

# CHRISTIAN CHURCH ORIGINS IN BRITAIN

by Laurence Gardner

[Including primary reference sources]

## Introduction

It is generally promoted by the Christian churches that the formalized religion based on the model of Jesus emerged from the teachings of Peter and Paul in Rome, but there is nothing in the Vatican Archive, nor in any historical record, to substantiate this premise.

The New Testament *Acts of the Apostles* relate that, following two years of confinement in Caesarea on a charge of incitement, St Paul was taken under guard to Rome in the year AD 60.<sup>1</sup> He was placed under house arrest prior to his appearance before the Senate tribunal, and then imprisoned in AD 62. Following that event, there is no further record of his life, and it is reckoned that he met his end in the mass slaughter of Christians by Emperor Nero in AD 64.

Paul's erstwhile colleague, the apostle St Peter, is not referenced in the Bible or in any other document subsequent to his imprisonment in Jerusalem,<sup>2</sup> from where he escaped to Antioch, Syria, in AD 44. But without any supporting evidence, Church tradition has claimed from the 4th century that Peter also went to Rome, where he became the first leader of Christians in the city and was martyred along with Paul. In contrast, however, the Church's own *Apostolic Constitutions* actually cite another man as the first Christian leader.

Writing in AD 180, Bishop Irenaeus of Lyon in Gaul stated that the first ministry of the Christians in Rome was committed to the supervision of a certain Linus. Paul had actually mentioned Linus in his second epistle from Rome to his colleague Timothy,<sup>3</sup> and it had been recorded as early as AD 68 by the Roman writer Martial that Linus was a prince who had been captured and brought from Britain.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, he had led the Christians of Rome since AD 58, two years before St Paul arrived in the city. Linus had been a Christian before his seizure and, as confirmed in the Vatican Archive, 'The first beginnings of Christian piety existed in Britain'.<sup>5</sup> It is on record that Christianity had entered Britain as early as AD 35, just two years after the crucifixion of Jesus and long before the faith made any impact in Rome.

## Disciples in Britain

Following more than two centuries of Christian persecution by successive Roman emperors, the *Edict of Milan* introduced religious toleration throughout the Empire from AD 313. Subsequent to this, Emperor Constantine established Christianity as the State religion of Rome, and Bishop Eusebius of Caesarea was commissioned to collate and document the history of the faith. Reputed as the Father of Church History, Eusebius is especially noted for his work entitled *Historia Ecclesiastica* (AD 324). Prior to this, in AD 320, he had produced his preparatory edition, *Demonstratione Evangelii*, in which he summarized the available details of early apostolic missions. He wrote: ‘Some of them passed beyond the ocean and reached the Isles of Britain’.<sup>6</sup>

Among the apostles credited with visiting Britain in the 1st century was Simon Zelotes – one of the original twelve as listed in the Gospels. Even before Eusebius had referenced the colleagues of Jesus in Britain, Bishop Dorotheus of Tyre in Phoenicia had written in his *Synopsis de Apostol* (AD 303) that ‘Simon Zelotes preached Christ through all Mauritania and Afric the less; at length he was crucified in Britannia, slain, and buried’.<sup>7</sup>

In later times, the Byzantine historian Nicephorus, Patriarch of Constantinople 802–11, wrote: ‘St Simon, surnamed Zelotes, travelled through Egypt and Africa, then through Mauritania and all Libya, preaching the Gospel. And the same doctrine he taught to the peoples of the Occidental Sea and the islands called Britannia’.

A noted Christian convert of the 1st century was Aristobulus, the exiled brother of King Herod-Agrippa I (r. AD 39–44). The writings of the Roman churchman Hippolytus (AD 180–230) list Aristobulus as a Bishop of the Britons. Dorotheus of Tyre recorded that Aristobulus had been in Britain when St Paul sent greetings to his household in Rome – as related in Paul’s New Testament epistle to the Romans: ‘Salute them which are of Aristobulus’ household’.<sup>8</sup> The Greek *Church Martyrology* (a calendar of the lives of the saints) claims that Aristobulus was martyred in Britain ‘after he had built churches and ordained deacons and priests for the island’. This was further confirmed by St Ado, Archbishop of Vienne (AD 800–874), in the *Adonis Martyrologia*. And the Jesuit *Regia Fides* additionally states, ‘It is perfectly certain that before St Paul reached Rome, Aristobulus was away in Britain’. He was

executed by the Romans at Verulamium (St Albans) in AD 69. England's royal chaplain Hugh Cressy, who wrote the *Church History of England* shortly after the Reformation, also maintained from Benedictine annals that Aristobulus had been a 1st-century bishop in Britain.<sup>9</sup>

### **The Original Church**

It is customarily taught that Christianity was brought into Britain by St Augustine of Rome at the behest of Pope Gregory I in AD 597. It is on record, however, that three British clerics had attended Emperor Constantine's very first Christian Synod of Arles nearly three centuries earlier in AD 314; they were Eborius of York, Restitutus of London and Adelfius of Caerleon. It is plain therefore that, despite all Church propaganda concerning St Augustine, what he actually brought to Britain was Roman Catholicism, not Christianity. This is made perfectly clear in Augustine's letter of AD 600 to Pope Gregory. Known as the *Epistolae ad Gregorium Papam*, it states:

In the western confines of Britain there is a certain royal island of large extent, surrounded by water, abounding in all the beauties of nature and necessities. In it the first neophytes,<sup>10</sup> God beforehand acquainting them, found a church constructed by no human art, but by the hands of Christ himself for the salvation of his people.<sup>11</sup>

In line with other earlier works, the 12th-century Benedictine chronicler William of Malmesbury wrote in his *De Antiquitate Glastoniensis Ecclesiae* that the church referred to by Augustine was the wattle chapel of Glastonbury, which had been built by Joseph of Arimathea and his disciples in AD 63.<sup>12</sup> This, according to the *Cronica sive Antiquitates Glastoniensis Ecclesiae* of the Benedictine abbot John of Glastonbury (c1314)<sup>13</sup> and the *Nova Legenda Angliae* of Augustinian friar John Capgrave (c1418), was 15 years after the death of Jesus' mother. Plainly, the chapel of Glastonbury was not built 'by the hands of Christ himself' 30 years after his crucifixion, but Augustine was sufficiently impressed when writing to the Pope, and there was indeed a strange tradition that Jesus had been to the Glastonbury chapel in AD 64 and had consecrated it to his mother (a matter to which we shall return).

Throughout the centuries, historical writers and Church chroniclers were consistent and unanimous in their reports of apostolic missions to Britain and Gaul (France). Freculphus, Bishop of Lisieux (AD 825–52), wrote in his *Chronica* that the apostle St Philip of Galilee (*Philippus Galilias*) sent the mission from Gaul to England ‘to bring thither the good news of the world of life and to preach the incarnation of Jesus Christ’.<sup>14</sup> Much earlier, the 5th-century Celtic monk Gildas I Albanus had described Philip as the inspiration behind Joseph’s mission in Glastonia. And in his *Nova Legenda Angliae*, John Capgrave stated that ‘Joseph came to Philip the apostle among the Gauls’. He cited this from a manuscript that had been discovered by Emperor Theodosius (AD 379–95) at the Pretorium in Jerusalem.<sup>15</sup>

For the most part, the Church of Rome was able to ignore these documentary items in Britain and Gaul. But the matter was brought to wide attention after 1502, when a scholar named Polidoro Virgilio was sent to England, from Urbino in Italy, as a tax-gatherer for Pope Alexander VI. He remained in the country for many years, becoming a deacon of the Somerset diocese of Bath & Wells, which included Glastonbury. It was the reign of King Henry VII Tudor, who commissioned Polidoro to compile a history of the English nation. Polidoro’s research led him to become entirely fascinated by the colourful nature of the early Britons. His studies in Italy had suggested only a tribal nation of barbarians and sorcerers but, once in England, he discovered an ancient land of great learning and rich kingdoms. By 1534, the results of his research were 26 books entitled *Anglicae Historicae*. Tracing back to the early days of Roman occupation, he wrote in his section concerning the reign of Emperor Nero (AD 54–68):

Arviragus was the principal chief in Britain during the principate of Nero ... At this time Joseph of Arimathea, who according to Matthew the evangelist gave burial to Christ’s body, either by happenstance or in accordance with God’s will came into Britain with no small company of followers, where both he and his companions earnestly preached the gospel and the teaching of Christ. By this, many men were converted to true piety, filled with this wholesome fruit, and were baptized. Those men were assuredly full of the Holy Spirit. They received as a King’s gift a small plot of land about four miles from the town of Wells, where they laid the first foundations of the new religion, and where today there is a

magnificent church and a Benedictine monastery. The name of the place is Glastonbury. The first beginnings of Christian piety existed in Britain.<sup>16</sup>

These were not words that the Catholic hierarchy of Rome wanted to hear: that ‘the first beginnings of Christian piety existed in Britain’. As a result, the Vatican librarian Cardinal Cesare Baronius undertook to investigate, and to expand the earlier works of Eusebius from the then extensive library collection in Rome. Beginning in 1570, his research took 30 years to complete, and his chronicle was compiled in 12 folios entitled *Annales Ecclesiastici a Christi nato ad annum 1198* (Ecclesiastical Annals from the Nativity of Christ to 1198). Published in 1601, and contrary to what the Church hierarchy were anticipating, the Baronius work confirmed that the British records consulted by Polidoro were indeed correct. Even as far back as the acknowledged Church Fathers, Tertullian of Carthage had written in AD 208 about the early ‘haunts of the Britons inaccessible to the Romans but subjugated to Christ’.<sup>17</sup>

Polidoro had cited the Pictish monk Gildas III Badonicus (born AD 516), who wrote in his *De Excidio Britanniae*, that Christian Britons were traceable back to ‘the latter part of the reign of Tiberius Caesar’ who died in AD 37, just four years after the crucifixion of Jesus.<sup>18</sup> But from the Lateran Palace archive, Cardinal Baronius was even more precise, and his *Annales Ecclesiastici* identified the specific year as being AD 35. He confirmed that the primary instigator of Nazarene Christianity in Britain, along with Simon Zelotes, had been Joseph of Arimathea, and that Simon had been executed by the Romans under Catus Decianus at Caistor in Lincolnshire. He further explained that whilst Joseph and Simon were in Britain, the apostle Philip, along with Mary Magdalene, Martha, Lazarus, and others had sailed to Marseilles, where they established the Nazarene faith in Gaul.<sup>19</sup>

### **The Domesday Secret**

King Arviragus who, as cited by Polidoro, made the Glastonbury land grant to Joseph of Arimathea, was the brother of High King Caractacus of Camulod (Colchester), Pendragon of the Britannic Isle (*Pen Draco Insularis*). Arviragus reigned in the western region of Siluria, which embraced Glastonia, and his land grant was featured in the famous *Domesday Book* of

England. The 2nd-century Roman lawyer, Decimus Juvenal, wrote that ‘No name had trembled the lips of Rome more greatly than that of King Arviragus of the Silurian Britons’.

The *Domesday Book* was commissioned in 1085 by King William I, the Norman conqueror of England, in order to record the details of some 13,418 towns and villages within 40 of the nation’s counties and shires. The book is currently housed at London’s Public Record Office in Kew. With regard to Glastonbury in the western shire of Somerset, the chronicle states that this *Dominus Dei* (Home of God) ‘possesses in its own villa twelve hides of land which have never paid tax’.<sup>20</sup> Somewhat mysteriously, it is further stated in the *Domesday* entry that the Abbey chapel contains the *Secretum Domini* – the ‘Secret of the Lord’.

The original wattle and daub chapel (the *vetusta ecclesia*) was said to have been founded at Glastonbury by Joseph of Arimathea in AD 63, and was consecrated in the following year as the first above-ground Christian mission in the world. It was restored by the monks Fagan and Dyfan in the 2nd century, and was later encased in boards with a leaded roof to preserve it. In time, a church and monastery were added, and Saxon incomers rebuilt the complex in the early 8th century. In the course of this, some of the old cladding was removed, but a charter of King Ine of Wessex confirmed in AD 725 that the encased wattle structure remained. A later charter of King Edgar, relating to Benedictine houses in AD 972, listed Glastonbury as ‘the first church in the kingdom, built by the disciples of Christ’.<sup>21</sup> Then in 1032 a deed of King Cnut also cited the *lignea basilica* (wooden church) of Glastonbury. In the interim, a stone casing had been erected around the chapel to keep its remains intact. But in 1184 a disastrous fire ruined the buildings, and the Plantagenet King Henry II of England granted a Charter of Renovation for ‘the mother and burying place of the saints, founded by the disciples of our Lord themselves’. The new buildings grew to become a vast Benedictine abbey, second in size and importance only to Westminster Abbey in London.

It was some years before the 12th-century fire that the *Antiquitate Glastoniensis* had been written (c1136) by William of Malmesbury as a commission from the monks of Glastonia. It includes information from library editions that were subsequently lost in the blaze, and in his 1140 work, *De Gestis Regum Anglorum* (The Acts of the Kings of England), William referred to these as being ‘documents of no small credit’.<sup>22</sup> Fortunately, a good many manuscripts were salvaged, but numerous of them met their end in 1539 when King Henry VIII Tudor

destroyed the Abbey in his Dissolution of the Monasteries. Henry's ambition was to separate the English Church from the papal lordship of Rome in his bid for a divorce from Catherine of Aragon. But, in the course of this, his ruthless destruction of monasteries nationwide caused one of the greatest archival and architectural losses in British history. Abbot Whiting of Glastonbury had objected to the royal divorce, as a result of which he was strapped to a hurdle and dragged to be slung on a gallows at the top of Glastonbury Tor. His head was then stuck above the Abbey gateway, and his body quartered and sent as warnings to neighbouring monastic centres. Today, along with other wrecked institutions of the Middle Ages, Glastonbury Abbey exists only as a desecrated ruin.

One of the more intact sections of the Glastonbury remains is the building known as the Lady Chapel. Dedicated to St Mary, this had replaced the stone casing that was built over the original *vetusta ecclesia*.<sup>23</sup> It is this building that contains the oldest record of the *Secretum Domini* – the Secret of the Lord as referenced in the *Domesday Book*. In the outside south wall of the chapel is a stone from the earlier Saxon construction inscribed with the words 'Jesus Maria'. This venerated stone was a prayer station for pilgrims in medieval times, and relates to the consecration of the original chapel by Jesus in memory of his mother. As previously referenced, however, the *vetusta ecclesia* was not built until AD 63, and was consecrated in the following year – three decades after the crucifixion of Jesus. What then was the nature of the *Domesday* 'secret' held within the words of the 'Jesus Maria' stone?

### **Chapel of the Stone**

The first Abbot of Glastonbury in the 5th century was St Patrick. In AD 488 his Irish disciple, St Bridget of Kildare, visited Glastonbury. Standing then in wet marshy country, the site was called *Yneswithirim*, alternatively *Ynys Witrin* (Crystal Isle). On returning home to Eire, Bridget wrote about the lake island in Glastonia, and documented that she had been to 'an oratory consecrated in honour of St Mary Magdalene'. By virtue of Glastonbury's location in its own sea, she called the place *Becc Eriu*, meaning Little Ireland.<sup>24</sup> The Abbey Gatehouse is now preserved as a museum in the aptly named Magdalene Street, whose name few people think to question. But why was the chapel consecrated to Mary Magdalene? The answer, which constitutes the secret of the stone, is to be found in the Benedictine archive.

One of the great abbeys whose fabric was left intact after the Dissolution, although looted by Henry VIII, was the Abbey Church of St Albans in Hertfordshire. This Benedictine establishment was founded by the Saxon King Offa in AD 793. It was substantially expanded by the Norman kings in the 11th and 12th centuries, with further additions in later times, to become eventually the largest cruciform church of the realm. Many ancient records of the St Albans library were chronologically documented by abbot John de Celia in the 12th century. His colleague, the Benedictine monk Matthew Paris, collated and continued the work in his richly illustrated 7-volume *Chronica Majora*.<sup>25</sup> Now held at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, it explains that AD 63, the year when St Joseph's chapel was built at Glastonbury,<sup>26</sup> was the very year in which Mary Magdalene died in Aix-en-Provence.

Who then was the son who had dedicated the foundation to his 'mother Mary' in AD 64 as claimed in the ancient records and represented by the 'Jesus Maria' stone? Everything points to the fact that he was the offspring of Jesus and Mary Magdalene, a son who also bore the name Jesus (Joshua). In this regard, there are no indications in any archive which suggest that Jesus Christ ever came to Britain. But there are a number of instances where a young Jesus is recorded in England's West Country, to where he was said to have travelled with his uncle, Joseph of Arimathea, from the late AD 40s. These were the traditions that gave rise to William Blake's famous 18th-century poem, *Jerusalem*. It was set to music by Sir Charles Parry and performed at London's Albert Hall Jubilee celebration of King George V in 1935:

And did those feet in ancient time  
Walk upon England's mountains green?  
And was the holy Lamb of God  
On England's pleasant pastures seen?

### **Heirs of the Lord**

As we have seen, King Arviragus was the brother of Caractacus the Pendragon, and it was Linus, a son of Caractacus, who was the first appointed Bishop of Rome. But why would such a commitment of control have been granted to a foreign prince? Because by that time in AD 58, marital links were already being forged between the British royalty and the Holy Family.



When the leadership of the Church was passed to Linus, the intention appears to have been for an institution with its leadership roots embedded in the messianic line.

According to the 1st-century Roman writer Martial, Gladys Claudia (the sister of Linus) was married to the Roman senator Rufus Pudens.<sup>27</sup> It was to these three that St Paul referred in his second New Testament epistle to Timothy from Rome: ‘Eubulus greeteth thee, and Pudens and Linus and Claudia’.<sup>28</sup> Outside of Glastonbury their hospice for pilgrims in Rome, although not a chapel, was the only other above-ground Christian foundation of the era. In AD 66, however, Senator Pudens was martyred under Emperor Nero for running the hospice and thereby disobeying the rule of Rome against Christian establishments.

Soon after the death of Linus, Emperor Vespasian issued an edict of persecution against those who were called the *Desposyni* (the Heirs of the Lord). This edict of AD 70 proclaimed that ‘none should be left alive of the Davidic royal stock’, and its provisions were enforced by Vespasian’s imperial successors Titus and Domitian. The continued assaults on known members of Jesus’ family were recorded in the 2nd, 3rd and 4th centuries by the historians Hegisippus of Palestine, Julius Africanus of Edessa and Eusebius of Caesarea.<sup>29</sup> Eusebius qualified that although many were seized, some were released and ‘on their release they became leaders of the churches, both because they had borne testimony and because they were of the Lord’s family’.<sup>30</sup> A primary motive of the persecution was to prevent any further involvement of the Holy Family in the affairs of Rome after the death of Linus. In Britain, the lines of kingly descent from Joseph of Arimathea and his wife Enygeus (a sister of Arviragus and Caractacus) are detailed in the Harleian Manuscript collection at the British Library.<sup>31</sup>

### **The Bishops’ Debate**

The accounts of Joseph of Arimathea and young Jesus in south-western Britain focus on three separate occasions. The first relates to a time when Joseph and Jesus voyaged to Marazion in Cornwall.<sup>32</sup> The second recounts a time when they were at the Mendip village of Priddy in Somerset. Thirdly is the account of young Jesus dedicating the *Ealde Chirch* of Glastonbury to his mother in AD 64. Prior to these visits are the recorded incidents of apostolic activity in

Britain onwards from AD 35. Regarding these earlier activities, Hugh Cressy, the 17th-century Benedictine chaplain to Catherine of Braganza (wife of King Charles II), wrote:

In the one-and-fortieth year of Christ, St James, returning out of Spain, visited Gaul and Britain, where he preached the gospel, and so came back to Jerusalem to consult St Peter about matters of great weight and importance.

The weighty matters referred to by Cressy concerned the necessity for a decision on whether to receive uncircumcised Gentiles into the Nazarene Church. As Jerusalem's first bishop, and as discussed in the New Testament *Acts of the Apostles*, Jesus' brother James presided at the meeting which handled the debate.<sup>33</sup> It is now known that Joseph of Arimathea and Jesus' eldest brother James (with whom St Clement of Rome corresponded in the 1st century)<sup>34</sup> were one and the same. As the second in succession, James the Just held the traditional Davidic patriarchal distinction '*Joseph ha Rama Theo*' (of the Divine Highness), a style that was phonetically corrupted in translation to *Arimathea* (as if relating to a place that never existed). This certainly explains why Jesus junior is recorded as having been Joseph's 'nephew'. Interestingly, the Rev Lionel S Lewis (Vicar of Glastonbury in the 1920s) confirmed from his church annals that St James the Just was indeed at Glastonbury in AD 35,<sup>35</sup> whereas other records of the visit use the name Joseph of Arimathea.

Misunderstandings, caused by the apparent anomalies and duplicated entries concerning *Joseph ha Rama Theo* and James the Just in Britain, Gaul and Spain, provoked some argument between the bishops at the Council of Basle in 1434. As a result, individual countries decided to follow their different traditions. It is St Joseph who is most remembered in connection with Church history in Britain, whereas it is as St James that he is revered in Spain. Even so, the English authorities compromised when linking him with the nation's monarchy, and the Royal Court in London became the Palace of St James. This primary residence of England's royalty was built in 1531–36 on the site of a hospital for leprosy women (as established by the 12th-century Glastonbury benefactor King Henry II), which had also been dedicated to St James.<sup>36</sup> The feasts observed at the foundation were those of St James and of St Dunstan, Abbot of Glastonbury AD 940–46.

The bishops' debate had begun at the Council of Pisa in 1409 with a dispute over the seniority by age of national churches in Europe. The main contenders were England, France and Spain. The case was ruled in favour of England because the church at Glastonbury was founded by Joseph/James '*statim post passionem Christi*' (shortly after the passion of Christ). Henceforth, the monarch of France was entitled His Most Christian Majesty, while in Spain the appellation was His Most Catholic Majesty. The bitterly contested title of His Most Sacred Majesty was, however, reserved for the King of England.<sup>37</sup> The debate continued at the Council of Constance in 1417, and records of this *Disputatio Super Dignitatem Angliae et Galliae in Concilio Constantiano* state that England won her case because the saint had been granted land in the West Country by King Arviragus, and was buried at Glastonbury.<sup>38</sup>

### **The Noble Decurio**

When writing about the Council of Constance, Archbishop Ussher of Armagh (the 17th-century compiler of Bible chronology) commented on the Gospel entry wherein Jesus had stated 'I am the true vine' in reference to his Davidic lineage.<sup>39</sup> In this regard, Ussher wrote 'Immediately after the passion of Christ, Joseph of Arimathea, the noble decurio, proceeded to cultivate the Lord's vineyard, that is to say, England'.

It is not insignificant that Ussher used the term 'noble decurio' in respect of Joseph of Arimathea. The same had been said of him by the Benedictine scholar Rabanus Maurus (AD 776–856), Archbishop of Mayence and Abbé of Fulda in the days of Emperor Charlemagne. Gildas Albanus had also used the expression in the 5th century. The term *decurio* relates to an overseer of fortified mining estates, and originated in Spain where Jewish metalworkers had been operative in the celebrated foundries of Toledo since the 6th century BC. It was not, however, a loose definition of Joseph's occupation; it was taken directly from the earliest Latin text of the New Testament, as translated from the Greek by St Jerome in about AD 382. This Bible, known as the *Vulgate* (the official canon of the Catholic Church), refers twice to Joseph of Arimathea in this context. The first mention in Mark 15:43 cites him as a *nobilis decurio*, and the second in Luke 23:50 as a *decurio*.

These are the verses that veil the reality of Joseph *ha Rama Theo* in the English Bible translations which do not refer to him as a ‘noble decurio’, but as an ‘honourable counsellor’. This definition has often been misconstrued as if the term used was ‘councillor’ (relating to a council member) – but the term ‘counsellor’ (an advisor) is actually quite meaningless in its undefined context. As a Gospel-reported *decurio*, Joseph was clearly involved in the world of metals, just as confirmed in the histories of Britain, Spain and Gaul.

As early as 445 BC, the Greek historian Herodotus referred to Britain as the ‘tin islands’. In about 350 BC, the Greek geographer Pytheus circumnavigated Britain, calculating its shoreline distance to within 2.5 percent of modern estimates. In writing of the country, he made specific mention of the prevalent tin trade. In about 160 BC, the Greek historian Polybius commented about the same British mining industry in his work *The Histories*. And in 30 BC, the Greek historian Diodorus Siculus wrote: ‘The tin ore is transported from Britain into Gaul, the merchants carrying it on horseback through the heart of Celtica to Marseilles and the city called Narbonne’.

The heartland of the British tin industry was in Cornwall. Diodorus wrote that the Cornish tin was mined, beaten into squares and carried across the low-tide causeway to the island of Ictis, as the later named Mont St Michael, off Marazion, was called. Indeed, the very name Marazion (Market Zion) was directly related to Jerusalem. From Ictis, the tin was taken over the Channel to Morlaix in Brittany and transported across France on pack-horses to the port of Marseilles. From there it was shipped to Phoenicia and other Mediterranean destinations. Tin was essential in those days to the production of bronze. Thus, in accordance with ancient writings from the BC years, the connection between Marazion and Marseilles is explained – the very two places described in the accounts of Joseph of Arimathea’s travels in connection with young Jesus and Mary Magdalene.

Along with the Cornish tin trade, the region most famed for its silver-bearing lead mines was that of the Mendip Hills – a cave-riddled limestone ridge that extends to the marshy Somerset Levels and the nearby towns of Glastonbury and Wells.<sup>40</sup> Again, this is precisely the region frequented by Joseph, including his visit to Priddy with young Jesus. The British Museum contains two splendid examples of lead from the Mendip mines near Glastonbury, dated AD

49 and AD 60 respectively. In Latin, one bears the name of ‘Britannicus, son of the Emperor Claudius’, and the other is inscribed, ‘British lead: property of the Emperor Nero’.

### **Captives in Rome**

Some while before the first edict against the *Desposyni* inheritors was instituted by Vespasian in AD 70, a pre-emptive strike was made by Emperor Claudius against those whom he called the ‘Christus Jews’.<sup>41</sup> In this respect, his decree was especially directed towards the Island Britons, whom he proclaimed to the Senate were the ringleaders of a menacing enterprise. Claudius asserted that the Druids and Nazarenes had become inextricably linked, and he classified the membership of both sects to be capital offences even though Britain was beyond his jurisdiction and not then a province of the Roman Empire. Contrary to the rule of Rome, the druidic colleges in Britain were teaching law, science, astronomy and religion. They had to be crushed. According to Gildas I, there were forty seats of druidic learning in Britain, the most influential of which was on the Isle of Mona (later Anglesey).

At that time in AD 43, the Roman culture was wholly pagan, and the emperors had never expressed any particular concern about the Druids in Britain or Gaul. The term ‘Christians’ had not moved into general use (it first appeared in Antioch in AD 44), but the Arimatheac mission in Siluria was perceived as a threat that might pervade the imperial stage if it were allowed to expand beyond the shores of Britain. Anna (the daughter of Joseph of Arimathea who led the Christus Jews) had married the Archdruid Brân the Blessed, and the international metals trade was becoming increasingly dominated by the alliance. For military and other purposes, the strength of Rome relied heavily on metals, but the Romans were not inclined to purchase their supplies; they wanted to own the resources. To expedite this, it was necessary to widen the imperial boundaries, and Britain became the primary target. Placed in charge of the Claudian invasion force that swept into Britain via Gaul in AD 43 was Aulus Plautius.

Around a century earlier, Julius Caesar had made two Roman incursions into Britain in 55 and 54 BC. The first, as reported by the political commentator Marcus Cicero (106–43 BC), was an exploratory visit in search of gold, silver and tin, but Caesar was not well received and returned to Britain in the following year with 800 ships and an invasion force. This did not

lead to any form of conquest although King Casswallan (the grandfather of Archdruid Brân) was defeated north of the River Thames when attempting to halt plundering by the Romans. Thereafter, he continued to harry the legions by the use of chariot-led guerrilla assaults and sharpened stakes, clad with iron, to scuttle Caesar's ships.<sup>42</sup>

Although Julius Caesar's armies did not manage to penetrate Britain, Senator Cornelius Tacitus later confirmed in his *Life of Agricola* (AD 98), that Caesar did succeed in mapping the lie of the land.<sup>43</sup> Ultimately, his records of hill-fort locations such as Camulod and Devil's Dyke (near St Albans) were of great assistance to the Claudian invasion by Aulus Plautius. He landed in AD 43 with four legions of 20,000 trained men and an equivalent number of auxiliary troops. Initially though, even this massive strength was not sufficient to push inland beyond the south-eastern coastal areas until Emperor Claudius arrived with war elephants, catapults and other heavy weapons. The result in the east of Britain was the Roman defeat of Caractacus the Pendragon and the seizure of Camulod.

As the legions moved westward under Ostorius Scapula, they were confronted by the Silurian troops of Arviragus and his brother Guiderius who was slain in the conflict. A period of truce was then declared in AD 45, at which point Emperor Claudius decided on a change of plan. To facilitate a diplomatic treaty, he brought his daughter Genuissa from Rome and gave her as a wife to Arviragus.<sup>44</sup> The object of the marriage was to create an alliance between the houses that would ease the pressure of war in Siluria whilst gaining a foothold in British government for Rome. The city of Caer Gloyw (Gloucester) was founded to mark the event and Claudius returned home. But the war did not abate for long and, despite the Emperor's own lessened enthusiasm for battle, General Vespasian arrived to renew hostilities by blockading the south-western fortified settlement of Caer Penhuelgoit (later Exeter).

In AD 51 Caractacus, who then commanded the Welsh and Dumnonian Silures, was seized and taken captive to Rome along with his wife, brothers, sons and daughters. Even though a hostage of war, Caractacus retained his kingly pride, and his address from the dais is documented in the 1st-century *Annals of Imperial Rome*. In justifying his campaign of retaliation against the Romans in Britain, he challenged his captors with a question: 'If you want to rule the world, does it follow that everyone else welcomes enslavement?'<sup>45</sup>

The Roman *Annals* explain that this lengthy speech to the tribunal and the crowded Senate was so powerful and convincing that Emperor Claudius released the Pendragon and his family from their chains, granting them an immediate pardon. Empress Agrippina arose from her throne to embrace Caractacus as the most noble of all adversaries, and the only restriction imposed on the royal family was that Caractacus should remain in Rome for a period of seven years. The rest of the family were free to travel as they wished. His sons Cynon and Cyllinus returned to Britain along with their sister Eurgan. The remainder took up residence at the *Palatium Britannicum* (the British Palace) that was provided for them on Viminalis Hill.

Caractacus' daughter Gladys was adopted into the imperial court and given the name Claudia Rufina Britannia. As we saw earlier, she was married at the age of 17 in AD 53 to Senator Rufus Pudens, whom she had first met in Britain when he was stationed at Chichester. Of her, the contemporary Roman poet Martial wrote, 'Our Claudia, named Rufina, sprung we know from blue-eyed Britons; yet behold, she vies in grace with all that Greece or Rome can show'. Eurgan, the second daughter of Caractacus, became in time the very first British female saint, noted for her work in Caer Salog (Salisbury) and at the Cor Eurgain mission founded by her husband, Lord Salog, at Llan Illid in Wales.

The son of Caractacus most famed in Christian history was Lleyn (Linus), who was appointed in AD 58 to be the first bishop of the Christians in Rome. The third bishop, St Clement of Rome, referred to his predecessor as '*Sanctissimus Linus, frater Claudiae*' (St Linus, brother of Claudia). Thus it is apparent that Christianity was prevalent in Rome before St Paul first went there in AD 60, and that neither he nor St Peter founded the mission in that city as is erroneously claimed in Church doctrine. The Church in Rome was plainly active during the earlier captivity of the Caractacus household, and it was they whom St Paul later met and sent their greetings in his letter to Timothy: 'Eubulus greeteth thee, and Pudens and Linus, and Claudia, and all the brethren'.<sup>46</sup> (Eubulus was the Greek rendering of Aristobulus, who subsequently returned to Britain and was slain by Roman soldiers in St Albans.)

The chances are that, had Claudius not died in AD 54, the Roman penetration into Britain might have been limited or handled more diplomatically. But despite his own change of heart towards Caractacus and the British establishment, Claudius was succeeded by the unstable Emperor Nero whose hatred for Britons and Christians was unrelenting. Fierce new

campaigns were launched into the Silurian West under the Roman governors Veranius and Paulinus. Then in AD 60 the legions were moved eastwards to confront Queen Boudicca and her two daughters, who led the warriors of the Iceni and Trinovante tribes. Boudicca regained Camulod, Verulamium and Caer Lundein (London) from the Romans, but was eventually vanquished and died of a fever. Some 80,000 Britons fell in these encounters, but the Senate was so impressed by the Queen that her initial battle address, after she and her daughters had been flogged and raped, was fully recounted in the *Annals of Imperial Rome*.<sup>47</sup>

The battles in Britain continued until AD 76 when the increasing might of Rome finally prevailed outside Wales and the Silurian West. Vespasian had succeeded as Emperor, and his legions marched northwards to take Caer Loit-coit (Lincoln) and Caer Evroc (York). The Romans' newly appointed governor in Britain was Gnaeus Julius Agricola, who subjugated most of the remaining tribal confederacies, and by AD 81 had reached the border of Caledonia (later Scotland). The Roman occupation of what subsequently became known as England was sufficiently complete. It was now a dominion of the Western Empire, but the price to be paid by Rome was the significant rise of Christianity. Just as the papal emissary Polidoro Virgilio had eventually stated, 'The first beginnings of Christian piety existed in Britain'. Emperor Claudius had known this, and had launched his AD 43 campaign partly in an effort to prevent the influence of the faith spreading into the Empire. But in doing this, he opened the very door that allowed it to happen in his own capital when his generals brought the popular British Pendragon and his family to Rome.

### **Druids and Christians**

Although a form of early Judaeo-Christianity entered Britain in the middle 1st century, it is evident that this did not constitute any wide-scale conversion to a new faith. Despite the fact that Linus and his sister Gladys were embraced by the Christian fraternity in Rome, there is no record to suggest that Arviragus, Caractacus or Boudicca became Christians, although Caractacus was plainly tolerant of the Christians within his own family. In general, the Britons' way of life was built on druidic principles and they maintained their old beliefs for another few centuries while Christianity evolved alongside.



The style of Christianity that came into Britain with Simon Zelotes and Joseph of Arimathea, and into Gaul with Philip and Mary Magdalene, was a Nazarene concept that seems to have been, in some ways, compatible with the druidic culture. Brân the Blessed (the son-in-law of Joseph/James) was not a Christian; he was the Archdruid of the Silurian kingdoms. In reference to the year AD 57, Tacitus wrote in the *Annals of Imperial Rome* of a certain Pomponia. She was the daughter of the Roman consul Gaius Pomponius Graecinus, and had married Aulus Plautius, the Claudian invader of Britain. It is not made clear whether Pomponia had been in Britain with her husband but, when Plautius returned to Rome, his wife was charged with embracing a ‘foreign superstition’.<sup>48</sup> This is generally thought to refer to Christianity but, whatever the case, Pomponia was acquitted.

Whereas biblical disciples such as Mark and Luke had experienced difficulty in conveying their eccentric version of Judaeo-Christianity in the Mediterranean world, the original tenets of Jesus and James were more easily assimilated into the Celtic environment. Even in the 1st century BC, the Druids had been described by the Greek geographer Strabo as ‘students of nature and moral philosophy’. He continued:

They are believed to be the most just of men, and are therefore entrusted with judgements in decisions that affect both individuals and the public at large. In former times they arbitrated in war, able to bring to a standstill opponents on the point of drawing up in line of battle; murder cases have very frequently been entrusted to their adjudication.<sup>49</sup>

The Sicilian-born Diodorus Siculus, another writer of the time, described the Druids as great ‘philosophers and theologians, who are treated with special honour’. The Druids were additionally said to have been both exceptional statesmen and divine seers.<sup>50</sup> One ancient text relates:

The Druids are men of science ... enjoying direct intercourse with the deities and able to speak in their name. They can also influence fate by making those who consult them observe positive rules or ritual taboos, or by determining the days to be chosen or avoided for any action that is contemplated.

When Diodorus wrote of the Britons in the 1st century BC, he referred to the works of the Greek historian Hecataeus from three centuries before, and called them Hyperboreans (people from beyond the North Wind). He told how the god Apollo visited a Hyperborean temple ‘every nineteen years – the period over which the return of the stars to the same place in the heavens is accomplished’. This 19-year astronomical cycle was used by the Druids for calendar calculation as confirmed by the old *Calendar of Coligny* found in the French Department of Ain, north of Lyon, in 1897.<sup>51</sup> The calendar (a fragmented bronze tablet) dates from the 1st century and is the longest ancient document to be unearthed in Gaul. It gives a table of 62 consecutive months (about five solar years), each month having either 29 or 30 days. Also intercalated is the alternative lunar calendar of 13 months per year. The days of each month are related to each other, with inherent dark and light periods, and are annotated as auspicious and inauspicious days. The *Coligny Calendar* indicates a significant druidic competence in astronomical science, and they were said to ‘have much knowledge of the stars and their motions, of the size of the world and of the earth, and of natural philosophy’.

According to Plutarch, a 2nd-century Greek priest of Apollo at Delphi: ‘The Druids celebrate the feast of Saturn once every thirty years because they contend that Saturn takes thirty years to complete its orbit around the sun’. They not only knew that the Earth and planets were in orbit around the sun, but they calculated Saturn’s orbital time to within six months of correctness. This was some 1,500 years before the Polish astronomer Nicolas Copernicus announced his related heliocentric principle to an astonished academic establishment. On presenting his theory, Copernicus suffered an onslaught of abuse from the Catholic Church, which insisted that the Earth was the centre of the universe, and his work was not published until his death in 1543. To the earlier Druids, with their advanced knowledge of heavenly bodies, the very idea of an Earth-centred universe would have been unthinkable. In common with the Samaritan Magi, the Druids were practitioners of advanced numerology and healing, and likewise the Essenes of Jesus’ community at Qumrân were especially interested in the mathematics which governed the order of the cosmos.

An essential difference between Druidism and Christianity was that the druidic order was not a religion. Rather more akin to the Essene community, the Druids maintained their own government, courts of law, educational colleges and surgeons. The members of the order were its statesmen, legislators, priests, physicians, lawyers, teachers and poets. Diogenes Laërtius, a

3rd-century chronicler of philosophies, wrote that the three main druidic tenets were ‘to worship the gods, to do no evil, and to practice manly virtue’.<sup>52</sup>

Thus it can be seen from the plurality of ‘gods’ that the Druid and Christian beliefs were distinctly different in this regard.<sup>53</sup> Key figures in the druidic pantheon of deities were Taranis (god of storms), Teutas (god of commerce), Esus (god of war), Belenus (sun god), Ardena (goddess of the forest) and Belisarna (queen of the heavens). The Roman poet Lucan (AD 39–65) provides the earliest known writing concerning Taranis (meaning ‘thunderer’) in his poem *Bellum Civile*, better known as the *Pharsalia*. A similarity between Druidism and Christianity, which has led many to presume a closer connection than truly existed at the time, was that the Druids used the symbolism of a cross. The emblem of Taranis was a cross within a circle,<sup>54</sup> and it might well be that this evolved to become the Celtic cross of the Christian Britons. It was also a Druid custom to strip an oak tree leaving two principal branches to form a cross with the trunk on which they would carve the name of *Taranis*, with *Belenus* and *Esus* on the left and right cross-arms and *Teutas* on the stem above.<sup>55</sup>

In the Gallic and Celtic realms, where it is known that Christianity flourished from 1st-century times, the main factor which allowed this to happen so naturally appears to have been the jointly held Pythagorean beliefs of the Druids and the Nazarenes. In this regard, both expressed the doctrine of the immortality of the soul; they believed equally in an afterlife and in a heavenly Otherworld.<sup>56</sup> The Essenes of Qumrân, to whom the Nazarenes were attached, were notable advocates of the Greek philosopher Pythagoras (c570–500 BC) who, in his study of arithmetical ratios, searched for meaning both in the physical and metaphysical worlds through mathematical proportions. The 1st-century Jewish chronicler Flavius Josephus wrote of the Essenes: ‘These men live the same kind of life as do those whom the Greeks call Pythagoreans’.<sup>57</sup> We come, therefore, to an essential matter of difference between the concept of a bodily resurrection, as supported by the Catholic Church, and the Pythagorean culture of the Druids and Nazarenes.

Immortality of the soul (rather than of the body) was around as a concept long before Jesus’ time. In the ancient Greek world it was promoted by the followers of the Athenian philosopher Socrates (c469–399 BC), and Pythagoras had expounded the doctrine a century earlier. Along with this jointly accepted belief, the Nazarenes and Druids also expressed a

common aptitude for astronomy and the healing arts. If we add to these things the fact that the lands of the Druids were a primary mining resource for the Jewish and Judaeo-Christian miners and metal traders, there is sufficient reason to understand how it was that the two cultures became so easily entwined.

### **The Holy Families**

Joseph's daughter Anna (the wife of Brân) is listed in a number of ancient pedigrees, including the Harleian and Jesus College manuscript collections (at the British and Bodleian Libraries) which classify her as a 'consobrina' of Jesus' mother Mary. The Harleian pedigree of Gwynedd, for example, defines Anna as a '*consobrina Mariæ uirginis matris*'.<sup>58</sup> A consobrina was a junior kinswoman – a younger cousin, niece or granddaughter. Anna appears as such in the genealogies of 'The Holy Families of Britain', which credit her with a son called Beli, the father of Avallach, father of Euguein.<sup>59</sup>

Beli and Avallach, the son and grandson of Anna and Brân, are given in numerous genealogical listings as founders of the Royal House of Gwynedd via Avallach's son Euguein. From his other son, Oudoleum, came the northern rulers of the kingdom of Rheged in Cumbria. More important to our line of enquiry is the descent from their daughter Penardun and her husband, King Marius of Siluria, the son and successor of Arviragus. It was their grandson, King Lucius, who became most famed as the formal instigator of Christianity in Britain. The venerable Bede wrote in his *Ecclesiastical History* that Lucius had entered into correspondence with a certain Eleutherius, who was at that time the leader of the persecuted Christians in Rome.<sup>60</sup> By virtue of this documented event, the later Catholic Church was unable to ignore Eleutherius, and he was listed in the Vatican's *Liber Pontificalis* (Book of Popes) as a saint with a feast day on 26 May.

Marius and Lucius are in fact Romanized names by way of records written in Latin. Their actual Silurian names were Meuric and Lles.<sup>61</sup> In the *Historia Regum Britanniae*, Geoffrey of Monmouth related that Gildas had written at length about the deeds of Lucius,<sup>62</sup> and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* refers to 'Lucius, King of the Britons' in its entries for the year AD 167. It states that he sent a deputation to meet with Bishop Eleutherius in Rome,<sup>63</sup> which

confirms the similar entry in the Vatican's *Liber Pontificalis*.<sup>64</sup> The Augustinian friar John Capgrave (1393–1464), and Archbishop Ussher of Armagh in his 17th-century *De Britannicarum Ecclesiarum Primordiis*, both recounted that the missionaries sent to Rome by Lucius were named Medway and Elfan.

Although Christianity was substantially intermixed with Druidism in Britain by that time, Lucius had elected to proclaim his personal Christianity at the court of Caer Guent (Winchester) in AD 156. He then sought a royal attachment to the Roman fraternity that was previously headed by his grandfather's cousin Prince Linus. Geoffrey of Monmouth, Bishop of St Asaph, reported that two representatives, namely Faganus and Duvianus (Fagan and Dyfan in the Welsh annals) were sent from Rome in response to Lucius. It was they who, as we saw earlier, were reputed to have instigated the first restoration of the wattle chapel at Glastonbury. They baptised Lucius at the mission's Holy Well (now called Chalice Well), and have since been credited with the second foundation of Christianity in Britain.

In his letter of approach to Eleutherius, Lucius asked for advice as to how he should operate a Christian kingdom, and details of the bishop's letter in reply are documented in the *Sacrorum Conciliorum Collectio* in Rome. He advised that the people of the realm should be treated 'as if they were sons of the king'. Subsequently, in AD 179, Lucius founded the first Christian archbishopric in Britain, which he settled in London where St Peter's Church now stands in Cornhill.

During his lifetime, the reputation of Lucius was said to have spread far and wide. He built the first Glastonbury tower on St Michael's Tor in AD 167, and the church at Llandaff was dedicated to him as Lleurwgg the Great. (It is here that Dante Gabriel Rossetti's famous Pre-Raphaelite *Seed of David* altarpiece can be seen today.) Lucius was said to have 'increased the light of the first missionaries' and, accordingly, became known as *Lleiffer Mawr* (the Great Luminary). He died on 3 December 201, and was buried at St Mary le Lode in Gloucester. Subsequently, his remains were moved to St Peter's Church in London.<sup>65</sup>

On the death of King Lucius, Emperor Severus sent his legions into Britain in order to quell the Christian insurgency against Roman law at a time when Lucius had no immediate male successor. His son Keriber had predeceased him, and his grandson Llyr was too young. But

Keriber did have an older sister named Gladys, whose son succeeded to the crown as King Coel II. Thereafter the battles continued for many years, to the point that Coel entered into a peace treaty with the Roman governor Constantius Chlorus. They agreed that, although Britain would pay tribute to Rome, the nation would retain its own sovereignty and its own monarchy. As part of the arrangement, Coel's daughter Elaine was later married to Constantius who, after Coel's death, declared himself King Consort of the Camulod Britons.<sup>66</sup> Their son was Constantine, who eventually became Emperor and proclaimed Christianity as the State religion of Rome.

Princess Elaine's younger brother Kenau (Cunedd) was not in a position to confront the kingly claim of Constantius, and settled for being Lord of Gloucester.<sup>67</sup> In time his descendants became rulers in the northern region of Strathclyde, ultimately to marry into the Scots Kings of Dalriada in the 6th century. Meanwhile, the primary kingship in Britain fell to a 7th generational descendant of Anna and Brân in the Silurian West. He was Caradawc Vreichvras – a grandson of Lucius' son Llyr, who was the ruler of Gwent and Archenfield in Wales.

### **The Church of Rome**

From the foregoing, it can be seen that Emperor Constantine was descended in a British royal line from Brân the Blessed and Anna, the daughter of Joseph of Arimathea. Constantine's mother was Princess Elaine, the daughter of King Coel II of the Britons at a time when the houses of Siluria and Camulod were conjoined. (Her name was translated in Greek to Helen, and in Latin to Helena.) Coel II was the grandson of King Lucius who, via his father Coel I, was the grandson of King Marius of Siluria (the son of Arviragus) and Penardun (the daughter of Anna and Brân). Hence, Constantine was an 8th generational descendant from the brother of Jesus.

Throughout the centuries, the Church authorities have done their best to veil Constantine's British heritage, even though it is clearly recorded in all British chronicles. Cardinal Baronius made a stand in this regard, however, and stated in his 1601 *Annales Ecclesiastici*, 'The man

must be mad who, in the face of universal antiquity, refuses to believe that Constantine and his mother were Britons, born in Britain'.<sup>68</sup>

Following the destruction of London by Queen Boudicca, the more northern city of Caer Eborac became the key centre for Roman rule in Britain. Subsequently named York, it was here that in AD 305 Constantius Chlorus, an adopted son of Emperor Maximianus, had been proclaimed Emperor in the West. Prior to this, he had married Princess Elaine of Camulod. This gained her the titular style of Flavia Helena Augusta, in which name her coins were struck. The 4th-century ecclesiastical writer Sulpicius Severus wrote that, following the death of Constantius in AD 306, Helena reigned as Empress in Britain jointly with her son Constantine. Then in AD 312 Constantine took the reins of the Western Empire, at which time he was called to Rome to confront Marcus Maxentius (the natural son of the earlier Emperor Maximianus) who had previously lost out to Constantine's father in the imperial selection process.<sup>69</sup>

The armies of Constantine and Maxentius met at Milvian Bridge, a little outside Rome, and Constantine was victorious. After this battle he announced that he had seen a vision of a cross in the sky, accompanied by the words 'In this sign conquer' (*In hoc signo vinces*). It led, in the following year, to the influential *Edict of Milan*, which declared that the Western and Eastern branches of the Empire would henceforth be neutral with regard to religious worship, thereby officially ending all sanctioned persecution against Christians. Subsequently in AD 324, Constantine also gained the Eastern imperial title, becoming Emperor overall and acquiring his historically familiar style as Constantine the Great.

With this knowledge of Constantine's background, it is now more understandable that he adopted Christianity as the State religion of Rome. He was born in Britain and raised by a Christian mother, whose religion was perfectly natural to him as against the pagan environment that he encountered in Rome. Constantine was fully conversant with Christianity when he became Emperor. What he discovered, however, was that it was a widespread and very diverse form of religion. Britain and Gaul might have been the earliest seats of the faith, but other branches had evolved over 250 years in places like Syria, Egypt, Greece, Mesopotamia and Turkey. Their belief structures were all different to greater or lesser degrees, and the regional Church Fathers and bishops were severely at odds with each other in

many respects. A polemic entitled *The True Discourse* by a Roman philosophical observer called Celsus had stated in AD 178: ‘There is a lack of unity among themselves. So many sects, and all so different; they have nothing in common save the name Christian’.<sup>70</sup>

It is relatively easy to criticize Constantine for what might be perceived today as corrupting the Christian faith when formulating his Catholic Church, but in reality his attempt appears to have been quite the opposite. What he saw was a highly competitive religion which had fiercely opposing groups within its geographically spread ranks – all operating within the Empire that he was supposed to control. Christianity had already become severely corrupted to the point that it was far from recognizable as a cohesive whole. The best that Constantine could hope to achieve was a series of compromise doctrines based on mutual discussion and a system of gaining majority votes at each stage. To this end, he settled on the idea of debating forums to which delegates would be invited and, following initial synods in Rome and Arles, he began this strategy with the First Council of Nicaea in AD 325.

Alongside this, the Emperor’s additional problem was how to introduce Christianity into Rome itself. Such a feat would mean a complete about-turn from the policies of his predecessors who had hounded and persecuted Christians since the 1st century. Somehow, Constantine had to create a hybrid religion that was, as far as he could manage, acceptable to all. The result might not be the same as the Nazarene teachings that he grew up with in Britain, but he was faced with little other choice and the best weapon that he perceived within his armoury was his own messiac family descent. This was something to which no other emperor before him could have aspired, and he proclaimed himself ‘The Apostle of Christ’.

What we know, however, is that despite the various council rulings during Constantine’s lifetime, it was the so-called heretical views of the Libyan priest Arius which he found more comfortable to affirm on his death-bed. These were views which denied the virgin birth and resurrection dogma of Jesus as taught by the ecclesiastical bishops. This probably indicates that the Arian perspective was the closest to the style of Christianity that Constantine had encountered in Britain – a belief system that had evolved, without Church Father interference, from the original teachings of Joseph and his colleagues in Silurian Glastonia. (The virginity of Mary and resurrection of Jesus were not mentioned in any original Gospel text; they were spuriously written into the scriptures in the 4th century.)



### **The Catholic Invasion**

It was not until AD 597 that any Christian dispute was evident in Britain, but this was not a matter of Christianity challenging an alternative religion; it was a case of Roman Catholicism challenging six centuries of Celtic Church evolution. The moment chosen by Pope Gregory to send St Augustine to England from Rome was strategically timed to follow immediately the death of St Columba, the venerated Irish Father of the Celtic Kindred. It was presumed that the Celtic Church would be temporarily weakened by this event, and Gregory's plan was to overawe the Christian movement in Britain, which the Vatican authorities had declared more or less heretical. But, having proclaimed himself the first Archbishop of Canterbury in 601, Augustine's effort to completely subjugate the Celtic Church was doomed to failure at that immediate stage. The days of Roman imperialism were over, and the western Empire had collapsed more than a century before in AD 476. No army that the Roman Church could possibly muster would ever defeat the fierce troops of the British kings who still prevailed in the western and northern regions of a land that had otherwise fallen to Saxon control.

Following the Romans' departure from Britain, the lands below the Scottish border had been largely infiltrated by Anglo-Saxon invaders from northern Germany. Having taken control of many of the previous Celtic kingdoms, they had installed their own kings and Angle-land (England) was born. The introduction of Roman Christianity into Britain by St Augustine was largely facilitated by the Saxon King Aethelbert of Kent whose wife, the Frankish princess Bertha, had swayed her husband to the Roman faith.

The venerable Bede of Jarrow recorded in his *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (AD 731) that, when Augustine arrived in AD 597, Aethelbert gave him a palace in Canterbury as a centre for the new Christian Church in Angle-land.<sup>71</sup> Ultimately, since Aethelbert was the senior king of the Saxon realm, other kings followed him to the font. The native Britons were then confronted by two aspects of threat: many of their kingdoms had been usurped by Germanic invaders, and now their ancient Celtic religion was destined to be subsumed. As the land filled from its eastern shore with Angles and Saxons, the Britons were forced westwards across the island to the far reaches of Wales and Cornwall, and northwards into the regions of Cumbria, Northumbria and Strathclyde.

Some time after Augustine's arrangement with King Aetherbert, a tablet was placed above the vestry fireplace at the London church of St Peter's in Cornhill, explaining:

In the year of our Lord 179, Lucius, the first Christian king of this island now called Britain, founded the first church in London, well known as the Church of St Peter in Cornhill; and founded there the archiepiscopal seat, and made it the metropolitan church and the primary church of his kingdom. So it remained for the space of four hundred years until the coming of St Augustine ... Then, indeed, the seat and pallium of the archbishopric was translated from the said church of St Peter in Cornhill to Dorobernia, which is now called Canterbury.

The greatest of all travesties is that, as Roman Christianity overran Celtic Christianity, the literature of the latter was systematically destroyed, to be replaced with strategically designed forgeries. Not a scrap now exists of any Gaelic writing by St Columba – and yet much of his Irish liturgy is supposedly extant. During medieval times, many ancient Celtic manuscripts from before 600, including the works of Columba, were re-written in Latin and presented as original documents.

The *Cathach* of St Columba, who died in AD 597, provides a good example of the subterfuge. This 58-folio work, held by the Royal Irish Academy from shortly after its discovery in 1813, is reckoned to be the oldest Irish illuminated manuscript in existence.<sup>72</sup> It is said to have been a copy made by Columba himself from manuscripts given to him by St Finian prior to AD 561. Palaeographic evidence proves, however, that the document was written long after Columba's death and, moreover, it is mostly in Latin – a language that was unknown in Ireland during the saint's lifetime and was never used by the Gaels. With its inclusion of Bible sections from the Latin *Vulgate*, the *Cathach* was either a pure fabrication or a substantial corruption of Columba's original work since the text is wholly Romanized to comply with post-Augustinian teaching.<sup>73</sup> Other similarly designed works followed, such as the 7th-century *Book of Durrow* and the 9th-century *Book of Kells*. Historically, they are all important, and they are individually wonderful in artistic terms, but they are all Roman Church fabrications, produced to subvert the Old Faith of Britain and Ireland.

It was not as if the Celtic churchmen were unaware of the impending threat posed by Pope Gregory and Augustine. But there was little they could do to prevent it because the Saxons had already driven them from the region where Augustine landed. Apologetic Church history records that his mission was designed to convert the Saxon invaders but, according to Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*, Augustine's papal brief was to 'subjugate all the bishops of Britain'.<sup>74</sup> The intention is therefore made perfectly clear because the Saxons had no bishops.

Not until AD 664 did Catholicism gain any significant influence over the Celtic movement when it reapplied an ancient British festival to a newly devised Christian doctrine. Pope Gregory was concerned that the 'Pascha of Jesus' (crucifixion and resurrection) was biblically tied to the Jewish Passover, and he was intent to separate Christianity from its Judaic origins. He learned that the people of Britain were not celebrating either event, but instead had a spring festival which centred on Eostre, the goddess of fertility. Although not an aspect of the Celtic Church, it was a long-standing druidic celebration of new life which Gregory felt was eminently suited to the resurrection doctrine. A synod was therefore convened at the Abbey of Whitby in Yorkshire, where the Eostre festival was nominally appropriated by the Bishop of York. The annual event was reapplied to Jesus as a new feast of the Catholic Church to become known as Easter.<sup>75</sup> According to modern Catholic doctrine, 'Easter is the cornerstone on which the Faith is built', and is reckoned to be 'the oldest feast of the Christian Church – as old as Christianity itself',<sup>76</sup> and yet it was never discussed by any council, nor suggested in any Christian literature as a matter for consideration until the 7th-century Synod of Whitby.

With the Saxon kings then controlling much of England, from Northumbria down to Kent, and from East Anglia and Sussex across to Mercia and Wessex, their dogmatically implemented Catholic ideals caused a majority of traditional British festivals to be subsumed within Roman Christianity. It was not long before Eostre and other feasts of the druidic tradition were forgotten. Apart from some localized regions in the South West and the Cumbrian North, England was predominantly a Catholic nation by the time of King Alfred the Great (AD 871–99).

Meanwhile, the Nazarene-based Celtic Church, as had been formalized by St Columba in the 6th century, had fallen back to where the saint had begun his mission in Ireland, the Western Isles and the Highlands of Scotland. The Sacred Kindred of St Columba had long been the

official ecclesiastical seat of the Kings of Scots and, despite the Catholic invasion of England, this remained the case through the ensuing centuries until 1066. In the same year that Saxon control in England fell to the Norman invasion of William the Conqueror, King Malcolm III of the Scots married the Saxon heiress Margaret Atheling. She had been raised at the Catholic court of her great-uncle Edward the Confessor, and forcefully imposed her faith on the people of the Scottish realm. Although the nation reverted largely to its Celtic traditions after Margaret's death in 1093, the seeds of conversion had been sown, and a constant struggle persisted between the two Churches thereafter until the 16th-century Protestant Reformation. Margaret, for her effort in undermining the ancient Celtic religious culture of Scotland, was granted a posthumous sainthood by the Vatican for 'Christianizing a hitherto pagan nation'!

### **Conclusion**

Notwithstanding all the centuries of historical and monastic documentary record in England, the most comprehensive survey on the subject of Christian religious heritage was that of the Vatican librarian Cardinal Cesare Baronius. Having spent 30 years researching the Vatican and Lateran Palace archives, he is regarded as the most learned ever scholar of Church history, and his 1601 *Annales Ecclesiastici* is one of the foremost documents of Christian literature ever written. Despite all the orthodox propaganda of Rome, however, Baronius deduced that Polidoro, Eusebius, Tertullian, Gildas, Willam of Malmesbury, Geoffrey of Monmouth and all others, including St Augustine, had been correct: Rome was not the founding city of Christianity; 'The first beginnings of Christian piety existed in Britain', and its birthplace from AD 35 was Glastonbury.

- 
- <sup>1</sup> Acts 24–28.
- <sup>2</sup> Acts 12:1–19.
- <sup>3</sup> Timothy 4:21.
- <sup>4</sup> Martialis, *Epigrammaton* (ed, W Heraeus) J Borovskij, Leipzig, 1976–82, VII, lib XI, LIII.
- <sup>5</sup> Polidoro Virgilio, *Anglicae Historicae*, Basle, 1534, lib II, ch 7.
- <sup>6</sup> Eusebius of Caesarea, *De Demonstratione Evangelii*, AD 320, liber III, chap V, item 130.
- <sup>7</sup> Dorotheus of Tyre, *Synopsis de Apostol*, synopsis XXIII: Aristobulus.
- <sup>8</sup> Romans 16:10.
- <sup>9</sup> Hugh Serenus Cressy, *Church History of Brittany or England from the Beginning of Christianity to the Norman Conquest*, Rouen, 1668.
- <sup>10</sup> Middle English, from Late Latin *neophytus*; from Greek *neophutos*: *neo* + *phutos* – planted (from *phuein*, ‘to bring forth’).
- <sup>11</sup> Sir Henrici Spelman, *Concilia, Decreta, Leges, Constitutiones, in re Ecclesiarum Orbis Britannici*, Richardus Badger, London, 1639, pp 5, 108, 109.
- <sup>12</sup> William of Malmesbury, *The Antiquities of Glastonbury*, JMF Books, Llanerch, 1992, ch 1, pp 2–3.
- <sup>13</sup> Johannes Glastoniensis, *Cronica sive Antiquitates Glastoniensis Ecclesiae*, Boydell & Brewer, Woodbridge, 1985.
- <sup>14</sup> William of Malmesbury, *The Antiquities of Glastonbury*, ch 1, pp 2–3.
- <sup>15</sup> Extracted from the work of Capgrave is a text known as *Joseph of Armathy*. This (as printed in England by Wynkyn de Worde, c1500) is reproduced in Rev Walter W Skeat, *Joseph of Arimathea*, N Trubner and the Early English Text Society, London, 1871, pp 27–32.
- <sup>16</sup> Polidoro Virgilio, *Anglicae Historicae*, Basle, 1534, lib II, ch 7.
- <sup>17</sup> Rev Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (eds), *The Ante-Nicene Fathers – The Writings of the Fathers down to AD 325*, T&T Clark, Edinburgh, 1867, Tertullian: *An Answer to the Jews*, ch VII.
- <sup>18</sup> Gildas, *De Excidio Britanniae* (trans, JA Giles), G Bell, London, 1891, part II, item 8.
- <sup>19</sup> Caesar Baronius, *Annales Ecclesiastici a Christi nato ad annum 1198*, Hieronymi Scoti, Venice, 1612.
- <sup>20</sup> Domesday Survey, *Great Domesday Book*, 1086, folio 90r. (A hide was an area of land reckoned agriculturally to support one family for one year with one plough – equal in Somerset to 120 acres or c48.5 hectares.)

- 
- <sup>21</sup> Edward Conybeare, *Roman Britain*, SPCK, London, 1911, p 254.
- <sup>22</sup> William Stubbs (trans), Willelmi Malmesbiriensis, *Monachi De Gestis Regum Anglorum Libri Quinque*, ‘Historiæ Novellæ Libri Tres’, Printed for HM Stationery Office Rolls Series by Eyre and Spottiswoode, London, 1887–89.
- <sup>23</sup> William of Malmesbury, *The Antiquities of Glastonbury*, intro, p xiii.
- <sup>24</sup> William of Malmesbury, *De Antiquitate Glastoniensis Ecclesiae*, Talbot, London, 1908, pp 139–40. Referenced also in *Proceeding of the Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society*, vol XXXV, 1889, pp 121–6.
- <sup>25</sup> Matthaëi Parisiensis, Monachi Sancti Albani, *Chronica Majora* (ed, HR Luard), Rolls Series lvii, 7 vols, Master of the Rolls, Court of Chancery, 1872–83.
- <sup>26</sup> William of Malmesbury, *The Antiquities of Glastonbury*, ch 1, pp 2–3.
- <sup>27</sup> The Roman poet Martial referred in AD 68 to her as ‘Claudia peregrina et edita Britannis’ (Foreign Claudia, native of the Britons), and cites her as ‘Claudia caeruleis cum sit Rufina Britannis’ in Martialis, *Epigrammaton* (ed, W Heraeus) J Borovskij, Leipzig, 1976–82, VII, lib XI, LIII
- <sup>28</sup> 2 Timothy 4:21.
- <sup>29</sup> Eusebius of Caesarea, *An Ecclesiastical History*, (trans, Rev CF Crusè), Samuel Bagster, London, 1838, bk III, ch XII, pp 84, 86.
- <sup>30</sup> Eusebius of Caesarea, *The History of the Church from Christ to Constantine*, Penguin, London, 1989, bk 3, p 81.
- <sup>31</sup> ‘Genealogies of the Welsh Princes’ in Harleian MS 3859.
- <sup>32</sup> Across the low-tide causeway from Marazion stands St Michael’s Mount – the location of an early Celtic monastery. This became a Benedictine priory in the 8th century, and was a designated cell of the Abbey of St Michel in Brittany. From St Michael’s Mount a ley line runs through St Michael’s Church, Brentor; St Michael’s Church, Burrowbridge Mump; St Michael’s Church, Othery, the Chapel of St Michael, Glastonbury, and onwards to Stoke St Michael.
- <sup>33</sup> As detailed in Acts 15:1–29.
- <sup>34</sup> St Clement of Rome, *The Clementine Homilies* (trans, Rev Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson), The Ante-Nicene Christian Library, T&T Clark, Edinburgh, 1870, pp 6–16.
- <sup>35</sup> Rev Lionel Smithett Lewis, *Joseph of Arimathea at Glastonbury*, AR Mobray, London, 1927, p 58.
- <sup>36</sup> John Strype, *Stow’s Survey of London*, London, 1720, ch VI:4.
- <sup>37</sup> Following the union of Scotland with England and Wales in 1603, the King’s title was adjusted to the less pious ‘His Britannic Majesty’.
- <sup>38</sup> *Disputatio Super Dignitatem Angliae et Galliae in Concilio Constantiano*, Theodore Martin, Lovan, 1517.

- 
- <sup>39</sup> John 15:11.
- <sup>40</sup> Kenneth O Morgan (ed), *Oxford History of Britain*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1988, ch 1, p 16.
- <sup>41</sup> C Suetonius Tranquillus, *The Lives of the Twelve Caesars*, Loeb Classical Library, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 1914, 'The Life of Claudius', 25:4–5.
- <sup>42</sup> Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain*, (trans, Lewis Thorpe), Penguin London, 1966, part III:iv, p 111.
- <sup>43</sup> Cornelius Tacitus, *Agricola* (trans, M Hutton and W Peterson), Loeb Classical Library, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 1969, item 13.
- <sup>44</sup> Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain*, part III:iv, p 121.
- <sup>45</sup> Cornelius Tacitus, *The Annals of Imperial Rome*, (trans, Michael Grant), Penguin, London, 1996, ref AD 51, p 267.
- <sup>46</sup> 2 Timothy 4:21.
- <sup>47</sup> C Tacitus, *The Annals of Imperial Rome*, AD 60, p 330.
- <sup>48</sup> C Tacitus, *The Annals of Imperial Rome*, ref AD 57, p 299.
- <sup>49</sup> Miles Dillon and Nora Chadwick, *The Celtic Realms*, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 1967, ch 1, p 7.
- <sup>50</sup> Henry Hubert, *The Greatness and Decline of the Celts*, Kegan Paul, London, 1934, ch 3, item 2, p 229.
- <sup>51</sup> M Dillon and NK Chadwick, *The Celtic Realms*, ch 1, p 15.
- <sup>52</sup> Diogenes Laërtius, *The Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers* (trans, CD Tonge), Bohn, London, 1853, intro, item V.
- <sup>53</sup> An informative work in this regard is Miranda Green, *The Gods of the Celts*, Alan Sutton, Stroud, 1986.
- <sup>54</sup> Dom L Gougaud, *Christianity in Celtic Lands*, ch 10, pp 348–49.
- <sup>55</sup> Geoffrey Higgins, *Celtic Druids*, Rowland Hunter, London, 1829, ch 4, p 130.
- <sup>56</sup> H Hubert, *The Greatness and Decline of the Celts*, ch 3, item 5, p 231.
- <sup>57</sup> Flavius Josephus, *The Antiquities of the Jews in The Works of Flavius Josephus*, (trans, William Whiston), Milner & Sowerby, London, 1870, bk XV, ch X:4.
- <sup>58</sup> Harleian MS 3859. Also see PC Bartrum, *Early Welsh Genealogical Tracts*, University of Wales Press, Cardiff, 1966, p 9.

- 
- <sup>59</sup> WAS Hewins, *The Royal Saints of Britain*, Chiswick Press, London, 1928, p 20. See also Rev WJ Rees, *Lives of the Cambro British Saints*, Welsh MSS Society, Llandoverly, 1853, ch III, p 400 and *passim* regarding Beino, Cadoc, Carannog, Dewi and Gwynllyw.
- <sup>60</sup> Bede, *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1969, bk I, ch 4, p 14.
- <sup>61</sup> George Owen Harry, *The Genealogy of the High and Mighty Monarch James*, Simon Stafford and Thomas Salisbury, London, 1604, chart B, p 20.
- <sup>62</sup> Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain*, part III:iv, pp 126–26.
- <sup>63</sup> Michael Swanton (trans), *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, JM Dent, London, 1997, Peterborough MS (E) 62, 167, p 9.
- <sup>64</sup> *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Robert Appleton, New York, NY, 1910, vol V, under St Eleutherius.
- <sup>65</sup> References in Roman martyrology to the burial of Lucius at Chur in Switzerland are inaccurate on two counts. They actually relate to King Lucius of Bavaria (not to Lucius the Luminary of Britain). Moreover, the Bavarian Lucius died at Curia in Germany, not at Chur in Switzerland.
- <sup>66</sup> Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain*, part III:v, pp 131–32.
- <sup>67</sup> GO Harry, *The Genealogy of the High and Mighty Monarch James*, chart A, p 24.
- <sup>68</sup> Caesar Baronius, *Annales Ecclesiastici a Christi nato ad annum 1198*, Hieronymi Scoti, Venice, 1612.
- <sup>69</sup> Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain*, part III:v, p 132.
- <sup>70</sup> *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol III, under Celsus the Platonist.
- <sup>71</sup> Bede, *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, bk I, ch 25, pp 39–40.
- <sup>72</sup> The O'Donnells claimed ownership of the *Cathach* from the 11th century, when it was enclosed in a shrine and carried into battle as a saint's relic. The *Cathach* was taken to France in 1691 and forgotten for a long time, until its shrine was opened in 1813. The O'Donnell family then reclaimed the *Cathach* and it was presented to the Royal Irish Academy in 1842.
- <sup>73</sup> The work is published as Rev HJ Lawlor, *The Cathach of St Columba*, Royal Irish Academy, Dublin, 1916.
- <sup>74</sup> Bede, *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, bk I, ch 29, p 56.
- <sup>75</sup> *Ibid*, bk III, ch 25, pp 152–159. According to Bede, Whitby was then called *Streanæshealh*: the Bay of the lighthouse.
- <sup>76</sup> *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol V, under Easter.