

The CHRIST CHILD at GLASTONBURY

There is a persistent tradition that Jesus as a child came to the British Isles in the care of his uncle, Joseph of Arimathea. The activity of the young Jesus and older man seems to center around the ancient religious center of Glastonbury, but other sites are mentioned in the traditions as well.

Of course those familiar with the life of Jesus as recounted in the Gospels are aware of the intriguing lack of any details relating to the time between His return to Nazareth (after being inadvertently left behind in Jerusalem; cf. Luke 2) and his appearance among John the Baptist's followers. This lack of historical detail has made it easy for various pious traditions to flourish, e.g. the young Jesus as a wanderer in search of knowledge in the Himalayas, as a member of a strict Essene community such as the one at Qumran, or as a sojourner in the British Isles (with regards to which consult www.asis.com/users/stag/chrstbrt.html).

One can only speculate on the probability or even possibility that the world will ever find out anything more about Our Lord's "missing years". In the absence of any teaching to the contrary, we can continue to exercise our imaginations on this subject, secure in the knowledge that someday - if we're worthy - we'll have all the answers!

**EARLY SUMMER IN THIS HAPPY ISLAND:
AFTER FORTY DAYS OF SEA VOYAGE
JESUS AND HIS UNCLE JOSEPH HAVE ARRIVED.
OUR CHIEFTAINS GREET THEM WARMLY;
THE OLDER MEN TALK OF TRADE AND PRECIOUS METALS
AND CARGOES AND SHIPMENTS AND FREIGHT
WHILE THE BOY DELIGHTS IN GAMES
AND BATHING IN THE WARM CLEAR SPRINGS
AND PRAYING ALONE IN GROVES OF SACRED OAK.**

**JOSEPH'S BUSINESS BEING CONCLUDED,
HE BRINGS HIS BELOVED NEPHEW TO OUR HOLY PLACE
TO BE WITH US, TO HEAR OF OUR MAGIC.
JESUS, STILL SO YOUNG, LISTENS WITH RESPECT,
AND THOUGH HE DOES NOT SPEAK MUCH**

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WE FEEL THE POWER OF HIS EYES.

**ONE BY ONE, AS SO OFTEN BEFORE,
OUR PRIESTS EXPLAIN TO THESE GENTLE VISITORS
THE MEANINGS OF STARS AND WINDS AND BIRDS
AND TREES ...**

**WHEN WE SPEAK OF HEROES
JESUS SMILES AT OUR STORIES,
ANCIENT ALMOST BEYOND RECALLING;
WHEN WE SPEAK OF OUR GODS, HE NODS
(AND RAISED HIS EYES BRIEFLY TO HEAVEN ONCE
HIS LIPS MOVING IN FORGIVING PRAYER
NOT THINKING THAT ANYONE NOTICED ...**

THEN IT WAS OUR TURN TO SMILE.)

**WHEN OUR MAIDENS SING HIM A CRADLE SONG
IN OUR LANGUAGE OF THE KELTOI
(A TONGUE ALREADY OLD
WHEN THE COPTS FIRST LAID STONE ON STONE
TO BUILD THEIR FAR-FAMED PYRAMIDS)
HE TURNS WITH A SMILE TO HIS UNCLE.**

**- I MUST LEARN THAT SONG FOR MY MOTHER, HE SAYS TO US.
- SHE LOVES SONGS, AND OFTEN SANG ME TO SLEEP
WHEN I WAS A BABY, SOFT SAD ARAMAIC SONGS
THAT SPEAK OF THE SOUL OF OUR RACE
AS YOUR SONGS TELL OF YOURS:
WARRIORS AND BATTLES AND FEASTS
FIERCE HATRED AND EVEN FIERCER LOVE
AND THEN THE SOFTNESS OF A LULLABY
CALLED FORTH FROM A SHIMMERING EVENING WORLD
THAT NO ONE BUT THE FATHER COULD HAVE MADE...
AND SO JESUS LEARNS THE SONG, AND WE MARVEL
THAT OUR LANGUAGE OF RIVER AND FOREST
COULD COME AS EASILY TO HIM
AS HIS OWN LANGUAGE OF MOUNTAIN AND DESERT.
HIS CLEAR YOUNG VOICE GIVES MEANING TO THE SONG**

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THAT EVEN WE DID NOT SUSPECT WAS THERE...

**... AFTER THE NIGHT OF THAT SINGING
THERE ARE OTHER SIGNS NOT UNDERSTOOD BY ALL.
OUR ELDERS GROW CONCERNED; OUR PRIESTS
SPEAK OF IT IN LOW VOICES AROUND THE NIGHT FIRES
AND STUDY THE STARS FOR GUIDANCE
WHILE JESUS AND HIS UNCLE SLEEP IN PEACE
NEAR THE STABLE THE BOY LOVES SO MUCH.**

**- PERHAPS, SAY SOME, THIS JESUS
IS MORE THAN A YOUNG TRAVELLER
COME TO LEARN FROM US:
PERHAPS THERE IS SOME NEW TRUTH
WE MUST LEARN FROM HIM.
SOME RECALL THE STRANGE REPORTS
BORNE BACK TO US FROM THREE TRAVELLERS
(CALLED MAGI IN THAT TIME AND PLACE)
WHO HAD FOLLOWED A STAR TO HIS BIRTHPLACE
AND SEEN AND HEARD WONDERS...**

**UNWILLING TO BELIEVE, YOUNGER ONES OF US MOCK:
- WE WHOM THE WORLD CALLS DRUIDS,
PROUD KEEPERS OF THE ANCIENT KNOWLEDGE,
WHAT HAVE WE TO LEARN
FROM A JEWISH TRADER'S NEPHEW,
A LAD OF BARELY TWELVE YEARS OLD?
... UNCERTAIN OF THE REPLY,
THE ELDERS CAN ONLY SHAKE THEIR HEADS
AND HOPE FOR SOME ANSWER FROM THE SKIES
WHILE WE WHO MOCKED FALL SILENT
AND FEEL AFRAID, BUT KNOW NOT WHY.**

**AND IN THE GROVES WHERE HE PRAYS, THE VERY OAKS
SEEM TO BE FILLED WITH EXPECTATION.**

**THEN AN ELDER TELLS US OF A DREAM:
A NEW TREE IN OUR GROVE
NO GENTLE OAK, BUT EVIL, CRUEL,**

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**ITS THORNED BRANCHES STRANGLING THE DARK SKY
AND IN A DEVIL'S TEMPEST, LASHING INTO AGONY
ALL LIFE AROUND IT.**

THEN TRANSFORMATION:

**A GLORIOUS TREE, BRIGHT AND PEACEFUL
CHANGED IN A MORNING LIKE NONE EVER SEEN
BOULDERS BECOME PEBBLES, WOMEN BEFORE TOMBS
LAUGH INSTEAD OF MOURN; A SKY
FILLED WITH A MILLION CRYSTAL COLORS.**

**WE PONDER THE MEANING, BUT EVEN NOW
THE OLDEST CALL US BLESSED:**

***- WE WILL DIE LONG BEFORE THIS JESUS, THEY SAY
BUT YOU WILL LIVE TO SEE HIS WORK ACCOMPLISHED
HIS WORK, AND OUR WORK TOO THE
MOST POWERFUL MAGIC OF ALL ...***

***- SEOITHÍN SEO, IS TÚ MO LEANBH, YOUNG JESUS SINGS
AND BIRDS FROM EVERY TREE IN THE WORLD
SING WITH HIM.***

- YES, MY MOTHER WILL LIKE THAT SONG.

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