

Christ in Cornwall?

AND

GLASTONBURY
THE HOLY LAND OF BRITAIN



Rev. H. A. LEWIS

1948

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(3rd EDITION)

With new and fuller Notes and Appendices.

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GLASTONBURY THE HOLY LAND OF BRITAIN

(2nd Edition).

BY

Rev. H. A. LEWIS
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(Author of "The Child Christ at Lammana", "Ab Antiquo
and "St. Martin's, St. Helen's, and Tean").

"Folks say that JESUS passed by here, and blessed these parts"
(A Cornish Woman).

"Sothely Glastenbury is the holiest erth of england, Rede saynt Dauydes lyfe,
and there may ye se, That our lorde it halowed with his owne hande;"

("The Lyfe of Ioseph of Armathia" ----Anon Punson, 1520)

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Chapter 1

LEGENDS AND HISTORY

A talented authoress has lately published a booklet, in which she sets out to disprove most of the holy legends of Glastonbury and Cornwall, and in particular that of the visit of Our Lord to this land. She has entitled it "Glastonbury, Truth and Fiction." The title alone shows the prejudiced attitude of the writer and her fellow sceptics. Since when has legend or oral tradition become identified with fiction? Or truth confined to facts attested by documents of unimpeachable reliability? The utmost that the writer has proved is that many of these holy legends have not the documentary support which she and her kind require in order that they should be classified as "truth," or at any rate be removed from the realm of "fiction." I wonder in which category the writer would place the following, to mention only three generally accepted traditions:

The martyrdom of most of the Apostles. The episcopacy of St. Peter at Rome. The residence of St. John at Ephesus.

If documentary proof is the only requisite of truth, and **all** legend is fiction, then surely these, too are fiction.

The view taken by the present writer has always been that legends often, perhaps generally, contain a germ of truth, and that the probable degree of truth can be fairly gauged by such considerations as the source of origin; the localities where the legends had vogue; the likelihood or otherwise of the influence of careless legend-mongers; and finally the result of applying to the legends the acid test of history and archaeology.

I claim that the legendary visit of Our Lord to Britain, and to Cornwall in particular, comes through all these tests remarkably unscathed, leaving all reasonable people with the conviction that it may have been, and many of us who have given years of study to the subject, the growing faith that it is probably true.

I shall presently record the various versions of the legend, mostly in the very words in which they were given me by my informants, the majority of whom are simple folk with no pretension to much "book learning." It will be seen at once that it is almost exclusively associated in Cornwall with the tin trade, in the mining districts and the adjacent ports from which British tin was exported before and during the first century A.D. It is *not* usually found in parts where monastic influence was most pronounced. Even at Glastonbury the legend perpetuated and embellished by the monks of the middle ages was about Joseph of Arimathea, rather than about Our Lord, as the holy visitor.

You have to go to Priddy by the old lead mines of the Mendips, or to Pilton, the reputed port from which much of the lead was shipped, to hear the local traditions of the visit of Christ or the Christ Child. In Cornwall it is found at such widely separated places as Marazion and Ding Dong in Penwith, St. Day and Falmouth in Carnmarth, St. Justin Roseland, and Lammana (Looe Island) in Wivelshire. These are all either tin districts or adjacent havens. Only Lammana can claim definite association with any of the big monastic houses (i): and, what is to me most striking, St. Michael's Mount, while expressly mentioned in the tanners' version of the legend, did not itself perpetuate it through the monastery, whose claim to pilgrimage was based on supposed apparitions of the Archangel.

It will be seen, too, that this holy legend is given in the simplest of language, without any of the "artistic detail" so dear to legend mongers, but so damaging to the value and credibility of many of their stories. The legend of the Holy Visit itself is not found in the elaborate romances of the Arthurian cycle, though there is indirect support for it in the claim of the greatest knights of the

Round Table to descent from Joseph of Arimathea, who is, as we shall see, closely associated with the legend, and who provides an important clue to its credibility,

As regards the test of history and archaeology, I do not propose here to give more than passing reference to the early documents which tend to prove the existence of the legend at the time they were written (2); but I claim with assurance that there is not one word in the Gospel narrative which in any way disproves it. The argument from silence leaves me cold. The omission of direct or indirect reference is of little value, in view of the fact that there is, as I imagine, only one alternative legend with regard to the eighteen years of Our Lord's boyhood and early manhood, viz., that he spent all his time at Nazareth as a carpenter, and there is certainly *no more* support for this belief in the story of the Evangelists. On the contrary, I consider that the account of his visit to Nazareth **during** the ministry fits in far better with the possibility of a prolonged absence, for he appears in the Synagogue as at least a comparative stranger. Even if he had made Nazareth his home for all those eighteen years, there would still have been plenty of *time* for a visit to Britain if the *opportunity* were there. We shall see that Joseph, the traditional tin merchant and supposed uncle, provides a simple and quite convincing "opportunity."

It has often been objected that such an adventure would have shown itself in his parables and discourses. If there is little or no reference to travel abroad, there is equally little to carpentry and Nazareth; and, as I pointed out in "The Child Christ at Lammana," those of us who have lived abroad know that most people are not much interested in hearing about our lives there. Our Lord spoke about the things in which his hearers were interested. and which he used to point the moral of his teaching.

It has again been objected that such a voyage as this legend suggests would be impossible for an ordinary Hebrew child or man. I do not know the real grounds of this objection, unless it means that it *seems* difficult to us. You have only to study the writings of Diodorus Siculus to see how accessible Western Britain was to the merchants, or the Acts and Pauline Epistles to see that travel by land or sea, presented no great difficulties to the Apostle and his friends.

Archaeology is showing us more and more the absurdity of the old idea that the Britons in the time of Christ were wild painted savages. The finds in the Lake villages of Meare and Glastonbury show a remarkable degree of culture and art, and so do the excavations now going on in the old "Castles" of Cornwall. It is more than possible that the Phoenician and Hebrew traders had many friends in these islands of a culture little (if any) inferior to their own (3).

Notes to Chapter 1

(1) *Lammana was a tiny priory of Glastonbury before the Conquest. For its history see my "Ab Antique."*

(2) *See Appendices.*

(3) *On St. Martin's Scilly, I have recently found much pottery of the Bronze age (c. 1000 B.C.), which has decoration or high artistic merit together with an exceptionally beautiful blue bead, which must have been made in Egypt or Phoenicia, and been imported to Scilly by traders from the Mediterranean.*

II THE LEGEND AS TRACED

SOME sceptics are quite incorrigible. They would even deny the existence of the legend at all. While anyone who really seeks can find abundant evidence that it was a household tradition at Priddy in the last generation that Christ came there, and while it is certain that there is an age old proverb in parts of the Mendips "As sure as Our Lord was at Priddy"; yet a dignitary of Wells lately suggested that the "legend of Priddy" was invented quite recently by a schoolmistress, to afford a plot for a children's play! Miss Hamilton Thompson was bold enough to assert in the booklet already referred to that two references to ancient writings which she could not trace were, in her opinion, "deliberate fabrications." You will find them traced, analysed, and (at least partially) verified in the Appendices. Truly "there are none so blind as those who won't see."

Before I proceed to show that the legend did actually exist in Cornwall, and still survives in parts, I throw out a word of warning to casual searchers. It is no use tackling all and sundry with a bald question "Did you ever hear ?" The probability is that you would get a negative answer in almost every case. The Cornish folk are not fond of talking about their old legends and traditions to us "foreigners." They are very sensitive to ridicule, and ridicule has, alas, nearly killed the Holy Legend. Once suggest that a tradition is "rubbish," and no oyster can ever be closer than the Cornish man or woman. For the same reason, the younger generation has not often heard of it, because the parents have feared that their sophisticated children would laugh at them.

In the course of some six years of rather intensive searching, I have gathered the following, which, in all cases of direct information, I give as nearly as I can in the actual words spoken. In no single case has the theme been enlarged on or "dressed up."

(1) **St. Justin Roseland.** My original informant here is the late Rector, the Rev. J. V. Hammond, who has often told me that a number of the older people still say that "Christ came to St. just." He quoted one man of middle age as saying, "Of course we know Christ came to St. just." I proceeded to verify this for myself, and in this case found confirmation much easier to obtain than had been the case round Looe. I have had it confirmed by past inhabitants of St. just that it was a common tradition of their childhood that Christ came there. One variant version was that "Joseph of Arimathea and Our Lord came in a boat, and anchored in St. just Creek." I know a man in Falmouth who, as a boy, used to go frequently to St. just, to visit the farmers in their homes, when acting as a local preacher. He tells me that the older folk often talked about it, and in particular records how as a boy he used to sit with the farmers on the beach below the Church, waiting for the tide to bring barges of manure. He tells how, "as often as not," the conversation would come round to the Holy Legend, and he says that "it was as much as your life was worth" to express any doubt about Christ coming to St. just. The period of which he is speaking cannot be more than forty years ago. He tells me also of a certain flat stone, with curious but unintelligible markings on it, which they used to point out as "the stone on which Christ stepped" when he landed. I hold no brief at all for this part of the story, but I think I know which stone it is, and where it stands today

(2) **Falmouth.** This is, of course, a comparatively modern town, and I should not expect to find much material here, but I have procured the following, which I value as highly as any in my collection.

A man of about 75 who used to live near the Strand (the oldest part of Falmouth, by the old village of Smithick) said his father always used to say that "Joseph of Arimathea landed at the Strand, crossed the stream, and went up Smithickhill." This could hardly have been invented by a modern schoolmistress, as there are few living who even know of the stream which used to flow over the site of the Moor today.

A dear old lady, but very illiterate, who recently died at the age of over 80, came out with this, when I was talking about the song "Joseph, was a tinman" (i), "Of course, we know Our Saviour preached to the miners. He was very fond of the miners."

Last, but far from least, a marvellous old saint, who has just found rest from long and painful cancer, said once in the dreamy voice with which she brought out all her bright "gems": "Folks say that Jesus passed by here, and blessed these parts."

(3) Mining District of St. Day, Redruth, etc. A wellknown Falmothian, who was brought up near Chacewater, says he often heard the old people, when he was a boy, say that "Joseph of Arimathea and the Child Christ worked (sic) at Creeg Browse." This is a very ancient tin mine between Chacewater and St. day

Another exceptionally wellinformed person tells me that at St. Day the miners always used to say that Christ came to the mines. I always suspect that this was also the original tradition about Gwennap, Pit, but if so it has been obliterated by the recent connection with John Wesley. It may well have been one of the reasons why Wesley chose it as his openair chapel.

The son of a prominent business man in Penryn says that, as a boy, he was somewhere between Cowlands Creek and CometoGood, when a village woman, in the course of conversation, said something like this: "Some people say that Our Lord came to these parts, but I don't know if it be true or not." These places are between the ancient tinstreaming district of Carnon Downs, and the creeks of the Fal river, from which the tin would be shipped.

Several informants from Redruth have said they had heard something about the legend, and one in particular knew the song "Joseph was a tinman" very well.

(4) Marazion and Penith District. Canon Jennings, in his "Madron, Morvah and Penzance," refers with confidence to the existence, at any rate in the past, of the tradition **that** Christ came to Mount's Bay, and suggests this legend as a possible basis for the name "Penzance" (Holy Headland).

A very prominent Falmouth lady, who lived in her childhood in Penwith, says she was always told that Christ visited Ding Dong mine, which is reputed to be one of the oldest in Cornwall.

(5) Looe, Talland, and Polperro. Several informants had memories, albeit sometimes faint, of the Holy Legend. One in particular gave it as follows: "My grandmother often used to say that Joseph of Arimathea and Our Lord landed at Looe Island." Another told how her mother would say to her father "You must go and get your hair cut, or folks will say it is Joseph of Arimathea come back!" Others said that scoffers of Looe would point to the arms of East Looe, which show a boat, with two figures, and say "There is your Joseph of Arimathea." While the remark seems to have been made in jest, yet it must have reflected a story actually told and believed by others. The arms in question have no connection at all with the Legend, but that does not affect the implication of the words. One illustration will show the difficulty of collecting material. An old man who had lived all his life at Port Looe (the old Lammana), used to deny stoutly that he had ever heard about the tradition.. I persisted, because this was the very land mentioned as the scene of the landing. At last I was able to confront him with evidence that his late wife had often spoken of it. A final question elicited the following, "Oh yes, I've 'eared 'er talk of it." Another old man who was born on Looe Island was as close as can be. He would say he never talked of anything he did not believe, or believe anything he did not see, etc., but he talked vaguely of "all kinds of stories." He remembered an old inscription on stone, now alas, lost. His wife, now nearly a centenarian, who came from Porthallow, spoke mysteriously of a piece of cloth which, they said, "was part of the cloth in which Our Saviour's body was buried," and of other "relics" of the sepulchre. These might have been "relics" from the old Chapel of Lammana, and, whether

genuine or not, would then reflect an old Arimathean tradition, in line with that of Glastonbury, the parent Community. (3)

At Talland, a late incumbent, according to his sister, often used to talk with conviction of Our Lord having come to Cornwall, and a family who later inhabited the Vicarage said that, in their childhood, they had often heard the story.

Polperro seemed to contain few memories of the legend, but one woman said she had always heard that Our Lord came to Cornwall. "and why not?"

(6) **Elsewhere.** In Somerset I have definitely traced the legend at Priddy, in other parts of the Mendips, and at Pilton, where Our Lord and Joseph, are said to have landed in the old harbour. At Glastonbury we saw that it was chiefly concerned with Joseph in popular memory, but the various Appendices show that the holier version undoubtedly existed once. In ancient Gaul. Dr. Taylor in his "Coming of the Saints" tells how he has traced the stories of Joseph in Morlaix, Limoges, and the Rhone Valley. Anatole le Braz, in "An Pays des Pardons" records the beautiful and traditional Breton legend, in equally beautiful language, that St. Anne was a "duchesse" of "Cornuaille," and was visited there by Our Lord before her death. (1) Whether the original legend referred to the present Cornuaille in Brittany, or to the old home of the Breton Colonists in our own Cornwall is really immaterial. If Christ could come as far as Brittany, he could quite well have come on here, and these legends of France, along the old tintrade route, form a definite connecting link in a story which is entirely woven round the tin trade.

Since issuing the second edition, I have now traced the story at the following additional places. A Welsh woman told me she had been told by her schoolteacher that Christ came to *Caerleon*. The vicar of Glastonbury tells me that Our Lord is said to have walked along the *Pilgrims' Way* to Winchester, which was very likely the old tintrade route. A lady has recorded the existence of the tradition of Our Lord landing at Hordle, near *Bournemouth*. I have myself traced a tradition, albeit faint, that Christ came with Joseph on one of his trading voyages to Merchants' Point on *Tresco* in Scilly, which is said to have been sonamed from the Phoenician traders. Perhaps the most interesting is a statement by Mr. E. V. Duff, Count of the Holy Roman Empire (per the vicar of Glastonbury) that among the Maronite Christians of the Lebanon district of Northern Galilee "there lingers a tradition that Our Lord as a youth came to Britain as a shipwright aboard a trading ship of Tyre, and that he wintered on the shores of the *West of England*, owing to bad weather." We note the close proximity of these tribesmen to Tyre, and their probable racial connection with the Phoenicians.

In view of the above, it is not at all surprising to find strong trace of the legend among the traditions of the miners and tin workers. The late Mr. H. Jenner, F.S.A., Chief Bard of Cornwall, and a great authority on all things Cornish, was much impressed by this. He wrote twice at least to the "Western Morning News" about it, and contributed a masterly article about St. Joseph of Arimathea to "Pax," the organ of the Benedictines, in 1916, in which he points out the difficulty of finding an "adequate reason" why Joseph should be singled out in tradition as the Apostle of Britain, "unless it happened to be the literal and actual truth" (i). He then goes on to tell how a certain "invocation" among tin workers, who say quietly to themselves Joseph was in the "tin trade," may afford some ground for the legend. He quotes Mr. Bailie Hamilton, through Mr. Hallam (a master at Harrow), as having heard from the foreman of these workers the following explanation of the invocation. "One of these (traditions of metal workers) is that St. Joseph of Arimathea, the rich man of the Gospels, made his money in the tin trade between Phoenicia and Cornwall. We have also a story that he made several voyages to Britain in his own ships, and that on one occasion he brought with him the Child Christ and his Mother as passengers, and landed them; at St. Michael's Mount in Cornwall"

While many have told me that they have heard of this "invocation," and I have been positively assured by one informant that it is still used by some workers in tin, I should rather doubt

whether the modern tanners who use it are aware of all its original import, as given above.

I have already referred to the old song beginning "Joseph was a tin man." It is known to many, but, unfortunately, I have so far failed to find anyone who can remember the rest. One informant said it went on "And the miners loved him well." Beyond that it still remains a blank, apart from one woman who was sure it was about "his coming in a ship."

It will be noted that the tanners' tradition, as given through Mr. Jenner, includes the Blessed Virgin Mary. Even this is not so impossible as appears at first sight, at least if we feel that there is any basis at all for the Breton tradition given above (2).

Notes to Chapter 2

(1) *An old song, once well known among mining people in Cornwall.*

(2) *In reply to Mr. Painter of Glastonbury and Miss Twycross of Menheniot, both of whom would discount the existence of the tradition at Looe, Mrs. A. Jeffrey of the latter place, in a letter written to "The Cornish Times" (May 21st, 1948) says "An aged Looe, couple kept alive for 70 year, the lovely Island story, but were reluctant to speak of it for fear of ridicule." Mrs. Jeffrey, whom I quoted in my "The Child Christ at Lammana," told me her grandmother spoke of "The Child Jesus and his uncle landing on Looe Island." She was undoubtedly one of the aged couple to whom she now refers.*

I wish sceptics would realise that they are the last people to whom the old folks of Cornwall would disclose their treasured memories.

(3) *See Appendix 7.*

III THE TIN TRADE WITH BRITAIN

WE have abundant evidence that the tin trade with Britain was flourishing long before the Christian era. Posidonius(1) quoted by Diodorus Siculus (v. 21, 22, 31), comments on the friendliness and good manners of the people of Daninonia (Devon and Cornwall), because of their intercourse with the traders. Britain was the principal, and, at times, almost the only place where tin was obtainable for the ancients. The Phoenicians came here for it, and it is practically certain that among the traders would be found Hebrews as well, for this race has always known where and how to find profitable trade. There are names in Cornwall suggestive of Hebrew origin, or at least of a Hebrew tradition, notably Marazion and its counterpart Market Jewstreet, in Penzance. A considerable part of Cornish folklore deals with "Jews' Houses" and the "Knockers," who were said to be the spirits of Jewish miners. If, as we are told in the Gospels, Joseph of Arimathea was an exceptionally wealthy man, he might well have made his fortune in tin. The fact that the Evangelists, who all mention him, have so little to say about him, surely suggests that he may have been a trader whose visits to his "homeland" were intermittent and short.

Among other things which we learn from Posidonius are details about some of the trading posts round the coast, the way in which the tin was brought there by the natives in ingots, and the route taken by the traders to the Mediterranean. This was over the Channel to Morlaix, or some adjacent port in Brittany, and thence across Gaul to the Rhone estuary at Marseilles and Narbonne. In

Britain, he speaks of a certain "Ictis," a sort of highwater island, as a great trading post. He speaks as though this sort of place (an island at high water) was a common feature in the trade, and any one, or all, of the following suit his description quite well: Looe Island, St. Michael's Mount, or the onetime "islands" round Glastonbury. Ptolemy and others speak of Voliba as a chief port of Britain, and this has been identified by many with the Fal estuary, which is the chief natural harbour of Britain. It is directly opposite Morlaix, and a rock off the adjacent coast is pointed out as the nearest land to Brittany. The inference that the present Falmouth was the port from which the tin was shipped across the channel is too obvious to need elaboration. It was in Falmouth harbour that the only identifiable ingot of tin of the period was dredged up, and Falmouth and St. Justin Roseland are, as we have seen, two of the places where the name of Joseph is mentioned in legend. On the other side of the channel, the tin trade route is traced across Gaul by Limoges and the Rhone Valley. It is at least suggestive that the name of Joseph is found in local tradition at all these places I have mentioned, and, as far as I am aware, nowhere else except in the mining districts of North West Spain. The Rhone Valley legends, while dealing principally with the reputed settlement there of Martha, Mary and Lazarus, mention Joseph as their "companion" in emigration, but distinctly suggest that he moves on elsewhere. Where should that be, except to his eventual legendary home at Glastonbury?

The lead mines near Priddy in the Mendips were certainly in existence before the Romans began to exploit them about 50 A.D., and the need for this metal would account for Joseph's connection with Glastonbury and the district. If I were to venture to reconstruct a trading voyage of the tin merchants from materials available, I should say that it probably began at Tyre or Joppa, that the merchants disembarked at Narbonne, that they travelled overland from thence to Morlaix, re-embarked for the crossing of the Channel to the Fal, and, after calling at various trading places along the Cornish coast, proceeded to their terminus in the Severn estuary.

In connection with Joseph, we must remember that he was almost certainly a decurion in the Roman Empire. "Nobilis decuriois" St. Jerome's translation in the Vulgate of St. Mark's "honourable counsellor" (A.V.), and I believe he meant what the Latin words mean, not a member of the Jewish Sanhedrin, but a member of a provincial Roman Senate. We hear of decurions in charge of mining districts (i), which is very striking. It is interesting to see how this title has been misunderstood, not only by most modern Biblical commentators, but also by the Arthurian romancers, who, thinking it was a purely military term, call Joseph "that noble soldier of Pilate." Hence King Arthur and his nearest of kin boast of their reputed ancestor, not as the wealthy trader that he was, but as the founder and paragon of chivalry, and, according to John Hardyng (c. 1450), the original bearer of the "arms of St. George" (4).

Notes to Chapter 3

(1) "Pax," *Summer 1916*, p. 135.

(2) "Pax," *Summer 1916*, p. 135.

(3) *This subject is dealt with fully in the Glastonbury Supplement, Part 2.*

(4) *Circa 80, B.C. There seems to be divided opinion among experts as to whether Diodorus was quoting from Posidonius in this passage, or whether it was from his own experience. Diodorus wrote shortly before the Christian era.*

Chapter IV

THE HOLY VISIT WHEN AND WHY?

WHEN I wrote "The Child Christ at Lammana," I was going on one aspect of the legend only, that which I traced at Looe, and that which is enshrined in the tanners' tradition, viz., that our Lord came as a Child with Joseph of Arimathea. It will be noticed, however, that in other versions, notably those at Priddy and St. just, I find no suggestion at all that they are about a child. I am indebted to the Rev. C. C. Dobson ("Did our Lord Visit Britain?") for the suggestion which I now accept, that Christ first visited our shores as a Child, and that he later sojourned here for a longer or shorter time as a Man. (i) If this sounds too bold and fantastic an idea, I ask you to bear in mind the following points:-

(1). If, as legend suggests, and as the story of the Entombment surely confirms, Joseph was an uncle or some older relative of the Blessed Virgin, he might well have brought the Holy Child to Britain, and given him his first introduction to Glastonbury and the Lake villages then existing near there. Archaeology, as I have said, pictures the villagers as possessing a high degree of culture, and living a simple, quiet life of fishing and husbandry. The growing Child would naturally fall in with any chance of seeing the greater world all the more if he realised it then as the world he came to save. Later, when he was grown up, he would surely look for a peaceful retreat in which to prepare for his life's work. Is it so remarkable that he would remember the Vale of Avalon, and find it there? The most cursory study of Josephus and contemporary writers must convince us that, whatever we may think of the suitability or otherwise of Avalon, it could not have been more unsuitable for quiet preparation than Galilee, whose claim to notoriety at that time appears to have been that it was the breeding ground of sedition and lawlessness. With his "uncle's" frequent trading voyages, there would be no difficulty whatever about transport there and back.

(2). His chief friends and acquaintances there would be in the Lake villages, and archaeology distinctly concludes that the one at Glastonbury did not survive till the Roman occupation, and that the one at Meare did not outlive that occupation for long. Small wonder then that such a faint memory should survive of that holy visit. But it did survive more by the mines of Priddy, which continued to be worked without a break for long after the Romans came to Bath. It probably survived also in the deep veneration felt for that building which men may have believed to have been constructed by the very hands of the Carpenter of Nazareth.(2)

(3). Some friendly critics have raised the question of language, if Christ were living in a foreign land, but I cannot really see that difficulty. He came from Galilee, where the population was very mixed, and where probably most people had some knowledge of Greek and other languages. And I cannot imagine that he would have found greater difficulty in making friends with folk of another tongue than many people find today, who go and settle in foreign parts, with no preliminary knowledge at all of the language.

Notes to Chapter 4

(1) *For Our Lord's supposed residence here. See Glastonbury Supplement Part 1.*

(2) *The Wattle Church at Glastonbury.*

Chapter V.

INDIRECT SUPPORT FOR THE LEGEND

SOME indirect support for the legend, which will weigh heavier or lighter, according to the prejudices of the reader, is afforded by the following:-

(1). Place Names In Cornwall we have Penzance ("Holy Headland"), Marazion (suggesting Hebrew connection), Jesus Well, opposite Padstow (an unique well dedication, I believe), St. Saviour's Chapel, Polruan (a dedication dating from the 13th century), Essa, at Saltash and Polruan (which might suggest the Holy, Name in Hebrew) and the so-called "Aesop's Bed," a rock near Talland, which certainly has nothing to do with the fabler, and might, with some probability, be also a corruption of the Hebrew "Yesu." (1).

In Somerset, there is Christon, near Cheddar, on the old route from the lead mines of Priddy to Uphill, another reputed port of the old merchants.

(2). **The Wattle Church, called in Saxon time "the Ealde Chirche."** --I have mentioned the reverence in which it was held from the earliest times of which we have any record. William, of Malmesbury, by no means a credulous writer (2) speaks of it with reverential awe, and, in describing some curious stones on the floor, says, "If I were to suppose that they concealed a holy secret, I should do no harm to religion" And he is our only historian of repute who *saw the Ealde Chirche* before the fire in 1184. He also quotes, with no apparent misgivings, the story of St. David's vision, with its supposed message from our Lord about the old church, "I have dedicated it long ago to my mother." It is, indeed, hard to find any justification for such language and such reverence, unless we seek for a supposed origin far holier than its building by an early disciple. The dedication to the Blessed Virgin certainly dates back before the Conquest, when, as the present vicar of Glastonbury points out in his "St. Joseph of Arimathea at Glastonbury," such dedications were probably unknown (6th edition P. 43).

(3) **The Holy Cemetery.** This was held in a reverence as great as, if not greater than that accorded to the Wattle Church. I have shown in the Glastonbury Supplement that this may be due to the belief that the Blessed Virgin had been laid to rest here. It is interesting also to note that in the "Nova Legenda" and other medieval stories events are frequently dated from the Assumption, even when the Year of Our Lord is given as well. At the same time, if this supposition be rejected, the reverence in which it was held suggests some holier connection than the burial place of Joseph of Arimathea and subsequent saints. It was, apart from the old Church, the holiest part of the Holy Land of Britain.

(4) **Folk Lore and Folk Songs.** I can see the smile of sceptics, when I include these. But they often contain a germ of truth, and more often reflect old legends and traditions. At Looe I traced a pretty bit of folk lore in connection with the Giant's Hedge. According to this version, from a centenarian of Looe, "The piskies of Cornwall heard that a little boy and his uncle had landed at Looe Island, and they were so anxious to protect them, that they went to the giants, and got them to build a hedge." Note the entire absence of names, and yet the obvious reference to our holy legend.

Of songs and so-called carols, popular now or once in Cornwall, I mention

"Joseph was a Tinman."

"I saw Three Ships."

"Jerusalem"

The second of these is most obscure, and has been sadly corrupted in later nursery versions. In the oldest form I can trace, the three ships bring, among others, "Joseph and his fair ladye." Of course, this might mean Joseph of Nazareth, but in view of the fact that the rhyme is about ships, I think it is quite probable that it first referred to the holy legend, and that "his fair ladye" was originally "our fair Ladye." Blake's "Jerusalem" is still a prime favourite, with its haunting and challenging question, never yet answered in the affirmative or negative:-

"Did the countenance divine

Shine forth upon these clouded hills?" (3)

Notes to Chapter 5

(1) *Pronounced locally "Essa's Bed," or by obvious corruption, "Aceo'spades."*

(2) *At the end of "The Child Christ at Lammana" I expressed the opinion that William of Malmesbury rejected the story of the coming of Joseph to Glastonbury. I now think that the word "rejected" was much too forcible, but he was certainly inclined to be suspicious of legends as a whole. He undoubtedly knew of the tradition and referred to it.*

(3) *It has been suggested that Blake was simply drawing on his fancy when he wrote these words. How are we then going to explain that in 1773, when he was 16, he did a drawing entitled "Joseph of Arimathea" among the rocks of Albion"?*

I am told that one branch of Blake's family lived in or near Glastonbury.

Chapter VI

LIGHT FROM ANCIENT DOCUMENTS

CRITICS of all times have harped on the everlasting theme that the legends "have no documentary support," at any rate before the 13th century. If by this they mean cast iron proof, of course they have not I never expect to find such.

We are dealing with a time which falls within the darkest period of the "dark ages" of history. Take the years 8 to 25 A.D. Search the writings of the Evangelists, Josephus, the Roman historians, and Gibbon, and, apart from the defeat of Varus and his legions in Germany in A.D. 9, you find next to nothing recorded. Josephus is never so short and uninformative as during this period, when, apparently, he was short of any reliable source of information. Of our old "historians" in Britain, Gildas and Ne reverence has woven beautiful and totally incredible legends. But, as Canon Doble again insisted, they were real men and women, who lived saintly lives in the districts where Supplement dealing with the holiest traditions of Glastonbury itself. After that I leave the documents to face the scrutiny of experts and await final verdict of History on the possibility, likelihood, **or truth of wonderful story I believe in and tell.**

GLASTONBURY

THE HOLY LAND OF BRITAIN.

In this Supplement to "Christ in Cornwall?" I return to the spot whence I started on "The Quest." It had its origin in a short reference to the Holy Legend of Our Lord's visit to Britain in an early edition of Rev. Lionel Lewis' "St. Joseph of Arimathea at Glastonbury". At Talland I traced the beautiful story of the visit grown man (The Saviour) visiting, with or without Joseph, most of the old mining districts of Cornwall. This part of the Quest is dealt with in "Christ in Cornwall?"

I have since traced the wonder story in places further a field, but still connected with early trade in metals. I always thought it should be found on the Welsh side of the Severn estuary, and I now hear definitely from a woman of Welsh extraction that she was told by her teacher at school that “it was said that Our Lord came to Caerleon”. Caerleon can trace its history as an important centre for trade before the time of the Romans and the later times of King Arthur. Now, in the Isles of Scilly, I hear that Merchants' Point on Tresco is said to be so named because the Phoenicians came here to barter for tin brought over from the mainland by the Britons. Some add the belief that Joseph of Arimathea also came, and there is a faint but quite definite memory that Our Lord's name was also mentioned. This is referred to in my “St. Martin's, St. Helen's, and Tean”, with comments on the possibility of Scilly as a place of trade or barter.

But Glastonbury, Priddy, and the Mendips have always been the focal point of it all. Here, on the “holiest erth of England” I have looked for, and I believe I have found, the culmination of the whole story. Here it is the legend, not of a visit, either by a Child or a Man, but of a retreat for the Saviour of the world during the hidden years of early manhood. And, hardly less wonderful, of another hidden retreat, the final home and grave of his blessed Mother.

Wild as these ideas may seem, I beg you to suspend judgment while I unfold the grounds on which the growing conviction has been forced on me that they are both true, and that the dear anonymous writer whom I quote on the cover had all this in mind when he called, and rightly called, Glastonbury “the holiest erth” in our beloved land.

To begin with, we must rid ourselves of all prejudices and preconceptions I have dealt with some of these as regards Our Lord in “Christ in Cornwall?” I would add a word about travel and emigration among Hebrew men and women. I said before that the story of Our Lady coming here was harder to conceive, but that it could not be discounted altogether in view of the tinnners' tradition. As regards women, we know that there was a large and early settlement of Hebrew folk in the Rhone valley, whither the Bethany family is said in local legend to have migrated en masse after Our Lord's Ascension; and Priscilla, a Jewess, is known from the story of the Acts to have travelled, apparently without much difficulty, between Rome, Ephesus, and Corinth.

Again, in considering the credibility of one legend, we must weigh it against that of alternative ones. With regard to Our Lord, the alternative is a permanent residence at Nazareth. I can conceive of no place less suitable in those turbulent times in which to prepare for his life's work. The same applies with still greater force to the idea of Jerusalem or Ephesus as a final home of rest for Our Lady of Sorrows. Both these alternatives are purely legendary, and if they are more generally accepted, there are very palpable flaws. Our Lord's visit to Nazareth at the beginning of his ministry does not fit in with the story of a village carpenter who has only been away for a few weeks or months. The chief flaw in the case of the Blessed Virgin is the site of her grave. The place now pointed out to pilgrims near Jerusalem was never mentioned by St. Jerome, who, in the 4th century, explored and described all the holy places of Judaea. Her alternative residence at Ephesus is faced with the glaring omission of all reference to her by St. Paul in his Epistles and by St. Luke in the Acts.

Having thus cleared the ground, let us see what clues have led me to the conclusions outlined above. I have acknowledged my debt to Rev. C. C. Dobson for the suggestion that Our Lord came to Britain twice at least, first as a child or youth, on a visit with Joseph, and secondly as a man, to reside for some years at or near Glastonbury. The two fit in quite well. The first visit would introduce him to the peace and, as I believe, the friendly atmosphere of Avalon and the Lake villages of the neighbourhood. In earlier. These passages suggest that the writers were conversant with, and did not altogether discredit, ancient traditions which attributed mysterious and holy origin to the spiritual Church in Britain, and to the material Wattle Church at Glastonbury in particular. The critics will find the passages quoted, analysed, and discussed in the Appendices, on which I claim to have bestowed a little research, study, and care. Meanwhile

in this Supplement I use the conclusion I have formed without comment, and translations which I claim to have justified in the said Appendices.

(1) The old wattle Church of Glastonbury was held in a veneration which far transcended that which would be accorded to an early Christian sanctuary, even if it were supposed to have been erected by or in the time of the Apostles. William of Malmesbury, who has never been accused of being a credulous legendmonger, in describing the holy fame as he saw it, mentions in particular some strange stones in the pavement, and suggests that they concealed a holy secret. The same writer records a traditional vision of St. David, where Our Lord appeared and told the saint that he had already dedicated the building to his Mother.

He also quotes a far older unknown historian, quoted, as he says, already by St. Augustine, as saying that the "Ealde Chirche" was built by no human art.

(2) While no writer can be quoted as saying explicitly either that Our Lord lived there, or that he built the Wattle Church, yet Gildas in the 6th century said that the "true Sun" first shed his beams on these islands at the height of Tiberius' reign (1437 A.D.).

(3) In the great Register of Glastonbury of the Middle Ages occur two titles, "Domus Dei", and "Secretum Domini", which bear the obvious meaning of 'The House or home of God' and 'The Secret or retreat of the Lord!' No special pleading or sophistry will ever make me believe that they had such mundane meanings as Domesday Survey and the Abbot's private notebook.

Fireside stories of the Holy visit still linger at Glastonbury and far more so at Priddy in the Mendips, Why the tradition was more emphasised at Glastonbury has always puzzled me. (1) That existed is beyond doubt, but the monks of the Middle Ages appear to have elaborated the cult of Our Lady and St. Joseph, almost to the exclusion of the holier tradition of Our Lord. Perhaps even then there were doubters, as today, who would say "Oh! That is going a bit too far." But what of that stone in the South wall of the Lady Chapel, with the two mysterious and isolated names 'IESUSMARIA'? No explanation. A monk called Edward Stourton wrote about them in the abbacy of Adam de Sodbury (1312-1334), but his work, alas, is lost. Is it too fantastic a flight of fancy to picture the Old Church, "Built by no human art," but by the human hands of the Son of God and inscribed with those names by him, in dedication, as he told St. David later, to his own Blessed Mother? I know they were carved in stone in the 12th century. But they may have reproduced what an earlier generation remembered carved in the rough woodwork of the original building. (1) And, while they did not blazon it in their writings, may not the monks of later years have deliberately enshrined the Holy Tradition in their name "Domus Dei"? The "Secret of the Lord" too had, perchance, a more momentous import than they even knew. It was not only his retreat, but his deliberate secret as well. Has the time at last arrived foretold by the old bard Melchinus in the dim ages of Glastonbury's story, when "long ere the Day of Judgment all will be open and plain to the world"?

(1) A lady who tells me that her ancestors lived in Somerset, and some time near Glastonbury but who would rather remain anonymous, says in a letter to me: my family (on both sides) have lived in Somerset for many generations, and have always believed that when Joseph of Arimathea came to trade in tin, he brought the boy Jesus with him to "the Summerland" to continue his education on the Isle of Avalon, and that after the Crucifixion Joseph of Arimathea, Mary, and other disciples lived and died there. She says also that she was brought up by her grandmother, who "never questioned" these legends. As my correspondent can hardly be less, than middleaged, and as she says that her grandmother had been told the Story by her grandmother, we have here no mean link in the long chain of oral tradition round Glastonbury.

At Priddy the precious tradition of Christ's visit remained as a treasured belief to within living memory, and modern scepticism has failed to destroy it entirely today. The comings of Christ there have always sounded to me more like the visits of a teach years who used to recall his

pupils to their task with the admonition "Suppose you saw Jesus coming up the hill now?" surely a memory of faroff days when the children gathered to watch for the coming of the beloved Teacher up the long coulee to the crest of Mendip.

The other amazing conclusion I have reached is that Our Lady lived and died at Glastonbury. Again, first consider the alternatives, which all presume that she lived all her latter life with the "Beloved disciple." All that has Biblical support is that Our Lord entrusted her to St. John from the Cross, and that "from that hour that disciple took her to his own (home). It nowhere says that she was expected to or actually did live with him all the rest of her life. Indeed, an early tradition of the 14th century, recorded by Capgrave in the "Nova Legenda Angliae," says explicitly that while the blessed John was labouring at Ephesus, he handed her over to the care of Joseph as her "bridesman " (" paranympus "), and that Joseph was present at her Assumption. So another legend had come into existence before the 14th century, showing that there was no *universal* belief in the Church *then* that she lived all the rest of her life with St. John. To return to the New Testament story, she is curiously missing in St. John's own account of Easter morning, and our last reference shows her after the Ascension living with all the Apostles and the other women in Jerusalem.

(1) I am inclined to accept Mr. Bligh Bond's idea that the original building was a circular hut, which was enclosed in a rectangular Church of wood at a somewhat later date.

As regards the alternative *places* where she is supposed to have lived, Jerusalem was a scene of incessant turmoil, with revolts against the Romans alternating with persecutions of the Christians; Ephesus lacks any confirmation either from local legend or New Testament writings; Mount Carmel is only mentioned in legend as, perhaps, a temporary refuge; and Nazareth was the place which had rejected and tried to kill her Blessed Son.

As to her death, we have a most fanciful story in the "Transitus Mariae", telling how all the Apostles came at divine bidding to be present at her passing. This story is not, I believe, taken seriously by any branch of the Church today. The story of the Assumption is generally located in or near Jerusalem, but St. Jerome's silence makes such a tradition sadly lacking in a firm foundation. All the alternative legends of Our Lady's later life are purely legendary, unsubstantiated, and, in my opinion, unlikely.

The main basis of my "amazing" surmise lies in striking phrases in old documents more than in folk memories and oral tradition. We shall see that such oral tradition did exist in 1502, and I have traced a dim echo of it in living memory. After I had just returned from Glastonbury, a lady said to me "Did you ever hear that Our Lady came to England and died here?" I was amazed. I had just returned from the spot outside the walls of the Lady Chapel at Glastonbury, where the surmise had first caught and stunned me, but I had said no word of it to her. I then asked where she had heard it, and she said she had been at school in Alexandria with Nuns who were all connected with the old aristocracy of France, and "it might have been they" who told her. A Roman Catholic friend of mine has just pointed out how remarkable it would be for Nuns of the French aristocracy to attribute such a story to England rather than to France, if it were pure invention.

Outside the Lady Chapel at Glastonbury I had been pondering over two passages which I had often read, but perhaps had never sufficiently studied. One day as I sat looking at the "IESUSMARIA" stone it all came back, and staggered me by the implication. First there was the passage from the old bard Melchinus, where he speaks of the early disciples building the Wattle Church *over* ("super") *the Powerful, adorable virgin*. The present vicar of Glastonbury said afterwards that he believed I was the first person who had dared to translate the simple Latin word literally. Why not? It is at least a simpler translation than Dean Armitage Robinson's "for

the adoring of a powerful virgin." What Melchinus said, rightly or wrongly, was that the Ealde Chirche was built over the grave of the Blessed Virgin.

For my other passage, we must jump perhaps 900 years, and we find that, while oral tradition on this subject is practically defunct now, it was not so when the anonymous bard of 1502 wrote of the Coming of Joseph of "Armathia" to Britain.

**“Now here how Ioseph came into englande;
“But at that tyme it was called brytayne.
“Than. xv. yere with our lady, as I understande,
“Joseph wayted styll, to serve hyr he was fayne;”**

The meaning is obvious, and though he does not expressly say that she died here, he goes on to quote from “the boke ” about what happened after “hyr assumpcyon." And note that the story of her residence with Joseph is from oral tradition (‘as I understande’), and not from “he boke.”

I now proceed to reconstruct the story as I see it. St. John took Our Lady away from the cross "at that very hour," that she might be spared the horror of the three hours of darkness. She lived with him or under his charge, for a comparatively short while. He then transferred his trust to Joseph, who, after seeing the Bethany family safe in the Rhone valley, brought the Blessed Virgin to Avalon. This was to be her secret refuge, beside the little building which her Blessed Son had built and already bequeathed to her. Here she died, probably about 48 A.D. Here they buried her, and here the "first neophytes of Catholic law" (1) erected the Vetusta Ecclesia over her resting place. Joseph now went to join St. Philip in France. Commissioned, and perhaps ordained by him, he returned about 63 A.D. with his band of twelve hermits to take up their abode around the same sacred spot.

This reconstruction would solve some puzzling problems. On Wearyall hill is a stone placed by John Clark (1801-1809) with the inscription "J.A. ANO.D.XXXI." The Vatican M.S.(2) dated Joseph's coming as 35 A.D. The dates are near enough for rough chronology. Either would allow approximately for 15 years here with Our Lady, and then for time with St. Philip before his final return to Avalon. In the claim for precedence put forward by the British Church in the 15th Century Councils, the date of Joseph's coming is given as “immediately after the passion." (“statim post passionem”). It also fits in with the very ancient dedication of the Church to the Blessed Virgin, perhaps the earliest on record; the strange, haunting Breton Legend of St. Anne's original connection with Britain or Brittany and most notably with the two following references, with which I close;

(1) See Appendix 2. The Latin phrase for those who found the old “Church” is “primi neophytæ,” which would hardly be used of any missionaries after the first century A.D.

(2) See Appendix 2

(1) Why is England called “Our Lady's Dowry”? All our Roman Catholic friends know of the title, and pray for us under it. It was assuredly her dowry, if it had been bestowed on her as her final home by her Son. And Joseph was then indeed her "bridesman," who was to conduct her to her inheritance.

(2) Lastly, I return to the subject of reverence. We noted this in connection with the Wattle Church. It is perhaps even more striking with regard to the Holy Cemetery. William of Malmesbury ("Gesta Regum," 1, 2) tells how acts of irreverence,

seemingly trivial met dire retribution, how the Holy Cemetery was the haunt of counties pilgrims, and how large numbers of holy men and women craved to be buried here, and here "especially chose to await the day of resurrection under the protection of the Mother of GOD." (i).

(1) *Deipara*, -- A common medieval title of Our Lady.

APPENDICES.

NO. 1. GILDAS (560-600 A.D.)

"De Excidio" --- Section VI.

(ex M.S. Cod. Cantab. Ed. Gale).

"Verus ille Sol, non de firmamento temporali, sed de summa. etiam coelorum arce tempora cuncta excedente, universo orbi praeifulgidum sui coruscum ostendens; tempore, ut scimus, summo Tiberii Caesaris radios suos primum indulget."

"He the true Sun revealing his excellent brightness to the whole world first bestows his rays (on this island), as we know, at the height of the reign of Tiberius Caesar."

The translation of "tempore summon" may be disputed. In any case Gildas says it was *during* the reign of Tiberius, who died A.D. 37. That he referred to Britain is defined in earlier words ("glaciali frigore insulae"), a truly Roman estimate of our climate.

I claim that it is more likely that Gildas meant that Christ came here himself, than that some disciples reached our shores before A.D. 37. The traditional date of the arrival of Joseph of Arimathea *with his twelve companions* is A.D. 63. My own surmise of an earlier visit with the Blessed Virgin could only be at the extreme end of Tiberius' reign, when the emperor had retired into semiinsane obscurity. I cannot believe that Gildas would have used the words "tempore summo" of such a period.

NO. 2. THE "ANCIENT BRITISH HISTORIAN."

William of Malmesbury, who plainly says he is shy of the legendary, is yet constrained to write thus:---

After referring to the twelve disciples, said to have been sent to Britain by St. Philip and St. James, he goes on:--

"Hoc autem ita se habere tum ex carta Beati Patficii, tum ex scriptis seniorurn cognoscimus. Quorum unus Britonum Historiographus, prout apud Sanctum Edmundum, itemque apud Sanctum Augustinum. Anglorum Apostolum vidimus, ita exorsus est." (Gale's transcript. "Histories Britannicae" pp. 292293). He goes on to quote, approximately, the words given below, from the "Visa Sancti Dunstani."

William distinctly says here that this passage had already been quoted by St. Edmund and St. Augustine. This at least shows it, great antiquity. I cannot actually trace St. Augustine's reference, but I would note a certain mysterious Vatican MS, mentioned by Cardinal Baronius as his authority for an assertion that Joseph of Arimathea was a companion of St. Philip, Lazarus, etc., in their flight to Gaul in A.D. 35, and later preached in Britain. Baronius' actual words in the margin are "ex manuscripta Historia Angl. quae habetur in Bibl. Vaticana," (Lansdown M.S. 255.f.364. British Museum). Baronius was librarian of the Vatican.

Now we turn to the "Vita Sancti Dunstani." Bishop Stubbs, Memorials of St. Dunstan, 1874), gives the following version of the passage by the anonymous writer called Saxon Priest "B," which he says is probably the oldest and most accurate. He thinks the writer was perhaps a contemporary of St. Dunstan.

TEXT

"Quem, (St. Dunstan), pii parentes sacri baptismatis undis renatum Dunstanum vocaverunt. Crevit itaque puer et effectus est tam Deo quam hominibus earns, Erat autem quaedam regalis in confinio ejusdem praefati viri (King Athelstan) insula, antiquo vicinorum vocabulo Glastonia nuncupata, latis locorum dimensa sinibus, piscosis aquis stagneisque circumducta fluminibus, et plurimis humanae indigentiae apta usibus, atque sacris, quod maximum est, Dei dicata muneribus. In ea siquidem ipsius loca (sic) primi catholicae legis neophitae antiquam Deo dictante repperunt aecclesiam, nulla hominum arte(i) constructam, immo humano salutis coelitus paratam; quam postmodum Ipse coelorum fabricator multis miraculorum gestis multisque misteriorum virtutibus(2) hanc(3) Sibi sanctaeque genetrici SuaeW Mariae consecratarn fore demonstravit. Huic etiam aliud addiderunt opere(5) lapideo(6) oratorium quod Christo ejusque Sancto Petro Apostolo dedicaverunt"

FOOTNOTES (Stubbs'):-

(1) *arte) ut fenint, ins. B. in marg.*

(2) *misteriorum birtutibus) virtutum misteriiis. B.*

(3) *hanc) om. B.*

(4) *Suae) Dei. B.*

(5) *opere) operes. A.*

(6) *lapideo) lapideos. A.*

The important footnote is (1), which shows that the version accepted by Bishop Stubbs did not have the words "ut ferunt" in the text, and that "B" only had it in the margin. William of Malmesbury includes it in the text. This gradual insertion of "So they say" is a very interesting commentary on the growth of scepticism. Note also the sudden and abrupt change from the account of St. Dunstan's boyhood to this amazing story of the "ealde chirche". The writer is clearly copying an older MS.

FREE TRANSLATION.

Now there was a certain royal island within the confines of the realm of Athelstan, called in the old language of the vicinity Glastonia, embracing broad tracts of country, surrounded by waters abounding in fish, and riverbeds rich in lead; adapted to the satisfaction of every human need. Also, best of all, consecrated by the gifts of God himself. Indeed, when they came into these parts, the first neophytes of catholic law, under the guidance of God, found a Church, constructed by no human art, but actually prepared divinely for the salvation of man. Which Church the Creator of Heaven himself, by many miraculous acts and mysterious virtues, showed was to be consecrated to Himself and to Mary his Mother.

NO. 3. "DOMUS DEI" --- "SECRETUM DOMINI"

I have seen the names "Domus Dei" and "Secretum Domini" to applied to Glastonbury by several writers, and have done my best to trace their origin. Ussher, in his "Britannicarum. Ecclesiarum Antiquitates" (Chap. 2), gives the following footnote to the word "Domesday," "*Domus Dei*; in magno Glastoniensis Monasterii Registro, quod *Secretum Domini* vocatur: fol.249b."

Certain authorities at the Bodleian Library tell me there is no doubt that "Secretum Domini" is an abbreviation of "Registrum Secretum Domini Abbatis," and it is certainly true that one such register of the time of Walter de Monyton, (Abbot 13411374), was called "Secretum Abbatis," (MS. Bodl. Wood. empt. I). But there were earlier registers. Dr. Oliver mentions an Original Survey of the Property of Glastonbury Abbey in the time of Abbot Adam de Sodbury (13081326), and Ussher may have got his "Secretum Domini" from one of these.

With the utmost deference to the experience of the Bodleian librarians on the subject of the ways of monastic scribes, I do find it very hard to believe that the "Private Register of the Lord Abbot" was shortened by them to the most ambiguous form of "The Secret of the Lord." Is it not at least equally possible that the original "Great Register" of Glastonbury was called, with no intentional ambiguity, the "Secretum Domini," and that later Abbots, not understanding its original purport, altered it to "Secretum Domini Abbatis," and later again quietly dropped the "Domini"?

The problem of the words "Domus Dei" is still more obscure. On fol.249b, (the same reference as Ussher's above), of the "Secretum Abbatis" is the following:

"Terra sancte Marie Glastonie sicut continetur in **libro scaccarii** Londoniensis qui dicitur *domus dei* quem componi fecit rex Willelmus primus subacto sibi et pacificato regno Anglie."

On the face of it, this certainly seems to give "Domus Dei" as a fourteenth century name for Domesday, and Stuart Moore, quoted by Dove in "Domesday Studies," says that, "according to the compiler of the Red Book of the Exchequer," it was called "Domus Dei," or "the Roll of Winchester." But is this his "liber scaccarii" identical with the Domesday Survey? The usual title of the latter is "Liber judicialis vel Censualis Angliae." A book of laws and customs, now lost, existed in the time of King Alfred, called "Dombok," and "tiger judicialis" is a remarkably close rendering of the old Saxon word.

Here again, the experts, though with less certainty, would attribute the name "Domus Dei" to careless monastic scribes, trying to put into Latin the vulgar names "Domebook," "Domesdaybook," or "Domesday." They may have been poor latinists, but were they really as poor as all this? "Domus Dei" has such an obvious meaning, even for the poorest Latin scholar, and it is a very different meaning to either "Dombok" "Domesday," or "Doomsday."

Others again have apparently given up the attempt to derive "Domus Dei" from "Domesday," and have attributed this name to the supposed circumstance of its having been kept in some room or chapel, which was called "Domus Dei." But they do not even seem sure whether this was at Winchester or Westminster. It looks very much like a surmise, and nothing more. Was any room or chapel ever called "Domus Dei"? The cathedrals themselves would of course have the right to the name, but so would the humblest "House of God." You might as well call the Survey a "Church," and be done with it! The explanation sounds forced and unreal.

Once again, I humbly put forward my suggestion. It is that the name "Domesday" may well have been the vulgar name for the Survey, based on the Saxon "Dombok." But that "Domus Dei" must have a different explanation, in which case the vulgar "Domesday" might equally well be a corruption of this. Something, some place, or the whole realm, may have been known as "Domus Dei," the "Home of God." And those to whom it was thus known may well have been the old monks of Glastonbury in whose registers the name has been preserved. In other words,

I suggest that they regarded either Glastonbury itself, or the whole of Britain, as in some sense "God's Home." Through them the name might easily become transferred to the Survey of the Conqueror, and have been copied by others, who perhaps never understood its original sacred import.

This may sound fantastic to some readers. I wonder if it is more so than any of the other explanations of the name "Domesday" which are put forward by more learned students.

Nor do I see that my theory about "Secretum Dominni" is seriously affected by the fact, which I acknowledge above, that the folio reference given by Ussher from what he calls "Secretum Domini" is the same apparently as that in "Secretum Abbatis" at the Bodleian. It is clear that these registers were recopied and brought up to date from time to time, but a great part of them would probably be a verbatim transcript, and therefore have the same folio references. The same words might well be on the same page, both in the known "Secretum Abbatis," and in Ussher's "Secretum. Domini."

Since the above was written I have found confirmation of my concluding argument in Adam de Domerham (circa 1300). Trill. Coll. Camb. MS. R.5.33. fol. 131a. Adam de Domerham here quotes a document called "Secretum domini," and gives the identical passage as that in the Bodleian "Secretum abbatis," *with the same folio number* (249b). There can be little doubt that this is the document which Ussher quotes from, and note that the date of this is certainly older than the "Secretum abbatis" (1311-1374):

Since the second edition was issued, the controversy over the meanings of these two phrases was resumed in the columns of the Somerset County Herald," and in the issue of 19th April, 1947, under No. 4264, Abbot Horne quotes, with apparent approval, the comments of Dom. Aelred Watkin. I give the exact words of the latter's pertinent summary in each case. (1) *Secretum Domini*. "On account of the fact that it was copied out for the private use of the Lord Abbots of Glastonbury, (it) went by the name of *Secretum Domini* --- a nickname implying that it was set apart for the use of the Lord Abbot."

I should like confirmation of that word "fact." As for the "nickname," I ask any intelligent reader to judge for himself as to its suitability! (2) *Domus Dei*. "The scribe attempting to find some Latin form for the word *Domesday*, invents the somewhat ridiculous *Domus Dei*, perhaps as a rather laboured witticism."

"Curiouser and curiouser," to quote Alice. "Ridiculous" "Laboured witticism"!

Surely for the poorest Latin scholar, both nickname and witticism verge perilously on the profane.

NO. 4. MELCHINUS

Melchinus or Melkinus (Celtic Maelgwyn?). He is most obscure in origin and date. John of Glastonbury, following Glastonbury tradition, says he was "before Merlin" Pits ("De illustribus Britanniae scriptoribus" 1619), describes him as an "Avalonian," and calls him a British bard, historian, and astronomer. He dates him with assurance as A.D. 560. Leland (c. 1530), noted the document here quoted as a very treasured possession in the old Library of the Abbey. He calls it "a fragment of history written by Melchinus an Avalonian." Apart from tradition, the language suggests great antiquity, and, whatever else we may call it, it does not sound in the least monastic. The passage is quoted, apart from John of Glastonbury, in the "Nova Legenda Angliae," and the following translation is from the text as given by Skeat ("Joseph of Arimathe," P. 7071).

“The Isle of Avalon, hungry for the burial of the natives, once adorned, above all others in the world, by oracular circles ('sperulis vaticinantibus') of prophecy, will for the future also be furnished with worshippers of the Highest. Abbadare, mighty in judgment. noblest of natives, with one hundred and four knights ('milibus' for 'militibus') fell asleep there. Amid whom, Joseph of Marmor, named of 'Armathia,' found his perpetual rest. And he lies inside the forked line near the southern angle of the oratory erected there (of wattles prepared before), over ("super potentem. adorandam virginem") the powerful adorable virgin, by that circle of thirteen inhabiting the spot. Joseph forsooth, has with him in his sepulchre two cruets, white and silvery, filled with the blood and sweat of the prophet Jesus. When his sepulchre shall be found, it will be seen in future years complete and undamaged, and it will be open to the whole world. Thenceforth, neither dew nor rain shall ever fail those who inhabit this most noble island. Long before the judgment day in Josaphat, these things will be open and manifested to living people.”

I have always felt that this document, though quoted by sceptics like Dean Armitage Robinson, has never had the consideration it deserves. The language stamps it as far earlier than the Conquest and the phraseology as native or even Hebrew in origin.

NO. 5. ST. DAVID'S VISION.

St. David's Vision and William of Malmesbury. William of Malmesbury (12th century), who actually saw the old Wattle Church, is, by his own confession, very cautious in repeating unsubstantiated legends, yet he records, with no apparent suspicion, the following supposed vision of St. David ("De Antiquitate," Hearne, P. 25). The translation here is by Mr. H. F. ScottStokes, a sceptic on Glastonbury legends:--

“In what reverence the great David, Archbishop of the Menevesians, held the place is so wellknown, that it needs no report of mine to elucidate it. Through him a divine miracle corroborated the antiquity and sanctity of the Church. For, thinking to consecrate it, he came with seven Bishops, of whom he was the primate, to Glastonbury. But when all was ready for the ceremony, on the night before it was to take place (as he thought), he bade sleep welcome. And, having relaxed all his senses to rest, he saw the Lord Jesus standing by, and courteously inquiring why he had come. He at once explained, but the Lord recalled him from his intention by saying that he himself had long ago dedicated the Church in honour of his Mother, and the sacrament ought not to be profaned by human repetition.

NO. 6. THE EALDE CHIRCHE

The following gives William of Malmesbury's own description of the Wattle Church, with the feelings which it inspired in him:--

Gesta Regum Anglorum," L, 20. “In it the bodily relics of many saints are preserved, some of whom we shall note in due course; nor is there any space around the shrine which does not contain the ashes of the blessed. Indeed, the tessellated pavement of polished stone, yes, even the sides of the altar, and the very altar itself, both above and below, are piled with the crowded relics. In places also one may note in the pavement on either side stones carefully placed, in alternate triangles and squares, and sealed with lead, beneath which, if I believe some holy secret to be held, I am doing no harm to religion.”

NO. 7. THE BRETON LEGEND

I append in full the legend current in Brittany, connecting St. Anne, the mother of the Blessed Virgin, with that land. While it is obvious that the Bretons themselves locate the scene of the legend in their own country, it is at least possible that it was transplanted from Cornwall, with

many of their place names, at the time of the great migration. The district with which the legend is connected is called "Cornuaille." The version which I append is my own translation of an extract from Anatole le Braz' "Sainte Anne de la Palude" in "An Pays des Pardons."

The writer tells how he was struck by the likeness of a poor peasant woman to the figure of St. Anne, before which she had been praying.

"Do you know," I said, "that St. Anne and you look like sisters?"

"I am, like her, a grandmother," she replied, "and, like me, thank God, she is a Breton."

"St. Annea Breton? Are you quite sure about that, my **worthy woman?**"

She turned her dreamy eyes on me, and answered in a pitying tone: "How easy to see that you are from the town! The townsfolk are ignorant; they despise us country folk, because we cannot read their books. But they! What would they know of their land, if we were not there to tell them? Oh yes, St. Anne was a Breton. Go to the Chateau de Moellien and they will show you the room she inhabited, in the days when she was Queen of that country. For a Queen she was; nay, she was even "Duchesse," a far more beautiful title. They blessed her in the streets, because of her goodness and her boundless pity for the humble and unhappy. Her husband, in turn, passed for a very hard man. He was jealous of his wife, and did not want her to bear children. When he discovered that she was with child, he flew into a violent passion, and drove her out like a beggar, in the middle of the night, in the depth of winter, half naked, into the icy storm. A piteous wanderer, she walked blindly on. In the bay of Trefentec, under this dune, a barque of light rode placidly, though the sea was rough, and at the stern stood an angel in white, his wings spread out like sails. 'Embark,' said the angel, 'that we may take care of you; for the time is short.' 'Whither would you take me?' she asked, and he replied, 'The wind will direct us; the will of God is in the wind.'

"They passed along the coast of Judaea, and landed in the port of Jerusalem. Some days later Anne gave birth to a daughter, destined by God to be the Virgin. She brought her up piously, taught her letters in a book of Psalms, and made her wise in body and spirit; meet to become the mother of Jesus. Her task ended, as she felt herself growing old, she prayed Heaven, saying, 'I am pining for my Bretons. If only, ere I die, I may see again my parish, and the beach, so sweet to my eyes, of 'la Palude in Plounevez Porzay!' Her prayer was answered. The barque of light returned to take her, with the same angel at the helm, only now he was robed in black, to show the saint of her widowhood, for the Seigneur de Moellien had died meanwhile. The castle folk, gathered on the shore, received their chatelaine with transports of joy, but she immediately hushed them. 'Go,' she commanded, 'and distribute all my goods among the poor.' She was resolved to end her earthly days in penitence. Henceforth she lived *here*, under this barren dune, in one perpetual orison. The light of her eyes radiated far over the waters like a moonbeam. On stormy nights she was the saviour of the fishers. With one gesture she calmed the sea, and drove the clouds back to bed, like a flock of sheep to the fold.

"Jesus, her grandson, undertook for her sake the voyage to Basse-Bretagne. Before he was to climb Calvary, he went to ask her blessing, accompanied by the disciples Peter and John. Their parting was a bitter one. Anne wept tears of blood, and Jesus tried in vain to console her. At last he said to her, 'Think, grandmere, of your Bretons. Speak, and in thy name I will grant them whatever they ask.'

"The saint checked her tears. 'Ah! then,' she cried, 'May a Church be dedicated here to me, and as far as its steeple shall be seen, as far as its bells shall be heard, may all sickness be healed, and every soul, living or dead, find peace!' . . . "There, my gentleman is the true history of Anne of la Palude, in Plounevez Porzay. There it is, just as I had it from my mother, who had it from hers, at a time when families transmitted piously, from memory to memory, the things of the past."

These simple words of the Breton peasant woman sum up the whole case for the credibility of oral tradition. Allowing for all possible embellishments in the course of time, the fundamental basis of the tradition dates back to those faroff ages when, in the beautiful words of the original "les familles se transmettaient pieusement de memoire en memoire les choses du passe."

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