

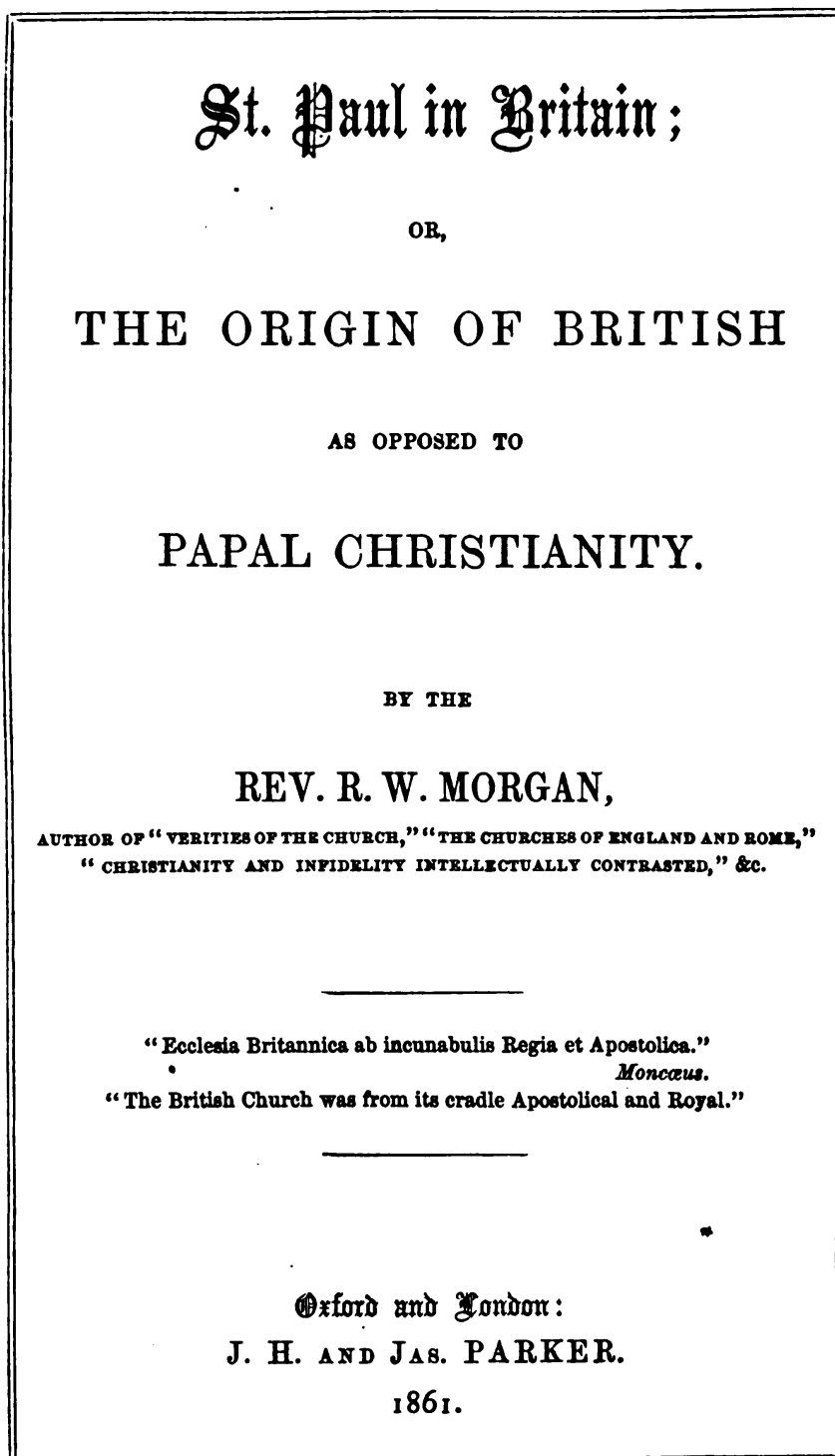
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Druidic Theology – R W Morgan (1861)



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Summary of Druidic Theology.

Druidism was founded by Gwyddon Ganhèbon, supposed to be the Seth of the Mosaic genealogy, in Asia, in the year when the equinox occurred in the

first point of Taurus, or the constellation of the Bull. Every year the equinoctial year is completed about twenty minutes before the sun has made a complete revolution from a certain star to the same star again. This arises from the precession of the equinoxes, or from a slow revolution of the pole of the equator round that of the ecliptic. In 25,920 years the pole of the equator makes one entire revolution round that of the ecliptic: hence the equinoctial colure occurs before it did the preceding year. In 72 years the precession amounts to one degree. If, therefore, we have the equinoctial or solstitial point given in the ecliptic at any unknown period, it is easy to discover, by comparing it with the present solstitial point, how long that period is past. When the Druidic system was founded, the equinox, on the 1st of May, occurred in the first point of Taurus, which first point is now, on the 1st of May, 80 degrees from this solstitial point. It requires 72 years to recede one degree. Eighty degrees multiplied by 72 gives 5,760, the exact date when Druidism commenced, i. e. 3,903 years before the Christian era, 181 years after the creation of man, and 50 years after the birth of Seth. The astral bull of milk-white hue, its horns crowned with golden stars, became the symbol, or visible sacrament, of Druidism. In process of time the symbol, as usual, superseded in the East the thing signified, and Druidism became that tauric religion

which gave the Crimea the appellation of the Tauric Chersonese. Extending thence, this corruption became the religion of Mithras in Persia, of Baal in Assyria, of Brahma in India, of Astarte or the Dea Syria in Syria, of Apis in Egypt, and in later ages, transferred from Egypt, of the two "Apis" (or calves as they are rendered in our version of the Scriptures) of the kingdom of Israel^c. In all these religions the bull, or Taurus, was the sacred animal, and the symbol was preserved free, as far as we can judge, from idolatry by the Gomeridæ of Britain. The bull was the sign and representant of the great Druidic isle, and the name still, in common parlance, continues to indicate a Briton of Britain as distinguished from the rest of the world. From Asia Druidism was brought into Britain by Hu Gadarn, or the Mighty, its first colonizer, a cotemporary of the Patriarch Abraham, and under his successors, Plennydd, Goron, Alawn, and Rhivon, it assumed its complete organization, becoming both the ecclesiastical and civil constitution of the island. About five centuries before the Christian era, its civil laws were codified by Dunwal Moelmud, the British Numa, and have since that period remained the common, unwritten, or native laws of the island,

^c The symbol of Druidism in Crete was the Menw-tarw, or Menw-bull, and its chief temple the Labyrinth. Out of such simple elements the imaginative Greek mind forged the fable of Minos, the Minotaur, and Pasiphae, as it did that of the rape of Europa from the Astarte of Syria.

as distinguished from the Roman, the canon, and other codes of foreign introduction. These British or Druidic laws have been always justly regarded as the foundation and bulwark of British liberties^d. The examination of them does not fall within our present purpose. The civil code and the sciences were taught by the Druids—orally or in writing indifferently—to every citizen, but the Druidic system of divinity was never committed to writing, nor imparted except to the initiated, and then under obligations to secrecy of a very awful character. It is, however, to the infraction of these obligations, when their force had been impaired by the influences of Christianity, that we are indebted for such knowledge as we possess of the real principles of the primitive religion of our island. This is, especially in the higher departments, exceedingly imperfect, but we must be satisfied with it until the British manuscripts buried in the obscure recesses of the hills of Cambria be disinterred by Government, or given by their worthless and degenerate proprietors to the republic of letters.

. Druidism taught as follows :—

The universe is infinite, being the body of the being who out of himself evolved or created it, and now pervades and rules it, as the mind of man does his body. The essence of this being is pure, mental light, and therefore he is called Du-w, Duw, (the

^d Sir John Fortescue, *De Laudibus Legum Angliæ* ; Coke, Preface to third vol. of Pleadings ; Origin of the Common Law of England.

one without any darkness.) His real name is an ineffable mystery, and so also is his nature^e. To the human mind, though not in himself, he necessarily represents a triple aspect in relation to the past, present, and future; the creator as to the past, the saviour or conserver as to the present, the renovator or re-creator as to the future. In the re-creator the idea of the destroyer was also involved. This was the Druidic trinity, the three aspects of which were known as Beli, Taran, Esu or Yesu. When Christianity preached Jesus as God, it preached the most familiar name of its own deity to Druidism; and in the ancient British tongue 'Jesus' has never assumed its Greek, Latin, or Hebrew form, but remains the pure Druidic 'Yesu.' It is singular thus that the ancient Briton has never changed the name of the God he and his forefathers worshipped, nor has ever worshipped but one God^f.

^e There are now three states of existence: the cycle of 'Ceugant,' where there is nothing of living or dead but God, and God alone can traverse it; the cycle of 'Abred,' where all natural existence originates from death—this man has traversed; the cycle of 'Gwynfyd,' where all existence is from life to life—this man will traverse in the 'Nev-oedd,' (changes of life in heaven.) The Druids, contrary to the Mosaic account, made the creation of man simultaneous with that of solar light. "Three things came into being at the same moment—light, man, and moral choice."—(Druidic Triads.)

^f So Procopius also testifies:—

"Hesus, Taranis, Belenus unus tantummodo Deus

Unum Deum Dominum universi Druides Solum agnoscunt."

De Gothicis, lib. iii.

The symbol of the ineffable name of the Deity were three rays or glories of light. Every Druid bore these in gold on the front of his mitre.

Other names of the deity were Deon, Dovydd, Celi, Tor, Perydd, Sol, Rhun, Ner.

In the infinite Deity exist in some incomprehensible mode, indivisible from himself, infinite germs, seeds, or atoms (*manred, manredi*), each in itself full and perfect deity, possessing the power of infinite creativeness. This branch of Druidic theism is involved in profound obscurity. It appears to have supplied Democritus with his theory of the atomic powers of nature, and Plato with his typical forms in the mind of the Deity. Matter was created and systematized simultaneously by the Creator's pronouncing His own name. It cannot exist without God. Nature is the action of God through the medium of matter. The laws of nature are, in the strictest sense, the laws of God, and that which is a violation of the laws of nature is necessarily a violation of the laws of God ε.

ε The Druid regarded himself as the priest of the deity of nature, but in addition to this hierarchic character there appears to have been the following observances derived from one original family, language, and religion common to his with all the other forms of the primitive truth—libation, sacrifices, tradition of the Deluge, of the war of the Titanidæ against Heaven, metempsychosis, adoration towards the East, the division of the circle into 360 degrees, of the zodiac into twelve signs, of the week into seven days. Most of these we find in the Chaldæan faith, and it is certain the Chaldæans were highly civilized 2,000 years before the Christian era.

The universe is in substance eternal and imperishable, but in form it is subject to successive cycles of dissolution and renovation. There is no such thing as annihilation in matter. Every particle of matter is capable of all forms of matter, and each form has its own laws of existence and action.

Around every separate existence, wherever it be, extends infinity; this is 'Ceugant,' (the infinite space, or all-of-being, ubiquity,) which God alone can fill, sustain, or uphold.

There were originally but two states of sentient existence,—God in 'Ceugant,' and the 'Gwynfydolion' (the beings of the happy, literally 'white,' state) in 'Gwynfyd.' The only aberration to which the 'Gwynfydolion' were liable was 'balchder.' 'Balchder' consisted in trying to do that which God only can do, enter and sustain 'ceugant,' uphold and govern the infinite universe. Certain of the 'Gwynfydolion,' whose numbers are known only to God, attempted to do so, and thus originated in themselves the state of 'Annwn.' 'Annwn' is the lowest possible point of conscious existence, in which the evil is wholly unmitigated by any particle of good. This result was the inevitable consequence of their act itself, not an external penalty imposed by God. To restore them to the state of 'gwynfyd,' God in His goodness created the third state of 'Abred.' 'Abred' includes all conditions of sentient life under 'gwynfyd.' Its lowest point is 'annwn;' its highest, that immediately next

to that of the 'Gwynfydolion,' the state of man, humanity. All 'abred' under humanity was termed 'bÿd maur,' the great 'bÿd.' Humanity itself was termed 'bÿd bychan,' the little 'bÿd' (world), because as all the infinite was contained in God, so all the cycles of existence below man were contained and represented in man ^h.

'Abred' is a state of probation and suffering for the 'Abredolion,' that is, for the 'Gwynfydolion' in 'abred,' the reason being that, moral liberty of choice and action, or willinghood, being the essence of 'gwynfydiaeth,' or the spirit-life, there is nothing *per se* to prevent the 'Gwynfydolion,' when they shall have re-attained heaven, from committing 'balchder' a second time, and thus re-incurring its consequences. God created 'abred' to be a state of suffering, that in the vivid recollection of its pains and degradations the 'Gwynfydolion' might possess in themselves the surest moral guarantee against a repetition of their folly. 'Abred' was therefore essentially the creation of God's mercy, and its sufferings were indispensable to fulfil the object of such mercy towards the fallen beings for whom it had been so created ⁱ.

^h The three causes of man falling into 'Abred'—neglect of knowledge, aversion to good, love of evil. Occasioned by these three, man declines to his congenial state in 'abred,' whence as before he re-ascends to humanity. (Druidic Triads.)

ⁱ The three things God alone can do—endure the eternities of infinity, participate of all being without changing, renew everything

In the 'bÿd mawr' below man there was no responsibility, for there was no liberty of choice. Responsibility began with the 'bÿd bychan,' or man-state, because there began such liberty. Hence the essence of the soul, according to the Druids, was the will, and the essence of religion was willingness. Without freedom of will there was no 'humanity' in its distinguishing sense from animal life, nor any life or light in the soul which continued *marw*, void of living action and imbruted. Freedom of conscience was both the birth and breath of manhood, without which it was not manhood at all, but brutality—the soul resembling a *fœtus* undeveloped in the womb.

Reason appears to have been regarded by the Druids as a faculty common to all sensitive creatures, the difference in their physical organization being the cause of the difference in its degrees.

Mankind are the fallen 'Gwynfydion.' Every human being has been in the angelic state in heaven ('gwynfyd'), fell thence to 'annwn,' rose thence through the various cycles of 'abred' probationary existence to his present state ('bÿd bychan'), in which he is again a free agent, master of his own spiritual destinies. If his soul willingly prefers good and abides by its choice,

without annihilating it. The three things wherein man necessarily differs from God—man is finite, God infinite; man had a beginning, God had none; man unable to sustain 'ceugant' (infinity of space and time), must have in 'gwynfyd' eternal change, cycles of existence; God sustains 'ceugant' unchanged. (Druidic Triads.)

then at the dissolution of the body it re-enters 'gwynfyd,' from which it fell. This is the restoration. If his soul prefers evil, it again lapses back to some cycle in 'abred' best calculated to purify it from it. For 'abred' is the cycle of purification by suffering. 'Balchder' alone plunged the soul back to the lowest point, 'annwn,' and of this man could not be guilty; hence the proverb, "But once in 'annwn.'" Inhumanity sunk the soul to the condition nearest 'annwn.'

In the 'bÿd mawr,' below man, evil and suffering preponderate. In the 'bÿd bychan,' or 'man-state,' good and evil are equipoised. With 'bÿd bychan' probation terminates. In 'gwynfyd' pure good and pure happiness commence.

A soul might relapse countless times from 'bÿd bychan' back to 'abred,' and again rise. Ultimately every soul would pass 'bÿd bychan;' and when the last of the 'Gwynfydion' had regained 'gwynfyd,' then would be the end of 'abred' ('terfyn abred'^k), the purpose for which it had been created being fulfilled. 'Abred' being dissolved, there would remain only the two states which existed from the beginning, 'Ceugant' and 'Gwynfyd.' According to the Druidic system, the 'hell' of man was past before his birth,

^k Three things decrease continually, darkness, evil, and death. Three things increase continually, light, truth, and life. These will finally prevail over all; then 'abred' will end. (Druidic Triads.) The idea of the eternal progression of man and the universe which pervades the Triads is very fine.

and hell itself was a temporary state. 'Gwynfyd' was re-attainable through 'abred' only and its conditions, 'abred' through 'annwn' only and its conditions. 'Annwn' and 'abred' were the pre-conditions of the re-attainment of 'gwynfyd.' The knowledge and suffering of evil was held the *sine quâ non* to the understanding and appreciation of good, being the only means whereby their difference could be realized to ourselves. Suffering was regarded as the pre-essential of enjoyment.

The faculty of the soul which constituted more especially its eternity, or imperishable self-identity, is *cov*, or memory. The memory of all the evils and existences it has undergone in 'abred,' forms or develops in the soul immediately it re-enters 'gwynfyd,' and not before. For the end of such memory is to preserve such 'Gwynfydolion' from a second fall. In the 'abred' cycles there is a suspension of 'cov,' and of the consciousness of self-identity.

The doctrine of transmigration was certainly Druidic, but it is equally certain that it was held by the Druids in a sense the Greek and Italian schools of philosophy have failed to transmit to us. The following extract from the *Coelbren Rhodd*¹, obscure as it is, may cast some light on the subject:—

“*Master.* What art thou?

“*Disciple.* A man.

¹ A Druidic Catechism, of which fragments only are extant.

“*M.* How ?

“*D.* By the will of God. What God wills must be.

“*M.* Why art thou not something else than man ?

“*D.* What God wills cannot be otherwise.

“*M.* Where art thou ?

“*D.* In ‘bŷd bychan.’

“*M.* Whence art thou come ?

“*D.* From ‘bŷd mawr.’

“*M.* What wert thou doing in ‘bŷd mawr’ ?

“*D.* Traversing the cycle of ‘abred.’

“*M.* Where wert thou before thou didst begin to traverse ‘cylch abred’ ?

“*D.* In ‘annwn.’

“*M.* What wert thou in ‘annwn’ ?

“*D.* The least of life that could be in itself, the nearest to the teeth of the dead. And in all forms and through all forms that are called body and life am I come hither into ‘bŷd bychan,’ and misery and trouble have been my condition for ages and ages since I was delivered from ‘annwn’ and separated therefrom through the hand of God and His love, endless and indestructible.

“*M.* Through how many ‘rhith’ (forms of life) art thou come, and what has been thy ‘damwain’ (character of life) ?

“*D.* Through every ‘rhith’ that can possess or be called life-in-itself, and my ‘damwain’ has been all misery, all hardship, all evil, all suffering, and little

of good or happiness has there been of me before I am man.

“*M.* Through the love of God thou sayest thou art come through all this and hast felt all this—how so, seeing there are so many signs of unlove ?

“*D.* ‘Gwynfyd’ cannot be regained without knowing everything, there cannot be knowing everything without feeling-in-self everything, there cannot be feeling everything without suffering-in-self every ‘rhith’ of evil and of good, that one may be self-known from the other ; and all this must be before ‘gwynfyd’ can be regained, for ‘gwynfyd’ is perfect liberty, choosing the good when all forms of good and evil have been self-suffered.

“*M.* Why cannot there be ‘gwynfyd’ without traversing every ‘rhith’ of life in ‘abred’ ?

“*D.* Because no two ‘rhiths’ are identical, and every ‘rhith’ has its own cause, suffering, means of knowledge, intelligence, ‘gwynfyd,’ power, not to be found in any other ‘rhith ;’ and since there is special knowledge in every special ‘rhith’ not to be found in any other, necessity ensues to suffer every ‘rhith’ before ‘abred’ be completely traversed.

“*M.* How many ‘rhiths’ are there ?

“*D.* As many as God saw necessary towards knowing all good and all evil in every kind and quality, so that there should be nothing conceivable by God which should not be experienced, and thence its ‘abred’-knowledge.”—(*Coelbren Rhodd*, p. 1.)

The happiness of 'gwynfyd' consisted in 'nevoedd,' i. e. eternal progressions of new scenes with new faculties of happiness. Herein, as in its notion of the time and object of "hell," Druidism differed from Christianity, which represents heaven as an eternal sabbath or rest^m.

A soul that had passed 'bÿd bychan' might resume the morphosis of humanity for the good of mankind. The re-incarnation of such was always a blessing.

The lapse of a soul in 'bÿd bychan' began at the moment when it voluntarily preferred vice to virtue, for the will is its essence.

A new form of life, or the entrance into another cycle of existenceⁿ, ensued simultaneously with death.

Man had the power by accepting every evil as his part of 'abred' (or purification for 'gwynfyd'), to turn it to good. Hence willing suffering for our own good or that of others was the test-virtue of humanity, or 'bÿd bychan.'

Every soul guilty of crime, by voluntarily confessing it and embracing the penalty prescribed, expiated its guilt, and if in other respects good, re-entered 'gwynfyd.'

Except by the laying down life for life there could

^m The three necessary essentials of God—infinite in Himself, finite to the finite, co-unity with every mode of existence in 'gwynfyd.' (Druidic Triads.)

ⁿ There could in fact, according to the Druids, be no life at all in 'abred' except as proceeding from death. Above 'abred' death ceased, and the celestial novations ran through eternity.

be no expiation or atonement for certain kinds of guilt. Cæsar's words on this point are remarkable:—
“The Druids teach that by no other way than the ransoming of man's life by the life of man, is reconciliation with the divine justice of the immortal gods possible.”—(*Comment.*, lib. v.) The doctrine of vicarious atonement could not be expressed in clearer terms.

The value of an atonement, or expiatory sacrifice, was in proportion to the value of the life sacrificed.

In all the changes of the ‘bÿd mawr,’ until it assumed the morphosis of man, the soul was in occultation, or eclipse.

The temples of the Druids were hypæthral, circular, and obelistic, i. e. open above and on every side, representing in form the dome of heaven, and composed of monoliths, or immense single stones, on which metal was not allowed to come. The draconic, or circular form, symbolized the eternal cycle of nature. The monolithic avenues leading to and from the temple, usually known as the dragon's head and dragon's tail, were in some instances seven miles long. The national religious processions moved through these on the three great festivals of the year.

All the prehistoric temples of Palestine, Persia, Italy, and Greece, commonly called Cyclopean or Pelasgic, were Druidic.

Stonehenge, the Gilgal of Britain, is the wreck of

four thousand years' exposure to the elements. Its first founder was Hu Gadarn, B.C. c. 1800.

The above summary may suffice in a brief treatise of this description to give the reader a broad conception of the chief tenets of the antediluvian religion of the world. Of its temples, rites, and usages we may add the following particulars.

There were in Britain south of the Clyde and Forth forty Druidic universities, which were also the capitals of the forty tribes, the originals of our modern counties, which preserve for the most part the ancient tribal limits. Hence, for instance, Yorkshire retains the same disproportioned magnitude to our other counties as the territories of the Brigantes, its British tribe, did to those of the other tribes. Of these forty seats nine have disappeared, the remainder were as follow :—

Three seats of the three Arch-Druids of Britain °.

Caer Troia, or *Caer Lud*, or *Caer Llyndain* (the city of the lake of the *Tain* (Thames), or of the beautiful lake, *tain* meaning fair or beautiful, hence the *Tain* so called in British, Tyne still in North Britain), London.

Caer Evroc, York.

Caer Lleon, Caerleon.

° The Gildas MS. (Julius, D. xi.), Cottonian Library, calls these the three arch-flamens and twenty-eight flamens of Britain. Geoffrey of Monmouth appears to have found the same titles in the Armorican version of Tyssilio's History.

Seats of the chief Druids of Britain :—

- Caer Caint*, Canterbury.
Caer Wyn, Winchester.
Caer Werllan, afterwards *Caer Municipium*, St. Alban's, or Verulam.
Caer Sahog, Old Sarum.
Caer Leil, Carlisle.
Caer Grawnt, Cambridge, or Granta.
Caer Meini, Manchester.
Caer Gwrthegion, Palmcaster.
Caer Coel, Colchester.
Caer Gorangon, Worcester.
Caerleon ar Dwy, Chester.
Caer Peris, Porchester.
Caer Don, Doncaster.
Caer Guoric, Warwick.
Caer Meivod, Meivod.
Caer Odor, Bristol.
Caer Llyr, Leicester.
Caer Urnach, Uroxeter.
Caer Lleyrn, Lincoln.
Caer Gloyw, Gloucester.
Caer Cei, Chichester.
Caer Ceri, Cirencester.
Caer Dwr, Dorchester.
Caer Merddin, Caermarthen.
Caer Seiont, Caernarvon.
Caer Wyc, Exeter.
Caer Segont, Silchester.
Caer Baddon, Bath.

[Note that The National CV of Britain and its underlying database, the CVpedia, were compiled a few miles from Caer Segont, modern-day Silchester]

The lapse of two thousand years has made but slight alteration in the names of these primitive cities of Britian. The Romans invariably fixed upon the chief *caer* of a British tribe, generally the strongest military position in its bounds, for their *castra*: hence the *castra* and *chester* superseded the *caer* or British citadel; but the British name itself survived the Roman. Llyndain is still London, not Augusta; Werllan, Verulam, not Municipium; Caer Col, Colchester, not Camalodunum, &c., &c.

The students at these universities numbered at times sixty thousand souls, among whom were included the young nobility of Britain and Gaul. It required twenty years to master the circle of Druidic knowledge; nor, when we consider the great range of acquirements which the system included, can we wonder at the length of such probation. Natural philosophy, astronomy, arithmetic, geometry, jurisprudence, medicine, poetry, and oratory were all proposed and taught, the first two with severe exactitude. The system of astronomy inculcated had never varied, being the same as that taught by Pythagoras, now known as the Copernican or Newtonian ^p. The

^p In our notice of the Zoroastrian religion we have alluded to the system of astrologic prophecy practised by its professors. The Hebrew prophet was inspired immediately by an afflatus of the Deity. The Druidic idea of prophecy differed from both, resolving it into a scientific knowledge of the natural connection and sequency of cause and effect. "He that will be a prophet of God," writes Gildas, "must never rest till he has traced everything to its cause and mode of operation. He will then know what God does, for God does no-

British words for 'star,' 'astronomer,' 'astronomy,' are *seren*, *seronydd*, *seronyddiaeth*; hence the usual Greek term for the Druids was *Saronidæ*, astronomers. Of the attainments of the Druids in all the sciences, especially in this of astronomy, classic judges of eminence, Cicero and Cæsar, Pliny and Tacitus, Diodorus Siculus and Strabo, speak in high terms. In the Druidic order indeed centred, and from it radiated, the whole civil and ecclesiastical knowledge of the realm: they were its statesmen, legislators, priests, physicians, lawyers, teachers, poets; the depositaries of all human and divine knowledge; its Church and parliament; its courts of law; its colleges of physicians and surgeons; its magistrates, clergy and bishops. The number of Druids was regulated by very stringent laws in proportion to the population. None could be a candidate for the Order who could not, in the May congress of the tribe, prove his descent from nine successive generations of free forefathers. No slave could of course

thing but what should be, in the manner it should be, at the time and in the order it should be. By understanding these laws of God, he will be able to see and foretell the future." (*Principles of Prediction of Gildas the Prophet*, Iolo MSS., p. 609.) Prophecy, then, was with the Druids nothing but the theological term for science, and Gildas supplies a useful commentary on Cæsar's words: "The Druids discuss many things concerning the stars and their revolutions, the magnitude of the globe and its various divisions, the nature of the universe, the energy and power of the immortal gods." (*Cæsar's Com.*, lib. v.)

be a Druid; becoming one, he forfeited his Order and privileges; and hence perhaps one of the reasons of the protracted, stubborn, and finally successful resistance of the Druidic island to the Roman arms; for it was not till the reign of Adrian, A.D. 120, that Britain was incorporated, and then by treaty, not conquest, with the Roman dominions, the Britons retaining their kings, land, laws and rights, and stipulating in return to raise and support three legions to be officered by the Emperor for the defence of the common empire⁹. By common law every Briton was seized as his birthright of five acres (ten English) of land in the *gweli cenedl*, the 'bed' or hereditary county of his clan. If the clan land was exhausted, recourse was had to emigration or conquest, and for this purpose the superfluous population was draughted off as an army, or more generally as a colony. Hence the mother-tribe and daughter-tribes of the same name which so frequently occur in Britain, Gaul, Germany and Hibernia. In addition to these five acres, the Druid received five acres more and a certain fixed income from his tribe. The dif-

⁹ The accepting or circulating Roman coin in Britain was made a capital offence by Arviragus; for such an act, according to the Roman construction, inferred the right of levying tribute, as we see in the Scriptures: "Whose image and superscription is this? Cæsar's. Render therefore unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's." From the reign of Claudius to that of Hadrian no coins, therefore, of the intervening Roman emperors have been found in Britain. From Hadrian onward there have been found a nearly complete series.

faculty of admission into the Order was on a par with its privileges. The head of the clan possessed a veto on every ordination. Every candidate was obliged to find twelve heads of families as sureties for moral conduct and adequate maintenance; nor could he be ordained until he had passed three examinations three successive years before the Druidic college of the tribe. These barriers to promiscuous admission threw the Order almost entirely into the hands of the *blaenorion*, or aristocracy, making it literally a "royal priesthood," kings, princes, and nobles entering largely into its composition. "All power," states Cæsar, speaking of Gaul, "is vested in the two orders of the Druids and aristocracy: the people are nothing." This, however, was evidently not the case in Britain, where the primitive Druidic laws, unaffected hitherto by foreign innovations, referred the source of all power to the people in congress, and every congress was opened with the words *Trech gwlad n' arghwydd*, 'The country is above the king.' Nevertheless, the authority and influence of the Druids were very great, and, on the whole, as popular as they were great. The extreme penalty lodged in their hands, and the one most dreaded, was that of excommunication,—*pœna gravissima*, states Cæsar,—which was, in fact, a decree of expulsion from both worlds, the present and future. The terror it inspired is the best proof that it was not abused and but rarely resorted to; for the most terrific punish-

ments, if abused, soon lose their effect and become despised. The Druidic excommunication was thus performed^r:—

Every tribe possessed a particular sword, termed the Sword of the Tribe. Neither this nor any other weapon could be unsheathed in the congress of the tribe, or any congress of Druids or Bards. But when an individual was about to be excommunicated, which was never done until after a year and a day's notice, to allow the offender time for voluntary atonement, he was brought into the congress of the tribe, the sword of the tribe was unsheathed by the head of the tribe, and proclaimed to be unsheathed against the offender by name; his name was then struck out of the roll of the book of the tribe, and out of the book of his own family; the badge of the tribe was torn from his arm, his sword broken in the ground and his wand over his head by the head of the tribe; his head was shaved, and the executioner of the tribe, with the point of the sword of the tribe, drew blood from his forehead, breast and loins, and pouring it on his head, exclaimed, "The blood of the man thus accursed be on his own head." His forehead was then branded, and he was led forth, the herald of the tribe going before and proclaiming,

^r The excommunication of the Church of Rome is, on the face of it, the old Druidic excommunication, with none of its redeeming or justifying features. It stands in direct opposition to the whole genius of Christianity.

—“This man hath no name, nor family, nor tribe, among the names and families and tribes of Britain; henceforth let no man’s flesh touch his flesh, nor tongue speak to him, nor eye look upon him, nor hand of man bury him; and let the darkness of Annwn again receive him.”

Death might well be considered a light penalty to an accumulation of such moral, social, and spiritual tortures. The sentence was read in the Druidic congresses throughout the tribes, and henceforth no door in the kingdom was open to the forlorn wretch; his forehead carried the curse everywhere with him; men threw food to him “as to a dog,” turning their eyes away as they did so and never speaking. Neither body nor mind could sustain such horrors, and the excommunicated crawled away to become a blanched, unburied skeleton far from the haunts of his fellow-men.

The sacred animal of Druidism was the white astral bull; the sacred bird, the crested wren; the sacred tree, the oak; the sacred grain, wheat; the sacred plant, the mistletoe; the sacred herbs, the trefoil, vervain, and hyssop.

The great festivals of Druidism were three: the vernal, on the 1st of May; the autumnal; and the mid-winter, when the mistletoe was gathered by the arch-Druids. The mistletoe, with its three white berries, was the symbol of the Druidic Trinity, and its growth in the oak the type of the incarnation of the Deity in man.

The hypæthral altar in the Druidic circle was called cromlech, (stone of bowing, or adoration). Near it another stone received in a cavity water direct from heaven, (holy water). This holy water and the waters of the river Dee, the Jordan of ancient Britain, were the only waters permitted to be used in Druidic sacrifices. No Druid could wear arms of any description. None but a Druid could officiate at a sacrifice.

The canonicals of the Druid were white linen robes, no metal but gold being used in any part of the dress. The canonicals of the arch-Druids were extremely gorgeous, not very dissimilar from those of the high-priest of the Jewish religion. The Druidic cross was wrought in gold down the length of the back of his robe.

No Druidic service could be celebrated before sunrise or after sunset.

In its corrupted form of Buddhism, the Druidic religion is still the religion of nearly one half of mankind*.

We have three distinct phases of faith in the Jewish Scriptures,—the Patriarchal, the Mosaic, and the Chaldæo-Mosaic, which came in after the Chaldæan captivity, and was in full force in our Saviour's time. The patriarchal was in many respects Druidic; the patriarchs planted and worshipped in oak-groves,

* The style of the Bardo-Druidic remains is remarkable for its extreme but pregnant terseness, one word often expressing a finished idea.

building their altar in the midst on "some high place," a practice strictly prohibited by the Mosaic code. Asiatic Druidism was, on the other hand, in not a few particulars incorporated, as might be expected of the antediluvian religion, into the Mosaic dispensation. The canonicals, sacrifices, sacred order of a priesthood, three leading feasts, the unhewn stones for the Jehovah-altars, were Druidic institutes; but there remained two tremendous differences between the two faiths,—one of omission, the other of hard, undeniable commission. The fundamental instruction of Druidism, the immortality of the soul, disappears, or at least is very faintly shadowed forth in the Mosaic religion. "The Druids," writes Cæsar, B.C. 54, "make the immortality of the soul the basis of all their teaching, holding it to be the principal incentive and reason for a virtuous life." It is obvious that on this vital point the great Gentile religion possessed incalculable superiority over the Jewish; and I have never succeeded in satisfactorily accounting to myself for the little prominence given to this root-truth of all religion in the Mosaic code. The second fact is, that the Druidic was essentially a priesthood of peace, neither wearing arms nor permitting arms to be unsheathed in its presence; and though patriotism, or the defence of one's country in a just war, was a high virtue in its system, we have no instance of Druidism persecuting or using physical force against any other religion or set of opinions. Its whole theory, indeed,

would have stultified itself in so doing; and herein consists no small part of its identity with Christianity †.

The Jewish priesthood, on the other hand, was one of the sword against all other religions; and Elijah on Mount Carmel and Jehu in Samaria are faithful reflectors of its spirit. When St. Paul said, "I turn henceforth to the Gentiles," he was about to turn to a religion possessing already much more in common than Judaism with Christianity. The saying of Taliesin, the prince-Bard and Druid, conveys a great historic truth, though over-strongly expressed:—"Christ, the Word from the beginning, was from the beginning our teacher, and we never lost His teaching. Christianity was a new thing in Asia, but there never was a time when the Druids of Britain held not its doctrines."

Having thus passed in review the religious status of the world, and especially of our own country, in the apostolic era, we proceed to give an epitome of the events in British history which brought the royal family of Britain into contact with St. Paul at Rome.

† "In the ancient world," observes Higgins, (*Celtic Researches*, p. 196,) "the Druids were the only priesthood of peace. Clad in his white canonicals, the Druidic herald presented himself between two armies, and every sword was instantly sheathed."

[ENDS]