

THE FIRST OPEN CHURCH, FOLLOWERS OF “THE WAY”

Part Four, By: Jeffrey Crosby

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Although this is the story of the very first church and the individuals involved with its founding, we have only, to this point, started to establish the foundation of why things occur the way they do; the folks involved and their God given purpose. The first three parts in this series have been necessary to set the stage. The succession of historical facts that lead us to where we are, both then and today, are simply a process of prophecy fulfilled by Yahweh's chosen Israel, His holy seed, His Ambassadors on earth. So if it seems like a slow boat to China to bring us to this point in this story, it is nonetheless imperative. Nobody could walk into a play at the end and expect to understand what is going on. Likewise with the Creator's agenda. We are on His prophetic clock. And we must remember that, as servants to Him, we carry “the testimony of Jesus: worship God (Elohim): for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy” (Rev. 19:10). It is this fulfillment of prophecy, through history, which establishes our faith. No other religion on earth, no writings of great wisdom can make that claim. In other words, there is a reason why the Word of Christ was brought to the British Isles, only to be spread to the four corners of the world from there.

So that those who are unfamiliar with the history of the Israelites may understand our story's background, it was some seven centuries before Christ was born that the tribes of Israel were sent into dispersion as a punishment for sinning against their God, Yahweh. The Greeks would call these scattered tribes by a common name of 'Scythians'. But they were known as the 'Kimmerians' in the Assyrian tongue, the ones who captured the northern portion of Israel and sent them into dispersion in the first place, along with many of the southern House of Judah. They would eventually become known as the 'British' to the world because of their religious beliefs and customs, which were set apart from the other known religions and practices. With them was a belief that was not found elsewhere, even considering the pagan practices that these migrating peoples may have adopted in their travels westward across Europe. It was a monotheistic belief, with One God and a coming Messiah. There were no graven images or idols. They worshiped in the open, facing the east (where they had migrated from). The immortality of life was their belief. The Kymri, namesake of King Omri, the

King of the northern kingdom in Israel at the time of their capture and dispersion, carried a replica of the Ark of the Covenant before them in their religious observances (so Jowett claims), giving birth to the British surname – Old Hebrew/ Cymric – “B’rith”, meaning ‘covenant’, and ‘ish’, meaning ‘man’, ‘woman’ or ‘person’. ‘Ain’ pertained to ‘land’. The Keltoi were adherents of a covenant law. As Christians, they were known as the ‘Covenant people’, or ‘Consecrated people’ (British), living in the ‘Covenant land’ (Britain).

From ancient chronicles and records it is possible to glimpse the early Britons at the time of our story of Yahshua and Joseph in the Isles. Diodorus Siculus (died A.D. 14) describes the people of these islands as “civilized and courteous to strangers. They are of much sincerity and integrity, far from the craft and knavery of men among us [Romans], contented with plain and homely fare, and strangers to the excess and luxury of rich men.” Other descriptions show the Britons’ advancements in arts and commerce. “... [W]e read that their ordinary clothing was of ‘tartan, spun, coloured and woven by themselves. The upper classes wore collars and bracelets of gold and necklaces of amber. The chiefs were armed with helmets, shields and cuirasses of leather, bronze or chain mail, while their many weapons of defence – darts, pikes and broad-swords – were often richly worked and ornamented’.” (Conybeare *Roman Britains*, p. 48-50).

The great similarities between the ancient Hebrew patriarchal faith and Druidism in the British Isles are also obvious. As Sir Norman Lockyer states in *Stonehenge and Other British Stone Monuments*, on page 252.: “... I am amazed at the similarities [between the Israelite/Kelts and Druids] we have come across”. Edward Davies, in *Mythology and Rites of the British Druids* states likewise, and W.M. Stukely, in *Abury* writes: “I plainly discerned the religion professed by the ancient Britons was the simple patriarchal faith.” Procopius of Caesaria saw a connecting link between the Israelite faith and Druidism, and Julius Caesar wrote, in 54 B.C.: “The Druids make the immortality of the soul the basis of all their teaching, holding it to be the principal incentive and reason for a virtuous life”. (*Gallic War*, VI, 14).

At this point it would be best to take a look at what we may or may not know regarding the Druids and Druidism. There has been much slanderous speculation over the ages regarding this subject. A very straightforward and unbiased account on Druidism is laid out in the book *The Druids*, by Peter Berresford Ellis, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, copyright 1994. Although this book does not necessarily delve into the early Keltic religious beliefs prior to and during the time of Christ, at least in depth, it shows that Druidism was not merely a religion but rather a sort of caste society among the Kelts. Regarding things centuries after the time of our story (being possibly dictated by Roman influence by that juncture), it does state on page 11: “... [T]he bulk of the ‘Classical’ observations [regarding Druidism] consist of the anti-Celtic propaganda of the Roman Empire. There has been a tendency for scholars to accept these sources as giving us facts writ in stone which are not to be questioned. By the time the Celts themselves came to commit their knowledge to writing, they had become Christianized and ... the Druids continued to get ‘a bad press’.”

It was when some of the antiquarians of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries wrote of Druidism, they romanticized them beyond recognition to what their role in Keltic society originally was. This is because the Druids committed nothing of their knowledge or ways to writing, not because they were illiterate, but quite the contrary. They were highly astute, yet their ways were so secretive that they would never allow even the knowledge of their exclusive society to be shared with outsiders. You could call theirs a separatist society.

We do know that training to become a Druid, which involved learning of everything from science and mathematics to medicine, astronomy, philosophies, law, and their religious rites, was a process of anywhere from fourteen to twenty years of study before one would become a Druid. They were not necessarily just priests, but rather the highest of the Celtic caste system. They would hear and judge Celtic society's situations and issues, wisely proclaiming the final say in all matters, including whether to seek peace or go to war. This was similar to both the judges and priests purpose among the Israelites after their exodus from Egypt. Yet it was the Greco-Roman view which prejudiced the Druids and Celtic life.

This entwines with our story of why Glastonbury would become the place for retreat and solace by Yahshua Christ, and for Joseph of Arimathea to later return to bring the Gospel to these particular people in the Isles, and there are a couple of reasons why. First, the island was unconquered by the Romans and remote from Roman influence and authority. Since before Christ, at the time of Julius Caesar invading Britain in 55 B.C., until A.D. 47, the Roman armies never reached Glastonbury. Secondly, Glastonbury was the center of the Druidic faith in Britain. It was surrounded by the chief centers, such as Caerleon, Salisbury, Bristol, Bath and Dorchester. Capt appropriately states, on page 9 of *Traditions of Glastonbury*: "Druidism was regarded by the Romans as its greatest religious opponent because of its widespread influence definitely opposed to Roman and Greek mythology."

It should not be in doubt that one of the main causes for the Romans to invade the British Isles, even prior to Christ, was to exterminate a cult which had proved the rival of Roman pagan civilization. The Roman legate in Britain, Suetonius Paulinus, in A.D. 61, would proceed to carry out instructions received from Rome to extirpate Druidism at any cost (Tacitus' *Annals*, XIV, Chap. XXX). However, the relentless resistance of the Keltic tribes on the island, which will be discussed further, was mainly because of their steadfast doctrine of the indestructibility of the soul taught by their religion.

Quoting Capt, "Druidism taught 'Three duties of every man: Worship God, be just to all men, die for your country'." Julius Caesar wrote: "The Druids teach that by none other way than the ransoming of man's life by the life of man is reconciliation with the Divine Justice of the Immortal Gods possible" (*Comment*, Lib. V). The basic Druid belief was in a trinity, but not polytheism. The God-head was called "Duw," (the one without darkness who pervaded the universe). Although British-Israel refers to God as three persons of the Godhead, it is rather One Almighty in three manifestations!

"The emblem of Druidism was three golden rays of light, representing the three aspects, or persons [sic manifestations], of the Trinity [sic 'Godhead'], emanating from

the God-head. They were known as 'Beli,' the Creator as regards the past; 'Taran,' the controlling providence of the present; and 'Yesu,' the coming Saviour of the future. Druidism thus anticipated Christianity and pointed to the coming Saviour under the very name which Christ was called" (*Traditions of Glastonbury*, p.9).

Although E. Raymond Capt uses the term 'Trinity' loosely, this must not be confounded with what the Roman Catholic doctrines would later, falsely, profess as three separate entities of 'God', His Son Jesus under Him, and the Holy Ghost aside from 'them'. These beliefs come from paganistic polytheistic doctrines dating back into antiquity. Capt has never professed a Trinitarian teaching, but rather the three manifestations or forms of One Almighty Elohim.

In fact, and as will be seen as we get further into our story of the early Church and its Apostles and followers, the first converts of the Culdees or "Judean refugees" would be the Druids of Britain, who found no difficulty in reconciling the teaching of the Culdees with their own teaching of the resurrection and inheritance of eternal life. The remarkable coincidence which exists between Druidism and Christianity is overwhelming. Before the introduction of Christianity to Britain, the Druids also made reference to the Supreme God as: "Distributer," "Governor," "The Wonderful," "The Ancient of Days," terms of Old Testament origin (*Religion of Ancient Britain* by G. Smith, Chap. II, p. 37).

Capt further points out that "Jesus would confirm and enlarge the Druid's faith in the One God, with three aspects [the Trinity] and their belief in a coming 'Yesu' or 'Hesus'. One thing is certain – Jesus never revealed His identity as the 'Yesu' they expected. He had not, as yet, accomplished the redemption of His people [by the cross] and the salvation of Mankind" (*Traditions of Glastonbury*, p. 10). This statement by Capt should not be out of order, inasmuch as "His identity" as Yahshua was not what was expected of the prophesied Redeemer in Palestine either, and yet He changed the destiny of the twelve lost tribes of Israel, which in turn benefited the whole world, whether deserving or not. Only Israel of the line of Adam was subject to divorce, so only Israel was subject to Redemption (meaning to be purchased back). But this doesn't exclude the rest of the pure White Adamic line from the Resurrection, such as the queen of Sheba.

Yet the Druids preserved His dwelling place in Avalon as a 'sacred spot'. Later, when Yahshua's uncle Joseph of Arimathea (the Nobilis Decurio) and his companions returned to settle there after the Passion of Christ, they found His dwelling, the "home of God" still standing. Only this could explain the two mysterious titles, which in the earliest times clung to Glastonbury – "Secretum Domini" (The Secret of the Lord) and "Domus Dei" (The House of God).

"It is no wonder that when Joseph of Arimathea subsequently came back to the Isles to proclaim the Saviour under the very name familiar to every Druid, we shall see that He received a welcome at the hands of the Druids and a king whose religion was Druidism, King Arviragus, or at least sympathetic to their ideals. Druidism prepared the way for Christianity by its solid acceptance of 'The Way'. But for Druidism, Christianity might never have flourished. Druidism nourished it through all its early stresses, giving it the vigor to endure through adversity" (*Traditions of Glastonbury*, p. 9).

“Pliny the Elder (A.D. 23/24-79) seems to be the first to raise questions about the reasons for the decline of the Druids and certainly has no hesitation in attributing it to Roman repression” (*The Druids*, p. 16). Yet the Roman’s attempt to suppress the Keltoi/Roman sociopolitical roots was not peculiar to them alone, as will be evident when we consider the introduction of Christianity across the realms of the Roman Empire, but in particular the Isles and Gaul.

It is not a fact that this early Druidic society disappeared from the face of the earth, any more than Yahweh’s chosen Bride on earth, the tribes and seed of Israel did. Rather, the Druids eventually merged with Christianity. “The adoption of Christianity ... did not lead to the abolition of the Druids but simply to their transformation” (*The Druids*, p. 19).

There were many links between the peoples of Gaul and Britain since times of antiquity, as will be seen when we look at the theme of our story of the first Apostles and Church founders. The Druids in both Gaul and Britain were well organized, as shown by Caesar’s statements a century before Christ. “The Druidic doctrine is believed to have been found existing in Britain and thence imported into Gaul; even today those who want to make a profound study of [Druidism] go to Britain for the purpose.”

Although the Druids were often portrayed as opponents to Christianity, the sources of such writings must be considered, as mentioned, particularly out of Rome. There is no evidence whatsoever of the Druids performing human sacrifice, no writings of same. The Kelts are another story altogether, and very well may have, but even that we can only speculate. Findings of mutilated bodies could possibly be victims of war. ‘Lindow Man’, a mummified body which was found submerged in peat bogs in 1984 near Winslow, in Manchester, is one example. A leg was found, then a decapitated head, and then the torso. From this one finding came the book *The Life and Death of a Druid Prince*, by Dr. Anne Ross and Dr. Don Robins, Institute of Archaeology, London. It was a 25 to 30 year old man, healthy but with mild arthritis, wearing a fox-fur amulet on his arm. His skull crown had been fractured and his jaw broken. His neck was dislocated, as is consistent with any hanging. There were apparent skin lacerations, and autopsy revealed that the man had been hit twice from behind, probably with an axe, then garroted by a knotted cord around the neck, a sharp blade plunged into the jugular vein, then dropped into the bog. The problem here is how these individuals with doctorates degrees came to the conclusion that this was a sacrifice, or that this poor soul was a ‘Druid Prince’. There was no evidence of either, but anyone can see how assumptions, along with myth, can compound one another’s errors.

Although the Druids were not known for putting their knowledge to writing, per se, they were a people that kept their secret knowledge through poetry, where they speak of such things as the ‘Tuatha De Danaan’, or ‘the People of Dan’ as their lineage since the earliest times, and the ‘Lia Fail’, or ‘Stone of Destiny’, which is Jacob’s anointed Pillar Stone, and later King David’s seat or throne, whereupon all kings and queens have been coronated throughout Ireland, Scotland, and then England since B.C. 583 to the present, their most precious relic. The Kelts, with their triune Godhead, and their belief in immortality and an afterlife alone attest to their heritage.

The fact is that, although the Kelts may have manifested forms of paganism in their travels, and often resulting in vicious treatment of their enemies, they were hardly barbarians, and Druidism had absolutely nothing to do with such behavior.

The Druids were known for their prophetic foreseeing and great wisdom and leadership. "It is said," Julius Caesar wrote of the Druids, "That they commit their studies to twenty years, [It is] improper to commit their studies to writing ... They use the Greek alphabet for almost everything else" And one thing that is attributed to their teachings is that the spoken 'Word is the Truth,' that it is sacred and divine and is not to be profaned. So in reality, we can no longer continue to view the Keltoi/Druidic societies of Gaul and the British Isles through the Greco-Roman writers who may have, it appears, denigrated a society that they just did not know enough about. Now let us return to our story at hand.

The people of Gaul, where Joseph of Arimathea and the group that left out of Palestine went, were called 'Gauls' (until the much later invasion of the Franks, when it would thereafter become known as France). The territory was called Gaul, Gallica, or Galatia. That name was carried in the migrations of Israel as they traveled in their trek westward along the Danube River. Ireland was called Hibernia and Scotland was, at early times, called Caledonia. The Irish folk were called Kelts, but it was only in Britain and Wales that the title of 'Brit', meaning 'Covenant' prevailed, where they were called British Celts. Scots were called 'Gaels', who were originally inhabitants of Iberia (northwestern Spain) who migrated to Caledonia, as the Irish of Hibernia had migrated from that same area of Iberia. But it should be noted, that the people that migrated to these areas, both in western Europe and the Isles, are all one and the same stock of kinfolk, whether they be known by the numerous names of Kelts, Saxons, Angles, Franks, Goths, Vandals or whoever.

These Isles were formally known as the Britannic Isles, then the British Isles, then the United Kingdom or Great Britain. Now although the United Kingdom including the Irish, Welsh, and Scottish, each of these areas have retained their clan titles through their names today. It was not until long after the arrival of the AngloSaxons in A.D. 426, when the invading Normans began to domestically absorb the British Kelts and Saxons did the Anglican title take hold. It was the lesser used name of the Angles (of Angle-Saacsen or Anglo-Saxons) which morphed into Angle-land, or England. Each and every one of these aforementioned peoples, the Kelts, Anglo-Saxons and Normans, were but separate tribal branches of the same Keltic race, the migrated tribes of scattered Israel. This is also true of the Danes (from Dans-Merck, Denmark or tribe of Dan) who would invade Britain in A.D. 787. Ethnologically the Keltic race is composed of Keltic-Saxon-Scandinavian tribes, of one original stock. What has historically occurred in the Isles is the regathering of the 'Covenant People' of the sacred Scriptures, Britain becoming the motherland.

Jowett agrees, on page 48 of *The Drama of the Lost Disciples*, that the things that linked these people were a common language of Cymric, and that each practiced the "Druidic religion", that Britain was the central headquarters to Druidism and that all others (Ireland, Gaul, etc.) paid tithes. As previously discussed, the Druidic/Keltoi society entailed so much more than "religion". But the point is made, that this

'Covenant' land and its peoples did factually fulfill the role of which prophets of old spoke. Britain was the world hub for the whole Keltic race.