# The Druids

**(Extracts and Comments)**

**By**
**Peter Ellis**

# Comments and Extracts From The Introduction of The book by Peter Ellis "The Druids" (1994)

## OTHERS SAY

Finally, a book that separates fact from mythology, telling us what we can and cannot know about the ancient Druids. This remarkable book by a leading historian of the Celts offers much for the academician as well as the general reader. Fascinating reading! **-JOSEPH A. KING author of Ireland to North America**

The Druids penetrates the veil of fiction and folklore by painting a compelling picture of a central aspect of Celtic society that has been shrouded in mystery for centuries. The author's insights are extremely fresh, based on impeccable scholarship, and presented in an engaging style certain to interest readers from all backgrounds. Once again Peter Berresford Ellis has made an invaluable contribution to Celtic studies. **-PETER CHERICI author of Celtic Sexuality: Power, Paradigms, and Passion**

A thoughtful, comprehensive, and highly informative study that corrects many of the ill-founded theories propagated concerning the Druids. It is one of the best books available on the topic. Ellis approaches his subject with realism, respect, and impeccable scholarship,

providing a balanced view not only of the Druids but of Celtic society and achievements in general. His book will be equally valuable to the scholar and the interested reader. -**GLENYS GOETINCK author of Peredur: A Study of Welsh Tradition in the Grail Legends**

# The Druids
# By Peter Ellis

## INTRODUCTION
## IDENTIFYING THE DRUIDS

**IF THIS WERE AN ACADEMIC DISSERTATION,** I would probably choose the subtitle 'An introductory argument'—-n no field is it more necessary to ask the right questions than when attempting to discover the Druids. The simple truth is that one person's Druid is another person's fantasy.

The Druids have been conjured in a wide variety of perceptions, as to who they were, what they believed and what they taught, since the sixteenth century. The basic problem is that no Druid, nor sympathetic contemporary observer, ever committed to writing the necessary unequivocal information for our latter-day understanding. We have to search diligently among many sources to come up with our answers and, as Levi-Strauss implies, the result of the search depends on what questions we ask.

In spite of several references to Druids in Greek and Latin writings and in spite of the traditions recorded in the native Celtic literatures, we are still far from being absolutely knowledgeable.

It is true that we possess a few respectful Greek sources; but the bulk of the 'Classical' observations consist of the anti-Celtic propaganda of the Roman Empire. There has been a tendency for scholars to accept these sources as giving us facts written in stone which are not to be questioned. By the time the Celts themselves came to commit their knowledge to writing, they had become Christianised and, not surprisingly, the Druids continued to get 'a bad Press'. Their portrayal remains an extremely biased one. And when some of the 'gentlemen antiquarians' of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries felt that they could see the Druids in a more sympathetic light, they romanticized them out of all recognition to what their role in Celtic society originally was.

Most people these days would be able to make some response if asked to define a Druid. In fact, the Druids have achieved something of a unique place in the folklore of Western Europe and its New World offshoots. They captured the imagination of the ancient world as no other group of people ever did and they still have a tremendous impact on the esoteric life of the modern world. The Celtic scholar, Nora Chadwick, has commented: 'The fascination of the subject is everlasting.' Apart from a vague acknowledgement that the Druids were the intellectual class of the ancient Celts, they are usually perceived as variations of religious mystics and priests.

Many will remember being taught at school that the Romans saw the Druids as bizarre, barbaric priests who indulged in the most horrendous human sacrifices, searching for auguries in the entrails of their victims. According to others, they were simply ancient patriarchal religious mystics, generally portrayed in white robes and beards, who worshipped nature, particularly trees, and who gathered in stone circles to perform their religious rites at the time of the solstice. To some they were powerful magicians and soothsayers.

To others merely bards and prophets. How many would immediately conjure Merlin of Arthurian Saga fame as the archetypal Druid? No doubt a good many modern children would see the Druid through the eyes of Goscinny and Underzo, in Asterix le Gaulois, where the character of the

Druid is known in the English translations as 'Getafix', originally Panoramix, supplying magic potions from his mystical cauldron.

Those readers who have encountered Celtic mythology, and the early sagas of Ireland and Wales, will know that the Druids are depicted as an all-powerful and essential element in society. By Christian times they had, more or less, been reduced to the status of wizards and soothsayers.

Others will associate the Druids as something to do with the recreation of the Welsh, Breton and Cornish Gorseddau and the romantic movement of the late eighteenth century. The robed figure of the ArchDruid of Wales is now an easily recognizable one, thanks to the press and media coverage of the Gorsedd ceremonies - particularly the Welsh Gorsedd - as part of the National Eisteddfod.

However, in England, people popularly associate Druids with earnest looking, white-robed men and women who continue to hold mystic ceremonies at the time of the summer solstice in stone circles such as Stonehenge and even at such sites as Parliament Hill or Tower Hill in London. Indeed, there still exist descendant groups of the Ancient Order of Druids formed by enthusiasts in London in 1781. Sir Winston Churchill was initiated into the Albion Lodge of the Order in 1908. These gatherings, of course, have nothing to do with Celtic culture, ancient or modern, and the 'mystic' incantations of these particular Druids, to the sun and pagan deities, are chanted in English.

Indeed, Druids have also been hijacked by the 'New Age' movement and conjured to their philosophies. An offering which has been reprinted several times now, The Mind of the Druid, by Dr E. Graham Howe, has a foreword by David Loxley, claiming to be 'Chief Druid of the Druid Order'. Again, this work has absolutely nothing to do with ancient Celtic philosophy, but, sadly, Druids are commercially acceptable in the new wave of esoterica and alternative religious thought.

Any half-baked philosophy can have the word 'Druid' or even 'Celtic' attached to it and be assured of an enthusiastic, if somewhat gullible, following. The first problem, then, is - who is right in their perception of

the Druids? The simple answer is rather like the logic found in Alice in Wonderland. Everyone is wrong but everyone has glimpsed a tiny part of the reality, so everyone is right and we all get a prize! Readers will recall the story of the blind men being asked to define an elephant by touch. One, feeling a leg, claimed that the elephant was like a tree, another, feeling its trunk, claimed it was like a snake, yet a third, feeling an ear, thought the elephant was a large winged creature and so on and so forth.

This is precisely what has been happening over the last three hundred years in the case of the Druids. Definitions are derived from small items of knowledge and no one seems to have perceived a totality of information to give an accurate picture of who they were and why they have survived into our modern folklore. (I think Isabel Hill Elder did do that in her work, "Celt, Druid and Culdee - Keith Hunt).

This work, which is an attempt to present the Druids to a general readership, sets out to demonstrate the role of the Druids in ancient Celtic society; what we know of their teachings, and how they imparted their knowledge without the aid of writing. This oral tradition existed not because they had no knowledge of the art of writing but because they placed a religious prohibition on committing their knowledge to that form, in order that such knowledge should not fall into the wrong hands. It thus took between twelve and twenty years of study to reach the highest level of learning among them.

This prohibition on committing their knowledge and philosophy to writing has been a great stumbling block for modern scholars attempting to understand exactly what they believed and taught; that, combined with the periodic destruction of native Celtic books and manuscripts by conquering forces. Indeed, it is argued that when the Celtic civilization first became known to the Greeks, the Greeks called them the Keltoi, which was a Celtic word used to describe meaning 'the hidden people'.

Celt is seen by some linguists as being. cognate with the Old Irish ceilid, used in Modern Irish as ceilt - to hide or conceal. It is also argued that the word kilt, entering English in about 1730 from Scottish Gaelic, meaning the distinctive short skirt of male Celtic dress, comes from this same root

word. However, it should be pointed out that others have contended that the word kilt derived from the Scandinavian languages, kilte meaning 'to tuck up'. This latter derivation seems a little too plausible.The Druids were no simple barbaric priests or priestesses.

Indeed, nothing in the accounts really suggests a priesthood nor does any Classical writer call them priests or sacerdotes. This is not to say that some Druids were not called upon to oversee religious functions.

I would suggest, as many other scholars in this area have now done, that the Druids were the parallel caste to the social group which developed in another Indo-European society - the Brahmins of the Hindu culture. They formed the intellectuals, or learned class, of Hindu society and were deemed the highest caste. While they had a priestly function, they were not solely priests.

So, too, with the Druids; they were a caste incorporating all the learned professions. The caste not only consisted of those who had a religious function but also comprised philosophers, judges, teachers, historians, poets, musicians, physicians, astronomers, prophets and political advisers or counsellors. Druids could sometimes be kings or chieftains, such as Divitiacus of the Aedui, but not all kings were necessarily Druids.

Our earliest and most extensive sources, as I have pointed out, are from Greek and Roman writers. In other words, from writers alien and often extremely hostile to Celtic culture.

Significantly, the Greek sources are generally more respectful to the Druids, particularly the Alexandrian School of writers, while the Latin sources are universally hostile. Yet, as I have said, these sources have, in the main, been accepted without question even by scholars who are usually more critical of source material. Imagine, the culture and history of the American Indians from the perceptions of nineteenth century white American settlers being accepted without question.

What a curious, prejudiced view we would have of the Native Americans. Imagine, too, the commander of a foreign army which has been sent to

conquer and destroy a people then writing a book about the culture and customs of those people and it being regarded by subsequent generations as written totally without prejudice. Yet we are asked to accept Julius Caesar's accounts of the Celts and Druids as totally accurate.

Had General, Lord Chelmsford, written an account of the culture and philosophies of the Zulu nation, following his conquest of Zululand in 1879, we might have had some reservations in accepting everything he wrote as being without prejudice. Yet many would have us believe that the passage of time makes for unquestioning accuracy. We can accept that Chelmsford would very likely have been prejudiced, but that Julius Caesar's comments on the Celtic civilization and the Druids are beyond reproach. This is not to say that Caesar was totally inaccurate to the point where he should be dismissed. Indeed, from native Celtic sources, we can confirm several of his observations.

We should question everything, especially if it comes from sources hostile to Celtic civilization.

The cultural prejudice of both the Greek and Roman sources must be taken into account when they speak of matters pertaining to a culture they generally deemed as barbaric or inferior.

When Christianity replaced the pre-Christian Celtic religion and the Druidic proscription on writing down the native history and philosophy was ended, the Celts poured out a wealth of literature.

Indeed, Irish became Europe's third written language. From early Irish and Welsh sources there are many references to the Druids and, in a few places, they do confirm some of the information found in Greek and Roman sources.

What emerges from a close study of the sources is that the commonly held belief, that the Romans attempted a widespread repression of the Druids because they were horrified by Druidic priestly practices, is no more than a conjecture which has become an accepted historical myth. There is, indeed, evidence that the Romans attempted to abolish the Druidic caste

although Nora Chadwick argues that the attempt was not as widespread as later historians would have us believe. Certainly such an attempt was not the result of Roman sensitivities about the religious rites practised by the Celts. As an intellectual class, the repository of Gaulish and British cultural and national resistance to Roman conquest, it would be inevitable that Rome would attempt to suppress them. It is a traditional imperialist maxim that to conquer a nation you must first subvert or remove the class which is most dangerous to your objectives, that is - the intellectuals.

Professor Jean Markle, in his "La Femme Celte" (1972) makes the following argument as to why the Romans attempted to suppress the Druids:–

When Rome spread its empire over the whole Mediterranean and into part of Western Europe, care was taken to eliminate anything that might harm its socio-political organization.

> This is very evident in Celtic countries: the Romans pursued the Druids until they disappeared into Gaul and later into Britain. The Druids represented an absolute threat to the Roman State, because their science and philosophy dangerously contradicted Roman orthodoxy.
>
> The Romans were materialistic, the Druids spiritual. For the Romans the State was a monolithic structure spread over territories deliberately organised into a hierarchy. With the Druids it was a freely consented moral order with an entirely mythical central idea. The Romans based their law on private ownership of land, with property rights entirely vested in the head of the family, whereas the Druids always considered ownership collective.
>
> The Romans looked upon women as bearers of children and objects of pleasure, while the Druids included women in their political and religious life. We can thus understand how seriously the subversive thought of the Celts threatened the Roman order, even though it was never openly expressed.

> The talent of the Romans in ridding themselves of the Gallic and British elites is always considered astonishing, but this leaves out of account the fact that it was a matter of life or death to Roman society.

Pliny the Elder (AD 23/24-79) seems to be the first to raise questions bout the reasons for the decline of the Druids and certainly has no hesitation in attributing it to Roman repression. Yet one cannot really take seriously the claim that this was done because of Roman outrage against a religion they associated with human sacrifice when Rome itself was so used to mass sacrifices. Eminent men from the nations that Rome had conquered were dragged though the streets, chained to the chariots of her victorious generals, and ritually strangled in the Tullianum at the foot of the Capitol to propitiate Mars, the Roman god of war. Vercingetorix, the famous leader of Celtic resistance to Caesar in Gaul, met his end here. It can hardly be believed that the Romans, especially during the reigns of such emperors as Caligula and Nero, could be shocked by human sacrifice.

It is only the Romans course, who would have us believe in their sensitivity to human sacrifice. The curious fact is that no Insular Celtic literature, nor traditions, provides evidence for the practice of human sacrifice as a religious rite.

When Augustus excluded the Druids from Roman citizenship by forbidding Roman citizens to practise Druidical rites, when Tiberius banned the Druids by a decree of the Roman Senate and when Claudius attempted to 'wholly abolish' them in AD 54, it was not, I believe, in disapproval of 'inhuman rites' practised by the Druids, but to wipe out an intellectual class who could, and did, organize national revolt against Rome.

Further, my argument is that the Druids were not entirely suppressed in the Celtic lands under Roman rule as is commonly thought. Nor would I accept Nora Chadwick's contention that they perished by slow strangulation from the superimposition 'of a higher culture on a lower'. Mrs Chadwick, for example, claims that when the inhabitants of the chief town of the Aedui in Gaul, that is Bibracte (Mont-Beuvray), were

transferred to the new Roman town of Augustodunum (Autun), and their oral Druidical school was replaced by a Romanized university, the Druids were driven into the backwoods where they eventually perished. On the contrary, I believe that the Druids remained and adapted to the new culture.

The great Gaulish intellectual Decimus Magnus Ausonius (C.AD 310-c.393) provides us with some fascinating evidence in this respect. He was the son of a physician of Burdigala (Bordeaux) where he taught for thirty years before being appointed as tutor to Gratian, son of the Emperor Valentinian 1. When Gratian succeeded as emperor, Ausonius became prefect of Gaul and finally consul in AD 79. He was nominally Christian, but without any deeply committed feeling. He wrote one discourse on the properties of the number three, so closely associated with Druidic teachings. Ausonius came from an educated Celtic family which would have been of the Druidic caste before Roman proscription.

Ausonius himself admits that his contemporary Delphidius, famous for his eloquence, and a likely teacher of his, also descended from a Druidic family. Delphidius' father was Attius Patera, a famous rhetorician, whose own father, Phoebicius, had been an aedituus or 'temple guardian' of the Celtic god Belenus at Bordeaux until he had been persuaded to become a teacher in the local Latin university.

Ausonius' own maternal grandfather was banished by Victricius, the Roman bishop of Rouen (C.AD 330-c.407), with the two local chieftains, to Tabellae (Dax) on the Adour for taking part in an insurrection of the Aedui. In Parentalia, Ausonius also tells us that his maternal grandfather practised astrology in secret and implies that he was from a Druidic family. Victricius was an ex-Roman soldier who converted to Christianity while he was still serving and stationed in Gaul. He was an implacable opponent of 'Pelagianism', which Rome claimed to be an attempt to revive the concepts of Druidism. And, most interesting of all, Ausonius had an aunt called Dryadia which means 'Druidess'.

With the arrival of Christianity, the Druids began to merge totally with the new culture, some even becoming priests of the new religion and continuing as an intellectual class in much the same way as their

forefathers had done for over a thousand years previously. We find an interesting reference in a 'Life of Colmcille' that, when the Irish missionary arrived on the island of Iona, he encountered two Druids who were bishops and who claimed that they had already planted the Christian faith there. Colmcille did not believe that they had been properly ordained and ordered them to depart, which they did. Many early Celtic Christian saints were referred to as 'Druids'.

According to the earliest known surviving biography of a British Celtic saint, written about the end of the sixth century AD, 'A Life of Samson,' Samson's teacher, the famous Illtyd (C.AD 425-505) was 'by descent a most wise Druid'. In the life of the seventh century AD British Celtic saint Beuno (which survives in a manuscript written in 1346) we are told that his last words, as he lay dying, were that he saw the Holy Trinity and the saints and Druids. Beuno was the father of St. Gwenfrewi, more popularly known as Winifred of Gwytherin in Denbigh.

The late fourth, early fifth century AD, Celtic Christian theologian Pelagius, of whom Victricius so strongly disapproved, was eventually declared a heretic after his conflict with Augustine of Hippo. Pelius, was accused of attempting to revive Druidic philosophy on Nature and Free Will. Pelagius' argument was that human beings had free will, while Augustine believed in predestination. We Bear how the Bishops of Rome despaired of the hold Pelagain philosophy had in the Celtic Church during subsequent centuries.

This is not so surprising if such a philosophy was simply a centuries old cultural attitude passed down by generations of Druids. The ninth century AD Welsh historian, Nennius, says that when the Celtic king Vortigern was excommunicated by Germanus of Auxerre (C.AD 378-448) for adhering to the teachings of Pelagius, he invited twelve Druids to assist him in his councils. We shall consider the matter of Pelagianism in the discussion on the Druids as philosophers. The father of St.Brigid of Kildare was a Druid named Dubhthach who is often wrongly associated with Dubhthach Maccu Lugir, who taught Patrick about the Irish law system. Significantly, there were no recorded Christian martyrdoms in Ireland and indeed scarcely any among other Celtic peoples. Those few

martyr which occurred in Britain, for example that of Alban in C.AD 287, were the result of antagonism among the Roman occupiers and not the native Celts.

In Irish ecclesiastical records we have a comment on the extensive land holdings of converted Druids being granted by them to the Church. Adomndn's 'Life of St. Columba' certainly indicates that the Druids were regarded as belonging to the same class as the leaders of Celtic Christianity.

The adoption of Christianity in Ireland did not lead to the abolition the Druids but simply to their transformation.

Father Joe McVeigh, in his polemic work 'Renewing the Irish Church: Towards an Irish Liberation Theology' (1993), points outs:–

> The first Christian missionaries to Ireland did not attempt a root and branch eradication of the Celtic Druidic tradition and beliefs. Instead, the new religion absorbed the holy mountains and the innumerable holy wells and gave them a Christian name. (It has been estimated that there were approximately 3,000 holy wells some of which, like Doon well in Donegal, remain in use.) This popular or vernacular religion, separate and distinct from the institutional hierarchical Church, has, from the outset, been a vibrant characteristic of Irish Christianity.

I believe that this transformation of the Druids occurred in other Celtic societies as well.

There is no support at all for Caesar's contention that in Celtic society 'the (ordinary) people are treated almost like slaves' and that only the Druids and the warrior class of Celtic society had any rights at all. No other observer goes so far as this, nor do the native sources indicate such a situation. Indeed, native sources demonstrate a contrary state of affairs.

Again we encounter the bellicose propaganda of the conqueror attempting to find justification for his conquests. If the people are being treated like

slaves by their own ruling class, then the logic is that their conquest is justified.

Druids were recognized by Irish law even after the introduction of Christianity. The civil law of Ireland was first known to have been codified in AD 438 as the Senchas Mor.' The criminal law, contained in the 'Book of Acaill,' was codified shortly afterwards. The Druids still had a place in these codices, which gives authority to the idea that they were not suppressed nor did they disappear with the onset of Christianity.

Indeed, a Druid was entitled to a position in society although, so far as any religious practices were concerned, the 'Bretha Crolige' puts the Druid on the same social level as a cainte (satirist) or a diberg (brigand), and as a religious functionary the Druid was reduced to a sorcerer or prophet. Indeed, the Irish word Druidecht came to mean sorcery, magic or necromancy while the Welsh word Derwydd meant a prophet.

So, with Christianity, the perception of the function of the Druid was already changing within Celtic society.

Under ancient Irish law the provision of sick maintenance, including curative treatment, attendance allowance and nourishing food, was made available to all who needed it. The Druids were 'entitled to sick maintenance (othrus) only at the level of the boaire (literally, a cow-chieftain or local magistrate), no matter how great his rank, privilege or other rights'. It is obvious from this qualification that a Druid still attained to high rank. Indeed, as both the civil and criminal law code of Ireland survive in their completest form in the 'Leabhar nah Uidre' (Book of the Dun Cow) dating from the late eleventh or early twelfth centuries, it might be remarked that there had been no amendment of the laws relating to the Druids by that time.

Two reasons can be argued: one, that the Druids still existed with a definite, if diminished, role in Irish society; two, that the Druids had vanished and so no one bothered to change the laws. A comparison here might be that it was not until 1951 that the English judicial system finally scrapped the medieval laws relating to the prohibition of witchcraft.

This work has been arranged in order to attempt the easiest presentation to the general reader. The initial chapters present the Celtic world to which the Druids belonged, together with their origins in that world. Next, we consider our sources concerning the Druids; firstly, how they were perceived through the foreign eyes of the Greeks and Romans, and secondly, the Celts themselves, albeit Christianized Celts, perceived these influential figures in their national ancestry.

The reader will note a heavy reliance on Irish sources. This is because there is a veritable treasure trove of Irish material which remains near to the original pre-Christian source.

Druids, of course, were both male and female and we shall examine some of the prominent female Druids or Druidesses.

In religious terms just what did Druids believe, and what were their rituals? What we know from Classical and native sources, together with archaeological evidence, is presented together with an examination of the controversial matter of whether they did or did not, practise the rite of human sacrifice. (I will present you with this in full as given and investigated by Ellis in "Druids #4" in this series - Keith Hunt).

Once again, relying on both Classical and native sources, we discuss the wisdom of the Druids in those areas of knowledge in in which Classical sources claim the Druids had especial renown.

We examine them, among their other occupations, as philosophers, as historians, a physicians, seers, astrologers, and magicians.

Finally, we examine how the Druids came to be revived and have developed as part of our modern folklore.

This book, as I have stated at the beginning, is no more than a modest attempt at an introductory argument about the reality and the legend of the Druids. As Nora Chadwick has already stated, there can be no doubt that the Druids were the most enlightened and civilizing spiritual influence in prehistoric Europe. Yet in trying to recreate the historical reality of the

Druids, myths of white bearded sages, of rites at the summer solstice in megaliths belonging to an earlier culture than the Celts, have developed into wild theories and speculations, to poetic romanticism and mystical dreaming and outright literary forgeries.

If, however, at the end of this work, the reader comes nearer to glimpsing even a little of the reality of what was once 'Druidism', then this book will have served its intended purpose.

I here also present to you the basic truth of the famous Halloween night as it is now pictured in the celebrations of our modern times. Here again, many (including the Worldwide Church of God under HWA), mis-applied, through lack of proper in-depth research, what the original teaching and understanding was believed by the Druids on this special night of October 31 and November 1. It was NOT what has been often attributed to them.

## QUOTE:

On one night of the year the Other world became **VISIBLE** to mankind. this was the feast of **SAMHAIN** (31 October 1 November), when the gates of the Otherworld were opened and the inhabitants could set out to wreak vengeance - on those living in this world who had wronged them. The ancient belief survived into Christianity in a **TRANSMUTED FORM** as Halloween, the evening of All Hallows or All Saints' Day being on 1 November. The **MODERN** idea is that it is the night when witches and demons and spirits from Hell set out to ensnare unsuspecting souls....

**END QUOTE,**

Ahhhh, did you **NOTICE IT?** The **ORIGINAL** belief and teaching of the Druids was **NOT** what is taught and practiced today, and is **NOT** what is commonly taught as what the Druids taught and believed. The Druids taught that those in the other world who had **BEEN DONE WRONG** by some still living in this world, could come back and take vengeance on

them. It was a teaching of "if you do wrong to people, they will have the chance in the next life to come back and take revenge on you." The Druids were **NOT** teaching that witches, demons, evil spirits, were set free to ensnare and harm people. This is as Ellis stated a "modern" idea, and was **NOT** the thought or teaching of the Druids at all.

Oh for the want of correct research into things before you spout off some fanciful wrong ideas on what the Druids taught. Of course these wrong ideas have been perpetuated in some Encyclopaedias (the writers of the article not knowing what they were taking about either–-so the wheel keeps turning) which have been quoted by ministers of the WCG and written in various religious articles on the Halloween subject.

Now, you have the truth of the matter. Yes, the Druids did teach and believe in the "immortal soul" doctrine, but what they taught about the October 31st feast or celebration, is NOT what is taught that they taught. It was for them, in their religion, the day when people who did wrong to others (who had now passed on to the Other world), would have revenge, or punishment, come upon them, from those they had wronged. It was then a Druid teaching that taught in essence, "You better do GOOD to people in this life, not EVIL, for if you do evil to people, you will have revenge come upon you one day, by the people you did evil to."

# Part One
# FROM THE BOOK "THE DRUIDS"
# by
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But before we leave the subject of rites and rituals, we should deal with the most controversial rite ascribed to the Druids: the practice of human sacrifice. The question of whether the Celts did or did not practice such sacrifice has been the subject of much controversy between scholars during the last two centuries. A Greek poet named Sopater of Paphos, in Cyprus, born in the time of Alexander the Great and living to mention Ptolemy 11 (285-246 BC), writes that the Celts of Galatia sacrificed their prisoners to their gods by burning them after a victory. This reference survives in the

work of the Greek author Athenaeus of Naucratis (c.AD 200). Diodorus Siculus, the Greek historian (c.60-30 BC) also speaks of the execution of prisoners by the Galatian Celts:

> The Galatian general returning from the pursuit, assembled the prisoners and carried out an act of extreme barbarity and utter insolence. He took those who were most handsome and in the strength and flower of their youth, and having crowned them, sacrificed them to the gods, if indeed any god could receive such offerings.

These references to the slaughter of prisoners have to be treated for what they are. There is not an army in the world in any historical epoch who has not been guilty of slaughtering prisoners after a battle. We must also remember the high degree of hysteria with which the Greeks regarded the Galatian Celts, especially after the invasion of Greece in 290 BC. Pausanias, (fl. CAD 160), the Greek traveller and geographer, goes on record to accuse the Celts of practising cannibalism after their defeat of the Greek armies of Athens, Pocis, Aetiolia and Thessaly.

He further implies that this was normal Celtic behaviour. According to Caesar, and he is always a questionable source, during the Roman siege of the Celtic hill fort of Alesia (Alias Ste Reine), a Celtic chieftain, Critognatus, proposed that the starving city hold out by eating its own dead. This was an extreme resort. The Celts were eventually forced to surrender. Alesia and Vercingetorix, their king, was taken as captive to Rome, to be sacrificed to the Roman god of war, Mars.

Thus we have to be careful as to what is propaganda and what is truth. So far as the Celts eating the Greeks during their invasion in 290 BC, the story falls into the 'bogeymen' propaganda that is always spread in such circumstances, such as the fabricated stories of German atrocities in Belgium at the opening of the Great War in 1914.

As Rudyard Kipling, a leading disseminator of the stories, cynically told an audience of Scottish university students after the war, the first use that the first man made of the gift of language was to lie about his neighbours.

The first contentious mention of human sacrifice as a deliberate act of religious worship by the Celts is made by Caesar and Strabo, apparently quoting Poseidons as a source. According to Strabo: 'They used to strike a man, whom they had devoted to death, in the back with a knife, and then divine from his death-throes; but they did not sacrifice without a Druid.' He goes further:–

> We are told of still other kinds of sacrifices; for example, they would shoot victims to death with arrows, or impale them in temples, or, having built a colossus of straw and wood, throw into the colossus cattle and animals of all sorts and human beings, and then make a burnt offering of the whole thing.

Even if we accept this at face value, there is nothing to suggest that the Druids were responsible for the sacrifice, only that their presence during it was essential. It has been pointed out that Strabo gives the Druids the position as judges and it can be argued that their presence was probably that of officials to check procedure and prevent miscarriage of the law.

Diodorus actually differentiates between the Druids and the seers who divine by human sacrifice. He says that on great occasions the 'vates' nominate a person as a sacrifice and, after plunging a dagger into him, they read the future from the manner of his fall and the twitching of his limbs and the flow of blood. He adds that it was not the custom to make the sacrifice without a Druid, for it was a saying that offerings acceptable to the gods had to be made through those acquainted with their nature.

He concludes that in internal wars among the Celts both sides would obey the Druids. Even when two armies were about to open battle, if a Druid stepped between them they would be forced to desist. Caesar emphasizes that it was upon occasions of danger, whether pubic or private - the Celts of Gaul immolated human victims, or vowed to do so, employing the Druids as to the conducting of these sacrifices.

He adds that in order to appease the gods, a life must be paid. 'Others make use of colossal figures composed of twigs which they fill with living men and set on fire.' Caesar adds a new twist to this, when he says that the

victims were preferably criminals but if the supply failed then the innocent were used. This passage corresponds in general very closely with those by Strabo and Diodorus and it may be safely assumed that he, too, was using the same source.

Caesar's contemporary, Marcus Tullius Cicero (106-43 BC) in his oration in 64 BC, 'Pro Fonteio,' mentions the prevalence of human sacrifice among the Gaulish Celts as if it were a well-known fact at the time. But whether this was merely something he had picked up from Poseidonius, the source of Strabo, Diodorus and Caesar, is a moot point.

Certainly, Pomponius Mela of Tingentera (near Gibraltar) C.AD 43, who wrote in that year 'De Chorographia,' the earliest surviving Latin work on geography, which gives information on the Druids not found elsewhere, reports that the Celts had once made human sacrifices but that they were now a thing of the past. 'At one time they believed a man to be highly pleasing as a sacrifice to the gods.' However, Mela does not refer to the Druids as being in any away connected with sacrifices. But he says of the Celts:

> “They have, further, their eloquence and their Druids, teachers of wisdom, who profess to know the greatness and shape of the earth and the universe, and the motion of the heavens and of the stars and what is the will of the gods.'

Mela certainly borrows some material from Caesar, such as the passage: 'One of their dogmas has become widely known so they may the more readily go to wars; namely that souls are everlasting, and that among the shades there is another life.'

Marcus Annaeus Lucanus, Lucan, (AD 39-65) from Cordoba, a grandson of Seneca the Elder, is concerned to support Rome's imperial policies and justifies the repression of the Druids because of the 'barbaric rites and a forbidding mode of worship in deep groves'. In this he seems to be hinting at the ritual of human sacrifice.

Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus (b. C.AD 70) in his 'Lives of the Caesars,' speaking of Claudius' reign, mentions that the religion of the Druids was 'cruel and savage' and thus hints at human sacrifice, like Lucan, but again without actually stating so. We have a clearer reference from Tacitus who speaks of human sacrifices in Mona (Anglesey). He says that when Suetonius attacked Anglesey, the Druids 'lifting up their hands to heaven, and pouring forth maledictions, awed the Romans by the unfamiliar sight'.

After the conquest: 'A force was next set up over the conquered, and their groves devoted to cruel superstitions were cut down. They deemed it a duty, indeed, to cover their altars with the blood of captives, and to consult their deities through human entrails.'

Petronius Arbiter (d. AD 65) is quoted by Marius Servius Honoratus (c. fifth century AD) on the rite of the emissary sacrifice, whereby a person is chosen to be sacrificed to the gods. In ancient Greece, where of course sacrifice was practised, the victim was called pharmakos, a scapegoat. Petronius refers to this custom in Marseilles:–

> Whenever an epidemic broke out at Marseilles, one of the poor of the town offered himself to save his fellow citizens. For a whole year he had to be fed with choice goods at the town's expense. When the time came, crowned with leaves and wearing consecrated clothes, he was led through the whole town; he was heaped with imprecations, so that all the ills of the city were concentrated upon his head, and then he was thrown into the sea.

While Marseilles was a Greek colony, founded in the sixth century BC, and this practice was undoubtedly a Greek custom, it has also been argued that Marseilles was on the Gaulish seaboard and that it was probably a Celtic custom. Lactantius Placidus, giving a commentary on the work of the Celtic writer, Caecilius Statius, from the Cisalpine Gaulish town of Mediolanum (Milan), talks of a similar custom which he attributes to his fellow Celts. Statius was brought to Rome as a slave c.223/222 BC, following the Roman invasion of the Celtic territory. Freed, he became the chief Latin comic dramatist of his day. According to Placidus' comments

on Statius:–

> The Gauls had a custom of sacrificing a human being to purify their city. They selected one of the poorest citizens, loaded him with privileges and thereby persuaded him to sell himself as victim. During the whole year he was fed with choice food at the town's expenses, then when the accustomed day arrived, he was made to wander through the entire city; finally he was stoned to death by the people outside the walls.

The passage is so similar to the comment on the Massiliot custom that it seems obvious that they both have a common source. But was it Greek or Celtic?

If such a basic philosophy as the need to propitiate their gods through human sacrifice had such prevalence among the Celtic peoples, one might expect some mention of it to emerge in the extensive Celtic literature, especially as these traditions were set down by Christianized Celts who would seize the chance to impugn their pagan past and revile the Druidic traditions.

O'Curry in his 'Manners and Customs o f the Ancient Irish,' maintained: 'in NO tale or legend of the Irish Druids which has come down to our time, is there any mention of their ever having offered human sacrifices'. There is, however, one specific reference to human sacrifice as a religious rite but not connected with Druidical observation. But it is one reference in the whole corpus of Celtic literature and even its veracity is questionable as it is open to interpretation.

This SOLE reference to human sacrifice as a **SPECIFIC** religious rite in general practice comes from the twelfth century compilation of Irish place-names, the Dindshenchas (sometimes given as Dinnsenchus), recording traditions much older than the period it survives from. The Dindshenchas was recorded by a Christian scribe, of course, and mentions human sacrifice only twice in the account of the naming of Tailltenn and Magh Slecht.

The first reference is to Patrick preaching at Tailltenn and arguing against the 'burning of the first born progeny', while the second reference is to the worship of the idol Cromm Cruach at Magh Slecht.

Cromm Cruach (sometimes Crom Croich) was an early golden idol who was reported to have twelve stone gods to serve him and who was worshipped by the king Tigernmas (Lord of Death) on Magh Slecht (Plain of Cutting/Slaughter). To Cromm Cruach human sacrifices were offered in the form of 'the firstlings of every issue, and the chief scions of every clan.' This concept of the 'first born' as sacrifices seems more in keeping with Hebrew Biblical tradition, via Christianity, than Celtic custom. Importantly, as already pointed out, the concept of primogeniture, which stresses the importance of the first-born male, or, indeed, female, was lacking in the Celtic social order. A foreign concept has been introduced which places the whole validity of the Cromm Cruach story under question.

We are told that for Cromm Cruach 'they would kill their piteous wretched offspring with much wailing and peril, to pour their blood around Cromm Cruach. Milk and honey' (again this seems more a Biblical analogy than a pre-Christian Celtic one) 'they would ask from the idol in return for sacrificing one third of their healthy issue. Great was the horror and the fear of the idol. To him noble Gaels would prostrate themselves. From the worship of the idol with many slaughters, the plain is called Magh Slecht.' (Slecht. Cutting, hewing, slaughter.) But this story is, in fact, presented in the form that Tigernmos and his idol were a social aberration and were soon overthrown by the Druids.

In the 'Leabbar na Nuacbongbbala' (Book of Leinster), there is a prose account of the idol and the death of Tigernmas with a multitude of his people while in the act of frenzied worshipping, an echo of the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah which might have seized the imagination of the Christian writers. But there is not a word about human sacrifice in this particular account, neither was it mentioned by the later writers such as Seathrun, Ceitinn, Ruaraidh O Flaithbheartaigh (Roderick O'Flaherty) or in the reference given in the 'Annales Riogbachta Eireann' (Annals of the Four Masters). Also, earlier in the ninth century AD, when the 'Tripartite

Life o f St. Patrick' claimed it was Patrick who overthrew the idol, rather than the Druids, no mention of human sacrifice is made. In fact, in Patrick's own 'Confession,' his biography, in which he strongly criticizes pagan practices, there is no reference to human sacrifice. Nor does any of the early Celtic saints 'Lives' mention such a rite. It seems obvious that the prejudice of the Christians had **NO GENUINE** 'human sacrifice' material at all to seize upon.

There are a couple of other references which might well imply the existence of human sacrifice but as a very ancient custom long since abandoned by the end of the **FIRST** millennium BC. This custom, however, is to be found in most early European societies. These references are connected with the ancient superstition that sprinkling the blood of some human victim on the foundations of a building, about to be erected, provides for its safety and stability.

This custom has been found in Hindu culture, among the Greeks, Slavs and Scandinavians. In a Life of Colmcille, it is recorded that one of his disciples, Odran, a British Celt, offered to die so that his sacrifice and burial would scare away the demons that infested Iona. There are oral traditions relating to this, to the effect that Odran was buried under the foundations of Colmcille's church. According to Alexander Carmichael's 'Carmina Gadelica' (1900), there are oral traditions found throughout the Hebrides of persons killed and buried, or even buried alive, under the foundations of newly erected buildings to ensure stability. But is this a tradition from the Celtic or the Scandinavian traditions, which were also prevalent among the Western Islands?

This custom is certainly reflected in 'Historia Brittonum' by Nenmus, the Welsh historian writing C.AD 829, which records that when Vortigern decided to build Dinas Emrys he consulted his Druids who told him that in order for the structure to last forever, a child, who had no father, should be sacrificed and his blood sprinkled on the foundations. Such a child was found. But the boy had great wisdom and argued the morality of the sacrifice with the Druids so successfully that he was released. The boy was Merlin. This story actually corresponds closely with an ancient Irish tale, 'The Courtship of Becuma', copied into the fifteenth century AD

'Book of Fermoy' from an earlier source. In this story a blight comes to the country because of a great crime committed by a woman. The Druids say that the only way to remove the blight is to sacrifice a child, the son of a couple who would have certain characteristics. The child's blood should be sprinkled on the doorposts of Tara. The child is found and about to be killed when a wondrous cow appears and is slain instead. The doorposts are sprinkled with its blood and the blight removed. There are also certain similarities between this and the Greek story of Iphigeneia, the sister of Orestes, whom Agamemnon was forced to sacrifice on the order of the seer Calchas. Artemis substitutes a deer for her on the sacrificial altar.

There is one other oblique Irish reference to this concept. In the Sanas Cbormaic (Cormac's Glossary), written by Cormac Mac Cuileannain of Cashel (d. AD 836), Emain Macha, the great palace of the kings of Ulster, received part of its name due to the sacrifice of a man at the time of its building. The fanciful etymology gives 'em' or 'ema' (blood), 'ain' or 'uin' (one), 'because the blood of one man was shed at the time of its erection'.

Of all the Classical writers, it is Pomponius Mela who seems the most accurate in recording that any tradition of human sacrifice among the Celts had ended long before the time he was writing, that is c. AD 46. Indeed, while there is much material on the rites and superstitions of the pagan Irish there is hardly anything, apart from the story of Cromm Cruach. This might be argued as supporting a claim of a human sacrifice tradition but the story actually shows Cromm Cruach as an aberration to the norms of society.

Even Mrs Chadwick, in her study 'The Celts,' while inclined to believe the Romans, has to admit:

> 'There is little direct archaeological evidence relevant to Celtic sacrifice ....'

In her attempt to find something, she refers too the evidence of bodies preserved in a bog in Denmark, but while she has to admit that they are 'beyond the boundaries of the Celtic world proper' she still tries to link

them up with the motifs on the Gundestrup cauldron. She has the scholastic grace to say that human sacrifices are 'apparently represented on the bowl from Gundestrup':–

> The much more plentiful archaeological evidence, corroborated by classical literary references to various offerings of inanimate objects, often of considerable value, in rivers, lakes, sacred groves and the like, and the possibility of animal sacrifice, suggest hat human sacrifice among he Celts, although of great ritual significance, may have been practised,appear commonly at time of communal danger or stress, rather than as part of regular ritual observance.

This comment by Mrs Chadwick makes many conceptual leaps. Why the offering of inanimate objects should lead one to believe that the people who made them also practised human sacrifice escapes one, as does the reason why human sacrifice should be of great ritual significance when there was no native literary or archaeological evidence to support it. And how is it that it was commonly practised at the time of communal danger when the only authority for such a statement is the sole and questionable opinion of Caesar?

Mrs Chadwick's comments rely on an acceptance that the enemies of the Celts were accurate in their observations.

Indeed, as Jean Louis Brunaux states in 'The Celtic Gauls':—

Archaeological clues relating to the question of human sacrifice have for a long time been scarce and equivocal. The presence in graves of skeletons without a skull or the strange position of some burials with hands behind the back as though tied, have indeed been cited, but no formal proof of sacrifice as opposed to exceptional funereal customs has been identified.

The excavations at Gournay-sur-Aronde in France show some eighty skeletons of bodies that had apparently been divided into quarters.

If the deaths were violent, no trace has been left on the remains. Brunaux seems to imply that this was a funeral practice after people had died naturally. Similarly, the excavation at Ribemont-sur-Ancre in 1982, showed bones meticulously arranged belonging to some 200 individuals. But these excavations, along with those at Mirebeau and Saint-Maur, are more likely to be of Celtic cemeteries rather than evidence of sacrifices.

# Part Two

# From Peter Ellis' book "The Druids" (1994)

The argument that archaeology has finally produced evidence of of human sacrifice is based on the discovery of 'Lindow Man' on Friday 1 August 1984, workers engaged in peat cutting on Lindow Moss, near Wilmslow, on the southern outskirts of Manchester, found a well-preserved human leg. The police supervised the search for further remains and a complete head and torso were found. Radio carbon dating eventually placed the body to AD 50-100. The British Museum were called in and in 1986 produced a preliminary study, 'The Body in the Bog.' In 1989, the leading Celtic scholar, Dr Anne Ross, together with Dr Don Robins, of the Institute of Archaeology at the University of London, published a book, 'The Life and Death of a Druid Prince.'

The facts were that the body was that of a man of about 25/30 years who was in fairly good health apart from a mild osteo-arthritis. He wore a fox-fur amulet on his arm. The skull had been fractured at the crown and the jaw broken. The neck had been dislocated, consistent with hanging. There were lacerations on the preserved skin tissue. A post-mortem

showed that the man had been hit twice from behind with an instrument such as an axe which probably rendered him unconscious. He was then garroted by a knotted cord of animal sinew which had cut into the skin. At the same time, a sharp blade had been plunged into his jugular vein. Then he had been dropped into the bog.

Now how had these facts then led to the identification by Drs Ross and Robins that this was a ritual human sacrifice? And further, that the victim was a 'Druid Prince'? Indeed, the conjectures get more imaginative. The fur amulet caused the authors to suggest that the man's name was Lovernios, that is 'fox' from the Gaulish 'lovernios,' cognate with the Welsh 'llwynog,' Breton 'louarn' and Cornish 'lowarn.' But what is the basis for such conjectures? The basis is that the 'human sacrifice' report of the Romans is accepted without question.

The authors argue:—

> Their (the Celts) penchant for human sacrifice shocked even the Romans, inured as they were to the horrors and carnage of the amphitheatre. Surrender to an enemy never figured largely in the Celtic order of battle. Prisoners of war, as we learn from Julius Caesar, were usually sacrificed to the gods. Caesar reports how captives were burnt in giant wicker cages ...

Caesar, with due respect to him, says **NOTHING OF THE KIND**. On the subject of sacrifices he says that criminals were chosen in the first place. References to Celts not taking prisoners of war, found in other Classical writings, could well have been simply a warning to Greek or Roman soldiers not to contemplate surrender and making them fight without quarter. But that's as maybe And, as we have seen, the 'wicker man' report was not even an original one by Caesar but a rehash of Poseidonios. The authors, Ross and Robins, refer to the traditions found in Scotland.

> 'It is in Scotland that the clearest traces of human sacrifice in connection with Beltain have been noted. This evidence

> is supported by Welsh oral lore and there is more than a hint of it in Ireland. In all cases the victim was chosen by means of the burnt piece of festival bannock.'

Now this is departing a little from what the evidence **ACTUALLY** shows, which I have cited above. The introduction of a burnt bannock into the proceedings is simply to reinforce the authors' arguments, because traces of a burnt bannock were found in the stomach of Lindow man. Indeed, at no time do the authors present their exact sources or evidence for the statement. Also surprising is the statement:—

> The Celts believed in capital punishment, but they turned it into a religious act, making an execution into a sacrifice— Captives were vowed to the gods before battle, and for this reason could not be sold or given away. They had to be offered. Human beings were sacrificed in order to propitiate the god of blight and crop failure.

Presumably this is the authors' own imaginative interpretation of Caesar's remark that the sacrifices among the Gauls were usually of criminals.

Again, the authors are simply accepting the authority of the Roman general and their own interpretations what he meant. In contravention to this statement we find the Celtic law systems are opposed to capital punishment and to slavery in the form understood by Greece and Rome. Again one has to ask, what is the evidence for the statement 'the Celts believed in capital punishment', other than the throwaway line by Caesar? Laurence Ginnell in is study 'The Brehon Laws (1894) comes to a contrary Statement:—

> There is ample evidence of various kinds that the whole public feeling of Ireland was opposed to capital punishment; and still more was it opposed to the taking of the law into one's own hands without the decision of a court.'

This is not to say that there was no capital punishment at all. 'At this day no one is put to death for his intentional crimes as long as eric-fine is obtained', says the commentary on the 'Senchus Mor.'

Dr Joyce explains:—

> 'the idea of awarding death as a judicial punishment for homicide, even when it amounted to murder, does not seem to have ever taken hold of the public mind in Ireland.'

Indeed, Edmund Spenser and Sir John Davies, and other early English settlers in sixteenth and seventeenth century Ireland, commentating on the eric-fine for homicide instead of capital punishment, denounced it as 'contrary to God's laws and man's'. According to Dr Joyce:

'There is no record of any human sacrifice in connection with the Irish Druids; and there are good grounds for believing that direct human sacrifice was not practised at all in Ireland . . .'

'The Life and Death of a Druid Prince' is a polemic, but too loaded with conceptual leaps of imagination to be acceptable as proven fact. Although as Dr I.M.Stead of the British Museum comments, 'The archaeologist would be hard put to produce a more convincing example' (of human sacrifice), more convincing examples do need to be found before we can truly come to the conclusions drawn by the authors.

The deduction one is really drawn to is that the idea of widespread human sacrifice among the Celts was mere Roman propaganda to support their imperial power in their invasion of Celtic lands and destruction of the Druids.

Additionally we can argue that we have more evidence of human sacrifice occurring widely both in Greek and Roman civilizations. Unlike Celtic literary tradition, Greek literature is full of traces of human sacrifice customs, particularly the slaughter of young virgins before a battle. The best known historical example is the mass ritual sacrifice of Persian prisoners before Salamis in 480 BC. Among the Romans there are many

specific references to human sacrifices, notably in 228 BC an during the Second Punic War to propitiate wrathful war deities. Livy himself records that the Romans made human sacrifices after the defeat of Cannae in 216 BC. Among the sacrifices to appease the gods, two Celts were buried alive under the Forum Boarium. During the lifetime of Plutarc(AD 46-c.120) human sacrifices were still being made. In the time of the late Republic an early Empire, children were sacrificed in rites to conjure the spirits of the dead. During the reign of Claudius, foreign captives were being buried alive at Rome to ameliorate the gods of war.

Prisoners of war, like the Numidian king, Jugartha, and the Celtic leader Vercingetorix, with their families, were held for long periods - six years in the case of Vercingetorix - in the deep underground prison of Tullanium below the Capitol before finally being ceremonially sacrificed in honour of Mars. Even Roman patricians, such as the followers of Lucius Sergius Catilina (d.62 BC) were ritually slaughtered here. During the second and third centuries AD, Tatian, Tertullian and Minucius Felix reported that human sacrifices were being carried out during festival of Latini.

Above all, when examining Roman sensitivities, one has to remember the violent and bloodthirsty culture of the Roman 'circus'. The spectacle of prisoners and slaves fighting to the death before enthusiastic spectators had been recorded in Rome from the third century BC. By the time of the emperor Marcus Ulpius Traianus (Trajan AD 98-117), a time when it is recorded that the Roman empire was at its 'greatest', Trajan himself could put five thousand pairs of gladiators into the arena and force them to fight to the death. As an 'interval' to the proceedings, tens of thousands of criminals were led into the arena and ritually slaughtered for the further entertainment of the masses.

It was Decimus Junius Juvenalis, the satirical poet Juvenal, writing during this period, who wrote the famous statement: 'The people who have conquered the world have only two interests - bread and circuses.'

In the early empire, during the course of a single day in the Circus Maximus, three hundred prisoners had to fight each other to death; twelve hundred men and women, condemned by law, were slaughtered, most of

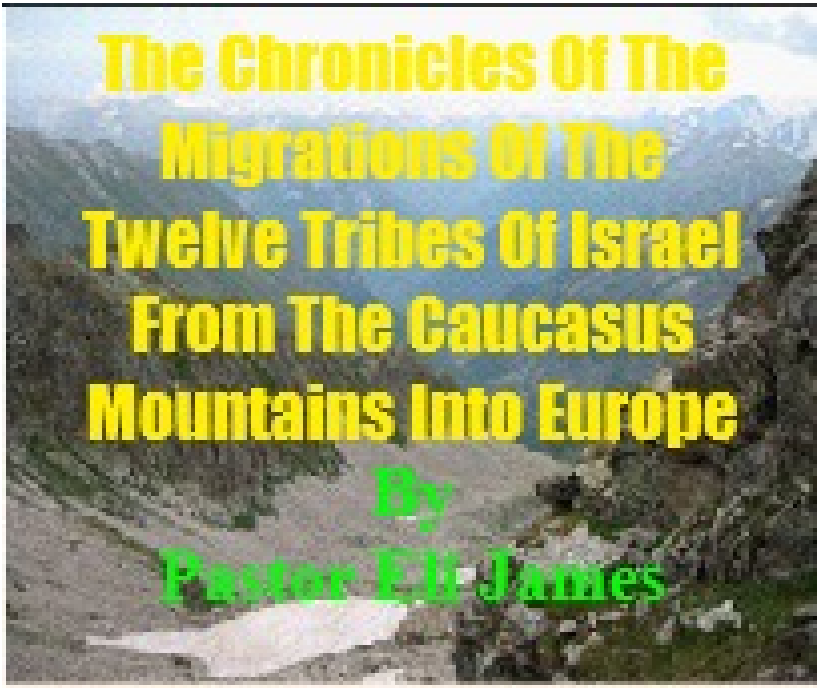
them killed by wild animals, and, as a special feature, it was announced that twenty girls would be forced to copulate with wild beasts. Slaughter of, and by, wild animals was a particular feature of Roman 'entertainment'. When Titus Flavius Vespasianus (AD 79-811), who became emperor on the death of his father Vespasian, finished the Colosseum begun by his father, a total of nine thousand wild animals were killed in fights with men and women (venationes) to mark the 'grand opening'. The number of men and women slaughtered is not recorded.

Even when Flavius Valerius Constantinus Augustus (C.AD 285-337) became emperor and a Christian, allowing Christians total freedom of rights within the empire, in AD 313, he allowed the continuance of the bloodthirsty spectacles. Even Pope Dionysius (AD 259-268) is recorded as owning gladiators and attending the games. Ironically, it was not until the fifth century, when Rome was invaded by those they called 'barbarians', that those 'barbarians' put an end to the bloody and violent spectacles.

Bearing this in mind one has to look at the Romans' expression of profound disgust and distaste for human sacrifice, as applied to the Druids, as rather meaningless and an act of high political cynicism.

Finally, we have to agree with the conclusion of Doctor Brunaux:

In the present state of research, knowledge of human sacrifice rests upon the texts that have a tendency to distort the reality of the facts and to exaggerate their frequency in order to make them more sensational. In this area, despite important discoveries, archaeology has nothing new to contribute. The absence of conclusive evidence, despite more and more numerous excavations, tends to confirm the hypothesis that the practice was rare. The ancient ethnographers had not actually witness any of these deeds with which they reproach the Celts. While exploring Gaul, like Poseidonios, they can only have seen skulls nailed above doors of houses and sanctuaries, for which there is some archaeological proof.

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