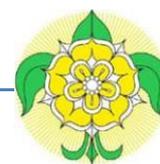# The Two St Albans

The history, legends, symbolism and parallels between the 3rd century martyr, St Alban, and the 17th century martyr, Francis St Alban (Francis Bacon).

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Saint Alban

According to ecclesiastical history, the proto-British martyr St Alban (Latin: Albanus) was born in the 3rd century AD, in Hertfordshire, near Verulamium, went to Rome as a young man where he served as a soldier and officer under the Emperor Diocletian, and then returned to Verulamium in the company of Amphibalus, a Christian friend and preceptor, by whom he was taught. When the persecution of Christians commenced, it eventually came to the ears of a strict judge—a magistrate, prince (Caesar) or emperor (Augustus)—that Albanus was sheltering a Christian priest. This judge gave orders for the soldiers to search Albanus' house, but the priest was helped to escape by Albanus, who donned his preceptor's cloak and, pretending to be the priest, gave himself up to the soldiers instead. On trial before the judge, on removal of the cloak, Albanus' real identity was discovered. When asked to renounce his Christianity and sacrifice to the gods, Albanus refused, following which he was condemned, scourged and taken out to be executed (beheaded) outside the city walls. Amphibalus was found shortly afterwards at a place (Redbourne) four miles north-west from Verulamium where, with some companions, he was stoned to death.

St Alban's execution took place outside the walls of Verulamium and on the hillside of Holmehurst Hill (now Holywell Hill) which forms the eastern border of the river Ver. (The Roman town of Verulamium was built on low-lying ground on the west side of the river.) The soldier appointed to execute Saint Alban refused to do so, resulting in him being beheaded together with Saint Alban. Various signs and miracles are supposed to have occurred, and the judge who witnessed these events was so moved that he ended the persecution of Christians and began to honour the saints.

St Alban's body was interred in a tomb near where he was executed, probably a Roman burial site. Following Constantine the Great's edict on religious tolerance in AD 313 (the Edict of Milan) that ended the persecution of Christians throughout the empire, a little church to St Alban's memory was built by St Alban's Christian friends or converts on the spot where the tomb was located. According to early sources of the legend, this was said to have been visited by St Germanus of Auxerre in c. AD 429, who brought with him other relics of apostles and martyrs which he placed in the tomb alongside the body of Saint Alban. This church was later destroyed by the invading Saxons and not rebuilt, and the location of the tomb was lost.

However, in the eighth century Offa, King of Mercia, visited the site, which was still held in honour as the burial place of the martyr, and there he was granted a powerful vision that revealed to

him the actual position of the tomb. He also discovered the wooden chest in which St Alban's body and the other relics had been buried at the time of the Saxon invasion. As a result, in AD 793 Offa founded a Benedictine monastery on the hill and built a monastic church in which the relics were housed on the site of the destroyed Romano-British church and tomb. A few centuries later, beginning in 1077 this Saxon monastery was replaced by a Norman abbey, with a magnificent abbey church, which was completed by 1088 but continually added to and partly rebuilt over the succeeding centuries.

At the beginning of the 14th century the shrine containing the relics of Saint Alban was rebuilt, adorned and set up on a pedestal in the east end of the newly built presbytery. At the Reformation the shrine was destroyed, but then rediscovered and rebuilt in the 19th century, and restored in 1993. Over the centuries St Alban's shrine became a renowned goal of pilgrimage and the town of St Albans adjoining the abbey grew into a prosperous market town. By the high Middle Ages the abbey ranked as the premier abbey in England. It now serves as the cathedral of the diocese of St Albans, established in 1877, and is still a famous and popular pilgrimage destination.
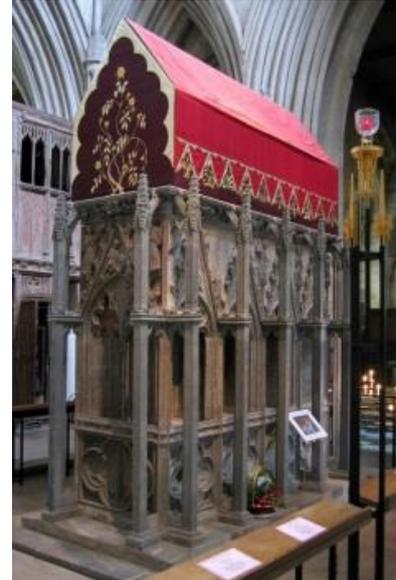
The foundational text for the legend of St Alban is the 5th century *Passio Albani*, of which several copies were made. The Turin version states that "Alban received a fugitive cleric and put on his garment and his cloak (*habitu et caracalla*) that he was wearing and delivered himself up to be killed instead of the priest… and was delivered immediately to the most impious Caesar Severus" in the time of "Emperor Severus". Another 5th century text to mention St Alban is the *Vita Germani* ('Life of St Germanus of Auxerre'), written about AD 480 by Constantius of Lyon. A short account is given by St Gildas in his *De Excidio et Conquestu Britanniae* (c. AD 570), in which he sets the martyrdom of "St Alban of Verulamium"[1] in London during the "nine years' persecution of the tyrant Diocletian". The Venerable Bede offers the most detailed version in his *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (c. AD 730), but describes the event as happening in Verulamium sometime during the time of Diocletian's persecution of the Christians, when Carausius "possessed himself of Britain", followed by Allectus, who "was then vanquished by Asclepiodotus, the captain of the Praetorian bands, who thus at the end of ten years restored Britain to the Roman Empire". St Alban is briefly mentioned in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (c. AD 900), and by Geoffrey of Monmouth in his *Historia Regum Britanniae* (c.1136).

The date of St Alban's martyrdom has never been firmly established. Following the references to Diocletian's 'Great Persecution' (The Diocletianic) that was inaugurated in AD 303, ecclesiastical history usually gives the date of execution as occurring on 22 June either in the year AD 304 or 305. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, however, gives the year AD 283. The *Passio Albani* refers to the judge who interrogated St Alban as being "Caesar Severus", thereby suggesting an imperial 'Severus' time period. The belief nowadays tends to be that the Latin word *severus* was mistakenly taken to be an adjective rather than a name; that "Caesar Severus" probably refers to Gita, the younger son and Caesar of the emperor

Septimus Severus; and that the earlier account of the legend recorded in the *Pasio Albani* is probably more reliable than the later accounts by Gildas, Bede and others.

The Roman emperor, Lucius Septimus Severus, was in Britain from AD 208 to 211, accompanied by his wife, Julia Domna, his sons, Caracalla and Geta, and the whole imperial court. Caracalla had been promoted to the rank of Augustus and Geta to the rank of Caesar in AD 198. During the campaign in Britain, Caracalla was involved in directing the military campaigns in Caledonia (Scotland) together with his father, and Geta was left governing Britannia (Roman Britain). During the course of the campaign, Severus became increasingly ill and the main responsibility of command fell increasingly on Caracalla. Eventually, in February AD 211, Severus succumbed to his illness and died at Eboracum (York). At some point Geta was promoted by his father to the position of Augustus, which was probably when Severus knew he was soon to die and wished to leave his sons as joint heirs, co-emperors of the Roman Empire. After his death, both Caracalla and Geta were acclaimed Augusti by the army, but with Caracalla being the senior of the two. Caracalla continued campaigning in the North a few months longer, but before the end of the year both emperor-brothers had left Britain. These circumstances could indeed mean that St Alban was tried and martyred by Geta sometime during AD 208-210, although other modern scholars have proposed that the saint was martyred during the period of persecution by Decius and Valerian in the years AD 250-259, because the latter were known as avid persecutors of Christians whilst Severus tended to be less severe.

There was also another "Severus"—Flavius Valerius Severus—who was the Augustus (senior emperor) of the western half of the Roman Empire from AD 306 to 307.[2] Before he became Augustus he served as Caesar (junior emperor) to Constantius I (Constantius Chlorus), the Augustus of the West from AD 305 to 306. The latter visited Britain in AD 296 as Maximian's Caesar, and again in AD 305-306 as Augustus, when he was accompanied by his son Constantine. Flavius Valerius Severus Augustus did not visit Britain, but his Caesar was Constantine, who remained in Britain for a short time after his father's death in AD 306, during which time he acted as Severus' Caesar.

Although there were many sporadic anti-Christian policies carried out locally across the empire during the first three centuries AD, there were only a few organised persecutions by the Roman government as a result of a decree or edict from the emperor. In the likely period (3rd and early 4th centuries) we are talking about for St Alban, there were the imperial persecutions of Decius, Valerian and Diocletian. Septimus Severus (Severus I) is described as a persecutor by the early church historian Eusebius, but the Christian apologist Tertullian states that Severus was actually well disposed towards Christians and never ordered an official persecution of Christians. The first person in the 3rd century AD to do so was the emperor Decius, who issued an edict in AD 250 requiring everyone in the empire (except Jews) to perform a sacrifice to the gods in the presence of a Roman magistrate. Since Christianity considered such sacrifices anti-Christian, this was in fact the first time that Christians throughout the empire had been forced by imperial edict to choose between their religion and their lives. The emperor Valerian, who took the throne in AD 253, continued this policy, but when his son Albanus became emperor in AD 260, the legislation was revoked and the persecution came to an end.

The next imperially-decreed persecution of Christians occurred when Diocletian became emperor in AD 284. His first act was to purge the army of Christians, which began early on in his reign. This was later followed by a general persecution begun on February 24, 303. However, whereas Diocletian and his Caesar Galerius were avid persecutors, the other senior emperor in the Tetrarchy, Constantius, Augustus of the western empire, was not. Constantius was succeeded by Flavius Valerius Severus (Severus II) in AD 306, but whether or not he was a persecutor of Christians is hard to tell. When Constantius' son, Constantine, became Augustus in AD 307, he restored the Christians to full legal equality and returned to them whatever property had been confiscated during the persecution.

Besides being reputed by the Church as the first Christian martyr in Britain, St Alban is claimed by Freemasonry in their Legend of the Craft as the founder of Freemasonry in England. The Legend adds further details and some modifications to the ecclesiastical history (including referring to Britain as England) when it comes to the time of St Alban.[3] Its Legend, collected from several sources and elaborated over the course of several centuries, declares that Masonry flourished in Britain since before the time of the Druids, and that during the Roman rule lodges and conventions were regularly held. However, continual wars reduced Masonry to a low ebb. It was then that Masonry was reintroduced into England by St Amphibal, a Christian monk, and first communicated to St Alban, who was a knight.

The story goes that when the King of England revolted from the Roman Emperor Maximilian and set himself up as the Emperor of England, he employed St Alban to environ the city (Verulamium is implied) with a wall and to build for him a splendid palace. To reward his diligence in executing these works, the Emperor appointed St Alban as steward of his household and chief ruler, after himself, of the realm. He also made St Alban the paymaster and governor of the King's (Emperor's) works.[4] Then, in order to make himself and his government acceptable to the people of Britain, the Emperor assumed the character of a Mason and raised the Masons to the first rank as his favourites, appointing St Alban as the Principal Superintendent of their assemblies. St Alban gave the fraternity the Charges and Manners as St Amphibal had taught him (i.e. framed for them a constitution), assisted them in making Masons, treated them with great kindness and increased their pay. Later on, in the year AD 287, the Emperor granted the Masons a charter and commanded St Alban to preside over them as Grand Master. Saint Alban's martyrdom, according to the Masonic Legend, took place in the year AD 303. Both dates, 287 and 303, are given definitively.

Ecclesiastical history states that St Alban was an officer in the Roman army, and the Masonic Legend says that he was a knight. These two statements can be seen to agree, since, after the Second Punic War (218-201 BC), the Roman *Ordo Equester* or 'Order of Knights' (the third order of Roman aristocracy that is made up of patricians, senators and knights) became exclusively an officer-class, with the First Class of commoners providing the legionary cavalry. Moreover, the Emperor Augustus instituted a policy, followed by his successors, of elevating to the Order of Knights the *primus pilus* (chief centurion) of each legion once he had completed one year's service as chief centurion.

If there is any truth in these legends, then it would indicate that St Alban was a chief centurion and knight, and he may have been even higher in rank than this. The legends make him out to have been of such high rank or importance that the "judge" or emperor

took great pains to try to persuade him to recant his Christianity and acknowledge the emperor as god on earth. It is noteworthy, therefore, that it was the chief centurion who was usually appointed as the *praefectus castrorum* (camp commandant), of senior officer status and the third-in-command of a legion. The role came with a host of tasks and was very important. The safety of Verulamium, which was of *municipium* status,[5] would have been under his direction and would naturally have involved making the city walls safe, possibly even rebuilding them.

Verulamium was granted the rank of a *municipium* in AD 50, which conferred Latin Rights on its citizens. Around AD 55 the settlement's first defensive system was constructed, consisting of a large bank and ditch which enclosed an area of 119 acres (48 hectares). The revolt led by Boudicca in AD 60-61 razed the largely timber-built city to the ground. The city was rebuilt fifteen years later, under Vespasian, to whom the new forum was dedicated in AD 79. By the early second century the town had expanded to such a degree that the first century 'Claudian' defences had to be removed and new defences built to encompass the larger area. These consisted of a massive bank and ditch surrounding the expanded town, complete with four monumental twin-arched gates, one on each of the four sides of the city. In AD 155 a fire destroyed almost half the city, after which the new buildings that arose from the ruins were constructed more of stone than timber, with many fine houses, two monumental arches spanning the axial Watling Street, a theatre and a basilica. There was another fire around AD 250, after which the city was rebuilt in stone rather than timber. Between AD 265-270 a new city wall was built of brick and flint, backed by a massive 5 m high earthen bank and surrounded by a 6 m deep defensive ditch. The town was rebuilt at least once again before AD 400, but during the period AD 250-400 it established itself as a wealthy market centre, with comfortable houses, fine mosaics, Italian marble and a piped water supply.

The fact that Masonic legend states that the "Emperor" employed St Alban to environ the city with a wall, and that a new city wall of flint and brick was constructed between AD 265 and 270, might imply that Saint Alban lived around that time and, as the camp commandant, ordered the wall to be built. This then makes it possible for St Alban to be caught up in a revolt led by a "British king".

The Masonic Legend does not name the British king, but it is usually assumed to be Carausius, who did lead a revolt. Carausius is made out by Geoffrey of Monmouth in his *Historia Regum Britanniae* (1136) to have been a native Britain who persuaded the Roman Emperor to give him a naval command. The historical Carausius was indeed a Roman naval commander, but a person of Menapian descent—the Menapii being a Belgic tribe of northern Gaul. The Catuvellauni, whose capital was Verlamion, which became Verulamium when Romanised, were a Belgic tribe originating from Belgic Gaul, which means that Carausius was, at the least, linked to the Catuvellauni by tribal ties, or was indeed a British king of the Catuvellauni, whose tribal capital was Verulamium. In the former case St Alban is most likely to have known Carausius, and in the latter case St Alban would not only have known Carausius but also have worked alongside him at Verulamium, all of which makes both the ecclesiastical and the Masonic legends plausible.

Carausius was tasked with clearing the English Channel of Frankish Saxon raiders, but then accused of collaborating with the pirates in order to enrich himself. As a result Maximian,

the Roman Augustus of the Western Empire, ordered him to be put to death. Carausius responded by declaring himself Emperor of Britain. His support among the British was strong, and at least two[6] of the three British legions defected to him, maybe all three, as did some or all of a legion[7] near Boulogne. Those in the army who didn't support him were quickly eliminated. This in fact lends further support to the theory that Carausius was a Catuvellaunian king, because it was the Catuvellauni who subjugated a large area of Britain and led the resistance to the Romans both when the Romans first invaded and also later, AD 43-50, under the leadership of the Catuvellauni princes, Togodumnus and Caractacus, sons of Cunobelinus (Cymbeline).[8]

The revolt led by Carausius occurred in c. AD 286, but in AD 293 Carausius was assassinated by his subordinate Allectus, who then assumed command and overlordship of Britain. In AD 296 Constantius Chlorus, who had become the Caesar of the Western Empire in AD 293, managed to reconquer Britain, during which Allectus was slain. Constantius only remained in Britain for a few months, during which he replaced most of Allectus' officers, and then returned to Gaul. In AD 303 Diocletian issued his imperial edicts ordering the persecution of Christians, but Constantius—who until AD 289 had been married to Flavia Julia Helena (St Helena), a Christian and mother of Constantine the Great—was on the whole well-disposed towards the Christians, and so he hardly carried out any serious persecution of the Christians.

It is therefore feasible that St Alban was the steward of Carausius' household and chief ruler (after Carausius) of Britain whilst Carausius was still alive. Likewise it is feasible that Carausius assumed the character of a Mason and raised the Masons to the first rank as his favourites, appointing St Alban as the Principal Superintendent of their assemblies, and who then, in AD 287, granted the Masons a charter and commanded Saint Alban to preside over them as Grand Master. It is also possible, but less probable, that St Alban continued in this position under Allectus, but this would imply that he either supported the overthrow of Carausius by Allectus or, as the most senior officer, was too valuable to be discarded and was willing to serve whoever was the British emperor. Or, of course, he could have gone into retirement, forced or otherwise, which is perhaps more likely. However, all this changed in AD 296 when Constantius Chlorus reconquered Britain.

Constantius had been made the Emperor Maximian's Caesar in AD 293 and was given command of Gaul, Britannia and possibly Hispania. It was as Maximian's Caesar that he visited Britain in AD 296 after defeating Allectus. Constantius was only a few months in Britain, but during that time he replaced most of Allectus' officers. If St Alban had been one of them, this would have been his fate, which probably would have meant execution.

However, St Alban is said to have been executed because of his Christianity and because he was sheltering a Christian priest and passed himself off as the priest in order to allow the latter to escape. He was being taught by this priest in private, seemingly in secret, but when he fully accepted Christianity is not known. Certainly no one seems to have known that Saint Alban was a convert to Christianity until he was arrested and interrogated. In the Diocletian context of dating St Alban's martyrdom, the events leading to St Alban's arrest, trial and execution are unlikely to have occurred until AD 306 for several reasons, but for then it is a possibility.

On 1 May 305, because of illness, Diocletian announced his abdication as Augustus. At the same time, and as agreed, Maximian did likewise. The two Caesars, Constantius and Galerius, were promoted to their positions, the former becoming Augustus of the West and the latter becoming Augustus of the East. Flavius Valerius Severus and Valerius Galerius Maximinus were appointed as their respective Caesars. Immediately after becoming Augustus, Constantius came to Britain in order to launch a military campaign against the Picts who had attacked the northern outskirts of the empire in Britain. This time Constantius was accompanied by his son Constantine (later to become the emperor Constantine the Great), who had joined him at Bononia (Boulogne) in Gaul in the late spring/early summer of 305 AD. They travelled together at the head of their legions through Britain to the far north in order to fight the Picts beyond Hadrian's Wall.

By 7 January 306 Constantius, aided by Constantine, had gained a victory against the Picts and retired to Eboracum (York) for the winter, where he declared himself "Britannicus Maximus II". Constantius planned to continue the campaign but, having become severely sick, on 25 July 306 he died. The army in York immediately proclaimed Constantine their leader and Augustus, and both Britain and Gaul quickly accepted his rule. Constantine sent to the emperor Galerius an official notice of Constantius' death and the army's acclamation of himself as an Augustus, requesting recognition as heir to his father's position. Since the normal recognised method was to appoint only a Caesar to the position of Augustus, coupled with the possibility of a civil war if Constantine was not recognised in some suitable way, Galerius granted Constantine the title of Caesar and promoted Severus to the position of Augustus, which Constantine accepted.

Constantine remained in Britain for the rest of the year, driving back the Picts, securing his control over all of Roman Britain, completing the reconstruction of military bases begun under his father's rule, and ordering the repair of Britain's roadways. He eventually left for Augusta Treverorum (Trier) in Gaul, the Tetrarchic capital of the north-western Roman Empire, in order to deal with the Franks who had crossed the lower Rhine and invaded Gaul during the winter of AD 306-307. In these circumstances Verulamium could well have been visited by Constantine on his way south in AD 306, and by then he would have been Severus's Caesar.

According to Lactantius, Constantine followed his father in applying a tolerant policy towards Christianity. He is said to have been converted to the faith in AD 312 when he was 40, but he waited for his baptism until he knew he was dying (in AD 337). Throughout his life he always sacrificed to the Roman gods and, when sole Augustus of the Roman Empire, proclaimed Apollo as his patron and promoted himself as the likeness of Apollo—an Apollo on earth. In AD 321 he instructed that both Christians and non-Christians should be united in observing the day of the Sun (i.e. Sunday); and when he dedicated the new capital of Constantinople in AD 330 he did so wearing an Apollonian sun-rayed diadem, with no Christian symbols being present.

Therefore, in AD 306, in Britain, when his father had just died and he had just been officially appointed the Caesar to Flavius Valerius Severus, the new Augustus of the West, if confronted with the Alban-Amphibalus situation he might well have dealt with it in the way that is recorded. Moreover, the legend told by Bede, that "the judge, astonished at the novelty of so many heavenly miracles [accompanying the execution of Saint Alban], ordered

the persecution to cease immediately, beginning to honour the death of the saints," could well have been the key motivation for Constantine's decision not only to stop Christian persecutions but also to legalise Christianity along with all other religions and cults in the Roman Empire. He was the first Roman emperor to do this.

To summarise, in terms of dating the historical Saint Alban's martyrdom, two dates stand out that satisfy the reference to "Caesar Severus": AD 208-210, with Geta as Severus' Caesar, and AD 306, with Constantine as Severus' Caesar. Of the two dates, only AD 306 fits all the legendary material, both ecclesiastical and masonic.

The legends are interesting in that they appear to deliberately conceal as well as reveal the truth. For instance, none of the legends tell us the real names of St Alban, St Amphibalus, or the Caesar. With such famous people, they could have done, but they don't. However, this tended to be fairly normal with an oral tradition in which a historical event becomes a legend, the legend a myth, and the myth turned into an allegorical drama or mystery.

The title 'Caesar' originally began as a title for an emperor and ended up referring to an emperor-designate, the heir-apparent to the throne. Etymologically it has various possible source meanings, but the most symbolically useful derivations are from *caesai*, a Punic word for 'elephant', and *Aisir*, the Etruscan term for 'deities'.[9] These provide the meanings preferred and promoted by Julius Caesar, who used the symbol of an elephant on his coins and wanted to be known as a king, signifying originally the concept of god on earth. On coins, the elephant is shown trampling on a snake, which in its finer meaning represents the victory of good over evil, and of wisdom over ignorance.

The names of Alban and Amphibalus are symbolic pseudonyms. *Alban,* and its Latin form *Albanus*, is equivalent to the Celtic name *Albion*, an ancient name of Great Britain. The word is derived from the proto-Indo-European root that denotes both 'white' and 'mountain', in the sense of 'white' referring to purity or holiness, and 'mountain' referring to the sacred mountain or island—hence the idea of Albion being the white land or holy land. The white mountain is an alternative symbol to that of the white pillar, referring to the sacred pillar of truth, the pillar of light—the *Axis Mundi* that is the axis of the universe and central pillar of the Tree of Life. It is symbolic of a golden age or paradise, as also of the holy and enlightened person. Another word meaning white mountain or white pillar, in this context, is *atlas*—hence the pure white Mount Atlas, the paradisiacal golden age of Atlantis, and Atlas, the king of Atlantis, who is known scripturally as Enoch, the 'Great Initiate' and source of the wisdom tradition.

The Latin word *albus* ('white') has the same root as *Alban*, from which is derived the name of the ecclesiastical white garment known as an alb. The word *amphibalus* (also spelt *amphibalum*)*,* on the other hand, is the Gallican name of the ecclesiastical cloak or outermost liturgical vestment known more commonly as the chasuble, worn over the alb and stole for the celebration of the Eucharist. In later times it came to be very elaborate and worn only by presbyters (i.e. priests) and bishops; but originally it was worn by all clergy (i.e. deacons as well as priests and bishops) and was fairly simple. This is the cloak that St Alban wore in order to pretend to be Amphibalus.

Metaphorically the holy person is covered by two veils: the chasuble (*amphibalus*) or outer veil, and the alb (*albanus*) or inner veil. The outer veil conceals the inner veil, and the inner

veil conceals the body. In the body is something precious. The body houses the personality, in which is the soul. In the soul dwells the spirit of God, the Holy Trinity. Symbolically the double threesome (trinity) of veils that conceals the Holy Trinity, thereby making three trinities (3 x 3) in total, is equivalent to the symbolism of the Temple of Solomon, which has an outer veil separating the outside court from the Holy Place, then an inner veil separating the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies. Within the Holy of Holies is the Ark of the Covenant. Within the Ark is the sacred book, and within the book is the written Word of God. Within the written Word of God is…God. These are metaphors or symbols for the fundamental law of the universe, signified by the cabalistic Tree of Life, which unfolds itself from its root seed or source as three Trinities (i.e. the Trinity multiplied by itself). To understand this, apparently, is to understand all.[10]

I mention this because of the importance of the story of St Alban to Freemasonry, whose symbolic teaching is based upon the building, destruction and rebuilding of Solomon's Temple. The extra elements of the Freemasonic story of St Alban, which were only finally laid down in the 18th century with the publication of James Anderson's *Constitutions of the Free-Masons* (1723 and 1738), together with the way the story is told, when applied to the later St Alban, fit like a glove, thus turning the St Alban legend into a double entendre, both concealing and revealing.

Francis St Alban

The later St Alban was Sir Francis Bacon (1561-1626). He was made a knight in 1603 and created Viscount St Alban in January 1621 by King James I of England, VI of Scotland. Unusually and uniquely, the title of Viscount St Alban is named after the saint, not the place (St Albans) which would have been normal practice.

As Lord High Chancellor, Francis Bacon served a king, James Stuart of Scotland, who was considered by many Englishmen to be a usurper of the throne of England and who was the first to bear the title of Emperor of Great Britain. Francis Bacon was his faithful "steward" and, for a few months in 1617, was also the temporary regent or proxy "chief ruler" of England whilst James was visiting Scotland. In this context, the "continual wars" which reduced Masonry to a low ebb were the many centuries of foreign wars, the civil wars (romantically named the Wars of the Roses) and religious persecution. Moreover, King James did support the Masons in the manner described, and it was in his reign that speculative (as distinct from craft) Freemasonry became firmly established in Britain.

In his letter or address to the King on being made Viscount St Alban, Bacon said:-

> You found me of the Learned Counsel, Extraordinary, without patent or fee; a kind of *individuum vagum*. You established me, and brought me into Ordinary. Soon after, you placed me Solicitor, where I served seven years. Then your Majesty made me your Attorney or Procurator General. Then Privy Counsellor,

while I was Attorney; a kind of miracle of your favour, that had not been in many ages. Thence Keeper of your Seal; and because that was a kind of planet and not fixed, Chancellor. And when your Majesty could raise me no higher, it was your grace to illustrate me with beams of honour; first making me Baron Verulam, and now Viscount St. Alban. So this is the eighth rise or reach, a diapason in music, even a good number and accord for a close. And so I may without superstition be buried in St. Alban's habit or vestment.[11]

From then on Bacon signed himself "Fr. St. Alban" (i.e. Francis St Alban) and was addressed by others in letters as "Lord Saint Alban".

Whether Bacon had a premonition or not of what it might mean to take on this title, by the end of April 1621 he had been made the scapegoat for complaints about the abuse of monopolies awarded by the King. Because he couldn't actually be held responsible for this, but at the same time Parliament did not want to condemn the King, Bacon was charged instead with accepting bribes, asked by the King to submit without defence, and impeached by Parliament for corruption in his office as a judge. His fall was contrived by his adversaries in Parliament and the Court so as to save Buckingham, the King's favourite, and others from public anger and retribution, and to preserve the good name of the King.

Bacon lost all his offices and his seat in Parliament, but retained his titles and his estate of Gorhambury. Most of all he lost his good name. Bacon's was not a physical martyrdom, but it was a severe psychological one, and one which is still continuing to this day whilst people choose to refer to him as a corrupt Chancellor, make him the scapegoat for all sorts of things for which he is not responsible, and look no more into the matter.

Before he submitted himself to Parliament, Bacon wrote to the King on 16 March 1621:-

> And for the briberies and gifts wherewith I am charged, when the books of hearts shall be opened, I hope I shall not be found to have the troubled fountain of a corrupt heart in a depraved habit of taking rewards to pervert justice; howsoever I may be frail, and partake of the abuse of the times…
>
> I have been ever your man, and counted myself but an usufructuary of myself, the property being yours: and now making myself an oblation to do with me as may best conduce to the honour of your justice, the honour of your mercy, and the use of your service, resting as clay in your Majesty's gracious hands.
>
> FR. ST. ALBAN, Canc.

The "abuse of the times" referred to by Bacon was the custom of the Chancery to receive gifts from litigants in lieu of fees, as otherwise the pension (allowance) from the royal treasury would not have been sufficient to cover all the costs of running the Court of Chancery. This also applied to other offices of State. Bacon had always argued that this was not a good state of affairs because it was open to corruption, but he was consistently ignored. Bacon himself tried to be careful to ensure that all gifts were received after the case had been dealt with in court, but he had to rely on his servants for actually dealing with this. It was the 'grey area' situation of a few cases reopened by litigants, coupled with some bribery of witnesses by Bacon's adversaries, which enabled Parliament to make a list of

charges. When the cases brought before Bacon were re-examined in later years, none of them were found to have been affected by any kind of bribery or corruption.

The word "usufructuary" used by Bacon is a legal term referring to a person who has the right to use and derive profit from a piece of property belonging to another, provided the property itself remains undiminished and uninjured in any way. The office and title of Lord High Chancellor, which included that of Lord Keeper of the Great Seal, was one that belonged to the King: it was his property.

The choice of the word "oblation" is, like the previous words, used by Bacon with a lawyer's exactitude. 'Oblation' refers to a religious offering or sacrifice made for charitable purposes, in particular an offering made to God. In Christian terms, it refers especially to the offering of bread and wine in the celebration of the Eucharist—the bread and wine being symbolic of the body and blood of Jesus sacrificed for the good of the world, about which Jesus said to his disciples: "Do this in remembrance of me." Like the previous St Alban before him, Bacon was following the teachings of Jesus, as recorded by St John the Beloved, the apostle of love:-

> Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.[12]

It must have been with feeling that Bacon, after his martyrdom, referred pointedly to Ecclesiastes 7:1 in his dedication to the final (1625) version of his *Essays*:-

> SALOMON says; A good Name is as a precious ointment.[13]

Bacon concluded his final will, which he wrote with his own hand on 19 December 1625, by emphasising the importance of his name and memory—which, like Prospero's final words in *The Tempest*, require rescuing:-

> For my name and memory, I leave it to men's charitable speeches, and to foreign nations, and the next ages.

The "palace" which Francis St Alban (Bacon) built for the "Emperor" was a temple of learning, a temple of light, constructed by Bacon's "fraternity in learning and illumination":-

> And surely, as nature createth brotherhood in families, and arts mechanical contract brotherhoods in commonalities, and the anointment of God superinduceth a brotherhood in kings and bishops; so in like manner there cannot but be a fraternity in learning and illumination, relating to that paternity which is attributed to God, who is called the Father of illuminations or lights.
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> Francis Bacon, *Advancement of Learning*, Part 2 (1605)

> I have held up a light in the obscurity of Philosophy, which will be seen centuries after I am dead. It will be seen amidst the erection of tombs, theatres, foundations, temples, of Orders and fraternities for nobility and obedience—the establishment of good laws as an example to the world. For I am not raising a capitol or pyramid to the pride of men, but laying a foundation in the human understanding for a holy temple after the model of the world.
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> Francis Bacon, *Advancement of Learning*, Part 2 (1605)

Bacon's temple is a temple of the Holy Spirit, the "house Sanctus Spiritus", his method the "perfect Method of all Arts", his Natural History the "Librum Naturae" ('Book of Nature'), and his fraternity in learning and illumination the "Fraternity of the Rosie Cross", all as mentioned in the Rosicrucian manifesto, *Fama Fraternitatis Rosae Crucis, or Discovery of the Brotherhood of the most laudable Order of the Rosie Cross*.

In his *New Atlantis* Bacon, who was referred to privately as "Solomon", calls his temple the House of Salomon (Solomon) or College of the Six Days' Work, founded by Solamona and comprised of a society of philosopher-priests whose badge is a red cross and who maintain a secrecy or invisibility from the world at large. Robert Boyle, writing in 1646-7, referred to the College as the "Invisible College" or "Philosophical College".

According to the *Freemason's Guide and Compendium*, the modern history of English Freemasonry starts with the record of Elias Ashmole's admittance into Freemasonry in 1646, although it is recognised that speculative as well as operative Freemasonry existed in England long before this. Moreover, some evidence exists which shows that the Royal Arch Degree as well as the basic Craft Degrees existed in the time of Queen Elizabeth I.[14]

The legendary dates of St Alban, given so precisely in the Freemasonic Legend as if factual, are part of the allegory. The year 287, when Carausius is said to have granted the Masons a charter and commanded Albanus to preside over them as Grand Master, is a cipher signature of the Rosicrucian fraternity, as also of "Father C.R.C.", the President or Grand Master of the fraternity.[15] In the Capital Letter Code, 'C.R.C.' stands for 'Christian Rosy Cross'. In the Kaye Cipher the number 287 is the count of 'Fra. Rosi Crosse'. 'Fra' stands for *Frater* or *Fratres*, Latin for 'Brother' or 'Brethren' respectively, although it could also represent 'Francis', as Dr John Wilkins, Bishop of Chester and first Secretary of the Royal Society, pointed out in his *Mathematical Magic* (1680).[16] When speaking of the ever-burning lamps of the ancients, Wilkins writes: "Such a lamp is likewise related to be seen in the sepulchre of Francis Rosicross, as is more largely expressed in the confession of that Fraternity".

The year 303, the Masonic date of St Alban's martyrdom, is likewise a cipher. 303 reduces to 33, since 0 (zero) is traditionally counted as a null. In Simple Cipher 33 is the count of the name 'Bacon'. The number is also the count in Simple Cipher of the word 'Free', the meaning of 'Francis' and the attribute of a Master who has achieved the highest level of initiation, thereby setting himself free of worldly desires and attachments. This highest level of initiation is known as the 33rd degree of initiation, also written as 'Thirty-Third', 'Thirty-Three' or 'T.T.'. The word 'free' means 'love' (from Sanskrit *pri*, meaning 'love'): hence a true Master is a Master of love. This undoubtedly is one of the reasons why, in the Shakespeare Folio, the first play *The Tempest* (whose capitals give the 'T.T.' signature) begins with the word "Master" and ends with the word "free"—the last sentence being "As you from crimes would pardoned be, Let your indulgence [mercy] set me free".

The year 303 is also the traditional date of martyrdom of St George, the Red Cross Knight, who is emblematic not only of the Knights of the Round Table but also of the Rosicrucians—the Fraternity of the Gold and Rosy Cross. (The metal gold is the heraldic equivalent of the colour red.) It is not by chance that both the birth and death dates of Shakespeare have been contrived to fall on St George's Day. Like the elephant symbolism associated with Caesar, St George is renowned for fighting and slaying the serpent-dragon, but in his case by

piercing it with his spear. St George, like the Archangel Michael or the sun-god Apollo, is a Spear-shaker or Shake-speare.

The Shakespeare plays, besides being signed with these and other cipher signatures, are full of Masonic symbolism, meanings and words. The founding (or refounding) of the Grand Lodge of Freemasons took place in 1716, the centenary of the actor William Shakspere's death. In 1723, the centenary of the publication of the Shakespeare Folio of plays, modern Freemasonry emerged into the open with the publication of *The Book of Constitutions of the Free-masons*. Also in the same year was published the Benson Medley edition of *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, the title-page headpiece of which depicts the symbols of the higher degrees of Freemasonry. A century is 100 years and 100 is the cabalistic Simple Cipher of 'Francis Bacon' (i.e. 67 + 33).

The three naked 'boys' in the centre of the headpiece, one of whom is looking through a telescope at the Sun and the other two who are pointing at the heavens, signify the three Principals of the higher degrees of the original 'Rosicrucian' Freemasonry. They are ones who have become "as little children" and can see the light, and who as a result can enter into the kingdom of heaven.

> Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.[17]

The ability to be able to see the light of truth is that of the seer—the wise person who sees the truth both inwardly and outwardly. In Christian terms, the famous seer was St John the Divine, aka the Beloved, the author of the Book of Revelations. For carefully chosen reasons, St John the Beloved is the patron saint of the higher degrees of Freemasonry, whilst St John the Baptist is the patron saint of the lower or craft degrees.

About St John the Beloved, Bacon remarked:-

> St. John, an Apostle of our saviour, and the Beloved Disciple, lived ninety-three years. He was rightly denoted under the emblem of the eagle, for his piercing sight into the Divinity; and was a Seraph among the Apostles in respect of his burning Love.

> Francis Bacon, *History of Life and Death.*

Bacon emphasises that St John the Beloved was rightly denoted under the emblem of the eagle because of his seership. The *Confession* of the Rosicrucians[18] warns that only those who have received strength borrowed from the eagle may behold the Rosicrucian fraternity and their House of the Holy Spirit. Bacon also tells us specifically that St John died at the age

of ninety-three, despite the fact that tradition records him as living well beyond the age of one hundred. Clearly the reason for this is that in Simple Cipher 93 corresponds to 'I.C.', which is phonetically pronounced as "I see"—a cipher signature that one can find embodied in the cryptic portrait of Shakespeare on the titlepage of the 1623 Shakespeare Folio.

Bearing in mind that the Romano-British St Alban was reputed to have been a Roman centurion (an officer in charge of a hundred legionaries) and that the Roman numeral for 100 (a century) is 'C', it is possible to see that Francis Bacon's heraldic coat-of-arms as Viscount St Alban also embodies this cipher 'signature' and, in a way, ties it all together. The letter 'C' is the third letter in the English alphabet and thus has the Simple Cipher of 3. Bacon's heraldic coat-of-arms portrays the Bacon shield supported by two centurions, one on each side, thus suggesting the signature 'C.C.' or 33 – or 303 wherein the shield performs the role of the null or zero. Like the Gemini, these two centurions act as a heraldic representation of the Great Pillars, Boaz and Jachin, that stand before the entrance to Solomon's Temple, reminding us of the "B.I." signature to the Portrait Poem on the first page of the 1623 Shakespeare First Folio.[19] They also give the signature 'T.T.'

Endnotes

[1] Latin original: *Sanctum albanum uerolamiensem*.

[2] In AD 293 Diocletian formed the Tetrarchy, with two senior emperors, the Augusti, and two junior emperors, the Caesars. Diocletian's co-Augustus was Maximian. Their Caesars were Galerius and Constantius respectively, who were formally adopted as 'sons' of the Augusti. Diocletian and Galerius ruled the eastern half of the empire; Maximian and Constantius ruled the western half of the empire. When Diocletian and Maximian abdicated in 305, and Galerius and Constantius became the Augusti of East and West, Maximin and Severus II were made their respective Caesars. When Constantius died in 306, Severus was promoted to Augustus, with Constantine agreeing to act as his Caesar, even though his troops had proclaimed him (unofficially) as Augustus. Maxentius, son of Maximian, resented being left out of the arrangements and warred against Severus, defeating him, forcing him to abdicate and then arranging his murder in 307. This was followed by certain amount of chaos, in which, by 308, there were no fewer than four claimants to the rank of Augustus

(Galerius, Constantine, Maximian and Maxentius), and only one to that of Caesar (Maximinus). They each made war on each other until by 313 there remained only two emperors: Constantine in the West and Licinius in the East. This was the end of the Tetrarchic system. In 324 Constantine finally defeated Licinius, reunited the two halves of the Roman Empire and declared himself sole Augustus.

[3] This 'error' of naming seems to have occurred, in terms of a written record, with the Cooke MS (c. 1400 or 1410), which is sometimes referred to as the "New Long History"—the "Old Short History" being the Regius MS (c. 1390). The Cooke MS 'history' includes some things for which no sources have ever been discovered, including the information that St Alban organised masonry in England, and the [Saxon] king Athelstan and his son gave English masons their charges.

[4] Until the second edition of Dr Anderson's *The Constitutions of the Free-masons* (1738), containing the story of St Alban, the usurping Emperor of Britain had been referred to as a "King of England". Anderson, who accepted (or promoted) St Alban's date of martyrdom as A.D. 303, then made the mistake of substituting "Emperor" for "King". Historically, Carausius did not assume the imperial purple until A.D. 303, the same year as St Alban's martyrdom.

[5] A *municipium* was the second-highest rank of Roman city, higher than a *civitas* but lower than a *colonia*.

[6] II Augusta and XX Valeria Victrix.

[7] Probably XXX Ulpia Victrix.

[8] Togodumnus fought at least two major engagements against Aulus Plautius in AD 43 and was either killed during the battle of the Medway, or died from his wounds shortly afterwards. Caractacus, who also fought with his brother in the battles against Aulus Plautius, afterwards retreated to Wales, where he organised the tribes against Rome. Eventually Ostorius Scapula, the Roman governor, succeeded in defeating Caractacus in an all-out confrontation in mid-Wales in c.AD 50, following which Caratacus fled into the territory of the Brigantes in the Pennines where he appealed for help from Queen Cartimandua. She, however, honouring her agreement with Emperor Claudius, dispatched Caractacus in chains to Scapula, who sent him in c.AD 51 as a captive to Rome, where Caractacus so impressed the Senate with his speech that he was allowed to live with his family in Rome.

[9] The idea of a plural divinity is similar to that of the Hebrew *Elohim* ('gods') who created all Creation in the Six Days' Work, as recounted in Genesis 1. All the gods are, collectively, but one God.

[10] This is paralleled in the idea of the seven (or nine) heavens. The first three heavens relate to the psyche or personality; the second three heavens relate to the soul; the seventh heaven relates to the spirit, which itself consists of the three "heavens of heavens".

[11] Spedding, *The Letters and Life of Francis Bacon*, Vol. 7.

[12] John 15:13.

[13] "A good name is better than precious ointment." Ecclesiastes vii. 1.

[14] See FBRT Essay, *General and Rare Memorials*.

[15] 'Fra. R.C.' or 'Fra. C.R.C.' is the abbreviated title of the founding father of the Rosicrucian Fraternity, as given in the first Rosicrucian manifesto, the *Fama Fraternitatis, or a Discovery of the Most Noble Order of the Rosy Cross,* which existed in manuscript in 1610 and was published in Cassel in 1614. Michael Maier, in discussing the Laws of the Fraternity of the Rosie Cross in his *Themis Aurea* (1656), confirms that 'R.C.' refers not only to the rose and cross, prime symbols of the fraternity, but is also specifically intended to denote 'the name of their first Author'.

[16] Dr John Wilkins, *Mathematical Magic* (1680), pp 236-7. The first edition was published in 1642.

[17] Matthew 18:3-4.

[18] *The Confessio Fraternitatis R.C.* (The Confession of the Brotherhood of R.C.)

[19] In Simple Cipher 'B.I.' equates with '2.9.' or 29, which is the count of 'Eagle'.