

THE DRUIDS

and THEOSOPHY

BY PETER FREEMAN
WITH A FOREWORD
BY DR. ANNIE BESANT

Y GWIR YN ERBYN Y BYD

DRUID



SEAL

THE TRUTH AGAINST THE WORLD
(DRUID MOTTO)

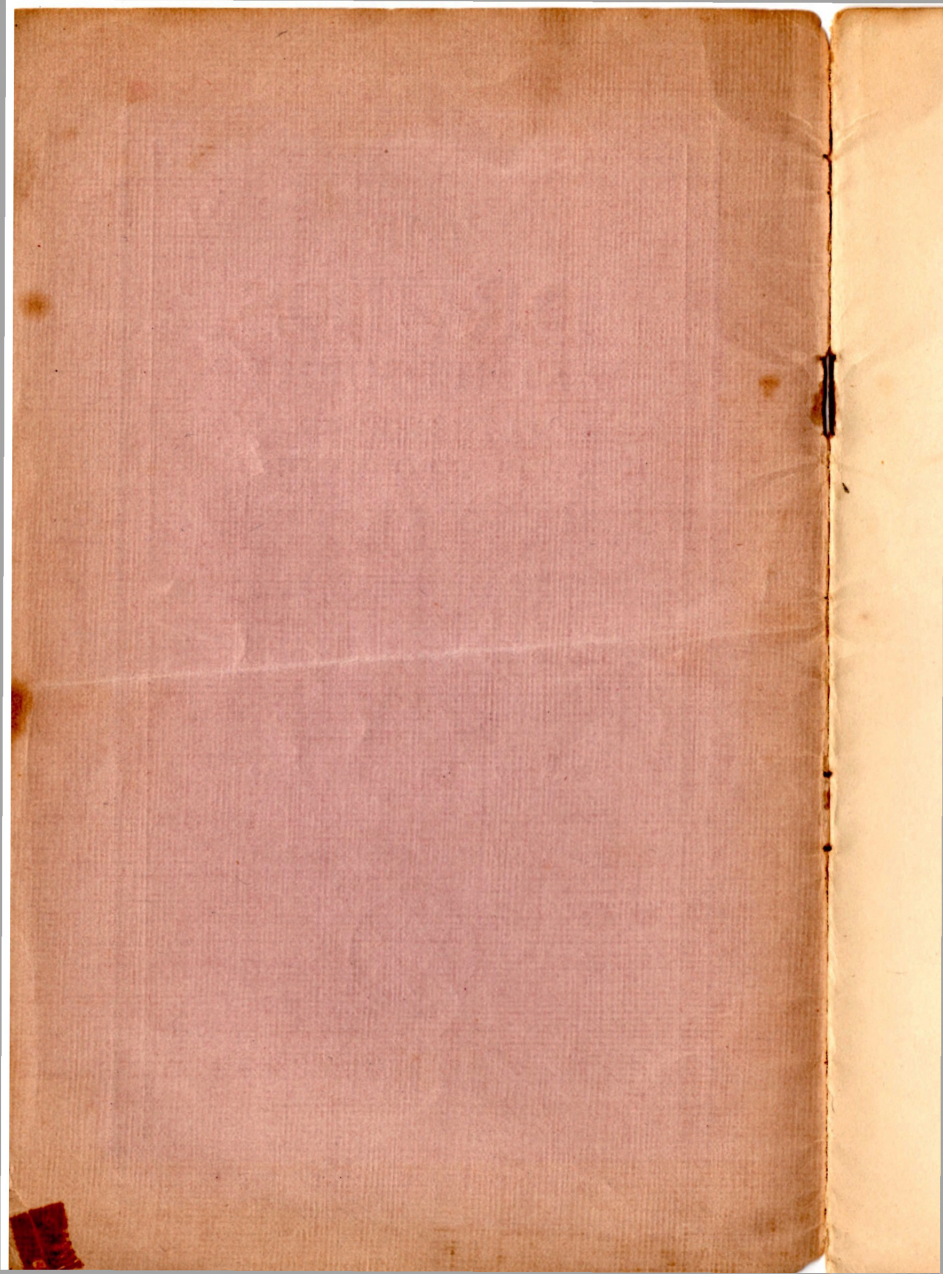
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T.S.



SEAL

THERE IS NO RELIGION HIGHER
THAN TRUTH
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THE DRUIDS AND THEOSOPHY

By
PETER FREEMAN



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Foreword

by

Dr. ANNIE BESANT

**:: PRESIDENT OF THE ::
THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY**

IN this little sketch of the Druid work and thought, Mr. Freeman unlocks a door which opens on long vistas of suggestive beauty, down which we would fain wander to gather the flowers of wisdom and tradition of which we catch a glimpse.

That the Druids held in trust secrets of science and mystic lore we know. Persecution by the ignorant and the superstitious slew, and drove into hiding the wise and the understanding, and robbed the lands of the Kelts of music and poesy, of art and grace, save that which was interwoven in the soul of the people and made them what they were.

This little brochure is but the opening of the door. May many walk through it, and enrich and beautify their land with the dust covered treasures they will find."

ANNIE BESANT.

THE DRUIDS AND THEOSOPHY

The Gorsedd Prayer

"Grant us, O God, Thy protection,
And in protection, strength;
And in strength, understanding;
And in understanding, knowledge;
And in knowledge, the knowledge of justice;
And in knowledge of justice, the love of it;
And in that love, the love of existences;
And in that love of existences, the love of God;
God, and all goodness."

This Prayer has been in constant and regular use for many centuries. When pronounced in the original Welsh it forms a powerful mantra.

The Ancient Bards or "Druids"

The Ancient Bards of Britain, otherwise known as the "Druids" of popular historians, have not always been well-spoken of by men of letters. Indeed, it has been almost the fashion among certain writers to represent these religious and ethical instructors as semi-barbarians, and of inferior capacity in spiritual knowledge.

This attitude, however, cannot be justified by evidence, but on the contrary it can be shown that the Druids have had a great and beneficent influence over the many nations and peoples in past centuries, particularly the Celtic civilization.

The Kelts

The Kelts were the Fourth Sub-Race, as the Teutons were the Fifth Sub-Race of the Aryan Root Race. The early history of their predecessors takes us back to Atlantis.

From the original Kelts migrating from Central Asia, many branches are found all over Europe, and now known amongst others, as the Greeks, Romans, Spaniards—and later—the Italians, French, Scotch, Irish and Welsh, Manx, etc.

The word Kelt comes from "Keli, the unmanifest concealed or hidden God."—*Morien*.

The Druids

The Druids were the acknowledged and recognised leaders and teachers of the Kelts for many thousands of years, though their power and influence probably attained its maximum in Ireland, Scotland and Wales (which included all England at this time), in the centuries preceding the Christian era. The Islands of Anglesey and Man were probably the last centres of Druidic activity.

We must, however, remember that that was an age of "Action" as the present is an age of "Thought," and Duty was enjoined rather than the Freedom of these more democratic days.

The Kelts were an idealistic, but emotional people, in contrast to the individualistic and intellectual Teutons, and undoubtedly the peculiar form of presentation of the "Mysteries" in the Druidic ceremonies and teachings, was more suitable to them than that of Christianity, and possibly some of the recent difficulties in Ireland may be directly traced to this question of "Religion."

Suppression of Druidism

The Romans eventually suppressed the whole Druidic organisation, especially in Wales, where their last headquarters were established. At the instructions of Suetonius Paulinus they "Cut down their sacred groves—destroyed their Temples and their Schools—burnt their Priests—punished adherents of their Faith, and suppressed their Teachings." Thus says a Christian book on "Faiths of the World":—"This idolatrous system disappeared as Christianity progressed, through all parts of the country, and before the zealous exertions of the Christian Missionaries, the barbarous rites and superstitions of the Druids passed away utterly and forever."

It is probably true that the exertions of these Christian (?) Missionaries were successful in destroying the form in which their teachings were given, as the modern Druids in Ireland or in Wales claim and know no link with this once great and beneficent organisation, but their Teachings still live and cannot die. Whether their statement as to their barbarous rites and superstitions is justified will hereafter be seen.

Druidic Sacrifices

"It is only candid to state, however, that human sacrifices have not only been denied, but it is supposed they were seldom even of the animal kind. The Gaelic language is said to contain no trace of such ceremonies—the word expressed by 'sacrifice' actually means 'the offering of a cake.'"—*Thompson*.

No satisfactory evidence has ever been produced that the Druids themselves were ever guilty of the crimes and cruelties sometimes attributed to them.

In their decadent days, hordes of worthless brigands trading under the guise of Druids, and surreptitiously using their name, etc., may have done so, however.

Statements about Druidism

Of the Druids, Cowper wrote:—

"Regions Cæsar never knew,
Thy posterity shall sway,
Where his eagles never flew,
None invincible as they."

and Pope:—

"Hail Bards, triumphant born in happier days,
Immortal heirs of universal praise."

And Matthew Arnold says: "There existed in the Island of Britain, before and at the time of its invasion by Julius Cæsar, a class or caste of persons who, under the name of Druids, formed a powerful hierarchy. The Druids were the depository of great and extensive learning and possessors of civil power; acquainted with letters, arts and sciences, conversant with the most sublime speculations of geometry, in measuring the magnitude of the earth and of the world; philosophers of a sublime and penetrating spirit, adding the study of moral philosophy to that of physiology, skilled in mechanics, and acquainted with rhetoric and other polite arts."—*Studies of Celtic Literature*.

Further, in his introduction to the *Everyman's Library* edition of George Borrow's ever delightful little volume entitled *Wild Wales*, the editor, Mr. Theodore Watts-Dunton, writes most enthusiastically of "Druidism" as "that mysterious poetic religion which more than any other expresses the very voice of Nature." This is admittedly a large claim; but it is no doubt true in a sense.—*Ancient Bards Preface*.

Madame Blavatsky's *Secret Doctrine* contains many eulogistic references to their teaching and influence, and compares them with the Brahmins of India, the Magi of Persia, and the Orphic Teachers.

Activities of the Druids

The Druids generally :—

1. Were exempt from military service.
2. No Druid would engage in fighting.
3. They were never armed.
4. Their persons were regarded as sacred.
5. They paid no "taxes" or "tithes."
6. They accumulated no funds, or ever had any "wealth."
7. They always had a recognised right to speak first and last at all meetings.
8. Were always present at religious rites and festivals.
9. They nearly always lived in communities.
10. They always recognised the equality of men and women.
11. They were the interpreters of Religion—the Law-makers, Teachers and Priests.
12. They had extensive powers which they used impartially in settling all disputes.

"So great was the veneration in which the Druids were held that when two hostile armies—inflamed with warlike rage, with swords drawn, and spears extended, were on the point of engaging in battle—at their intervention, they sheathed their swords, and became calm and peaceful, and would accept the impartial decision of the Druids on the dispute."—*Diodorus Siculus*.

Occult Knowledge: They had considerable occult knowledge of elementals, fairies, etc.—the use of talismans, occult forces, recognised the power of the sun, and had great faith in conducting their ceremonies in the "open air" and in "sacred places."

It was reputed that they could "Foretell the Future"—"Perform Magic"—"Cast Spells"—"Divine Mysteries"—and "Explain Dreams." The whole of their teachings were

given orally, and none were allowed to be written. This accounts, to some extent, for the lack of so-called "evidence" of what they taught.

In one of the notes to his poems, Iolo vindicating the genuineness of the alleged primitive traditions very strenuously asserts that "letters cannot transmit knowledge so correctly as oral tradition."

Druidic Triads

Their method of conveying knowledge was in the form of "Triads" of which there were probably at least 20,000, dealing with every phase of life, and giving the answer to every question. A few of these have been handed down and are now available, and there can be no question as to their wisdom, simplicity and value. They are generally regarded as the genuine remains of the Druidical Ages, but it being then considered unlawful to commit them to writing—accurate records of them are difficult to trace from the time they ceased to be handed on by word of mouth during the ceremonies of the Druids themselves. Further, the English translation does not probably convey the full meaning of the original Welsh or Gaelic.

A few examples of the Triads were:—

1. "Three eternal foundations of Ethics—Love to man, Justice to all, and Obedience to the Laws of Humanity."
2. "Of three things come Wisdom—of Truth, of Meditation, and of Suffering."
3. "Three good things to cultivate—Good Friends, Good Thoughts, and Good Humour."
4. "Three things to govern—Temper, Tongue, and Conduct."
5. "Three necessities of Transmigration—the least of all life, whence a beginning; the substance of all things, whence progress; and the formation of all things, whence individuality."
6. "Three things ever accumulate strength—Love, Knowledge and Righteousness; for there is an unceasing endeavour after them."


7. "Learn diligently what thou seest; keep diligently what thou learnest; and fear not to make known what thou knowest."
8. The duties of the Druid are :
 - (1) To reform Morals and Customs,
 - (2) To secure Peace,
 - (3) To celebrate the praises of all that is good and excellent.
9. Three things to remember :
 - (1) To act bravely,
 - (2) That the Souls of men are immortal.
 - (3) There is another life after death.
10. Three things to do :
 - (1) To worship the Gods,
 - (2) To do no evil,
 - (3) To exercise fortitude.
11. The Three embellishing names of God :
 - (1) The Soul of the Worlds,
 - (2) The Father of Animation,
 - (3) The Immensity of Love.
12. The Three embellishing names of the Stars :
 - (1) The Eyes of Serenity,
 - (2) The Candles of God,
 - (3) The Gems of the Sky.

General Teachings



These included Astrology, Theology, Geography, Politics, Natural Science, and Art. The Druids certainly excelled in all forms of Art. The basis of all modern "verse" is probably due to them—all writings having been in the form of prose hitherto. They had their own musical notation—a little different from that of the present. They first introduced the violin and the harp. The Druids originated and developed the art of enamelling—to the surprise of the Romans, when they came and found it being carried on in Britain by those "uncivilised savages." They reduced design in art to its simplest form,

and used four simple methods which were all probably symbolical, representing the four main Principles of Life.


- (1) A series of dots (sometimes grouped

in various ways),  representing the "value of the individual."

- (2) Diagonal lines

 or  representing "growth, change, evolution."

- (3) Zig-zag

 "action and reaction" (Karma), and

- (4) The ingrowing or outgrowing circle



"Man's relationship to God and God's relationship to man."

Many of the most beautiful designs of the Druidic period can be reduced to these elementary forms.

Personality counted for little amongst the Druids. No names of their great teachers have been handed down to posterity. They erected no statues nor monuments, but believed men lived in their work, *not* in their names.

Religious Teachings

They had no special "Beliefs" nor "Faiths," no dogmas, no doctrines. Druidism was *not* a religion, but rather a religious system or philosophy of life, and all their teachings were inseparable from the activities of daily life. For this reason they gladly co-operated with the early Christian teachers in the introduction of Christianity into Britain.

St. David, the patron saint of Wales, although gaining his knowledge from Druidic sources, so efficiently organised Christian activities in the sixth century, that for the only time in our history Christianity, in this country, was a united body, and known as the British Church of Christianity.

St. Patrick, a little earlier than this, but coming also from Wales, where he was in charge of one of the Druidic centres, including temples, colleges, etc., at Llantwit Major (S. Wales), undertook a similar work in Ireland, with conspicuous success, though probably encountering greater difficulties.

The Druids always used natural surroundings and conditions for their ceremonies. The 12 upright stones in a circle (the Gorsedd) (carefully oriented), represent the zodiac and typified the whole manifested universe—the stones themselves symbolising simplicity and stability—The “Logan Stone” (often weighing many tons), was probably made to move, and possibly represented the voice of God (Logos) to impress the multitude with certain teachings, but also used as a platform for the Arch-Druid.

It was on this stone that the mystic Fire was lit at the Midsummer Festival, after all lights and fires had been put out everywhere, all over the country.

During this ceremony, “the Mystic Fire of God” would descend on the altar, and the Arch Druid would then instruct his Druids; “Now take your brands fresh with the breath of God to light the hearths of men,” and all fires would be re-lit by them in every home.

“Fire” and “Light” were regarded as a special “Gift of God,” and this ceremony was performed to keep it in remembrance.

Worship with them, was a national institution, and everybody took part in their ceremonies. These were not held on Sundays, as is the custom in most religious services with us, but on such occasions as the solstices and equinoxes, times of full moon, Midsummer Day, etc.

Amongst other things they taught and practised were :—

1. The existence of One God, the Supreme Governor (not Ruler) of the Universe.
2. The Unity of all Life (all life was mutually dependent).

3. All beings and all forms of life were descended or "sprang from" God; (there is no reference to "creation" by God).
4. Immortality of the Soul, and Cremation of the Body.
5. Laws of Periodicity and Correspondences.
6. Various planes or states of existence on a seven-fold basis.
7. Metamorphosis, metempsychosis, and/or reincarnation.
8. Sacredness of all life (many were probably vegetarians).
9. The Brotherhood of all Humanity; (a well-known Druidic motto says: "There is no Stability save in Brotherhood.")
10. The free and unlimited "Search for Truth."
11. The exoteric Truths for the people, and the esoteric Truths for students.
12. Existence of "Adepts," or Masters.

The Eisteddfod

The Eisteddfod (meaning "Sittings") probably dates back to the time when Wales was a self-governing and independent Nation, with its own laws (which Howell Dda systematised and have since become the basis of English common-law), their own educational institutions, and practising very largely a community life. At this time, the Eisteddfod was the House of Commons of the day, and their "sittings" always commenced with music.

When Wales fell under the more powerful military dominion of England, she was deprived of the privilege of making her own laws—but still kept on the Eisteddfod—which thereby became mainly a musical Festival, and has been so celebrated ever since even to this day.

The Druidic Order

The Old Druidic Order has, however, no connection between the present day activity which centres round the Eisteddfod, and has little in common with it other than the use of the "Gorsedd circle" (Caer—Sidi=Church—Star, representing the Kosmos and the Zodiac), the motto of the early Druids—"Y gwir yn erbyn y Byd." (The Truth against the World), and the symbol



It was divided into three degrees or orders :—

- (1) The Druids—the teachers, and priests.
- (2) The Bards—philosophers, poets, and prophets.
- (3) The Ovates—the artists, the workers.

This priestly order was always held in great estimation. Nobles, and even princes, eagerly sought admission into it, and the more numerous the Druids were, the more prosperous would be the country. Dr. Henry says, "Many of the Druids seem to have lived a kind of collegiate or monastic life, united together in 'Fraternities,' as Morcellinus expressed it."

The Druids wore a flowing white robe with different coloured bands or scarves for the various degrees. They generally went bare-headed and bare-footed.

The Druids recognised the hierarchical basis of life, but the order was built on a democratic form. The Arch Druid being elected generally for life.

They had their annual conventions in each country, and bi-annual convocations for all Europe.

The Druidical "Secret Doctrine"

"Degrees were conferred by complicated ceremonies—and we hear for the first time of the "Secrets" and "Mysteries" of Bardism. Claims of the most extravagant kind are put forth for the Bards. And, "The Truth against the World" is represented not only as a motto, but as the basis and the character of every bardic work." (*Old History of Wales*, p. 546, Woodward).

"But the chief feature is the strange theosophic scheme which these two mystagogues (Iolo Morganwg and Dr. Owen Pughe) have developed out of the scanty authentic and traditional accounts of the Druids, and their mythological poems of the Middle Ages." (*ibid.*, p. 547).

"From this it is evident that there was a secret doctrine as well as a public one—and although it is not possible to say what the esoteric doctrine was, we may well believe with Cæsar that it consisted of speculations concerning the

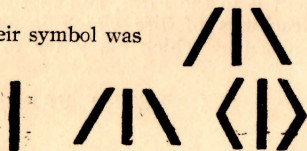
World and the Universe—concerning Nature and the Deity.” (*ibid.*, p. 54).

E. Renan traces the descent of Masonry from the Druids in his “Poetry of Celtic Races.”

Relationship of Druidism and Theosophy

Their symbol was

i.e.,



I A O (the unpro-

nounceable Name of God) representing the three-fold

nature of the Deity, sometimes written



or



or



(the Tau Cross), and some-

times



Another symbol was the Serpent and the

Serpent's Egg



One can see from both of these



and



when conjoined, a close con-

nection with the Seal of The Theosophical Society.



The word "Druid" is derived from, Dru=God (cf. Modern Welsh Duw; Gaelic, Draoi; French, Dieu; Greek, Δ; English, Deity), and "Vid"="knowledge" (cf. Aryan root, vid=wisdom; Latin, video; Sanscrit, vidya; English, vision); in fact it is but another form of the words "Divine Wisdom," the Brahma-Vidya or THEOSOPHY.

From the above it does not seem unreasonable to assume that the Druids were to the Fourth Sub-Race, what the Theosophical Movement is to the Fifth, and that the same great fundamental teachings of life which inspired the Druids are now the ideals by which many try to live as Theosophists.

PETER FREEMAN.

ST. DAVID'S DAY,
1st March, 1924.

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The Philosophic Teachings of Catwg the Wise

On TRUTH

There is nothing easy but the seeing of Truth.

There is nothing difficult but the obtaining of Truth.

There is no wisdom but the love of Truth.

There is no learning but the knowledge of Truth.

There is no heroism but the speaking of Truth.

There is no love but in the expression of Truth.

There is no enemy but that of clinging* to Truth.

There is nothing wonderful but in obedience to Truth.

There is nothing more general than the praise of Truth.

There is nothing less general than the seeking of Truth.

There is no astonishment but the hearing of Truth.

There is nothing supreme over everything but Truth.

There is no attainment but the finding of Truth.

There is no wealth but the obtaining of Truth.

There is no effort that is good but the Search for Truth.

There is no peace but in the maintenance of Truth.

There is no good end but Truth.

There is no will of God but Truth.

*The Letter of the Law and not the Spirit of Truth.

A Few Druidic Proverbs

Whoso possesses the grace of God, is rich.

Long the tongue, short the wit.

Vain is the advice not sought.

The fool loves the sound of his own voice.

Whoso loves wisdom will not practise deceit.

Truth is the eldest child of God.

Good for evil will take thee to heaven.

Often is the devil found in a garb of light.

The true home verily is heaven.

Happy is he whose life is pure.

Disagreeable is every Truth where it is not loved.

He verily is not good who cannot become better.

Whoso loves God is safe.

Early rising is the better half of the day's work.

The real friend will be seen in adversity.

Violence is insulting Truth.

Gentleness and patience will make the work perfect.

After leaping is too late to refrain.

