

# THE REAL SAINT PATRICK DIDN'T PLANT CLOVER

As I read and learn and study Baptist history it seems I am constantly exposed to what we have lost as Baptists because of rewriting history by Catholics and Reformation protestants who don't understand Baptist (*or Bible*) distinctives and doctrine. One instance of the rewriting of history includes the story of St. Patrick. The truth about this man and what God used him to do is inspiring and extremely helpful in our understanding of the great commission.

The reason for rewriting the history of St. Patrick is so the Catholic church could get credit for his work. Celestine, Bishop of Rome, sent a bishop named Palladius to Ireland about the year 431. The monks who were the biographers of Patrick and Palladius were careful to adjust the mission of Patrick and his time frame to harmonize with Palladius. They made it look like Palladius was sent to disciple and pastor the converts of Patrick. Patrick arrived in Ireland to do his great work in A.D. 405 but catholic biographies adjust his arrival to 27 years later to make it fall at 432.

If we go back to the third and fourth centuries we notice three places of primitive belief. The Christians in these places very simply obeyed what Christ commanded in Matthew 28:19-20. These three places were Asia minor (from these churches would spring the Paulicians), The Alps (These would have been the Vaudios at this time and the Cathari) and the Islands of Briton.

The most astounding testimony for primitive Christianity in the fifth and sixth centuries has to do with the Spirit-filled ministry of Patrick, the Briton who won the nation of the Scots to Christ and turned the Emerald Island of Ireland into "the Island of the Saints." The true story of St. Patrick is quite different from the Roman Catholic tale of a green clad lad who "christened" thousands of Irish heathen into the arms of Holy Mother church. The truth is that Britain had a rich Christian history long before the invasion and conquest by the Catholic institution in A.D. 597.

A little history about Briton: Ireland was always the true home of the Scots. The name of the country was changed around 1200 A.D. St. Patrick in his confession mentions the sons of the Scotti and the daughters of the chieftains, especially one blessed Irish princess that he baptized. All writers up to the 12th century refer to the inhabitants of Hibernia as the Scottish Tribes. The Scotland of today was then called Caledonia and was inhabited by a people called Picts.

Patrick was a Briton and was born in either present day England or Scotland around the year 387. At age 16, he was kidnapped by pirates and sold to an Irish prince. This led to his conversion to Christ. After a second imprisonment, he answered the call of God to preach the Gospel to the people who had imprisoned him. His call was to preach the Gospel to the **Emerald Island**. His successes were nearly total. He baptized thousands of adult believers by immersion by the year of his death around 466.

Here is J. A. Wylie's account of Patrick:

Around the beginning of the fourth century the mighty Roman Empire began to crumble and fall, the lamp of civilization was about to go out and the long dark shadows of the approaching night of the Dark Ages began to appear. It was at that time that God raised up a small nation in the West, at the ends of the earth, to keep the torch burning and be a light to the nations. That island, far from Rome, was Ireland, and the man chosen by God to begin this glorious work was St. Patrick.

St. Patrick was born in the year 373, along the banks of the River Clyde in Roman Britain, now a part of the country called Scotland. He was descended from a family, which for two generations had publicly professed the Gospel. His father Calpurnius, was a deacon, and his grandfather, Potitus, was a presbyter in the Christian Church. His father was an important official holding the rank of "decur," a member of the council of magistracy in a Roman provincial town. As a youth Patrick ignored the spiritual instructions of his father and mother.

One day a little fleet of strange ships suddenly made their appearance in the Clyde. Patrick, with others was at play on the banks of the stream, and they remained watching the new arrivals, not suspecting the danger that lurked under their apparently innocent and peaceful movements. In an instant, Patrick was a captive and on his way to Ireland. He was a youth of 16 at that time.

The pirates who had borne him across the sea, had no sooner landed him on the Irish shore than they proceeded to put him up for auction on the slave block. Patrick was purchased by a chieftain and sent to herd his master's cattle and swine on the mountains. Was ever a metamorphosis so complete or so sudden? Yesterday the cherished son of a Roman magistrate, today a slave and a swine

herder. Pinched with hunger, covered with rags, soaked with the summer's rain, bitten by the winter's frost, or blinded by its snowdrifts, he is the very picture of the Prodigal son who was sent into the fields to keep swine. Like the proud King Nebuchadnezzar, he had to learn the hard way that the Most High rules. (See Daniel 4:33-37.)

After several years Patrick likewise lifted up his eyes to Heaven. He called on the name of the Lord, was born again into the kingdom of God, and indeed excellent majesty was added to his name. He was able to escape and found a ship which carried him back home. Discouraged by his parents and friends, he tried to ignore the plight of the Irish, but the Lord spoke to him by dreams for many years. One such dream he records:

In the dead of the night I saw a man coming to me as if from Hiberio, whose name was Victorious, bearing innumerable letters. He gave one of them to me to read. It was entitled, "The Voice of the Irish". As I read I thought I heard at that same moment the voice of those that dwell at the wood of Foelut, near the western ocean; and thus they cried, as with one mouth, "We beseech thee, holy youth, come and walk still among us." I felt my heart greatly stirred in me, and could read no more, and so I awoke.

Patrick received his Divine Commission, not from the Seven Hills, but from the Mount of Olives. Attended by a few companions and humble men like himself, he crossed the sea and arrived in Ireland. He was now just over 30 years of age. The story of Patrick is so much like the story of Joseph in the *Book of Genesis*. Both were sold into slavery as teenagers. Both were given special dreams and both began their ministry at about age 30. Joseph fed Egypt with bread; Patrick fed Ireland with the *living bread*: both were a great blessing to the whole world!

He arrived around A.D. 405. Patrick's first sermon was preached in a barn! The use of this humble edifice was granted to him by the chief of the district, whom, the legend says, was his former master Milchu. In later years a church was built on the site where Patrick began his ministry and won his first converts to Christ. It was called Sabhal Padriuc, that is Patrick's Barn. It faced north to south. It never dawned on Patrick that a church had to face east to west in order for the sacraments to be effective according to Catholic tradition.

Dr. J.A. Wylie continues on "THE COURAGE OF PATRICK AND HIS PREACHERS".

The great annual festival of Tara called "Baal's fire" was at hand. No other occasion or spot in Ireland, Patrick knew, would offer him an opportunity of lifting his mission out of provisional obscurity and placing it fully in the eyes of the nation. All Ireland would be there. Mixing with the multitudes of all ranks which were crowding to the scene of the festival, Patrick pursued his journey, and arrived in the neighborhood of Tara without attracting attention. He and his attendants immediately began their preparations. Like the Prophet Elijah of old, Patrick decides to fight fire with fire. Ascending the hill of Slane, the little party collected the broken branches and rotten wood which were lying about, and piling them up on the summit of the hill, they applied the torch and set the heap in a blaze. The flames shot high in the air. On that night the fire on every hearth in Ireland must by law be extinguished. If even a solitary lamp were seen to burn, the rash or profane man was surely to be burned alive. Patrick was arrested and brought to the royal court. He preached Christ to the king. The simple message of the Gospel, the one sacrifice of Christ, was all that was required to overthrow the Druid human sacrifice and convert Ireland from paganism to Christianity. After his victory at Tara, Patrick was given an "open door" to the entire nation. The king realized that true Christianity was not a threat to his throne. He did not have to have a Papal Nuncio, nor submit to *any* foreigner. **His ministry covered a period of 60 years. He founded 365 churches**, and a school arose beside each church. The schools were frequently called monasteries. The monasteries of St. Patrick's day were *nothing* like the Roman Catholic monasteries of later years. They were not isolated from the world, the retreat of the idle and ignorant, no vows were taken and the clergy were always allowed to marry. The monasteries were associations of studious men, who occupied their time in transcribing the Scriptures, in cultivating such sciences as were then known, and instructing the young. They were *colleges* in which the youth were trained for the work of the home ministry and the labors of the foreign mission-field. Patrick died near the place where he began his ministry 60 years earlier, an old man and full of days. He did not perform miracles as his later biographers claim, except the conversion of an entire nation!

It is my personal opinion that Saint Patrick is one of the greatest Baptist church planters in history. Planting 365 churches in 60 years averages to about 5 churches a year. In planting churches he changed a nation and made a difference. If we apply what we learn to our lives from our heritage we learn that complete obedience to the great commission is what changes a town, a county, a state, a nation. If we only partially obey the great commission and do the first part, getting people saved; or do the first and second part, getting people saved and baptized then we are made the wiser because "He that winneth souls is wise," and Heaven is populated because we did an eternal work but because of our partial obedience to what we were commanded to do a nation is not changed. I believe we should get every person saved that we can because our Lord wants everyone saved. The purpose of the church is very simple... make disciples. When you lead a soul to Christ it brings a joy to you that nothing else can bring and it forever settles their eternal home as Heaven but no Christian can grow without getting baptized and going to church.

The local New Testament Baptist church is the expression of Jesus Christ on the earth until the rapture. Jesus Christ works through the local New Testament Baptist church. We can go soul winning in an area but that does not change that area until the people change and Christians don't grow and change spiritually without a local New Testament Baptist church. We don't change an area because we are partially obedient to the Great Commission, we change an area when we plant churches. Because we have taken for our pattern Protestants of the past like Billy Sunday who got a lot of people saved but never baptized one of his converts and never started one church (I am thankful for the people he

had saved) WE DO THE SAME THING. We have gotten away from the pattern of not just starting churches but planting churches. We think missionaries are supposed to go to a foreign field and start one church and then train nationals and start other churches because that is what the Apostle Paul did and he was the greatest missionary in the Bible. What the Apostle Paul did was not just a pattern for missionaries, he is the pattern for all pastors. The church was started during the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ and He used the Apostle Paul to Organize and Administrate the church. We think that church starting and church planting is only for churches with Bible colleges... this is not true. Every church is to teach and train disciples to go plant other churches in their county and state. We are getting over-run spiritually in America because we have only partially obeyed the great commission. WE MUST START PLANTING CHURCHES. The real Saint Patrick doesn't inspire me to dress in green and plant four-leaf clovers. The real Saint Patrick inspires me to plant churches or fully obey all three parts to the Great Commission.