

# The Glastonbury Scripts

The Glastonbury Scripts are texts communicated through a medium, seemingly by deceased former monks of Glastonbury Abbey in the southwest of England. They were obtained between 1907 and 1917, the result of an attempt by an archaeologist to solicit help with excavations at the site.

## The Abbey

The monastery at Glastonbury was founded during the seventh century on 37 acres of ground given to the Celtic Church by the King of Dumonia. The buildings were ravaged by the Danes in 878 and restored by the Benedictine order under St. Dunstan in 943. In 1539 they were again destroyed during the dissolution of the monasteries ordered by Henry VIII on his break from Rome. The Church of England acquired the grounds in 1908 and in that year GW Lambert wrote:

If we follow the conservative line, we must suppose that a simple fact, e.g. that [a story] lodged itself in [Bartlett's] memory owing to his having read it in the ordinary way, and thereafter gradually developed unconsciously a fanciful story. ...

Such subconscious weaving of stories has been reported in other cases, and they are sometimes not understood by the persons who obtain them. Such inventiveness, working on available data, is not quite so difficult to envisage now as it was at the beginning of the century, owing to the advances made in the manufacture of computers. But a computerlike process cannot introduce facts not known to the automatist, and the verification of such facts is a matter of extreme difficulty, because the range of the automatisis reading cannot be exactly determined. I think that many of those who have made a study of reliable automatic scripts are convinced that they do occasionally show evidence of knowledge which the automatisis mind had never possessed. Bligh Bond was convinced that the scripts he published did show such knowledge, both as regards the abbey ruins and the self-styled monks who furnished it. I feel that we must regard such a claim as not proven.<sup>1</sup>

Bond himself gradually came to believe that the communications came from spirits of the dead and not some universal mind, as he originally speculated. He noted in particular that the communicators seemed to have distinct personalities, also that much personal information was given, which one would not expect to get from a universal mind. He wrote:

These have been described as "intrusions," and are only dealt with incidentally in [*The Gate of Remembrance*], and necessarily to a very limited extent. Behind and beyond the mediaeval and monkish ideas and influences which are concerned with the Glastonbury Abbey, there are in evidence controlling influences which speak to us from out of the great profundity of time, and which seem to marshal the memories and personalities evoked in the script, as

the stage-manager summons and controls the actors of a play in their several parts. These more dominant influences are many ...'<sup>2</sup>

However, Bond recognized that the scripts fell well short of providing veridical information, also that some of the information offered by the monks conflicted with historical records. The fact that the directions often conflicted with his own ideas as to the abbey layout suggested that the phenomenon was not one of mental telepathy: the medium, or the medium's subconscious, reading Bond's mind. But the extent to which the purported spirits helped him in his excavations could not be measured, since progress would have been made anyway, and there was no way for him to prove that his unorthodox methods expedited the excavations. Clearly, however, Bond was convinced that the 'spirits' Bond (1919), helped him significantly.

Bond later worked with Cram in Cram's architectural practice in Boston, and served as an educational director for the American Society for Psychical Research as well as Editor of that organization's journal. In 1936 he returned to England, devoting much of his final years to painting oil sketches of churches. The story of the Glastonbury Scripts receives little, if any, notice at the museum on the site of the ruins.

Michael Tynn

## Literature

Bond, F.B. (1918). *The Gate of Remembrance*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell.

Bond, F.B. (1919). *The Hill of Vision*. London: Constable & Co.

Lambert, G.W. (1968). Johannes, the monk: A study in the script of J.A. in 'The Gate of Remembrance'. *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 44, 271-80.

## Endnotes

### Footnotes

- <sup>1</sup>. Lambert (1968), 282-83.
- <sup>2</sup>. Bond (1919), 2.

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