and Soul of Ireland to Catholicism, helping to create the strong Irish Catholic identity we have in America. However, he did not do this, by allowing us to truly know about him... we simply know his baseline. A man was enslaved, converted by Christ, redeemed, and accepted enslavement of Christ to convert those who had enslaved him. For learning the beauty of this mystery I am giving this three stars, because truly this is a feat to be followed.

I'm not sure what led me to finally read this book, because I was afraid it would either be an unhistorical repetition of legends, or else an attempt to discredit people's devotion to Patrick. Happily, this extraordinary biography would be as easily appreciated by the devout believer as by the most secular skeptic. Freeman successfully manages to place Patrick in his historical context, while using Patrick's own writing to sketch a vivid picture of who he was as a human being, aside from or in addition to devotional legend. Best of all, the narrative is quite lively and well written.

This is a well-researched, non-fiction book about St. Patrick and late fourth century Ireland. Learn about Irish tribes, choosing a new King, druid magic, superstitions, and more! All told with a sense

of humor. This book is 165 pages long.

In this work Mr. Freeman has presented a very lucid and well thought out accounting of the famous saint. Being of half Irish descent, I was naturally drawn to learn more about this illustrious figure of the distant past. I imagine that he may well have set my ancestors on the straight and narrow path of Christianity but, irregardless of that, his great and honorable role in helping moderate and humanize a people famed for their wild and uncivilized behavior may have also contributed to the fact that so many of America's ablest and most successful political leaders claim Ireland as their (or part of their) ancestral home. I feel that the author not only communicated with his readers in a very intimate and entertaining fashion but also obviously researched the subject thoroughly before composing his book. All in all, St. Patrick of Ireland is, in my humble opinion, a superior piece of authorship illuminating an often little understood icon of piety and religious dedication (who has long been celebrated at festivals worldwide in a most un-pious way) by helping the reader through careful and thorough research to separate the man from the legend. This book, as such, should be recommended reading for high school and college students (to help temper their future celebratory revels, ofcourse).

Excellent book! I am reading it for a class assignment, but would recommend it for personal reading too. It is very well written and extremely interesting. Philip Freeman makes history come alive and be real.

I thought very highly of this book. I very much appreciated that the author focused almost exclusively on the actual facts known about St. Patrick, which isn't as much as most of us think. The book is fleshed out by the authors additional historical information about life in Ireland during the time of Patrick's ministry. Finally, the last section of the book contains the complete text of Patrick's two letters on which the book is based. I'd recommend this to anyone interested in Patrick, the roots of Christianity in Ireland (and England) at that time, and early Irish history and society.

I enjoyed the biography, but I had to rate it less than 5 stars because of an inaccuracy I found. The author says there was no High King during Patrick's early Times in Ireland, but the respected scholars on the Irish high kingship would disagree. This slight oversight made me question the rigor of research that went into the claims made as fact throughout the book. I assume it to be accurate overall and perhaps there is just a few mistake like the one I noticed.

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