

The Historical St George



A brief historical sketch of the life of St George of Lydda, friend of Constantine the Great, who became for a time the patron saint of all Christendom.

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Historically, St George (AD 280-304) was a friend of Constantine, the son of Constantius Chlorus and the British princess Helen, whose court was at York. George's father was Anastasius, the son of John, chief Governor of Cappadocia. Anastasius, born of a noble Cappadocian family, was an officer of great wealth in the army of Diocletian, who became Governor of Palestine and Diospolis (Lydda). George's mother was Kina Theognosta, daughter of Dionysius, Count of Lydda. Lydda is en route from Jerusalem to the port of Joppa (Jaffa), by way of Emmaus. The Count's family had been visited in the 1st century AD by the Apostle Peter, resulting in the conversion to Christianity of the family and of all that dwelt at Lydda and in the district of Sharon. Hence George's family were Christian, and he was brought up a Christian.

Not far from Lydda was Rama, or Arimathea, the original home of Joseph of Arimathea. Some authorities claim that the families of Joseph and George were kinsmen, being linked in some way by marriage. Whether this is true or not, they were undoubtedly linked through initiation (i.e. baptism and confirmation) as Christian brethren.

George, like his father, came to hold a high position in the Roman army and enjoyed the special favour of the Emperor Diocletian. Whilst on a military expedition to Britain he visited his friend and companion-in-arms, Constantine, in York. He also (reputedly) made a pilgrimage to Glastonbury, then the centre of the Christian Church in Britain, founded by Joseph of Arimathea. From there he visited Caerleon-on-Usk, the capital of Britannia Secunda and headquarters of the 2nd Roman Legion. Whilst he was there, the Emperor Diocletian published his edict banning Christianity.

George decided immediately to visit the Emperor, as a friend, to plead for the lives and liberty of his fellow Christians. However, Galerius, the joint Emperor with Diocletian, with overall responsibility for the eastern half of the Roman Empire, persuaded Diocletian to issue an edict compelling all Roman soldiers to take part in the sacrificial rites according to the old State religion, followed by a further edict ordering a general persecution of Christians. Diocletian, however, forbade any shedding of blood.

Stripped of all his military and civil offices, honours and worldly goods, George decided to go to Nicomedia where Diocletian was wintering with Galerius Maximus, co-Emperor of the eastern empire, to plead further for the Christians. Whilst there a fire broke out in the imperial palace, which Galerius immediately blamed on the Christians. A fierce and bloody persecution of all Christians was then waged throughout the Roman Empire.

George tore the anti-Christian edict to pieces when it was posted in the forum, declaring it an unholy and profane thing. He was arrested and brought to trial before Galerius and sixty-nine other nobles and governors. Because of his high standing in society he was not immediately

executed but remained in prison for several years, enduring repeated tortures and trials designed to make him recant. In addition he was offered all kinds of inducements to win him over, including an offer of royal rank and governorship of ten of the greatest cities and provinces in the eastern empire, all of which he refused. Eventually he was beheaded on 23 April, AD 304.

Whilst enduring these sufferings and temptations, George converted the Empress Alexandria to Christianity. Even she was imprisoned and tortured by Galerius as a result; but, like George, she remained steadfast until her death. George subsequently became associated with the dragon, one interpretation being that the cruel Emperor Galerius was the dragon, and his wife, Alexandria, was the virgin rescued by St George from the dragon's corruptness.

Eventually the body of St George was laid in a shrine constructed at Lydda and consecrated by Abba Theodosius, Bishop of Jerusalem. A rose bush was planted at this sepulchre—the Rose of Sharon being the special badge of George's family as well as a symbol of the Master Jesus. This rose, of the single Persian variety, became the original emblem of England, long preceding the white and red roses of Lancaster and York (and later the Tudor rose), which developed their symbolism from the Rose of Sharon.

As soon as George was dead, the Emperor Diocletian suffered huge remorse, leading to his repentance and the halt of the persecution against the Christians. Even Galerius at length implored the pardon of the Christians, publicly acknowledging his error and declaring that he now knew that the God of the Christians was the only true God. In AD 311, after George's friend Constantine had become the principal Emperor, Galerius joined with Constantine and Licinius in signing the Edict of Toleration by which the Christians were no longer to be penalised for their religion. Then, when Galerius died in May AD 311, Constantine (the Great) immediately restored to the Christians all their confiscated land, recalled exiles and set free political prisoners in the Eastern Empire—this already having been done in the West. Furthermore, he had St George declared as the patron saint of all Christendom and founded the Order of Constantinian's Angelic Knights of St George, the first chivalric Order in which St George was honoured.

In the course of time, after Constantine the Great was deceased, other nations gradually reverted back to or adopted a patron saint of their own, but England kept St George as their patron saint. England's previous patron saint, whom St George supplanted, was St Alban, but both these saints were perceived as being jointly responsible for the cessation of the imperial persecution of the Christians, and not only the acceptance but also the promotion of Christianity as the major religion.

The Order of St Khidr and the Sufi Builders

There is a profound historical as well as allegorical link between the Order of St George, or Order of the Garter, and those of the Sufis. The Order of St George translates into Sufi phraseology as Tarika-i-Hadrat-i-Khidr (the Order of St Khidr).¹

St Khidr is 'the Green One'. In Celtic symbolism green, called *glas*, is an emblem for purity and ever-abundant life—or holiness. Merlin's Emerald or Green Stone is, like Moses' Tablet or Sapphire Stone, the pure crystal form in which the Word of God is inscribed in letters of fire. It also stands for Clas Myrrdin ('The Enclosure of Merlin'), Merlin's Crystal Island—a synonym for Britain in particular and the world in general—in which is to be found the Round Table and the Holy Grail. In fact the Stone, or the Island, as also each human soul, is the Grail.

In Spenser's *Faerie Queene* the Red Cross Knight is portrayed as the personification of Holiness, who accompanies the lady Una (Truth) to her own land (ie Merlin's land) in order to free it (and her) from oppression by a frightful dragon. The Red Cross Knight is St George, who is 'green' or holy—the 'Green Man', the gardener or cultivator of nature.

When the English Order of St George was founded by Edward III in 1348, it was divided into two sections, each of thirteen persons. The first section was presided over by the King, the second by the Black Prince. The Order's colours were blue and gold, its robes woollen and hooded. Likewise the Khidr Order of the Sufis is organised in groups of thirteen, each group called a *halka*. The symbolic colours of the Khidr Order are, like those of the Order of St George, blue and gold, signifying the essence within the body or mind, which is like the sun in the sky or the speck of gold within the sea. The robes are woollen and hooded.

The story of the founding of the Order of St George is associated with a dance, at which the garter of the Countess of Salisbury fell to the floor. Hearing the bystanders' whispers of disapproval, the king is reported as rebuking them with the words, 'Honi soit qui mal y pense' ('Shame on him who thinks this shameful'), which became the motto of the Order. In fact the Sufi Khidr Order has as its slogan a salutation to the Cupbearer, the Sufi equivalent of the Grail Guardian or King, and the Persian pronunciation of this slogan, in the form of a rhyming sentence, is reputed to sound like this motto of the Order of St George. Edward III, or those who reported (or invented) this incident, may well have been particularly clever in their disguising of the real motto or salutation, in order to explain it to the uninitiated. Moreover, a dance forms a basic part of the Sufi ritual, each dancer being known as a dervish; and, like the Holy Grail, the Sufi's Cup is said to have miraculous properties.

The Order of St George later became known in the time of Edward VI as the Order of the Garter. The garter is equivalent in Arabic to the Sufi mystical tie or bond, which also infers religious asceticism. This, incidentally, would seem to have a connection in meaning with the Hindu word for union with the divine, *yoga*, which means 'yoke'. The Western equivalent, from which the symbol of the garter is probably derived, is what the Druids called their 'yoke'—the Divine Name, IOA, manifested and represented by the Three Sounds, the Three Rays and the Three Letters (to which the modern letters 'IAV' approximate).

The manifested Name is thus the Word and Light and Form of God—the ‘Letters’ being not only the written symbols of the divine form but also representations of the actual appearance of the sublime Light, which certain basic stances (or gestures) of the human being also portray symbolically. The sacred dances incorporate these three fundamental postures into their movements as the very foundation of the dances, whilst the mantras or song-prayers which accompany such dances use the sounds of the seven sacred vowels, in particular combinations and sequences, which are derived from and represented by the fundamental Three (‘IOA’).

The three rods² that used to be carried and used by the three Principals of the Holy Royal Arch in the higher degrees of Freemasonry likewise signify the Three Rays. The rod that is borne as a staff of office by each Royal Arch Companion in the Arch Degree of Freemasonry, representing Moses’ rod, is an equivalent symbol—Moses’ rod having three forms.³ The Freemason’s twenty-four-inch rod or gauge, the Craft equivalent of the rod of Moses, is another representation of this yoke, being a measure of time, space and holiness.

The Bardic tradition gives the following in explanation of the yoke as representative of the sacred Name and thus of the Divine Being:—

Disciple: Why is the IAV (‘yoke’) given as a name for God?

Master: Because the yoke is the measuring rod of country and nation in virtue of the authority of law, and is in possession of every head of family under the mark of the lord of the territory, and whoever violates it is liable to a penalty. Now God is the measuring rod of all truth, all justice, and all goodness; therefore He is the yoke on all, and all are under it, and woe to him who shall violate it.⁴

But the Divine Being, also known to the Druids as Béal, meaning ‘Universal Being’ (Bé = ‘Being’ and Al = ‘All’ or ‘Universal’) is not only signified by the Three Rays (the basis of the Three Letters) but also by the Circle—the circle representing the universality of all life which is Divine Being. The Sumerian, Hebraic, Syrian and Phoenician cultures also used the same sacred name to represent the Divine Being, this name usually being translated to us as Bal, Bel or Baal. Its feminine equivalent, Allah, is still used by Islam today, being composed of Al (‘Universal’) and Hé (‘Being’), the latter word being the feminine equivalent to Bé—ie the Holy Breath, Hé, which bears the Word Bé.

The Druidic Circle is a Wheel of Life (or Medicine Wheel) expressing the Triune nature of Divine Being that manifests from the Unknown. It is also a Hermetic symbol, the IOA representing the three stages of manifestation from the darkness of the Unknown—the three stages of Creation, Formation and Action that stem from the initial impulse of life, and which we are required to respond to and ‘image’ with the three steps of initiation—love (faith), understanding (hope) and service (charity). Divided by the cross, the four quarters of the circle signify these stages and degrees—the three from the original one, as signified by the seasons of spring, summer and autumn which are born from winter, and symbolised by the alchemical elements of water, air and fire respectively which emerge from the earth element. Further triune subdivision renders the zodiac of twelve signs or aspects of Divinity (ie 3 x 4), of which the quintessence is the thirteenth sign.

The Sufi Circle is called the Halka, which is, as already mentioned, the name for the basic Sufi group of thirteen dervishes. Not only has all this a clear relationship to the Round Table with its thirteen places (ie twelve seats plus the Siege Perilous, the throne of the Grail King or heir to the throne, but the derivative word for halka is identical with that from which garter is derived. In other words garter, like halka, describes the circle which enfolds and unifies all things, binding (or yoking) them together as one, and is therefore almost entirely similar to the golden wedding ring in its symbolic function. The employment of a garter solely to bind a stocking to a leg is but a later degenerate use of the garter's original significance.

The direct Sufi equivalent of the Freemasons, the Sufi society called the al-Banna ('Builders' or 'Masons'), use the Hebraic word for the Universal Being, BAL, transliterated into Arabic letters, as their password. In the higher degrees of Freemasonry this word is also used, being composed of the three leading letters of the Hebrew alphabet which together stand for the whole alphabet and therefore the Word of God.⁵ The letters are representative of the creative Trinity and have their emblematic counterpart in Craft Freemasonry in the three immovable jewels—the square, the level and the plumb. The Sufi Builders have three basic meditation postures that represent the same—kneeling, prostrating and standing.

The Sufi Builders use the letter 'Q' rather than the letter 'C' to represent the number 100, for the 'Q' in Hebrew, as the letter Qoph, has a cabalistic value of 100. With 'Q' added to the three letters, 'ABL', the basis of the word Qabala is formed. Qabala (more commonly written in English as Cabala) means 'the received teaching', which denotes acquired knowledge or illumination. The Sufi teacher Indries Shah suggests that the 'Q' may be the original of the letter 'G' used in Freemasonry to denote God.⁶ The letter 'G', set in a triangle, represents for the Freemason the 'capital letter' hieroglyph of the Grand Master of the Universe, the All-Good, or God, a word which is derived from the Persian Goda, which is itself derived from the absolute pronoun meaning 'Himself'. It also has a derivation from the Old Irish Guth, meaning 'Voice' and signifying the Word of God.

In addition the letter 'G' denotes to the Freemason the art and science of Geometry, associated with the Creator who geometrises the Universe in order to bring its form into being, and which provides the basis of all emblematic teaching. This form, the Temple of the Universe and Lodge of the Divine Word, is represented by the number 100, portrayed geometrically in Freemasonry and elsewhere by the 10 x 10 Mosaic floor in which is contained the 8 x 8 'chessboard', representative of the stage of life (ie the world in which we live) enfolded in the 'borders' of the Universe.

The Creator is commonly known as the Christ, deriving from the Greek name Christos, meaning 'Word'. This name is represented by the two Greek letters, Chi Rho, which can be transposed into English as the letters CR or by the symbol of the Rose (Rho) and Cross (Chi). CR or RC is the cipher for the Brethren of the Rose Cross, and in particular for the 'Father' of the Rosicrucians, who is entitled 'Christ'. Christ, and its equivalent words in earlier languages, has been the title of the Rosicrucian Grand Master for millennia. In Hebraic tradition the Messiah (Christ) is said to be born each time the planets Saturn and Jupiter conjunct. The Hebrew letters Caph ('C') and Tau ('T') represent these two planets respectively.⁷ The letter

‘G’ can easily be seen as the conjunction of these two Hebrew letters and therefore as the symbol of Christ, both human and divine.

But this is that which will dignify and exalt knowledge: if contemplation and action be more nearly and straitly conjoined and united together than they have been: a conjunction like unto that of the highest planets, Saturn, the planet of rest and contemplation, and Jupiter, the planet of civil society and action.⁸

Freemasonically these refer to the two themes of work and rest, whilst cabalistically they imply acquired knowledge which has to be dignified and exalted with the burning love of compassion (ie love in action). Only then is it possible to see into the heart of God and become the embodiment of true illumination, which is a pure joy.

Edward I, who first made the proposal to found an Order of St George, was on the throne of England from 1272 to 1307. At about this time Najmuddin⁹ Gwath-ed-Dahar Qalandar (born c 1232) travelled from India to England on a teaching mission, being the first dervish to do so according to Sufi records. His son or successor, Najmuddin Baba, followed in his father’s footsteps in 1338, and in 1348 Edward III, who ruled England from 1327 to 1377, founded the Order of St George.

Najmuddin Gwath-ed-Dahar Qalandar’s own teacher was the illustrious Nizamuddin Awlia of Delhi, who sent his disciple to Turkey to study under the Sufi master, Sayed Khidr Rumi Khapradari, the Cupbearer. He in turn was an associate of the Sufi teachers, Suhrawardi, Abdul Qadir, Faridudin Shankarganj, Shah Madar and the father of Jalaluddin Rumi. Suhrawardi was a Sufi master of the Path of the Rose, whilst Abdul Qadir was known as the Rose of Bagdad. Some of the stories of the famous Jalaluddin Rumi are to be found in Chaucer, who was writing at the time of Najmuddin’s journey to England.

Sufis and Rosicrucians are essentially the same, both believing in and teaching the underlying unity of all faiths. Because they comprise the mystics, adepts and masters of the Western Wisdom Tradition—ie that which has descended from the two great founders, Hermes in Egypt and Zoroaster in Chaldea (and before that from Enoch in Atlantis)—the Sufis and Rosicrucians are especially concerned with Islam and Christianity, which are understood as being essentially identical to each other, even though outwardly diverse in their customs, dogmas and practices. The chivalric Order of St George, and of the Garter, are secular in comparison with the religious mysticism of the Sufi Order of St Khidr, but more secret and truly mystical Rosicrucian groups existed in both Syria and Europe, paralleling the Sufi groups, from the time of Jesus right up to Bacon’s time. Such groups probably exist today.

Interestingly, Shakespeare’s name can be rendered phonetically in Persian as Sheikh-Peer, meaning ‘the Ancient Sage’.

The Round Table

The emblem of St George, besides the Red Cross, is the Rose of Sharon. The name of the rose is derived from the beautiful fertile plain which lies twelve miles to the east of Joppa (the area in which Lydda, home of St George, is situated) and stretches along the Palestinian (now

Israeli) coast north of Joppa (Jaffa). In esoteric circles Jesus Christ is known as the Rose of Sharon, sharing the symbolism of the Rose with some of the great Sufi and Rosicrucian masters, and it is from Jesus that the Christian and Rosicrucian interpretation of the Holy Grail and Round Table originates. In fact, from the time of Jesus the Rosicrucians became known as the Brothers of the Christian Rose Cross, with Jesus the Christ being the original 'Father' of the Christian Fraternity, and with subsequent 'Fathers' also bearing the title of 'Christ' (which means both 'King' and 'Word of God').

Jesus had his own Round Table, comprised of himself plus twelve senior disciples. This then extended cabalistically to a full company of 120 (ie 12 x 10) disciples over whom he presided as Master or Grail King. Later, when Jesus' Round Table was dissolved, the senior disciples (called apostles) created their own Round Tables in other parts of the world, following the same archetype. One such was established by Jesus' uncle, Joseph of Arimathea, who was anointed Apostle to Britain by St Philip when in southern France and who brought with him to Britain one of the symbols of the Holy Grail—an olive wood 'loving cup' supposedly used at the Last Supper of Jesus and his twelve Apostles. The famous Troubadour legends of the Holy Grail derive from Joseph's Round Table and those of his successors, there being three Tables in all—that of St Joseph at Avalon, that of Bron (the Rich Fisher King) at Muntsalvach, and that of King Arthur at Camelot. In this tripartite legendary history is embodied the sequential development of love, understanding and service, or of creation, formation and manifestation.

Joseph of Arimathea is reputed to have given to the British High King, Arviragus, the emblem of a Red Cross set on a silver field as his standard, to be used in his fight against the Roman invasion of Britain.¹⁰ Red is the heraldic colour of the metal gold, and so the Red Cross is also the Golden Cross, which heraldically is set upon a white field—white being the colour of silver. This was not in fact an innovation but a confirmation or investment of office, for Celtic Britain already possessed the emblem of the Red Cross, as the Long Cross. It was the sign of the Chieftain. Together with this emblem was that of the Garter, and the Pendragon or War Chief was referred to as an 'elected man of the Garter, leader of your ranks'. The original garter used by the Britons to signify the spiritual Garter was a light blue cord or thong bound on or just below the left knee.

King Arthur, personifying the aspect of love in action, or service, founded his Order of chivalry (c 520-540) as the Order or Society of St George and the Round Table. By this time St George had become associated with the Red Cross and Merlin with the Round Table. The Arthurian emblem of the Grail as a chalice, which the Red Cross Knight has to achieve and then protect, was derived from both the Christian chalice of the Last Supper and the Druidic cauldron of Ceridwen. It is primarily from King Arthur's Round Table that the later English Order of St George and the Round Table derives.

Richard I (1189-1199), when he altered England's patron saint from being Edward the Confessor to being St George, instituted the battle cry, 'For St George'. His knights carried his banner with the device of the Red Cross on a white field (ie the St George Cross), which was first used then as the British national ensign. They also wore the Red Cross of St George as a badge over their armour—a custom which remained until the 16th century.

On crusade, King Richard, known as Coeur de Lion ('Lion-Hearted'), vowed to re-establish the Arthurian Order and make any knight who scaled the walls of Jerusalem into a 'Companion of St George'. Such knights were to be distinguished by wearing blue thongs as a garter around their legs. However, Richard died before he could fittingly found his Order of the Round Table.

A century later Edward I (1272-1307) renewed the ancient Round Table tournaments which had fallen into abeyance and, with one hundred knights at Kenilworth Castle, not only revived the Arthurian glories but vowed to found an Order of the Round Table with 300 members. He even commissioned a building to house its assemblies. His idea was copied by John the Good of France, who submitted a like proposal to the Pope soon after, which Clement VI approved in six bulls dated 5th June 1344. John's Order was to be known as the Ordre de l'Etoile ('Order of the Star'), consisting of 200 knights and a college of canons, under the patronage of the Virgin and St George. They were to assemble on St George's Day for a religious ceremony, at which jousting was to be specifically excluded. But, like that of Edward's, this scheme was never realised at that time, probably because of the French disaster at Crécy.¹¹

It was Edward III (1327-1377) who in 1348 properly refounded the Order of St George and the Round Table, having for its purpose 'Good Fellowship'. The blue thongs became the blue garter, and the Companions were known as the Knights of the Blue Garter. The Order originally included ladies, who were known as 'dames de la confraternité de St George'. Altogether there were twenty-six Knight-Companions—thirteen men and thirteen ladies—in two groups presided over by the King and the Black Prince. Complementing this was an equal number of priests, making fifty-two in all—significantly the number of weeks in a year and of cards in a pack, indicating that the original esoteric intention of the Order (if indeed the founders knew the true significance of what they were taught) was to work with what is known as the Solar Breath.¹² The sacred Name IOA is in particular significant of this Solar Breath, which is understood as a manifestation of the Divine Breath and which bears its light in multi-directional 'ripples' (ie circles of vibration) from its solar centre out into the universe, embracing all in its life-giving qualities.

Exoterically the blue Garter, bearing the motto *Honi soit qui mal y pense* in gold, represents the importance of Unity amongst the Knights. The gold collar, consisting of twenty-six Garters each encircling a red rose, alternating with twenty-six interlaced knots, is said to have its origin in the chain of office placed by the Pharaoh about the neck of the Hebrew patriarch, Joseph, and represents the Bond of Faith, Peace and Unity. The royal blue¹³ robe indicates that the Garter Knight is the equal of Kings (because of his piety, devotion, etc, to Truth).

When the Tudors came to the throne of England the Reformation of the Church began. In England the idea was to return to the original Celtic model of the Christian Church, and this reformation was also extended to the Order of the Garter. Henry VII completed building and embellishing St George's Chapel at Windsor, the home of the Garter Knights, and made the Garter Feasts an important part of the Tudor monarchy. It was actually in the reign of this first Tudor king that the great collar of the Order first appeared, designed to rival that of the Golden Fleece. Henry VIII (1509-1547) tried even further to revive the original Arthurian model, revising and clarifying the statutes, and introducing the Lesser George which, like the collar of the Golden Fleece, had always to be worn by member Knights.

Under Henry's son and heir, Edward VI (1547-1553), successive Protestant efforts were made at reforming the Order, in order to sever it from all 'papal' connections. Certain statutes were promulgated which attempted to erase the association of St George with the Order, and the Order thereafter became known only under the name of the Most Noble Order of the Garter. In addition, in 1551, St George's Day was one of the several 'papal' holy days abolished by Act of Parliament. The Garter Feast was transferred instead to Whitsun and the Garter George became a nameless armed knight on horseback encompassed by the Garter. But these statutes were never fully put into effect due to King Edward's illness and untimely death.

The Roman Catholic Mary I, when she came to the throne of England, restored the connection, and the festival of St George continued to be observed by the nation. Elizabeth I (1558-1603), as part of the Protestant revival, re-ordered the national observance of the festival to be discontinued as it was thought to be incompatible with the reformed religion. However, the connection of the Order of the Garter with St George was maintained, as also St George's Day as the Feast Day for the Knights of the Order; but the High Mass on the Feast Day and the requiem on the day after were replaced by the vernacular communion service and called a 'divine service'. The dragon was perceived by the Protestants to be a symbol of the Pope and all popery.

From 1567 onwards the Feasts were held either at Whitehall or Greenwich rather than at Windsor, and developed as a consequence into grand public spectacles. In addition, the Arthurian tournaments were revived on a magnificent scale by Queen Elizabeth in celebration of the yearly anniversary of her Accession Day, 17th November. These developed into major entertainments with an elaborate but distinctive cultural theme of their own, with knights and courtiers, noblemen, poets and artists all playing their parts to the full. Although smaller tournaments existed earlier, the grandiose events began with the Kenilworth and Woodstock Entertainments of 1575.¹⁴ The Accession Day Tournaments were remarkably well co-ordinated and appear to have had a carefully devised and evolving theme from the first to the last, which built up the image of Elizabeth as the Virgin (or Faerie) Queen, the Sovereign of her Red Cross Arthurian knights and ladies, ruling over an Arcadian land of justice and peace.

With the death of Elizabeth Tudor and the accession of James Stuart to the throne of England, the Accession Day Tournaments, with all their lavish pageantry, ceased, although the popular jousting still continued. The Stuarts had a great love for extravagant indoor theatre and masques, but on the whole they rejected the Arcadian and Arthurian mythology of Elizabeth's reign. The chivalric romance, to all intents and purposes, died in 1603, except for one last fling in connection with James' eldest son, Prince Henry. For a brief moment, in the years 1610 to 1612, once Henry had been invested as Prince of Wales he became a new focus of the Arthurian myth in masques created for him by the poets, personifying anew the Red Cross Knight. For instance, in Ben Jonson's mask, Oberon, the Faerie Prince, Henry was seen allegorically as Oberon, the Faerie Prince and successor to Gloriana, the Faerie Queen, to whom was passed on Astraea's sword,¹⁵ and he was cast as King Arthur, the new Grail King. But on 6 November 1612 he, and the great hopes of many, died. After 1621 even the once popular jousting ceased.

In one last attempt at survival the chivalric romance re-focused abroad in a new way, centred around Henry's sister, the Princess Elizabeth, who married Frederick V, the Elector Palatine of the Rhine and head of the union of German Protestant Princes. Their specially selected betrothal night on St John's Day, 27 December 1612, was the event at which, it has been suggested,¹⁶ the highly Masonic and Rosicrucian Shakespeare play, *The Tempest*, was performed. Frederick was invested as a Knight of the Garter. The story of St George and the Dragon was portrayed in fire in the fireworks display shortly before the wedding. The wedding took place on St Valentine's Day, 14 February 1613. The masque presented before the couple that night opened with Orpheus creating harmony and developed the theme of the marriage of the Thames and Rhine. On the following night the members of Gray's Inn and the Inner Temple presented the masque for which Sir Francis Bacon is credited, both in design and cost—again on the theme of the Marriage of the Thames and the Rhine.

For a few years the couple's Palatinate home at Heidelberg became a centre for the development of a Rosicrucian culture, both romantic and scientific, whilst the Rosicrucian manifestos were being published and circulated widely. But this was to be extinguished, in its public form, when the couple briefly became King and Queen of Bohemia in 1620 and the Catholic Hapsburgs launched their overwhelming offensive which led to the vicious Thirty Years War. The true Rosicrucian chivalry, the mystical Order of the Knights of the Rose Cross who were the European complement to the Sufi dervishes, could then only exist 'invisibly', operating from then on not only behind the scenes but 'underground'.

The Order of the Garter, however, remained in public view and does so to this day, transformed into an Order of merit but still retaining something of the magic with which it was first inspired.



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Endnotes

¹ Indries Shah, *The Sufis*, ch 15, 'Mysteries in the West: II - The Chivalric Circle', p 218 (Camelot Press, 1964, 1977).

² ie one rod of 3 ft, one of 4 ft and one of 5 ft. Placed together end to end they construct the famous 3-4-5 right-angled triangle that is the subject of the 47th Proposition of Euclid and the Pythagorean symbol of the Deity—the Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Ghost (or of Spirit, Soul and Matter). Spirit (or Father) = 3, Matter (or Mother—the Mind or Holy Ghost) = 4, and Soul (or Son) = 5.

³ ie sceptre, crook and serpent (or flail)—the same emblems of authority as used by the Egyptian pharaohs.

⁴ Quoted by Dudley Wright in *Druidism, The Ancient Faith of Britain*, ch 2, 'The Creed of Druidism', p 37 (EP Publishing Ltd, 1974; Ed J Burrow & Co, 1924).

⁵ *Aleph*, the head of the three mother letters, *Beth*, the head of the seven double letters, and *Lamed*, the head of the twelve single letters. The Hebrew alphabet has twenty-two letters in all, the symbolism of which is synonymous with the twenty-two Major Arcana cards of the Tarot. In Hebraic numerology the sum of the Hebrew letters, *ABL*, renders 33 (*ie Aleph* = 1, *Beth* = 2, *Lamed* = 30).

⁶ Indries Shah, *The Sufis*, ch 12, 'The Secret Language: II - The Builders', p 185 (Camelot Press, 1964, 1977).

⁷ *Caph* is the eleventh letter and *Tau* the twenty-second letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Eleven plus twenty-two equals thirty-three.

⁸ Francis Bacon, *Advancement of Learning* (1603).

⁹ 'Star of Faith'

¹⁰ The use of the Crucifix instead of the Red or Golden Cross, as a symbol of Christianity, was brought into use at the end of the 7th century, almost contemporary with the Council of Constantinople.

¹¹ The Ordre de l'Etoile was eventually founded in 1351-2 by John II of France, with a membership of 500 knights and without St George as a patron. Our Lady, the Virgin Mary, was the Order's sole protector. Charles V let the Order die out.

¹² Due to the movement of the Earth about the Sun, coupled with the differential rotation of the two magnetic fields of the Sun, the light-energy of the Sun bathes the Earth with alternating polarity. The switch in polarity occurs every seven days and the general effect is like an inbreath and an outbreath of energy—hence the symbolism of the Solar Breath or Breath of God. This effect means that in a year there occur twenty-six 'inbreaths' and twenty-six 'outbreaths', signified by the twenty-six knights and the twenty-six priests. Each knight and priest combination is thus representative of one complete breath, or of two particular weeks of the year. One circle or garter of thirteen knights, or of thirteen priests, is thus significant of one season, or one of the four alchemical elements, with all that that means.

¹³ Nowadays purple, but signifying the 'blue' blood of royalty—the *Sang Réal* of the *San Greal*, the Holy Grail.

¹⁴ See *The Great Vision* (FBRT Journal Series I, Vol. 4), 'The Kenilworth and Woodstock Entertainments'.

¹⁵ Astraea is the goddess of Justice and the last of the immortals to quit the Earth at the onset of the Iron Age (*ie* the Dark Age or Kali Yuga), when unrighteousness prevailed. She took up her abode in the heavens as the constellation of Virgo, the Virgin. She is destined to return once the world has emerged from its Dark Age and is about to enter a new Golden Age, ruled by Saturn. Astraea was one of several titles given to Queen Elizabeth I, the 'Virgin' Queen.

¹⁶ Suggested by Frances Yates, p 29, *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment*.