

Saint Patrick Was A Baptist

Saint Patrick Was A Baptist

An Epoch-Making Message

By John S. Wimbish, Pastor
Calvary Baptist Church, New York City

This sermon was delivered to a thronged congregation on March 12, 1952, just a few days before the phenomenal "St. Patrick's Day Parade" in which 95,000 people marched up New York's fashionable Fifth Avenue and an estimated 1,500,000 spectators lined the streets. The reviewing stand bore such dignitaries as Mayor and Mrs. Vincent Impellitteri, former Postmaster General James A. Farley and scores of city and state officials and ecclesiastical and military leaders. The message, in printed form, has been offered to a world-wide radio audience and there has been an unprecedented demand for it.

Saint Patrick was a Baptist. After a serious study of reputable writings, I am firmly convinced that he was not affiliated in any way whatsoever with the Roman Hierarchy.

It is indeed magnanimous of our Catholic friends to give this humble missionary of ours such prominence on their scroll of illustrious saints. Think of it! They have even erected cathedrals in his honor. However, we feel that it is time to sweep the cobwebs of superstition and the dust of legend off this dear old preacher of the Cross.

To most of us, Patrick is a mythical being, vaguely associated with a serpent exodus from the Emerald Isle. Other misconceptions are that he was Irish, that he was an emissary of the Pope and that his name was *Patrick*. All of these are false. He was not Irish, he was in his honored grave 175 years before his name was even mentioned in Catholic writings¹ and his real name was

Sucat, which means "warlike" in Modern Welsh.² For the sake of simplicity, throughout this message we will refer to him as *Patrick*.

Let us consider, first of all,

I. PATRICK'S HISTORY

The libraries of the world contain innumerable biographies of Patrick which we cannot accept as valid. An examination of the facts will reveal that the honored historians of the Hierarchy have not always been characterized by honesty and during the Middle Ages such a web of superstition was spun around the evangelistic zealot that his real self has been distorted in the minds of millions. Most of these traditions and myths may be found in the seven ancient lives of Patrick, assembled and published in 1647 by John Colgan under the title *Trias Thaumaturga*.

There are two documents by Patrick which are recognized by all parties as being genuine: his "Confession" or "Epistle to the Irish" and his Epistle to the Christians under the cruel king, Coroticus. Then, too, we should mention the *Lorica* or *Hymn of Patrick*, originally written in Latin and known as *The Breastplate*. We use these authentic writings as the basis of our declarations concerning the Apostle to the Irish.

Patrick, in his own "Confession" tells us that he was a Briton, not an Irishman. He first saw the light of day in the town of Dumbarton on the River Clyde in the

south of Scotland about the year 389 A.D. His father was a Christian deacon and his grandfather a clergyman in the ancient church of Britain which had never come under the yoke of Rome. These facts in themselves practically crush the claims of the Papacy.

At sixteen years of age, our hero was captured by a band of Scottish slave-dealing pirates who sold him to the Druid Chieftain, Milcho, who reigned in the north of Ireland. For six years Patrick herded the cattle of this ruthless pagan chieftain. In his "Confession" he tells us: "When I was a youth, I was taken captive before I knew what I should desire or seek, or what I ought to shun."

It was during this time of servitude in the bleak forests of northern Ireland that Patrick turned from his frivolous ways and came into a knowledge of Christ as his own personal Savior. Of that period he says, "Frequently in the night I prayed and the love of God and His fear increased more and more in me." Possibly it was while a hidden onlooker of the weird Druid ceremonies that he was inspired of God to become a missionary to these heathen people.

He relates how, after six years, he managed to escape from his master and, after a torturous journey over sea and land, returned to his people in Britain. It must have been a beautiful home-coming as his mother embraced him once again and his father, in amazement, learned of the lad's experiences. They had long before given him up as dead.

Like the great apostle Paul, he received a clear and personal "Macedonian call" from the Lord of harvest to preach the Gospel in the land of his former captivity. Patrick described his call in these words: "Again, I was in Britain with my parents, who received me as their

son, and besought me to promise that, after the many afflictions I had endured, I would never leave them again. And then, truly, in the bosom of the night I saw a man as if coming from Ireland, whose name was Victoricus, with numerous letters, one of which he gave me, and I read the beginning of the epistle, containing the Voice of the Irish.

"And while I was reading the beginning of the epistle I thought in my mind that I heard the voice of those who were near the wood Focluti, which is near the western sea. And they shouted thus: 'We beseech thee, holy youth, to come and live amongst us.' And I was greatly pained in my heart, and could not read very much more; and thus I was proved. Thank God, that after many years the Lord performed to them according to their entreaty."

From these words it is evident that his call to go as a missionary to Ireland was not from any Pope or representative of the Roman Church. If our hero had been an agent of Rome, surely Popes Sixtus or Leo, who were his contemporaries, would have informed the Roman constituency of the astounding work being performed by Patrick and his co-laborers.

Dr. J. Lewis Smith, in his scholarly treatise, "Patrick of Ireland Not a Romanist," says, "We have in hand now 140 letters of Pope Leo the Great and we have not found a line written by him or any other Pope, or any other man, rejoicing over the wonderful additions to the Roman Church by Patrick and his disciples."³

Patrick, like Paul, "had the mighty ordination of the nail-pierced hands." The *Book of Darrow*, one of the oldest of Irish manuscripts, says nothing about his being an ecclesiastic of Rome and in his letter to the Christians under Coroticus and in his "Confession" Patrick makes no mention whatsoever of his being consecrated as a diocesan Bishop.

Dr. Hamilton, in his book "The Irish Church," says this of Patrick's confession letter: "There is not a faint Roman tinge about it. It is ... thoroughly evangelical." And Dr. Todd says: "The 'Confession' of St. Patrick contains not a word of a mission from the Pope Celestine."⁴

We are certain that Patrick was a product of the Celtic Church, noted for its purity of Biblical doctrine, and not an "obsequious tool of the Romish system." Yes, we are positive that Patrick's call to go to Ireland as a missionary was from God Himself and not from Pope Celestine.

This leads us to examine

READ

THE BAPTIST CHALLENGE

www.centralbaptistchurch.org

M. L. Moser, Editor

**Pastor Emeritus
CENTRAL BAPTIST CHURCH**

15601 Taylor Loop Rd.

Little Rock, Arkansas 72223

Email: mlmoser1@juno.com

II. PATRICK'S MISSION

At forty years of age, the amazing Patrick began his magnificent work on the Emerald Isle. His mission field was wild and primitive. The people who inhabited its primeval forests were animists and they worshiped such things as trees and stones and wells. They believed that spirits dwelt in these idols and they sacrificed their little children on heathen altars to appease the gods and to secure, so they thought, better harvests.

About a year after his arrival in Ireland, Patrick did something that called much attention to his ministry. The *Encyclopedia Britannica* tells us that he challenged the “royal authority by lighting the Paschal fire on the hill of Slane on the night of Easter Eve. It chanced to be the occasion of a pagan festival at Tara, during which no fire might be kindled until the royal fire had been lit.”⁵

Ah, this should put iron in our blood! Glorious, audacious Patrick challenged all the forces of hell. Not a little flame did he kindle, but a bonfire! All the people were transfixed and King Loigaire was amazed at his daring and said: “If we do not extinguish this flame it will sweep over all Ireland.” This prophecy proved true for it seemed that a holy fire fell from the altar of heaven and for years there were such tears of repentance as have seldom been witnessed by the angels of glory.

When the flames of the great conflagration on Tara’s hill, ignited by Patrick, illumined the countryside, the King was curious to see what kind of mortal this Patrick could be and he sent for him. The Druid priests were infuriated and declared they would destroy him by sorcery if he dared to come.

But in the dim light of that Easter morn, in the year 428 A.D., the valiant hero of the Cross and his assistant missionaries marched boldly into the presence of the monarch and told him that Christ was the light of the world and preached Jesus crucified and risen from the dead with such persuasive eloquence that the King was born again by the Spirit of the living God.

We are told that Patrick and his company advanced toward the Irish sovereign arrayed in white and carrying crosses and singing the evangelist’s hymn in all its majestic cadence:

*“I bind to myself today,
The strong power of the invocation of the Trinity;
The faith of the Trinity in unity;
The Creator of the elements.*

*“I bind to myself today,
The power of the incarnation of Christ*

*With that of His baptism;
The power of His crucifixion,
With that of His burial;
The power of the resurrection
With (that of) the ascension;
The power of His coming
To the sentence of judgment. . .*

*“I bind to myself today,
The power of God to guide me,
The might of God to uphold me,
The wisdom of God to teach me,
The eye of God to watch over me,
The ear of God to hear me,
The Word of God to give me speech,
The hand of God to protect me,
The way of God to prevent me,
The shield of God to shelter me,
The host of God to defend me,—
Against the snares of demons,
Against the temptations of vices,
Against the lusts of nature,
Against everyone who would injure me,
Whether far or near,
Whether few or with many.*

*“I have set around me all these powers,
Against every hostile, savage power
Directed against my body and my soul;
Against the incantations of false prophets;
Against the black laws of heathenism,
Against the false laws of heresy,
Against the deceits of idolatry,
Against the spells of women, and smith, and
Druids,
Against all knowledge that blinds the soul of man.*

*“Christ protect me today,
Against poison, against burning,
Against drowning, against wound,
That I may receive abundant reward.
Christ with me, Christ before me,
Christ behind me, Christ within me,
Christ beneath me, Christ above me,*

*“Christ at my right hand, Christ at my left,
Christ in the fort (when I am at home),
Christ in the chariot-seat (when I travel),
Christ in the ship (when I sail).*

*Of the Lord is salvation;
Christ is salvation;
With us ever be
Thy salvation, O Lord!*

*“Christ in the heart of every man who thinks of
me,
Christ in the mouth of every man who speaks to
me;
Christ in every eye that sees me,
Christ in every ear that hears me.”⁶*

After the king believed, Patrick won and baptized multiplied thousands of converts and ere his thirty-three years of ministry were finished, all Ireland was evangelized. Innumerable churches dotted its hills and valleys and from their ranks sent forth zealous missionaries to proclaim the message of redemption with incomparable passion to the pagan tribes of Scotland, England, Germany and Gaul.

In his second lecture on Ireland, John L. Stoddard states: “During the sixth, seventh and eighth centuries, especially, this farthest boundary of the Continent held aloft and kept aflame the torch of Christian faith, and glittered like a star upon the dark horizon of the western world.”

Even so cautious and reliable a historian as Green, in his *“Short History of the English Bible,”* says: “For a time it seemed as if the course of the world’s history was to be changed; as if that older Celtic race which the Roman and German had swept before them had turned to the moral conquest of their conquerors; *as if Celtic and not Latin Christianity was to mould the destinies of the Church of the West.*”

This was the beginning of the golden age of Ireland. It is forever true that when the Holy Word of God is opened and preached to the people, the chains of illiteracy and vice are broken.

The real Patrick was a Bible-reading, Bible-believing, Bible-preaching missionary and it was the unadulterated Gospel of the Son of God that lifted the Irish out of the darkness of paganism into the glorious light of the Truth.

Hands that once grasped the sword were now folded reverently in prayer. The heathen stone idols, known as *Cromlechs*, that once marked their graves gave way to the cross of Jesus. Druid paganism was crushed and the “buffer state of Europe” became known as the “Isle of Saints.”

Odriscol, who, incidentally, was an Irish Catholic, in his work entitled, *“Views of Ireland,”* says: “The Christian church of that country, as founded by St. Patrick and his

predecessors, existed for many ages, free and unshackled. For 700 years this church maintained its independence. It had no connection with England and differed on points of importance with Rome.”⁷

It was not until the years 1172 A.D., at the Council of Cashel, that Henry II of England and the Pope prevailed over this people and another great victory was won for the Roman Catholic Hierarchy. But from the days of Patrick to the fateful Council of Cashel, many glorious victories were won for the cause of Christ by the Irish Christians.

Study the pathetic history and you will be as firmly convinced as I that Catholicism has been more guilty of blighting the Irish than the invasion of the Danes from the North or the failure of the potato crop in which one fourth of its entire population was destroyed. It takes no student of world economy to discover that wherever the Vatican holds sway the masses are kept in superstition and poverty. Stoddard says that “Some terrible vampire has, for a thousand years, been draining the life blood of Ireland,” and he attributes it to the geographical location of the little isle. But if any person will, with unbiased mind, examine the record, he will be firmly convinced that an intellectual and spiritual gloom settled upon the Emerald Isle when Romanism kidnapped the Irish Church.

Then I would refer you to

III. PATRICK’S THEOLOGY.

You will notice that throughout the sermon I have not labeled him “*Saint*” Patrick. We Baptists do not refer to our preachers as “saints.”

None of the many volumes in my library and others at my disposal sheds any light on the beatification and canonization of this “Patron Saint of Ireland.” So, as a final resort to secure this information, one of our staff members called the research librarian of one of the leading Catholic universities in our city. He was very gracious but after searching through *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, the *Dictionary of Saints*, and several other volumes, he reported that Patrick was neither beatified nor canonized for it was not until about the 1200’s that the *Papal Bull* was issued which set forth the requirements for sainthood.

Realizing that at least four miracles must be accredited to a candidate for this exalted position, our worker probed further to discover what miracles Patrick had performed, whereupon the librarian said: “Well, the only miracle I could find was that on one Easter day shamrocks sprang from a wound in his body. If that actually happened, it was a miracle.” And our staff

member replied, tongue in cheek: “Yes, if that actually happened, it was a miracle.”

The Roman Catholic Church down through the years has been very adept at “saint-making,” but this old preacher was certainly not one of them. “*I, Patrick, a sinner*” — that is the way the “Patron Saint of Ireland” begins his own “Confession.” He starts his letter to Coroticus in the same striking manner.

The late Dr. Ironside reminds us, “Whatever others may have thought of him or may think of him today, Patrick knew himself as a sinner and found salvation where only sinners find it, in the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ.”⁸

Rome’s most notorious theft was when she seized bodily the apostle Peter and made him to be the infallible head and founder of her system of error. Imagine Peter, who in humility said to Cornelius: “*Stand up, I myself also am a man,*” placed on a pedestal as a “*Vicar of God on Earth.*” It would have been exceedingly difficult to convince Peter of his infallibility shortly after he heard the cock crow.

But surely alongside the theft of Peter stands this brazen act of Catholicism — that of enrolling the great missionary preacher of Ireland among her saints. He is pictured for us as a croziered and mitred Roman prelate, whereas his very own words show us that he was far removed from such pretensions. This is the way Patrick speaks: “*I knew not the true God. ... The Lord opened the understanding of my unbelief ... I was not worthy ... Love of God and fear of Him increased more and more ... By the help of God so it came to pass ... Because of His indwelling Spirit who hath worked in me until this day ... Let who will laugh and insult ... Though I be rude in all things ... I baptize so many thousands of men ... the Lord ordained clergy everywhere by means of my mediocrity ... The Lord is mighty to grant to me afterward to be myself spent for your souls.*”

How humble, how deeply spiritual was Patrick. And though we as Baptists may not agree with every method he used, we do know he cherished all the leading principles that we accept.

Whereas the Roman Church dates its beginnings from the day when Jesus Christ said: “thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church,” we know that the Hierarchy was not set up until many years later when the Emperor Constantine looked with favor upon Christianity.

For four centuries after the resurrection of Jesus the fire of God had spread. It was a period of glory and conquest. The preaching of the Cross was overcoming

the world. There was bitter persecution but the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the Church. But then Constantine and Theodosius wedded the Roman Empire to Christianity and made it the state religion. That was one of Satan’s greatest triumphs and one of the worst calamities that has ever befallen the Church of the Living God. That was the beginning of the Roman Catholic Hierarchy.

Now, when did Baptists begin? No exact date can be set and we are proud of that. Some say that we came into being with John Smyth in the year 1611. It is true that the title “Baptist” was not affixed to our people until about that time and that our churches were not called by that name until then. However, all of us know that there were many Democrats before Thomas Jefferson was ever born, but the Democratic Party began with that great exponent of democracy.

In order to consummate the adulterous union between the Roman Empire and the Christian Church, Constantine, in the year 313 A.D., invited the churches to send their representatives to a council. Although many groups accepted, thank God there were some churches that did not respond. The people called “Baptist,” that is, those who remained faithful to Christ and spurned the Emperor’s proposal, never entered that unholy wedlock.

We, as Baptists, claim that the principles of our church date back to that day when the “*heavens were opened*” and a voice from heaven said “*This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*” As someone has well said: “Baptists have no founder but Jesus and were born the day He stood with John the Baptist in the Jordan River. They recognize no human authority, no human creed. Their faith was functioning before the Pope came to Rome. They were Protestant before the Reformation or Luther was born.”

Permit me to parallel the beliefs of Patrick and those of the Baptist church.

1. Baptists recognize Christ Jesus as their head and founder. “He is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence” (Col. 1:18). As far as I know, we are the only group of Christians who holds that Jesus, during His personal ministry, constituted His church.

Patrick was a Baptist. No one can read his writings, especially the “*Breastplate,*” without knowing that he exalted Christ and secured his authority from Him. Christ was all in all to him. Have no fear, this old warrior of the Faith never bowed the knee to mortal man.

2. Baptists accept the Bible as the only rule of faith and practice. They believe that “*All scripture is given*

by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:16). To them, the Bible is the final authority. Baptists know that the real sword of the true Church is not the keen Damascus blade that pierces the vitals and severs the head of the non-believer but it is, as Paul told the Ephesians, "*The sword of the Spirit, — which is the word of God.*"

Patrick was a Baptist. It was the "sword of the Spirit" he wielded against the pagan Druids. His writings overflow with Scripture. One hundred thirteen references or quotations from Holy Writ may be found in his two epistles and his alphabetical poem and, incidentally, there is never a mention of the Virgin Mary, the Eucharist, or relics or holy places.

3. The polity of the Baptist Church is congregational — that is, all members equal. "*One is your master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren*" (Mt. 23:8).

Patrick was a Baptist. Any scholar worthy of the name, making an impartial study, will tell you that his form of church government was not diocesan and emphatically not Papal. Our hero preached the Gospel from the Word of God, established an indigenous church, baptized believers and ordained clergymen.

Patrick was also "Baptistic" when it came to the matter of

4. Repentance, faith and conversion before baptism. In the "*Tripartite Life of Patrick,*" the author marks this quotation concerning Patrick's views of the great commission of our Lord. He says: "*Go, ye, teach. Meet is the order of teaching, before baptism. For it cannot be that the body, receive the sacrament of baptism, before the soul receives the verity of faith.*"⁹

Patrick was a Baptist. Like them he believed that repentance was first, regeneration second and baptism last.

There is no intimation anywhere in Patrick's writings that he baptized infants, but there is mention of the fact that he immersed adults. Patrick, like the Baptists of this modern day, followed the New Testament mode of baptism by immersion. A great scholar, Dr. William Cathcart, in his *Baptist Encyclopedia*, says: "There are strong reasons for believing that Patrick was a Baptist missionary and it is certain that his baptism was immersion."¹⁰

Now, if we could journey to the Emerald Isle today, we could show you the *Wells of Talmah* in which he baptized many converts, sometimes thousands in a day. Thomas Moore, in his history of Ireland says: "The convert saw in the baptismal fount where he was *immersed* the sacred well at which his fathers worshipped."

No less an authority than Archbishop Usher says:

"Patrick baptized his converts in Dublin, including Alpine, the king's son, in a well near Saint Patrick Church, which in after ages became an object of devotion."

Campbell, in his "*History of Ireland,*" says: "As baptism was the rite of admission into the Christian Church, these societies (or churches) were in all cases, when practicable, planted near the wells first used, hence the origin of holy wells, so abundant in Ireland."

Patrick, himself, was immersed in one of these fountains. The "*Tripartite Life of Patrick*" by Tirechan says: "A Church moreover was founded over that well in which Patrick was baptized, and there stands the well (*fountain*) by the altar."

Patrick was a Baptist. Yes, our Catholic friends have given this early missionary evangelist of ours a rather exalted place in their galaxy of ecclesiastics but in doing so they have denied him his rightful place in history as a valiant apostle of the true Christian Faith.

If there is any Irishman whose memory is more revered than that of Patrick it is Daniel O'Connell, the great "Liberator." The impressive monument erected in his honor stands in Dublin today. It consists of a fine statue of O'Connell, beneath which Erin, freed from her chains, is represented as grasping with one hand the *Act of Emancipation*, while with the other she points upward to the figure of her "*Liberator.*" As O'Connell brought political freedom, so Patrick brought spiritual freedom. Would that another Patrick could arise today and, with an open Bible, thunder forth against the bigotry and superstition that hold multitudes enslaved.

Bibliography:

¹ In correspondence with the Abbot of Iona, an Irish Catholic, by the name of Cummian, in 634 A.D. spoke of the "Cycle of our Holy Father Patrick."

² Encyclopedia Britannica, Vol. 17, P. 383

³ "Patrick of Ireland Not a Romanist," Dr. J. Lewis Smith, Associated Printing Co., Stockton, California, 1924, P. 10

⁴ Ibid., P. 10

⁵ Encyclopedia Britannica, Vol. 17, P. 383

⁶ "Patrick of Ireland Not a Romanist," Dr. J. Lewis Smith, Associated Printing Co., Stockton, California, 1924, P. 13

⁷ "The Real St. Patrick," H. A. Ironside, Litt. D., March, 1938, *Revelation Magazine*

⁸ "Patrick of Ireland Not a Romanist," Dr. J. Lewis Smith, Associated Printing Co., Stockton, California, 1924, Pg. 17, 18

⁹ "The Baptist Encyclopedia," Dr. William Cathcart, Louis H. Everts, 1881, P. 887

¹⁰ "Patrick of Ireland Not a Romanist," Dr. J. Lewis Smith, Associated Printing Co., Stockton, California, 1924, P. 20

