

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Churchman* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_churchman_os.php

THE CHAPELS ROYAL OF BRITAIN.

BY J. CRESSWELL ROSCAMP, M.E.

II. CHAPEL OF ST. GEORGE, WINDSOR.

THE noblest and most historic Palace in the world is without doubt Windsor Castle, that beautiful, dignified pile that stands so bravely forth on the banks of the Thames in the county of Berkshire, and which has been the residences of the Sovereigns of England since the days of the Normans. Not one of the least attractive portions of it is the Royal Chapel of St. George, the scene of all the solemn celebrations in connection with the investiture of the Order of the Garter since its foundation in the year 1349.

The present building is a most magnificent specimen of ornamental architecture belonging to the end of the fifteenth century, and it was begun in the reign of King Edward IV who took down the old chapel "on account of its decayed condition," building on the same site a much larger and more magnificent structure which, however, was not completed until the reign of Henry VIII. George III conscientiously enough had much repairing and alterations carried out which have not in any way added to the beauty. The east window with its beautiful traceried stonework was removed to make room for a huge painting by Benjamin West, but fortunately Queen Victoria had this restored and the window filled with excellent stained glass. The western window would have suffered a like fate had it not been for the death of West, who was President of the Royal Academy, in 1820.

The most beautiful part of the chapel is the choir with the superb stalls for the Knights of the Most Noble Order of the Garter. Originally there were twenty-six, but now there are thirty-two. They are most elaborately carved with beautiful canopies above supported by slender pillars. On the canopy of each stall rests the helmet, coat, mantle and sword of the Knight Companion to whom the seat has been allotted, and above hangs the banner. A small plate with the "arms" and titles of the former occupants is fixed on the panel of the stalls, and it is a pity a few have been lost or stolen and the list thereby rendered incomplete.

The Order originated in the time of King Edward IV. He deter-

mined to in some way revive the old "Round Table" conferences, and for the purpose built a large circular building and had a round table put within it. He then on St. George's Day, 1345, invited all the Knights who would prove their valour to come to "solemn feasts and jousts at Windsor on that day." The invitations were sent broadcast to all England, Scotland, France, Burgundy, Flanders, Brabant, and the whole Empire, and all but the Knights of France came and were met by the King and Queen and chief Nobles and three hundred of the fairest ladies in the land. At this meeting it was decided to institute the Order, and the first investiture took place on St. George's Day, 1349, when twenty-six Knight Companions were duly elected. The original insignia consisted of Garter, Mantle, Surcoat and Hood; the "George" (George and Dragon) and collar being added by Henry VIII.

On the entrance to the Choir the Sovereign's seat is on the right and that of the Prince of Wales on the left. The fine traceried roof is due to Sir Reginald Bray. "Perhaps without exception this is the most beautiful specimen of Gothic roof in existence, superior in structure to King's Chapel, Cambridge, and the Chapel of Henry VII at Westminster." In 1642 the Parliamentarians took the castle by storm and seized "altar" hangings, plate and other valuables.

Many and beautiful are the tombs and monuments erected in memory of those interred here and some have a great interest. Wolsey built a part on the spot where the old Norman chapel stood which was repaired by that enthusiastic builder, King Henry III, who lived in a period of architectural design unsurpassed for its beauty. In referring to King Henry III it is interesting to note that so limited had funds become to carry out his designs that he bade the Keeper of the King's Apartments to pawn "the most valuable image of the Virgin Mary," requesting that it should, however, be taken "to a decent place."

Wolsey built in this chapel a large sarcophagus and image of himself, intending to have his last resting-place there. But after he was deposed and had gone to York, he sent his servant to obtain them to put up for himself there. The image has gone, but whether he got it or not is unknown. The sarcophagus was utilized by Edward VI for a monument to Henry VIII and a brass figure of the "Bluff King Hal" put on the top of it. In 1646, after the place was ransacked by the Parliamentarians the brass effigy was melted to

pay the soldiers with. Later still, after the death of Nelson it was removed to St. Paul's Cathedral to cover his tomb, and remains there to this day with a Viscount's coronet fixed on the top in place of the King's statue or Cardinal's effigy.

Among those interred may be mentioned :—Edward IV and his Queen Elizabeth Widville, " the gentle, pious, and incapable Henry VI," Henry VIII, and Jane Seymour, Charles I, who was buried in the dead of the night after being brought through a snowstorm and with much difficulty and followed only by four of his late trusted servants, Charles Brandon, the Duke of Suffolk and brother-in-law to Henry VIII, having married Mary the widowed Queen of France and being therefore the grandfather of Lady Jane Grey, Charles Somerset, the first Earl of Worcester (1526), Henry, Seventh Earl and Third Marquess of Somerset and First Duke of Beaufort (1699).

And in the Royal Tombhouse of the Hanoverians lie the remains of Queen Charlotte, died November 17, 1818; George III, died January 29, 1820; Edward, Duke of Kent, died January 23, 1827; Frederick, Duke of York, died January 5, 1827; George IV, died June 26, 1830; William IV, died June 20, 1837; George V, King of Hanover, died June 12, 1878; Edward VII, died May 6, 1910. Queen Victoria was laid to rest by the side of her consort Prince Albert in the Mausoleum which she erected to his memory, but she was brought to St. George's before being taken there, and anything written upon Windsor failing to recall this her last journey to it would surely be incomplete.

Probably no more truly majestic funeral than hers has ever taken place. Borne on the Royal yacht from Osborne Castle, she passed between two lines of monstrous warships—the products of her reign—the cannons booming out their last salutes, then to London in the middle of bitter winter, but thronged nevertheless with massed multitudes of silent mourners, and then to Windsor where the gun-carriage bearing her coffin was drawn up the slopes by the bluejackets on account of the nervousness of the artillery horses, and lastly the Chapel packed with such an assemblage as can rarely if ever meet again, including everyone of note throughout the Empire and representatives from every civilized nation in the world, and above all, rich and poor, prince and peasant, whites and black and coloured races—all with one accord mourning with sad heart the loss of the " Great White Queen."

Four notable marriages have taken place during the past half century in the Chapel:—March 10, 1863, Edward to Princess Alexandra of Denmark; March 21, 1871, Princess Louise to John Douglas Sutherland, Marquess of Lorne, afterwards ninth Duke of Argyll; March 13, 1879, Arthur, Duke of Connaught, to Princess Louisa Margaret of Prussia; April 27, 1882, Leopold, Duke of Albany, to Princess Helen Waldeck-Pyrmont.

In connection with this Chapel it seems there is no place more fitting to give a brief account of the Patron Saint of England. Saint George is also the Patron Saint of Aragon and Portugal, and has been the Patron Saint of England since the reign of Edward III. According to legend, George was born of noble, Christian parents either at Cappodocia or Lydda, and embracing the profession of the Army rose rapidly in the ranks under Diocletian. During the persecution of the Christians, however, he took up their cause so valiantly that he was arrested and put to death at Nicomedia on April 23, 303, his body being brought thereafter to Lydda. There is an ancient bas-relief of St. George and the Dragon on the Church at Lydda, or as it afterwards assumed the title "St. George." This connection of St. George with the Dragon can be traced back to the sixth century. At Arsuf, or Joppa, near Lydda, Perseus slew the sea monster that threatened the maiden Andromeda, and it appears that St. George afterwards received the credit for the deed accomplished by that hero.

The Council at Oxford in 1222 ordered the feast of St. George to be kept as a national feast, but it was not until the reign of Edward III that he became the Patron Saint of England. To a Byzantine he was regarded as a saint of the sea, and Richard Cœur de Lion took up his battle-cry in the crusades of "For St. George, For St. George."

The Castle has sustained siege and trial, capture and recapture, but stands as bravely as ever, and the Chapel dedicated to the Patron Saint of England is still the place of worship of the Knights of the Garter whose chivalrous motto is emblazoned on every Royal Coat of Arms, "*Honi soit qui mal y pense.*"

J. CRESSWELL ROSCAMP.

