

Christianity in the British Isles

There is information available concerning individuals named in the New Testament that gives us a fuller understanding of events in the very early years of Christianity than is found in the New Testament. Although generally disregarded by Protestants, the so-called “Lost Books of the Bible,” more accurately known as the Apocrypha are a valuable source of information for various events in the NT. The NT was not written as a history but as a divinely inspired statement of the Gospel of salvation through Jesus the Christ. The internet has opened up a whole world of fascinating material. [See*** suggested web sites below-W.B.W.] My own pursuit began with searching the Orthodox Churches web pages. There I found information that I have not found anywhere else. Some of the Early Church Fathers were contemporary with some of the apostles, others were disciples and successors of these fortunate ones. As a result they have information that takes us back to the very beginning of the Christian Church.

We know from *Acts of the Apostles* that persecution of the first Christians (See Chaps. 8-10), all of them Jews, led to the dispersal of many from Jerusalem to other places in the Roman Empire. The first persecutions were by the Jewish authorities against these followers of Christ whom they called Natzarenes (mistakenly translated as Nazarenes since the Greek does not have a “tz”(x) letter which is “tsadiq” in Hebrew. At first Saul, later called Paul, was a leading prosecutor of the early Jewish Christians as is recounted in *Acts of the Apostles*. As a result, many were expelled, others fled from Jerusalem. This took place soon after Stephen’s death by stoning (c. 35 A.D.), and somewhat before the Romans’ assault on Jerusalem in 68 AD, ending with the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem itself in 70 AD. Jewish Christians were dispersed throughout what is now known as North Africa, India, the Middle East, Cyprus, Europe, and even far off Britain.

It is these individuals named in Acts or in Paul’s letters that provide fascinating and important information about the spread of Christianity. The following material deals especially with the rapid spread of Christianity into the British Isles soon after Christ’s death, resurrection and ascension. Few history texts tell us anything about these personages; probably because they seemed of so little significance to the modern day historians themselves. The facts are that the British Isles in those early years were a sanctuary for a number of these individuals named in the New Testament, and the result was that Britain became the first nation to accept Christianity and establish an ordered ministry throughout the realm. All notes in [] in the following pages are by Archdeacon Wayne B. Williamson (Rtd.) *** <http://www.lundyisleofavalon.co.uk/biblog.htm>; <http://www.state.edu/library/links.htm#history>, from here click on “Labyrinth” and explore to your hearts content.

The following account is from the Mystic Realms web page

[This web page is the source of a vast amount of information in the form of citations from scores of books and ancient manuscripts dealing with the events and personages who were involved in the flight from Jerusalem. Bibliography follows at end of quotes from this web page. All underlined text that follows is in the original documents. W.B.W.]

First, under the persecution in which Saul played a prominent role as an agent of the Sanhedrin in bringing Jewish Christians to trial and as an official witness at the stoning of Stephen, the first martyr. These bits of information are not in any particular order, although I have attempted to put them in some chronological sequence. It was at this time that many of those closest to Jesus either fled the city or were driven out. (Acts 8:1–6)]

I have followed this with an historian's account of much the same information, confirming this particular material, plus information about Lazarus whom Jesus raised from the dead. This latter information is from the web page identified in the message. Western history texts take no account of Joseph, Nicodemus, or the story of Lazarus, who, although raised from the dead did not thereby become immortal. The Eastern Orthodox churches, however, date from the very time of the apostles and their successors the Early Church Fathers. The Orthodox has historical information that is inexplicably ignored by most western historians, both secular and church. With regard to early Christianity in the British Isles it needs to be noted that this is disputed by some Roman Catholic historians and supported by others.

The disputes concerning the primacy of the British Isles, it should be further noted, only arose following the Norman conquest of England in 1066 AD. The Norman French had laid claim to the primacy of Christianity in France being the first Christian nation. It is simply a historical fact that from the time of the Frankish king Charlemagne (800 AD) the Franks sought to overthrow the Orthodox Patriarchs of Rome who were one of the five Patriarchies of what is now called the Orthodox Churches, New Rome (Constantinople), Antioch, Jerusalem, Alexandria –the patriarch of Rome enjoyed the title of *primus inter pares*—first among equals, but not as primate over all the others,

When the Franks succeeded in 1054 AD in accomplishing their centuries long effort, beginning in 800 AD, to gain control of the Roman papacy and emperor, they excommunicated the other four Orthodox Patriarchates over false charges. At long last they were finally able to place Frankish Popes on the throne of Peter. There are sound historical proofs that refute the Roman Catholic assertions concerning the origin of Christianity in England which they limit to St. Augustine's mission to the British Isles in the 5th century, ignoring the fact that there are undisputed evidences, both historical and archaeological, for Christians in England from the 1st century and in the very early centuries, notably the three British bishops who attended the Council of Arles in France, as early as AD 314.

In the BYZANTINE EMPIRE in THE CAMBRIDGE MEDIEVAL HISTORY VOL. IV, PART I, 1966; PART II, 1967, we find the following comments:

1) The above volumes replaced J. B. Bury's 1923 volume IV entitled "The Eastern Roman Empire". For Bury there was never an "Eastern Roman Empire". He explains that the only reason he added "Eastern" to "Roman Empire" was to distinguish it from Charlemagne's empire in the west. Both Bury and Edward Gibbon use the name Byzantine to designate the Romans in the East. But they did not use this name to replace the name Roman. That a transformation had taken place whereby Romans changed into

Byzantines was introduced by the British via their historian George Finlay. Then the British used East Roman Empire via J. B. Bury and A. Toynbee, but revived Byzantine by 1966. It was stylish for the natives of the Capital to call themselves "Byzantines" from the town of "Byzantion" which New Rome replaced. But the name was their own to share among themselves while they shared the name Roman with all other Romans.

CONSTANTINE I (324-337).

Constantine the Great was elected Roman Emperor in Eboracum (York), Britain, in 306 A.D. [It was he that declared the Christian religion licit in 314–W.B.W.] The above would mean that Constantine was a Roman Emperor between 306 and 324 and supposedly became a Byzantine Emperor between 324 and 337. Here we have the preposterous assertion of a Roman Emperor since 306 who became a Byzantine emperor in 324 without knowing it and without anyone knowing about it before 1966.

WHY A BYZANTINE EMPIRE ?

The French, British and Russian Empires fabricated a Byzantine Empire in the 19th century to Balkanize the European part of the "Ottoman Empire" which the Turks continue to call "ROMANIA" and "ROUMELI," that is "THE LAND OF THE ROMANS." The French, British and Russians based their support for East Roman revolutions against the Ottoman Empire on the condition that each linguistic group would accept that they were first enslaved to the "GREEK EMPIRE," which never existed, and then to the "Ottoman Empire." But they had a problem depicting the Greek speaking Romans as having been enslaved to the so-called "Greek Empire" since the Franco-Latins had been calling them "Greeks" since 794 A.D. At first they invented a legal distinction between "Greeks" and "Hellenes," which one finds in protocols and treaties. But to publicly depict "Hellenes" (which was simply a term that embraced all Greeks) as having been enslaved to "Greeks" would have been hilarious. So the solution was that the Neo-Hellenes are to be depicted as having been under the yoke of a byzantine empire which of course never existed.

Roman mothers never gave birth to Byzantine children. Those born Romans and who purportedly died as Byzantines never existed. The account concludes with the ironical note that: It would seem that laws are needed requiring historical facts to be reported by the names used by the nations being described in their own sources. Names used by others to hide their real historical identity should be made illegal. Fabrications of historical reality are especially dangerous since they create contexts within which U.S judgments on matters of foreign policy are in favour of the fabricators.

The foregoing quotes from the Cambridge History should give pause to anyone reading history to ask questions about the source and what bias they may have in their writing. The revisionist accounts of U.S. history today are ample current evidence that history can be and has been distorted in favor of national, religious, or other prejudices.

"The facts are that there is ample credible history for a very considerable commerce in the Roman Empire and that people were far more cosmopolitan than twentieth and twenty-first historians appear willing to concede. Instead, they list many historical references under the rubric of 'legend.' Such is the case and fate for a considerable amount of history in the early Christian era. From "Joseph of Arimathea & Nicodemus" Joseph of Arimathea is mentioned in several New Testament gospels and also in what are called the books of the Apocrypha or Pseudepigrapha. The latter are Jewish biblical writings not included in some versions of the English Bible. They include, among others, the Book of Jubilees, the Psalms of Solomon, the Fourth Book of Maccabees, the Book of Enoch, the Fourth Book of Ezra and the Apocalypse of Baruch.

"As evening approached, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who had himself become a disciple of Jesus." - Matthew 27:57

'Joseph had not consented to the counsel and deed of them; he was of Arimathea, a city of the Jews: who also himself waited for the kingdom of God.' - Luke 23:51.

'And after this Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave him leave. He came therefore, and took the body of Jesus. ' - John 19:38

Joseph of Arimathea was a highly respected Jewish councillor, a member of the Sanhedrin, the ruling council of the Judaic community under the Romans. He is also described as a person of wealth. He was a secret disciple of Jesus who took no part in Jesus' condemnation. Joseph seems to have done his utmost to persuade Pilate to speed the release of the body of Jesus. One source suggests that a large bribe was paid to Pilate by the wealthy Joseph to expedite matters. This is quite possible. The Bishop of Antioch writing in 180 A.D. quoted from the Apocryphal 'Gospel of Peter' that Joseph of Arimathea was a close friend of Pontius Pilate. – In the Gospel of Peter we read 2:2–5a: **"Now there stood there Joseph, the friend of Pilate and of the Lord, and knowing that they were about to crucify him he came to Pilate and begged the body of the Lord for Burial. And Pilate sent to Herod and begged his body. And Herod said, 'Brother Pilate, even if no one had begged him, we should bury him, since the Sabbath is drawing on. For it stands written in the law: the sun should not set on one that has been put to death."** We also know from Josephus, the Jewish historian who lived through these events, and was himself allied with the Romans tells us much the same thing. The fact is that these accounts say that Joseph was an uncle of Mary, the mother of Jesus.

That there were other accounts of Jesus is revealed by Luke who writes: ***"Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things which have been accomplished among us, just as they were delivered to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word. It seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus,***

that you may know the truth concerning the things of which you have been informed.”

Luke 1:1–4

With regard to the role of Joseph in the burial of Jesus; both Jewish and Roman Law laid down that it was the duty of the nearest relatives to dispose of the dead, irrespective of the manner of death. If Joseph was a relative of Jesus' mother Mary, as claimed by early Church writers, then he was obeying both Jewish and Roman law in claiming the body, and Pilate would have had no choice but to give his consent. Joseph wrapped the body in a linen cloth and laid the body in a newly excavated rock tomb intended for his own burial. According to the Gospel of St. John the unguents for the burial were brought by Nicodemus, another secret follower of Jesus. – **“He (Joseph) was accompanied by Nicodemus, the man who earlier had visited Jesus at night. Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pound weight. Then they took the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices. '." - John 19:38-40**

“Joseph of Arimathea, Nicodemus and the centurion Longinus (he who stood at the foot of the Cross and is recorded as saying, “Truly this was the son of God.” – Mark 15:39) were among the secret followers of Jesus ... Joseph was highly respected as a member of the Sanhedrin (high council of the supreme Jewish authorities); Nicodemus, who was initiated by Jesus under cover of night (John 3:1-22), was also a Jewish councillor.' from 'The Jesus Conspiracy.' [It should be noted that the centurion's name Longinus is NOT in the Acts of the Apostles. The name was inserted in certain of the apocryphal writings and the conversion of Longinus is said to have resulted from his reaction to the events surrounding the crucifixion in which he was a participant. There are many accounts concerning him and his martyrdom; for example, see the Catholic Encyclopedia–W.B.W.]

The fact that Joseph was a relative of our Lord is an Eastern tradition and may be inferred from the Bible passage: **"Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and placed it in his own new tomb that he had cut out of the rock. He rolled a big stone in front of the entrance to the tomb and went away."** - Matthew 27:59-60

The apocryphal 'Evangelium Nicodemi' – ‘The Gospel of Nicodemus' tells how Nicodemus,, a ruler of the Jews, spoke up for Jesus during his trial before Pontius Pilate. It also contains the nucleus of the story of Joseph of Arimathea. Joseph is credited with a share in founding the first Christian community at Lydda with Philip the Deacon. Its original name was Lod. Founded by Shemed, a Benjamite, see 1 Chronicles 8:12. There were Christians in this locality from the first, and St. Peter, having come to visit them while there cured the paralytic Eneas (Acts 9:32-5). Today, called Lud – the Ben Gurion International airport is built on its outskirts.

After Joseph had deposited the body of the Crucified Jesus in the sepulcher, the Jews imprisoned him, but when on Easter day the door was opened, he was not to be found. Search was made at the suggestion of Nicodemus and Joseph was discovered at his home in Arimathea. Brought to Jerusalem he testified that at midnight of the Sabbath day, the prison in which he was confined was opened. The risen Christ appeared to him, lifted him

up, and brought him to his house." – Roger Sherman Loomis, The Grail, From Celtic Myth to Christian Symbol

Another apocryphon which mentions Joseph of Arimathaea is the 'Vindicta Salvatoris'. This manuscript tells of the conversion to Christianity of Vespasian, son of the Roman emperor, after his miraculous cure brought about by the sight of the veil of Veronica, on which was an image of the face of Jesus. Vespasian then set out to avenge the death of Jesus by crucifying a large number of Jews for their complicity in the Crucifixion. Vespasian went on to free Joseph of Arimathaea from his incarceration. 'Then about the beginning of the 11th century another apocryphon was translated. Subsequently, Joseph left the Holy Land accompanied by his brother-in-law, Hebron or Bron into Old English. Joseph of Arimathaea then became a figure in western literature for the second time. Joseph always stood in close relationship with Philip the apostle and the evangelization of England. Whether or not such a connection is justified or not is hard to judge. It is however conspicuous that 10th and 11th century manuscripts in the Georgian (or Gruzian) language – originating in Palestine, translated into Greek, and probably based on a Syrian original, yet again characterized Joseph as the protagonist. Here, the story is told by Joseph himself, which is almost identical with Robert's account: Christ's burial, Joseph's captivity, and the appearance of the risen Jesus. In this originally Syrian version, a sort of grail chapel is erected. In 1974 Burdach—a German philologist—came to the conclusion that a comparison of the two texts compels one 'to assume that the Joseph legend known and loved in England in early times derives from a Syrian source, or at least partially through Syrian traditions'. In this Syrian version, however, there is no vessel resembling the grail. Therefore the essential grail part of the legend, deriving as has been shown from Celtic origins, should be considered separate from the Christian components such as Joseph of Arimathea.' – Johannes and Peter Fiebag, The Discovery of the Grail, translated from the German by George Sassoon

Joseph is also mentioned in other early uncanonical texts. One has Philip who had become a bishop preaching in Gaul before sending Joseph and his (12) companions to Britain. More will be said about this later.

pre flight from Judea

In the aftermath of the crucifixion the apostles, led by Peter, we know that they began to actively seek converts with such success that the Pharasaic Jews were alarmed.— **Acts 4:1** **Now as they spoke to the people, the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came upon them, 2 being greatly disturbed that they taught the people and preached in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. 3 And they laid hands on them, and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening. 4 However, many of those who heard the word believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.**

"In AD 38, a centralized Nazarene authority was well established in Jerusalem. Its most famous member was of course Peter. The official head, however, who is conspicuously neglected by later tradition, was Jesus' step-brother, known subsequently as Saint James, or James the Just. ***** By this time, the Magdalene, the Virgin and others of those close to Jesus had disappeared, and there is no further mention of them in scriptural accounts. It is certainly reasonable to suppose that later assertions are correct and that they indeed sought refuge in exile. ***** What is significant, however, is that it is not Peter, but Jesus' step-brother James who presides over the 'Church' in Jerusalem. Quite clearly, some principle of dynastic succession is at work."—from 'The Messianic Legacy' we learn more about this from the history of the Messianic Jews.

At this time there were also a series of Christian missions by those Jewish Christians who had fled from Judea expanding along the Hebrew-Phoenician trade routes. These were known cities extending from Palestine to all the old Phoenician colonies. In the very earliest years of Christendom there is evidence of evangelizing these missions that were conducted by the inner circle of disciples who were brought into immediate contact with Jesus at Capernaum and Jerusalem: men and women who were well known to have been the followers of Jesus, and who therefore, in common with Lazarus (John 12:10-11) and with Saul (Acts 9:23), went about in danger of their lives, and were forced to escape from Jerusalem at the earliest opportunity.—*from the "Coming of the Saints", p.15.*

'But rumor, which is swifter than the wind, swiftly brought the news [of their evangelizing activity—W.B.W.] to the Jews, who were by no means delighted but rather were deeply dejected. Among themselves they held a council in order to banish Joseph and expel him from the land, and they informed him at once that he must depart because of his crime, he and all his friends, and also Nicodemus, who was a marvelously wise man, and a sister of his.'—from Perceval.

Herod Agrippa I began his crackdown on the early church when the Jewish Christians in Antioch sent assistance to Jews in Judea beleaguered by the Romans. **"And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch. And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar. Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea: which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul. Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church. And he killed James the brother of John [not James the Righteous] with the sword. And because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also. And when he had apprehended him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him; intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people."** – Acts 11:27-12:3

Joseph of Arimathea, Nicodemus, Restitutus [a prominent Christian whose inscribed grave site is found on Lundy—W.B.W.] must all have known each other in Jerusalem and been known to and known Jesus. 'St. Barnabas, Aristobulus his brother [a Roman mentioned in Paul's Epistle to the Romans (16:10), whose "household" is saluted-

W.B.W.], and Joseph were members of the Jerusalem church - they were of the one hundred and twenty which constituted it prior to the day of Pentecost.'-from "Paul in Britain". These were persons who were following Jesus' Great Commission. **'Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.'**- Matthew 28:19-20.

If we accept, and there seems no reason to doubt, the existence of the historical Jesus, then there is every reason to believe that the people who knew him and cared for him, would honor his memory after they fled from the continuing persecution by the Romans. There can be no denying that when the gospels were written it was necessary to play down the role of Rome in the death of Jesus. This was accomplished by blaming it on his fellow Jews and, in effect, white-washing the Roman administration. The Jewish people had been fighting for their independence since the 50s A.D. A war that only partially ended with the destruction of Jerusalem, and was followed by the forcible removal of the majority of the Jewish people in the early 70s AD following the destruction of the Temple.

By AD 54/5, militant activity had again assumed epidemic proportions. At last, around A.D. 62-5, James, head of the Natzarene party in Jerusalem, was seized and executed. Once again, a dynastic principle of succession seems to have obtained among the Jewish Natzarenes. Following James' death his place was taken by Simeon, who is identified as a cousin of Jesus. Around A.D. 65, Simeon led the Natzarenes out of the Holy City. They are said to have established their headquarters at the town of Pella, north of Jerusalem. In the spring of AD 66 serious fighting broke out in Caesarea. Shortly after, Roman troops ran amok in Jerusalem, murdering all Jews they could find, including women and children, rendering open war inevitable ... from 'The Messianic Legacy'

From the historian Eusebius- 'there still survived of the Lord's family the grandson's of Jude, who was said to be His half-brother, humanly speaking. 'Eusebius also reports that the Desposyni - the descendants of Jesus' family - survived to become leaders of various Christian churches, ...a strict dynastic succession.' It is from these that today's Messianic Jews claim to derive.-from 'The Messianic Legacy'

'In AD 318, the Bishop of Rome, Patriarch of the then Orthodox Church in the West (now known as Pope Sylvester) is said to have met personally with eight Desposyni (Dispersal) leaders - each of whom presided over a branch of the church - at the Lateran Palace. This is said to have been the last contact between the Judaeo-Christian Natzarenes and the coalescing Christian orthodoxy, based on Pauline thought. From then on, Natzarene tradition is generally believed to have disappeared. In fact, however, it did no such thing.' From 'After the revolt of 66 AD and the fall of Masada 8 years later, the politically oriented Messianic movement embodied by Jesus, (calling themselves the "party of James" who had been executed) his brothers and his immediate followers was

seriously disrupted.' *****The adherents of the old Natzarene hierarchy - of the party of James - found themselves squeezed between diverse factions and relegated increasingly beyond the pale of recorded Western history. It amounted, in effect, to a kind of 'exile from history'. ***** from 'The Messianic Legacy" [A Google web search reveals numerous web pages by Messianic Jews in American, Japan, China, England and elsewhere. W.B.W.]

'By the second century, Natzarene thought was already being branded as a form of heresy. Despite being repudiated, condemned and persecuted, Natzarene teachings continued to survive, for much longer than is generally suspected. Talking of early texts it appears to reflect a tradition dating, without a break, back to the original Natzarene hierarchy which fled Jerusalem immediately prior to the revolt of AD 66, from 'The Messianic Legacy". [This will be dealt with more fully in the account of Messianic Jews.–W.B.W.]

'Natzarene thought was also transmitted south-westwards, into Egypt and along the coast of North–Africa. Since Old Testament times there had been constant traffic, in ideas as well as in commodities, between Palestine and Egypt, especially in Alexandria.***** also with Britain! ***** In Jesus' time Alexandria was the most eclectic, ecumenical and tolerant city in the whole Roman Empire – it was the single most important cross-roads of the Mediterranean trade–routes and, as such, a kind of clearing house not only for goods but for modes of thought as well. It was the location of a very large Jewish community of the dispersion who no longer spoke either Hebrew or Aramaic but Greek. It was in Alexandria that a group of scholars translated the Old Testament into the Greek, a version known as the Septuagint.'–from “The Messianic Legacy”.

Joseph of Arimathæa disappears from the Gospels after AD 35-36, not only Joseph but Mary Magdalene and the others who are all mentioned as having been close to Jesus. It is certainly reasonable to suppose that later assertions are correct and that they sought refuge in exile. –from 'The Messianic Legacy”

The tin trade between South West Britain and the Eastern Mediterranean is described here. Diodorus Siculus (8th.C BC) gives us a detailed description of the trade. The tin was mined, beaten into squares and carried to the island of Ictis, which was joined to the mainland at high tide. Ictis has been identified by some authorities as St. Michael's Mount in Cornwall.

There were two distinct trade routes between the southwest of Britain and the Eastern Mediterranean. One was by sea through the Pillars of Hercules (the Strait of Gibraltar) and past Tarshish. The other was overland across Brittany to the Greek settlement of Massilia (Marseilles), as described by Diodorus Siculus. From there the tin was shipped to Morlaix (France). From Morlaix it was carried across France on pack horses to Marseilles. The tin was loaded onto ships for the last stage of the journey to Phoenicia.

By the first century AD the Bristol Channel was known to be a well-established trade route. [see map below, p. 11-W.B.W.]

There are very persistent traditions in Cornwall that Joseph was involved in the trade of tin. 'The existence of a tin trade between Cornwall and Phoenicia is frequently referred to in Classical writers, and is described at considerable length by Diodorus Siculus. That Joseph was engaged in it rests on tradition. The tradition is also found in Somerset, Gloucester, and the west of Ireland.' (Dobson). [Tin combined with copper makes bronze, a much harder material than copper alone and was in great demand.–W.B.W.]

The version quoted by S. Baring-Gould in his book '*Cornwall*' is that Joseph of Arimathæa 'came in a boat to Cornwall. There is a tradition associated with Marazion in west Cornwall that one of the traders with the ancient tin miners of Cornwall was Joseph of Arimathæa' Similar traditions are also to be found in other parts of the west of England and the west of Ireland. The same tradition occurs in Gaul. If he had been engaged in the tin trade we have an explanation for his selection of Cornwall for his place of retreat when forced to flee from Palestine.

Writing in '*The Life of St. Mary Magdalene*' the Orthodox archbishop of Mayence, Rabanus Maurus 776 –856 AD attributes to Joseph of Arimathæa the title 'nobilis decurion.' The following passage has come down to us from Maelgwyn of Llandaff, the uncle of St. David of Wales, circa 450 AD, in the Latin –'Joseph ab Arimathæa nobilis decurio in insula Avallonia cum xi. Sociis suis somnum cepit perpetuum et jacet in meridiano angulo lineae bifurcate Oratorii Adorandae Virginis. Habit enim secum duovacula argentea alba cruore et sudore magni prophetae Jesu perimpleta.'– translated, 'Joseph of Arimathæa, the noble decurion, received his everlasting rest with his eleven associates in the Isle of Avalon. He lies in the southern angle of the bifurcated line of the Oratorium of the Adorable Virgin. The troop commander was the decurio in the Roman Legion, the same name was given in civil life to a town councillor. (Webster's dictionary says) The Latin word 'Decurion' is equated with 'deacon' a word which came to describe an officer in a Christian church.and in this context also denotes 'a Roman citizen of some standing'.



The route of the earliest Christian missions from Jerusalem followed the path of **Phoenician colonization** / the **tin trade, as described by Didorus Siculus.**

Initially from the cities and the towns along the **Phoenician** / Syrian coast to Antioch (1). Then all the main **Phoenician** settlements Cyprus (2), Crete (3), Sicily (4), Cyrenia (5), Massilia (Marseilles) (7), Sardinia (6), Spain (8) and ultimately Southwest Britain (9).

'Joseph and his company, including Lazarus, Mary, Martha, Marcella and Maximin, came at the invitation of certain Druids of high rank , from Marseilles into Britain, circa AD 38-39; were located at **Ynys Avàlon**, (Isle of Avalon) the seat of a Druidic cor (site of worship) which was subsequently made over to Joseph and company in free gift by King Arviragus. Here they built the first church, which became the centre and mother of Christianity in Britain. Joseph died and was interred in 76 A.D.' –from “Paul in Britain”, p.73

'The whole story of the subsequent journey of Joseph and his eleven companions from Palestine to Britain has been convincingly traced out by J. W. Taylor in his *'The Coming of the Saints,'* and he shows that they were driven from Palestine at the time of the persecution which resulted in Stephen's martyrdom (35 A.D.) in which Paul participated, he followed the exact route of the tin trade described by Diodorus Siculus, and at every main stopping place along that route Taylor shows that traditions of his visit still remain'– from “Paul in Britain”, p.38

'And at this time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles', and 'they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the 'word', and 'now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen,' left the Holy Land. (Acts 8:1, 4). Those persons whose attachment to Jesus was most public, including those mentioned in the Gospels, would likely be among the earliest to flee. “The chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus to death, because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away and believed on Jesus' (John 12:10,11).

Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, the Bethany family including Mary Magdalene, Martha, her handmaiden Marcella, Maximin and Lazarus are among those named in a

Vatican Manuscript –'ad annum 35' quoted in 'Ecclesiastical Annals' by Baronius. Other sources add Joanna and her son; St. Zaccheus; Salome, the mother of St. James; Restitutus—the man born blind whose sight was restored by Jesus (John 9:1–12); Simon the Cyrene and Philip the apostle. All of these would have attracted the suspicion and hatred of the Romans.

1. It is known that many of the earliest missionaries went westward to the Phoenician colonies. Most, if not all, of the Apostles remained for a considerable time in the east and chiefly at Jerusalem, save for Paul. Peter later became the Bishop of Antioch and then was subsequently translated to Rome as Bishop of Rome.

2. Among these early missionaries of Christ one would certainly expect to find, and one does find to some extent, those who were conspicuous by their attachment to the Savior in the Gospels.

3. The work done by these missionaries and their successors was primarily among the Jews and Phoenicians of the Mediterranean colonies, and then extended into all parts of the Roman empire, so that St. Paul some years later (circa 64 AD) was able to speak of 'the truth of the gospel which is come to you as it is in all the world' (Col. 1:5,6). Such statements are not hyperbole.

4. St. Peter and St. Paul, who were essentially the chief Apostles of the West, took up and organized much of the work of the first enthusiasts and pioneers, in many cases appointing bishops and establishing settled church order and government, in other cases leaving the natural extension of the church to the future and their successors. Peter became the Bishop of Antioch in 43 AD, where he remained until going to Rome.

5. The chief port from which these missions started was Caesarea, (the headquarters of the Roman forces in Israel), and the local head or organizing secretary, from whom the missionaries went and to whom they returned, appears to have been St. Philip the Evangelist, who settled at Caesarea, and evidently helped the early Christians on their journeys. Acts 21:8- On the next day we who were Paul's companions departed and came to Caesarea, and entered the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, and stayed with him. [Caesarea was the garrison city and chief port of the Romans in Palestine at this time. –W.B.W.]

'The Bethany family—Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, St. Joseph of Arimathæa, and according to some of the traditions, St. Zaccheus, undertook a longer journey beyond Rome, as far as the neighborhood of Massilia, (Marseilles), and Salome, the mother of St. James, is said to have accompanied them between 34 AD and 44 AD.' – from "St. Paul in Britain", p.61

Lazarus is asserted to have accompanied Joseph. The only record we possess of him beyond the Scripture narrative (the tradition of the Church of Lyons makes him return with Martha and Mary to Marseilles, of which town he became the first bishop, and there died) [This is in error and will be explained later.¹—W.B.W.] is in a very ancient British Triad: 'The Triad of Lazarus, or the three councils of Lazarus; 'Believe in God who made thee; Love God who saved thee; Fear God who will Judge thee.' (Triads of Ancient

¹ This will be clarified in the material that follows concerning St. Lazarus. See p. 20 following.

Britain.) It is difficult to explain how the name and counsel of Lazarus could find their way into these peculiarly British memorials except by his presence and teaching in Britain.'—from “St. Paul in Britain”. In the 'Coming of the Saints' by J. W Taylor, the author traces the travels of Joseph and his companions from the Holy Land to the White Isle. He convincingly demonstrates that the route of the flight from the persecution in Judaea the party followed the path of the tin trade described above as described by Diodorus Siculus. Traditions of the passing of Joseph and his companions are to be found at every main stopping point on the route.

When Joseph of Arimathea came to Lundy he found an important pagan temple (i.e., a druidic Cor). Joseph founded what may have been the earliest Christian Church, on Lundy at the Beacon Hill site. Early Christianity on Lundy is evidenced by the inscribed stones with Christian symbols and names. *"The four inscribed stones alone make it (Lundy) archaeologically unique."* *The Island of Lundy*. *"These stones allude to British Christian dead, were erected by British ,and were an aspect of continuous British Christianity."* “Christianity in Roman Britain to 500 AD”.

' We have in Devon a dozen Christian headstones which can be dated to the period between 400 and 650. These stones mark the graves of important people, none of whom can be identified for certain, but all were Christians.' Hoskins. In " The Archaeology of Exmoor." I.V.Grinshell says *"Most, perhaps all, inscribed stones from the 5th to the 7th century are considered to have been put up in memory of a deceased notability. All are Christian."*

Further evidence is in an account by the Romans that the Britons Caractacus (and Bran) were taken to Rome as captives after 52 A.D. as hostages to insure that there would be no rebellion, then Bran's accompanying Joseph to Britain is a logical conclusion. King Arviragus would be a nephew of Bran, making Joseph's acceptance by the king more credible, and if the king who granted Joseph the White Island was a Silurian (Welsh), at this particular period Glastonbury was inside the Roman sphere of influence, even if it fell within the Silurian realm that by-and-large was outside that sphere.

"Jesus' cousin Shimeon (Simon), who had succeeded James the Righteous as Head Natzirite led his followers out of Jerusalem and into the Decapolis (south of the Sea of Galilee) at the first sign of impending war." – William Harwood, Mythologies' Last Gods: Yahweh and Jesus.

'Great ways' or Roman roads passed through Marseilles to the west and to the North. About this time the Emperor Claudius had himself gone through Marseilles on his way to Britain. This was followed by a continuous stream of troops going to and returning from Britain, for the war was prosecuted with vigor throughout the reigns of Claudius and Nero' – “Coming of the Saints” by J. W Taylor, p.140. 'We find Joseph's traces at Limoges. The old Aquitaine (French) legends concerning St. Martial, the first missionary apostle of Limoges, which have a definite history reaching, at least, as far back as the

tenth century (*Fastes Episcopi*, vol. ii, p. 104) mentions the name of St. Joseph of Arimathæa in passing. St. Martial, St. Zaccheus (the publican of the gospels) and Joseph - all Hebrews- are also represented as arriving at Limoges in the first century.' – “Coming of the Saints”, by J. W Taylor

'We find traces of the disciples or companions of Joseph at Morlaix in Brittany. The local tradition here is that Drennalus, a disciple of Joseph of Arimathæa and the first bishop of Treguier, preached the gospel in this district about 72 AD (north-western France).' – “Coming of the Saints”, by J. W Taylor

“Coming of the Saints” by J. W Taylor p.141. 'Joseph of Arimathæa is never represented as coming to Britain alone, but as accompanied by other Hebrews, and notably his son 'Josephes". These companions and relations are said to have intermarried with the families of the British kings or chieftains, and from them, by direct descent, in something like four hundred years, are said to have arisen the greater heroes of King Arthur's court - the Knights of the Round Table.'

'About the middle of the first century AD the western country on both sides of the Severn estuary was held by the British in comparative security, being outside the main lines of Roman conquest, and it was purposely to these (as we are told) that St. Joseph and his companions came. Quoting from the historian Gildas;- 'These islands received the beams of light - that is, the holy precepts of Christ - The True Sun, as we know, at the latter part of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, in whose time this religion was propagated without impediment and death threatened to those who interfered with its professors. Quoting from the historian Eusebius speaking of events from 37–41 AD;- 'Thus the doctrine of the Savior, like the beams of the sun, soon irradiated the whole world. '

Tiberius died in AD 37. 'What we do know is that through the reigns of Tiberius, Claudius and the earlier years of Nero there was but little or no hindrance to the spread of the gospel, and that troops were constantly passing between Britain and Rome during all this time. Also 'This tin metal is transported out of Britain into Gaul, the merchants carrying it on pack horses through the heart of Celtica (Gaul) to Marseilles and the city called Narbo (Narbonne, vol. v, cap. 2) (Diodorus Siculus, in Booth's trans., vol. i, p. 311).

Before Christ was born, we find the very route exactly described by Diodorus that was afterwards traditionally chosen by Joseph. 'Marseilles up the Rhone to Arles to Limoges to Morlaix to south-west Britain. The tradition is that 'Joseph of Arimathæa came in a boat from the mainland to Cornwall.' from 'Cornwall', S. Baring-Gould

'All the best authorities, including the late Prof. Max Muller, accept the identification of St. Michael's Mount with Ictis. 'From the very earliest times it (St. Michael's Mount) was regarded as sacred and as a place of pilgrimage.

Joseph's central role in the introduction of Christianity to Britain circa 63 AD is described in *'The History of the Franks'* by Gregory of Tours (544–595 A.D.) --'Joseph of Arimathæa, the noble decurion, received his everlasting rest with his eleven associates in the Isle of Avalon. He lies in the southern angle of the bifurcated line of the Oratorium of the Adorable Virgin. The translation for the Latin -- 'Joseph ab Arimathæa nobilis decurio in insula Avallonia cum xi. Sociis suis somnum cepit perpetuum et jacet in meridiano angulo lineae bifurcate Oratorii Adorandae Virginis. Habit enim secum duovacula argentea alba cruore et sudore magni prophetae Jesu perimpleta.'-- Thick vellum Cottonian MS., quoted also by Archbishop Usher, *Melchini Fragmentum.*' from "Paul in Britain."

'We know from Tertullian an early Christian (circa. 197), who later became a follower of the heretic Montanus, that Britain was Christian before it was Roman. He wrote: 'Regions in Britain which have never been penetrated by the Roman arms have received the religion of Christ.' If this statement is correct, after the war of conquest between Britain and Rome had raged for a century and a half, from A.D. 43 to A.D. 192, then it is obvious that Joseph's Arimathean mission must have been founded in the heart of independent Britain, outside the pale of the Roman Empire. This inference tallies with the rest of the evidence. Joseph died in these 'loca inaccessa Romanis' (in locale inaccessible to Romans. –W.B.W.) His death, therefore, could not have been chronicled by either Greek or Roman churches,' since they had no access to this information. from "Paul in Britain."

'Other eminent converts at this early date in Britain – Beatus, born of noble parents in Britain, was there converted and baptized. He became the founder and first bishop of the Helvetian church (Switzerland). His death occurred in the cell, still shown, at Underseven, on the Lake of Thun, (Switzerland) in AD 96. (*Theatre. Magn. Britan., lib. vi. p. 9.*)

Mansuetos, born in Hibernia (Spain), converted and baptized in Britain, was sent afterwards from Rome with St. Clement to preach the Gospel in Gaul, and afterwards became the second bishop of Rome. He founded the Lotharingian Church [Duchy of Lotharingia, now known as Alsace–Lorraine. W.B.W.], fixing his mission at Toul, (France) where after extending his labors to Illyria, (Balkans) he suffered martyrdom, AD 110. (Pantaleon, *De Viris Illus. Germaniae, pars. I;* Guliel. Eisengren, cent. 2, p. 5; Petrus Mersaeus, *De Sanctis German.;* Franciscus Gulliman, *Helvetiorum Historia, lib. i. c. 15;* Petrus de Natalibus, *Episcop. Regal. Tallensis.*)

Marcellus, a noble Briton, became bishop of Tongres, and afterwards founder bishop of Treves – the diocese which for centuries exercised the chief influence in the Gallic (French) church. The conversion of Linus, the son of Caractacus, is attributed to him. (Marcellus Britannus, *Tungrorum episcopus postea Trevirorum Archiepiscopus,* &c.- Mersaeus, *De Archiepiscopis Trevirensium.*)

The next missionary after Joseph was Simon Zelotes, the apostle (cousin of Jesus)- Luke 6:15. He suffered martyrdom in Britain. Of these the principal authority is Dorotheus, Bishop of Tyre, in the reigns of Diocletian and Constantius (AD 300) who wrote, 'Simon Zelotes traversed all Mauretania [Land of the Moors—modern day N. Morocco and W. Tunisia.—W.B.W]., and the regions of the Africans (Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa), preaching. He was at last crucified, slain, and buried in Britain.' (Dorotheus, Synod. de Apostol.; Synopsis ad Simon Zelot.) Crucifixion was a Roman penalty for runaway slaves, deserters and rebels; it was not known to British laws. Simon Zelotes suffered in the east of Britain perhaps, as tradition affirms, in the vicinity of Caistor, under the prefecture of Caius Decius, the officer whose atrocities were the immediate cause of the Boudiccan war in Britain. The Roman town of Caistor, today's St.Edmund was once Norfolk's capital.

'The Greek and Roman menologies (ecclesiastical calendars) and Martyrologies commemorate with scrupulous jealousy the obituaries and death—places of all the earlier Christian characters of note who died within the pale of the Roman Empire. They nowhere record those of Joseph.' This is, as noted earlier, evidence for his being in a locale not controlled by the Romans.

'The Rev. R. W. Morgan [he was an Anglican scholar knowledgeable about *Ecclesia Anglicana's* Orthodox origin and early history. —W.B.W.] writing in the nineteenth century gives the following as all having stated that Joseph of Arimathæa was the first to bring the teachings of Christ to Britain;- even Roman Catholic historians, concur with the British historian Gildas in the year, and with the above authorities in holding Joseph of Arimathæa to have been the first who preached Christ in Britain' – from *St. Paul in Britain*. [Indeed, it should be noted that all the western Church was simply a part of the Orthodox patriarchies, specifically the Patriarch of Rome, until the takeover by the Franco-Latins in the 11th century. W.B.W.]

Freculphus tells how Joseph and his companions including Lazarus, Mary, Martha, Marcella, and Maximin were invited by certain high ranking druids to travel from Marseilles to the seat of a druidic cor (Temple) at Ynys Avàlon (Isle of Avalon), now Glastonbury, a site which was subsequently made over to them by Arvigarus the Silurian King. It was on this site that they built the first church, the mother of Christianity in Britain. Joseph died and was interred there in 76 A.D. His grave is in Glastonbury Cathedral.

Joseph of Arimathea In Welsh Legend.

'It is also in essential harmony with the Welsh account in the 35th Triad (third series) which records how the native king bestowed 'the freedom of the country and nation with privilege of judgment and surety on all those who might be of the Faith of Christ, and how he built the first church at 'LLandaff' (?). The only question that arises is whether, according to some scholars, the last word is not a mistake for Llundain, or London.' *** from *'The Coming of the Saints.'* p.159

Three Hebrew missionaries are named, but only with their British names in Welsh manuscripts as having brought the teachings of Jesus into Britain in the first century. The three are called 'Ilid', 'Cyndaf' and his son 'Mawan. Most eminent Welsh authorities concur in identifying the three with Bron,² Joseph of Arimathea, and Joseph's son Josephes. Ilid and Cyndaf are described in the manuscripts as 'Men of Israel' and in one manuscript Mawan is said to be Cyndaf's (Joseph of Arimathea) son.

The three are credited with bringing the gospel into Britain during the first century AD. In the manuscripts their mission is associated with the coming of Aristobulus - 'Arwystli Hen,' in the Welsh as 'Man of Italy,' whose role as 'bishop of the Britons' is detailed in the List of Hippolytus and in the Greek Martyrologies. Aristobulus is a Roman that Paul mentions in Romans 15:10.

'Next to Joseph and Simon Zelotes came Aristobulus. The Martyrologies of the Eastern Orthodox Churches relates;— 'Aristobulus was one of the seventy disciples, and a follower of St. Paul the Apostle, along with whom he preached the Gospel to the whole world, and ministered to him. He was chosen by St. Paul to be the missionary bishop to the land of Britain, inhabited by a very warlike and fierce race. By them he was often scourged and repeatedly dragged as a criminal through their towns, yet he converted many of them to Christianity. He was there martyred, after he built churches and ordained deacons and priests for the island.' – from “St. Paul in Britain”, pt. II, p.80.

[This ends the quotations found in The Mystic Realm web page. –W.B.W.]

[All that follows is taken from *The Origin and Early History of Christianity in Britain*, by Andrew Gray, D.D., London, Skeffington & Son, Piccadilly, W., 1897. COPYWRITE © 1991 BY ARTISAN SALES. Now available as a reprint from Amazon.com–W.B.W.]

The Statement is made—and this is a question for the jury to decide—that Christianity was brought into Britain by Joseph of Arimathea, circ. A.D. 36-39; that a little later Aristobulus became a Bishop among the Britons; and that St. Paul too went there in person, perhaps also Simon Zelotes and others. The first converts are said to have been members of the royal family of Siluria (Wales).³ It is asserted that there were two cradles of Christianity in Britain—“the Chrystal Isle,” called by the Saxons *Glaston* (today's Glastonbury), in Somersetshire, where Joseph of Arimathea is believed to have settled and taught; and *Siluria* (Wales), where Churches and Schools were founded by the

² Bron, also known as Hebron the brother-in-law of Joseph

³ In the year A.D. 36, Bran (or Brennus) resigned the Silurian crown to his son Caradoc (called by the Latins Caractacus), and become Arch-Druid of the College of Siluria, where he remained till ordered to go to Rome as a hostage for his son. At the period of his accession Caradoc had three sons, Llyn or Linus, being one of them, and two daughters, Eurgan and Gladys or Claudia. *Vide St. Paul in Britain, R.W. Morgan, p. 105*

Silurian (Welsh) dynasty. Glastonbury was commonly known as Ynys Avàlon, and by the Latins as “Domus Dei,”

EVIDENCES

The constant current of European tradition affirmed Britain to have been the first country in Europe to receive the Gospel, and the British Church to be the first of all Churches of Christ therein. The universality of this opinion is readily demonstrated. Polydore Vergil in the reign of Henry VII, and after him *Cardinal Pole* (AD1555), both rigid Roman Catholics, affirmed in Parliament, the latter in his address to the sovereigns Philip and Mary, that “Britain was the first of all countries to receive the Christian faith.” “The glory of Britain,” remarks Genegrard, “consists not only in this, that she was the first country which, in a national capacity, publicly professed herself Christian, but that she made this confession when the Roman empire itself was still pagan and a cruel persecutor of Christianity.”

This priority of antiquity was only once questioned, and that on political grounds, by the Ambassadors of France and Spain, at the Council of Pisa, A.D. 1417. The Council, however, affirmed the British claim. The ambassadors appealed to the Council of Constance (1419) which confirmed the decision of Pisa. It was again confirmed by the Council of Sena, and then assented to. This decision laid down the principle that the Churches of France and Spain were bound to give way, in point of antiquity and precedence, to the Church of Britain, which was founded by Joseph of Arimathæa, “immediately after the passion of Christ.”⁴

We may therefore accept as the general opinion of Christendom, the priority, in point of antiquity, of the British Church, over all others in Europe.. This opinion was well expressed by Sabellius, a Christian Priest in Libya, writing in the early 2nd century (215 AD): “Christianity was privately professed elsewhere, but the first nation that proclaimed it as their religion, and called itself Christian after Christ, was Britain.”⁵ Gildas, the British historian, who flourished 520-560, states expressly that the Gospel was introduced into Britain in the last year of Tiberius Cæsar.⁶

The Gospels tell us the Crucifixion took place in the seventeenth year of Tiberius. The last year would be his Twenty–second. Consequently if we follow Gildas, Christianity was introduced into Britain *five* years after the Crucifixion, that is, AD 38. And this date corresponds with the first persecution of the Church by Saul of Tarsus, the Stoning of

⁴ “Statim post passionem Christi.” Robert Parsons, the Jesuit, in his *Three Conversions of England*, admits, in common with the great majority of accurate writers, that Christianity came into Britain direct from Jerusalem. “It seems nearest the truth that the British Church was originally planted by Greek Orthodox teachers from the East, and not by the Romans.” Vol. 1, p. 15. The Eastern usages in the liturgy of the British Church until 1066 AD alone would attest to this fact.

⁵ Sabell, *Enno*, lib. vii, e.5

⁶ “We know that Christ, the True Sun, afforded His light to our island in the last year of Tiberius Cæsar.” “*Tempore ut scimus, summo Tiberii Cæsaris,*” *history. Briton.*

Stephen, and the subsequent and general dispersal. **“They were all scattered abroad except the Apostles.”** Acts 8:1. And if, *“all,”* then, Joseph of Arimathæa among them. Regarding this date (given by Gildas) as our starting point, we have several testimonies assigning the first introduction of Christianity in or about the same year to *Joseph of Arimathæa*.

Maelgwyn of Llandaff, the uncle of St. David, writing about AD 456, says: “Joseph of Arimathæa, the noble decurion, received his everlasting rest with his eleven associates in the Isle of Avàlon. He lies in the Southern angle of the bifurcated line of the Oratorium of the Blessed Virgin.”⁷ This is British testimony from one who was personally acquainted with the interior of the Church at Avàlon (Glastonbury), the “*Domus Dei*” (House of God), and knew the exact spot where Joseph is said to be buried. The greater weight is due to this evidence of Maelgwyn’s, as no fact is better established than the reconstruction of the *Domus Dei* on a cathedral scale by his nephew, St. David. In recent years archaeological excavation has confirmed the accuracy of the account of Joseph’s burial site within what is now the cathedral.

The Vatican MS. Quoted by Baronius in his “*Ecclesiastical Annals,*” *ad annum 35*⁸,—the same year in which the Acts of the Apostles state that **“all except the Apostles were scattered abroad”** (Acts 8:1b)—records that (in this year 35 AD) Lazarus, Mary, Martha, Magalene, Marcella their servant, Maximin a disciple, St. Philip, and Joseph of Arimathæa, against all of whom the Jews had special enmity, were banished from Judea and exposed to the sea in a vessel without sails or oars. The vessel drifted many days in the Mediterranean, being tossed by storms hither and thither, but ultimately arrived safely at Marseilles. St. Philip remaining in those parts Philip [being one of the apostles appointed by Jesus and therefore having the authority to do so —W.B.W.], sent Joseph with a few companions into Britain to preach the Gospel there and convert the Britons to the Faith. On their arrival they were hospitably received by Arviragus,⁹ the king of that portion of the country where they landed. He gave them the island then called Ynys Wydrin or Ynys Avàlon, now Glastonbury. Here they built a small Church of “hurdle-work,” and “here they watched, prayed, fasted, preached,” converting many to the Christian Faith, “having *high* meditations under a low roof, and large hearts betwixt narrow walls.”¹⁰ Here, too, Joseph and his companions lived and died, and here they were buried in their tiny oratory.

The “*Chronicon*” of Pseudo-Dexter and the Fragments of Haleca, Archbishop of Saragossa, (a province in Spain) furnish the same statement, professedly from primitive sources of unknown date. Cressy, Sanders, and Alford, all Roman Catholic historians,

⁷ Thick Vellum Cottonian MS, quoted also by Usher, *Melchiri Fragmentum, vide St. Paul in Britain*, Morgan, p. 139. Joseph of Arimathæa is by Eastern tradition said to have been the younger brother of the father of the Virgin Mary.

⁸The respective dates, 35 and 38, allow for three years between the expulsion of Joseph and party from Judea and his settlement in Britain, an undesigned harmony which goes far chronologically to confirm the common record.

⁹ “*Regem aliquem capies, aut de tempore Britainna excidet Arviragus*” (Juvenal, Sat. iv, 126

¹⁰ Fuller, Book I., Sec. I, 11-13

concur with Gildas as to the year, and with the authorities already quoted in regard to the statement that Joseph of Arimathæa was the first to preach the Gospel in Britain.

We possess physical evidence that Churches were erected in Britain before the close of the second century, and whatever direction our investigations take, we find authority for the statement that the Church of Joseph of Avàlon, or Glastonbury now the site of Glastonbury cathedral, was the first and oldest them all, affirming that it was the oldest or senior Church in the *whole world* It will be interesting to give the conclusions arrived at by a few of the historians who have treated this subject, for example:

“The Church of Avàlon, in Britain, no other hands than those of the disciples of the Lord themselves built.” *Publius Discipulus*.

“The mother Church of the British Isles is the Church in Insula A’valloniam, called by the Saxons Glaston.” *Archbishop Usher*.

“If credit be given to ancient authors, this Church of Glastonbury is the senior Church of the world.” *Fuller*.

“It is certain that Britain received the faith in the first age from the first sowers of the Words.” *Sir Henry Spelman*.

Had any doubt existed on this point of priority, it certainly would have been contested by some of the other Churches, for it was not a mere question of chronology, but one which carried with it enormous privileges and advantages. It was universally conceded, however, and upon it the long series of royal charters of the Church and Monasteries, from that of King Arthur, the nephew of its second founder, St. David, to that of Edward III proceeded.

And it is well known that Archbishop Parker, in his letter to John Calvin in the 15th C., concerning the latter’s proposal of a union among all Protestants, reminds Calvin the Church of England was **orthodox and catholic**, not Protestant, and would “retain her Episcopacy; but not as from Pope Gregory, who sent Augustine the monk hither centuries later (597 AD), but from Joseph of Arimathæa.”¹¹ Archbishop Parker knew that the *Ecclesia Anglicana* was not established by Rome but was established by Eastern Orthodox coming from Jerusalem itself. (late 30s AD). At that time Rome had Christians but they were under persecution and worshipped in the catacombs clandestinely and their bishop had no claim to being the Vicar of Christ as claimed after the Franco-Latin conquest in the 11th century. Later Rome itself became one of the five Orthodox Patriarchies. Only centuries later did England come under the control of Rome when England was conquered by the Norman (Frankish) William the Conqueror in 1066 AD). Until then the Church in England, Wales and Ireland was independently recognized as an autonomous Orthodox Church.

Joseph and his companions came from Marseilles into Britain about AD 36-39, and located at Ynys Avàlon, the seat of a Druidic Cor (temple), which was subsequently given over to them in *free gift* by King Arviragus.... Joseph died and was interred here,

¹¹ See Strype’s “Archbishop Parker,” Vol. I., p. 139.

AD 76. His tomb was inscribed with the following epitaph, touching by its spirit of faith, peace, and humility: “*Ad Britannox veni post Christum Sepelivi, Docui Quievi.*”

St. Paul in Britain

St. Paul, who traveled extensively, and mixed with all classes of society, must have been as well acquainted with Britain and the events transpiring there, as any other intelligent citizen. There was much to attract him to Britain as a field of Gospel labor and enterprise. We know from Scripture evidence that he contemplated a journey to Western Europe. A reference to the Epistle to the Romans (15:24, 28) shows that his journey to Spain was meditated not only before he came to Rome, but also that it was the principal object of his leaving the East. “**Whensoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you, for I trust to see you on my journey (i.e., while passing through), and to be sent forward to that place by you.**” He speaks of his journey as a thing decided upon, and that he intended making Rome a stage in that journey, and in the prospective visit, he anticipated further help as was customary for authentic missionaries.

All the incidents and delays which occurred between this date (AD 56), and the termination of his imprisonment, were interruptions of his original plan of operations. His destination was the far West in accordance with the words of Christ, “I will send thee *far hence to the Gentiles.*” (Acts 22:21) At Rome, then, he abode two whole years, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence; the things which had happened to him falling out to the furtherance of the Gospel; his bonds in Christ being manifest in the Emperor’s Palace and in all other places.¹² It is well known that he made converts among the Emperor’s own Praetorian Guard who were assigned to keep him in control although he was allowed considerable freedom during his first imprisonment

The Acts of the Apostles embrace only so much of his history as ends with his first imprisonment at Rome; but there remains at least five or six years—the time between his liberation from that first imprisonment, and the date of his second imprisonment and martyrdom—to be accounted for. It cannot be supposed that he was taking his ease during such an interval. The energy of his character, the sense of his responsibility, and the spiritual wants of the world, alike forbade it. He is now actually at Rome, and at liberty, and the wide world once more before him. What more probable than that he should profit by the occasion now afforded him, of completing his plan—his intent still westward from the beginning of his ministry—and go forwards into Spain and Britain? We think we are justified in the conclusion that having already, as has been before stated, sent Aristobulus¹³ into Britain a short time before, he would carry out his purpose of visiting Spain, and would then join his fellow-laborer in Britain; for it is plain that Aristobulus acted as much under his instruction in Britain as Titus did in Crete or Timothy in Ephesus.

¹² Phillipians 1:12, 13

¹³ Romans 16:10b

Gades in Spain, not Cadiz, was no doubt the place that St. Paul had especially in mind when he wrote of his intended journey. It was at that time the commercial center of western Europe, the capital of the district of Boetica, and was the old Tarshish of OT Scripture.¹⁴ Not only was it a great commercial center, but one of the routes of communication between Rome and Britain via Gades; so that anyone at Gades would find ample opportunity of going to Britain in one of the boats that plied between the two countries.

The conclusion generally arrived at by writers who have investigated this subject may be given in the words of Capellus: "I scarcely know of one author from the times of the early Church Fathers onwards, who does not maintain that St. Paul, after his liberation, preached in every country in western Europe, Britain included."¹⁵ The same opinion substantially is held by Baronius, and also by Griffith or "Alford," next to Baronius the most erudite of Roman Catholic historians; and by Anglican Archbishops Parker, Usher, Stillingfleet, Camden, Gibson, Cave, Nelson, and others. Both St. Chrysostom and Theodoret assert, without any hesitation, in so many words, that to Spain the Apostle went after his imprisonment in Rome.¹⁶ Indeed, Theodoret says: "to Spain and other nations, *and to the islands lying apart in the ocean.*" St. Jerome affirms that after Paul's first imprisonment he preached the Gospel in Spain. And to cite one more writer on this point, Bishop Wordsworth, of Lincoln, says: We find clear testimony, dating from St. Paul's age, that the Apostle, who in his first confinement was at Rome for the first time, and had never reached any point beyond it, did not terminate his career there *at that time*, but went to some regions westward of Rome." It may fairly be presumed that these witnesses furnish sufficient evidence to prove that St. Paul did carry out his intention of "taking a journey into Spain." We will now summon other witnesses, who, with those already heard, will show that he went not to Spain only, but also to Britain.

Eusebius, when showing that the Apostles "preached their doctrines in the remotest cities and countries," particularly adds, "that some passed over the ocean to those which are the British islands."

Tertullian (AD 190), says: "There are places in Britain inaccessible to the Romans which have been subdued to Christ."¹⁷

Origen (AD 230), says: "The power of God our Savior is ever with them in Britain who are separated from the world."

St. Jerome (AD 400), says that St. Paul's preaching extended "as far as the earth itself," and that he "preached the Gospel in the western parts."¹⁸

St. Chrysostom (about AD 400), in his eloquent comparison of Paul with Nero, in the fourth Homily on 2 Timothy, speaks of the former as having been known and honored by the world, and by those of the extreme limit of the world."¹⁹

¹⁴ *The Anglican Church*, R. H. Cole, pp. 24, 25

¹⁵ *The Anglican Church*, R. H. Cole, pp. 14, 15

¹⁶ Pearson, *Minor Theological Works*, I., p. 392

¹⁷ "Loca inaccessis Romanis"

¹⁸ *Catalogue Eccl. Script.* 9. R. H. Hore, p. 14 note.

¹⁹ *St. Chrysostom*, Homily IV, on 2 Timothy 4:10

Venantius Fortunatus, (AD 500) says that St. Paul having “crossed the sea to Great Britian, also reached Thule (Greenland) and the ends of the earth.”

Clement of Rome, a contemporary of Paul, whom that Apostle calls his “fellow laborer,”²⁰ and says that his “name is in the book of life,”²¹ had ample opportunity for conversing with him and being familiar with his journeys. He was ordained a priest by Peter then Bishop of Rome, and later himself became Bishop of Rome (92 AD). He wrote Epistles from that city to the Corinthians, about AD 87. He speaks of Paul having “become the herald of God in the East and in the West; of his having preached righteousness to the whole world, and having come to the *extreme limit of the West*.”²²

The foregoing is extracted from pp. 2–27 of Andrew Gray’s history cited above. The book itself has 137 pages. I have cited only those parts that offer substantial proof of Paul’s presence in the British Isles, including Ireland.

The other sources listed above are from: Baigent, Michael & Leigh, Richard and Lincoln Henry - *The Messianic Legacy* (Cape, 1986)

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²⁰ Philippians 4:3

²¹ *De Vita S. Martini*, quoted by Fuller, Book 1, cent. I.; also by Hore, p. 14, note.

²² *Clement of Rome, Epistola Corinthios*, chap. 5

Historians William of Malmesbury, Maelgwyn of Llandaff and Polydore Vergil all place Joseph of Arimathea at Glastonbury. Even the four Church councils of Pisa 1409, Constance 1417, Sienna 1424 and Basle 1434, mention that "the Churches of France and Spain must yield in points of antiquity and precedence to that of Britain as the latter Church was founded by Joseph of Arimathea"**immediately after the passion of Christ.**"

The basic story of Joseph's trip to England varies in some details from account to account. But the bare facts are that Joseph, with many disciples traveled from the holy land by boat and landed at Marseilles, in the Vienoise province of the Gauls (France). From there he went on to England, established seminaries, sent out missionaries, and helped in the conversion of the Royal family. In his "Ecclesiastical Annals", Cardinal Baronius, Curator of the Vatican library, gives this account. "In that year the party mentioned was exposed to the sea in a vessel without sails or oars. The vessel drifted finally to Marseilles and they were saved. From Marseilles Joseph and his company passed into Britain and after preaching the Gospel there, died." The reason for the boat having been set adrift, was that the Jews wanted to get rid of these Christians, but couldn't get away with outright murder.

How many of the disciples were with Joseph of Arimathea during his short stay in Gaul, before going on to England, is hard to say. Various existing records agree in part with the Cardinal Baronius record, naming among the occupants of the castaway boat Mary Magdalene, Martha, the hand-maiden Marcella, Lazarus whom Jesus raised from the dead, and Maximin the man whose sight Jesus restored. Other records state that Philip and James accompanied Joseph. Others report that Mary, the wife of Cleopas, and Mary, the mother of Jesus, were also in the boat. Here is Baronius' complete list of passengers:

- St. Mary, wife of Cleopas
- St. Martha
- St. Lazarus
- St. Eutropius
- St. Salome
- St. Cleon
- St. Saturninus
- St. Mary Magdalene
- Marcella, the Bethany sisters' maid
- St. Maximin
- St. Martial
- St. Trophimus
- St. Sidonius (Restitutus)
- St. Joseph of Arimathea

And true to God's way, Philip was waiting for the travelers in France. There is a wealth of uncontroversial testimony asserting his commission in Gaul, all of which alike state that he received and consecrated Joseph, preparatory to his embarkation and appointment as the Apostle to Britain.

There are some who would argue for France being first, most records agree that Britain, at Glastonbury was the Root of the Christian movement. One would expect that history would show that the missionary activities would flow out of the well-spring of Christianity. And history does record this. The Gaulic records state that for centuries the Archbishops of Treves and Rheims were all Britons supplied by the mother church at Glastonbury-Avalon. St. Cadval, a famed British missionary, going out from Glastonbury, founded the church of Tarentum, Italy, *A.D. 170*.

Many famous names are recorded as having been associated with Glastonbury-Avalon.

- Sidonis, Saturninus, and Cleon taught and supported other missionaries in Gaul, then returned to Britain.
- Martial's parents, Marcellus and Elizabeth were there along with St Zacchaeus. Many faithful Judeans moved to Britain.
- Parmena, a disciple of Joseph, was appointed the first Bishop of Avignon.
- Drennalus, helped Joseph found the church at Morlaix. He was then appointed to Treguier as it's first Bishop.
- Beatus founded the church in Helvetia, after receiving his baptism and education at Avalon.
- Beatus was baptised by St. Barnabas, the brother of Aristobulus, sent in advance by St. Paul to Britain. He is referred to in scripture as Joses, the Levite.
- Mansuetus was consecrated the first Bishop of the Lotharingians A.D. 49, with his See at Toul. He also founded the church at Lorraine.

Historical note:

Mansuetus was a constant visitor at the Palace of the British at Rome after Claudia had married Pudens. He was a friend of Linus, the first Bishop of Rome, and brother of Claudia. After the death of St. Clement, Mansuetus became the third official Bishop of the Church at Rome. Thus we have three disciples of Avalon, instructed by St. Joseph, to become, in succession, Bishops of Rome. Iltigius, in "De Patribus Apostolicis", quotes St. Peter as saying; "Concerning the Bishops who have been ordained in our lifetime, we make known to you that they are these. Of Antioch, Eudoius, ordained by me, Peter. Of the Church of Rome, Linus, son of Claudia, was first ordained by Paul, and after Linus's death, Clemens the second, ordained by me, Peter."