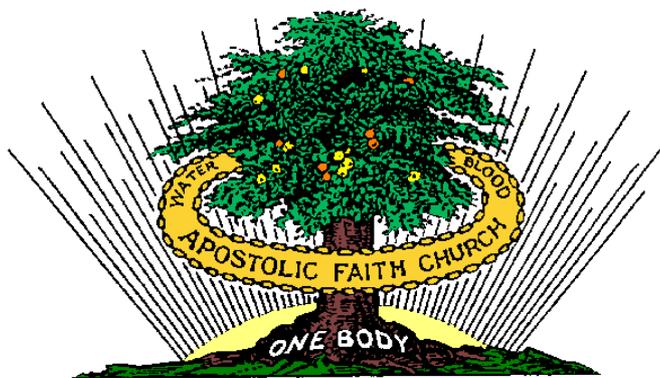


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Joseph Of Arimethea

While reading more of the book "Ark Of the Covenant" I came across some interesting comments about Joseph of Arimethea. The author, Jonathan Gray, having described the finding by Ron Wyatt of Jesus' crucifixion site and tomb, then investigates the man who gave Jesus his own tomb.

Joseph was a rich man of some reputation in Jerusalem. He was a member of the Sanhedrin, who were all from the aristocracy. Pontius Pilate knew and respected him, and gave him permission to remove Jesus' body from the cross and bury it in his own newly cut sepulchral chamber. This was in accordance with existing Roman law that a near relative could attend to the burial of a crucified man. It has been claimed that Joseph was a great uncle of Jesus.

It seems likely that Joseph gained his wealth by involvement in the tin mining industry, in Cornwall, Britain. In his book Jonathan Gray presents evidence of a Hebrew-Phoenician trading co-operation going back to King Solomon's days, and Cornwall used to have almost a world monopoly of tin production. Only one mine remains in production today, but traditions still survive that Joseph was a tin miner and was in the tin trade. Joseph became the "patron saint" of tin miners.

After he gave his tomb for Jesus' burial the Jewish religious leaders wanted their revenge. The 4th century Evangelium Nicodemi claims that Joseph was soon imprisoned, but miraculously delivered. It is likely that Saul of Tarsus (before becoming the apostle Paul) hounded Joseph mercilessly.

Several medieval traditions agree that Joseph was cast adrift on a boat, from which the oars and sails had been removed. One can envisage this as an act of Saul, who would not wish to be responsible for the fate of such an august person, preferring to commit him to the mercy of the waves. There were others cast adrift with Joseph. Cardinal Baronius, who asserts that he obtained his information from ancient documents in the Vatican Library (many important documents have been hidden away there which ought to be made public), quotes Frederic Mistral (1859) and earlier unnamed sources, saying:

"These were the names of the castaways - Joseph of Arimathea, Mary the wife of Cleopas, Martha, Lazarus, Eutropius, Salome, Clean, Saturninus, Mary Magdalene, Marcella (maid to the Bethany sisters), Maximin, Martial, Trophimus, and Sidonius."

A good number of other sources from early times also state emphatically that Mary the mother of Jesus also accompanied Joseph. Joseph was reportedly Mary's uncle and sole surviving relative. I have also read an article that presented evidence indicating that the author of the Gospel according to John was in fact Mary Magdalene, which was covered up due to prejudices against women in those days. The cover up involved replacing her name with "the disciple whom Jesus loved". This makes sense when you consider John 19:25-27 which describes who was at Jesus' cross; there is no mention of John but it does mention Mary Magdalene:

"Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple

standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home." It would therefore be no surprise that both Jesus' mother and Mary Magdalene were together on the boat.

Another ancient manuscript contains the following account of the castaway's journey from Palestine to France:

"Leaving the shores of Asia, and favoured by an east wind, they went around about, down the Tyrrhenian Sea, between Europe and Africa, leaving the city of Rome and all the land of Italy to the right. Then happily turning their course to the right, they came near the city of Marseilles, in the Viennoise province of the Gauls, where the river Rhone is received by the sea. There, having called upon God, the Great King of all the world, they parted, each company going to the province where the Holy Spirit had directed them, presently preaching everywhere, 'the Lord working with them, and confirming His word with signs following'."

The records show that Joseph of Arimathea, together with his band of castaways, landed at Marseilles in the south of France. Other sources tell us that this was the centre of evangelism of the apostle Philip, who became a dear friend of Joseph. Another source states "From Massilia (Marseilles) Joseph and his company passed into Britain... preaching the gospel there."

John Capgrave, a voluminous writer of English history, quotes an ancient manuscript that asserted "Philip sent from Gaul a hundred and sixty disciples to assist Joseph and his companions."

Ancient sources stated that Joseph stayed in Glastonbury until the death of Mary fifteen years after arriving in Britain. This means that she would have died in 51AD. She is said to be buried in Glastonbury. After the passing of Mary, Joseph is recorded as having returned to France for a few years, then again to Britain to work and minister until his death on July 27th, 82AD, aged 98.

Most of Joseph's companions eventually returned to France. French historical records are replete with traditions and mention each one, where they worked, how they lived and how they died. Lazarus (the brother of Mary and Martha of Bethany, who Jesus raised from the dead), for example, became Bishop of Marseilles, living there for seven years before he died in 41AD.

These fascinating facts show that Christianity was not founded in England by St. Augustine in 597AD, as is widely assumed, but that it was founded by Joseph and his companions in around 36AD. Augustine sent a letter to Pope Gregory in which he said:

"In the western confines of Britain, there is a certain royal island of large extent, surrounded by water, abounding in all the beauties of nature and necessities of life. In it the first neophytes of catholic law, God beforehand acquainting them, found a church constructed by no human art, but by the hands of Christ Himself, for the salvation of His people."

That island was Glastonbury (the area has long since been drained so that it is no longer an island in a lake). There is also other early documentary evidence that Britain received the gospel of Jesus soon after the resurrection. One of Britain's earliest historians was the monk "Gildas the Wise", who in 550AD wrote "We certainly know that Christ, the true Son, afforded His light, the knowledge of His precepts to our island in the last year of Tiberius Caesar." Tiberius's last year of reign was 37AD, so the gospel arrived in Britain just six years after Jesus rose from the dead. The Roman Catholic Archbishop Ussher (1550-1613) wrote "The British National Church was founded in AD 36, 160 years before heathen Rome confessed Christianity." Sabellius, Roman Catholic prelate and theologian, wrote in 250AD "Christianity was privately confessed elsewhere, but the first nation that produced it as their religion and called it Christian, after the name of Christ, was Britain." Poldore Vergil (1470-1555), the learned Italian historian, living in England, wrote "Britain, partly through Joseph of Arimathea, partly through Fugatus and Damianus, was of all kingdoms the first that received the gospel."

Article by Keith Robichaud, Bournemouth, first published in Showers no. 4301.

