

# THE FIRST OPEN CHURCH, FOLLOWERS OF “THE WAY”

Part Seven, By: Jeffrey Crosby

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Previously we identified Glastonbury, England as the earliest church outside of Jerusalem. Among these early followers of The Way, the Apostle Philip is referred to by the Gallic Church as the first Apostle to Gaul – today's France. Yet we will see how it was by the direction of those in the British Isles who would dominate the Gallic scene and catapult its evangelizing efforts, with Saints like Lazarus. This same Lazarus was the one Christ Yahshua raised from the dead. Lazarus later became the first bishop of the church in Marseilles. It is also on record, from the Magna Glasionensis Tabula, that Philip baptized Joseph of Arimathea's son Josephes. Upon Joseph of Arimathea's arrival in Gaul, Philip sent the two together, along with ten other disciples, on to Britain. It is acknowledged from the historians John of Glastonbury, William of Malmesbury and Capgrave that Philip ultimately sent one hundred and sixty missionaries on to Britain from Gaul, to serve Joseph in his evangelizing mission.

Historian George Fusidale Jowett states that a “British Druidic delegation of ‘Bishops’ arrived at Marseilles to greet Joseph” to urge him to return to Britain with them and teach the Christ gospel. Note that these Druids, being ‘Bishops’, should not be viewed in any universalist light, as implied by Catholicism. As shown in previous parts of this treatise the Druids were the learned Elders of all Keltic society, authorities in matters of religion, folklore, engineering, medicine and astronomy, as well as arbiters of conflict. But this particular group of Druids was sent to Gaul by invitation of the British Prince Arviragus, who offered to Joseph and the band a large tract of land which would be a safehaven, and protection against Roman molestation.

There are numerous independent manuscripts of great antiquity, such as the Rabanus (MS. Laud 108 of the Bodleian) which agree to these facts. Lazarus is always reported as having become the first Bishop of Marseilles, and the names of many of the other saints are listed in the records of the early Gallic church. Roger of Hovedon (A.D. 1174-1201), the English chronicler, wrote: “Marseilles is an Episcopal city under the dominion of the king of Aragon. Here are the relics [bones] of St. Lazarus, ... who held the Bishopric here for seven years after Jesus had restored him from the dead.” So we know that for at least one thousand years the Roman Church has accepted the presence of these saints in France.

E. Raymond Capt, in *The Traditions of Glastonbury*, states that “[w]hile some of the party of refugees settled in France, Joseph later, with Mary and eleven other companions crossed France to the Atlantic coast. They followed well known Phoenician trade routes to Britain, as described (before the birth of Jesus) by Diodorus Siculus. This would have taken them through the country of the Lemovices to the sea coast in Brittany at Vannes or Morlaix. From Morlaix, according to the legend, the refugees sailed to Falmouth, England, before continuing on to Cornwall.

“Two traditional routes are found in the legends of Glastonbury tracing Joseph and his disciples to their destination. One has the little party traveling overland from Cornwall to Glastonbury. According to the other legend, the refugees sailed around the southern tip of England, passing what is today known as ‘Land’s End.’ Then, following the west coast, they sailed northward to the Severn Sea. From there they entered the estuaries of the rivers Parret and Brue. Following the River Brue eastward, they arrived at a little cluster of islands about twelve miles inland from the coast. Joseph’s destination was the Isle of Avalon, suitable as a quiet retreat in which to establish a home for Mary – a place they knew had already been hallowed by the presence of their Master” (pp. 38-39).

As previously stated, tradition says that Yahshua, as a younger man traveling with his great uncle Joseph, built a simple altar here. It was centuries after Joseph’s time that St. Augustine mentions this wattle altar in a letter to Pope Gregory (Epistolae ad Gregorian Papem), stating that the altar then still existed. From this we can understand why Joseph and the twelve disciples with him would make this particular sacred spot their destination, and thus build at this very site the first above ground Christian church in all the world, three centuries before the birth of Constantine or the founding of the Roman Papacy.

So Joseph accepted the invitation to go to Britain. Philip performed the consecration upon Joseph of Arimathea about four years after the Passion of Christ. Jowett places this date about A.D. 36, while Capt says it was A.D. 37. But Capt places the crucifixion in the year 33, which does not fit with our present Gregorian calendar. Not to nit-pick, but Yahshua was born in the year 3-4 B.C., (after Gregory’s time reckoning corrections). His ministry began in A.D. 27 and lasted three and one half years (by scriptural record). Although some place His crucifixion in A.D. 30, it was actually at Passover of the year 31, by our present reckoning, in late April that year (Wednesday, April 25th, 31 A.D. being an extended monthly calendar that year). But whenever the true date, Joseph, with his elected companions, journeyed to Britain and thereafter was known in history as “the Apostle to Britain”.

In Cornwall, Arviragus was the Prince of the Silures of Britain, in the Dukedom of Cornwall. This is how Joseph was already known to King Arviragus. It was in Cornwall and Devon where Joseph’s mining interests laid. Arviragus was the son of King Conobelinus (the ‘Cymbeline’ of Shakespeare), and he was cousin to the British warrior/patriot Caradoc, who the Romans named ‘Caractacus’. Together they represented the Royal Silurian dynasty. This was the most powerful warrior kingdom in Britain, from whom the Tudor kings and queens of England would descend.

Those that were present with Joseph on the journey from Gaul to Avalon after his consecration were a group that were most closely tied to Yahshua in the Holy Land. Cardinal Baronius quotes from Mistral, in Mareio and another ancient document in the Vatican Library, and lists all of the names as Saints, except for Marcella, the black\* handmaiden to the Bethany sisters. She was probably inseparable from them throughout her life, particularly after their exodus. Those names listed are: St. Mary (the wife of Cleopas), St. Martha, St. Lazarus, St. Eutropius, St. Salome, St. Clean, St. Saturninus, St. Mary [Magdalene], Marcella, St. Maximin, St. Martial, St. Trophimus, St. Sidonus (also called Restitutus), and St. Joseph of Arimathea. [*often in Latin & Greek meaning "black hair", G-3189, "hair", "horse" & "sackcloth"*]

All of the records refer to Joseph and twelve companions, yet Baronius here lists fourteen. Marcella was not considered part of the missionary band, though present. Many other writers also list Mary, the mother to Christ. Tradition, and a great deal of documentary testimony, substantiate that she was with Joseph, he being appointed as 'paranyphos', or the guardian to the blessed Mary by the beloved disciple John. As his kindred responsibility under the sacred law, we can be rest assured that Mary remained in Joseph's safe keeping until her death. We will see that the first chapel built was in fact dedicated and inscribed in stone to "Ieosus-Maria", Jesus-Mary.

Glastonbury lies in southwest England, in Somerset County. In Britain's earliest times of history, Glastonbury was an island surrounded by a large swampy estuary, a bog (the Uxella), covered by the Bristol Channel. This drained into three rivers, the Axe, Parret, and the Brue. The River Brue, from which the assembly traveled, flowed from the foot of the Mendip Hills (and mines, north of Glastonbury) to the sea, south of Bristol.

The most outstanding feature of the landscape at first sight is the Glastonbury Tor, also known as "Tabor's Holy Mount" (Dean Alford). This hand-built mound of rock and dirt was a Druidic Gorsedd ('High Place of Worship'). Built in prehistoric times, the Tor rises five hundred feet above the surrounding area. Imagine a mound half the height of the Empire State Building, covering a vast countryside, comprised of hundreds of millions of tons of earth. Excavations show that there was a dark age society that lived at the Gorsedd. Archaeologists have found sixth century pottery, imported from the Mediterranean, remains of wooden buildings, and some kind of metal industry. Because of its nature and height, it is believed that Glastonbury was a main stronghold of Melwas, king of the "Aestive Regia" (the Summer Kingdom) of Somerset. Possibly this Tor was not only a stronghold, but a larger political center for a much larger area of the country.

At a later time than our immediate story, in the eighth and ninth centuries, there were other small monastic communities established on the Tor. Archaeologists have discovered small living quarters cut into the rock and a (possible) wooden church. At a later time, after the Norman conquests, they erected a stone church dedicated to the Archangel St. Michael at the very crest of the mount. But in an earthquake in A.D. 1275, this cathedral was destroyed. All that remains is a solitary tower.

Earlier, when describing the area of Glastonbury and the tin trade, we cited the historian Diodorus Siculus. He explained that after the tin was mined, smelted and cast

into square hides, they were carried “to a British isle, near at hand, called Ictus. For at low tide, all being dry between them and the island, they convey over in carts abundance of tin” (Book v, ch. 2).

I will quote Capt in *The Traditions of Glastonbury*, page 24: “This description of the island [Ictus] as being joined to the mainland at low tide, describes ‘St. Michael’s Mount’, a small island off the coast of Cornwall, in southern England. The Mount is dedicated to St. Michael, the archangel, who is said to have appeared to a group of fisherman (in A.D. 495) on a ledge high above the waves on the western side of the island. The visitation of the Archangel made the mount a place of pilgrimage. Its recognition as a religious center came in 1044 A.D., when Edward the Confessor established a cell there and granted its administration to the Abbot of ‘St. Michael’. By the fourteenth century a church was built on the island ....” with a village of cottages below.

There should not be confusion between this “St. Michael’s Mount”, found on the “western side of the island”, with the “St. Michael’s” church that was built and destroyed on the Glastonbury Tor, about one mile easterly, in the middle of the isle. Most all of the information cited here regarding Glastonbury is taken from the historian E. Raymond Capt, and here I shall quote him:

“The earliest name of Glastonbury was ‘Ynis-witrin’ (Ynys-gyrdyn – British; Glaestingabyrig – Anglo-Saxon), or the ‘Glassy Island.’ Later, when it was found to be fruitful and ideal for the cultivation of apples, it was called ‘Insula Avalonia,’ or the Isle of the Apple trees. Aval, in Welsh, means apple. Just how this area came to be known by the name ‘Glastonbury’ remains in doubt. One suggestion is that the origin of Glastonbury is in ‘Glaestingaburgh’, the hill fort of the Flaestings, a family who settled in the area. Another, and more accepted theory is that the Celtic word for green is ‘Glas’, and hill is ‘ton.’ Glaston is therefore ‘the green hill,’ so named after the tor, or mount that dominates the landscape.

“When the Saxons occupied Somerset, in the sixth century A.D., they built a town about [a] half mile from the ‘green hill’ and obtained a charter, adding ‘borough’ or ‘bury’ to the original name which has since remained ‘Glastonbury.’ The town of Glastonbury suffered incursions of the Danes in the ninth century. Later in A.D. 1184, a terrible fire destroyed part of the town and the Abbey. In A.D. 1276, an earthquake rocked the area and destroyed St. Michael’s Church on the Tor and severely damaged the town.

“Today, Glastonbury is a municipal borough, its charter of incorporation dating from A.D. 1705. The high road to the West, from London, passes through Bath, Wells and Glastonbury. Its ruined Abbey is visited annually by the thousands of pilgrims who are drawn to its haunted vale, hallowed by the holy, half-forgotten lives and reverent worship offered here from most ancient times” (Ibid p. 13).

At one time the Isle of Avalon was surrounded by a swampy lake. Today it is filled in with layers of peat, clay and gravel, leaving evidence of a prior culture. Six lakes that were formed as the estuary receded still existed as late as the early sixteenth century. They are named as fields on survey maps of Somerset. One such lake that

was recorded in A.D. 1540, five miles in circumference (which is now a pasture), is called a "Meare Pool" by the locals, "Mere" being "Lake".

In prehistoric times, there were many communities among this tidal-swamp area between Glastonbury and the sea. They were inhabited by Celto-British (Cimmerian) people. Their living quarters were huts built of mud and wattle, which is mud intertwined with sticks thatched with reeds. It was so strong that Roman structures, even castles, were built with wattle, which could last for centuries. These huts were built round, with stone or clay hearths in the center. Often they would be whitewashed with lime to protect them from weather, and have woodwork of willow, alder, beech and oak. Some of these communities would be found built in the shallows of freshwater lakes, near higher ground where they could farm and graze their sheep and cattle. Three such villages were found near Glastonbury. They would build up platforms of stone, clay or peat above the water. From the villages, they would build trackways of wood which ran to the mainland and nearby islands. They were causeways built between two rows of pilings, with filler between. There have been many excavations of these "lake villages", the most noted being the one at Glastonbury.

The Glastonbury Lake Village lies about a mile from today's town of Glastonbury. This village covered an area of three to four acres. Because of the peat, the area is well preserved. There were about ninety round huts that ranged from 20 to 30 feet in diameter. They are wattle, with a baked clay or stone hearth in the middle of each. A layer of clay covered with split wood floorboards formed the floors. There is no palisade of timber around this village as is evident in two other villages located at Meare and Godney.

Glastonbury Lake Village was constructed about 50 B.C., the time of Julius Caesar's invasions against the Britons, and remained until about A.D. 80, when it was destroyed by fire (perhaps by the Belgae tribes from the north). This is contemporary with the time of our story, during the time of Yahshua of Nazareth and when Joseph and these apostles would arrive in Glastonbury. These were a highly cultured people, and numerous tools and utensils have been found. But here the archaeologist Capt has painted a vivid picture of the culture and society that existed at that time.

They were expert carpenters. Their dug-out canoes were over twenty feet in length, sufficient to make long coastal trading voyages up and down the shores of the Bristol Channel, and could even cross the rough waters to South Wales. They had wheeled carts, the wheels nearly three feet across, with twelve spokes fitted into an axle-box. The tools were precision. They created perfectly turned wooden bowls, beautifully decorated with incised patterns, which craft is carried on unchanged in Wales today.

Their wheel-turned pottery was in the style of Late Celtic (La Tene) art. The glass and bead work was inlaid in colored patterns. As mentioned, they were known for their beautiful enameling. Their utensils and implements were made of tin, copper and bronze.

These villagers practiced a well developed agriculture and animal husbandry, growing wheat, barley, peas and beans, and collected berries and seeds. They built large grain pits in the ground for storage. They raised cattle, sheep, pigs, goats and

horses. They used weighted nets and spears for a variety of fish. The wildlife was abundant in this area. But most of all, the people of Glastonbury enjoyed peace and prosperity from the violence and oppression of the Romans, and were the most advanced civilization (of their time) in Britain. (The previous information on Glastonbury is taken from Capt.)

And so it was that when Joseph and his disciples arrived in Britain, sailing westward up the Severn Sea, they came to the lofty green hill known as Glastonbury Tor, where amongst this cluster of islands was the 'Sacred Isle of Avalon', its shores sheltered in apple orchards. In fact, the Isle got its name from the sacred fruit of the Druids (which is the emblem of fertility), the apple.

On their arrival upon Avalon, Joseph and his companions were met by another assemblage of British Druidic priests, King Guiderius, and his brother Prince Arviragus, along with an entourage of nobles. The very first act was that Prince Arviragus presented to Joseph, as a perpetual gift, free of tax, twelve hides of land, or a hide for each disciple. Each hide is 160 acres, or a total of 1920 square acres in all. Until one actually sees this vast estate, it is difficult to comprehend this generous move on Arviragus' part, with its massive Tor in the background where the remains of the ancient cathedral stand today. This grant covers about three square miles of land.

This was the first of many charters to follow upon this sacred spot dedicated in the name of Jesus the Christ in the year 36. It is called "The Hallowed Acres of Christendom" from kings and queens throughout Britain's history, all of which are recorded in the British Royal Archives. This original charter is embodied in what is known as 'The Domesday Book', on recognition of William I, the first Norman King of England, A.D. 1066. It is because of this land grant, and its charter, that even Papal authority to this day proclaim Britain's seniority to unbroken apostolic succession through its Bishops, dating from Joseph, the Apostle to Britain.

In the Liber Soliaco (A.D. 1619) it is stated that at Glastonbury itself one hide of land equaled 160 acres, and was deemed sufficient to maintain a man and his family. With this grant a document was furnished explaining the legalities of this gift, giving the recipients British citizenship and all the privileges accorded the Druidic heirarchy (*Ensign Message*, Oct.-Dec. 2009, p. 31). Every Druid, and now every Josephian apostle, was entitled to one hide of land, free of tax, freedom to pass unmolested from one district to another in time of war, and many other privileges. With this, Arviragus promised his protection.

It seemed as a natural process for both Druids and the rulers of the land to merge with the Josephian assembly and accept the Good Word, the Gospel of Christ. It fulfilled a waiting on both ends. This was the prophesied time when the Kingdom was taken from Judea and brought to Yahshua's kindred people in the Isles, those who would "bear the fruit" of His teachings. As Jowett appropriately states, a "new dispensation" had arrived.

Secular history books erroneously teach that the Augustan Mission, under Pope Gregory in A.D. 596, marked the introduction of Christianity in Britain. Yet that was simply the arrival of the Roman Catholic Papacy, long after the facts presented, thereby causing confusion of the true history of the early ecclesia. At Ecclesiastical Counsels of

the Roman Catholic Church, religious representatives have contested as to who would be honoured in order of receiving Christianity first. And as late as 1931, Pope Pius XI substantiated that Christianity was first introduced to Britain, from whence it spread!

As the church historian Bishop Ussher wrote in *Britannicum Ecclesianum Antiquitates*, some 500 years ago: "The British National Church was founded in A.D. 36, 160 years before heathen Rome confessed Christianity." This was but one step in the natural process of events that the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob took, to take His Kingdom to the rightful heirs of the Covenant (Matt. 21:43).