**Behind the Mists of Ireland**

**By Douglas S. Winnail**

**The real plot in the drama of Western civilization is the struggle for the soul of Europe. Most assume Apostolic Christianity prevailed. Surprising clues nearly hidden on the Emerald Isle suggest something else!**

**F**or many today, Ireland is an enchanting—yet puzzling—island on the fringe of Europe; a beautiful green country where terrorist activity periodically makes headlines. It is portrayed as a land of fairies and leprechauns, and of quaint little legends—that few take seriously. However, this popular image of Ireland *totally obscures* the incredible role the Emerald Isle has played in determining the course of history in the West. It also *conceals* the critical part the Irish have played in the struggle for the soul of Europe—a struggle that *will again* envelop Europe and the world in the years ahead!

In this article we will draw back the curtain of time and explore what is hidden behind the mists of Ireland. What you will discover is remarkable. The forgotten history of Ireland—when combined with key facts from the Bible—provides a surprising and sobering insight into events that have shaped the development of Western civilization. You will also learn how *your beliefs* have been influenced by critical events that occurred centuries ago on this "Sacred Isle."

Believe it or not, the preserved history of Ireland reaches far into the distant past—predating even Greek or Roman civilizations. Due to its isolated location on the outer edge of Europe, Ireland was spared the ravages of barbarian invasions that destroyed the culture of the Roman world on the Continent. The most surprising fact about Ireland’s early history is that it is *clearly linked* to the Bible! This critical link is discounted by modern historians, who tend to view Ireland’s history as untrustworthy, because events were transmitted orally for centuries before being written down by monks in the Middle Ages. However, even historians realize that legends "may contain a kernel of truth" and that place-names can be important guides to the history of a region (see *The Conversion of Europe*, Fletcher, 1998, p. 81).

In a sharp challenge to modern critics, Irish author Seumas MacManus notes, "the legends of Ireland are, generally speaking, *far from baseless myths*. The Irish people are a people who eminently cling to tradition. Not only were the great happenings that marked great epochs enshrined in the memory forever, but even little events that trivially affected the history of the race, were and are, seldom forgotten" (*The History of the Irish Race*, 1944, p. 9). MacManus comments further that while poets may embellish a tale, "the big, essential facts had to remain unaltered" and that no reputable poet would dare falsify the essential facts (ibid.). When the legends of Ireland are placed beside the carefully preserved scriptures of the Old Testament, a remarkable story begins to unfold.

**Prophet, Princess And Treasure**

One of the most amazing legends in Irish history links the biblical prophet Jeremiah with the Emerald Isle. Oxford-educated Mary Rogers recounts several versions of the Jeremiah story. Each version tells of Jeremiah fleeing from Jerusalem at the time of the Babylonian conquest. One account makes "Jeremiah flee to Ireland with Tea Tephi, eldest daughter of Zedekiah" (*Prospects of Fermanagh*, 1982, pp. 31–32). (Zedekiah was the last king to occupy the throne of Judah). Other accounts have Jeremiah and a princess or princesses and a man named Barak or Baruch leaving Egypt for the "Isles of the West" (*The Book of Tephi*, Goodchild, 1897, p. 4).

Although this might sound quite fanciful to our modern ears, it fits directly with the Scriptures. In the Bible we learn that when Jerusalem fell, Jeremiah escaped, along with his scribe Baruch and "the king’s daughters" to Egypt where they resided at the city of Tahpanhes (Jeremiah 43:5–7). The Bible reveals little else about this group of refugees. There are no clear statements about where they may have gone from Egypt. However, there *are clues*, both in the Scriptures and in history—especially the history of Ireland!

Ancient Irish legends recount that in addition to the king’s daughters, Jeremiah brought with him "some *national treasures* from the Temple. The most important of these was the Lia Fail, or Stone of Destiny, Jacob’s stone" (Rogers, pp. 31–32). The Bible relates that Jacob, the forefather of the Israelite tribes, set up a stone pillar after making a covenant with God (Genesis 28:13–22). It was also a custom in ancient Israel to crown kings over a stone (Judges 9:6; 2 Kings 11:12–14). The stone was later taken to Scotland by a king Fergus, and then to England. It has been used in all three countries for the coronation of monarchs—following the ancient Israelite custom. Other items brought to Ireland by Israelites include a sword, a spear and a cauldron (see *The Flowering of Ireland*, Sherman, 1981, p. 55). The Bible also reveals that David, when he killed Goliath, took his armor (including a sword and spear) which was kept by the priests (1 Samuel 17:45–47, 54, 21:9). The cauldron was probably used in the Temple. These items were symbols of *national identity* to the Israelites—comparable to the Crown Jewels of England and Scotland on display today.

**Jeremiah’s Mysterious Mission**

But what was Jeremiah doing and why did he bring the king’s daughters to Ireland? The Bible reveals that Jeremiah was given a two-part mission "to root out and pull down... *to build and to plant*" (Jeremiah 1:10). Jeremiah foretold the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the monarchy in Judah—which happened. The Bible does not provide any information on how Jeremiah fulfilled the second phase of his mission; however, Irish history provides some intriguing answers. The prophecy to build and to plant would apply to taking the king’s daughters to a place where they could re-establish the royal line. Ancient Irish legends say that the princess Jeremiah brought with him married a High King of Ireland (see Goodchild). This would have completed the second phase of Jeremiah’s mysterious mission. The Bible clearly predicted this would happen (2 Kings 19:30–3; Isaiah 37:31–32).

**Lost Tribes in Ireland**

But why did Jeremiah go to Ireland? Irish history describes a prominent people who settled on the island as the Tuatha de Danann. While historians puzzle over the identity of these gifted invaders, the Bible reveals the obvious answer. One of the Israelite tribes that disappears from history after the fall of the kingdom of Israel about 720bc was the Tribe of Dan. Other sources indicate that members of this tribe left Egypt about the time of the Exodus about 1500bc. This is about the time the Tuatha de Danann began to arrive in Ireland. The Tuatha de Danann, if they were Israelites, would be kinsmen to Jeremiah and the princess he brought. Irish legends say that Jeremiah’s party came to the island "in the ships of the Danites" and that after being "shipwrecked off the coast of Ireland... the company made its way to the hill-seat of the last of the Tuatha de Danann kings of the tribes of Dan" (Rogers, p. 31).

**Castles, Footprints and Jewish Knights**

One possible landing place for Jeremiah is Murlough Bay, on Ireland’s rugged northeast coast, in County Antrim. This is an area of isolated bays and rocky cliffs. Leading up and away from the bay is a trail, marked on geologic maps as the "Gray Man’s Path." Jeremiah would have been an old man when he reached Ireland after a difficult prophetic ministry that lasted some forty years. The "Gray Man’s Path" leads westward toward Dunseverick castle—about fifteen miles away. The castle sits on a stunning and highly defensible rocky outcrop on this rugged coastline. A marker at the site states that Dunseverick was a "royal site" and "may have been a royal stronghold in the Iron Age (around 500bc) and traditionally was one of the great duns [royal forts] of Ireland." Jeremiah would have arrived about this same time—and with his "royal cargo."

Traveling south from Dunseverick on the way to Tara, in County Meath (the seat of the Tuatha de Danann kings) you come to the ruins of the great hill-fort, Emain Macha, in County Armagh. This was the seat of the kings of Ulster and the Knights of the Red Branch. The symbol of the knights was a *red hand* surrounded by a *red cord*. This symbol of a red hand appears on the flag of Ulster, the symbol of Northern Ireland. It is also found (along with a *red lion*) on the heraldic crests of several other counties in Northern Ireland and some Scottish clans (see *Symbols of Our Anglo-Saxon Heritage*, Bennet, 1976, p. 115). But what is the significance of the red hand and red lion in Northern Ireland? How does this relate to Jeremiah and his mission?

The Bible again provides an intriguing answer. Judah, the father of another one of the tribes of Israel, had several sons, including Perez and Zerah. Something strange happened at the birth of these two boys. The hand of Zerah appeared first and a midwife fastened a *red cord* around it. However, the hand was retracted and Perez was born first (see Genesis 38:24–30). God promised Judah (symbolized by a lion) the scepter of rulership in Israel (Genesis 49:8–10). The branch of Judah’s line that includes David (whom God promised would have descendants on a throne forever—2 Samuel 7:12–17) and Jesus Christ descends through the children of Pharez (Matthew 1:1–17). The Zerah branch—symbolized by the red hand and red lion—was left out of this inheritance, even though Zerah’s hand appeared first when the boys were born.

This is where Irish history and the Bible come together. The princess Jeremiah brought to Ireland was of the Pharez line. The presence of the red hand and red lion indicate the Zerah line had preceded Jeremiah to Northern Ireland. The fleeing princess married into the Zerah line—healing the breach that developed at the birth of Judah’s two sons (Genesis 38:29). The knights of the Red Branch clearly carry the symbolism of the Zerah line. This would mean that some of the members of the royal families in the Isles of the West trace back to David—thus God’s promise to David still stands. Place-names in Northern Ireland are clearly related to the names of Judah’s sons—Hermon, Calcol and Dara (1 Chronicles 2:6). Jeremiah brought the king’s daughters to the land of the Red Branch Knights who were descended from the house of Judah.

**The Mists of Time**

By now you might be asking why you have never heard any of this information before?

Not only is it logical and makes sense, it is actually what has been *preserved* in Irish history—and it connects directly with the Bible! But why is it not being taught today? Here again the answers are shrouded by the mists of Ireland that, with the passage of time, have nearly obscured critical developments in the struggle for the soul of Europe—and for that matter, the world! However, the veil of history, like the Irish mist, is not impenetrable.

The legends that link Jeremiah with the Emerald Isle are concentrated in several counties primarily in Northern Ireland. This is exactly the same area where Patrick, the patron Saint of Ireland—the individual credited with bringing Christianity to the Irish—came to live and work. Patrick herded sheep on Slemish Mountain in County Antrim. He made his headquarters in Armagh, near Emain Macha (seat of the Red Branch Knights) and built a church near Tara, in central Ireland. He visited Devenish, an island in Loug (Lake) Erne, in County Fermanagh, where Jeremiah is said to be buried. The name Devenish comes from a word that means "a learned man" (*Devenish; Its History, Antiquities & Traditions*, McKenna, 1897, Introduction), and it was considered a holy island long before Patrick’s time. A monastery was later built there. The activities of Patrick and those who followed him—whose goal it was to convert the Irish to a new religion—suggest "a *deliberate policy*of locating the new Christian churches beside old pre-Christian power-centers" (*The MacMillan Atlas of Irish History*, 1997, p. 16). Thus with the passage of time, the footprints of Patrick and the church he established have *overshadowed* and *nearly obscured* historical clues from an earlier time that link Irish history to the Bible.

**Forgotten Facts**

But what religious ideas did Patrick bring to Ireland after being trained in Gaul (France) and commissioned from Rome? Was it the Christianity taught by Jesus Christ and the Apostles? Here again the facts of history provide some *surprising* answers. The church Patrick established in Ireland "was Roman in character and organization" (*A Short History of Ireland*, Wallace, 1986, p. 18). In addition to pointing people to the *person* of Jesus, the Roman Church emphasized the observance of Sunday, Easter, and the veneration of the Cross (Fletcher, pp. 55, 171). Patrick’s church was a fervent promoter of monasticism and the veneration of saints and relics. To his credit, Patrick worked to build "a Christian culture, where slavery and human sacrifice became unthinkable, and warfare... diminished markedly," however, he had far less success in transforming the sexual mores of the Irish or their *attraction to pagan customs* (*How The Irish Saved Civilization*, Cahill, 1995, p. 148). It is noted that "the Irish never troubled themselves overmuch about eradicating pagan influences, which they tended to wink at and enjoy. The pagan festivals continued to be celebrated" (ibid. pp. 148–9). Historians acknowledge that the Christianity that emerges from Patrick’s efforts is a "characteristically Irish melange [mixture] of *pagan and Christian*" beliefs and practices (ibid.).

While recent folklore credits Patrick with converting the Irish to Christianity, numerous sources indicated that the apostles of Jesus Christ visited the "Isles of the West" over three centuries before Patrick arrived! MacManus writes that the early church historians Eusebius [about 300ad] and Nicephorus tell of the apostles Paul, Simon Zelotus and James visiting these islands. MacManus writes that, "Julian of Toledo says that the apostle James addressed a canonical letter *from Ireland* to the Jews in Spain" (MacManus, p. 104). Both the Bible and history indicate that the teachings of the church established by Jesus and the apostles *differed significantly* from the teachings of Patrick and his followers. Jesus and the apostles kept the Sabbath and the biblical Holy Days (Luke 4:16; Acts 17:2; 18:4, 21). Edward Gibbon states the early Christians combined the Law of Moses with the teachings of Jesus Christ and that they abhorred idolatrous pagan festivities—especially the Saturnalia—our Christmas (see *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, chapter 15). The Encyclopedia Britannica records "there is no indication of the observance of the Easter festival in the New Testament, or in the writings of the apostolic Fathers—they kept the 14th of Nisan" (see article: Easter, 11th ed.). The church established by Jesus Christ was not monastic, did not venerate crosses or relics and did not pray to saints. These were all innovations absorbed into Patrick’s church *from pagan sources*—between 350–450ad.

But what happened to the teachings of the Apostles who brought Christianity to Ireland nearly three centuries before Patrick? History records that Roman Christianity eventually prevailed in Ireland. However, it is also acknowledged that "history is written by the victors" and that the teachings of those who differed "were systematically vilified, and their writings hunted down and destroyed" (Fletcher, p. 75). What was not destroyed has been obscured and nearly forgotten. This is why little is known about the beliefs of the Irish prior to the coming of Patrick (ibid. pp. 4, 10). Scribal monks of the seventh and eighth centuries suggest that before Patrick, paganism prevailed everywhere in Ireland.

However, historians suspect this is a "deceptive" idea (ibid. p. 12). History clearly records that in Ireland and on the continent of Europe, there has been a *struggle* not only between Christianity and paganism, but also within the Christian community itself. What is undeniable is, that in most areas of the world, "Apostolic Christianity" has survived *in name only*. The *original* teachings of Jesus Christ and the apostles were passed off as allegories and myths, and later rejected as heresy (see Gibbon, chapter 15). Catholic historian Will Durant acknowledges this: "Christianity did not destroy paganism; it adopted it... Christianity was the last great creation of the ancient pagan world" (*The Story of Civilization*, vol. 3, p. 595). Critical aspects of this struggle for the soul of Ireland, Europe and the world have taken place on the misty Emerald Isle.

In the years following Patrick, "as Europe sank into the Dark Ages, Ireland in the 7th and 8th centuries became *a land of saints and scholars*" (*Ireland*, Smallman, 1996, p. 15). Monks on this isolated island copied and preserved their ancient legends along with the literature of the ancient world that was being destroyed by barbarians on the continent. Missionary monks from Ireland later *reintroduced* into Europe the secular and religious ideas that have long formed the core of Western civilization. But in particular, the religious ideas they promulgated were *significantly different* from the biblical teachings of Jesus Christ. The Roman Christianity that spread over Europe and from there to our modern world contained different doctrines and a different gospel (see Galatians 1:6–9; 2 Corinthians 11:1–4). The forgotten facts of history indicate that true apostolic Christianity *disappeared* behind the mists of Ireland.

**What Lies Ahead?**

The religious struggle that has played out over the centuries on the Emerald Isle is not over. That ongoing struggle is destined to take some sobering turns in the months and years ahead. The Bible reveals that, as the end of the age approaches, a beast (a political-economic-military organization) and a religious figure of international stature will move to the center of the world stage (Revelation 13, 17, 18). The beast will arise from the ashes of the ancient Roman Empire—in central Europe—as its final revival (Daniel 2:40–43, 7:7, 19–23). It will be composed of ten nations (Daniel 2:41; Revelation 17:12) and be led by an individual who gains power by deceitful means (Daniel 8:25, 11:21). Allied with this beast will be an influential religious figure who will work miracles and deceive many people (Revelation 13:13–14). The religious organization behind this individual will mount an *ecumenical effort* to regain the allegiance of her rebellious offspring (Isaiah 47:8). The healing of centuries-old divisions between the various branches of the Christian community may be the forerunner of this prophesied effort.

However, during the rise to prominence of the beast and false prophet, the *original gospel* of the kingdom of God will once again be preached to the world as a witness (Matthew 24:14). The Bible also indicates that before the return of Jesus Christ, a knowledge of *true Apostolic Christianity* will re-emerge from the misty past (Matthew 17:11). This will not be a popular message to a world under the delusion of a resurrected Roman system. This religious-political-economic-military union will—*in a replay of the past*—persecute those who choose to believe and follow the biblical teachings of Jesus Christ (Daniel 7:25; Revelation 12:17, 17:6). This persecution will be limited in time, because the beast and false prophet will eventually turn on each other (Revelation 17:16; Daniel 11:40–45) as this final resurrection of the ancient Roman church-state system crumbles into ruin at Christ’s return (Daniel 2:44–45).

The struggle for the minds of millions will then be over. The world will learn that Roman Christendom, which has played such a dominant role in Western civilization, was *not* the prophesied kingdom of God; it was merely a counterfeit. The world will come to understand that what emerged from the mists of the Emerald Isle was not Apostolic Christianity, but paganism with a "Christian" gloss. The day is coming when the whole world will have an opportunity to learn and experience the blessings of God’s true way of life (Isaiah 11:9). We are also told in Scripture that at the end of the age, God is going to recover a remnant of His people from the "islands of the sea" that lie "far off" to the north and west of Jerusalem (Isaiah 11:11; Jeremiah 30:24, 31:8, 11; Hosea 11:10). God is now calling and training a group of people to assist Jesus Christ in establishing the kingdom of God on this earth in the years just ahead. This is part of the real purpose for human life. You can play a role in the *re-introduction of Apostolic Christianity* if you can begin to grasp what has happened—behind the mists of Ireland!

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