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The Cultural and Political Significance of St George in England, 1509 – 1625

by

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for the
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DECLARATION AND INCLUSION OF MATERIAL FROM A PRIOR THESIS

Some of the materials in chapters 2, 3 and 4 have been used in my 2013 Masters thesis for the University of Warwick. The thesis is my own work and does not contain any collaborative research. I confirm that the thesis has not been submitted for a degree at another university.

ABSTRACT

The cult of St George in England at the close of the fifteenth century was one of the most popular in the country. Throughout the medieval period, St George evolved from being seen as a martyr saint to an allegorical chivalric warrior who represented the victory of good over evil. Historians have argued that with the dawn of the reformation in England and on continental Europe, this cult largely abated in favour of more scriptural and less fantastical saints who were not reputed dragon-slayers. This paper seeks to re-evaluate this argument as St George has an intriguing story to tell in terms of the Church and its reformation in England and abroad.

By exploring both the continuity and changes to devotional practices associated with St George and his legend, it is evident he was a malleable figure who reflected the complex set of belief systems that existed in sixteenth century England. On a more macro level it is possible to see through church paintings, church wardens' accounts, inventories, portraiture, religious tracts, 'secular' literature and ballads that St George is integral to our understanding of the role that faith and the church played within sixteenth century English society. Furthermore, this paper focuses on the ways in which St George helped identify England as a distinct Protestant nation but also as a significant player as part of the wider Christian collective in Western Europe.

Through examining and re-analysing the roles and representations of St George both at the English royal court and large sections of English society it is possible to gain a greater sense of understanding about individuals' perceptions of their faith, the impact that the reformation had on the English and Roman Catholic church and to what extent alternations to doctrinal beliefs and practices were embraced.

Keywords: representations, cult of the saints, iconography, nationalism, secularism, monarchy, popular devotions

Introduction: 'St George for England'

In November, 2014, MP Emily Thornbury posted a Tweet that would lead to her resignation from the Shadow Cabinet within a matter of hours. It was of a house in Rochester, where she was campaigning for a by-election, with three English flags draped from the guttering with a white van parked outside on the drive. Despite there being limited text associated with the image, it led to a backlash from people who claimed, rightly or wrongly, that the reference to the flags with St George's Cross, along with the white van, was a snobbish remark about the people in the constituency.

This event started a debate about interpretations of the St George flag and of England's patron saint. Newspaper editorials explored its associations, including links with football hooliganism and the English Defense League. At the same time, questions were raised about why other patron saints of parts of the United Kingdom, St David, St Andrew and St Patrick, had feast days that were still widely celebrated in their respective nations, while St George's Day is usually more muted, often combined with commemorations of Shakespeare's birth and death day.¹

The incident reminds us that the role that St George plays in English public life continues to be of great significance and has deep historical roots. There are several scholarly and popular works that chronicle his cult in medieval England or assess his broader place in English consciousness. Yet to date there has been no comprehensive study of Saint George during the Reformation era in England – a period when one might have expected this non-scriptural Catholic saint to have disappeared from English public life.

This thesis seeks to re-evaluate the cultural and political roles that St George played during the period of the long English Reformation, beginning with the Act of Supremacy in 1534 and extending to the end of the reign of James I. It takes a two-fold approach; firstly, it explores the saint's relationship with the Tudor and early Stuart monarchy and how each king and queen addressed, and in some cases appropriated, his legend for their own purposes. Secondly, popular perceptions and devotional and other practices associated with the saint are analysed against the backdrop of the Reformation. These two areas are not mutually exclusive, however.

¹ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/nick-clegg/11250430/Emily-Thornberrys-white-van-Tweet-was-drippingly-patronising-Nick-Clegg-says.html> (Date accessed: 14 December, 2017), <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2014/nov/21/emily-thornberry-resignation-explain-outside-britain> (Date accessed: 14 December, 2017), <https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/795110/Emily-Thornberry-St-George-s-Day-Labour> (Date accessed: 14 December, 2017).

In many cases, St George facilitated a dialogue between a monarch and his or her subjects. As the patron saint of both the monarch and the country, St George is a medium through which ideas of loyalty, allegiance and identity can be expressed and explored. In this sense the arguments laid out in this thesis add to the debate surrounding the 'compliance conundrum'.² The way in which representations of St George and his legend proved adaptable throughout this period of religious, political and social change goes a way to explaining the limited resistance of the English Reformation.

The thesis investigates changing representations of St George by the crown at and beyond the royal court during this period, and the degree to which St George was used to appeal to the populace and their sense of obedience to the monarchy against the background of the English Reformation up to and including the transition of power to the house of Stuart and the reign of James I. Furthermore, it argues that the monarchy's affinity with St George was not only kept to preserve a sense of tradition, but was used politically to assist the monarchy in creating a sense of dependence amongst the nobility, and a focal point for the general populace through which they could focus their loyalty to their monarch. At the same time, the broader relationship between the English people and their patron saint is also juxtaposed with that of Tudor and early Stuart monarchs.

To say that St George held or continues to hold an affinity with the English monarchy is no revolutionary statement. Chapter two will explore how since the time of the Crusades, English kings have invoked the intercession of this fourth-century martyr. But why this should be so requires some explanation. St George lived and was martyred in what is thought to be present-day Turkey. His resting place is unknown, despite the existence of many alleged locations, and even the most devout believer would admit that the legend of the saint slaying a dragon is implausible at best.³ With this history in mind, the thesis will investigate what led to this saint becoming the patron saint of England and how representations changed as a result of the Reformation. It will also examine how St George was appropriated during the reigns of the subsequent Tudor monarchs and the potentially tumultuous periods of the Stuart accession from Scotland. The thesis will then turn to the role that St George played during the outward expansion of England as it grew into a more

² Christopher Marsh, *Popular Religion in Sixteenth-Century England* (London, 1998).

³ For historical interpretations of St George see E.O. Gordon, *Saint George: Champion of Christendom and Patron Saint of England* (London, 1907). More modern studies of the saint include David Scott Fox, *Saint George: The Saint with Three Faces* (Windsor, 1983) and Samantha Riches, *Saint George: Hero, Martyr and Myth* (London, 2000) which offers an in-depth account of the saint's progression in Western culture. For early representations of St George see Samantha Riches' article 'St George as a Male Virgin Martyr', Samantha J.E. Riches and Sarah Salih (eds), *Gender and Holiness: Men, Women and saints in late Medieval Europe* (London, 2002), pp. 65-85.

influential Protestant power and, as a result, to what degree can one argue that the figure of St George was secularised.

The topic of St George has not totally been ignored within the historiography of the English Reformation. As J.P.D. Cooper states, the Reformation brought about the potential of dual allegiance facing the English people who may have been torn between their loyalty to the papacy in Rome with that of their loyalty to the king. As a result, the Tudor government had to 'take great strides in the direction of political propaganda'.⁴ The affinity between the monarchy and St George was already well established by the start of the sixteenth century, but during the convulsions of the Reformation it took on a new importance.

That Henry VIII felt an affinity with St George, and utilised him for political purposes, has been recognised by other historians. But to date, the focus has been largely on the early part of the reign. In his work *Selling the Tudor Image: Authority and Image in Sixteenth-Century England*, Kevin Sharpe analyses the importance visual imagery played in the reign of the Tudor monarchs.⁵ In examining the reign of Henry VIII, Sharpe argues that the king was cast in the role of St George during the first half of his reign as it reinforced his desire to appear as a brave and chivalric young king. Sharpe goes on to argue that, after the break with Rome, Henry and his advisors abandoned this allusion in favour of Scriptural typologies, with Solomon, Abraham and David as role models for the monarch. John N. King argues strongly that while Henry VIII, like previous monarchs, shared a personal affinity with St George, after the break with Rome, the king sought to portray himself as an Old Testament figure as part of defending and purifying the English Church.⁶

These arguments, however, do not tell the whole story. A central argument of this thesis, which will be the foci of chapters three and four, is that Henry sought role models for kingship not just from the Old Testament, but from medieval hagiography and iconography. In continuing the pattern from the first half of his reign, Henry adopted the image and popular legend of St George and cast himself in the role of defender of the state, the church and the English people's souls.

⁴ J.P.D. Cooper, *Propaganda and the Tudor State: Political Culture in the Westcountry* (Oxford, 2003), pp. 211, 215.

⁵ Kevin Sharpe, *Selling the Tudor Image: Authority and Image in Sixteenth-Century England* (London, 2009).

⁶ John N. King, *Tudor Royal Iconography: Literature and Art in an Age of Religious Crisis* (Princeton, 1989). For other works by King see 'Henry VIII as David: the king's image and Reformation politics', Mark Rankin, Christopher Highley and John N. King (eds), *Henry VIII and his Afterlives: Literature, Politics and Art* (Cambridge, 2009), pp. 15-33. See also Pamela Tudor-Craig, 'Henry VIII and King David', David Williams (ed.), *Early Tudor England: Proceedings of the 1987 Harlaxton Symposium* (Woodbridge, 1989), pp.183-205 and Richard Rex, *Henry VIII and the English Reformation* (2nd edition, New York, 2006).

The debate surrounding the existence of 'propaganda', and the use of visual imagery in the early modern period, is an ever changing one.⁷ Sydney Anglo has argued for caution in readings of early modern images, warning that

it is sometimes impossible – in the midst of these earnest analyses – to imagine that princes and courtiers may have organised and participated in tournaments, masques and dances for recreation; written read and recited poems for enjoyment; watched plays and sung songs for delight; or adorned their dwellings and their persons for pleasure.⁸

On the other hand, Tatiana C. String argues that 'the aim to communicate through the medium of art, from tonal messages of princely magnificence to subject-specific, overtly informative propaganda, is evident throughout Henry's reign'.⁹ However, she suggests that the idea of propaganda in Henrician England needs to be slightly more nuanced.¹⁰ As a result of the break with the papacy, there was a greater sense of 'urgency and intensity' to communicate with the populace and disseminate royal authority.¹¹ Propaganda had a 'role to play [but] other forces were at work'; images, along with 'court drama, poetry and prose', were more a 'matter of contest, of political negotiation and persuasion' than an egotistical matter for the king.¹² In terms of forming interpretations within this thesis, it was important to at once consider potential meanings of the visuals whilst not trying to assume how they would have been considered and by whom. The existence of these images however, does often go a long way in showing some form of consciousness, even if the level to which was proliferated or promulgated cannot be known for certain.

The imagery associated with St George does not exist in a vacuum. Through examining court inventories, state letters and papers and accounts of the material culture of the court, it is possible to see the variety of roles that St George played during this period and in subsequent reigns, partially as a result of Henry VIII's legacy. Furthermore, Kent Rawlinson has recently discussed the degree to which the architecture of the court played a role in disseminating messages to the social elite.¹³ The work of these historians makes it apparent both that visual imagery had a significant role to play

⁷ See Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence* (London, 2001) and Ludmilla Jordanova, *The Look of the Past: Visual and Material Evidence in Historical Practice* (Cambridge, 2012).

⁸ Sydney Anglo, *The Images of Tudor Kingship* (London 1992), p. 3.

⁹ Tatiana C. String, *Art and Communication in the Reign of Henry VIII* (Aldershot and Burlington, 2008), p. 2. See also 'Projecting Masculinity: Henry VIII's Codpiece', Mark Rankin, Christopher Highley and John N. King (eds), *Henry VIII and his Afterlives: Literature, Politics and Art* (Cambridge, 2009), pp. 143-159 and 'Henry VIII's Illuminated "Great Bible"' *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, Vol. 59. (1996), pp. 315-324.

¹⁰ String, *Art and Communication*, p. 10.

¹¹ String, *Art and Communication*, p. 16.

¹² Greg Walker, *Persuasive Fictions: Faction, Faith and Political Culture in the Reign of Henry VIII* (Aldershot, 1996), p. 74.

¹³ Kent Rawlinson, 'Architectural Culture and Royal Image at the Henrician Court', Tom Betteridge and Suzannah Lipscomb (eds), *Henry VIII and the Court: Art, Politics and Performance* (Farnham, 2013), p. 94.

within the Henrician Court and that it was part of a wider public consciousness during the initial break with Rome.

With the death of Henry VIII in January 1547, the future of England's reformation and politics was thrown into uncertainty, as the new king, nine-year-old Edward VI was obviously incapable of ruling autonomously at the time of his accession. The extent of the influence that Edward's advisors, the dukes of Somerset and Northumberland, as well as the Privy Council, had during his reign, and the role played by the young king himself, has long been a matter of debate by historians.¹⁴ The situation was made all the more chaotic six years later when Edward died and his Catholic half-sister acceded to the throne under very precarious circumstances.¹⁵ St George was used as a vehicle through which religious and political changes were debated and negotiated; chapter five will investigate how this role changed during the reigns of Edward VI and Mary I at both monarchical and popular levels. It will examine the changes to court traditions such as the Noble Order of the Garter during both reigns, as well as the portraiture and the writings of the respective monarchs.

The role of St George during the reign of Elizabeth I is also a matter of some debate. Some have argued that he became a figure who acted as an allegory for the political triumph of Protestantism over Roman Catholicism.¹⁶ This approach claims that all directly religious connotations around the saint were removed and that he stopped being a devotional figure altogether in England, so that he would no longer reflect superstitious practices that went against the teaching of the new faith. Furthermore, it has been asserted that the increasingly secular nature of St George is apparent in the revival of chivalrous ideals, promulgated by the 'Virgin Queen', who wished to control her male counterparts by treating them as her gallant champions.¹⁷ In many ways,

¹⁴ See Jennifer Loach, *Edward VI*, George Bernard and Penry Williams eds. (New York and New Haven, 1999); Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Tudor Church Militant: Edward VI and the Protestant Reformation* (London and New York, 1999); Stephen Alford, *Kingship and Politics in the Reign of Edward VI* (Cambridge, 2002) and Catharine Davies, *A Religion of the Word: The Defence of the Reformation in the Reign of Edward VI* (Manchester and New York, 2002).

¹⁵ See Jennifer Loach, *Parliament and the Crown in the Reign of Mary Tudor* (Oxford, 1986); Robert Tittler, *The Reign of Mary I* (New York and London, 1991); Andrew Pettegree, *Marian Protestantism: Six Studies* (Aldershot, 1996); David Loades, *The Reign of Mary Tudor* (London and New York, 1991); *Mary Tudor: A Life* (Oxford, 1992); *The Religious Culture of Marian England* (London, 2010) and Sarah Duncan, *Mary I: Gender, Power and Ceremony in the Reign of England's First Queen* (New York, 2012).

¹⁶ See Alison Chapman, *Patrons and Patron Saints in Early Modern English Literature* (London and New York, 2013); Jonathan Good, *The Cult of St George in Medieval England* (Woodbridge, 2009); Richard Rex, *The Tudors* (Stroud, 2011); Samantha Riches, *St George: Hero, Martyr, Myth* (London, 2000); Roy Strong, *The Cult of Elizabeth: Elizabethan Portraiture and Pageantry* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1977).

¹⁷ See Sydney Anglo, *Images of Tudor Kingship* (London, 1992); Susan Doran, *Elizabeth I and Religious: 1558 – 1603*, (London and New York, 1994); Susan Doran and Thomas S. Freeman (eds), *The Myth of Elizabeth* (Basingstoke, 2003); Susan Doran and Norman Jones (eds), *The Elizabethan World*, (London and New York, 2011); Christopher Haigh, *Elizabeth I* (Second Edition, London and New York, 1998); Christopher Haigh (ed.), *The Reign of Elizabeth I* (Basingstoke and London, 1994); John N. King 'Queen Elizabeth I: Representations of

however, the course that St George travelled throughout the queen's long reign altered and reflected the changing religious climate in more subtle and complex ways. In chapter six it will become apparent that the malleable nature of St George's image and narrative allowed the saint to be used by numerous groups and sects at all levels of society, and for a variety of cultural and religious purposes. Despite the fact that St George was neither native to England nor attested to in scripture, his embeddedness in English cultural and political traditions led to him remaining an integral figure in the latter half of the sixteenth century.

Until relatively recently, the reign of James I had been somewhat neglected by historians and where it has been broadly assessed it has met with much censure. It was not until the late 1970s that historians such as Mark L. Schwarz and Maurice Lee Jr. began to reassess James' reign in England and argue that he should not be characterised merely as a 'bad king'.¹⁸ The work of Jenny Wormald has done much to analyse and try to understand the bias against James VI and I. Wormald argues that up to March 1603 James had enjoyed a largely successful reign in Scotland since reaching his majority and was, to all intents and purposes, a learned man who ruled well. At the same time, Wormald attributes the hostile assessment of the king's reign to his English contemporaries who were not used to a king with philosophical interests and who were embittered when they did not benefit from patronage which largely favoured his closest Scottish advisors. Kevin Sharpe agrees with Wormald in recognizing that James possessed a 'forensic intelligence', but he asserts that his reign suffered due to his inability to 'grasp the importance and style of the English monarchy' as it had developed throughout the reign of the Tudors.¹⁹ Defining James as the 'least recognised or visually imagined' English monarch, Sharpe argued that the first Stuart monarch failed to make a considerable impact in England through the use of propaganda. By not having a portrait

the Virgin Queen', *Renaissance Quarterly*, Vol. 43, No. 1 (Spring, 1990), pp. 30-74; Richard Rex, *Elizabeth I: Fortune's Bastard?* (2nd edition, Stroud, 2009); Richard Rex, *The Tudors* (Stroud, 2011); David Starkey, *Elizabeth: Apprenticeship* (London, 2001); Roy Strong, *The Cult of Elizabeth: Elizabethan Portraiture and Pageantry* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1977); Roy Strong, *Gloriana: The Portraits of Queen Elizabeth I* (London, 2003).

¹⁸ Marc L. Schwarz, 'James I and the Historians: Toward a Reconsideration', *Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (May, 1974), pp. 114-134, Maurice Lee Jr., 'James I and the Historians: Not a Bad King after All?', *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies*, Vol. 16, No. 2 (Summer, 1984), pp. 151-163. For the historiography of James' reign and various interpretations see Pauline Croft, *King James* (Basingstoke and New York, 2003), Christopher Durston, *James I* (London and New York, 1993), Roger Lockyer, *James VI&I* (London and New York 1998). Jenny Wormald has completed a number of works studying various aspects of James VI and I's reign including 'James VI and I: Two Kings or One?', *History*, Vol. 68, Issue, 223 (June, 1983), pp. 187 – 209; 'James VI and I, Basilikon Doron and The Trew Law of Free Monarchies: The Scottish Context and English translation', *The Mental World of the Jacobean Court* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 36 – 54 and 'James VI and I and the Identity of Britain', *The British Problem, c.1534 – 1707, State Formation in the Atlantic Archipelago*, Brendan Bradshaw and John Morrill (eds), (Basingstoke, 1996), pp. 148 – 171.

¹⁹ Kevin Sharpe, *Image Wars: Promoting Kings and Commonwealth in England 1603 – 1660* (New Haven and London, 2010), p. 14.

taken of himself until May 1605, nearly two years after his accession to the English throne, Sharpe claims that this led to the king being isolated from his English subjects both at court and further afield.

Chapter seven will challenge these assessments. While there were definite flaws with James' rule as king of England, it is unfair and inaccurate to state that James made no attempt to have an impact on his English subjects; the fact that his approach was less ostentatious than his Tudor relatives did not necessarily make it any less effective. This chapter will argue that James used St George to ingratiate himself with his new subjects both in 1603 and in the longer term within several different contexts. In terms of the imagery surrounding his accession, St George assisted in naturalising the native Scottish king to his English subjects— a process with similarities to another non-English ruler, the Welsh Henry Tudor, earl of Richmond, who ascended the English throne in less than certain circumstances after the Battle of Bosworth in 1485. This was repeated during the reign of James VI of Scotland when he became James I of England in an attempt to reconcile his new subjects to his accession. The Noble Order of the Garter continued to play an integral role at the Jacobean court and assisted the king in securing his and his family's place on the English throne. Rather than being removed from public consciousness, St George remained a popular figure, both religious and secular, amongst the middling sorts throughout James' reign and was a significant symbol of England's continued expansion in the New World.

Chapter eight will focus specifically on the laity and their relationship with St George both in England and abroad during the latter half of the sixteenth century and the first quarter of the seventeenth century. An exploration of popular images of the time, as well as examples of prose, plays, poetry and ballads speaks to the broad appeal of the saint during this period. Looking outward through writings and cartography, the significance of iconography associated with the saint, namely the St George Cross, is also evaluated in terms of how far it retained its religious connotations and to what extent it represented an emerging English nation.

As a traditional religious figure with some secular roots in England linked to the martial nature of his dragon-slaying legend, St George proved to be a very popular figure not just with the monarchy, but with portions of the English population. In this sense, the thesis' analysis of the impact and use of St George casts light on the wider debate over the efficacy of the English Reformation with the English people.²⁰

²⁰ For the debate surrounding the English Reformation see Peter Marshall, *Reformation England 1480-1642* (2nd edition, London and New York, 2012), G.W. Bernard, *The Late Medieval English Church: Vitality and Vulnerability Before the Break with Rome* (Yale, 2012), Eamon Duffy, *Saints, Sacrilege and Seditious: religion and Conflict in the Tudor Reformations* (London and New York, 2012) and *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional*

The popularity of St George during the Henrician Reformation has been addressed in Muriel McClendon's 1999 article, 'A Moveable Feast: Saint George's Day Celebrations and Religious Change in Early Modern England'. McClendon, while acknowledging the arguments made by revisionists Eamon Duffy and Christopher Haigh that the Reformation was unwanted and then slowly accepted by the laity, asserts that 'seemingly traditional rituals do not necessarily indicate the endurance of traditional religious piety'.²¹ Furthermore, she attacks Duffy and Haigh's arguments for not acknowledging 'that the meanings and feelings' associated with events like feast days 'changed over time' and that neither had tried to understand 'what these celebrations meant to the people'.²² McClendon argues for an essentially secular nature to St George celebrations, quoting Erasmus' 1509 work *Praise of Folly* where he suggests that the saint's celebrations distracted individuals from worshipping Christ, as rather than focusing on the saint's martyrdom, they are more concerned with the pageantry and celebrations centred around the more mythological dragon-slaying. While building on McClendon's research, this thesis takes a rather different approach. I will argue that it was St George's traditional religious significance that made him such an enduringly popular figure amongst the laity during the English Reformation, and rather than becoming wholly secularised, he achieved and ultimately maintained an elevated and protected status within the English Church.

By examining the *Records of Early English Drama* for the midlands and south-west of England it becomes apparent that traditional devotional practices associated with the saint thrived throughout the period of the Henrician Reformation, right up until Edward VI's Royal Injunctions of 1547. It is at this point that the records begin to indicate items relating to the saint were being sold off. Furthermore, there is evidence from Henry's contemporaries that exceptions were made both by the king and his ministers due to the former's close relationship with the saint. As the cult of the saints was attacked, St George survived the siege due to his integral role within the English tradition. It also allowed for a convergence of sources about popular practices related to St George and associated figures and events, something that proved to be a challenging but vital component of this thesis.

In her final work, Margaret Aston contrasted the fates of St Thomas Becket and St George in England, claiming that the survival of the latter was a result of Tudor 'power politics', although visual representations of St George also started to dwindle from the reign of Henry VIII.²³ What this

religion in England, c.1400-c.1580 (2nd edition, Yale, 2005). See also Robert Whiting, *The Blind Devotion of the People: Popular Religion and the English Reformation* (Cambridge, 1989), and Christopher Haigh, *English Reformations: Religion, Politics and Society Under the Tudors* (London, 1993) and Richard Rex, *Henry VIII and the English Reformation* (2nd edition, New York, 2006).

²¹ Muriel McClendon, 'A Moveable Feast: Saint George's Day Celebrations and Religious Change in Early Modern England', *The Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 38, No. 1, (Jan, 1999), p. 4.

²² McClendon, 'Moveable Feast', p. 5.

²³ Margaret Aston, *Broken Idols of the English Reformation* (Cambridge, 2016), p.361.

argument does not take into account, however, is the importance of the Order of the Garter at the royal court. Nor, perhaps, does it address closely enough the significance of the proliferation of the Cross of St George during Henry's reign, and throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries – a proliferation which ensured that the saint remained at the forefront of England's consciousness and became entrenched as part of the English nation both at home and abroad. In challenging this perception there is certain challenges. Although it is impossible to trawl through every archive for a comprehensive account of whether or how the legend of St George was engaged with within each parish in England, records have provided evidence of significant enough movements within the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to suggest with confidence that the assertions in this thesis are supportable.

The more traditional media may have changed, but they were replaced by others that ensured that St George never disappeared, only to be brought back in a cultural revival during the Restoration. Contemporary paintings, heraldry, ballads, woodcuts, letters, sermons, religious tracts, poetry, prose and cartography of the time, demonstrate that St George is a largely untapped figure in this period of history in terms of understanding multiple interpretations of the long English Reformation. This thesis answers the question as to how England's ultimately Protestant patron saint makes the Reformation story look different.

2. The Origins of St George in England: 800 - 1509

The relationship between Saint George and the English monarchy predates the English Reformation by nearly a millennium. By delving into this subject matter, a number of questions are raised: How did St George become revered by the English monarchy and people and how was this image used by both church and state? How and why was he chosen over other, perhaps more obvious English saints to represent the monarchy? Did the representations of the saint change within the medieval period and what were the circumstances?

St George arrives in England

The biography of St George is largely uncorroborated. He is thought to have been a Christian soldier who was martyred for his beliefs in Palestine by the Emperor Diocletian, circa 303.²⁴ His martyrdom thus occurred around the same time as the first English martyr, Alban, who was also executed by Romans for harbouring Christians and would rise in popularity at the same time as St George as the Church established its roots in England.²⁵

It is believed that the legend of St George arrived in England with missionaries sent by Pope Gregory in the sixth century. Records show that churches in places such as Doncaster were dedicated to the saint long before the Norman Conquest.²⁶ In the eighth century the Venerable Bede included the saint in his martyrology.²⁷ Bede wrote of 'the passion of St George the martyr [who] was famous for converting many to the faith of Christ [for which] he received the crown of martyrdom'.²⁸ Later, his martyrdom would be documented by Ælfric, eleventh-century Archbishop of York, in his *Passion of Saint George*.²⁹ In the work, St George was portrayed as the 'champion of God' who witnessed the 'heathen's delusion' and tried to rectify this through conversions.³⁰ Ever so slowly, however, the representations of the saint began to change and a greater emphasis was placed on him as a militaristic figure. It is this side of the saint that appealed directly to the English kings.

During the Crusades, Richard I claimed to have visions of the knighted saint prior to a battle and commanded his soldiers to place themselves under the protection of the saint.³¹ It is hardly

²⁴ Muriel C. McClendon, 'A Moveable Feast Day: Saint George's Day and Religious Change in Early Modern England', *Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 38, No. 1, (Jan. 1999), p. 5.

²⁵ Peter Brimacombe, *St George & the English Saints* (Stroud, 2007), p. 1.

²⁶ David Scott Fox, *Saint George: The Saint with Three Faces* (Windsor, 1993), p. 59.

²⁷ Fox, *George*, p. 59.

²⁸ E.O. Gordon, *Saint George: Champion of Christendom and Patron Saint of England* (London, 1907), p. 38.

²⁹ Samantha Riches, *Saint George: Hero, Martyr, Myth* (Thrupp, 2000), p. 19.

³⁰ Gordon, *Champion*, pp. 40, 42.

³¹ Fox, *George*, p. 61.

surprising that it was during this period that English soldiers first fought under the saint's banner. St George was the perfect icon for the crusades; not only was he willing to die for his faith, his own brave actions resulted in mass conversions to Christianity. The monarchy could not ask for a better role model. David Scott Fox in his work about the myth of St George asserts that it was with Richard's return to England that the first cult of the holy martyr was founded in England.³²

In the thirteenth – century *The Golden Legend*, George is described as being born in Cappadocia, then as a soldier travelling to Sylene, Libya, where he rescued a virginal princess from a dragon, killing the latter. His bravery and faith in Christ acted as catalysts to motivate people into mass baptisms.³³ This was the first widely disseminated text that alluded to St George as a dragon-slayer. The metaphorical battle between good and evil was in keeping with a popular trope at the time, also seen with the archangel St Michael, expelling Lucifer from heaven, and the dragon slaying-martyr St Margaret, both of whom will be discussed below. It is hardly surprising that these allegories proved popular in homilies, they fit into the chivalric ideals of the time and portrayed an image of protecting the vulnerable in the name of God.

By the fourteenth century, St George had become an 'honorary Englishman' whose story of rescuing the virgin from the vicious dragon appealed more to the popular interests of the English people than previous patron saints such as the Virgin Mary, Edward the Confessor and Saint Edmund.³⁴ Whilst Fox is going too far in saying that St George usurped the others in popularity immediately, or perhaps at all in the case of the Virgin Mary, it is correct that by the fourteenth century, St George had become a saint with whom the English monarchy particularly identified. He was a perfect figure for the medieval king with passionate religious views as well as temporal political and military interests.

St George and the Reign of Edward III

It was during the reign of Edward III that the relationship between St George and the monarchy really came to the fore. Edward's personal devotion to the saint would continue through his reign. The 1331-32 inventory showed the king owned a vial of the saint's blood and in the latter half of his rule, Edward had his wife and children painted with St George from 1355 to 1363 in St. Stephen's chapel, a tradition that would be carried on by Henry VII.³⁵

³² Fox, *George*, p. 61.

³³ Victor Hoagland, *The Book of Saints: The Lives of Saints According to the Liturgical Calendar* (New York, 1986), p. 84.

³⁴ The latter two saints could have been surpassed for St George as they were not considered military figures. With the Plantagenet kings' military campaigns, it is possible that St George was a more appropriate symbol being a strong warrior and not from the Anglo-Saxon vein. Fox, *George*, pp. 69, 70.

³⁵ Riches, *Hero, Martyr, Myth*, p. 106.

Edward's personal devotion to the saint manifested itself in his political machinations and military campaigns, thereby solidifying St George as a patron of the monarchy. Edward's affinity with St George transcended his personal devotion; he attempted to use the saint to influence others for his own political ends. One such example is the *Douce Hours* (c. 1325-1330) which shows Thomas, Earl of Lancaster standing next to St George (see Figure 2.1).³⁶ This work was created whilst Edward was endeavouring to get the earl canonised for trying to lead a revolt against Edward II. Riches states that by ordering this manuscript to be created and adorned with that image, he was attempting to assert the earl's holiness to the pope as a sort of royal endorsement.³⁷ The image certainly does suggest that the earl is subjugating himself to the will of the saint. Whilst both figures are of equal height and stature, the earl's uncertain gaze looks up at St George, who stares back sternly. Surely a man who desires such approval from the saint could be deserving of canonisation? Even though the petition was unsuccessful, Edward's attempt at altering the earl's image and reputation by using St George demonstrates the high estimation in which the saint was held by Edward and by those in the English court.

One of the most pivotal moments that drew St George closer into the fold of the monarchy and the court was the establishment of the Order of the Garter. The Order of the Garter was founded in 1348 to reward the nobility for their loyalty and service; there were 26 original members.³⁸ The Garter was originally founded with the Holy Trinity, the Virgin, Edward the Confessor and St George as its patrons and its ideals centred around the medieval code of chivalry. The exclusivity of the Order made it desirous to members of the nobility who wished to be close to, and hopefully have influence over the monarch. Thomas of Walsingham wrote in 1349 that as Edward was about to commence the battle at Crecy he was 'moved by a sudden impulse', drew his sword and cried "Ha! Edward, Ha! Saint George!"³⁹ Crecy, an English victory, continued to entrench St George as England's protector in battles against foreign armies. A chronicler referring to St George within a narrative of a significant (and victorious) battle suggests again the importance in which St George was held. As the king and Black Prince's military campaigns grew in significance, the militaristic St George became the most appropriate icon for the order, thereby negating the need for the other religious figures in that context. Indeed, even more English saints, such as St Edmund and certainly Edward the Confessor, were not depicted as being as brave or as valiant in a military sense, as the warrior knight, St George. This was further solidified with the construction of

³⁶ Riches, *Hero, Martyr, Myth*, p. 105.

³⁷ Riches, *Hero, Martyr, Myth*, p.107.

³⁸ W.M. Ormrod, *The Reign of Edward III: Crown and Political Society in England 1327-1377* (London, 1990), p. 19.

³⁹ Fox, *George*, p. 64.

St George's Chapel at Windsor which would act as the seat for the Order in perpetuity.⁴⁰ Whilst admission to the Order was primarily used as an accolade for brave feats, its political significance cannot be ignored. Having emerged from a period of political instability, Edward needed a device through which he could control the powerful nobles who were in a position to threaten his reign. What better way to do so than by creating a reward for those who served him loyally? Ormrod states that the individuals who were elevated to the order through the 1350s and 1360s consisted of 'household servants, prominent soldiers of fortune... and great aristocrats'.⁴¹ Fox suggests that this order was initially created to unite the fractious barons thereby demonstrating a previous history between the English monarchs and the saint in an attempt to maintain political control.⁴² The king's wish to use the Order of the Garter to reward those from whom he expected loyalty is also apparent, as up until 1375 vacancies were either filled by sons, sons-in-law or trusted members of the king's household.⁴³ Furthermore, those nobles who were seen as being in opposition to the king were consistently overlooked.⁴⁴ Ormrod argues that this built up a sense of camaraderie that would benefit the king in terms of loyal followers and also aid his military campaigns.⁴⁵ In this sense, St George continued to be the perfect saint to emulate, especially during the French campaigns. As the 'champion' who fought bravely for Christianity against God's enemies, the narrative was extended to nobles who were to act as brave knights, fighting next to their king.

As mentioned above, St George's role in Edward's military campaigns was crucial to both Edward and his army. Edward's awareness of this is evident from the beginning of his reign. The Milemete Treatise (1326-27) was created for and given to Edward around the time of his accession by his clerk, Walter of Milemete.⁴⁶ The illustration of 'St George arming Edward III' is of particular note (see Figure 2.2).⁴⁷ The viewer can see St George, wearing his cross on his tunic and epaulettes, presenting the king with his shield, having just given him a spear. The king and the saint are looking directly at one another and are of equal height which suggests that one is not deferring to the other. They are also extending their arms towards one another, an overture suggesting friendship or camaraderie. Both appear as military figures and, as Riches suggests, the image implies that Edward is trying to 'emulate the chivalric values embodied in this soldier-saint'.⁴⁸ Although the book was

⁴⁰ This chapel was initially meant to be dedicated to Edward the Confessor until Edward III changed it to St George. Riches, *Hero, Martyr, Myth*, p. 106.

⁴¹ Ormrod, *Edward III*, p. 105.

⁴² Fox, *George*, p. 64.

⁴³ Ormrod, *Edward III*, p.116.

⁴⁴ Ormrod cites that the earls of Arundel and Huntingdon were expressly ignored due to their opposition to the king in the 1341 parliament. Ormrod, *Edward III*, p. 105.

⁴⁵ Ormrod, *Edward III*, p.105.

⁴⁶ Riches, *Hero, Martyr, Myth*, p. 104.

⁴⁷ Riches, *Hero, Martyr, Myth*, p. 104.

⁴⁸ Riches, *Hero, Martyr, Myth*, p. 105.

produced for Edward's personal enjoyment, it demonstrates the devotion that the king felt towards the saint and the representation of both men as warrior figures.

St George and the knightly tradition were also manifested through the Black Prince who often encouraged tournaments involving the knights of the Garter. These tournaments took place with skilled fighters and riders as their participants.⁴⁹ Both the king and the Prince of Wales ensured that St George was remembered and marked through the event by ordering that they and the knights were provided the garters, buckles, girdle tips, bars and ouches, all items that were part of the Garter's regalia.⁵⁰ These accessories allowed the monarch and their knights to brandish the image of St George throughout the proceedings, making him a constant presence and to involve their patron directly in the pageantry. It was imperative that the ideology of the Order of Chivalry and 'distinguished companionship' was maintained and nurtured. During his French campaign of 1355-1357, Hewitt notes that when it came to pillaging French towns the Black Prince and his followers were 'very eager and desirous to acquit themselves well [and be] flowers of chivalry' as many men were of the Order of the Garter.⁵¹ Regardless of the fact that pillaging did occur it is significant that members of the Order of the Garter were expected to be above the desire for spoils of warfare as they were meant to emulate their patron, St George. The saint is represented as being both a holy figure and a brave chivalric warrior who was a perfect figure to emulate, whether the devotee was a king or a simple member of his army.

St George and Henry V

St George continued to grow in popularity as the establishments of the monarchy and the church promulgated his legend during the reign of Henry V. Henry V would continue in the same vein as Edward III in glorifying St George as a militaristic figure. The most significant change however was the distancing of the monarch and the saint. Whereas before St George was still a figure to be emulated, he was now seen as an intermediary from whom intercession should be sought. As R.N. Swanson states, 'the increasing invocation of specifically English saints in the reign of Henry V has been linked to the growing nationalism in his reign: the Anglo-Saxons could again come into their own' using the developing cult of St George as part of their identity.⁵² The king and his soldiers could not hope to be comparable to the saint, but surely as they were in the right he would intercede on their behalf and bring the English good fortune? Henry V went further than his predecessors in

⁴⁹ H.J. Hewitt, *The Black Prince's Expedition of 1355-57* (Manchester, 1958), p. 31.

⁵⁰ 'Ouches' were bejewelled brooches that were worn with the images of the garter and St George. Hewitt, *Black Prince*, p. 9.

⁵¹ Hewitt, *Black Prince*, p. 72.

⁵² R.N. Swanson, *Church and Society in Late Medieval England* (Oxford, 1989), p. 99.

raising the profile of St George to associate him with the monarchy. This association was promulgated through the rise in public pageantry during the later medieval period.

Similar to his predecessors, Henry V had a strong, personal affinity with St George, keeping his feast day 'solemnly'.⁵³ When the Emperor Sigismund came to Windsor to visit Henry in May 1416, he gifted Henry the heart of St George. He also appointed Henry to the Order of the Dragon, another order that was created in the name of St George, and gave him a set of dragon-adorned, decorative saddles. Such gifts on a diplomatic visit demonstrate that the relationship between the English monarchy and St George was well known outside the country's borders.

Where St George served Henry V with the broader population was the part he played in military campaigns that would become legends in themselves. The fifteenth-century chronicle, the *Gesta*, sought to tell the narrative of a 'devoutly Christian prince' who had God's approval as well as the support of the saints, especially the Blessed Virgin and St George.⁵⁴ Henry V's use of the latter saint was documented during the surrender of the town of Mont Lecomte. The chronicler states that 'immediately after the keys had been handed over and surrendered', the first actions were to raise the 'standards of St George and royal standards... over the gates of the town'.⁵⁵ Jeremy Catto also argues that Henry V presented himself as a deeply religious ruler who invoked the names of saints to lead the English army to victory. One such example occurred when he called upon the Virgin Mary's intercession before the Battle of the Assumption.⁵⁶ By choosing the right divine intermediaries and having their feast days correlate with victories, Henry, according to the *Gesta*, created the impression that God would 'deliver from the swords of the French our king and us his people'.⁵⁷ All of this would come to a climax with the Battle of Agincourt in 1415.

St George was a perfect martial figure from whom intercession should be sought, and a significant fixture in the narrative that surrounded the English victory at Agincourt. The *Gesta* states that as the English marched towards the French army at the commencement of the battle, the king did so 'in the name of Jesus (to Whom is bowed every knee, of those in Heaven, on earth, and under the earth) and of the Glorious Virgin and of St George'.⁵⁸ Henry's much lauded victory at Agincourt led to St George being further favoured by the monarchy and the establishment of the church.

⁵³ James Hamilton Wylie, *The Reign of Henry V Vol. 1: 1413-15* (New York, 1968), p. 316.

⁵⁴ Frank Taylor and John S. Roskell (trans. and eds), *Gesta Henrici Quinti*, (Oxford, 1975), p. xxiii.

⁵⁵ *Gesta*, p. 55.

⁵⁶ Jeremy Catto, 'Religious Change Under Henry V', G.L. Harriss (ed.), *Henry V: The Practice of Kingship* (Oxford and New York, 1985), p. 107.

⁵⁷ *Gesta*, p. 67.

⁵⁸ *Gesta*, p. 85.

Whilst St George's feast day had been a holy day since 1222⁵⁹ it would not be until 1415 that Archbishop Chichele transformed it into a *festum duplex* along with St John of Beverley. This was then elevated to a *magis duplex*⁶⁰ to allow people to celebrate the feast of 'the special patron and protector of the English nation'.⁶¹ Catto argues that Henry V and Chichele arranged this in order to 'propagate the image of the King as miles Christi in the new feasts of national and military saints'.⁶² The emphasis was placed by both the monarchy and the church on those religious figures that were conducive to the political and military contexts and traditions of the time.

Perhaps the greatest departure from his predecessors occurred through the use of public pageantry. Henry V and Archbishop Chichele used the former's victorious return to London in November 1415 after Agincourt as a form of public theatre during which St George was a key player.⁶³ During Henry's triumphal return to London the city's officials went out to meet Henry displaying the arms of the king and St George. Opposite them stood a line of beautiful young maids who held inscriptions that "Welcome[d] Henry ye fifth, Kynge of England and Fraunce".⁶⁴ This display of allegiance demonstrates the acknowledged role St George played in the English victory but may also allude to the legend itself. The young, virginal girls were representations of the Virgin Mary but also perhaps of the princess that St George saved from the dragon. By this point, there is no direct reference to St George's martyrdom. Rather, the sole emphasis is put on his military prowess and the role of intercessor.

The *Gesta* recounted the representation of St George in more detail when it stated that as Henry rode towards London Bridge:

over the foot of the bridge and spanning the route had been raised a tower...and halfway-up it, in a canopied niche richly fashioned, there stood a most beautiful statue of St George, in armour save for his head which was adorned with laurel studded with gems sparkling like precious stones; and behind the statue was a crimson tapestry all aglow with his heraldic arms on a large number of shields. And to his right hung his triumphal helm, and to its left a shield of his arms in matching size. With his right hand he held the hilt of the sword with which he was girded, and with his left a scroll which extended over the ramparts, containing these words: *Soli deo honor et gloria*.⁶⁵

St George is clearly God's knight as the statue was completely covered in armour. The crimson tapestry behind him, which could have been a reference to his martyrdom, also aligned him closely to Henry, the warrior king. The laurel leaves, also a symbol of victory, harken back to Henry's victory

⁵⁹ Gordon, *Champion*, p. 44.

⁶⁰ *Festum duplex* being a major church holiday. *Magis duplex* being a greater church holiday.

⁶¹ *Gesta*, p. 85.

⁶² Catto, 'Religious Change Under Henry V', p. 108.

⁶³ Catto, 'Religious Change Under Henry V', p. 109.

⁶⁴ C.T. Allmand, 'Henry V the Soldier and the War in France', G.L. Harriss (ed.), *Henry V: The Practice in Kingship* (Oxford and New York, 1985), p. 124.

⁶⁵ *Gesta*, p. 105.

at Agincourt. The king's consciousness of the religious aspect, however, can also be seen in the inscription on the scroll St George was holding, which stated that Henry V's campaign and subsequent victory was for the honour and glory of God. Henry had prayed to God through the Virgin and St George and God had delivered the English a victory. Henry was very careful to protect the image that he was God's warrior king and did not take all the credit for himself.

The impact of the representation of St George and Henry V was not lost on observers. A contemporary narrative poem by John Lydgate entitled 'The London Pageant' demonstrates the way in which St George and Henry V were cast as the nation's protectors in their spiritual and temporal spheres, respectively:

To London brigge, thanne rood oure kyng,
The processions there they mette hym ryght,
'Ave Rex Anglor' thei gan syng.
'Flos mundi' thei seyde, Goddes knight.
To London brigge whan he com ryght,
Upon the gate ther strode only,
A gyant that was full grym of sight,
To tech the Frensshmen curtesye.

And at the drawe brigge, that is faste by,
To toures there were upright,
An anteloupe and a lyon stondyng hym by,
Above them Seynt George our Lady knight,
Besyde him an angell bright,
'Benedictus' thei gan synge,
'Qui venit in nomine Domini' Goddes knight
'Gracia Dei' with yow doth sprynge...⁶⁶

In the light of all this, it can be said that by the fifteenth century St George was the English monarchy's principal intercessor and protector. His martyrdom, whilst not entirely forgotten, was subjugated in favour of the chivalric ideal that was useful to the medieval English king with military aspirations.

The later medieval period saw a change in the role and representation of St George. Previously he was lauded as a martyr who died for his Christian beliefs and encouraged mass conversions. This image suited the English monarchs who were advancing their own English martyr saints and their own campaigns during the crusades. As a result, in the increasing military interests of the English monarchy, St George became more of a military figure, God's warrior knight. Edward III and the Black Prince used their devotion to the saint to help tame fractious barons by creating chivalric ideals through the Order of the Garter. St George also gave the monarchy and their armies a soldier to emulate. By the reign of Henry V, both the monarch and the church made St George a central figure and intercessor for England and its people.

⁶⁶ *Gesta*, p. 191.

St George and the people

St George's popularity was not limited to the English monarchy and the aristocratic circles around it. The saint's cult would become firmly entrenched with a significant portion of the English population and became the focus of elaborate, public celebrations. It will become apparent that St George played a significant role in popular religious beliefs and practices throughout the period in question.

The Cult of the Martyr, 800 - 1100

In order to understand these questions, it is important to first look at the rise of the saint's cult in Medieval Europe and how this influenced St George's narrative. It was the nature of St George's death that initially led to his popularity. By the sixth century he had become a fully venerated *megalomartyr* whose story of mass conversions and horrific torture spread from Byzantium into Western Europe.⁶⁷

In England, the cult of St George was far more prevalent in the south than in the north. By the sixteenth century the vast majority of the guilds dedicated to the saint were located in the south and the Midlands, with a few exceptions. One potential reason for this was the way in which Christian missionaries arrived in England. In the sixth century the missionaries entered through two avenues; the first was through Cornwall, the second through Lindisfarne and then on to Northumbria.⁶⁸ One of the first missionary saints to the north was St Cuthbert. From the time of his death his cult inspired such devotion in the north that over five hundred years later the translation of his incorrupt body for re-entombment at Durham Cathedral in 1104 drew great attention across the vicinity.⁶⁹ The monks organising the translation played the event out publicly in front of crowds who came to observe. It is therefore far more likely that the legend of St George entered England through the missionaries in the south. The proximity to London and the monarchy as the establishment's affinity with the saint grew also was responsible for St George's following rarely extending above central England.⁷⁰ It was easier for the cult of St George to be promulgated with royal endorsement. One way a subject could profess or demonstrate his loyalty to the king was through venerating the saints with whom the monarch shared an affinity. It would be natural for those men serving Edward III and Henry V in battle to serve their king and return home to a location

⁶⁷ A megalomartyr, or Great martyr, is an individual who has been venerated by the Eastern Orthodox Church and has usually undergone martyrdom. David Hugh Farmer, *Oxford Dictionary of Saints* (2nd edition, Oxford, 1987), p.177. See also Samantha J.E. Riches, 'St George as a Male Virgin Martyr', Samantha J.E. Riches and Sarah Salih (eds), *Gender and Holiness: Men, Women and Saints in Late Medieval Europe*, (London, 2002), pp. 65-88.

⁶⁸ Peter Brimacombe, *St George and the English Saints* (Stroud, 2007), p. 6.

⁶⁹ Barbara Abou-El-Hai, 'The Audiences for the Medieval Cult of Saints', *Gesta*, Vol. 30, No.1, (1991), p. 6.

⁷⁰ See Jeremy Catto, 'Religious Change Under Henry V', *The Practice of Kingship* G.L. Harriss (ed.), (New York), 1985, pp. 97 – 116.

which was likely close to London and the southern portion of England, nearest the point of embarkation. This would explain why after the battle of Agincourt, many guilds dedicated to the saint began to appear in south and central England. As St George rose in prominence with the monarchy, he would also become popular in areas that were closer and more influenced by their proximity to London.

What was it about the legend of St George that would have inspired missionaries to speak about him and honour him, especially considering that his background and experiences were a world away from England? In terms of the early medieval period, the answer lies in the manner in which he died. Martyrdom, being the means of death for so many of the first Christians, was particularly lauded by the Church. The martyr's feast day 'was celebrated by the Christian community – and not just by those close to him – as that of his birth into heaven (*dies natalis*)'.⁷¹ As the Church became more organised so did the celebration of these individuals who died for their faith. Thomas Head argues that the 'veneration of those people deemed to be saints lay at the core of the practice of medieval Christianity... [they were] key members of the Christian community'.⁷² Indeed, these people already belonged to the 'fatherland of heaven' to which everyone still living eventually wanted to belong.⁷³ St George was no exception; he was an individual who had died for his faith and as a witness to encourage the mass conversions of others.

Whilst early tales of the life and death of St George allude to the killing of a dragon or demon figure, the saint was first worshipped for his violent martyrdom. The earliest visual representations of St George depict him as a passive figure or an 'emasculated martyr' (see Figures 2.3 and 2.4).⁷⁴ He is often shown in frescos and carved in alabaster enduring various forms of torture, including his own castration. The emphasis appeared to be on St George's ability to withstand great pain and suffering in order to demonstrate his faith and love of God. This would have appealed to church officials who sought the obedience and devotion of Christian followers but would have also resonated with the lay people who were being told that suffering was a way through which one could demonstrate love of and trust in God. Furthermore, it has been argued by Samantha Riches that St George was presented as a 'male virgin saint' who, like his female contemporaries like St Agnes and St Barbara, remained chaste throughout his life and devoted to the Christian faith even when faced with a horrific death.⁷⁵ The argument is based on the fact that the early representations of St George make

⁷¹ André Vauchez and Bernard Flusin, 'Cult of the Saints', André Vauchez (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of the Middle Ages* (e-reference edition, Oxford University, 2000).

⁷² Thomas Head, 'Introduction', Thomas Head (ed.) *Medieval Hagiography: An Anthology* (London, 2007), p. xiv.

⁷³ Head, 'Introduction', p. xiv.

⁷⁴ André Vauchez, *The Laity in the Middle Ages: Religious Beliefs and Devotional Practices*, Daniel E. Borstein (ed.), Margery J. Schneider trans., (Notre Dame, 2002), p. 69.

⁷⁵ Riches, 'Male Virgin Martyr', p. 69.

no reference to the saint's masculinity, except for when his genitalia are being removed. This would make him closer to a female in the eye of the medieval observer. While it might be going a bit far to say that people in the early medieval period would have perceived St George to be a virginal female, it is clear that the saint's passivity and meekness, his readiness to conform to and obey the will of God, were attributes to which Christians were to aspire.

The representation of St George as an asexual male further aligned him with another popular religious figure: the archangel Michael. In many ways St George and Michael's representations are quite similar: both defended Christian ideals and were seen as protectors in terms of their hagiography and iconography. Katherine Allen Smith in her work on representation of St Michael and the Virgin Mary cites the fact that the archangel was often seen as a defender of women whilst remaining an asexual figure. In one episode described by Guillaume de Saint-Pair in his *Roman du Mont Saint-Michel*, Michael saves a pregnant woman from her abusive husband and keeps her under the sea with him for an entire year.⁷⁶ The fantastical element of this tale speaks to the desire to give the saint a popular appeal, similar to that of St George slaying the mythical dragon to save a virginal princess. The role of females in relation to popular stories about Saints Michael and George is also interesting. In some instances, they are seen to be the Virgin Mary, the Queen of Heaven. This is particularly significant as St George was originally a co-patron with Mary in the Order of the Garter. As the Garter rose in prominence and became more martial and then political in its nature, the Virgin Mary's role in the order gradually subsided and the focus was placed entirely on St George.⁷⁷ In either case, both saints are seen as protectors of the vulnerable against danger and evil. The women in these tales represent the threat that the Christian church was constantly facing from evil forces. These gallant warriors fulfilled societal expectations in protecting the faithful in God's name, regardless of the threat they faced.

Both saints, as detailed in their hagiographies, also fought against a serpentine figure, a symbol of ungodliness. St George's slain dragon is an obvious variation of Satan who was banished from heaven by St Michael. The popularity of St George and the correlation between him and other saints became more prevalent as a result of the restructuring of the Church in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.

⁷⁶ Katherine Allen Smith, 'Mary or Michael? Saint Switching, Gender and Sanctity in a Medieval Miracle of Childbirth', *Church History*, Vol. 74, No 4, (Dec 2005), p. 770.

⁷⁷ It should also be noted that the same was to happen to Edward the Confessor who was also an initial patron of the Garter.

St George and the Written Word, 1100-1500

By the start of the twelfth century the popular worship of saints had developed into formalised patterns. The large number of people who had acquired saintly status became regulated by the papacy and the ways in which saints were venerated by the public became far more organised. These changes corresponded with the emergence of the feudal system and therefore a reordering of society.⁷⁸ Saints were organised into a hierarchy with the more popular saints being retained and given a position of status.⁷⁹ The re-organisation had a significant impact on the way that the cults of the saints adapted and manifested themselves.⁸⁰ It was during this period that the veneration of saints was incorporated into public spectacles including feasts and market fairs. Barbara Abou-el-Haj argues that these 'spectacles' were remarkably well thought out as they often times had to appeal to a 'volatile audience'.⁸¹ This is significant as it demonstrates that there was a public consciousness or preference as to which saints were widely celebrated. St George was made a lesser saint of the Church during the Synod of Oxford in 1222.⁸² Saints' relics were being venerated in monastic places and provided people with a sense of continuity with the past. Reliquaries became more ornate and made of glass so that pilgrims could see the saint they had travelled so far to worship. There was also an increase in religious imagery and visual representations of these venerated individuals.⁸³ Thomas Head argues that as public worship remained prevalent through this period confraternities and guilds began to adopt saints as their patrons and celebrated their feast day with elaborate festivities.⁸⁴ The saints' desired intercession also acted as an intermediary between the spiritual and temporal worlds and was a method through which the community was able to join together and celebrate.

Another way in which the lay people were able to demonstrate their devotion to selected saints was through pilgrimages. It was also a method by which community leaders and civic authorities could profit from visitors to pilgrimage sites which acted as a significant source of revenue.⁸⁵ However, the popularity of individual sites fluctuated. This is particularly evident in the

⁷⁸ Andre Vauchez, *The Laity in the Middle Ages: Religious Beliefs and Devotional Practices* Margery J. Schneider (trans.), (New York, 1997), p. 28. This work details the religious practices of the laity. Whilst some of the examples were quite useful, I am dubious about the argument that there would have been a perception of 'class' during this period of history. The idea of the churchmen being the 'urban bourgeoisie', trying to suppress the 'popular classes' is not an accurate assessment of the mentality of contemporaries and seems to be an anachronistic Marxist reading of the period.

⁷⁹ Head, 'Introduction', p. xxv.

⁸⁰ For further information on the cults of the saints see Barbara Abou-el-Haj, *The Medieval Cult of the Saints: Formations and Transformation* (New York, 1994).

⁸¹ Abou-el-Haj, *Cult of the Saints*, p. 1.

⁸² Farmer, 'Dictionary of Saints', p. 172.

⁸³ Head, 'Introduction', pp. xv, xx, xxiv.

⁸⁴ Head, 'Introduction', p. xxv.

⁸⁵ Abou-el-Haj, *Cult of the Saints*, p. 1.

case of Thomas Becket of Canterbury. Up to the point of the Reformation the martyr St Thomas Becket was one of the most famous saints in England. Despite the fact that the story of his martyrdom was well-known, the number of pilgrims to his shrine peaked within the first ten years of his martyrdom and then did not rise again until 1220 when his body was translated into the cathedral proper. The *Valor Ecclesiasticus* suggests surprisingly low levels of offerings at Canterbury in the immediate Pre-Reformation period.⁸⁶ These trends are important as they demonstrate that the general populace was discerning in who they venerated.

What is particularly interesting and unusual about St George, however, is his popularity despite the fact he had no site of pilgrimage, and few relics in England available for public veneration. This owed something to royal endorsement but also came about through his portrayal in the hagiographies that were compiled and proliferated during this period. These tales would be re-enacted in marches and pageants in communal settings to show their interpretations and the appeal of St George's feasts. The ways in which these observances and ceremonies altered over time allows us to follow the trends of the guilds and confraternities who venerated St George and through them the various representations the saint took at a popular level. It also presents a differing way in which the monarchy and the wider population chose their preferred representations of the saint. For example, it was the monarchs who were in a more efficacious position to venerate relics from St George, as in the cases of Henry V who acquired the heart of St George from Emperor Sigismund after the Battle of Agincourt. Henry VI kissed the arm of St George at his coronation in Paris, and Henry VII was gifted the right leg of the saint as a good will gesture from Louis XII of France. The acquisitions allowed the monarchs to demonstrate their genuine sense of devotion to the saint whilst promulgating St George as a martial figure who interceded on behalf of the English and their monarch who was 'God's anointed'. This would particularly explain the emphasis placed on St George after Henry V's victory at Agincourt and his importance to Edward IV and Henry VII, two monarchs desperate to legitimise their families' claim to the English throne.

In the case of the wider populace, it would appear that their motivations for venerating St George were different. Whilst they accepted the representation of St George put forth by the monarchy and the written word, the saint was a vehicle through which brave deeds and devotion to the Church could be acknowledged and lauded. It was a way through which their loyalty to their monarch and God could be demonstrated. Furthermore, the more fantastical elements of St George's legend could easily be incorporated with pre-existing public pageants and spectacles that coincided with both the Christian calendar and other spring or harvest-based celebrations.

⁸⁶ Abou-el-Haj, *Cult of the Saints*, p. 1. See also Richard Rex, *Henry VIII and the English Reformation* (2nd edition, New York, 2006), pp. 63-64.

In addition to public ceremonies and religious practices, saints' lives, deeds and deaths were recorded in hagiographies, recounted to the general populace in the form of sermons and retold for generations. These practices led to more widespread commemorations of saints and it was during this second phase of the medieval saints' cults that the representation of St George began to alter and become better established in England and the image of St George as a chivalric knight and defender became far more popular. These hagiographies acted as a wide reaching genre which appealed to a larger percentage of the population as they were produced in the vernacular language, making it easier for the legends to be told by more people and easily remembered and retold by others.⁸⁷ In many ways these collections had a very standard framework including a 'short moralising prologue, personal details of the saint treated, his or her parentage and education, the call to Christian service, the relation of adventures associated with religious experience and practice, the miracles, the martyrdom, translation to Heaven, and the invocation of prayer'.⁸⁸ This pattern is followed in hagiographies from the eleventh century onwards.

The hagiographies that emerged during this period followed similar patterns. For example, in Wace's *Life of St Margaret*, written around the mid eleventh century, she, like St George and St Theodore, was responsible for 'vanquish[ing] a dragon' who was considered a threat and a symbol of the devil's presence in the world.⁸⁹ Indeed the allegory of warriors killing mythical representations of evil was suitable to appeal to a wider populace and could be applied to many different contexts.⁹⁰ As we shall see, in *The Golden Legend* and subsequent versions of the life of St George, he became a distinctive chivalric figure who defended Christianity and inspired people to convert to Christianity based on his own bravery. André Vauchez claims that it was during the twelfth century, primarily led by the Crusades, that the image of *miles Christi*, soldier of Christ, came to the fore.⁹¹ The group of military saints suited not just the monarchs who wished to be seen as brave warriors but those who fought in armies or knew those who did. It was during this period that the image of St George on horseback impaling a serpent or 'dragon' became the widely preferred image of the saint.⁹² It became so well-known during this period that St George was often one of the figures who was

⁸⁷ S.C. Aston, 'The Saint in Medieval Literature' *The Modern Language Review*, Vol. 65, No. 4, (Oct., 1970), p. 6.

⁸⁸ Aston, 'The Saint in Medieval Literature', p. 6.

⁸⁹ Karl D Uitti, 'Women Saints, the Vernacular and History', Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski and Tímea Szell (eds), *Images of Sainthood in Medieval Europe* (New York, 1991), p. 254.

⁹⁰ Oya Pancaroğlu, 'The Itinerant Dragon-Slayer: Forging Paths of Image and Identity in Medieval Anatolia' *Gesta*, Vol. 43, No. 2, (2004), p. 151

⁹¹ André Vauchez, 'Lay People's Sanctity in Western Europe: Evolution of a Pattern (Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries)', Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski and Tímea Szell (eds), *Images of Sainthood in Medieval Europe* (New York, 1991), p. 26.

⁹² Although this image had been existence and used with other military saints like St Theodore over many centuries in the east. Oya Pancaroğlu, 'The Itinerant Dragon Slayer: Forging Paths of Image and Identity in Medieval Anatolia' *Gesta* (Vol. 43, No. 2), 2004, p. 151.

chosen to adorn the entrances to cathedrals, thereby demonstrating his role as a brave protector, one who would actively fight against wickedness and evil in the temporal world.⁹³

Perhaps the most significant cause of this change in the representation of St George from the twelfth to the fifteenth century was the influence of *The Golden Legend*. This collection of saints' lives, written between 1260 and 1275 by Jacobus de Voragine, portrayed St George as a brave knight who rescued a princess from a dragon to whom she was an offering. His bravery and faith in God inspired the mass conversions of thousands of people to Christianity but ultimately led to his martyrdom for refusing to acknowledge the validity of Roman gods. He was the ideal of chivalry who sought to defend women, detested evil and had complete faith in the will of God. The Legend does not cast St George in the role of an aggressor, but his Christian and courtly values are evident from the beginning of the text. After seeing a young woman in distress

he demanded the lady what she made there and she said: Go ye your way fair young man, that ye perish not also. Then said he: Tell to me what have ye and why weep ye, and doubt ye of nothing. When she saw that he would know, she said to him how she was delivered to the dragon. Then said S. George: Fair daughter, doubt ye no thing hereof for I shall help thee in the name of Jesu Christ.⁹⁴

Here it is apparent that St George is portrayed as a brave defender who volunteers to help a woman from danger. He also casts himself as a brave knight who performs heroic deeds for God:

the dragon appeared and came running to them, and S. George was upon his horse, and drew out his sword and garnished him with the sign of the cross, and rode hardily against the dragon which came towards him, and smote him with his spear and hurt him sore and threw him to the ground. And after said to the maid: Deliver to me your girdle, and bind it about the neck of the dragon and be not afeard. When she had done so the dragon followed her as it had been a meek beast and debonair.⁹⁵

The dragon, a symbol for evil, is easily felled by St George. The image of the saint on the horse with his sword demonstrates him as a fierce warrior who is not afraid of the threat of danger. It should also be noted that in this version, St George does not kill the dragon, but merely subdues him. Perhaps St George was meant to appear as benevolent and merciful, but more than likely it is meant to act as an allegory to suggest that whilst evil can be fought and tamed, it can never be fully removed. Even the archangel St Michael could only banish Lucifer from heaven. With the threat of evil ever present in the world, the need for the Church and the saints' intercession was a particularly important message to send to the laity. Certainly, the visual imagery of the cross is also significant as it links the saint to the symbol of Christ's death and foreshadows his own martyrdom. It is also the iconic image that would be associated with the saint from this period in history onwards, the

⁹³ Vauchez, 'Lay People's Sanctity', p. 26.

⁹⁴ Jacobus de Voragine 'The Life of St George', *The Golden Legend* Vol. 1, William Granger Ryan (trans.), (Princeton, 1993), p. 241.

⁹⁵ Voragine, 'The Life of St George', p. 241.

George Cross. The existence of the dragon being at once a mythical creature and a symbol for the devil, thereby making the narrative both entertaining and devotional.

After seeing St George's bravery in defeating the dragon, and his faith in God, thousands of people converted to Christianity. His devotion to Christ and refusal to worship Roman idols brought him into contention with the officials. When St George refused to recant his Christian beliefs, the provost Dacian ordered that he be tortured, though this did not go according to plan. It began when Dacian ordered an enchanter to poison him which had no effect:

the enchanter ... gave it him to drink, and it grieved him nothing. When the enchanter saw that, he kneeled down at the feet of Saint George and prayed him that he would make him Christian. And when Dacian knew that he was become Christian he made to smite off his head. And after, on the morn, he made Saint George to be set between two wheels, which were full of swords, sharp and cutting on both sides, but anon the wheels were broken and Saint George escaped without hurt. And then commanded Dacian that they should put him in a caldron full of molten lead, and when Saint George entered therein, by the virtue of our Lord it seemed that he was in a bath well at ease.⁹⁶

The violent account of the torture that St George sustained with his understated reactions further demonstrates that this text was meant for a wider audience who would have been impressed with St George's willingness to endure such torture and God's benevolence in initially sparing him the suffering. It is important to note, however, that the actual martyrdom of St George is mentioned only briefly. After praying to God to give succour to those who sought it from Him, the legend simply states that 'a voice came from heaven which said that it which he had desired, ie. martyrdom, was granted; and after he had made his orison his head was smitten off, about the year of our Lord two hundred and eighty-seven'. The limited amount of time spent on St George's actual martyrdom suggests that the focus on the saint was placed primarily on his role as God's warrior and his ability to face torture in an almost nonchalant manner. St George's representation in *The Golden Legend*, while certainly not completely disregarding his martyrdom, already placed greater emphasis on the saint's role as a soldier of Christ and a defender of Christianity.

The account of the life and death of St George in *The Golden Legend* acted as a catalyst for other works that portrayed the saint as a brave warrior. The importance of sermons, at a time when the vast majority of the population was illiterate, cannot be overestimated. One such work was Mirk's *Festial*, written at the beginning of the fifteenth century, which showed the saint as a military figure as opposed to a martyr.⁹⁷ Mirk, who largely adopted his sermons from *The Golden Legend*, states that after slaying the dragon and returning the princess to her father, he instructed the king that he should 'belde fast in every hyron of his londe churches, and be lusty for to here Goddys

⁹⁶ Jacobus de Voragine 'The Life of St George', *The Golden Legend* Vol. 1, William Granger Ryan (trans.), (Princeton, 1993), p. 240.

⁹⁷ Riches, 'St George as a Male Virgin Martyr', p. 68.

service, and done honoure to alle men of Holy Chirche'.⁹⁸ In this account St George appears to take a more forthright and demanding stance against the king; his role as God's knight and his motivations are clear. The change in the saint's disposition becomes further evident when Mirk writes that St George, upon seeing the Emperor Diocletian and knowing that he was executing Christians, 'wente to hym boldly and repreuid hym of þat unsyd dede'.⁹⁹ Mirk's account of St George's actions is significant because it demonstrates a complete departure from earlier representations of St George. He was no longer a passive, devoted follower of Christ, but rather an active member of the church who chastised those in authority who did not acknowledge the Christian faith. The representation was reflective of the contemporary preferred image of knights being brave figures who defended the weak and served God or courtly ideals.¹⁰⁰ Mirk himself stated that his writings were meant for the parish priest with limited means and books.¹⁰¹ It was this representation of St George that would be adopted by those ascribing to his cult.¹⁰² As Susan Powell points out, the *Festial* was the only collection of sermons printed in England before the Reformation. Not only that, it seems to be the most printed English work before the Reformation with texts found in East Anglia, the central Midlands, Cardiff and even as far as Dublin.¹⁰³ The popularity of the sermons would indicate a level of popularity and approval of the colloquial legends within the collection.

Saint George's Rise in Popular Culture, 1415-1528

It is evident that by the beginning of the fifteenth century St George was an already popular figure amongst the laity in some sections of England. By the end of this century, however, St George would be a significant figure in the English psyche to whom there would be a strong devotion. William Caxton, who first published *The Golden Legend* in English in 1483, summed up the sentiment felt by the laity towards St George when he described him thus: 'This blessed and holy martyr S. George is patron of this realm of England and the cry of men of war. In the worship of whom is founded the noble order of the garter, and also a noble college in the castle of Windsor by kings of England'.¹⁰⁴ It

⁹⁸ John Mirk, *Festial* Vol. 1 Susan Powell (ed.), (Oxford, 2009), p. 118.

⁹⁹ Mirk, *Festial*, p. 119.

¹⁰⁰ For further elaboration on chivalry and courtly ideals refer to Maurice Keen's work *Chivalry* (New Haven, 1984) and Richard Barber and Juliet Barker's work *Tournaments: jousts, chivalry and pageants in the Middle Ages* (Rochester, 1989).

¹⁰¹ Susan Powell, 'The Festial: The Priest and His Parish' in Clive Burgess and Eamon Duffy (eds), *The Parish in Late Medieval England* (Donington, 2006), p.1 65.

¹⁰² For further elaboration see below and refer to chapter 5.

¹⁰³ Mirk, *Festial*, pp. 160, 165.

¹⁰⁴ Voragine, 'The Life of St George', p. 142.

is clear that this was no 'ordinary' saint's cult. Its rise, moreover, was due as much to social and political factors as to strictly religious ones.

It was during the reign of Henry V, that St George's wider popularity really began to flourish. The celebrated English victory at Agincourt in 1415 played a major role in increasing the saint's public image as well as his importance to England's national identity. Henry V had declared on the eve of Agincourt that St George and the Virgin would keep English soldiers safe and bring them victory against the French. When this occurred it was obvious that St George had interceded on behalf of the English as their patron saint and had helped lead them to victory. The use of public pageantry on Henry's return from Agincourt further demonstrated the role that St George played in the victory as well as the king's personal devotion to the saint. Furthermore, by altering St George's feast day to a *magis duplex*, thereby prohibiting all but essential work, people would be able to celebrate and honour the saint.

One example of the flourishing cult in the south east of England is provided by the St George brotherhood, founded at St Nicholas Church in New Romney in Kent. The image of St George was erected there in 1481.¹⁰⁵ The veneration of the saint by the people in New Romney demonstrates that St George was perceived as a brave and valiant knight who played an active role in the town's religious community. St George also became increasingly popular in Cornwall after Agincourt, with nine guilds in the county being dedicated to him.¹⁰⁶ The Legend of Saint George appears on the wall of a parish of Saint Mary Magdalene in Launceston painted and dedicated from 1524.¹⁰⁷

In Norwich, the feast day of St George was celebrated as early as 1408.¹⁰⁸ After the victory at Agincourt, however, the public celebrations became far more elaborate and included St George ridings. Ridings were celebrations that re-enacted the legend of St George and had the saint fighting a dragon and rescuing a virgin. In Norwich, the St George ridings were performed with the lady, known as 'the Margaret', and the dragon. The name of the lady is particularly significant as Margaret was another saint who was popularly known for slaying a dragon. The event culminated in a mock battle outside the city walls. In 1429 a payment was made to a man for 'playing in the dragon with gunpowder', which demonstrates the large amount of effort put into these celebrations and the dramatic effects that seem to have been involved.¹⁰⁹ Norwich's Guild of St George also had a reliquary 'beryng the Arme of Seynt George the whiche was yoven to be the seid Fraternite by

¹⁰⁵ *Records of Early English Drama (REED) Kent Diocese of Canterbury*, 3 Vols. James M. Gibson (ed.), (Toronto, 2002), p. xc.

¹⁰⁶ *REED Dorset/ Cornwall*, Rosalind Conklin Hayes, C.E. McGee, Sally L. Joyce and Evelyn S. Newlyn (eds), (Toronto, 1999), p. 412.

¹⁰⁷ *REED Dorset/ Cornwall*, p. 412.

¹⁰⁸ Clifford Davidson, *Festivals and Plays in Late Medieval Britain* (Aldershot, 2007), p. 124.

¹⁰⁹ Davidson, *Festivals and Plays*, p. 32.

John Fastolf Knyght'. There was also a wall painting of St George fighting the dragon and saving the princess.¹¹⁰ The veneration of the saint by the residents of and pilgrims to Norwich demonstrate that St George was perceived as a warrior knight who had clearly caught the imagination of the local community.

Church wall paintings dating from the period just after Agincourt all demonstrate St George in an active pose, usually on horseback, in the act of slaying the dragon. One prime example is the painting of St George and the dragon dating from around 1470 in Broughton, Buckinghamshire (see Fig. 2.5). The image shows St George on horseback, bearing his cross and a lance with which he is slaying the dragon. He is dressed in a kind of contemporary armour that would have been worn by knights. The princess is kneeling in the background watching the battle. A carol from the period describes the devotion that people felt towards St George and the way that they interpreted his legend:

Enfors we us with all our might/ To love Seint George, our Lady['s] knight... /He keped the ma[i]d from dragon's dred, / And fraid all France and put to flight. /At Agincourt - the crowne cle ye red - / The French him see foremost in fight. / In his vertu he wol us lede /Againis the Fend, the f[o]ul wight, / And with his banner us oversprede,/ If we him love with all oure might.¹¹¹

The lyrics of this carol demonstrate the direct correlation between those who had fought at Agincourt and the devotion to St George. This affinity with the saint filtered through the various parishes in the south of England.

St George's cult can also be seen taking hold during the late fifteenth century in central England. In Stratford upon Avon, members of the Guild Chapel held ridings on St George's Day. They also painted a scene of St George impaling the dragon and saving the princess. In Coventry, the saint first figured in a pageant for Prince Edward in 1474 as the populace welcomed the royal family into the city. St George appeared in armour fighting the dragon with 'a kynges doughter knelyng a fore hym with a lambe and the fader and the moder beyng in a toure a boven'.¹¹² By incorporating St George into the celebration for the royal family the civic authorities used him as a vehicle to show their loyalty to the crown; it was a public demonstration of patriotism using the popular legend of St George.

St George also acted as the protector of the city. A statue of the saint in plate armour slaying the dragon dating from between 1470 and 1490 stood in the Chapel of St George at Gosford Gate.¹¹³ It was during this period that relics of the saint started to appear in inventories; a further

¹¹⁰ Davidson, *Festivals and Plays*, pp. 33-34.

¹¹¹ Anon, mid C.15, *A carol [with music] of St George*, BM. MS Egerton 3307, fol.63b, R.T. Davies, *Medieval English Lyrics* (London, 1963), p. 185.

¹¹² Davidson, *Festivals and Plays*, p. 34.

¹¹³ Davidson, *Festivals and Plays*, p. 34.

example of the saint's popularity despite not having a site for pilgrimages. St Mary's Cathedral at Coventry claimed an image of the saint 'with a bone of his in his shelde'. The Collegiate Church of St Mary, Warwick, had a 'horn of glory that was sant Gorges', a fragment of his collarbone, and a piece of his breastplate. Further south, Salisbury Cathedral had two unspecified relics of the saint, one of which was probably the item placed in the 'little cross, curiously ornate' containing also relics of the Holy Innocents.¹¹⁴ The relics listed above all pertain to St George's role as a soldier of God. Much like the wall paintings which showed St George saving a young woman, the placing of his relics with those of the Holy Innocents provided another representation of vulnerability that needed to be defended. Just as St George protected the chastity of women, so too would he defend the relics of innocent children who were massacred.

After the Wars of the Roses, plays inspired by *The Golden Legend* began to be performed at various locations throughout south and central England. In these plays St George would also be cast as a Prince as well as a soldier, no doubt a link to his patronage of, as well as patronage by the English monarchy. Coventry also attempted to endear itself towards the royal family during the Tudor period when in 1498 the city staged a pageant for Prince Arthur that had him greeted by St George and Dame Fortune.¹¹⁵ The choice demonstrates the people's awareness of the Tudors' affinity with the saint and their wish to ingratiate themselves with their future king by wishing him good 'fortune'. Another example of stagecraft manifesting St George's popularity is the Lutterworth St George play from Oxfordshire, which cast the saint as a Prince who declares himself 'the champion bold,/ And with my sword I won three crowns of gold;/ I slew a fiery dragon and brought him to the slaughter/ And won the King of Egypt's only daughter'.¹¹⁶ Here, George is again seen as an authority figure that not only protects females, but wins them as a prize for his bravery, a far departure from the emasculated saint portrayed in the early Middle Ages. The popular appeal of St George is apparent, as towards the latter half of the fifteenth century many of the miracle plays that were based on his legend were acted in alongside entertainments involving popular heroes such as the tales of Robin Hood which would suggest that St George's legend was particularly suited for providing entertainment.¹¹⁷

The rise in popularity of the cult of St George and alterations to the saint's image along the way were influenced by many factors. St George was initially venerated by the early church as a martyr who passively accepted his fate for his love of God and the Christian faith. As a re-

¹¹⁴ Davidson, *Festivals and Plays*, p. 33.

¹¹⁵ Anglo, *Images of Tudor Kingship*, p. 52.

¹¹⁶ Craig Harden, *English Religious Drama of the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1955), p. 331.

¹¹⁷ See below and in Chapter 4 more further elaboration. Robert Withington, *English Pageantry: An Historical Outline*, Vol. 2 (Cambridge, 1920), p. 7.

emergence of military figures gained in popularity from the eleventh century, the image of St George changed. In line with the preferred representation of St George by the monarchy, the wider populace readily adopted the image of the saint as a defender and a protector, not just of vulnerable parties but of whole towns and cities. To a considerable extent, these elaborate practices were indicative of the changing religious patterns throughout the Middle Ages. From the reordering of the spiritual hierarchy of the saints to the introduction of more dramatic venerations, St George mirrored these changes. What sets him apart, however, was his steady popularity with the general populace and with the English monarchy during a time when the popularity of many saints fluctuated, as was the case of St Thomas Becket.

St George, as patron of England, was also a way through which people could simultaneously assert their loyalty to the monarchy and partake in communal celebrations, thereby combining the 'religious' with the 'political'. There is no doubt that the monarchy's affinity with the martial St George encouraged the general populace to make devotions to the saint. It was one way in which civic authorities could openly demonstrate their allegiance to a monarch and their dynasty. In that case, one might wonder what made St George so popular as opposed to Edward the Confessor, who was another royal favourite though portrayed as a kind of pacifist. This probably owes much to the popular appeal of the saint's legend as an allegory of the triumph of good over evil. Whilst the populace was eager to demonstrate their loyalty, they could also be discerning in their choice of whom they venerated. The rise in guilds and the development of visual imagery related to the saint during the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries shows the extent of his popularity, especially in southern and central England.

By dawn of the sixteenth century, St George was a popular temporal and religious figure within certain areas of England who actively practised honouring the saint as their patron and defender. In summation, St George was a figure who promoted chivalric ideals. He was at once a martyr and one of God's warrior saints who stood for virtue, loyalty and truth; a devotional figure who had become somewhat romanticised due to the lore surrounding his allegorical hagiography. One who protected the vulnerable and aggressively stood against moral corruption and for Christianity. These virtues would appeal to and serve Henry VIII greatly throughout his reign, both before and after the Reformation.

Images



Figure 2.1. The Douce Hours, Thomas earl of Lancaster with St George, 1325 - 1330

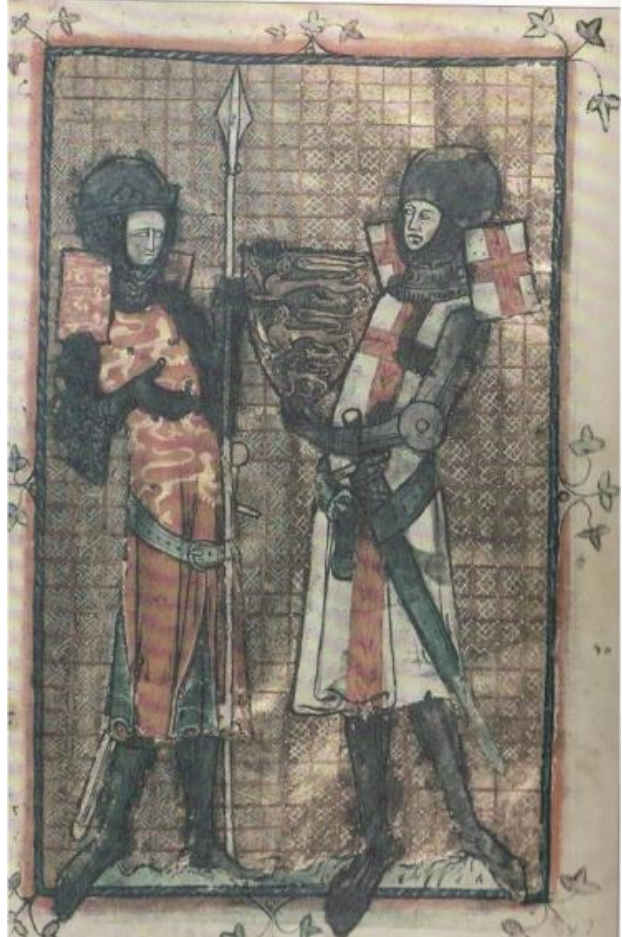


Figure 2.2. The Milemete Treatise, St George arming Edward III, 1326 - 1327



Figure 2.3 Triptych with scenes from the life of St. George, tempera, gold leaf, and silver leaf on panel, school of Aragon, c. 1425–50

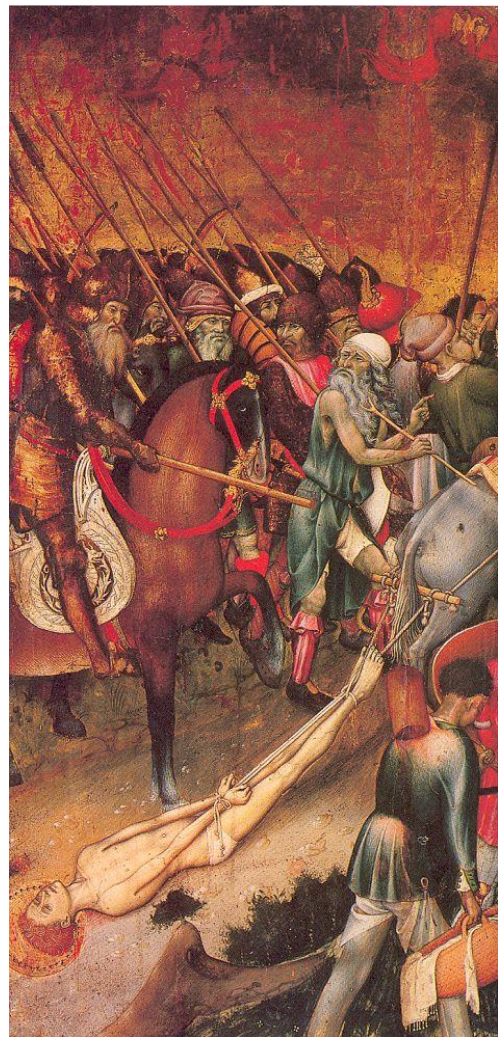


Figure 2.4 Saint George dragged through the streets (detail), by Bernat Martorell, 15th century

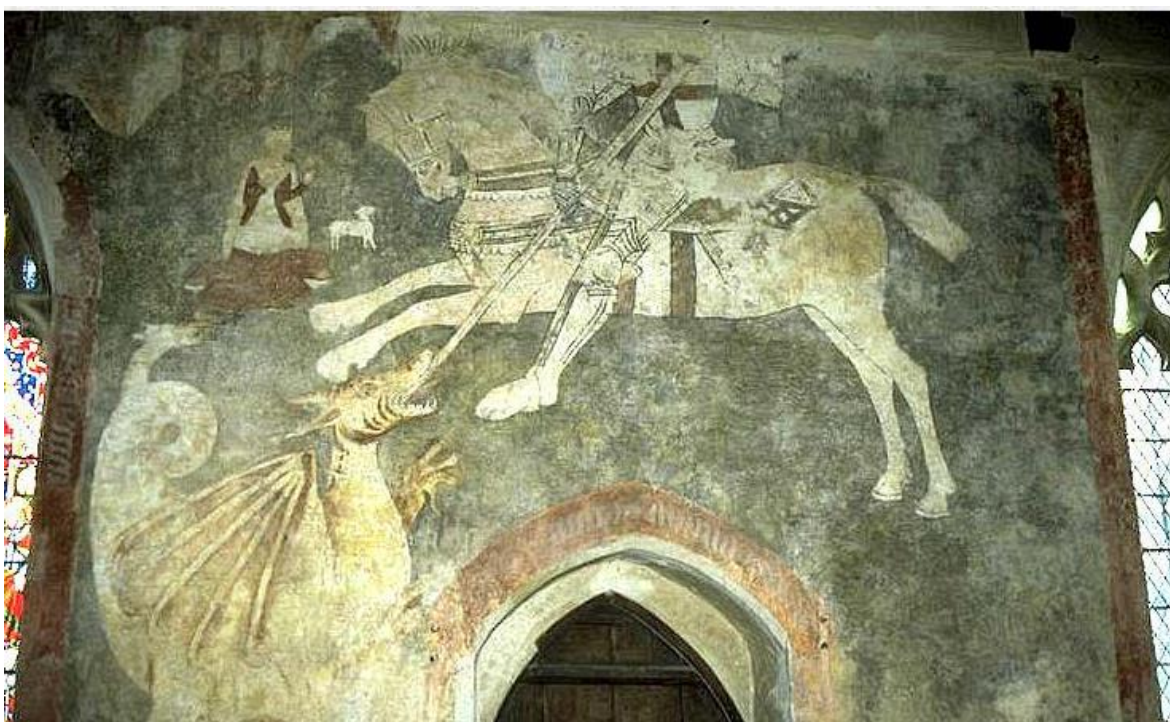


Figure 2.5 St George and the Dragon, Broughton c. 1470

3. SAINT GEORGE AND HENRY VIII, 1509 - 1532

In order to appreciate the significance of the role St George played during the English Reformation and its aftermath, it is necessary to understand the relationship between the saint and the king. St George played an integral role in the tradition of the English monarchy but to what extent did Henry VIII's personal devotion to the saint equal or exceed that of his predecessors? How did Henry use St George to advance the Tudor dynasty's rule in the first half of his reign; which representations of St George were prevalent and why?

Henry's early relationship with St George was characterised by his intense personal devotion to the saint, which went beyond private worship and was made manifest to the whole court. Henry differed from and surpassed his predecessors in his relationship to the saint. He not only used the image of St George and appealed to him as an intercessor, he actually assumed the role of St George himself. This is particularly significant given that it was during Henry's reign that the image of the monarch was circulated and promoted to a greater extent than that of any previous ruler. St George was, therefore, an ideal figure for Henry to emulate. Henry, a brave and chivalric young warrior king, who fought to defend the borders of his realm, obviously admired St George whose legend also encapsulated this image.

Henry's relationship with the saint in these years can be broken down into two distinct phases: in the first twelve years of his reign the emphasis was on the representation of St George as an aggressive militaristic figure; a warrior knight who was to defend the border of England and strove to make it one of the most powerful nations in Renaissance Europe. The year 1521, however, marked a turning point when Henry was given the title of *Fidei Defensor* by Pope Leo X. It was at this point that St George's representation as a 'defender' or guardian came to the fore. The representations of this quintessentially royal saint can therefore be used to track significant shifts in domestic and international policy.

Henry's Personal Devotion to St George

Much like that of his predecessors, it is evident that Henry VIII's devotion to St George was genuinely felt. The saint was invoked by Henry from the moment he became king. In his *Chronicles*, Edward Hall states that Henry's accession 'was Proclaimed by the blast of a Trumphet, in the citie of London,

the xxiii daye of the saied moenthe [April], with muche gladness and rejoyssyng of the people'.¹¹⁸ The significance of Henry's decision to declare his accession to the throne on St George's day goes beyond a happy coincidence and marks the first occasion that Henry demonstrated his affinity with St George as England's new monarch. St George also played a major role in the coronation at Westminster Abbey the following June. In the procession to the Abbey, Henry was followed by barons carrying the arms of Saints Edward, Edmund and George.¹¹⁹ Whilst it might be argued that St George was only one of three saints that were highlighted by Henry, it would soon become apparent that he was the preferred saint of the king. He was also the only saint present who was neither royal nor a native of England. It is obvious that, like his father, Henry wished to use the popular figure of St George to assert his claim to the English throne and reaffirm the legitimacy of the Tudor dynasty. Henry would further demonstrate his admiration for St George by taking the saint's feast day as his official birthday from 1510 and announcing in 1513 that St George was his patron saint.¹²⁰ Henry wished to be seen as a promising young king who would surpass the reign of his father and usher England into a new era therefore becoming a rival to the other, more powerful European monarchs and their courts. As the French ambassador Marillac would claim, Henry sought to be 'not only a king to be obeyed on earth, but a veritable idol to be worshipped'.¹²¹ By establishing these parallels between himself and St George Henry was able to continue the close relationship between the English monarchy and the saint whilst enhancing his personal image both at home and abroad.

Henry's affinity with St George can also be seen in the material culture of the court from the first half of his reign. One item dating from this period was Henry's writing desk (see Figures 3.1 and 3.2). Commissioned in the 1520s, the desk gives a clear indication of Henry VIII's preference for and personal devotion to the saint. On the inner lid of the desk are the Roman gods Mars and Venus along with Cupid, Paris and Helen of Troy. These mythological allusions demonstrate an interest in powerful figures, reflective of Henry's projected image. The allusions also refer to the interest in humanism as part of the Renaissance that Henry welcomed into the court. In the centre of the desk there is a head of Christ and to the right a full-length portrait of St George represented in a classical style wearing Romanesque armour and holding his standard with his cross. The image makes no allusion to his martyrdom and certainly adheres to the more militaristic representation of the saint in the role of defender of the king and, through him, England. The inscription on the desk reads 'God of Kingdoms great Protector of the authority of the Christian Church give to your servant Henry

¹¹⁸ Edward Hall, *Chronicles of Henry VIII*, Charles Whibley (ed.), (London, 1904), p. 1.

¹¹⁹ *The Great Chronicle of London*, A.H. Thornas and I.D. Thornley (eds), (Gloucester, 1983), p.340.

¹²⁰ This latter fact would correspond with this victory at the Battle of the Spurs against the French and refers to Henry V's victory at Agincourt to further enhance his image as a successful military leader. This point will be discussed in full below. David Starkey, *Henry VIII: A European Court in England* (London, 1991), p. 52.

¹²¹ Lacey Baldwin Smith, *Henry VIII: The Mask of Royalty* (Chicago, 1987), p. 75.

VIII King of England a great victory over his enemies'. The desk serves as an example of both Henry's preference for St George in his personalised items and the representation of St George as a martial figure. It also demonstrates Henry's wish to make his country a significant power through military prowess; he wished to be its champion. St George was therefore the perfect figure to emulate.

A further example of Henry's personal devotion to St George can be seen with the Howard 'Grace' Cup (see Figures 3.3 and 3.4). The original alabaster and gold cup dates from the late twelfth century and was allegedly owned by St Thomas Becket. The cup was gifted to Henry and Katherine of Aragon by the Howard family, in an attempt to garner favour with the royal couple. It remained in royal possession until Katherine of Aragon's death in 1536 at which point it was returned to the Howards. Interestingly, an addition to the cup was made in the 1520s: the gilt figure of St George slaying the dragon, set in rubies and pearls in a further allusion to the saint's cross and perhaps the Tudor Rose.¹²² Choosing to add another saint to a pre-existing holy object linked to one of England's most famous martyr saints is significant. It shows a preference for the more martial and aggressive figure of St George over the representation as the church's martyr. The figure makes no reference to St George's martyrdom or that he experienced the same fate as St Thomas Becket. By the time the cup was returned there was no reference to Becket at all. Was the replacement intentional? Although the cup was returned to the Howards two years before the dismantling of Becket's shrine it certainly demonstrates once again Henry's preference for St George and his legend, as this addition was made whilst the cup was in Henry and Katherine's possession.

Henry's ardour for St George and his legend was more publicly displayed as well. Henry owned two tapestries with the legend of St George which hung in his palaces. The saint's life was one of the few subjects that was not taken either directly from the Old Testament or Roman mythology.¹²³ Other items owned by the king that were dedicated to St George or carried his likeness included religious pictures, tablets, printed legends and lives of the saints, carvings, images in crystal, parcel gilt and white stone, a tabernacle, statues, heraldry and badges; not to mention numerous items of ceremonial costumes related to the Order of the Garter.¹²⁴ The colour schemes of the royal palaces also manifested a link between the Tudors' livery colours and the legend of the saint. Henry's palaces were all accented with the colours red, green and white.¹²⁵ Much like the battle standards of his father on the battlefield of Bosworth, the symbolism of the dynasty was easily combined with the symbolism related to St George. The imagery of the red dragon and the white

¹²² Red and white being the colours St George's cross and the Tudor Rose. See below for further elaboration.

¹²³ *The Inventory of Henry VIII: The Transcripts of Antiquaries MS 129 and British Library MS Harley 1419*, David Starkey (ed.), (London, 1998), p. 350.

¹²⁴ *Inventory of Henry VIII*, p. 350.

¹²⁵ Susan Foister, *Holbein and England* (New Haven, 2004), p. 180.

and green livery colours corresponded directly with the red and white of the George Cross. There is evidence that Henry VIII used these colours and images for the purpose of associating himself with St George thereby drawing further correlations between his patron saint and his dynasty.¹²⁶ The lack of a private sphere within Henry's court was used by the king to promulgate his affinity with St George and his own image as the brave, chivalric English king. The items owned by Henry VIII that related to St George and the colour schemes of the palaces demonstrated to a wider audience the affinity between the king and the saint. These items and locations acted as props and a setting for the stage on which Henry's reign took place. They would not only have been seen by politically important courtiers and diplomats, but by wider members of the public. For instance, in 1527 Henry commanded that the Banqueting House at Greenwich should hold a public exhibition 'for three or four days so that "all honest persons"' might look at and admire the king's goods.¹²⁷ The fact that these colours were also used whenever the king went on royal progress or embarked on military campaigns also suggests the importance of colour coding in representing Henry VIII and his kingdom.

Henry and St George as Chivalric Warriors

The way in which Henry displayed these items, and therefore himself, demonstrates that he wished to present himself as a king who could rival those on the European stage. Upon his accession to the throne Henry not only sought to defend England against European powers and potential threats but enhance and empower himself through an aggressive foreign policy. Although it might be premature to define this as an example of modern nationalism, there was a definite sense of England emerging on to the international stage as a distinct nation. In order to do this, Henry used St George, in the same vein as Henry V, as protector of his armies. Where Henry went further, however, was through linking his family's heraldry with the legend of the saint and likening himself to the saint's warrior image. Henry also ensured that he cast himself as an awe-inspiring king with great military prowess. He was to be England's Renaissance king, one to be envied by the powers in Europe. Henry's strategy of magnificence included the use of St George, in particular the Order of the Garter, of which, by this point in English history, he was sole patron. Through this ancient tradition, Henry was able to promulgate the image of a powerful and chivalric leader. This was noted by the Venetian ambassador Piero Pasqualigo in 1515 when he wrote of the Garter celebrations:

On Saint George's Day he celebrates the anniversary of the institution of the Garter, our audience was delayed until then to render it more pompous...His doublet was in the Swiss fashion, striped

¹²⁶ For further examples see below with Henry's early military campaigns in Scotland and France.

¹²⁷ *Inventory of Henry VIII*, p. x.

alternatively with white and crimson satin, and his hose were scarlet and all slashed from the knee upwards...This mantle was girt in front like a gown, with a thick gold cord, from which there hung large glands entirely of gold, like those suspended from cardinals' hats; over this mantle was a very handsome gold collar, with a pendant of St George, entirely of diamonds. On his left shoulder was the garter which is a cincture buckled circular wise and bearing in its centre a cross gules on a field argent and on his right shoulder was a hood with a border entirely of crimson velvet.¹²⁸

Although Pasqualigo may not have been impressed that he was kept waiting, he was clearly aware of the significance behind the pomp and circumstance. Henry portrayed himself as a grandiose figure, the ultimate warrior who was adorned with references to his patron saint. A far more direct reference between the king and his patron was remarked upon by Pasqualigo's successor, Sebastiano Giustiniani, when he wrote in a letter to the Signory of Venice that when dressed for a joust and mounted on his horse dressed in cloth of gold, Henry VIII looked 'like St George in person on its back'.¹²⁹ These comparisons exemplify the type of image that Henry VIII wished to project of himself to those around him; he wished to maintain the appearance of a chivalric and autonomous warrior king.

In addition to the way he portrayed himself, Henry also ensured that those who were appointed to the Garter in the early years of his reign were also martial figures that would fight for his cause and be worthy representations of chivalric knights. For example, in 1513 Henry appointed Charles Brandon who was his jousting partner and close friend. His other jousting companions, Bergavenny and Ferrers, were also elected in 1513 and 1523 respectively before they left for their campaigns in France.¹³⁰ Appointing these men to the Order prior to their embarkation for France demonstrates Henry's consciousness of the campaigns of Edward III and Henry V and the chivalric ideals they represented.

Henry, however, did not simply mimic his predecessors' use of St George. Within the first year of his reign, Henry remodelled the attire that was associated with the Order of the Garter in order to strengthen the link between the Tudor dynasty and St George through the use of ceremony and pageantry. In 1510 Henry ordered that the garter collar was to have twelve Tudor roses 'set with blue garters interspersed with twelve tasselled knots [from which was to hang] the Great George'.¹³¹ The Great George was a jewelled pendant of the saint slaying the dragon and was only to be worn on St George's Day and other great feast days. This acted as reinforcement of the

¹²⁸ C.H. Williams (ed.), *English Historical Documents 1485-1558*, Vol. 5 (London, 1967), p. 388.

¹²⁹ Sebastiano Giustiniani, *Four years at the court of Henry VIII: selection of despatches written by the Venetian ambassador, Sebastian Giustinian, and addressed to the Signory of Venice, January 12th 1515, to July 26th 1519*, Vol. 1. Rawdon Brown (trans.), (London, 1854), p. 81.

¹³⁰ Helen Miller, *Henry VIII and the English Nobility* (Oxford and New York, 1986), p. 89.

¹³¹ Alison Weir, *Henry VIII: King and Court* (London and New York, 2001), p. 120.

importance of the Order and enhanced the idea of exclusivity for its members. Henry also revised the livery of the Garter, making the attire grander and linking it to the Tudor dynasty. Knights of the Garter were now to wear 'a blue velvet mantle with a Garter on the left shoulder, lined with white saracenet [and] scarlet hose with black velvet around the thighs... [with] a light blue silk garter with a gold buckle and embroidered Tudor roses round his leg...and a rich gold collar'.¹³² By altering the livery and the symbols associated with the Order of the Garter, making them grander with direct references to his family through the roses, Henry demonstrated the importance in which he held St George and his Order and the extent to which he wished to be associated with the saint. Henry continued to draw a direct correlation between his dynasty and the saint, both through imagery and the written word. By doing so, Henry sought to both portray himself as a brave young warrior king whose armies would fight to establish England's power on the European stage.

In his campaign against the Scots in 1512, Henry commanded that the Earl of Surrey, who was to be 'the lieutenant of our army now to be sent Northwards,' should bear 'one banner of the Cross of St George, one standard of the red dragon and four banners of our arms and four trumpets'.¹³³ Henry wanted to ensure that the image of his patron saint was presented alongside that of the Tudor heraldry. These symbols would represent the king in his absence. Henry also invoked the intercession of St George in correspondence to the Scottish king, James IV. In a letter written the following year, Henry informs James that should Scotland desist with helping the French their enterprise against England, Henry would, in time, 'acquit James hereafter, by the help of the Lord and Saint George'.¹³⁴ Henry's message both through imagery and the written word is clear: his military endeavours, in defending and exerting English sovereignty and authority, were legitimate and endorsed by both God and his knight, St George. Henry continued to reaffirm his role as sovereign by using the image of St George and combining it with his own family's heraldry.

The same was done in campaigns against the French in the same year when Henry ordered another warrant to be given to the Marquis of Dorset, 'lieutenant general of our army now being in Gyen'. In the document Henry issues commands that he wants a 'standard of white saracenet with a Cross of Saint George of red saracenet fringed with white and green silk, a banner of green saracenet with the picture of Saint George...and another banner of red saracenet with the arms of the duchy of Gyen both fringed as above' to be made.¹³⁵ Not only in this instance is St George's Cross to be used, but it is to be directly intertwined with the Tudor livery colours to act as a quick visual reference to

¹³² Weir, *King and his Court*, p. 120.

¹³³ *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII*, Vol 1: Part 1: 1509-13.

¹³⁴ *Calendar of Documents relating to Scotland, 1509-1603*, Vol. 1: 1509-1589, SP 49/ 1 f/16.

¹³⁵ *Letters and Papers*, Vol. 1, p. 589.

the English monarchy and nation on the battlefield. Henry goes even further by commanding that the image of St George be displayed on one of the banners, again with one of his livery colours in the background. The intertwining of St George's imagery with that of the Tudor dynasty is striking. Henry aligned himself with his patron saint in an attempt to appear as a chivalric warrior king.

The promulgation of the linkage between Henry's image and that of St George is further demonstrated in paintings of the 1513 French campaign commissioned by the king. The painting of *The Battle of the Spurs* and *The Meeting of Henry VIII and the Emperor Maximilian I* demonstrate Henry's desired image of a brave warrior king as well as the role that St George played in establishing that representation (see Figures 3.5 and 3.6). In *The Battle of the Spurs* it is possible to see the armies of England and the Holy Roman Empire engaging with the French troops with the latter beginning to retreat. In the far-left hand side of the foreground flies the standard of St George, the white and red juxtaposed against the darker background and standing out for the viewer to notice. In the centre of the painting is an English soldier with a smaller standard of St George flying freely as the French flag is being pulled down from a French soldier on horseback, a blatant symbol of the English victory. The English victor's camp stands in the background with the white and green livery colours of the Tudors. In light of the correspondence and commands that Henry issued with the use of the colour codes red, green and white to represent both his dynasty and the presence and endorsement of his patron, St George the colour scheme of this painting is certainly significant.

Similarly, *The Meeting of Henry VIII and the Emperor Maximilian I*, commissioned by Henry VIII around the same period, also demonstrates the significance of St George in Henry VIII's militaristic pursuits. The painting, which is comprised of three horizontal bands, portrays the alliance of the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I and Henry VIII which culminated in the defeat of the French in the Battle of the Spurs. The aforementioned encounter occurs in the top third of the painting, where England's troops are once again represented by two large standards of St George. The portrayal of Henry VIII in this painting is particularly significant. Both he and Maximilian are dressed in grand, gold armour but there is further imagery surrounding Henry. In addition to the Cross of St George that is behind the English king, he is flanked by two stewards who are wearing red and white, along with breastplates with crosses on them. These colour codes connote a distinct reference to Tudor symbolism and St George and therefore directly link Henry with this patron. Maximilian also used St George to demonstrate his good will towards his English ally. In a letter to Henry dated December 1516, it was said that the Emperor, who had been made a knight of the Garter was 'much joyful of cheer [and wearing the order] of Saint George, both about his neck and leg'. Not only does this account demonstrate Maximilian using the Order of the Garter as a gesture

of friendly diplomacy, but the fact that Sir Robert Wingfield thought enough of it to write it to Henry speaks to how seriously he took the Order of the Garter dedicated to St George.¹³⁶

Without doubt, the most ostentatious display of Henry's role as a chivalric king was the diplomatic Anglo-French meeting at the Field of the Cloth of Gold in 1520. It is possible to see the importance of St George to Henry VIII as England's king. Even before the event took place, the use of St George was discussed and planned for. The preparations for the Field of the Cloth of Gold were exhaustive, with representatives from the two countries planning every aspect of the schedule in its minutia. Diplomatically, everything needed to be perfect all involved. One issue that arose in the planning, which shows the importance of the role St George played in English pageantry, occurred when the French vetoed any reference to the saint when it came to the tournaments. For example, the saint was not included in the jousting. In response to mention of the saint being omitted from jousting ceremonies it was remarked by the French that 'where Saint George is left out, is for consideration of more indifference, and set in the court celestial in which he is comprised' – a striking demonstration of the extent to which he was perceived in France as an 'English' saint.¹³⁷ The concern expressed by the English commission meant the collar of St George was added to the jousting cheque.¹³⁸ As the French armorial shield was circled by the collar of St Michael, it is obvious these patron saints played significant roles in symbolising their respective countries. The joust also acted as a way through which the kings and their champions could manifest the chivalric ideals that were integral to the diplomacy of the meeting (see Figure 3.7).

Henry also combined the legend of St George with his family's livery from the moment he and his entourage arrived. Upon the English court's entrance onto the field, fireworks were released in the form of a dragon. Not only could this be seen as an example of Tudor heraldry but also, as we have seen, in all probability an allusion to the legend of St George, particularly in light of the significant role the saint had to play in the ceremonial proceedings of the Field of the Cloth of Gold. Within his personal tent, where both he and French king François I prayed, Henry's altar cloth displayed images of St George.¹³⁹ The painting entitled *The Field of the Cloth of Gold* which documents the meeting and the events that took place also demonstrates the use of the Tudor colour scheme. The temporary English buildings that were erected, those that were not cloth of gold, were red and white and adorned with Tudor roses, another symbol of the royal dynasty that corresponds with the Cross of St George. Although England and France would be at war again within

¹³⁶ *Letters and Papers*, Vol. 2, p. 357.

¹³⁷ *Letters and Papers*, Vol. 3, p. 43.

¹³⁸ This jousting cheque was intended for a presentation volume to commemorate the Field of the Cloth of Gold. Anglo, *Images of Tudor Kingship*, p. 32.

¹³⁹ Fox, *George*, p. 74.

two years, Henry had succeeded in creating an image that suggested he was a brave and chivalric warrior, in the same vein as St George, who had protected England against foreign threat, forged alliances with European powers and projected an image of royal magnificence.

St George and Henry as Defenders

In true Renaissance fashion, Henry VIII wished to appear as a multifaceted king. In order to solidify England's role as a force amongst the other courts of Europe, Henry styled himself as a learned king who could debate theology and philosophy as well as he could command armies. Surprisingly perhaps, St George had a part to play in supporting Henry in this role too.

With the Protestant Reformation breaking out on the continent, Henry was desperate to show himself as not just a king but as a theologian defending the papacy and Catholic Church against Martin Luther's written attack in *De captivitate Babylonica ecclesiae praeludium* (1520). Henry countered this with his *Assertio septem Sacramentorum* (1521) which defended the legitimacy of the papacy and its rule. This tract was graciously received by Pope Leo X who created Henry *Fidei Defensor* on 11 October 1521. This title was of particular significance as it made Henry a potential rival to his French and Spanish rivals who already held the titles of 'Most Christian King' and 'Most Catholic King' respectively.¹⁴⁰ The importance of this title to Henry as well as the role that St George played can be seen in the depiction of *Henry VIII Disputing with Charles V before Pope Leo X* (see Figure 3.8). In this image, originating from an Italian manuscript from the early 1520s, King argues that Henry is actually portrayed as St George with a docile dragon at his feet and the saint's cross in the background, directly behind him as well as on a mitre of the bishop to the right of Pope Leo X. In his hand Henry holds the bull pronouncing his new-found title. While the interpretation of this painting is arguable, and the dragon could equally reference the Order of the Dragon within the Holy Roman Empire, the allusions to St George are certainly present. As with earlier imagery, this painting's colour codes are predominantly red, white and green further linking the event to the Tudor livery colours and standard. Henry becoming Defender of the Faith marked a point where the representation of the king evolved from that of being a young warrior to that of a defender of England in both temporal and spiritual matters. It is this role that Henry would develop for the remainder of the reign, using St George as a collaborator.

Henry continued to advance his role as defender with Charles V's state visit to England in 1522. The pageantry surrounding the visit demonstrates the extent to which Henry wished to

¹⁴⁰ King, *Royal Iconography*, p. 44.

display the seriousness with which he held his new title. Upon Charles' entry into London he and Henry observed a number of displays representing various Biblical stories and popular legends. At the final display in Cheapside the stage appeared 'like a heaven shining with sun, moon and stars, populated not only with angels and the twelve apostles but also with Saint George, John the Baptist and 'seynt Edmund Kyng, seynt Edward Kyng and confessor, Kyng Henry the VIth with certain bishoppes, sayntes off englonde, as seynt Dunstane, seynt Thomas off Cantorbury and seynt Erkenwolde'.¹⁴¹ The figures presented to Charles are particularly significant as they acted as a religious endorsement for Henry VIII. What is particularly interesting to note is the presence of St George and that fact that he is the only saint presented in this scene who is neither biblical nor English. In addition to this scene, there were placards calling both monarchs 'defenders' and 'champions moost strong'.¹⁴² Once again, this would explain the presence of St George both as patron saint and defender of England. At the same time Henry could laud the English religious martyrs, thereby showing the devotion of his predecessors whilst using St George to keep up the more aggressive chivalric ideals of a warrior knight and defender. At the same time, the displays mark out the emerging sense of an English tradition with figures that portrayed Henry's kingdom as a strong, Christian country. Making references to famous individuals and events in English history was a device that Henry would employ throughout his reign. It was a way through which a sense of continuity could be maintained during the more tumultuous periods. Not only did this continually legitimise Henry's role as supreme ruler, it also helped create a sense of history and identity that would differentiate England from their Catholic rivals.

In addition to public pageantry, Henry VIII also used the Order of the Garter to promote his role of defender and as a majestic martial figure. Henry maintained a sense of continuity with the past and the chivalric ideals associated with the Order to portray himself as a worthy ruler who would defend his throne and this country, making England a rival to his continental counterparts. Charles V, who had been made a knight of the Order in 1508 and knowing how significant St George and the Order was to Henry, made a great display of being a member.¹⁴³ During the 1522 visit Charles took part in the St George's Day celebrations held at Windsor.¹⁴⁴ Henry also used these celebrations to further associate his image with that of his patron saint. After the St George's Day celebrations had finished, Henry took his guest to Winchester Castle where he would combine the legend of St George with that of King Arthur. Henry designed a Round Table to hang in the Great Hall of the castle, supposedly a copy of the one created by King Arthur (see Figure 3.9). The

¹⁴¹ Anglo, *Images of Tudor Kingship*, p. 72.

¹⁴² King, *Tudor Iconography*, p. 47.

¹⁴³ Helen Miller, *Henry VIII and the English Nobility*, p.87.

¹⁴⁴ E.O. Gordon, *Saint George: Champion of Christendom and Patron Saint of England* (London, 1907), p. 91.

decorations of the table had been redesigned at Henry's order. Henry was painted in the middle of the table with a Tudor Rose beneath along with the badge of St George. The table was painted green and white and had the names of the knights of the Garter at the edge.¹⁴⁵ Henry had cast himself as a replacement to the legend of King Arthur while further aligning himself with the legend of St George. The allusions made to the Order of the Garter demonstrate the importance it held for the king. Adding to the suggestion that Henry wished to assume the role of the saint is the lack of the latter's physical imagery. Whereas the medieval monarchs were shown interacting with St George or being protected by him, Henry VIII was a lone figure despite the direct references to the saint. This suggests that although the affinity between him and St George was very important, Henry wished it to be known that it was he who was the defender of England whose power was not subject to any one, save God. Charles V's state visit is a clear demonstration that Henry wished to assert his authority and project himself as a powerful king and newly appointed Defender of the Faith through public pageantry, state ceremonies and celebrations associated with the Order of the Garter.

The Order of the Garter was also redefined after Henry became the Defender of the Faith and altered the rules in 1522.¹⁴⁶ In a declaration Henry said that 'out of the love that he now hath, and even hath had to the military state', the king, after receiving the nominations, 'shall pronounce him elected who is supported by the most votes or whom the sovereign himself shall judge most worthy, more honourable, more useful, and more fit for his kingdom and his crown'.¹⁴⁷ In addition to this pronouncement Henry ordered that a smaller pendant called the Lesser George be struck so that the knights could wear the image of St George with greater regularity, as opposed to just wearing the Great George pendant on major feast days. The proliferation of the image of St George amongst the knights of the Garter is striking evidence of how the saint's profile was raised after Henry received his title of Defender of the Faith.

Perhaps the best example of Henry himself assuming the role of St George as defender occurred with the striking of the George Noble coin in 1526 (see Figure 3,10). This coin solidified the affinity between Henry and the saint and promulgated the image of the former as the defender of England. On one side of the coin lies Henry and Katherine of Aragon's initials with the Tudor Rose in a ship along with Henry's kingship of England and France and Lordship over Scotland. The other side bears an image of St George slaying the dragon. Significantly, it marked the first time that an English monarch had a saint's image impressed upon a coin. It also acted as a replacement for the Angel coin which had been minted by Henry VII. The Angel coin bore the image of St Michael the

¹⁴⁵ Gordon, *Champion*, pp. 91, 93.

¹⁴⁶ Helen Miller, *Henry VIII and the English Nobility*, p. 88.

¹⁴⁷ Helen Miller, *Henry VIII and the English Nobility*, p. 91.

Archangel, another religious figure who was popular for expelling the devil, often portrayed in the form of a serpent. By minting the George Noble, Henry was able to demonstrate his preference for St George whilst still maintaining the connotation the more martial religious figures provided, that of protectors against wickedness and evil. It should also be noted that whilst the Angel coin made a visual reference to St Michael, its name was in descript. The same cannot be said for the George Noble which by name and imagery was a direct and indisputable reference to Henry's patron saint. The motto on the George Noble 'Tali dictata signo mens fluctuare nescit'¹⁴⁸ further demonstrates the significance of St George in maintaining Henry's role as Defender of the Faith as well as the defender of his realm.¹⁴⁹ Henry clearly believed that his divine right of kingship was secured through his affiliation with St George. It also made the assertion that whatever Henry did would receive a spiritual endorsement as St George was his patron saint. The minting of this coin marked the first of many instances where Henry used the image of St George on horseback and would later cast himself in this image for his Great Seal. This stance would eventually be assumed by Henry throughout the Henrician Reformation as he remained determined to maintain the role of England's defender both spiritually and temporally. It was this role of Defender that would remain at the fore of the Henrician Reformation and be adapted accordingly.

St George played an integral role in the presentation of kingship during the first half of Henry VIII's reign. He acted as a vehicle through which the young king declared his accession, he was a presence at Henry's coronation and he allowed his feast day to be used as the king's official birthday. This offered Henry further security in solidifying his dynastic rule and again aligned the Tudors with a widely popular English legend. Beyond religious devotion, it is obvious that Henry admired the chivalric ideals that St George encapsulated. As a result, Henry emulated his patron saint, particularly through the public pageantry of the Order of the Garter and the pageantry surrounding diplomatic visits both at home and abroad. In warfare, Henry used St George's Cross to show the representation of England's warrior saint. He then ensured that his victories and alliances with foreign European powers were documented through paintings, in which there was considerable and significant reference to St George. After receiving the title of Defender of the Faith in 1521, Henry further utilised the imagery of St George by going beyond the chivalric and militaristic representations and becoming England's defender from the dragon of heresy. He had begun to establish England as a more significant military force (compared to the reign of his father) and had brought it into the Renaissance. After being appointed an equal to France and the Empire according to the pope, with the title of Defender of the Faith, he put St George and his legend on display once

¹⁴⁸ Translated as 'consecrated with this sign the mind knows no wavering'.

¹⁴⁹ Gordon, *Champion*, p. 94.

again. By re-launching the Order of the Garter Henry drew direct correlations between the symbolism of the ancient order with that of the Tudor dynasty. It would be the representation of St George as defender that Henry would continue to assume and use throughout the tumultuous period of reformation that was to follow.

Images



Figure 3.1 Henry VIII's writing desk, c.1520



Figure 3.2 Detail of St George on Henry VIII's writing desk



Figure 3.3 The Howard Grace Cup



Figure 3.4 Detail of St George on the Howard Grace Cup



Figure 3.6 The Meeting of Henry VIII and the Emperor Maximilian I, c. 1513



Figure 3.5 The Battle of the Spurs, c. 1513

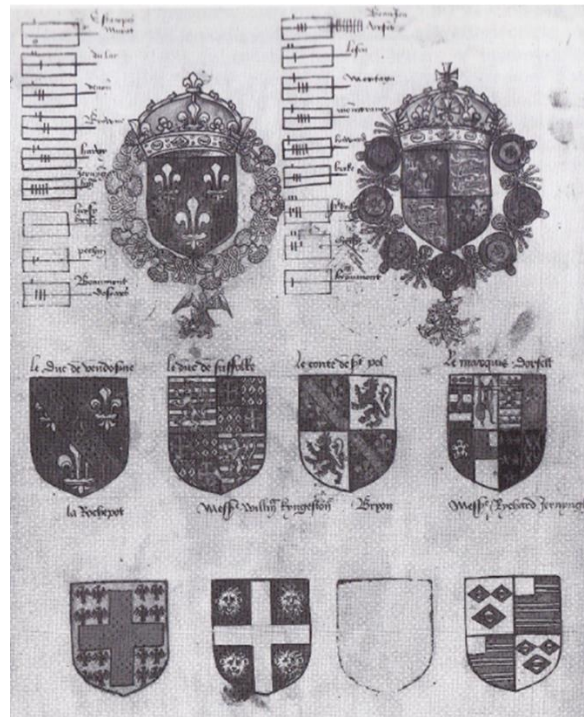


Figure 3.7 Jousting cheque from the Field of the Cloth of Gold



Figure 3.8 Henry VIII Disputing with Charles V before Pope Leo X



Figure 3.9 Round table at Winchester Castle as created by Henry VIII



Figure 3.10 The George Noble Coin

4. ST GEORGE AND THE HENRICIAN REFORMATION 1533 - 1547

In order to appreciate the way in which St George was used by Henry VIII during the period just prior to and following the break with the Roman church, it is important to first establish the direct role that the king played. It has been argued by some historians that Henry at best relied heavily on the key advisors through the various phases on his reign and at worst that he was merely a puppet of his advisors: first Cardinal Wolsey in his early reign who established his domestic and foreign policies, followed by Cromwell during the secession from the Papacy, who orchestrated the necessary statutes and then the conservative and reformist factions at court in the tumultuous final years of the reign who bickered for scraps of favour and influence at the ailing king's table. Indeed some would cast Henry as an indulged ruler, easily bored, who took no interest in anything unless it impacted directly on his enjoyment and was then happy for others to fix matters for him.¹⁵⁰ While there was little doubt that Henry was indeed indulged and appears to have had a 'low threshold' for boredom, it is clear that he was politically aware and took great involvement in matters of state, especially during the period of the Reformation.¹⁵¹ He was willing to be advised by the more trusted members of his council but, as Wolsey, Cromwell, the Howards and the Seymours would discover, he would not be cajoled into anything which he did not agree with or see as beneficial to his authority and reign.

Henry's political and religious consciousness and desire to exert his authority was made evident in 1511 when he invoked laws passed by Richard II, Henry IV and Henry V 'concerning the punishment and reformation of heretics and lollards', insistent that 'every provision therein contained, not being repugnant to this act, shall be and stand in their force and effect'.¹⁵² By acting on the laws set by his predecessors Henry was able to establish a sense of continuity with the past as well as demonstrate his own morals as a Christian king. In addition to this legislation, Henry also tried to pass an act in 1512 which was designed, in part, to abolish clerical immunity from the time

¹⁵⁰ For a wider debate on the level of Henry's involvement in governance see J.J. Scarisbrick *Henry VIII*, (London, 1968) and G.R. Elton *The Tudor Revolution in Government: Administrative Changes in the Reign of Henry VIII*, (Cambridge, 1953). Also David Starkey, *The Reign of Henry VIII: Personalities and Politics*, (London, 1985) who argues that court factions played an integral role in the Henrician government. This argument has been more recently undermined in *Henry: Virtuous Prince*, (London, 2008) when Starkey asserts that Henry did exert control especially during the latter half when he developed into a tyrannical ruler. For arguments that suggest Henry VIII had a sense of autonomy from manipulative court factions see G.W. Bernard, *The King's Reformation: Henry VIII and the Remaking of the English Church*, (London, 2005), Richard Rex, *Henry VIII and the English Reformation* (2nd edition, New York, 2006) and Lucy Wooding, *Henry VIII* (London, 2008).

¹⁵¹ See Eric Ives 'Henry VIII: The Political Perspective' in *The Reign of Henry VIII: Politics, Policy and Piety* Diarmaid MacCulloch (ed.), (2nd edition, Basingstoke, 2008), pp. 13-34.

¹⁵² Susan Foister, *Holbein and England*, (London, 2004), p. 191.

of Becket with the Compromise of Avranches and confirmed by the *Concessimus Deo* clause in the Magna Carta.¹⁵³ This move was opposed by Pope Leo X but does suggest that Henry was flexing his muscles in order to exert greater control over the English Church.¹⁵⁴ The controversy continued as in February 1515 Richard Kidderminster, Abbot of Winchcombe, preached against it at St Paul's Cross. Henry proclaimed in November 1515 at Baynard's Castle: 'By the ordinance and sufferance of God we are the king of England, and the kings of England in time past have never had any superior but God alone. Wherefore you know you well that we shall maintain the right of our crown and of our temporal jurisdiction as well in this point as in all others.'¹⁵⁵ Although it would be another twenty years until the Act of Supremacy, this is evidence which attests to the king's willingness to exert his own authority and his own belief that no one other than God would have any influence over his actions.

It has already been established that it was Henry's desire to assume the role of St George and act as the *Fidei Defensor* of the Church; the break with Rome did not alter this determination. Even after the passing of the Act of Supremacy in 1534 Henry VIII not only kept his close, personal affinity with St George, but also retained his title of Defender of the *English Church*, in a way emulating the saint's legend. Furthermore, he used St George as a trope which assisted him in maintaining his self-image as well as enhancing political and spiritual control.

St George, Henry and the Legislation of the Reformation

One need look no further than *The Golden Legend* to witness the direct correlation between St George and Henry that the latter sought to continue throughout the break with Rome. In *The Golden Legend*, St George, after rescuing the princess, returning her to the king and prompting mass conversions to Christianity, 'enjoined the king four things, that is, that he should have charge of the churches, and that he should honour the priests and hear their service diligently, and that he should have pity on the poor people'.¹⁵⁶ Later, after being challenged by the pagan provost Dacian who wished for him to repudiate his Christian faith, St George 'prayed our Lord God of heaven that he would destroy the temple and the idol in the honour of his name, for to make the people to be

¹⁵³ For a more in-depth assessment of this act see P.R. Cavill, 'A Perspective on the Church-State Confrontation of 1515: The Passage of 4 Henry VIII, c. 2', *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, Vol. 63, Issue 04, (Oct, 2012), pp 655- 670.

¹⁵⁴ For Henry VIII's 'imperial' approach, see also Thomas Mayer, 'Tournai and Tyranny: Imperial Kingship and Critical Humanism', *Historical Journal*, Vol. 34, No. 2 (Jun., 1991), pp. 257-277.

¹⁵⁵ John Guy 'Thomas Cromwell and the Intellectual Origins of the Henrician Revolution', *The Tudor Monarchy* John Guy ed. (London, 1997), pp. 222-223.

¹⁵⁶ Jacobus de Voragine 'The Life of St George', *The Golden Legend* Vol. 1, William Granger Ryan (trans.), (Princeton, 1993), p. 240.

converted'.¹⁵⁷ The language in this text, a text that directly pertained to Henry VIII's patron saint, is significant as it bears distinct similarities to the language used in the legislation that was passed and the literature published by Henry and his ministers whilst they were ceding from papal authority. The maxims set forth by St George to the king: to have high expectations of the churches, honour the clergy and hear their services and be charitable to the poor are all justifications given by Henry as to why the break with Rome was necessary. It was he, as their absolute monarch, who was charged with both the temporal and spiritual well-being of the state, the church and the general population of England.

The power which Henry wished to exude is well expressed in a tract written in 1533 by the king's Privy Council entitled, *Articles deuisid by the holle consent of the kynges moste honourable counsayle, his gracis licence opteined therto, not only to exhorte, but also to enfourme his louynge subiectis of the trouthe*. Most significantly, the first item states that

the mere truthe is, that no lyuinge creature, of what astate, degree, or dignytie so euer he be, hath power gyuen hym by god, to dispense with goddes lawes, or lawe of nature. Which thing is confirmed and determined in oure princis case, by an infinite nombre of well lerned men straungers, by the most part also of al the moste famous vniuersities of Christendome.¹⁵⁸

Henry wished to reaffirm his authority and to protect what he perceived to be God's law, and he once again projected himself in the image of Defender of the Faith. The Act of Supremacy of 1534 claimed as its purpose the 'increase of vertue in Cristis Religion within this realme of England, and to repress & extirpe all errours heresies and other enormities & abuses' that were inextricably linked to the papacy. Here it is possible to see that Henry had tasked himself with the role of safeguarding the well-being of his people, defending his realm from the heresies and idolatry of the papacy. Henry's representation as 'defender' was further manifested through the Ten Articles of 1536. The Articles stated that 'the king daily studieth to extinct vice and exalt and increase virtue in this his realm, to the glory of God and quietness of his people, considering that by occasion of such corrupt and deceitful indulgences many of his loving subjects have been encouraged to commit sin and to withdraw their faith, hope, and devotion from God'.¹⁵⁹ Henry was very conscious of the role he had to play as the Supreme Head and defender of the English Church.

These articles demonstrate the important role that St George played in the reforming of the English Church. The Ten Articles addressed the manner in which the veneration of saints should be

¹⁵⁷ Voraigue, 'Life of St George', p. 241.

¹⁵⁸ Privy Council, *Articles deuisid by the holle consent of the kynges moste honourable counsayle, his gracis licence opteined therto, not only to exhorte, but also to enfourme his louynge subiectis of the trouthe*, (1533), fol. 3r.

¹⁵⁹ Cited in G.W. Bernard, 'The Making of Religious Policy, 1533-1546: Henry VIII and the Search for the Middle Way', *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 41, No. 2, (Jun., 1998), p. 329.

regulated and curtailed. In keeping with the idea that the clergy should not lead their flocks astray it was instructed that 'touching the honouring of saints, we will that all the bishops and preachers shall instruct and teach our people committed by us unto their spiritual charges, that saints, now being with Christ in heaven are to be honoured of Christian people in earth; but not with that confidence and honour that are only due to God.' Saints were useful allegories to be used in sermons due to 'their excellent virtues which [God] planted in them, for example of and by them to such as yet are in this world to live in virtue and goodness; and also not to fear to die for Christ and His cause, as some of them did'.¹⁶⁰ Where change did come, was with the issue over the veneration of the saints which, it was thought, undermined the direct relationship that God had with the people and their souls. By worshipping saints who could be seen as 'idols', individuals would put their immortal souls in peril. Saints were to be used as points of reflection towards the glory of God and nothing more.

Henry's intention towards this end is evident in Article VIII on the matter of praying to saints where it is stated that:

in this manner we may pray to our blessed Lady, to Saint John Baptist, to all and every of the Apostles or any other saint particularly, as our devotion doth serve us; so that it be done without any vain superstition, as to think that any saint is more merciful, or will hear us sooner than Christ, or that any saint doth serve for one thing more than another, or is patron of the same. And likewise we must keep holy-days unto God, in memory of Him and His saints, upon such days as the Church hath ordained their memories to be celebrated, except they be mitigated and moderated by the assent and commandment of us, the supreme head, to the ordinaries, and then the subject ought to obey it.¹⁶¹

The message to the clergy and the laity was clear: the Supreme Head of the Church of England had set forth these articles in order to defend their souls from the error to which the Church of Rome would expose them. It should also be noted however that Henry's motives with the Ten Articles were not solely spiritual. By undermining the worship of saints and various saints' cults he was able to eliminate challenges to his supreme authority by removing potential foci for rebellions and discontent. If the primary focus of worship was to be God and the Scripture, it would allow him to appear as the vehicle through which the Word of God was disseminated.¹⁶² Henry was perfectly accepting of certain saints being used as role models. As it will become apparent, St George was to remain a figure whose attributes Henry continued to channel.

¹⁶⁰ C.H. Williams (ed.), 'Ten Articles', *English Historical Documents 1485-1558*, Vol. 5 (London, 1967), p. 803.

¹⁶¹ 'Ten Articles', p. 803.

¹⁶² This issue will be looked at in further detail later in the chapter with regards to the Pilgrimage of Grace and the dismantling of Thomas Becket's tomb. For further reading on this argument see Richard Rex's article 'The Friars in the English Reformation', Peter Marshall and Alec Ryrie (eds), *The Beginnings of English Protestantism* (Cambridge, 2002).

Henry's role of Defender of the Faith was further solidified in August of the same year when the First Royal Injunctions were announced. The cull on the cult of the saints was reinforced where it was stated that '[Men] shall not set forth or extol any images, relics or miracles for any superstition or lucre, nor allure the people by any enticements to the pilgrimage of any saint, otherwise than is permitted in the Articles put forth by the authority of the King's Majesty... seeing all goodness, health and grace ought to be both asked and looked for only of God'. The language used in this piece of legislation is particularly interesting as it portrays the king, under God, as the keeper of his subjects' souls. Like St George's instructions to the king in *The Golden Legend*, the Injunctions suggest that Henry saw it as his duty to take charge of the church, ensure that the clergy were preaching appropriate homilies and that the well-being of the poor, or general populace, was being guarded. Henry himself 'charged' the clergy in a letter to the bishops the following year to abolish 'all manner of idolatry, superstition [and] hypocrisy'. It was their responsibility to ensure that saint worship decreased and fewer saints' days were observed.¹⁶³

Despite the abrogation of saints' days and the abolition of all holy days during harvest time, there were some noted exceptions. In an attempt to return the English Church to a faith that was firmly rooted in Scripture, twenty-five feast days were retained: the feast days of the Apostles, St John the Baptist and the Virgin Mary were retained as were the feasts of the Ascension, All Saints and Candlemas.¹⁶⁴ In fact only one non-scriptural saint retained his feast day: Henry's patron, St George. The significance of this decision cannot be overstated. By retaining St George's feast day, Henry was ensuring the close relationship between the saint and the monarchy remained steadfast. St George had acted as a role model to the young, chivalric king who wished to encapsulate humanist ideals; now, with the changing political and religious situation in England, the saint's role was two-fold: to appeal to those closest to the king and allow Henry to promulgate his image of defender of the faith.

One occasion where St George played an integral role in Henry's reformation occurred with the Pilgrimage of Grace which began in the autumn of 1536. The rebelling 'pilgrims' initially chose the Cross of St Cuthbert, a saint with a strong affinity with the north of England. St Cuthbert's Cross was used on the force's banners and badges. Henry, on the other hand, used the Cross of St George for his soldiers' tunics as well as the royal banners and badges.¹⁶⁵ Although this practice had already

¹⁶³ Susannah Lipscomb, *1536: The Year that Changed Henry VIII* (Oxford, 2009), p. 139.

¹⁶⁴ Ethan H. Shagan, *Popular Politics and the English Reformation* (Cambridge, 2003), p.55. See also Damian Nussbaum 'Reviling the saints or reforming the calendar? John Foxe and his "Kalendar of martyrs"', *Belief and Practice in Reformation England* Susan Wabuda and Caroline Litzenberger (eds), (Aldershot, 1998), p. 115.

¹⁶⁵ The rebels used the actual banner of St Cuthbert from Durham, which had in earlier centuries been carried against the Scots. Michael Bush, 'The Pilgrimage of Grace and the pilgrim tradition of holy war', *Pilgrimage: The English Experience from Becket to Bunyan* in Colin Morris and Peter Roberts eds. (Cambridge, 2002), p. 183. See also *The Defeat of the Pilgrimage of Grace* Michael Bush and David Bownes eds. (Hull, 1999).

been established during the French and Scottish campaigns in the first half of his reign, Henry's choice of St George's Cross signifies his personal devotion to the saint and his wish that St George remain a permanent symbol of the English monarchy. It is a physical and forceful example of Henry as Defender. To him it seemed he was being put in a position where he not only had to defend the revisions of the English church, but his direct authority as king. By using St George's Cross as the symbol of loyalty to the monarchy, Henry ensured that the saint was still seen as a royal symbol. St George allowed for martial force to be used and was a more fitting figure than the Scriptural saints Henry wished to promulgate in his statutes. His legend, which was part of the public consciousness, would have been easily understood by both the soldiers fighting in the king's army and those in the general populace. His ultimate victory over the 'pilgrims' could be portrayed in symbolic terms - a state endorsed saint overcoming the 'idolatrous' symbolism over the rebels.

After the rebellion was suppressed, Henry was more determined than ever to reinforce his cleansing of the English church. In a letter to the Bishops in 1537, he instructed them to abolish 'all manner of idolatry, superstition [and] hypocrisy'.¹⁶⁶ This wish was reinforced the following year when Thomas Cromwell introduced the Second Royal Injunctions. It was in this document that Henry attacked figures and saints who he perceived as threats to his authority and his reforms. Item 15 of the Injunctions states that

no person shall from henceforth alter or change the order of any fasting day that is commanded and indicted by the Church, nor of any prayer, or Divine Service, otherwise than is specified in the saint Injunction until such time as the same shall be declared henceforth to be no fasting days; excerpted, also the Commemoration of Thomas Becket, sometime Archbishop of Canterbury which shall be clean omitted, and instead thereof the ferial service used.¹⁶⁷

Furthermore, it was argued that 'feigned images' of worship were abused through pilgrimages 'therefore the king's Highness graciously tendering the weal of his subjects' souls, has, in part already, and more will hereafter travail for the abolishing of such images as might be occasion of so great an offence to God, and so great a danger to the souls of his loving subjects'.¹⁶⁸ Singled out for particular attack was the cult of St Thomas Becket; this was not incidental but rather an overt political and religious statement.¹⁶⁹ Whilst Henry was happy to emulate chivalric predecessors like

¹⁶⁶ Lipscomb, 1536, p. 139.

¹⁶⁷ C.H. Williams (ed.), 'The Second Royal Injunctions of Henry VIII, 1538', *English Historical Documents 1485-1558*, Vol. 5, (London, 1967), p. 814.

¹⁶⁸ 'The Second Royal Injunctions of Henry VIII, 1538', p. 814.

¹⁶⁹ For more information about the dismantling of Becket's cult see Margaret Aston's *England's Iconoclasts*, Vol.1 (Oxford, 1988). Richard Rex also discusses Becket at length in *Henry VIII and the English Reformation* (2nd edition, New York, 2006). See also Robert Scully, 'The Unmaking of a Saint' Thomas Becket and the English Reformation' *Catholic Historical Review*, Vol. 86, No.4, (Oct, 2000). Scully argues that the dismantling of Becket's tomb was a direct result of Henry's fear of being undermined by the memory of executed Thomas More and John Fisher.

Edward III and Henry V he would not bow to the whims of the church and clergy as Henry II had done. Henry was a defender of the English Church, but also a defender of his own rights and prerogatives *against* the English Church, a strong king who would not accept any challenges to his authority or apologise for his actions. By dismantling the cult of Thomas Becket, Henry made these feelings abundantly clear.

Shortly after the Second Royal Injunctions were released, Becket's cult came under attack. The popularity of the saint had been in decline since the mid-thirteenth century but folklore, sermons and popular works like *The Golden Legend* had ensured that Becket had become a firmly entrenched figure in the English Church.¹⁷⁰ On Henry's orders it was decided that 'there should be no more mention of him never' and as a result he was systematically removed from all written work, including copies of *The Golden Legend*.¹⁷¹ A proclamation from Henry made at Westminster in November 1538 stated that Becket 'shall no longer be named a saint...his pictures throughout the realm are to be plucked down and his festivals shall no longer be kept, and the services in his name shall be razed out of all books'.¹⁷²

Henry also took a personal interest in the physical removal of the saint. In late 1538, a group of men were commissioned to dismantle Becket's shrine. This was turned into a public spectacle which included Henry watching Becket's bones being burned, thereby making it a state occasion as well.¹⁷³ Henry also ordered the play *On the Treasons of Becket*, by Cromwell's propagandist John Bale, to be performed.¹⁷⁴ Through this elaborate pageantry it is possible to see how Henry wished to undermine the cult of the saints in order to avoid subversive foci for those who would challenge his authority.¹⁷⁵

At this point it is quite important to reassert that Henry did see himself in the role of defender of orthodoxy and not a radical reformer, a position that makes his affinity with St George all the more significant. In the same year that Henry razed the tomb of Thomas Becket, he also involved himself in another public spectacle: the trial of John Lambert, a theologian who denied transubstantiation. Henry VIII attended the trial completely dressed in white and debated theology with Lambert for over five hours. Lambert remained unmoved continuing to deny the Real Presence, and appealed to the king: 'I commend my soul unto the hands of God, but my body I wholly yield

¹⁷⁰ See Barbara Abou-el-Haj *The Medieval Cult of the Saints: Formations and Transformation* (New York and Cambridge, 1994) and Richard Rex *The English Reformation* (2nd edition, New York, 2006).

¹⁷¹ See also the *Wriothesley Chronicle* in addition to Susan Doran, *The Tudor Chronicles 1486-1603* (London, 2008), p.176.

¹⁷² John Butler, *The Quest of Becket's Bones* (London, 1995), p. 117.

¹⁷³ Rex, *English Reformation*, p. 154.

¹⁷⁴ This play has subsequently been lost. Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer: A Life* (London, 1996), p. 227. See also Rex, *English Reformation*, pp. 151, 154.

¹⁷⁵ Rex, *English Reformation*, p. 153.

and submit unto your clemency'. Henry, not willing to accept any transgression of his authority responded, 'In that case you must die, for I will not be a patron unto heretics'.¹⁷⁶ Henry was willing to remove points of 'superstition' and 'idolatry' that he felt had been introduced by the Roman Church, but he was unwilling to make any radical reforms or undermine the basic sacramental structure of medieval Catholicism.

A proclamation *Altering Feast Days and Fast Days* which was issued on 22 July, 1541, after the death and therefore influence of Thomas Cromwell, demonstrates Henry's wish to defend the church from heresy and to defend orthodoxy from within a focus on purity of the Scripture. The proclamation states that:

Forasmuch as the Feasts of St. Luke and St. Mark, Evangelists occurring within the terms holden at Westminster, and also the Feast of Mary Magdalene falling within the time of harvest, were among other abrogated and commanded not to be observed as holy days: the King's highness considering that the same saints been often and many times mentioned in the plain and manifest Scripture, willet and commandeth that the said three feasts from henceforth shall be celebrated and kept holy days in as times passed they have been used...¹⁷⁷

However, other traditional popular feast days that were not based in Scripture were to meet their end:

The Feast of the Invention of the Cross, commonly called St. Elyn's day, for the most part chanceth within Easter term...ambiguity and doubt hath risen amongst the king's subjects whether the saint Feast should be celebrated and kept holy day or no. The King's most benign grace, of his infinite goodness willing one uniform order herein to be observed among all his faithful subjects, ordaineth and commandeth that, as the said Feast falling within the term is not kept holy day, so likewise at all times from henceforth it shall not be observed, accepted, nor taken as a holy day.¹⁷⁸

This legislation, along with the others that were passed before it demonstrates the unique position in which St George found himself. At a time when saints and their related religious imagery were being culled, in particular those with no Biblical significance, St George remained very much to the fore. As Henry's patron he was protected from the reforming legislation and assisted the king in political and military matters. Moreover, St George continued to play a significant role in the material culture of the court, even during the height of the Henrician Reformation.

St George and the Material Culture of the Henrician Court

¹⁷⁶ Lipscomb, 1536, pp 131-132.

¹⁷⁷ *A Proclamation Altering Feast Days and Fast Days*, 'Henry VIII: July 1541, 21-25', in *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic*, Henry VIII, Vol. 16, 1540-1541, James Gairdner and R. H. Brodie (eds), (London, 1898), pp. 485-492.

¹⁷⁸ Henry VIII, *A Proclamation Altering Feast Days and Fast Days*, Northampton, 22 July, 1541.

The level of symbolism and its meaning at the Henrician court has been another matter that has been much debated. Some historians have argued that 'symbols were of course a highly familiar mode of expression' and the public festivities such as 'jousts and revels signified their meaning through a fanciful and elaborate symbolism'.¹⁷⁹ Others disagree with this assessment, suggesting that modern historians are over-analysing court politics, and that it is implausible that the monarchy would have had all of the spectacles for the purpose of political propaganda rather than for their enjoyment value.¹⁸⁰ Indeed, there is no statute in Henry's reign that detailed the king's image or outlined how he wished to be portrayed.¹⁸¹ It is true that a balance needs to be kept when analysing the material culture of a monarch's court. However, in the case of Henry VIII when the primary evidence is considered it quickly becomes apparent that he did use imagery and symbolism to impart political messages, to those surrounding him at court, and to the general populace. St George was an integral to this agenda.

In *Selling the Tudor Monarch*, Kevin Sharpe argues that before the Reformation, Henry had a very close relationship to St George and tried to emulate him in the first half of his reign, but that not much is mentioned of him after the Reformation.¹⁸² Yet there is much evidence to demonstrate that St George played an integral role during the period of the Reformation.

Before the break with Rome was completed, Henry attempted to use the legend of St George at the coronation of Anne Boleyn on 28 May 1533. The fleet that carried Anne from Greenwich to the Tower preceding the royal couple's move to Westminster included 120 large crafts and 200 smaller ones. The flotilla was highly ornate, complete with decorations, bells and numerous musicians. It was 'led by a light wherry in which had been constructed a mechanical dragon that could be made to move and belch out flames, and with it were other models of monsters and huge wild men, who threw blazing fireworks and uttered hideous cries'.¹⁸³ To the Tudor public, the dragon inevitably evoked St George and the occasion showed a continuation of Henry incorporating Tudor symbols in major political events.

¹⁷⁹ David Starkey, 'Representation through Intimacy: A Study in the symbolism of monarchy and court office in early modern England', *The Tudor Monarchy* John Guy (ed.), (London, 1997), p. 43. See also Roy Strong's *Holbein and Henry VIII* (New York, 1967).

¹⁸⁰ For further elaboration of this argument see Sydney Anglo, *Images of Tudor Kingship* (London, 1995). The debate about the extent to which propaganda was used and by which officials has more recently been discussed in Tatiana C. String's *Art and Communication in the Reign of Henry VIII* (Ashgate, 2008). String also highlights, through the use of contemporary accounts, the acknowledgements of the messages contained within images by Tudor contemporaries and highlights the use of images within Henry's court during the period of the Henrician Reformation.

¹⁸¹ Foister, *Holbein in England*, p. 181.

¹⁸² Kevin Sharpe, *Selling the Tudor Image: Authority and Image in Sixteenth-Century England* (London, 2009).

¹⁸³ Eric Ives, *The Life and Death of Anne Boleyn* (Oxford, 2004), p. 173.

Henry's affinity with St George was also expressed in public celebrations which were designed to reflect the king's new self-understanding as head of the Church of England. In 1539, as a response to his excommunication, Henry VIII staged an anti-papal spectacle on the Thames. Two barges, one representing the King and the other the Pope and his cardinals, 'fought sore', with the latter inevitably being overcome. The spectacle was observed by the King and nobles. It was also noted by chronicler Charles Wriothesley that there were 'also two other barges [that] rowed up and downe with banners and pennons of the armes of England and St George, wherein were the sagbuts and waighes, which played on the water, and so fynished'.¹⁸⁴ The following year Henry attended part of the New Year's revels at Greenwich with Anne of Cleves which also had a theme relating to St George's legend. As part of the revels the Greenwich Armourers, whose patron was St George, put on an elaborate display relating to the saint including presenting the king with a statue of the saint slaying the dragon whilst wearing a suit of armour they had made.¹⁸⁵ As these spectacles suggest, the reputation of the saint as a martial, nationalistic and royal figure was a perfect fit for Henry's reign after the Reformation.

Showing Henry's devotion to St George on a much grander scale were his ships. From the 1549 Inventory, it is possible to see that Henry owned two sister ships: the *George* and the *Dragon*, undoubtedly linked to his patron saint. Still more interesting however is the Anthony Roll, compiled by Anthony Anthony, that made an inventory of Henry's fleet (see Figure 4.1). The drawing of the ships that decorated the rolls all have clear references to St George. It is possible to see the ships covered in George Crosses with green and white standards from the masts. Whilst it was common for Tudor standards to be tailed, the hyperbolic nature of them for the purpose of this image bears a remarkable resemblance to dragon tails, arguably a further reference to St George's Legend. The names of the vessels also reflected Henry's benevolence to God, made all the more significant after the break with Rome.

Henry's blending of Tudor symbolism and St George's legend also continued throughout his reign with the decor used in his palaces. He ensured that the colour codes of red, green and white were used in all the palaces, particularly around the fireplaces. Furthermore, a number of paintings dating from the 1530s and 1540s allude to Henry assuming the role of St George as the Defender of England. One such piece, painted by Hans Holbein in the mid to late 1530s, is the *Allegory of the Old and New Testament* (see Figure 4.2). The canvas is divided into two halves. The Old Testament on the left of the canvas shows the presence of Original Sin and mankind turning his back on the Laws

¹⁸⁴ Tatiana C. String, *Art and Communication in the Reign of Henry VIII* (Aldershot, 2008), p. 32.

¹⁸⁵ National Maritime Museum, *Royal River: Power, Pageantry & the Thames Exhibition*, 2012.

of Moses, a reference to the superstition and idolatry that was imposed by the English Church by the Papacy. The right-hand side of the canvas concerns the New Testament and the redemption mankind can receive through Christ. What is particularly evident is Jesus' resurrection and triumph over death; Christ emerges from his tomb, holding the English battle standard, St George's Cross and gazing directly at the viewer.¹⁸⁶ The blending of the imagery associated with Christ's resurrection and the symbolism of St George are combined within the context of the Henrician Reformation. Although the Cross of St George was initially linked to his martyrdom, there are no references to his manner of death, rather his cross was now a more nationalistic symbol. These paintings acted as an example of Scriptural allegories with references England's patron saint further solidifying St George's place in the English Church.

The image of Christ holding St George's Cross was used again at Hampton Court at the same time. In what is now known as 'Wolsey's Closet' at Hampton Court Palace there are religious paintings dating from the early sixteenth century (see Figures 4.3 and 4.4). After Henry assumed control of the palace in 1529, he set about making alterations. One of these changes was to Wolsey's Closet and in the 1530s, he covered Wolsey's religious painting with images of Christ's passion and resurrection. Christ can be seen emerging from the tomb holding the Cross of St George. The allegory is clear: salvation and resurrection are achieved through the Word of God and by following the Scripture which has been cleansed of superstition by the English king.

Two other paintings that use symbolism relating to St George are *The Embarkation at Dover* and *The Field of the Cloth of Gold, 1520*, both likely painted in 1545 as part of friezes that were to hang in Henry's palaces (see Figures 4.5 and 4.6). These paintings were meant to document the diplomatic event the Field of the Cloth of Gold as a glorious moment in Henry's reign. In *The Embarkation at Dover* it is possible to see the English retinue getting ready to leave for France. The number of George Crosses on the ships are striking and act as a symbol of English nationalism and identify insofar as Henry was concerned, referring to the country's patron saint. As this painting was commissioned twenty-five years after the diplomatic mission, and over ten years after the break with the papacy, it is obvious that Henry wished the link between St George and English politics and identity to remain firm.

In *The Field of the Cloth of Gold, 1520*, there is a more direct link between Henry VIII and St George's legend. The painting highlights the main festivities during the diplomatic Anglo-French

¹⁸⁶ Although this image was a trope used by Jacopo Bellini and other Renaissance painters, it is yet another happy coincidence of Henry using imagery to make further allusions to St George. For a more in-depth study of the connotations behind the image of 'Christ triumphant' see Richard Foster and Pamela Tudor Craig, *The Secret Life of Paintings* (New York, 1996).

meeting but puts particular emphasis on the strength and grandeur of the English entourage. It is in the first third of the painting that the viewer's eye is drawn with the allusions to St George's legend. In the sky above the English as they arrive flies a dragon. Below and slightly ahead rides Henry VIII dressed in cloth of gold and red, symbols of his royal authority. Upon closer inspection it becomes apparent that the red portion of his doublet and breeches form a red cross similar to the Cross of St George (see Figure 4.7). The allusion is subtle but serves as another example of Henry in the role of St George and harkens back to his original representation of a chivalric warrior king. These paintings correspond with Henry's return from his final and unsuccessful French campaign and act as early modern propaganda, allowing Henry to reassert points in his reign that he perceived as triumphs. As ever, St George is present through subtle yet persuasive symbolism to promote Henry's interests.

Henry's personal collection of items relating to St George continued to grow throughout the period of the Reformation. As stated in the previous chapter, devotional items representing St George were a popular subject amongst Henry's private collection (see Figure 4.8). Through acquiring these pieces Henry was able to solidify his affinity with the saint and continue to cast himself as Defender of the English Church and people. The idea of a king having a 'private life' is relative as even Henry's personal possessions would to some extent at least have been on public display within the court. One item of note was the bejewelled pin of St George that Henry frequently wore from 1540 onwards. The pin shows a martial representation of St George, a pose of him slaying the dragon. There were other personal items used by the king. These pieces were then portrayed in Holbein's portraiture. The most obvious example is the portrait of Henry VIII from the mid-1540s that shows the king wearing a pendant of St George slaying the dragon (see Figure 4.9). This painting would have been disseminated both at court and to the wider populace and would have acted as the king's endorsement of the saint whilst demonstrating his affinity with him.

Henry casting himself as St George and as Defender of the English Church is also encapsulated in a painting he had in his private collection showing himself 'triumphing over the seven-headed beast of Rome that wears a triple crown as well as another painting depicting the "Harlot of Babylon"'.¹⁸⁷ The meaning behind the allegory is implicit and once again portrays Henry as a chivalric defender. These pieces also succeed in undermining and vilifying the papacy. It is at

¹⁸⁷ These paintings are no longer in existence having been destroyed by Mary I when she sought to regain favour with the papacy. For further information on this image see Margaret Aston, *The King's Bedpost: Reformation and Iconography in a Tudor Group Portrait* (Cambridge, 1993). Tatiana C. String, 'Politics and Polemics in English and German Bible Illustrations', *The Bible as Book: The Reformation*, Orlaith O'Sullivan (ed.), (London, 2000), p. 141.

least a happy coincidence that the dragon, a symbol of evil and threat completed the reformists' preference of portraying the papacy as the beast of the Book of Revelation.

St George and the Order of the Garter

The Order of the Garter was another way through which Henry used his patron saint to keep a firm hold on his court. In her work on Henry and his relationship with his nobles, Helen Miller states that it was during the time of the Reformation that the Order stopped being 'chivalric and became more political'.¹⁸⁸ In many respects, however, the Order of the Garter always had a strong political element. Edward III, who founded the Order in 1348, used it to control power-hungry barons that may have challenged his authority. Furthermore, Henry VIII was certainly not a king who would have admitted to overthrowing chivalric ideals for the sake of politics. Where the Order of the Garter did change after the Reformation was with its religious significance, although it still very much retained its chivalric traditions. Much like his predecessors, Henry used the Order of the Garter to manipulate courtiers, using their knowledge of his devotion to St George to elevate and eliminate relevant individuals within and from the royal court.

The significance of the Order of the Garter was, if anything, heightened after Henry broke with Rome. Henry was formally rejecting well-entrenched traditions as superstition and idolatry and it was important for him to retain and re-establish English national traditions in their place, ones that met with the criteria of the newly cleansed church. One way in which Henry demonstrated the importance of the Order of the Garter was by creating the Register or the Black Book of the Garter in 1534 (see Figure 4.10). This work, compiled by Robert Aldridge at the request of the king, detailed the history of the Order from when it was founded until the present.¹⁸⁹ The book notes all of the monarchs from Edward III until Henry VIII and gave a list of all the knights appointed by each king. The register was decorated by ornate borders and illuminated images showing Garter ceremonies. One of the main images was that of Henry VIII and the twenty-six Garter knights of 1534-35. It is possible to see Henry sitting front and centre with the symbols of kingship. Present are also the foreign sovereigns who were inducted into the Order: Charles V, the Holy Roman Emperor; Francis I of France; Ferdinand, Archduke of Austria and James V of Scotland. In this image it is possible to see Henry's full power and majesty which he is asserting through this Order, now dedicated entirely to St

¹⁸⁸ Miller, *Henry VIII and the English Nobility*, p. 91.

¹⁸⁹ This book would continue until Edward VI's reign in 1552.

George.¹⁹⁰ This in itself is significant as it shows the saint's representation was the preferred choice over that of the Virgin Mary and Edward the Confessor. It also demonstrated the importance of being a member; only those closest to the monarch and who were of the utmost importance would be given a place. The text allowed Henry to impart these sentiments to his courtiers whilst continuing to entrench the Garter tradition in English history.

Henry's use of St George's Order to manipulate the nobility was a process in which the latter were willing participants. It was generally recognised at court that Henry was tiring of the Boleyns when, on St George's Day, 1536, instead of appointing his brother-in-law George Boleyn, Viscount Rochford to the Order, he instead chose Nicholas Carew, a well-known friend and ally of the Seymours.¹⁹¹ Less than two weeks after the slight, George and Anne Boleyn were arrested for treason and within a month both were executed. This is not to say that not being appointed to the Order meant imminent death, but it does demonstrate a way through which Henry exerted political control over the factions at court and that it was he who ultimately held the power.

The importance of the Garter continued to be recognised through the period of the Henrician Reformation. On St George's Day 1537, Henry appointed Henry Clifford, earl of Cumberland, to the Order for his help in suppressing the rebels during the Pilgrimage of Grace.¹⁹² Upon the execution of Thomas 1st Baron Darcy (who had been a member of the Garter) for his role in the rebellion, Henry called an emergency meeting of the Order in August 1537. Henry ignored protocol, allowing for only five knights to be present in order to appoint his trusted advisor Thomas Cromwell. During the chapter meeting, it was cynically observed by one ambassador that the king and knights welcomed Cromwell, 'extolling him for his merits, so much as they were able'.¹⁹³ Cromwell's appointment is indicative of Henry's willingness to alter rules and traditions to suit his purpose. Whilst Cromwell had sent a small number of soldiers to the north, his reward of knighthood arose more from the king's desire to have loyal individuals close to him. By praising Cromwell as being virtuous and worthy of the Order, Henry was able to maintain the perception that the chivalric ideals were still important in the Garter and members continued to follow the behaviour and traditions set forth by St George. Cromwell also did his part to advertise the significance of the Order of the Garter by having his portrait painted with the chain and the Lesser

¹⁹⁰ It is true that the role of St Michael and the Virgin had been diminishing since the reign of Edward IV (see Chapter 2 for further details) however it is significant that Henry continued to ignore these two religious figures with the Order and make an exception with St George.

¹⁹¹ David Starkey, *The Reign of Henry VIII: Personalities and Politics* (London, 1985), p. 111.

¹⁹² Miller, *Henry VIII English Nobility*, p. 88.

¹⁹³ Garter statutes stated that a minimum of six knights should be present in order for the chapter meeting to take place. Miller, *Henry VIII English Nobility*, p. 91.

George around his neck (see Figure 4.11). The use of visual imagery promulgates the importance of the Order, its patron saint and the king who imparted the honour onto him.

Although Henry was prepared to bend the Garter rules when it was to his benefit it should be pointed out that throughout the Reformation Henry continued to reinforce the importance of pageantry and symbolism within St George's Order. On 28 April, 1539, John Husee wrote to his master Arthur Plantagenet, 1st Viscount Lisle, to inform him that 'the Lord Russell, Lord Warden and Mr Kingston were advanced into the Order of the Garter. And this shall be advertised your lordship that the King's Highness rode to the Parliament from his Palace with all the Lords Temporal and Spiritual, and all the heralds on horseback in most solemn order'.¹⁹⁴ Such a 'solemn' procession with heraldry was yet another example of visual symbolism that Henry used.

The case of Lord Lisle, Governor of Calais, is perhaps the best example of how the Order of the Garter was used politically. Lisle had been desperate to join the Order and incur favour with the king. Henry, on the other hand, was deeply suspicious of him due to his links with the Pole family, in particular the exile Cardinal Reginald Pole who persistently railed against Henry's reforms from the relative safety of the continent. Henry also suspected Lisle of being part of the Botolph Conspiracy and needed to find a way to bring Lisle back to England with a minimal amount of threat to his authority.¹⁹⁵ It was decided that Lisle should be appointed to the 'noble order' on St George's Day 1540, at Westminster Palace. The ceremony was performed and Lisle was one of the guests of honour at the Garter feast of 9 May, sitting next to the king at the head table.¹⁹⁶ The ceremony however was being used as a ruse to lure Lisle into a false sense of security so he could be arrested with expediency. The following account, written by chronicler Ellis Gruffudd, demonstrates how Lisle was manipulated and how Henry continued to use symbolism during his arrest:

At this time, the next Whitsun holiday, Lord Lisle and his friends in Calais were given to think that he would be made an earl and that he was sent for to Windsor to keep the feast of St George and that he would be chief of the feast. The contrary indeed was true. For none of the great men of the Council looked at him save askance, for they saw he was besmattered in some way or other, for secretly he has been before the Council once or twice; and on Whit Tuesday the Council called for a meeting to discuss the matter...[Lisle] went down on his knees and appealed to the king to help him in his righteousness. But the king told him 'Doest thou not ask for righteousness! For I shall take trouble to hear this matter myself.' At this the lord asked the king to be merciful and righteous to him. To these words the king turned his back and went to his room without letting him answer either good or bad. The Council then sent him in the custody of Sir William Kingston, who delivered him to the Lieutenant within the walls of the Tower, around eleven at night.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁴ Muriel St Clare Byrne ed., *The Lisle Letters*, Vol. 5 (London, 1981), p. 1396.

¹⁹⁵ The Botolph Conspiracy, named after the Catholic priest Gregory Botolph was a plan to deliver Calais into the hands of Catholic authorities with the assistance of Cardinal Pole and the Pope. For more information see Muriel St Clare (ed.), *The Lisle Letters*, Vol. 6 (London, 1981).

¹⁹⁶ *Lisle*, Vol. 6, p. 116

¹⁹⁷ *Lisle*, Vol. 6, p. 118.

Lisle's arrest in this manner highlights a number of important issues. Firstly, Henry was in enough political control to use his machinations to bring in a suspected traitor. Secondly, Lisle's willingness to come to London if he was involved in a conspiracy to obtain his title speaks to the importance in which the nobility held the Order of the Garter. Finally, the fact that Garter celebrations spanned almost a month demonstrate the importance it held in the court calendar. The seriousness with which the nobility held the Order is suggested by the effort that was taken to attend the ceremonies.

Just as the Order was used in his downfall, when it was believed that Lord Lisle was to receive a reprieve and once again incur the king's favour, it was first suggested through the Order of the Garter. On 17 January 1542, the French ambassador Marillac wrote to Francis I: 'The Deputy of Callais, the Lord Lisle, who hath been a prisoner in the Tower these two years, is at a point to have is pardon, and is saying that his Order of the Garter hath been restored to him...'.¹⁹⁸ Likewise, two or three weeks later, Eustace Chapuys wrote to Charles V that 'the king hath given commandment that the arms of the said Lord Lisle, which had been removed from the Chapel of the Order, should be restored and set up again in their place'.¹⁹⁹ Chapuys went on to hint that the reason for this sudden change in the king's opinion was due to his interest in Lisle's step-daughter, whom Henry was considering as a potential wife. Whatever Henry's motivation, the Order of the Garter was a vehicle through which Henry controlled the nobility at Court and it was his patron saint who supplied the symbolic muscle to do so.

Henry and St George and the People

It was not just at court where Henry used his affinity with St George. By taking advantage of popular saints' legends and his role of Defender of the Faith, Henry was able to portray himself as a contemporary version of St George who acted as God's intercessor and warrior that would protect the English Church and people from the idolatry of the papacy. The cult of St George and his legend had been promulgated, especially in southern and central England, since the fifteenth century. To what degree did Henry use St George as a way to disseminate his new religious role and reforms to his subjects? Whilst the vast majority of people did not get the opportunity to see the king's rich inventory of paintings, sculptures, jewels and tapestries, the king did use the popularity of St George's legend and visual imagery to cast himself in the role of their Defender. In many ways, St George would become a still more nationalist figure than he had been during the reign of Henry's

¹⁹⁸ *Lisle*, Vol. 6, p. 179.

¹⁹⁹ *Lisle*, Vol. 6, p. 179.

predecessors. While it would be too far to say that at this point the English had a clearly defined sense of national identity in the modern sense, it is apparent that Henry used their innate fear of a foreign ruler to argue that his reforms of the English Church were just and desirable. As a contemporary, Richard Morgan, remarked in his *Discourse on Law* (1539) it was necessary for Henry to create 'spectacles...to inculcate and drive into the people's heads the abuses of the papacy'.²⁰⁰

One way that Henry portrayed himself as the defender of his subjects was through the use of his Great Seals (see Figure 4.12). The famous pose of St George striking the fatal blow to the dragon, which adorned a number of items that Henry owned, was also used on his second Great Seal from 1532 until 1542 and again with his third Great Seal from 1542 until 1547. During this period the similarity between Henry VIII and his patron saint became more direct. The second seal depicts Henry VIII on one side and the image of St George on horseback on the other. The third Great Seal, in use from 1542 onwards, depicts Henry as St George himself. On the back of the seal one can see Henry VIII in armour assuming the battle position of St George. Henry also had his title of Defender of the Faith placed around the image, a title that was made hereditary by statute from 1543 onwards.²⁰¹

The king's personal devotion to and use of St George was posthumously highlighted by Bishop Stephen Gardiner. In a letter written a month after Henry VIII died, Gardiner cautioned against radical reform:

If ye allow nothing but Scripture, what say you to the Kinges ringes? But they be allowed; ergo, somewhat is to be allowed besides Scripture. And another: If images be forbidden, why doothe the King weare S. Georg on his brest? But he weareth S. Georg on his brest; ergo, images be not forbidden. If saincts be not to bee worshipped, why kepe we S. Georges feast? But we kepe Saint Georges feast...

²⁰²

At the same time Gardiner also wrote to the Lord Protector, referring to Henry's Great Seal and the impact it had for the king with the wider populace. Gardiner observed that

he that cannot rede the scripture written about the Kinges great seale, either because he cannot rede at al, or because the wax doth not expresse it, yet he can rede Sainct Georg on horseback on the one side, and the Kinge sitting in his majestie on the other side; and readeth so much written in those images as, if he be an honest man, he wil put of his cap.²⁰³

²⁰⁰ String, 'Politics and Polemics', p. 138.

²⁰¹ Lucy Wooding, *Henry VIII* (New York, 2008), p. 109. See also J.J. Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII* (London, 1968), p. 117.

²⁰² Stephen Gardiner, *The Letters of Stephen Gardiner*, James Arthur Muller (ed.), (Westport, 1970), pp.260-261.

²⁰³ Gardiner, *Letters*, p. 274.

Henry's contemporaries identified the king's affinity with the saint as well as how Henry used him as a method through which people could identify with and observe the authority of the monarch. Even more significant is the fact that Gardiner was using Henry's attachment to the cult of St George to argue against the innovations of the Edwardian Reformation and to preserve the 'Henrician Catholicism' of the 1540s, thereby highlighting the exceptional yet significant nature of the late king's devotion to the saint. The special preference shown towards the saint by the king was also highlighted during the inquisitions into the Prebendaries Plot of 1543. William Burges, apparitor to Cranmer, was informed by a surgeon in Cranmer's diocese that his master 'would have pulled down our St George, but your master lyeth by the heel, and we have showed the taking down thereof to the King's Council and were bid set it up again'.²⁰⁴ The explicit reference to the king's preference and protection of St George was therefore acknowledged by a wide spectrum of the king's subjects.

Further evidence of the continued use of imagery and was demonstrated in 1538 by the Vicar of Ticehurst in Kent. During one of his homilies, warning about those who would engage in acts of iconoclasm, the vicar held up a 'King Harry Groat' and asked his congregation 'Who darest thou spit upon this face? Thou darest not do it. But thou wilt spit upon the image [in Church]...then thou spittest upon God'.²⁰⁵ It is clear that the use of visual imagery and the purposes behind it were not lost on the populace. By examining the way Henry presented himself through the printed word, in particular popular political tracts and the visual imagery present on the English Bibles that were printed between 1535 and 1542, it is possible to see how the church reforms were presented as the way through which the king could defend his people.

In order to be a defender, Henry first had to create his own 'dragon'. The malleable nature of St George's legend allowed for vilification of the pope to be made at a popular level without exclusively having to use Scriptural references. It also allowed for the king to be presented to the general populace as a heroic figure, one that would defend the spiritual welfare of his people. In the 1530s Henry and Thomas Cranmer had annotated versions of the *Donatio Constantini* and used the text in order to ridicule the Pope's claim to the Lordship of England.²⁰⁶ This belief was then disseminated to the people who were to think of Henry as their defender against papal tyranny.

In Miles Coverdale's 1535 English Bible the dedication to Henry claims that the Pope was guilty of 'stealyng awaye of youre money for pardons: his disceavyng of youre subiectes soules and his develysh doctrines and sects of his false religions his bloudsheddyng of so many of your graces

²⁰⁴ Margaret Aston, *Faith and Fire: Popular and Unpopular Religion: 1350-1600* (London, 1993), p. 279.

²⁰⁵ Starkey, 'Representation through Intimacy', p. 45.

²⁰⁶ For further information on Henry VIII's texts see James P. Carley, *The Books of Henry VIII and His Wives* (London, 2004).

people' (see Figure 4.13).²⁰⁷ The dedication portrays the pope as stealing from the people whilst also endangering their immortal souls. Another example of popular writings which portrayed the Pope as a hypocrite was the 1534 anonymous work *A treatise wherin Christe and his techynges, are compared with the pope and his doings*. In the treatise the author censures papal authority: 'The pope is full of high and proude sayenge: I am a lorde of bothe realms, hevenly and erthly: and the Emperor is my subjecte: as it is mentioned in the popes own decrees and laws'.²⁰⁸ The pope was also guilty of saying that 'the emperours and kynges shall knele and kysse my feete, and is not ashamed to express it in the lawe' as well as commanding his ministers 'to preache his lawes and authority to the worlde: And that no man to be hardy, upon payne of excommunication to take upon him to preache the gospel'.²⁰⁹ This work was commissioned and published *cum privilegio* and once again presents the foreign threat from which the English needed protection.

In 1536, it was noted by Thomas Starkey that 'hyt hath pleasyd your hyghnes to take such laborys, studye and paynes, as you haue lately put in stablyschyng of a concord and unite of doctrine here among vs'.²¹⁰ In the same year the king offered a proclamation to ensure that the people were 'fedd and norrishd with holsome and godly doctrine and not seduced with the filthy and corrupt abhomyneacions of the bishop of Rome or his disciples and adherents'.²¹¹ In the language of the proclamations and injunctions Henry modelled himself in the role of Defender of the Church of England, in the same role as his patron saint. Having uniformly established that it was his 'duties, bothe to let no occasion whereby religion myghte at the laste be truly restaured and also withstand...all assaultes made by the bishoppes of Rome', Henry set about counter-acting the foreign threat.²¹²

Beginning with the 1535 Coverdale Bible, Henry is portrayed as a defender and relates himself to St George. The title page of the Coverdale Bible has the insignia of the Order of the Garter below Henry VIII who is holding a sword, both a monarch and a martial figure.²¹³ Bordering the throne at the base of the page are the figures of the Garter collar and the motto 'Hony Soit Qui Mal y Pense' and scrolls bearing the words: 'O how swete are thy wordes unto my throte: yee more then hony'

²⁰⁷ String, 'Politics and Polemics', p. 138.

²⁰⁸ Anonymous, *A treatise wherin Christe and his techynges, are compared with the pope and his doings*, (London, 1534), p. 3.

²⁰⁹ Anonymous, *The Pope and his doings*, pp. 4,6.

²¹⁰ G.W. Bernard, 'The Making of Religious Policy, 1533-1546: Henry VIII and the Search for the Middle Way', *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 41, No. 2, (Jun., 1998), p. 322. For a detailed study of Henry VIII's thoughts and practices during the Reformation, as well as an argument about his autonomy from factions see also G.W. Bernard *The King's Reformation: Henry VIII and the Remaking of the English Church* (London, 2005).

²¹¹ Bernard, 'Making Religious Policy', p. 331.

²¹² Henry VIII, *A Glasse of Truth*, (1532), p. 1.

²¹³ Foister, *Holbein*, p. 160.

(Psalm 118) and 'I am not ashamed of the Gospell of Christ for it is the power of God' (Romans I).²¹⁴ This is a demonstration of the blending of Church reforms with the political or secular, the Order of the Garter having a particular significance to Henry and representing the monarchy. The image demonstrates that Henry is cleansing the church from all superstitions and returning it to a much purer form, based on Scripture.

The frontispiece of the 1539 Great Bible also portrays the King as the Defender of the Faith, disseminating the word of God to all the people (see Figure 4.14).²¹⁵ Having Henry sit just below a 'diminutive God the Father' while distributing copies of the Bible to Archbishop Cranmer and Chief Minister Thomas Cromwell gave the English people the image of the king being the ultimate authority in politics and religion on Earth.²¹⁶ The fact that the people below Henry, his ministers and the bishops are crying out 'Vivat rex' and God Save the Kyng' could be interpreted as endeavouring to appeal to both the educated and uneducated members of English society whilst also acting as a representation of its hierarchy.²¹⁷ Further proof that the motives behind the Bible were ordered by Henry can be seen in a letter of commands written from the king to Cromwell on 5 September 1538, which ordered the clergy to

provide on thisside the feast of all saintes next cummyng, one boke of the hole bible of the largest volume in English, and the same sett upp in sum convenient place within the said churche that ye have cure of where as your parishioners may most commodiously resorte to the same reade yet.²¹⁸

The importance of the Bible being large and noticeable in order to convey the king's position to the people can also be seen most vividly with the illuminated Bibles which vividly demonstrated the same type of image, but would have been more visually appealing to those to whom the books were given.²¹⁹ By using colour it was possible to demonstrate more clearly, from whom Henry was defending his people. In one of the bottom corners, facing in the opposite direction of the king in the Illuminated Bible of 1542, stands a group of prisoners, the most visible of whom is wearing a red cap (see Figure 4.15). It has been suggested that that this individual could be wearing a cardinal's cap, thereby suggesting the Henry's role as king is to defend the people from papists.²²⁰ It is therefore evident that Henry was portrayed to his subjects as England's defender, giving them the

²¹⁴ Greg Walker, *Persuasive Fictions: Faction, Faith and Political Culture in the Reign of Henry VIII* (Aldershot, 1996), p. 87.

²¹⁵ Tatiana C. String, 'Henry VIII's Illuminated "Great Bible"', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, Vol. 59, (1996), p. 317.

²¹⁶ John Guy, 'Tudor Monarchy and Political Culture', *Tudor and Stuart Britain*, John Morrill ed. (Oxford, 1996), p. 228.

²¹⁷ String, 'Great Bible', p. 320.

²¹⁸ String, "Great Bible", p. 315.

²¹⁹ In Tatiana C. String, 'Henry VIII's Illuminated "Great Bible"', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, Vol. 59, (1996), pp. 315- 324.

²²⁰ String, 'Great Bible', p. 320.

'Verbum Dei' and protecting them from the outside threat of the pope.²²¹ Having physically contained the foreign threat, Henry has achieved his primary purpose of protecting his people. As always, the presence of the Garter insignia demonstrates the presence of St George's order and its intimate connection to the king's understanding of his royal supremacy.

These ideals expanded upon those first established by Henry at the beginning of his reign. Whilst Henry always saw himself as a chivalric figure, his role of warrior became far more political when he began his religious reforms. As much as Henry was styled in the image of Saint George and the defender of his realm, this propaganda mechanism would not have been successful had it not been for the suppression of rivals to the king's semi-divine status. By casting the pope as a threat whose authority was to be undermined, Henry could portray himself to his people as their protector and state that it was in their best interest to acknowledge his authority and reforms to the church.

Rather than lessening the importance of St George, the Henrician Reformation gave the saint an enhanced role. He was the only non-Biblical saint to retain a feast day which remained of national importance throughout the remainder of Henry's reign. While maintaining his level of importance St George increasingly became a more political figure that was used and assumed by Henry. Alluding to and imitating the role of St George as 'defender' was one of the ways through which Henry was able to portray his reforms of the English church as a means whereby the English would be saved from superstition and hypocrisy.

Politically speaking, Henry also used his personal devotion to St George to manipulate and control both those at court and the general populace. Through the use of visual imagery, such as St George's Cross and the Garter emblem, Henry consciously promulgated the image of the saint and himself in the same vein. For his courtiers and other subjects, observing the significance of St George was a way of incurring favour with Henry VIII, whether they were reformed individuals who had been involved in the Pilgrimage of Grace, or the highest born nobles and churchmen vying for entry to the Order of the Garter.

St George and the devotional practices of the people

It is impossible to know the exact feelings of people and the true nature of their beliefs just prior to and during the Henrician Reformation. A number of questions arise, such as the degree to which the general populace understood the doctrine of the church or even if they understood it all. We cannot

²²¹ Carley, *The Books of King Henry VIII*, p. 88.

even be certain how many practised their faith on a regular basis. With regards to their level of understanding, it would appear that one way through which a largely illiterate populace was educated about the Christian doctrine was through the use of imagery. It has been argued above that the imagery used by Henry and his government through the frontispiece of the Great Bible and the Great Seal was not lost on the general populace. Whilst this too remains a matter of debate, it is obvious that the use of images and symbolism acted as vehicles through which the teachings of the Church could be disseminated. Examples of imagery in churches for the purpose of instruction include full-length, bloodied representations of Christ on the cross, 'surrounded by tools parishioners used in their daily working lives'.²²² The message to the people was clear: the Lord's Day should be kept holy to so that one could reflect on Jesus suffering and dying for mankind's sins.

The inherent message of the Church, that Christianity would always triumph over evil, was one context in which the image of St George was manifested. In Ranworth, Norfolk, there was the example of a chancel screen which showed the Apostles, flanked on either side by images of Saints George and Michael killing their respective dragons.²²³ In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, as we have already seen, the image of dragon slaying as a metaphor for good triumphing over evil was a popular trope and it remained so during the Henrician Reformation. Rather than becoming more secularised in the 1530s and 1540s, festivals relating to St George remained a way that communities could continue to act out a popular legend with religious overtones, even when devotions to images, relics and other 'superstitions' had been forbidden. The fact that St George celebrations were associated with the coming of spring and May Day was of no particular secular significance. The majority of Christian feast days and holy days were established to coincide with and ultimately replace the Pagan calendar or harvest cycle and had been for centuries. Through examining the records of parishes in the South-west, where St George remained at his most popular, it is possible to see that there was little alteration to festivities surrounding God's warrior knight.²²⁴

In Cornwall, according to town official Richard Curtis' Steward's Account, Lostwithiel officials continued to support traditional mumming practices on Saint George's feast including the riding day. The guild also paid for liturgical expenses for Saint George as well as rent money and allowances put towards Saint George dirges.²²⁵ There were also payments and various rents for land dedicated to

²²² G.W. Bernard, *The Late Medieval English Church: Vitality and Vulnerability Before the Break with Rome* (London, 2012), p. 98.

²²³ See below for more information on the cult of St Michael during the Henrician Reformation. Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: traditional religion in England, c.1400-c.1580* (2nd edition, London, 2005), p. 158.

²²⁴ Robert Whiting, *The Blind Devotion of the People: Popular Religion and the English Reformation* (Cambridge, 1989), p. 49.

²²⁵ It was common in mummer's plays for a dirge to be sung lamenting and then celebrating the dead and rebirth of St George respectively. It has been suggested that this harkens back to pagan legends including that of the Solar Deity who was celebrated on May Day to commemorate the start of spring. See Bronwen Forbes,

the saint.²²⁶ Throughout the latter half of the reign of Henry VIII, Lostwithiel retained its annual parade along the main street which was arranged by the guild of Saint George. One member of the guild played the saint and rode with armour, crown, sceptre and sword. At the parish church he was received by a priest and escorted to the guild's chapel to hear a dirge performed. Then the whole company would go to a house and have a feast with the requiem Mass celebrated for all the members of the guild.²²⁷ In a set of ceremonies blending the secular with the religious, the saint was honoured as 'prince of Cornwall'.²²⁸

There were numerous practices at Lostwithiel which were actively maintained throughout the Henrician Reformation. From 1536-37, St. George's Guild stewards noted that they were accepting donations. One such example was the substantial sum of nine shillings and two pence 'from a stranger'. Five pence was spent 'for skowring of Saint George's harness', twenty pence for 'a paire of hose for Saint George's rideng', three shillings for the dinner, twelve pence to the musicians, four shilling for the tying up of the saint's horse, one pence for the Mass of Requiem after the riding and four pence for the 'bred at the end'.²²⁹ Between 1541 and 1542, the Stratton guild of Our Lady of Homadons ended and workers were paid 'for drawing down our Lady Chapel'. But it was not until 1549 that the St. George guild at Lostwithiel was dissolved and the parish church was 'defaced' by the order of Mayor Richard Hutchings.²³⁰ The fact that this guild was able to exist and thrive through the Henrician Reformation until the reign of Edward VI demonstrates that there was no widespread movement to attack all saints' guilds. Those of England's patron saint were allowed to exist.

These popular religious practices were quite similar in Devon, with many guilds in the county owning swords, armour and a dragon which they used to re-enact the battle with the saint.²³¹ In 1531 the St George guildwarden's parish accounts paid twenty shillings to have a new George, horse and dragon made.²³² In 1534, the parishioners of Morebath erected a gilded image of Saint George on their tabernacle once again demonstrating that popular devotion to the saint was still fervent in

Make Merry in Step and Song: A Seasonal Treasury of Music, Mummers' Plays & Celebrations in the English Folk Tradition (London, 2009), p. 96.

²²⁶ REED: *Dorset, Cornwall*, Rosalind Conklin Hayes, C.E. McGee, Sally L. Joyce and Evelyn S. Newlyn (eds), (Toronto, 1999), pp. 428-29.

²²⁷ Whiting, *Blind Devotion*, p. 106.

²²⁸ The correlation between St George and the monarchy in popular practice will be discussed further later in the chapter. REED *Dorset/ Cornwall*, p. 412.

²²⁹ REED *Dorset/ Cornwall*, p. 412.

²³⁰ Whiting, *Blind Devotion*, p. 102.

²³¹ McClendon, 'Moveable Feast', p. 10.

²³² REED: *Devon*, John Wasson ed. (Toronto 1986), p. 208.

the area at the dawn of the Henrician Reformation.²³³ As the First and Second Injunctions were being released the parish records between 1537 and 1538 show that one pence was paid for the cleaning of the 'churchyare for revyll Sunday', in preparation for the procession of and the celebrations surrounding St George. In the period between 1539 and 1540, two pence was paid for the cleaning of the church yard and the celebrations. Between 1540 and 1541 they paid the same amount and then an additional amount for 'a new stremer ofsylke a gayn sent iorge day'. This occurred every year until 1547 with the death of Henry VIII.²³⁴ In addition, payments for the 'cleansing of the churchyard against St. George tide' did not end until after 1547.²³⁵ In Plymouth, the Receiver's accounts noted that between 1541 and 1542 sixteen pence was paid to 'lohn Harrys for skowryng of Saint Georgez harnes' and eight pence was paid 'for a barrel to putt the same harneyz yn'.²³⁶

The populace's devotion to St George was not limited to the South-Western counties. At Lydd in Kent, the All Saints Chapels had altars and shrines dedicated to Saint George. They also had a parish play about the legend of Saint George.²³⁷ Between 1520 and 1521 Thomas Bunting paid for the writing of 'the boke of the play' and 'for brengyng of the seid boke of Saynte Georgis play in to the Custody of the town ageyne where it was in the keeping of other men'.²³⁸ Between 1526 and 1527, two shillings and four pence was paid by the chamberlains 'for a new Booke for the lyfe of Saynt George' and again in 1533-34.²³⁹ Furthermore, between 1526 and 1533 the wardens of the Saint George play consulted with New Romney's Richard Gibson who served as 'serjeant of the tents for Henry VIII' about costumes of the Saint George play. It was played throughout the period of the Henrician Reformation and beyond, continuing until 1556 and 1560 in New Romney and Bethersden respectively.²⁴⁰ As the king's sergeant of tents for the king, Gibson would have also been familiar with the militaristic iconography that was used during Henry VIII's campaigns. Whilst one must be careful not to draw too many conclusions it is at the very least a happy coincidence that Gibson would have been chosen as a consultant for the St George play.

²³³ Christopher Haigh, *English Reformations: Religion, Politics and Society Under the Tudors* (London, 1993), p. 30.

²³⁴ REED *Devon*, p. 209.

²³⁵ Whiting, *Blind Devotion*, p. 72.

²³⁶ REED *Devon*, p. 229.

²³⁷ REED: *Kent, Diocese of Canterbury* Vol.1, James M. Gibson (ed.), (Toronto, 2002), p. 38.

²³⁸ REED *Kent*, p. lxiii.

²³⁹ There is no record as to the title of the book but it can be assumed that it discussed the saint's popular legend which was often acted out during the saint's feast day revels. REED *Kent*, p. xiii.

²⁴⁰ REED *Kent*, p. lxiii.

Other popular devotional practices were associated with the Lords of Misrule who collected money between 1534 and 1537, to maintain lights burning before the image of Saint George at All Saints' Chapel.²⁴¹ The Lydd guild that was dedicated to Saint George was not suppressed until 1549 when the Churchwarden accounts record 'the seeling off of Saynt George curtaynys', the 'sayncte George skaffold' and the 'borde that the George dyd stand on'.²⁴²

The popularity of St George, and a close intertwining of spiritual and secular elements, can be seen elsewhere in Kent also. St. Clement's church in Sandwich had a brotherhood that maintained an image of Saint George which was carried through the town on Saint George's day. In 1535 the Saint George celebrations and procession ended up at Dover. A payment was made for the 'men of Sandwyche that dauncyd the Mores on seint Marks daie (25 April) at the beryng or seint George'.²⁴³ They were paid twelve pence.²⁴⁴

In Canterbury there is no mention of Saint George celebrations after 1532-33 when the Saint's image was 'borne in procession on St. George's day in the honour of God and the king, with Mr. Mayor, the alderman, their wives with all the commons of the same going procession.' This was called the Order of the Marching of the Watch.²⁴⁵ This could be linked to the appointment of Thomas Cranmer to the Archbishopric of Canterbury but it does not suggest that all private devotions to the saint stopped. On the contrary, there is significant evidence that they continued. The Probate Court in Canterbury demonstrated how popular religious imagery was when in 1534 two triptychs of the Virgin and Saint George sold for nine shillings and four pence and four shillings and eight pence respectively. In the late 1530s it was recorded that parishioners in Canterbury had their image of Saint George taken away from them due to the fact that they had been carrying it in procession around the town on 23 April. When the wardens went to the Council to complain about the treatment of the patron saint of England, they promptly had their image restored to the church.²⁴⁶

Tensions in Canterbury were also evident in April, 1541 when the King's Council discussed the offences of John Barkley, innkeeper, who was accused by a clergyman of 'having molested the King with sundry troublous supplications' and as a result he was 'found to be "a common barrater and a malicious promoter of false and unjust matters," and so committed to the Fleet'.²⁴⁷ The following

²⁴¹ REED *Kent*, Vol. 2, pp. 680-690.

²⁴² REED *Kent*, Vol.1, p. xc.

²⁴³ REED *Kent*, p. xc.

²⁴⁴ REED *Kent*, p. 431.

²⁴⁵ REED *Kent*, p. xc, p. 144.

²⁴⁶ Haigh, *Reformations*, p. 157.

²⁴⁷ *Letters and Papers*, Vol. 16, pp. 366-385.

March there were still concerns about the continuation of 'the abolishing of the candles before images, and more diligent erasing of the names of the bishops of Rome and Thomas Becket, and about vestments, the Lord's Prayer, &c'.²⁴⁸ The extended period of dissent from the inhabitants of Canterbury demonstrates that private worship did continue and that, in the case of St George, the royal council was prepared to intervene to protect devotions to the king's patron saint.

Further north, in Coventry and Warwickshire there were also devotions to St George. In Coventry's St Mary's Cathedral the 1537 Inventory made note of 'A relique of [Saynt] Thomas of Canterburie/ parte sylver & parte Copper and Image of Saynt George with a bone of his in his shelde Sylver'. Also included in this list was a 'shrine of St Osborne with his head, part of the Holy Cross and relics belonging to St James, Lawrence, Justin, Jerome, Augustine and Andrew'.²⁴⁹ It is interesting that of the religious items mentioned above, it is only the relic of St George which appeared in context with this military tradition. The bone set in the saint's shield speaks directly to the legend of St George as well as to the representation of him being a martial protector and defender. Much like the other areas across the south of England, Coventry was also known for celebrating the legend of St George on Corpus Christi Day where a major civic procession would lead to and then focus on the chapel dedicated to St George.

Another example of popular devotion to the saint occurred twenty miles away in Stratford upon Avon (see Figure 4.16). The Corpus Christi guild supported an altar dedicated to St George in the parish church and accounts dating between 1541 and 1547 suggest that the guild paid for an actor to impersonate St George as part of the riding and during St George pageants marking Ascension Day.²⁵⁰ The devotion felt by the parishioners towards the saint can also be seen in the Guild Chapel where a fifteenth century wall painting was preserved until 1547 when it was whitewashed on the orders of Edward VI's government (Figure 4.17).²⁵¹ The representation of St George is that of a brave defender and protector, the same image that was maintained throughout the first half of the sixteenth century. The location of the painting, in the Guild Chapel, is another example of the intertwining of a religious allegory with secular elements. In many ways, the Stratford guild supplies an explanation of why St George remained a popular figure during the Henrician Reformation. He was a well-known hero with a popular allegoric legend which was firmly

²⁴⁸ *Letters and Papers*, Vol. 17, pp. 71-84.

²⁴⁹ *REED: Coventry*, R.W. Ingram (ed.), (Toronto, 1997), pp.487, 488.

²⁵⁰ For more information see Clifford Davidson, *The Guild Chapel Wall Paintings at Stratford-upon-Avon* (New York, 1988).

²⁵¹ That the religious painting was whitewashed, rather than being destroyed, speaks to the possibility that parishioners hoped that a time would come when they would be able to see them again. This is furthered by the fact that St George pageants began again during the brief Counter Reformation during the reign of Mary I.

fixed in tradition. Given the nature of the early modern parish church it would have been impossible for religious and secular thought to be mutually exclusive of one another. In addition to being a popular way through which a large number of individuals, from various walks of life could show their devotion to a patron saint of England, St George also acted as a vehicle through which subjects could show their obedience and allegiance to their king.

St George and St Michael: Saints separated by reformation

As discussed earlier, St George belonged to a group of dragon-slaying protector saints whose cults were promulgated throughout the medieval period. One of these saints whose cult had a very different experience during the Henrician Reformation was the Archangel, St Michael. Visual representations of St Michael and St George were often virtually interchangeable. They were both responsible for casting away a symbol of evil and fighting against threats to the faith and had numerous associated legends that extolled their heroic and loyal virtues. Both saints' cults grew in popularity in England at the same time and the related iconography took on an increasingly violent aspect throughout the medieval period.²⁵² This was aided in part by the Crusades. In the time that followed, devotions to St Michael remained strong and he became associated with being a protector of the vulnerable, including the Virgin Mary, even after St George became a more martial figure.²⁵³ At first glance it would appear that there was no great difference between Saints Michael and George. Both were seen as 'God's warriors', as protectors of the weak and both seemed to have significant popular cults dedicated to them at the dawn of the Henrician Reformation.

St Michael's status as an archangel however ultimately set him apart from England's patron saint. Jacobus de Voragine in his work *The Golden Legend* states that St Michael 'shall arise and address in the time of Antichrist against him and shall stand defender and keeper for them that be chosen. He also fought with the dragon and his angels and casting them out of heaven had a great victory'.²⁵⁴ Similarly, Mirk's *Festial* characterises St Michael in a similar way and quotes St Gregory discussing the affinity felt between the archangel and God as saying 'When God would perform a wonderful thing or deed, then he would send St Michael as his agent'.²⁵⁵ Here, it is possible to see

²⁵² See Samantha Riches, 'Saint and Monster, Saint as Monster: Exemplary Encounters with the Other', *Saints and Sanctity* Peter Clarke and Tony Claydon (eds), (Woodbridge, 2011), pp. 125-135.

²⁵³ Peter Marshall and Alexandra Walsham, 'Migrations of angels in the early modern world' in *Angels in the Early Modern World* Peter Marshall and Alexandra Walsham eds. (Cambridge, 2006), p. 11. This text offers a full discussion of angels and their treatment during the Reformation.

²⁵⁴ Jacobus de Voragine 'The Life of St George', *The Golden Legend* Vol. 1, William Granger Ryan (trans.), (Princeton, 1993), p. 240.

²⁵⁵ Richard E. Johnson, *St Michael the Medieval English Legend* (Woodbridge, 2005), p. 68.

that, as a spiritual being, St Michael was a very powerful and influential intercessor which led to a number of cults being dedicated to him as well as him being made patron of a number of churches and occupations.²⁵⁶

This closeness to God and his status as an archangel put St Michael in a very precarious position after Henry VIII and his ministers began to implement reforming legislation, beginning in the mid-1530s. Although there were no legitimate relics that could be associated with St Michael, most of the tales related to angels were from 'saints' lives and secondary material' and were therefore more susceptible to being accused of superstition.²⁵⁷

The danger of angels attracting inappropriate veneration was acknowledged by Archbishop Thomas Cranmer when he argued that:

neither the visions of angels, apparitions of the dead, nor miracles, nor all those together joined in one, are able or sufficient to make any one new article of faith, or establish any thing in religion, with the express words of God...What teacheth the picture of sayncte Mychael waying scales, and our lady putting her beades in the balaunce[?] Forsoothe nothing els, but superstitiousnes of beades, and confidence in oure owne merites, and the merites of saints, and nothyng in the merites of Christ.²⁵⁸

As a result, the cult of St Michael was firmly in the reformers' sights. With the veneration of angels being a point of contention for reformers it was important for the king and his councillors and theologians to promulgate less contentious figures amongst the populace.²⁵⁹

The way in which the cult of St Michael was treated is very telling about the special position in which St George found himself. While both saints had no physical remains in England, St George's cult was permitted to thrive on the whole whilst St Michael's began to suffer as a result of reforming legislation. As angels were a point of contention amongst reformers, St George was a far more appropriate figure as his presence at one point had been tangible. Perhaps more significantly, the protection the cult of St George received as opposed to St Michael who was a biblical figure speaks to the special protected status in which St George found himself.

Whilst both St George and St Michael had popular cults that developed through the medieval period, the former's cult was also able to thrive through the re-enactment of the former's legend. This was different from St Michael whose legend of expelling Lucifer from heaven was often told in relation to others; it was not performed on its own. For example, in exploring accounts of

²⁵⁶ Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, pp. 60-61.

²⁵⁷ Laura Sangha, *Angels and Beliefs in England, 1480-1700* (London, 2012), p. 47.

²⁵⁸ Sangha, *Angels and Beliefs*, pp. 47, 59.

²⁵⁹ This is not to say that the more ardent reformers, such as Cranmer, approved of figures like St George but rather reinforces the importance of royal intercession in the protection of the patron saint.

religious plays, it is significant that St Michael often appears in *Corpus Christi* plays and *tableaux vivants* but rarely had plays dedicated to his story. A further manifestation occurred in Cornwall with the aforementioned Flora Day. During these celebrations participants would often sing the Han-an-Tow song which mentioned 'Robin Hood, St George, St Michael, invading Spaniards and "Aunt Mary Moses"'.²⁶⁰ St Michael is clearly mentioned, but merely in conjunction with other figures who were also associated with expelling evil. Similarly the 'Flurry Dance' where dancers would weave in and out of houses and gardens to symbolically 'driv[e] out evil and darkness and let in goodness and light' was also associated with the saint.²⁶¹ The village of Helston, Cornwall, whose patron saint was St Michael moved this celebratory ritual to Michaelmas in his honour showing that the archangel retained some degree of popularity.

It would appear however that the mass popularity of St George overshadowed that of St Michael during the period of the Henrician Reformation. The potential reasons behind this are numerous. Certainly St Michael, was more of a controversial figure than St George. The latter's legend also appears to have stood well on its own and acted as a representation of the battle between good and evil. Furthermore, St George had a long and promulgated history in England both at a monarchical and popular level. Despite never stepping foot in England, the legend of St George was adopted and adapted by different groups within the kingdom. This may not have been the case for St Michael who achieved great popularity in France; this might also explain why St Michael did not receive the same protection that St George did from the king.

It has been discussed that Cranmer's contemporaries knew he would not ultimately attack the role that St George played within the English Church for fear of angering the king, unlike the overall influence of St Michael. This was a direct result of the close affinity with the English monarchy and the king's personal devotion to the saint. At a popular level, the legend of St George retained its popularity throughout the Henrician Reformation was an example of continuity during this volatile time.

St George and managing dissent

It has already been established that Henry VIII and his ministers used the king's personal devotion to St George to appeal to the general populace. It is also clear, especially through the dismantling of Becket's shrine, that Henry worried about challenges to his authority, even when these were of a

²⁶⁰ Despite the reference to the Spaniards, this song predates the Armada of 1588. REED *Dorset/ Cornwall*, p.414.

²⁶¹ REED *Dorset/ Cornwall*, p.414.

historical and symbolic character. To counter them, Henry engaged in ritualistic and symbolic practices that demonstrated his role as king and as Supreme Head of the Church of England. By dispersing the remains of Becket, Henry was able to ensure that they would 'cause no superstition afterwards' and eliminate rivals for his own political and religious agenda.²⁶² The fact that Saint George was not buried in England and therefore had no shrine allowed Henry to adopt his image without having to address the superstition of pilgrimages.²⁶³ The king was therefore able to ensure that he was able to control which saints the populace were able to worship. By casting himself in the role of defender of the faith, Henry attempted to portray himself as the way through which the English people would achieve their salvation.

The importance of maintaining control over popular movements, and therefore removing any potential causes for dissent was of the utmost importance to Henry from the moment he began the break with Rome.²⁶⁴ By examining the threat posed by popular figures like Elizabeth Barton, the Holy Maid of Kent, it is possible to see how and why the image and legend of St George would increase in importance to the king when appealing to his subjects.

During Henry's application for an annulment from his first wife, Katherine of Aragon, Elizabeth Barton and her followers began to spread a story that an angel had "seized the host from Henry at Mass and given it to her".²⁶⁵ As Barton was a much respected, pious figure she acted as a threat to Henry as it suggested God might not favour him. This story was particularly problematic to the king and his ministers, because it took the authority out of the king's hands and placed it in Barton's.²⁶⁶ The situation with Barton escalated further when she began to prophesise by 'divine authority that the king would be dethroned if he married Anne Boleyn'.²⁶⁷ Despite the fact that Henry tried to bribe her with the position of becoming an abbess, Barton would not stop preaching against the annulment.²⁶⁸

When one of Barton's followers prepared a collection of these prophecies with seven hundred published copies, both she and her entourage were immediately apprehended and questioned by Cranmer.²⁶⁹ In order to eliminate her popular following, Thomas Cromwell had her arrested and

²⁶² Butler, *Becket's Bones*, p. 59.

²⁶³ McClendon, 'Moveable Feast', p. 10.

²⁶⁴ Tatiana C. String, *Art and Communication in the Reign of Henry VIII* (Aldershot, 2008), p. 105.

²⁶⁵ Haigh, *Reformations*, p. 138.

²⁶⁶ Haigh, *Reformations*, p. 138.

²⁶⁷ Ethan H. Shagan, *Popular Politics in the English Reformation* (Cambridge, 2003), p. 62.

²⁶⁸ G.W. Bernard, *The King's Reformation: Henry VIII and the Remaking of the English Church* (London, 2005), p. 91.

²⁶⁹ Haigh, *Reformations*, p. 138.

executed as a traitor after a sermon was given at Saint Paul's Cross on 23 November, 1533 denouncing Barton as a fraud.²⁷⁰ What is significant is not the fact that Barton was arrested but that it was Henry's chief minister who decided the punishment and the charge and not Archbishop Cranmer or the church courts, thereby suggesting the concern was for the well-being and security of the state. On the scaffold, Barton was forced to admit that she had lied about the visions. Hall quotes her as revealing that

the things which I feigned was profitable unto them, therefore they [her followers and religious officials] praised me and bare me in hand that it was the holy ghost and not I that did therein, and then puffed up with their praises fell into a certain pride and foolish fantasy with myself and thought I might feign what I would.²⁷¹

As was often the case in early modern executions, it was made sure that Barton completely undermined herself, thereby promoting the king's authority and supremacy in the matter. It is apparent that Henry acknowledged the threat posed by those who received significant support from the general populace.

With threats like Barton, that could have undermined the king's authority, it was all the more important for Henry to maintain a strong and appealing band with his populace; in this sense, St George was extremely important. St George was a patriotic figure who had played a defining role in English military successes. His legend had definite popular appeal, involving as it did a princess and a dragon-slaying whilst maintaining strong moral overtones. These characteristics were also embedded within the traditions of the English monarchy. By performing acts of devotion towards St George the English people reinforced their allegiance to their king. He was a stable figure who could not have been easily appropriated by forces of opposition due to his long affinity with the English monarchy and with Henry in particular.

It must be asked: to what extent were people conscious of the political implications of St George devotions? Much like Henry VIII's courtiers, the general populace knew that St George shared an affinity and tradition with the monarchy. It is important to note, however, that while Henry and the council were lenient towards those who would show devotion to St George, the same cannot be said for their attitude towards other popular figures. The story of the Robin Hood riots offers insight what was deemed acceptable and unacceptable.

²⁷⁰ Haigh, *Reformations*, p. 139.

²⁷¹ Bernard, *King's Reformation*, p. 94.

St George and Robin Hood in Popular Practice

The legend of Robin Hood had been part of English popular culture since its inclusion in *Piers Plowman* in the latter half of the fourteenth century.²⁷² In the century or so that followed it has been argued that the character of the bandit, whilst 'transgressive', was also 'playful'²⁷³ and underwent a 'gentrification' through adoption by the monarchy and nobility. The young Henry VIII was greatly drawn to the romantic elements of the Robin Hood legend, similar to the way the chivalric nature of St George appealed to him. In 1510 during courtly celebrations, the King and eleven nobles broke into the Queen's Chamber dressed as Robin Hood and his merry men and wooed her and the ladies in waiting.²⁷⁴ Five years later, whilst passing by Shooter's Hill Henry and Katherine were brought by two men dressed in green into the forest where they had a feast. According to Hall's Chronicle, 'the kyng and queene sate doune, and were served with venison and wyne by Robyn Hood and his men, to their great contentacion'. It is evident that Henry was happy to partake in the English legend and popular tale as it appealed to the young king's romantic and chivalric ideals.²⁷⁵

Sean Field has argued that Henry VIII used the popularity of Robin Hood legends as a way through which he could highlight the corruption of the monasteries. These legends acted as allegories used by those involved in the dissolution of the monasteries and were welcomed by the larger populace who did harbour some resentment, if not towards the Church as an institution, then to the corrupt practices of its religious orders.²⁷⁶ While there is evidence, as mentioned above, that demonstrates Henry VIII was partial to the popular legend and utilised it for his own amusement and ends, the 'complex and sometimes seemingly contradictory attitudes' towards Robin Hood to which Field refers meant that it was a narrative that had to be closely monitored and controlled.²⁷⁷

At a popular level, the legend of Robin Hood became part of the spring celebrations such as Flora Day which was celebrated in the south of England. These events would run concurrently with Saint George's Day which also included re-enactments of the legend of Robin Hood.²⁷⁸ In Exeter, the

²⁷² Thomas Hahn, 'Playing with Transgression: Robin Hood and Popular Culture', *Robin Hood in Popular Culture* Thomas Hahn (ed.), (Cambridge, 2000), p. 3.

²⁷³ Hahn, 'Transgression', p. 1

²⁷⁴ Stephen Knight, *Robin Hood: A Complete Study of the English Outlaw* (Oxford, 1994), p. 109.

²⁷⁵ Knight states that the adoption of Robin Hood's legend is indicative of the outlaw's role being 'fully reshaped, stylised so it has no disruptive force'. Knight, *Robin Hood*, p. 110.

²⁷⁶ See Sean Field, 'Devotion, Discontent, and the Henrician Reformation: The Evidence of the Robin Hood Stories', *Journal of British Studies*, Vol.41, No.1, (Jan. 2002), pp.6-22.

²⁷⁷ Field, 'Robin Hood Stories', p. 7.

²⁷⁸ REED Dorset/ Cornwall, p. 414.

first Robin Hood play was performed in conjunction with the St George celebrations in 1427 and continued to be so until the start of the sixteenth century.²⁷⁹

The appeal that Robin Hood had to the general populace somewhat mirrored that of St George, as their stories and legends were open to interpretations and could be told in numerous ways through various mediums. In Kent, these celebrations often 'featured a Robin Hood game or play in which the gallant outlaw and Maid Marian took the place of the summer king and queen'.²⁸⁰ In some respects this practice is very similar to the instances in Cornwall which portrayed St George as the 'prince' who was master of the ridings.

Both legends acted as popular forms of entertainment to a population that was largely illiterate and depended on images and oral history to disseminate entertainment.²⁸¹ The connotations surrounding Robin Hood, especially at a popular level, were slightly different as in its most base form the title character was an outlaw who flouted authority, albeit sometimes for a greater moral good. It has been noted that Robin Hood 'consistently represents the local, the natural, the vigorous, and the unsophisticated' making it just as possible to 'please a king or liberate a prisoner'.²⁸² It is in this description that the integral difference between the two figures lies: Robin Hood's tales could suggest or incite protest against a king, whilst the legend of St George taught obedience and loyalty. Furthermore, by the sixteenth century the legend had enjoyed a long history associated with the English monarchy. By contrast, there are cases as early as 1509 in Exeter where the Robin Hood 'riots' were causing such upheaval that the council 'called a virtual halt to them' for nearly fifty years.²⁸³ In a declaration read out at the time it was stated that 'ther shall be [no] riot kept in any parysh by the yong man of the same parysh [called Robyn hode] but oonly the Church holyday...if any be the persons so doying shall be punysshed by the Mayre'.²⁸⁴ It is clear that the transgressive nature of the Robin Hood tales were not lost on its audience. The fact that the decree limits celebrations to 'holy days' twenty-five years before the Act of Supremacy is also quite telling as it restricts the celebrations to state and church-sanctioned festivities, once again demonstrating the intermingling of the religious and secular.

The importance of St George's role at the popular level at the outbreak of the Henrician Reformation can be seen when attitudes towards St George and Robin Hood are compared. In June

²⁷⁹ REED *Devon*, p. xxiv.

²⁸⁰ REED *Kent*, p. xc.

²⁸¹ Hahn, 'Transgression', p. 9.

²⁸² Knight, *Robin Hood*, p. 114.

²⁸³ REED *Devon*, p. xvii.

²⁸⁴ REED *Devon*, p. 119.

1528, as the king had started his divorce proceedings, Sir Edward Guildford, Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports, ordered the mayors, bailiffs and jurats of all Cinque Port towns to forbid large gatherings of people, 'no doubt to forestall any possible public demonstration of discontent'. The order specifically banned any 'stage play Robyn hoodes play wacches or wakes yeveales or other such lyk playes wherby that eny grete assemble of the kynges people shuld be made and caused to be arreysed'.²⁸⁵ This fear of public upheaval as a result of Robin Hood revels was not, however, transferred to ridings linked to St George. It has already been shown that St George celebrations continued throughout the south of England during the Henrician Reformation and that devotions to the saint were permitted.

The infrequency with which Robin Hood revels were celebrated in certain parishes also suggests either that they were not as popular as St George or that they were met with some discontent from officials. For example, in Ashburton, an area with a guild dedicated to St George who had a riding every year, there are only two entries for payments made in relation to Robin Hood. The first between 1526 and 1527 in St Andrew's Churchwarden's accounts noted 'de iiis xd solutis pro nova tunic pro Robyn Whode facta hoc anno...'²⁸⁶ The second was not made until 1541/1542. 'Et de xixs xjd solutis pro...tunicarum pro Robin Hood and is men'.²⁸⁷ Whilst it is not definite, it would appear that less money and resources went into the funding of the Robin Hood revels than into the St George ridings. With its largely secular and malleable nature the Robin Hood legend was more inclined to incite discontent and trouble amongst revellers as opposed to England's patron saint who had a long-established tradition of loyal support for the monarchy.

St George remained a popular figure during the Henrician Reformation and that he did so with considerable official support. Rather than becoming an increasingly secular figure, however St George acted as a vehicle through which traditional Catholic teachings and morals could be disseminated in a time when church devotional practices were changing and coming under attack from several quarters. Despite the fact that the general population may not have been well versed in the intricacies of church doctrine, religious worship was alive and well in English parishes leading up to the reformation and legends and morals were shared if not through the liturgy or the Mass then through the images present in the parish churches. It would have been impossible for there to be a widespread differentiation between the spiritual and temporal worlds: both were deeply intertwined. Parish records indicate that throughout the latter half of Henry's reign the traditional

²⁸⁵ REED *Kent*, pp. xcii, 427. They would eventually be started up again, in New Romney at least, in 1532. p. 770.

²⁸⁶ REED *Devon*, p. 21.

²⁸⁷ REED *Devon*, p. 25.

celebrations associated with St George were actively maintained and funded. Not only is this evident through the symbolic practices, but also through the fact that revels, feasts and other celebrations linked to St George were not significantly challenged or culled until after the reign of Henry VIII. At least until 1547, the saint's affinity with the traditions of the English monarchy made him a state-endorsed heroic figure who could be seen as a role model: brave, obedient and loyal to God and his faith. He remained the chivalric knight of God who defended the Christian faith much like their king was attempting to do by removing foreign and superstitious influences over the English church. As opposed to other saints as well as popular and more secular figures, such as Robin Hood, he remained an acceptable focus for celebrations in an increasingly tumultuous time offering security both to the people and their monarch.

Given the king's personal devotion to St George, which continued to grow after the Reformation at a time when the vast majority of saints' cults were suppressed, it is evident that scriptural authority and imagery was not the sole source of legitimatisation for the royal supremacy. As a non-scriptural individual, St George could be alluded to in martial and political matters. Furthermore, as patron saint of the monarch and his kingdom, he was a perfect symbol for the English church. The affinity with the monarchy also allowed Henry to make a link between ancient traditions and the revisions to the Church. Henry's relationship with St George allowed for both a sense of continuity and change during this tumultuous period.

Images



Figure 4.1 Detail of the Anthony Roll



Figure 4.2 The Allegory of the Old and the New Testament, Hans Holbein



Figure 4.3 Christ's Resurrection, Hampton Court Palace



Figure 4.4 Detail of Christ's Resurrection, Hampton Court Palace



Figure 4.5 The Embarkation at Dover, c. 1545



Figure 4.6 The Field of the Cloth of Gold, 1520, c. 1545



Figure 4.7 Detail of The Field of the Cloth of Gold, 1520



Figure 4.8 Pin thought to belong to Henry VIII



Figure 4.9 Henry VIII wearing St George pendant, Hans Holbein



Figure 4.10 The Black Book of the Garter



Figure 4.11 Portrait of Thomas Cromwell wearing the chain of the Order of the Garter, 1537



Figure 4.12 The Second Great Seal of Henry VIII with St George slaying the dragon (left). The Third Great Seal of Henry VIII with the king as St George and Defender of the Faith with the livery symbol of the hound (right).

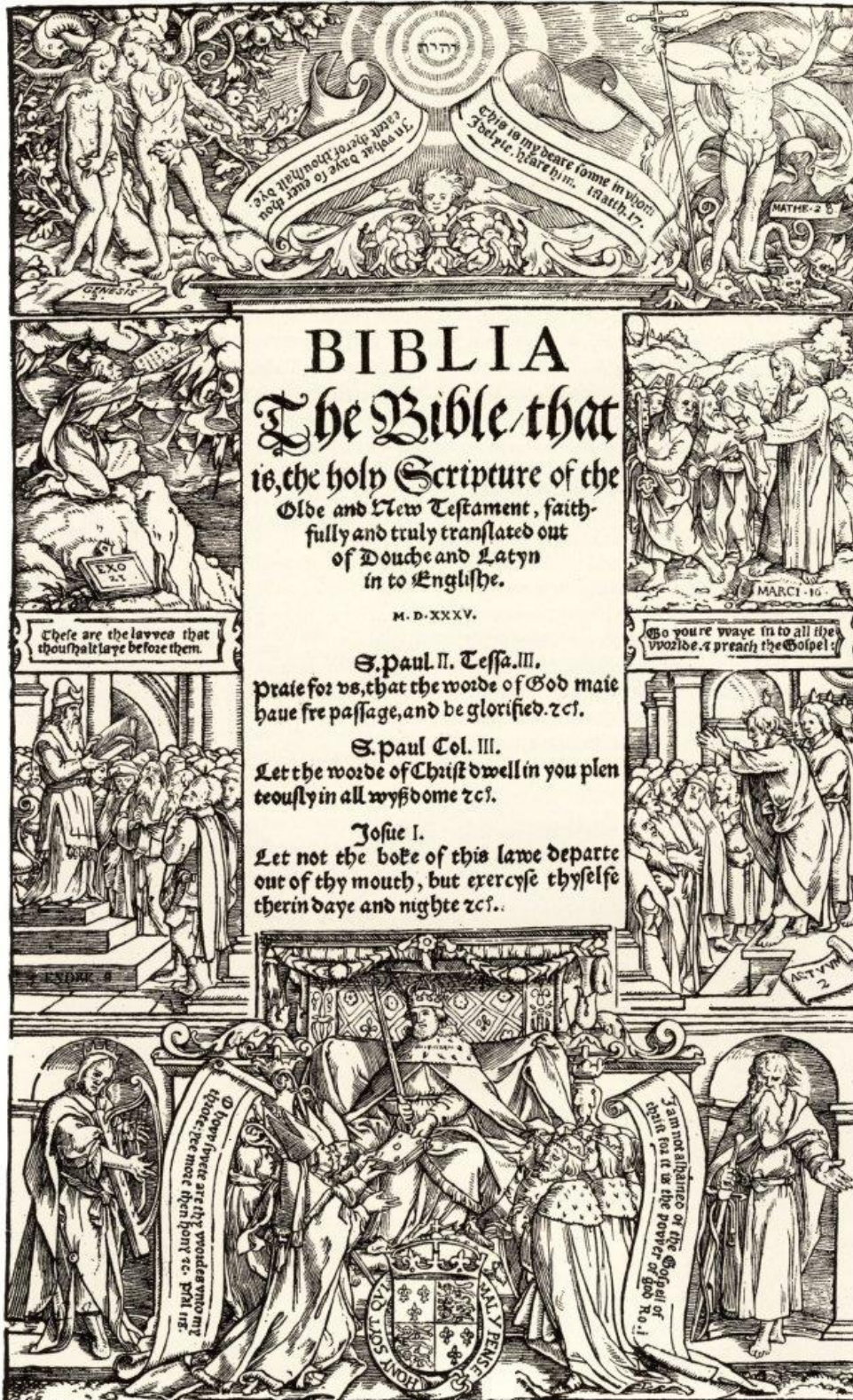


Figure 4.13 Cover of the Coverdale Bible 1535

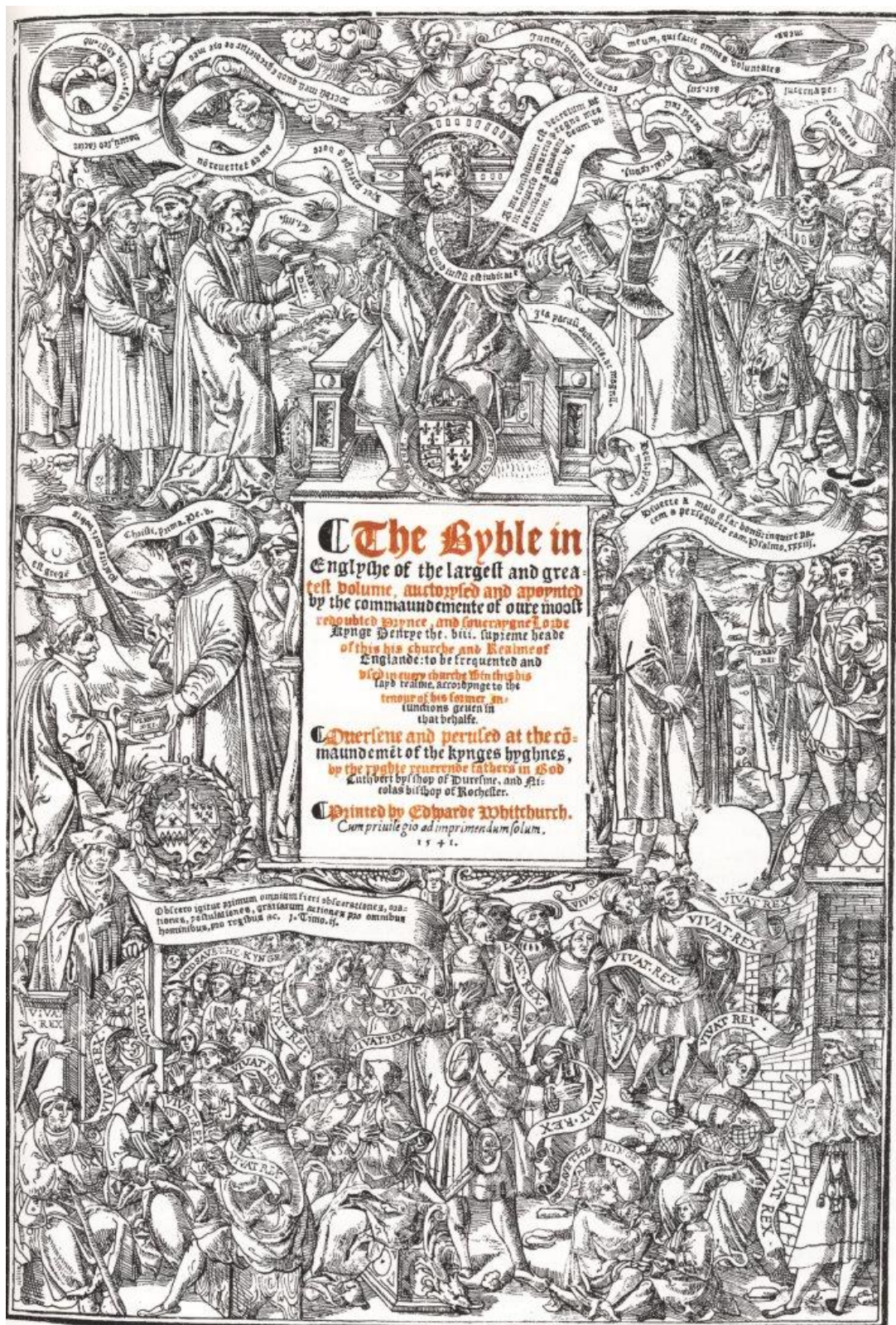


Figure 4.14 Cover of the Great Bible 1539



Figure 4.15 Cover of the Illuminated Bible 1542



Figure 4.26 A sketch of St George Slaying the Dragon in the Stratford Upon Avon Guild Chapel after being uncovered in 1804

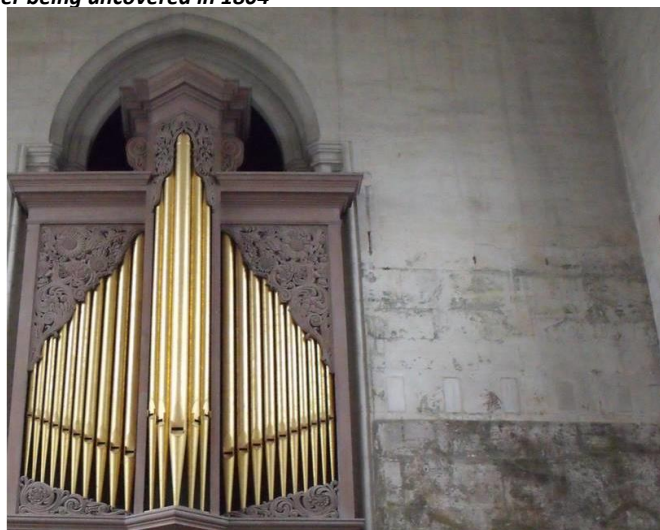


Figure 4.17 The wall of the Guild Chapel, present day

5. Saint George and Religious Upheaval, 1547 - 1558

With the death of Henry VIII, St George experienced a very uncertain future. The treatment of England's patron saint offers a nuanced insight into the tumultuous reigns of Edward VI and Mary I. One would be forgiven for thinking that St George was sent largely into obscurity, or at least secularised by the stalwart Protestant king. This is simply not the case. Despite the king and his councillors' best efforts at thorough Protestant reform, they were unsuccessful in totally eradicating traditional religious figures. Although their time of governance was short, there is ample evidence to suppose that entrenched iconography, could not totally be done away with, despite the religious pendulum swinging towards for radical reform.

St George and the Boy King

Jennifer Loach argued that Edward VI was largely influenced by those around him as an impressionable youth, a point disagreed with by Diarmaid MacCulloch, who subsequently depicted him as a militant Protestant crusader.²⁸⁸ In his assessment of Edward's reign, David Loades persuasively sought to find a middle ground between Loach and MacCulloch. He is hesitant to believe that a twelve year old boy could command but states that as Edward became older and began to approach the age of maturity, he sought to assert his views and commands over his advisors and the Privy Council.²⁸⁹ This argument is also largely shared by Stephen Alford who notes that Edward wrote of his desire for greater independence to rule in his personal papers and cites his treatment of some of his Privy Councillors when he chastised them for questioning his authority whilst a minor.²⁹⁰

It is clear that Edward VI had definite Protestant sympathies and interests which he wished to promulgate. The idea that any child-king in the early modern period would not have understood something of the authority of his position, or would have held merely child-like interests is far better suited to Victorian narratives or ideals of childhoods. Conversely, one cannot ignore the influence that the personal religious and political beliefs of Somerset, Northumberland and Cranmer had over the young king's reign. Rather, as Alford states, Edward had a 'gradual emergence' as an operational king: 'The significant point to grasp is that the dynamics of power at the centre were capable of

²⁸⁸ Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Tudor Church Militant: Edward VI and the Protestant Reformation* (New York and London, 1999).

²⁸⁹ David Loades, *Essays on the Reign of Edward VI* (Oxford, 2003), p. 40.

²⁹⁰ Stephen Alford, *Kingship and Politics in the Reign of Edward VI* (Cambridge, 2002).

reshaping themselves because the men around the king accepted that, in the circumstances, they should'.²⁹¹ In this sense, Edward's personal beliefs are reflected in the decreasing importance of St George during the years of the young king's reign. That being said, the fact that St George survived the reign, and did not disappear completely, speaks to the importance of the saint and how intrinsically he was interwoven into the fabric of English tradition at all levels of society.

As the patron saint of Henry VIII, and the wider institution of the monarchy, St George had played a significant role in all ceremonies at court. These included Edward's birth, where it was recorded that '[b]y the provision of God, Our Lady S. Mary, and the glorious martyr S. George on the 12 day of October, the feast of St. Wilfrid, the vigil of St. Edward, which was on the Friday, about two o'clock in the morning, was born at Hampton Court Edward son to King Henry the VIIIth'.²⁹² The same can be said three days later at the young prince's baptism in October, 1537, when, after the christening itself, the young prince 'was then borne to the King and Queen and had the blessing of God, Our Lady, and St. George, and his father and mother'.²⁹³ The monarchy's affinity with the saint did not immediately cease at the death of Henry VIII but rather, despite the fervent Protestant beliefs of Edward and Somerset, remained part of public ceremonies including the funeral of Henry VIII which kept with the previous king's conservative beliefs.²⁹⁴ Even during Edward's coronation procession there were pageants such as the one at Cheap, which included traditional English figures including Edward the Confessor and St George.²⁹⁵ The traditional nature of these ceremonies makes it clear that Somerset and Cranmer were biding their time in order to slowly make changes to the religious fabric of the English church, changes that would be fully endorsed by the boy king.

As the Edwardian programme of reform began to unfold, St George became a touchstone of debate about the acceptable limits of change, as evidenced by the letters of Stephen Gardiner, bishop of Winchester, in the months after Henry VIII's death. In a series of letters, Gardiner argued for the significance of St George as means through which Christians could be instructed but could also pledge their obedience to the monarchy. Although outlined earlier, the full debate surrounding the use of St George's image is important in understanding attitudes towards him at that time. Writing to Bishop Ridley from Southwark between 23 and 28 February, 1547, disputing a sermon he heard Ridley deliver on Ash Wednesday, Gardiner laid down a challenge:

²⁹¹ Stephen Alford, *Edward VI*, p. 159.

²⁹² *Calendar of Letters and Papers*, XII, ii, p. 911.

²⁹³ Meaning that the prayers said for the prince invoked St George's intercession. *Letters and Papers*, XII, ii, p. 911.

²⁹⁴ Loades, *Edward VI*, p. 5.

²⁹⁵ *Calendar of State Papers, Spanish*, ix, p.47.

If ye allow nothing but Scripture, what say you to the Kinges ringes? But they be allowed; ergo, somewhat is to be allowed besides Scripture. And another: If images be forbidden, why doothe the King weare S. Georg on his brest? But he weareth S. Georg on his brest; ergo, images be not forbidden. If saintes be not to bee worshipped, why kepe we S. Georges feast? But we kepe Saint Georges feast; ergo, etc.²⁹⁶

Here, Gardiner clearly acknowledges the special status that St George held within the tradition of the monarchy and in particular during the late king's reign. The argument also represents the apprehension felt by the conservatives in the court who thought that changes to religious doctrines were occurring too quickly, especially since the king was in his minority. Gardiner continued the debate about the symbolic significance of the saint with the Lord Protector on 28 February, when he asserted that

the pursivant carieth not on his brest the Kinges name written in such letters as a few can spell, but suche as all can reade, be they never so rude, being greate knowen letters in images of three lyons and three fours de luce, and other beastes holding those armes. And he that cannot rede the scripture written about the Kinges great seale, either because he cannot rede at al, or because the wax doth not expresse it, yet he can rede Sainct Georg on horseback on the one side, and the Kinge sitting in his majestie on the other side; and readeth so much written in those images as, if he be an honest man, he wil put of his cap.²⁹⁷

These letters not only demonstrate the importance of the saint to the monarchy, but also suggests that from very early on in Edward's reign, St George was placed under threat from the *nouveau regime* who wished to further eradicate superstition from the English Church. His reference to the protected patron saint of the monarch demonstrates that Gardiner thought that he was playing the equivalent of a trump card in this high-stakes game. St George was more than a mere courtly trope. This is further apparent in the debate that emerged surrounding Henry VIII's Great Seal as Somerset retorted to Gardiner that neither the king nor St George had been represented, but rather a simple knight on horseback.²⁹⁸

On 6 June, from the relative safety of his seat at Winchester, Gardiner informed Somerset that he was incorrect and that there had been a definite and deliberate allusion to St George and that he was an important figure not only to the monarchy, but also the wider populace:

a good will the people, taking Saynt George for a patron of the realme under God and having some confidence of succor by Gods strength derived by him, to encrease thestatyion of there prince and sovereign lord, caled there king on horsbake in the feat of armes, S. Georg on horsbake. My knowledge was not corrupt. I know it representeth the King...As for S. George himself, I have such opynyon of hym as becommeth me, and have red also of Belerephon in Homere, as they call him the father of the tales.²⁹⁹

²⁹⁶ Stephen Gardiner, *The Letters of Stephen Gardiner* James Arthur Muller (ed.), (Westport, 1933), pp.260-261.

²⁹⁷ Gardiner, *Letters*, p. 274.

²⁹⁸ For further context and analysis, see below under the changes to the Order of the Garter and the Garter Statutes.

²⁹⁹ Gardiner, *Letters*, p. 289.

In addition to speaking to his own affinity with the saint's tale, Gardiner's allusion to Greek mythology in his letter is particularly significant as it represents another horse-backed hero who defeated evil beasts and was lauded by the gods. This refutes the argument that St George was completely side-lined by the new Protestant regime; by making this comparison, Gardiner is linking the idea of using St George's legend to the fables that would have entertained people and carried a moral message. The allusion also suggests the origins of St George's legend were firmly based in antiquity which would further explain the popularity and appeal of the narrative. Gardiner feared that forbidding these types of traditions in the name of religious reform would result in alienating large swathes of the population and could cause unrest or dissention towards the wider Reformation.

Less than a week later, Gardiner wrote to Cranmer, again using St George to make an argument for caution in religious policy:

if the King our sovereyn lord being in minority, we bishops should not, under pretence of *Legenda Aurea* or the *Festival Book*, do any thing that may touch St George, wherein were at once touched as many as are companions in that Order, yt might be marvellously taken yf the sovereyn of the Order, our sovereyn lord, list to be angry.³⁰⁰

Gardiner clearly felt that the young impressionable king was at the mercy of his political advisors who were making significant religious changes and reinterpretations from the previous reign. These letters speak to Gardiner's attempt to keep the Protestant faction at bay and his references to St George and the protected status up he enjoyed until this point. Gardiner's argument, whilst acknowledging that *The Golden Legend* and *Mirk's Festial* could foster superstition, also called for a pragmatic approach to reform so the church would not lose valuable moral lessons that were well-known to its parishioners.

Despite Gardiner's perhaps diplomatic assertion that it was not the king, but rather his advisors, who were introducing religious change, it is clear both that Edward was influenced by these individuals and believed in the new faith. As his reign progressed, it became more apparent that the young king was not content with having others rule for him. Edward VI wrote in his private papers that it was 'a great impediment for me, to send to al my counsell, and i should seme to be in bondage'. According to Alford, this issue seemed to annoy Edward on two fronts: the first was the 'practical nuisance of gathering together privy councillors for the transaction of the routine business of governance' and 'the assault on his authority'.³⁰¹ One such example of Edward rebelling against

³⁰⁰ Gardiner, *Letters*, pp. 312-313.

³⁰¹ Alford, *Edward VI*, p. 160.

this 'assault' occurred in October 1551, when Richard Rich received a signet letter from Edward VI challenging Rich's return of a letter addressed to the Lord Chancellor by the Privy Council because it bore only eight signatures. Edward believed his power 'to be su[ch] that what so ever we shall do by the advise of the nombre of our Counsell attending upon our person' had more 'strength and efficacye than to be put into question or doubt of the validite therof'. Although he was willing to 'inclyne' himself to listen to his advisors, he was not obliged to follow or adhere to 'any parte of them'.³⁰² Edward VI was not a simple boy-king who was happy or content with others ruling for him. Whether influenced by his tutors it is obvious that his religious leanings were far less conservative than those of Henry VIII. The result was a set of legislation that would further reform the English church and from which St George was not immune.

St George and the Edwardian Legislation

Whilst the public ceremonies surrounding Henry VIII's death and Edward VI's accession remained conservative and traditional, the first Edwardian Parliament immediately set about refining legislation from the Henrician Reformation and St George was anything but immune.

The repeal of the Henrician Six Articles in 1547 allowed openly Protestant tracts to be published.³⁰³ In addition, the parliament also passed the Chantries Act which enjoined the dissolution of all of England's intercessory institutions, which should have eradicated all religious guilds, including those dedicated to St George.³⁰⁴ The purpose of this legislation was completely outlined in the Edwardian Injunctions of that same year. The introduction to the Injunctions stated that Edward was 'intending the advancement of the true honour of Almighty God, the suppression of idolatry and superstition throughout all his realms and dominions... to plant true religion to the extirpation of all hypocrisy, enormities and abuses'.³⁰⁵ The special status of St George was one way in which religious dissidence could be manifested. Whereas the Henrician Injunctions allowed for the use of some images as remembrances, allowing parishes to retain religious figures, the new legislation forbade all religious devotions and practices that encouraged 'superstition':

II (II, 10) Also, if they have heretofore declared to their parishioners anything to the extolling or setting forth of pilgrimages, relics or images, or lighting of candles, kissing, kneeling or decking of the same images, or any such superstition, they shall now openly, before the same, recant superstition.

³⁰² Alford, *Edward VI*, p. 160.

³⁰³ Penry Williams states that 160 of these tracts were seen as religiously controversial with 159 involving Protestant beliefs. See Penry Williams, *The Later Tudors: England 1547-1603* (Oxford and New York, 1995).

³⁰⁴ Muriel McClendon, 'A Moveable Feast: Saint George's Day Celebrations and Religious Change in Early Modern England' in *The Journal of British Studies*, (Vol. 38, No. 1. Jan., 1999), p. 17.

³⁰⁵ *Edwardian Injunctions* (1547) in *Documents of the English Reformation*, Gerald Bray (ed.), (Cambridge, 1994), p. 247.

They shall now openly, before the same, recant and reprove the same, showing them, as the truth is, that they did the same upon no ground of Scripture, but were led and seduced by a common error and abuse crept into the Church, through the sufferance and avarice of such as felt profit by the same.³⁰⁶

It was not simply the ownership of these religious items that were a threat to one's salvation, but also the devotional practices that were often associated with them. Whilst the Henrician Reformation was willing to turn a selective blind eye on certain devotional practices, the Edwardian Injunctions forbade them as they caused 'great peril and danger of his soul's health, ringing to holy bells, or blessing with the holy candle, to the intent thereby to discharge the burden of sin, or to drive away devils...he grievously offendeth God'.³⁰⁷ As a result it was ordered that all parishes and individual homes should immediately

take away, utterly extinct and destroy all shrines, covering of shrines, all tables and candlesticks, trundles or rolls of ware, pictures, paintings and all other monuments of feigned miracles, pilgrimages, idolatry and superstition, so that there remain no memory of the same in walls, glasses, windows or elsewhere within their churches or houses.³⁰⁸

The purpose of these Injunctions was clear: the new English Church should extirpate all signs of the Roman tradition. The fact that these images and practices were to be erased from the 'memory' of the public conscience demonstrates the extent to which these religious changes were enacted. There was no room for subjectivity in the interpretation of this legislation. Insofar as Edward was concerned, St George was nothing more than a superstitious figure, one to be mocked and eradicated certainly from the English church, if not from wider public ceremonies.³⁰⁹

The Books of Common Prayer provide another example of how St George ceased to be an exalted religious figure, worthy of popular admiration in the eyes of the monarchy and government. In the Preface to the Book of Common Prayer of 1549 it was stated that over time religious ceremonies had 'turned to vanity and superstition...[and] grew daily to more and more abuses...[and] blinded people and obscured the glory of God'.³¹⁰ It was at this point that religious celebrations and observances related to St George were forbidden and therefore extirpated or at least heavily curtailed at a popular level. As a result of the first edition of the Book of Common Prayer being heavily criticised for not reforming the church enough, the 1552 version went further in removing supposed superstitions. As a result, in the 1552 Book of Common Prayer, St George's feast day moved from a red to black letter day, thereby lessening its importance in the church calendar.

³⁰⁶ *Injunctions*, p. 251.

³⁰⁷ *Injunctions*, p. 255.

³⁰⁸ *Injunctions*, p. 255.

³⁰⁹ MacCulloch, *Militant*, p.51. See below also.

³¹⁰ *Preface to the 1549 Book of Common Prayer*, p. 274.

MacCulloch has claimed that all celebrations related to St George's Day were abolished by Parliament in 1552.³¹¹ Whilst it is true that St George is not one of the biblical saints whose feast days are protected by the act, when one reads the act of parliament, entitled *An Acte for the keeping of Hollie daies and Fastinge dayes*, there is one notable exception. The final item of the act deems it 'lawfull to the Knights of the right honourable Order of the Garter, and to every of them, to kepe and to celebrate sollemplie, the Feast of their Ordre, comonlie called St Georges Feast, yerelie from hensforth the xxii th, xiii th and xxiii th daie of Aprill and at such other tymes and tymes as yerely shalbe thought convenyeant by the King's Highnes his heyres and successors...'.³¹² In this document, Edward and his government are at once trying to limit those who can celebrate the feast day of St George, whilst at the same time acknowledging that he cannot be totally removed from English traditions.

The Order of the Garter during the Edwardian regime

The Order of the Garter remained an important vehicle through which the monarchy was able to control and manipulate the nobility. Almost immediately upon the death of Henry VIII in January, 1547, Edward Stanley, earl of Derby and Henry Grey, marquess of Dorset, petitioned Edward to become members of the Garter after they had been repeatedly over-looked by his predecessor.³¹³ It was therefore necessary for the new king and his advisors to retain the Order. However, it was their express wish to remove all allusions and dedications to St George from the tradition of the Garter. Anstis in his *Black Book of the Garter* writes that Edward thought that the Order was a victim of 'a great deal of superstition'.³¹⁴ Edward himself stated that he wished to restore the Order to its 'originall estate and prystynye fundacion', meaning there would be no place for the superstition ridden St George.³¹⁵

MacCulloch has shown that Edward played a direct and significant role in reforming the Garter Statutes.³¹⁶ It has been seen, however, that neither Edward nor his advisors could totally remove St George from the country's tradition. It is true that the king, in the preamble of the 1552 reformation of the Garter Statutes blamed 'that olde serpent Sathan' who, in his envy and enmity towards mankind 'busily labored to deface and utterly to destroye so grete an encouragement and

³¹¹ MacCulloch, *Militant*, p. 227n.

³¹² 'An Acte for the keping of hollie daies and fastinge dayes' (5 & 6 Ed. VI, c.3) in *Statutes of the Realm*, iv., 1819, p. 133.

³¹³ Helen Miller, *Henry VIII and the English Nobility* (Oxford, 1989), p. 88.

³¹⁴ Anstis, *Black Book of the Garter* (London, 1724), p. 438.

³¹⁵ Peter J. Begent and Hubert Chesshyre, *The Most Noble Order of the Garter: 650 Years* (London, 1999), p. 70.

³¹⁶ MacCulloch, *Militant*, p. 32.

occasion of virtue' until 'at length he filled and stuffed the very statutes and ordynances of this fellowship ad ordre with many obscure, superstitious and repugnante opinions'.³¹⁷ As a result, Edward wished to demonstrate that it was his role as Defender of the Faith to remove all evil or satanic influences from the Order by purifying it. Unlike his father, Edward and his advisors believed that redemption through faith alone was enough justification for changes to religious and popular practices, the allusions to St George would not be required. The saint, however, was not vilified in the process.

The first Item of the 1552 Garter statutes simply states 'that the Order should henceforth be called the Order of the Garter, and not of St George, lest the honour due to God might seem to be given to a creature'.³¹⁸ This reference to St George is hardly pejorative, but merely coincides with the king and his government's reformed religious beliefs. Rather than totally banning the image of St George outright, the Statutes go on to say that insofar as foreign princes are concerned, they were not required to swear the Garter oath or 'wear the image of St George during the remainder of his life, unless it [pleased] him to do so'.³¹⁹ This is hardly the stipulation of a king who wishes to totally remove all references to the saint. Instead, it suggests that Edward was adapting established tradition to meet the expectations of the reformed religion.

The same can be said with the imagery related to the Order of the Garter. Within the Statutes there are clear attempts to retain a sense of chivalric tradition and Tudor heraldry. For example, they stipulate that the gold collar of the Garter shall be 'coupled together in the fashion of Garters, with red roses, as of late accustomed' and the insignia, rather than being identified as St George, was to be 'a massive gold image of an armed knight, sitting on horseback with a drawn sword in his right hand, all encompassed with the Garter'.³²⁰ The fact that Edward made a point of saying that only a 'knight' was to be on the badge and collar demonstrates an attempt to reinterpret it. It would have been impossible, however, to totally expunge its older associations. In addition to these changes, the annual Garter feasts at Windsor were to be discontinued.³²¹ The Black Book of the Garter which was used by Henry VIII to extoll the traditions and magnitude of the Order was also stopped in 1552.³²²

Whilst these alternations are significant, the removal of St George was far from complete. The red cross of St George was retained, possibly because of its entrenchment with the army and

³¹⁷ Begent and Chesshyre, *Noble Order*, p. 69.

³¹⁸ '1552 Garter Statutes', George Frederick Beltz, *Memorials of the Order of the Garter* (London, 1841), p.xcvii.

³¹⁹ '1552 Garter Statutes', p. xcvi-xcvii.

³²⁰ '1552 Garter Statutes', p. xcix.

³²¹ Anstis, *Black Book*, p. 443

³²² Begent and Chesshyre, *Noble Order*, p. 78.

navy; however, during the investiture of a knight, no part of the ceremony was to take place at the altar.³²³ Henry VIII's attempt to reinvigorate the Order of the Garter as a chivalric order that drew on the bravery of bygone knights in the name of the patron St George was gone. However, some of the ideals remained. Henceforth, the Order would be more secular, a way through which the king and the Privy Council could endeavour to control possibly fractious nobles, a particular concern for a government with a ruler who had not yet reached his majority.

It is more than evident from Edward VI's *Chronicle* and political papers that the Order was still used for political and diplomatic purposes. For example, during the investitures of April 1550, the Garter ceremony was used to impress nobles from the French court.³²⁴ The following year 'the French King and the Lord Clinton [were] chosen into the Order of the Garter'.³²⁵ It would not be until June that the actual ceremony took place for Henri II, 'in his bedchamber, where he was given a chain to the Garter worth £200...[with] the Bishop of Ely making an oration and the Cardinal of Lorraine making him answer'.³²⁶ The investiture once again suggests that the Order was something Edward VI wished to use to flatter foreign princes and nobles, though he would not mimic the ostentatious nature of his predecessors' celebrations.

The Garter was not simply used to ameliorate hoped-for allies, it was also seen as a potent marker of political favour at home. For example, after the fall and subsequent execution of the Lord Protector in 1552, his ally Lord William Paget was degraded from the Order, supposedly due to the fact that neither of his parents were of 'gentle blood'. It is far more like that it was due to Paget's loyalty to Somerset.³²⁷ In the campaign against the Scots in September 1547, William Patten notes in his account of Somerset's expedition that the 'banner of Sainctt George' was still in use and was used in an attempted parley with the Scots.³²⁸ This, in conjunction with the red cross of St George which was retained as part of the imagery of the Order of the Garter, also speaks to the extent to which St George was entrenched in English traditions or history. This is not to say that there was a single, national identity at this point in England, but rather the saint's influence was so multi-faceted, it would be impossible for his legend and influence to be removed completely.

Despite the numerous changes to the Garter, what remains clear is its importance to the monarchy. Unlike Henry VIII, the new boy king and his Council had little use for St George and the

³²³ Begent and Chesshyre, *Noble Order*, p. 70.

³²⁴ W.K. Jordan (ed.), *The Chronicle and Political Papers of King Edward VI* (Ithica, 1966), p. 26.

³²⁵ *Chronicle*, p. 59.

³²⁶ *Chronicle*, p. 67.

³²⁷ *Chronicle*, p. 119.

³²⁸ See William Patten, *The Expedition into Scotland of the most worthy fortunate prince Edward, duke of Somerset, uncle unto our most noble sovereign lord ye Kinges Majesty Edward VI* (London, 1548), STC / 138:13.

traditions of the *ancient regime*. St George, instead of being a representation of a defender of England, had his connection with the monarchy ended as he was one of the figures of superstition through whom the Roman church had controlled and led English Christians astray. The legislation addressing the wider religious practices of the English Church, as well as the Garter Statutes for the nobles at court, marked a change in the governance and a significant step towards an obvious religious reformation. However, it did not, and could not, entirely remove the saint from the English tradition. The long history of St George's legend was already too interwoven into the religious and secular fabrics of numerous local identities to be entirely extirpated. Communities that appeared in general to be willing submit to the religious reforms were less accepting of ending long-standing public traditions and pageants that involved their patron saint.

Responses to Edwardian Reform

The response to Edward's radical attempt at reform was mixed and demonstrates that, beyond the court, there was a nuanced response from those who would have likely identified themselves as having a 'reforming nature'. This goes a way to show that there was not one prescribed belief and that certain traditions remained important or were re-appropriated to suit a variety of morals, messages and beliefs. It has already been established that St George was a popular presence both in prose and verse. He was portrayed as a brave, chivalric, martial figure who protected England and its subjects (both the great and the meek) from a variety of threats. It was this representation that Henry VIII continued to channel and promulgate throughout his reign and especially during the period of the Henrician Reformation.³²⁹

Somewhat surprisingly, these representations did not disappear entirely after the accession of Edward VI. The veneration of saints and devotional practices did indeed come under attack and St George, no doubt to the extent of his popularity, was a target. For example, reformist Bishop John Hooper's *A Declaration of the Ten Commandments* (1549) attacks St George as one of the figures through which the Roman church flouted the first commandment by encouraging parishioners to worship false gods:

Souche as trust in aduersite to be holpe by ony saint / and not only by god in christ / make then strange godes. as they do that call vpon the saint departyd in the time of warr. As in time past / The English man vpon S. George. The frenche man vpon S. Denys / the Scote vpon S. Anrey why|che is nothing else / but a very gentile and ethnycke custome / as thowghe theer priuate godes / and singuler patrones / could yeue the victorie and vpper hand in the feld. or S. George fauore him / that S. Andrey hatythe. what thing is this else / but to set too soules at bate: as the gentiles dyd there godes / Iuno / and Minerua / withe Venus.³³⁰

³²⁹ See Chapters 3 and 4 for further elaboration.

³³⁰ John Hooper, *A declaration of the ten commandments of Almighty God* (London, 1549), STC / 51:13.

Afterwards, Hooper demonstrated the superstition surrounding St George and his legend:

S. George / with a long spere / vpon a lolie hakeney / that gaue the dragon his deathe wound (as the Peinters say) in the throwght. Sainct whit with as many rotund cheses / as may be peintid about his tabernacle. No difference at all betwene a christiane man and gentille in this Idolatrie / sauing onlie the name.³³¹

The comparisons made between the Roman Church and the faith of the ancient Roman undermines the practice of saint worship, attacking both the figure and legend of St George as part of a series of idolatrous veneration. The text speaks to the popularity and the special position St George had enjoyed as the country's patron saint and the contempt in which the reformers held him.

Thomas Becon's 1551 treatise on *Fasting and Praying* shares Hooper's opinions about the abuse of the saints that the English Church had suffered. In keeping with the sentiment of other Edwardian reforms, the clergyman argued that fasting and praying for the intercession of the saints was nothing more than 'superstition and hypocrisy' informing the reader that:

If we fast the blessed Saintes euens, and worshyppe them wyth a Pater noster, Aue and Creede, they wyll do for vs whatsoeuer we axe. S. George wyl defend vs in battell agaynst our ennemies. S. Barbara wyll kepe vs from thondring and litenyng. S. Agasse wyl saue our house from burning. S. Antony will keepe oure swyne. S. Luke wil save oure Oxe. S. Iob wyll defend vs from the poxe. S. Gertrude wil keepe oure house from mise & rats.³³²

The satirical tone of the litany ridicules the devotional practices that existed in the period before the time of the Edwardian Reformation.

Some reformists actually used the popularity of St George's lesson when trying to impart lessons and develop their argument for the newly reformed English Church. The noted reformer John Bale's *Legenddes and Chronycles* which was written in 1546 but not published until 1551, used the legend of St George when discussing the importance of the power of the Scripture:

As great honour will it now be to you...to slee the sede of the Serpent by the worde of God, as ever it was to Saint George the noble captain, to slee ye great hydre or Dragon at Silena...I speak not this for what I could ye to fall upon that sorte with material weapon, but with the mighty strong word of the Lord, For as Esaye, Daniel and Paul reporteth they shall be destroyed without hands.³³³

The Scripture therefore makes the intercession of St George redundant. This text certainly speaks to the degree to which the idea of reformation had progressed and been endorsed by Edward's

³³¹ John Hooper, *A declaration of the ten commandments of Almighty God* (London, 1549), STC / 51:13.

³³² Thomas Becon, *A fruitful treatise* (London, 1551) STC / 636:09.

³³³ John Bale, *Legenddes and Chronycles*, p.78.

government. Bale's tone, whether genuine or caustic in referring to St George as a 'noble captain' still reinforces the popularity of the saint's legend within the English tradition.

The works of the scholar and humanist Thomas Wilson give further insight into reformists' attitudes towards St George during this period. Wilson's *The Rule of Reason*, also published in 1551, presents Saint George as an example of a popular figure whose image was idolised and a source of superstition. Wilson mocks the idea of images and says they are interpreted in such a way as they can be nothing more than idol worship. He gives as an example an individual thinking 'this is the picture of saint George, ergo it is saint George himself'.³³⁴ Wilson then goes on to say that the 'rule' of Edward VI will 'overthrow all manner of idols which have been in all ages from time to time'.³³⁵ By marking out the Edwardian reign as the time in which the English church would be purified, and then referring to St George it signifies the extent to which the Edwardian regime saw the patron saint as a well-known and relatable figure who was to be discredited as a figure of superstition. The people's familiarity with the legend was used by reformers to make didactic points.

Similar references were made again by Wilson in his *The Arte of Rhetorique* (1553) which states that

Saint George he is set on horsebacke & killeth a Dragon with his speare, whiche Dragon woulde haue deuoured a virgine, whereby is none other thyng ment but that a Kyng and euery man vnto whom the execution of iustice is committed, should defende the innocent against the vngodly attemptes of the wicked, and rather kill suche deuilles by marcial law, than suffer the innocentes to take any wrong.³³⁶

The comparison between St George and a king who defends his subjects from being led astray is striking. The king is not likened or cast in the image of St George, as it was during the case of Henry VIII, but Wilson certainly uses the allusion to help explain the king's role. In doing so, Wilson removed the need for St George as a defender, his role is to be filled by those in religious authority in England.

This is followed by an instruction to the clergy to not allow heresy in the church, but to defend it. The text does not imply that the king, clergy or common people should be like Saint George, but gives the legend as an example of good triumphing over an evil figure. Wilson asks the question, 'But who gave our clergie any suche auctoritie that those monsters shoulde bee in Churches as laye mens Bookes? God forbadde by expresse worde to make any grauen Image, and shal we be so bolde to breake Gods wil for a good entent, and call these Idolles laie mens

³³⁴ Thomas Wilson, *The Rule of Reason* (London, 1551), STC / 403:03.

³³⁵ Wilson, *Reason*, STC / 403:03.

³³⁶ Thomas Wilson, *The Arte of Rhetorique* (London, 1553), STC / 553:09.

Bookes?’³³⁷ Wilson therefore makes the distinction between popular fables and religious morals saying both should be kept completely separate for fear of offending God and endangering men’s souls. St George may have once been an inspiring symbol whose secular legend was representative of the age-old battle against evil but he no longer in the newly reformed English Church.

The end of St George’s cult?

The Edwardian legislation concerning reforms of religious beliefs and practices was far more overtly reformist than that of the Henrician Reformation. No longer would a blind eye be turned on certain devotional practices. Edward VI had placed himself in the role of Defender of the faith, much like his father had. However, Edward wanted to be seen as combating the Roman Church on his own, and he needed no knight or patron saint to assist him.

Many of the traditional and public celebrations related to the story of St George, even in areas that shared a close affinity with him, did cease. Pageants that were dedicated to or contained the legend of St George were stopped in Coventry and York by 1548.³³⁸ In Cornwall, where it has been seen that St George was an extremely popular figure, acquiescence to the new legislation did not come about as smoothly. Rebels in the 1549 uprisings in the southwest of the country stated that they wished any reforms of the English Church to wait until Edward has reached his majority. Until then ‘they would have all such laws as was made by the late Henry VIII and no other’.³³⁹ In that same year, the Guild of St George in Lostwithiel was ended, seven years after the Lady Chapel was dismantled in the church. Images relating to St George and the saints were ‘defaced’ on the orders of Mayor Richard Hastings.³⁴⁰ The Stratton guild had also disappeared by 1549.³⁴¹ Further afield in Morebath, Devonshire all St George celebrations ceased for the rest of the reign.³⁴²

Not all of the guilds dedicated to St George shared the same fate. The Norwich Guild acts as a very significant example of how potential dissention was handled in a very pragmatic way. After the Chantries Act, the Guild of St George reorganised itself as the Company and Citizens of St George. By making this alteration, they were able to demonstrate that they rejected superstitious, Roman ideas such as intercession and purgatory; there were also no more processions with actors

³³⁷ Wilson, *Rhetorique*, STC / 553:09.

³³⁸ McClendon, ‘Moveable Feast Days’, p. 17.

³³⁹ Eamon Duffy, *The Voices of Morebath: Reformation and Rebellion in an English Village* (London, 2001), p. 123.

³⁴⁰ Robert Whiting, *The Blind Devotion of the People: Popular religion and the English Reformation* (Cambridge, 1989), p. 102.

³⁴¹ Whiting, *Blind Devotion*, p. 110.

³⁴² REED Devon, p. 210.

playing the part of St George, Margaret or the dragon.³⁴³ There was a marking of the feast day of St George, however, the date of the celebration being moved to June so as not to arouse any suspicions.³⁴⁴

Ambiguity surrounding the acquiescence to religious reforms can also be seen in London in 1552, when the Bishop of London announced that St George's Day was no longer to be celebrated. Samantha Riches has demonstrated that this was mainly ignored and the ridings went ahead as 'the Ridings were a convenient way of celebrating civic pride and allowing the urban [population] to assert the status quo'.³⁴⁵ Records of St Botolph church in Billingsgate also suggests that this might be the case. The church was well known for its ownership of a mechanical St George that was built by a group of artisans in 1474, complete with the king, queen, maiden and saint. After the Chantry Act and Edwardian Injunctions were passed, the church records show that the bells which accompanied this scene were sold off.³⁴⁶ What is less clear however is whether or not the rest of the display was discarded. This particular case may be ambiguous, but it suggests that although many parishioners did not wish to commit an act of treason by defying the government's legislation, they were not entirely prepared to give up their sense of tradition and a well-loved patron saint. This is also demonstrated further north in Oxford. The church wardens' accounts of St Michael's at Northgate note that donations were placed in a box at an altar that had been dedicated to St George. Donations are recorded for the years 1549 (just over three shilling), 1551 (eight shillings, eleven pence) and 1552 (fifteen shillings, six pence).³⁴⁷ Similarly, in Coventry, the chapel dedicated to St George remained until 1695 despite the fact that the guild was disbanded.³⁴⁸ These specific examples further exemplify how entrenched St George was in communities across the south and middle of England.

The extent to which the cult of St George was reinstated during the reign of Mary I is equally a point of contention. Although devotions to St George were once again allowed, there is very little evidence that areas which once celebrated the legend of St George or engaged in related devotional practices. One potential reason for this was, having sold off or destroyed devotional items and religious imagery, they were incredibly expensive to replace in a relatively short amount of time.³⁴⁹ Another reason is, as mentioned above, parishes wishing to observe St George did so in a

³⁴³ McClendon, 'Moveable Feast Days' p. 18.

³⁴⁴ McClendon, 'Moveable Feast Days', p. 18.

³⁴⁵ Riches, *Hero, Martyr, Myth*, p. 139.

³⁴⁶ REED *Ecclesiastical London*, pp. xxxiii, 293.

³⁴⁷ *St Michael's at Northgate*, Church Warden's Accounts, Oxford Archives, PAR211/1/F1/2.

³⁴⁸ *Letters Patent*, Coventry Archives, BA/C/10/5/8.

³⁴⁹ Loades, *Marian England*, p. 62.

surreptitious way and continued to adhere to the new legislation that was passed, overriding the reformist changes. What is clear is that the period between 1547 and 1553 saw a marked change in the way that St George was presented and perceived.

St George and England's First Queen

With the death of her younger brother, Mary I swept the Reformation pendulum back in the other direction to start what she hoped would be the English Counter-Reformation and a reconciliation with the church in Rome. A return to the more traditional ceremonies within the English Church is demonstrated through the reintegration of devotions to St George. The more traditional argument suggests that Mary was largely ineffectual and was easily manipulated by her large council and later her Spanish interests. More recently however, a revisionist reinterpretation has suggested that Mary assumed the role of both male and female and successfully 'blended' both genders so that she could reign successfully.³⁵⁰ Upon further investigation, the revisionist argument proves partially accurate. This is especially the case when one looks at the changing representation of St George during the period of the English Counter-Reformation. While Mary was a fervent Catholic, her gender prevented her from emulating the legend of St George to the same extent as her father during his reign.

First and foremost, the gender of the new monarch meant that Mary would not have the traditional relationship with the patron saint that her male predecessors had enjoyed. This may account for the fact that the saint did not appear to play a significant role in the coronation processions or rather, it was not thought significant enough to mention. Indeed, a much greater emphasis was placed on London's loyalty towards Mary as their new sovereign. For example, rather than describing the traditional displays and *tableaux vivants* that were placed at various places during the progress, the chronicler Holinshed primarily focuses on London's allegiance:

Another pageant at the little conduit in Cheape next to Paul's was made by the City, where the aldermen stood, and then the Queen came against them the Recorder made a short proposition to her and then the Chamberlain presented to her in the name of the Mayor and the City a purse of cloth of gold and a thousand marks of gold in it.³⁵¹

³⁵⁰ Sarah Duncan, *Mary I: Gender, Power and Ceremony in the Reign of England's First Queen* (New York, 2012), p. 20. For more on the debate and interpretations of Mary's reign see David Loades, *Mary Tudor: A Life* (Oxford, 1989) and *The reign of Mary Tudor : politics, government and religion in England, 1553-58* (London, 1991), Judith M. Richards, *Mary Tudor* (New York and London, 2009), *Mary Tudor: Old and New Perspectives*, Susan Doran and Thomas S. Freeman (eds), (London, 2011), John Edwards, *Mary I: England's Catholic Queen* (London, 2011),

³⁵¹ Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland*, Vol. 4 (London, 1808), p. 7.

The fact that Holinshed discusses the fealty sworn to Mary is hardly surprising given that it was only three months after her claim to the throne had been challenged and usurped by Northumberland and Lady Jane Grey. With Mary's ascendancy being secured, any representation of her as a martial figure ended. This can be seen in the Plea Roll from 1553 which shows Mary sitting in state and removed from the skirmishes that resulted in her claiming her throne that have been painted in the background (see Figure 5.1).

It is also evident that Mary's gender would mean limitations of her involvement with the rituals at court such as when it came to appointing the Knights of the Bath. It was recorded by the Spanish Ambassador that

these knights are [usually] made by the Kings on the eve of their coronation and at no other time; and their rank is inferior to the other Order. The Queen instituted twenty fresh ones. They are called Knights of the Bath because they plunge naked into a bath with the King and kiss his shoulder. The Queen being a woman, the ceremony was performed for her by the Earl of Arundel, her Great Master of the Household.³⁵²

Whilst this would be entirely appropriate given her gender, it makes it clear that the traditions and ceremonies associated with the English monarchy were susceptible to change to some degree. Therefore, the more male-oriented traditions at court would not be so much in the foreground due to the new monarch being a Queen. Now that she had secured her throne from rebels, Mary I was never to be a martial figure again.

Securing her position on the throne, however, was not the end to Mary's trouble. She was faced with the task of realigning the English Church with Rome after six years of fervent religious reforms from her Protestant predecessors which, like her half-brother, she addressed through legislation.

St George and Marian legislation

Whereas Edwardian legislation increased the secularisation of St George and removed him from the fabric of the English Church, the saint's devotional practices were restored by Mary I. The Precentor's Rolls at the Chapel of St George at Windsor suggest that there was a mass dedicated to the saint in 1553.³⁵³ The dedication of the Mass suggests that St George's holy status was restored as a result of Mary's accession to the throne; he is an example of Mary's wish to restore the English Church's relationship with Rome. Despite this, it cannot be said that St George enjoyed the same

³⁵² 'Spain: October 1553, 1-5', *Calendar of State Papers, Spain*, Volume 11: 1553 (1916), pp. 261-272.

³⁵³ *Precentor's Rolls*, St George's Chapel Windsor Archives, XV.56.39, 1553-1554.

status as he had during the reigns of the earlier Tudor kings, nor was his role completely de-secularised. Mary's promulgation of her image as queen did not allow her to share a close affinity with England's patron saint or emulate his legend. Whilst she did not have a close relationship with the patron saint, she did use the Order of the Garter as a means of foreign diplomacy and as a way to help ameliorate the arrival of her foreign husband to England.

In the same way that Edward VI's government set about reforming the English Church, upon her accession Mary I set about enacting legislation that reversed the changes. Significantly this did not mean a complete reversal of all reforms but rather a return to the English Church during the period of the Henrician Reformation. The Marian Injunctions of 1554 state that 'all such holy days and fasting days be observed and kept, as were observed and kept in the latter time of Henry VIII' as well as that 'every bishop and his officers...put in execution all such canons and ecclesiastical laws heretofore in the reign of King Henry VIII used within the realm of England'.³⁵⁴ Despite this, it is important to note that Mary did not reinstate the Six Articles, nor were pilgrimages to holy sites renewed during this period.³⁵⁵ It could be argued that this was due to the fact that they had been dismantled during the Dissolution of the Monasteries, but it also suggests that Mary initially wished to be pragmatic in her restoration of the new faith.

Directions given by Mary to her Council in 1554 suggest that while Mary I was a devoted Catholic, she wished for the transition back to the Roman Church to be gradual. Mary writes that she wishes to 'overcome the evil preaching in time past and also to make a sure provision that none evil books shall either be printed, bought, or sold, without just punishment therefore'.³⁵⁶ This punishment, however, was only to take the form of burnings if it was an extreme circumstance and was agreed by the council.³⁵⁷ Mary also outlined the need for 'good preachers' who needed to 'overcome the evil diligence of the abused preachers in the time of the schisms, not only by their preaching but also by their good example, without which, in my opinion, their sermons shall not so much profit as I wish'.³⁵⁸ Although this mentality was to change, it is apparent that initially there was an almost naïve belief on the part of the Queen that the return to the Roman religion would be efficacious in restoring traditional belief.

³⁵⁴ *Marian Injunctions* (1554), pp. 316, 317.

³⁵⁵ David Loades, *The Religious Culture of Marian England*, p. 35.

³⁵⁶ 'Direction of Queen Mary to her council touching the reforming of the Church to the Roman religion', Robert Tittler, *The Reign of Mary I* (London and New York, 1991), p. 87.

³⁵⁷ 'Direction of Queen Mary to her council touching the reforming of the Church to the Roman religion', p. 87.

³⁵⁸ 'Direction of Queen Mary to her council touching the reforming of the Church to the Roman religion', p.88.

The Order of the Garter under Mary

Although St George was restored to his role of patron of the order during the reign of Mary I, the purpose behind this was both religious and secular. Much like Henry VII had used St George to blend his Welsh identity with the English monarchical tradition, Mary attempted to do the same with the arrival of her foreign husband, Philip II of Spain, in 1554. Upon his arrival in England Mary ensured that 'the Lord Steward met him on the water, and on coming ashore presented him with the George and Garter, he having been elected at the last Chapter'.³⁵⁹ In order to do this, Mary also ensured that the Garter celebrations in 1554 were delayed until Philip's arrival, so that he could take part in the celebrations.³⁶⁰ Once Mary had joined Philip, the Council stated that 'her Majesty and the Prince intend to go to Basing, two days thereafter to Reading, and thence to Windsor, where the Prince shall keep the feast of St. George, and shortly after make his entry into London, where there are great preparations made by the citizens for his reception'.³⁶¹ These events are made all the more significant, given the limited number of public ceremonies and pageants during Mary's reign.³⁶² The Order of the Garter allowed Mary to help naturalise Philip II into the establishment of the English monarchy.

That same year Mary and Philip also reversed the Edwardian Garter Statutes and made their own modifications ordering the removal of 'all the acts and decrees being written in divers places of the grete book of the most honourable order which were repugnante and dysagreable eyther with the ancient ordres and statutes of the most honourable order or els with the lawes of the realm'.³⁶³ The monarchs did not return the Garter Statutes to their original state in the time of Henry VIII, they also made their own modifications. This included retaining the English tradition of the Order but making the Garter more accessible to foreign leaders. One way in which this was achieved was by creating a separate text in French for foreign rulers who were inducted into the Order. Henry VIII's prologue was removed and instead there was a simple statement that introduced the statutes of 'le tresnoble Ordre de Saint George, communément appellé le Jarritiere' founded by Edward III.³⁶⁴ In addition to this, the regalia of the Order, including the pieces denoting St George, were also restored and sent to foreign rulers. When the Duke of Savoy was inducted into the Order the inventory of goods was recorded in detail. It included:

³⁵⁹ 'Mary: July 1554', *Calendar of State Papers Foreign, Mary: 1553-1558* (1861), pp. 101-110.

³⁶⁰ Duncan, *Representations*, p. 99.

³⁶¹ 'Mary: July 1554', *Calendar of State Papers Foreign, Mary: 1553-1558* (1861), pp. 101-110.

³⁶² Penry Williams, *The Later Tudors: England 1547-1603*, p. 127.

³⁶³ Begent and Chesshyre, *Noble Order*, p. 71.

³⁶⁴ Begent and Chesshyre, *Noble Order*, p. 71.

First, a collar of the Order with 20 garters with roses in the midst, and 20 knots linked together of gold. A George of gold enriched with diamonds for the same collar. Item, a small chain with 12 pieces, and in every piece three small diamonds, and 12 pieces, and in every of them three rubies and 24 pearls. A little George of goldsmith's work to hang upon a lace. Item, a garter set with letters of goldsmith's work with a buckle and pendants of the same, and on the pendant a ruby and a pearl hanging at the end. Item, a mantle of blue velvet lined with white sarcenet with a garter on the shoulder embroidered. Item, a gown and hood of crimson velvet lined with white sarcenet. Item, a book of the statutes covered with crimson velvet.³⁶⁵

The extent to which Mary used the Order of the Garter as a method of diplomacy can be further seen in the same year when the French Ambassador 'in [the] course of conversation mentioned that the French King in token of amity had on St George's day last kept a solemn feast of the Order of the Garter, for which her Majesty expressed her thanks'.³⁶⁶ It is apparent that Mary wished to have her foreign husband accepted by her subjects whilst rebuilding the relationships with the Catholic powers in Europe. The Garter played an instrumental role in these attempts.

In addition to the revision of the Garter Statutes, Mary and Philip also promulgated their image as king and queen within the context of the Order (see Figure 5.2). The 1555 portrait legitimises Philip's role as consort within England with the Garter insignia directly above them. Mary remains in a slightly higher position over Philip, reinforcing her role as Queen of England. Despite this, it suggests to the viewer that Mary and Philip had their own distinct roles within the context of the Garter and on a more macro level, as rulers of the country.

Over time, Philip slowly took to presiding over the Garter ritual as the master of ceremonies. In April 1558, after his return to England, it was remarked that 'the King [was at Windsor] in good health upon St George's Day in his robes, and the Duke of Savoy with him; the feast was kept very solemnly by the King with all his nobles and gentlemen about him'.³⁶⁷ Sarah Duncan has argued that Mary did not relinquish her responsibilities for the Order and was always present, even if she was seen from a window during her confinements.³⁶⁸ This statement is flawed as it would appear that whilst Mary valued the importance and tradition of the Order, from the first instance of Philip's arrival, she believed that he was a more appropriate figure-head for the Order, being a male chivalric figure. The Hans Eworth portrait of Mary and Philip also highlights the latter's role in the Order through the Garter on his left leg (see Figure 5.3). Again, the reference to the Order is not made through the female monarch, but rather her consort. Furthermore, as has already been seen, Mary had very little involvement in the Garter pageantry and was prevented by her gender and decorum

³⁶⁵ 'Mary: October 1554', *Calendar of State Papers Foreign, Mary: 1553-1558* (1861), pp. 121-132.

³⁶⁶ 'Mary: April 1554', *Calendar of State Papers Foreign, Mary: 1553-1558* (1861), pp. 69-81.

³⁶⁷ 'Mary: April 1558', *Calendar of State Papers Foreign, Mary: 1553-1558* (1861), pp. 367-371.

³⁶⁸ Duncan, *Representations*, p. 102.

from partaking in the male-oriented traditions of the chivalric orders. What is true is the fact that the Garter, although altered, held a very important role in legitimising a foreign figure of authority. It acted as a conciliatory gesture Mary could make towards foreign Catholic powers who had been alienated from England in the past as a result of the break with the Roman Church.

St George and the wider population of Marian England

Perhaps due to his continued popularity, St George remained equally a common figure in the literature of the Marian period. In his *Commentaries* Don Lewes de Auela and Suniga outlined the campaigns fought by the Emperor Charles V against Protestants in the German states. He writes that 'Germanye of late being in the power of the Protestants & new religion: so that it is clearely seen, how necessary it hath been for almighty God to put his remedye therin: for as to the help of man ther hath been so many difficulties'.³⁶⁹ This 'remedy' was achieved through Charles trying to extirpate Protestantism through his military campaigns.

Auela writes that during one of these campaigns

the Emperor had made mete with the vawarde: he spake chearefullye to duke Morris, and to the men of armes of Naples, the woordes beseming a captayne in suche a day as this, and to the souldiers geuing the name that was Sainct George imperial, Sainct James Spayn, so going towarde y^e enemyes a pace that was conuenient.³⁷⁰

Whilst St George is not the only saint mentioned, the fact that he is referred to in the English translated text, speaks to his continued popularity as a martial figure. The translation from the Spanish is also reflective of that influence in England as a result of Mary and Philip's marriage the previous year and the former's attempt to realign England with the Catholic powers of Europe.

The martial figure of St George is also referred to by Catholic theologian Henry Watson in his *Hystory of the two Valyaunte brethren Valentyne and Orson* when he refers to the invocation of the saint: 'But Valentyne that was lyght rose vpon his feete anone and toke hys swerde and slewe sarazyns on euery syde in cryenge hyghly saynt George, and reclaymynge God'.³⁷¹ The invocation harkens back to the tradition of calling upon St George to intercede on their behalf for victory. The message also acts as a direct refutation of the Protestant literature decrying the practice. The Catholic divine Roger Edgeworth also referred to St George in one of his sermons when he discussed

³⁶⁹ Luis de Avila y Çuñiga, *The commentaries of Don Lewes de Auela, and Suníga, great master of Aranter which treateth of the great wars in Germany* (1555), STC / 168:11, image 121.

³⁷⁰ Luis de Avila y Çuñiga, *The commentaries of Don Lewes de Auela, and Suníga, great master of Aranter which treateth of the great wars in Germany* (1555), STC / 168:11, image 121.

³⁷¹ Henry Watson, *The hystory of the two valyaunte brethren Valentyne and Orson, sonnes vnto the Emperour of Grece* (1555), STC / 1368:09.

the region from where St Paul originated. On mentioning Capadocia, Edgeworth notes that it is 'where Saint George the martyr was born, as appeareth by his legend'.³⁷² The mention of St George's martyrdom, in addition to the secular *The Golden Legend* demonstrates that he was still very much a point of cultural reference for preachers.

At the same time as St George re-emerged in the pulpits, there is evidence that popular pageants dedicated to the saint resumed. In Stratford-upon-Avon, the Bridge Warden's Accounts show that the St George celebrations reappeared, and two shillings eight pence was paid for 'dressing the dragon and for berynge the dragon and werynge seint George harness on holy Thursday'. These celebrations continued until 1562 when the Bridge Wardens relinquished their functions and property to the town corporation.³⁷³

At the same time however, Protestant dissidents refused to be deterred and continued to use St George as a trope in their criticism of Mary's reign and foreign policies. In the anonymous 1558 tract, *The Lamentations of England*, the writer argues that

If the queen should now begin wars with France, for her husband's pleasure, and have not the like provision aforehand in comparison of her said noble father (as it is to be supposed she has not) by reason she hath given away so much to the bishop of Rome and his adherents...to set up her spiteful spirituality (so that the old proverb is now fulfilled, Saint Nicholas is on horseback and Saint George is on foot) whereupon it is to be thought that she hath nothing the like provision, that her said noble father had, when he began to have wars with France.³⁷⁴

The ineffectual military campaign Philip and Mary were conducting was tantamount to the martial figure of St George losing his stead, resulting in him not being able to fight. The extract also gives insight into the criticism that Mary faced, especially when her military campaigns are compared to those of her father. The statements about having the proper 'provisions' is also ironic as Henry's final military campaigns in France were almost as unsuccessful and expensive. The references to the bishop of Rome further demonstrate the resistance that Mary faced with returning England to the Roman tradition. If sections of the English population had no taste for the reformed religion, then they certainly had a distaste for foreign influence and authority in their country. This also resulted in the Marian period being equally as uncertain as that of her predecessor.

It is obvious that the period between 1547 and 1553 was one of great change and contention. Edward VI, strong in the religious views in which he had been raised, was determined, with the support of his Protestant advisors Somerset, Northumberland and Cranmer, to promote the

³⁷² Roger Edgeworth, *Sermons very fruitfull, godly, and learned, preached and sette foorth by Maister Roger Edgeworth* (London, 1557), image 128.

³⁷³ *Bridge Wardens' Accounts, Stratford-Upon Avon*, Shakespeare Birthplace Trust Archives, 3 May, (1554).

³⁷⁴ Anonymous, *The Lamentation of England*, (London, 1558).

new faith and the belief that salvation could be obtained through Scripture alone. The time for half measures was over and the resulting legislation demonstrated that there was no place for the 'idols' and 'superstitions' that had been endorsed for so long by the Roman church. These alterations did not only impact the churches, but the fabric of the English monarchy as well. Alternatively, the exact same can be said for the Counter Reformation that was attempted by Mary I during her short reign through the legislation that was passed which attempted to return England to more traditional religious observances. The revision of the Garter Statutes in the first instance by Edward was meant to remove St George and the superstitions he represented, whilst maintaining a secular order that allowed him to make overtures to foreign princes and control dissention within a possibly unstable government. Once again, this intention was completely reversed when it came to the inclusion of St George in the Order, although similarly, Mary used it as a means of diplomacy both at home and abroad. The affinity felt towards St George by a large proportion of the English population can also be noted during this period. The subtle ways individual parishes and guilds attempted to mark their patron saint indicates that St George remained popular throughout this period. It also suggests that the representation of the saint was becoming increasingly secular, if not as a conscious effort on the part of the populace, then as a way through which they could still celebrate the tradition of his legend. The public reaction to these changes was not particularly welcoming, especially the areas in England that were isolated or had long established traditions and affinities with certain saints. It would appear, especially with regards to the devotional practices that were related to St George, that a number of them continued albeit in a more surreptitious or secular way. This leads one to believe that the tradition of St George was entrenched in local identity and was not necessarily a way through which religious rebellion or conservatism was manifested. Considering the literature of the period, it is interesting to note that St George remained a figure through which arguments could be made, ironically both for and against religious reformation.

Images



Figure 5.1 Detail from Mary I's Plea Roll, 1553



Figure 5.2 Portrait of Philip II and Mary I Under the Garter, 1555



Figure 5.3 Philip II and Mary I by Hans Eworth, 1558

6. St George and the Virgin Queen

The gender of Mary I presented new questions around the role of St George for the English monarchy. When Elizabeth acceded to the throne upon the death of her half-sister on 17 November 1558, the context remained very much the same. Rather than legitimising her reign through finding a pre-existing role to play, Elizabeth created a new role for herself. Fresh light can be shed on this process through exploring the role that St George played during the Elizabethan period. Asserting that by becoming the Virgin Queen, Elizabeth was able to remain both king and queen is nothing new. However, by looking at the reign through references to and representations of St George, and at how Elizabeth appropriated and manipulated the saint and his legend, it is possible to see mid-sixteenth century political and religious beliefs were far more malleable and fluid than might be expected.

Christopher Haigh has written in some detail regarding the public belief that Mary's reign had proved that females were unfit rulers.³⁷⁵ Elizabeth, acceding to the throne after another queen and a period of religious tumult, needed to ensure that she exerted her authority immediately. How was a female figure to maintain her authority in a male dominated society? Scholars have long argued that Elizabeth used her gender in order to maintain her power over those around her. David Starkey, for example, states that both Elizabeth and her advisors 'relied heavily on the manipulation of sentiment' and that from the point of the Seymour scandal during her youth she 'showed herself acutely sensitive to her public reputation'.³⁷⁶ Richard Rex has added to this argument by raising the point that Elizabeth often referred to the reigns of Henry VII and Henry VIII, whilst actively distancing herself from the more brief and contentious reigns of her siblings.³⁷⁷ Elizabeth's gender, however, prevented her from making a direct comparison between herself and the earlier Tudors. As a result, Rex argues, Elizabeth manipulated her gender to her favour. Rex states that 'Elizabeth certainly used her femininity to great effect in the political arena...courtly love was the language of her court'.³⁷⁸ Haigh asserts that Elizabeth often presented herself as a member of the weaker sex. He notes that in a 1563 speech to the House of Commons, Elizabeth described herself as 'being a woman, wanting both with and memory' and acknowledged that her indecisiveness was 'a thing appropriate to [her] sex'.³⁷⁹

³⁷⁵ Christopher Haigh, *Elizabeth I*, p. 6. See also Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Tudor Church Militant: Edward VI and the Protestant Reformation* (New York and London, 1999), p. 191.

³⁷⁶ David Starkey, *Elizabeth: Apprenticeship* (London, 2001), p. 78.

³⁷⁷ Richard Rex, *Elizabeth I: Fortune's Bastard?* (2nd edition, Stroud, 2009), p. 122

³⁷⁸ Rex, *Elizabeth I: Fortune's Bastard?*, p. 72

³⁷⁹ Haigh, *Elizabeth I*, p. 13.

One way Elizabeth achieved this was through ensuring that she remained the centre of festivities at both a court and national level. Alison Chapman has argued that, due to her gender, Elizabeth cast herself in the role of the princess who needed to be rescued by St George. This led to a 'resuscitation' of the Order of the Garter and the related proceedings which 'meant that Elizabeth was acting, even if only in ceremonial fashion, as a devotee of the saint – precisely the reason why Edward VI had earlier allowed the Garter ceremonies to lapse'.³⁸⁰ Stephen Hamrick, in his work on the cult of Elizabeth, has noted that the Garter knights served as 'an evocation of popular romance, the chivalrous Order celebrated the archetype of the courtly knight serving or fighting upon behalf of the Queen'.³⁸¹ Furthermore, Elizabeth decided to focus on 'traditional St George ridings' during Garter ceremonies as she took the figure of the 'Maid' or 'Margaret' thereby taking part in the proceedings.³⁸²

By examining the various levels of society through tropes related to St George, it is possible to gain further insight into the politics of the Elizabethan court, the religious and secular practices of the wider Elizabethan populace as well as an acknowledgement of a sense of nationalism in the latter half of the sixteenth century. If there was a decrease in public celebrations that included St George, rather than it being a statement against the saint, it is more indicative of a general reformation of practices around the churches and a fear of sedition and dissention from the monarch and her government. For example, it was decided in Chester after Elizabeth's accession to the throne that the annual charitable donations to prisoners to mark St George's Day would cease. This practice had been brought back under the reign of Mary; in 1554, the churchwardens' accounts show an 'item payde for St George's day xxs viid'. In 1555, two pence were given to the prisoners to mark St George's Day. This was repeated again in 1556 and 1557. In 1558, two pence were again given to the prisoners but after that year, the day on which this money was given changed to Midsummer's Eve. The alteration suggests a wish that St George's Day was no longer to be affiliated with charitable acts from the crown. It could be that disassociating the donations with St George allowed Elizabeth to differentiate her reign from her sister's. Another possible reason for this was the fear of Catholic dissidence. As Elizabeth's reign progressed and it became more apparent that England was not going to return to Rome, the Queen and her government became increasingly worried about Catholic threats.

The gradual removal of St George from public celebrations became more prevalent throughout the 1570s and onwards. For example, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Matthew Parker,

³⁸⁰ Chapman, *Patrons*, p. 55.

³⁸¹ Stephen Hamrick, *The Catholic Imaginary and the Cults of Elizabeth, 1558 – 1582* (Farnham, 2009), p. 41.

³⁸² Hamrick, *Catholic Imaginary*, p. 43. See below.

released Visitation Articles which warned ‘blasphemers of ye name of almighty God, adulterers, fornicators, baudes, or any other notorious fault, sin or crime. Any drunkards, ribald, common slanderers of their neighbours, raylers or scolders, sowers of discorde between neighboures, by plaies, rimes famous libels, or otherwise’ should not sully the demarcated sacred space of the church.³⁸³ The revels associated with St George ridings and pageants would give ample opportunity for the aforementioned forbidden actions to take place and go a way to explain their abatement. Similar articles were issued by Archbishop Edmund Grindal in 1576. These articles reached further afield and now include popular activities and functions that may disrupt the peace of the parish by suffering

any Lordes of Misrule, or Summer Lordes or Ladies, or anye disguised persons or others in Christmasse or at Maygames, or any Morrice dauncers, or at any other tymes, to come unseemly partes with scoffes, ieastes, wanton gestures, or ribald talke, namely in the time of common prayer. Any what they be that sommit such disorder, or accompanie or maintain them [will be punished].³⁸⁴

Whilst the English church was to be cleansed from corruption and foreign threat, at a micro-level it was also meant to be cleansed of any form of popular misrule. The extension of these articles demonstrates concerns about the dissention that could arise from large groups assembling. As seen previously in Henry VIII’s reign, during times where there was a significant concern of sedition or popular disloyalty, occasions for large gatherings were either carefully monitored or forbidden altogether. In 1597, these activities also extended to ‘bowling, coyting, skaling, stoole ball playing, or dauncing or any other pastime whatsoever, or any that fight or make any frayes, or doe brawle or chide in those places, when and who they be etc’.³⁸⁵

It was a very different matter at the royal court, where pageants and ceremonies proliferated throughout Elizabeth’s reign. In the case of the Order of the Garter, at a time when some would argue that St George was being dismissed from the political realm of the court and the wider kingdom, there was a proliferation of imagery related to the saint.

³⁸³ REED *Kent Diocese of Canterbury*, p. 931.

³⁸⁴ REED *Kent*, p. 931.

³⁸⁵ REED *Cheshire including Chester*, pp. xl – xli.

St George, the new Queen and the Order of the Garter

Much work has been done to explore the allusions made regarding Elizabeth including those to Venus, Diana, Pallas, Athene and Deborah.³⁸⁶ Although she often presented herself as a 'weak and feeble woman', she would equally portray herself as a male figure in subtle ways. One example that occurred from early in her reign was on the day of her coronation as she left the Tower of London. As Elizabeth emerged she was documented as praying:

O Lord Almighty and Everlasting God, I give thee most hearty thanks that thou hast been so merciful unto me to spare me to behold this joyful day. And I acknowledge that thou hast dealt as wonderfully and as mercifully with me as thou didst with thy true and faithful servant Daniel, thy prophet whom thou delivered out of the den from the cruelty of the greedy and raging lions. Even so was I overwhelmed and only by thee delivered. To thee therefore only be thanks, honour and praise forever. Amen.³⁸⁷

Although Elizabeth chose a figure who ultimately had to be rescued by God, she cast herself in the role of a brave male figure who stood against her enemies and was ultimately triumphant due to God's intercessions. At once Elizabeth is able to declare her victory over adversaries whilst vilifying all those who wished her ill or tried to persecute her in the past.³⁸⁸

The allusion to the Biblical figure of Daniel was not lost or ignored as one year later the Preface to the Geneva Bible addressed the 'most noble and virtuous Queen' and informed her that the writers wished to 'endeavour ourselves by all means to aid, and to bestow our whole force under your grace's standard' and had '[considered] God's wonderful mercies towards you at all seasons, who hath pulled you out of the mouth of the lions, and how that from your youth you have been brought up in the Holy Scriptures'.³⁸⁹ Whilst this does not suggest that Elizabeth's contemporaries would have seen her as the equal of a male, it does suggest that allegories to male figures were not solely limited by a ruler's gender. The preface advises Elizabeth that she 'must show [herself] strong and bold in God's matters' and, like God, must battle 'against this great dragon, the ancient serpent, which is called the devil and Satan, till he [and Elizabeth have] accomplished the whole work and made his Church glorious to himself, without spot or wrinkle'.³⁹⁰ The writers believed that she needed to be a stalwart figure in order to fight for Protestant beliefs

³⁸⁶ See Susan Doran 'The Queen', *The Elizabethan World* Susan Doran and Norman Jones (eds), (London and New York, 2011), pp. 35-58.

³⁸⁷ Maria Perry, *The Word of the Prince: A Life of Elizabeth I* (Woodbridge, 1990), p. 93.

³⁸⁸ Alexandra Walsham has explored this topic in depth in 'A Very Deborah?', *The Myth of Elizabeth* Susan Doran and Thomas S. Freeman (eds), (London, 2003), pp. 143 – 170. The article discusses the malleability of Elizabeth's gender in addition to the didactic purposes of these allusions. Whilst there is often a flattering tone, there is also a very strong instructional message about the way Elizabeth should rule.

³⁸⁹ *The Preface to the Geneva Bible*, (1560), p. 359.

³⁹⁰ *The Preface to the Geneva Bible*, (1560), p. 360.

against the evil forces of Rome. It is an indication once again that Elizabeth could and would be portrayed as a martial figure who needed to defend her people against foreign religious threats. One way that this would be accomplished was through the ancient Order of the Garter.

Rather than giving herself a role within the legend of St George, Elizabeth altered proceedings whereby they were focussed around her instead of the patron saint. This was at the expense of St George's feast day celebrations when in 1558 it was removed from the list of 'Scarlett Days' whilst at the same time her Accession Day, 17 November, was added as a day of celebration.³⁹¹ Although it might be argued that this represented a 'downgrading' of St George's feast day, it is apparent that Elizabeth wished to keep an affinity with the saint, if not all the traditions that were associated with the Order.³⁹² It has been argued by some that Elizabeth merely used the Garter to recreate chivalric ideals. Whilst this was one element of the order, it also succeeded in allowing Elizabeth to exert her authority over nobles at court and at once to be seen as a princess and a defender of her people. The Garter knights assumed the role of protectors of the Virgin Queen but at the same time they were also at her whim and the mercy of her favour which reinforced her authority at court. Elizabeth remained the central figure at St George feasts. From 1567, Elizabeth changed the feast day celebrations of St George whereby they would be celebrated wherever the monarch happened to be and need not be centred on Windsor Chapel.³⁹³ The installation ceremony would still be held at Windsor but this allowed Elizabeth to control the Garter ceremonies from anywhere in the country without having to return to Windsor. Raymond B. Waddington has argued that by making this alteration to the location of Garter celebrations, she was able to '[distance] herself a bit from the male Tudor associations of Windsor-where her grandfather had completed St. George's Chapel and emphasized the Garter Feasts and where her father was buried-while establishing her dominance over the Order by changing the ceremony to her desire'.³⁹⁴ Although this is true to some extent, Waddington misses the point that Elizabeth presented herself, albeit subtly, as a chivalrous figure in addition to her knights.

Whilst it is true that the public spectacle of the court was limited to a select number of people in a specific location, the meaning of these ceremonies was significant to all spectators. Despite arguments to the contrary, imagery associated with key figures such as the monarch were understood by those of the lower classes. Church bells rang every year on 17 November, marking

³⁹¹ A Scarlet Day being a day of great religious importance. The term comes from the colour of the ink on the medieval religious calendar. *REED Bristol*, p. xxxi.

³⁹² Rex, *Fortune's Bastard?*, Fig. 62.

³⁹³ Begent and Chesshyre, *Noble Order*, p. 71.

³⁹⁴ Raymond B. Waddington, 'Elizabeth I and the Order of the Garter', *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, Vol. 24, No. 1 (Spring, 1993), pp. 101.

the accession of Elizabeth I to the throne. The 1563 proclamation regulating the representation of Elizabeth in all portraits that 'all sortes of subjects and people both noble and meane' would hang in their homes is also a very telling sign that it was not just the wealthiest of subjects who understood visual imagery to some degree.³⁹⁵ It is in this context that the annual Garter celebrations involving St George need to be understood.

As mentioned above, it has been argued that public displays related to St George were largely abandoned through Elizabeth's reign and that the saint was perceived as an increasingly secular figure.³⁹⁶ Although this is true to some extent, there was a definite blending of religious and secular representations of England's patron saint in the latter half of the sixteenth century. One source that speaks to this is the diary of Londoner Henry Machyn, which described life in the city from July, 1550 until August, 1563.³⁹⁷ Machyn's diary entry from 24 June 1559 writes of a public celebration involving a May Game where there was

saint John screys with a giant and drums...gunes...9 words with spechys and a godly pageant with a queen and divers others with speeches and then saint George and the [dragon], the morris dancers and after robin hood and lytyll John and [Maid Marian] and Friar Tuck and they had speeches about London.³⁹⁸

St George is clearly being portrayed here as a folkloric figure and as one of several popular narratives. The following May, Machyn, also somewhat disapprovingly, notes the secularisation of St George and a break with some traditions when he described the Garter knights' supper:

The . . . day of May was a knyghtes of the Garter for soper, and the next and soper with all maner kyndes of fysse [and flesh,] boyth venesun and all maner of folle [of all] kyndes and by (blank) cloke c was send d a com[mand] that they shuld come away, boyth . . . knyghtes and all here servandes of all oifeses, [and] brynge as myche as cold be savyd ; the [same] nyght was browth 6 unto estmynster, the quen . . . , for sant Gorge (} s) fest that shuld have bene at W[indsor] as the old costume has bene.³⁹⁹

Despite these changes, however there were elements that remained religious. In an apparent contradiction of the 1559 and 1560 entries, the 1561 entries outlining St George and Garter celebrations, demonstrated more traditional and religious representations. The account of St George's day in 1561 was described by Machyn as being 'kept holy' at Elizabeth's court in

her halle in copes to the nombur of xxx, with [God,] the father of Hewyn, have merce on . . . and the owttter cowrt to the gatt, and rond abowt st[rewed with rushes ;] and after cam master Garter, and

³⁹⁵ See also Roy Strong, *Gloriana: The Portraits of Queen Elizabeth I* (London, 2003), p. 17.

³⁹⁶ See Muriel McClendon 'Moveable Feast Days'

³⁹⁷ See Ian Mortimer, 'Tudor Chronicler or Sixteenth-Century Diarist? Henry Machyn and the Nature of His Manuscript', *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, Vol. 33, No. 4 (Winter, 2002), pp. 981-998.

³⁹⁸ REED *Ecclesiastical London*, p. 137.

³⁹⁹ Henry Machyn, *The Diary of Henry Machyn*, p. 233.

master Norres, and master dene of the ch[apel, in copes] of cremesun saten, with a crosse of sant Gorge red, and [eleven knights] of the garter in ther robes, and after the Giuen('s) grace in [her robes, and] all the garde in ther ryche cottes ; and so bake to the [Chapel,] after serves done, bake thrughe the hall to her graces chambur, and that done her grace and the lord(s) wh[ent to dinner,] and her grace wher a goodly servyd ; and after the lordes [sitting on one] syd, and servyd in gold and sylver ; and after dener [there were] knyghtes of the Garter electyd ij, my lord of Shrewsbere [and my] lord of Hunsdon ; and ther wher be all the haroldes in ther cote armurs a-for the quen('s) grace, master Clarenshux, Lanckostur, Rychemond, Wyndsor, Yorke, Chastur, Blumantyl, Ruge-dragon.⁴⁰⁰

Although the monarch was the focal point of the proceedings, St George played an equally important role. Machyn's description is reminiscent of the Garter celebrations with pre-Reformation monarchs. It is heavy in the symbolism related to the saint including the Cross of St George and the prevalence of red. The monarch is the central figure around which the ceremony rotates. In addition, Elizabeth also blended the Tudor livery through the use of her coat of arms including the red Welsh dragon in the same vein as her predecessors. The fact that part of the ceremony occurred in the chapel also reaffirms the religious connotations of the service and the Order. The ceremonies continued a month later at Windsor when the knights were officially installed. Once again the brevity of the Order and its ceremonies were outlined in detail:

The xvij day of May was sant Gorge fest keptt at Wyndsor, and ther was stallyd ther the yerle of Shrowsbere and my lord of Hunsdon, and the yerle of Arundell was the quens deputte, and the way c my lord Monteguw and my lord Pagett, and so they came to cherche ; and after matens done, they whent a prosessyon rond about the cherche, so done the mydes and so rond a-bowt, and almes-knyghtes in red kyrtylles, and a-loft a robe of purpull cloth syd with a crosse of sant Gorge, and after the verger, and then the clarkes and prestes a xxiiij syngyng the Englys prosessyon in chopos d xxxiiij, and sum of them in gray ames e and in calabur, and then cam my lord of Hunsdon, and after my lord Montyg uw, and after the yerle of Shrowsbere, and after my lord Pagett, and after the yerle of Arundell, all they in their robes, and master Garter and master Norres and master dene in cremesun saten robes, with a badges, red crosses on ther shuldurs, and after rod up to the castylle to dener.⁴⁰¹

The symbolism speaks to the importance and reverence in which the Order was still being held. A near identical account exists from the diary in 1562:

The xxij day of Aprell was sant Gorge's day, a[nd at White[h]alle the Quen('s) grase whent from her chapell with xii . knyghtes of the Garter in robes with colars of gold with garters, [and] xx of here chapelle, in copes of cloth of gold, to the offering, s]yngyne the Englys presessyon from the chapell rond [about the] halle and bake agayne to the chapelle syngyng ; and master [dean of] her chapell bare a boke and a robe, and master Norres [bare the] blake rod in a robe, and master Garter, all iij in cremesun saten ; [and] the byshope of Wynchester warre ys robe of red (blank); and ser William Peter, master Clarenshux, Somersett, Yorke, Lanckaster, Rychemond, and Chaster, Ruge-dragon, and R[ouge-croix, Port-] colles, Blumantyll, Wyndsor.⁴⁰²

⁴⁰⁰ Machyn, *Diary*, p. 257.

⁴⁰¹ Machyn, *Diary*, p. 259.

⁴⁰² Machyn, *Diary*, p. 261.

The symbolism of the Order remains prevalent in all of these accounts. Rather than stripping back the public celebrations, or at least the imagery related to St George, the iconography remained visual and prevalent throughout the proceedings alongside the monarch. That the day of the celebrations remained the saint's feast day also reinforces that not all traditions associated with the patron saint had been eradicated.

Although Elizabeth reinforced her total authority over her nobility she did not wish to alienate them. Garter knights were given more rights and privileges than they had enjoyed before Elizabeth's reign. For example, from 1571, they were given precedence of seating in the Lower House of Parliament.⁴⁰³ The precedence within the Order was also altered whereby the knights with the least seniority sat furthest away from the monarch during the Garter ceremonies. This successfully created a further layer of hierarchy and increased desire for the monarch's favour; those closest to the queen would be grateful for their position and the respect for their loyal service and those recently appointed to the Order had something to which they could aspire. This was never more evident than in June 1572, when Elizabeth wished to reinforce her nobles' loyalty. The chronicler John Stowe reports that shortly after the execution of the Duke of Norfolk for his role in the Ridolfi Plot 'the feast of St George was holden at Windsor, where the French ambassadors were royally feasted and Francis duke of Momorencie was stalled knight of the most honourable order of the Garter'.⁴⁰⁴ In this context, Elizabeth used the Garter celebrations as a way through which the nobility could demonstrate their loyalty to the monarch in the immediate aftermath of a crisis of allegiance. The location of Windsor also suggests that Elizabeth wished for the ceremony to be as traditional as possible, perhaps to reinforce the long tradition of ancient order and its link with the monarchy. Finally, the feting of the French also allowed the queen to ameliorate relations with her Catholic counterparts. The importance of the symbolism cannot be overstated.

To add to the symbolism surrounding the Order of the Garter, badges were also created for the Knights of the Garter as well as the Black Rod knot which served as another visual symbol to show their membership to the exalted Order and therefore their allegiance to their monarch.⁴⁰⁵ As will become apparent, visual imagery related to the Garter proliferated further during the reign of Elizabeth.

⁴⁰³ Begent and Chesshyre, *Noble Order*, p. 71.

⁴⁰⁴ The Ridolfi Plot of 1571, named after the Florentine banker who acted as the facilitator, was a plan to depose Elizabeth in favour of the Catholic Mary, Queen of Scots. Thomas Howard, duke of Norfolk, had agreed to marry the Scottish queen, having already been imprisoned once in the Tower for plotting against Elizabeth. John Stowe, *The Chronicles of England*, 1580.

⁴⁰⁵ Begent and Chesshyre, *Noble Order*, p. 71.

The continued importance of the Order is also demonstrated through the portraiture of the time. By comparing two portraits of Elizabeth's favourite, Robert Dudley earl of Leicester, it is also possible to see that the iconography and links to St George remained constant throughout. The 1575 portrait of the earl of Leicester (see Figure 6.1) presents the sitter as a knight of the Garter through the emblem on the left side of the painting; the George medallion also hangs about the earl's neck. Leicester's assured and confident stance, with his sword almost at hand, presents the figure of a brave, young knight in loyal service to his monarch, the type of ideal long associated with the medieval Order. It is noteworthy, however, that the later portrait of Leicester, dated circa 1584 (see Figure 6.2) has far more ornate references to the Order and its patron St George. The Garter emblem remains affixed in the top left-hand corner of the painting, but this time Leicester wears his full Garter regalia complete with the chain and Great George hanging from it. In addition, St George's Cross circled with the Garter motto is on the sitter's left-hand shoulder. The more obvious references to the Order's patron saint are a prime example of how he remained integral to the symbolism of the Garter. That Leicester chose to be painted in more ornate regalia demonstrates the close association the Order retained with the monarchy and perceptions of loyalty. The knights were the chivalric figures of the Order, but Elizabeth was still the most significant individual. During England's campaigns in the Netherlands, Leicester kept an empty seat for the Queen during the St George celebrations in Utrecht, showing the Order served as a way through which loyalty to the monarchy could be demonstrated.⁴⁰⁶

The same can be observed with the portraits of William Cecil, Lord Burghley, who was also made a member of the Order for his service to the queen. In the early portrait, William Cecil is painted with the George medallion around his neck (see Figure 6.3); however, in the later portrait, painted sometime after 1585, Burghley appears wearing his full Garter regalia, complete with the Great George, Garter chain and George's Cross on his robe (see Figure 6.4). St George evidently was not merely a chivalric figure for young courtiers wishing to impress and defend their queen but remained a symbol of status for them as they aged securing a greater status and influence at court and, for some, over the governing of the country. In addition to showing loyalty to one's monarch, the use of the George Cross in the later portraits could also be a symbol of a type of national identity in that they were a member of an ancient English Order. As will become apparent, the use of St George's Cross on flags proliferated throughout the 1580s and 90s, when the latter portraits were completed. The increasingly ornate elements of the Garter robes and regalia also suggest the

⁴⁰⁶ Perry, *The Word of a Prince*, p 197.

importance of St George at a time when it has been incorrectly argued that he was being side-lined by the more militant Elizabethan Protestants.

Sir Henry Lee's induction to the Order is another specific example of the importance of the Garter as a chivalric order to the Elizabethan courtiers. After years of loyal service, and likely as a way to placate him for the amount of debt he was in after she stayed at his home during one of her summer progresses, Elizabeth appointed Sir Henry Lee to the Order of the Garter in 1597.⁴⁰⁷ In fact, having been appointed the Queen's Champion and her Master of Armouries, Lee was the quintessential example of a chivalric figure at the Elizabeth court. He was also responsible for organising the Accession Day Tilts that occurred from the 1580s onwards. Whilst these events lend themselves to the argument that the Order had become 'secular', it is clear from the Garter Book and William Segar's 'Sonnet to Sir Henry Lee, former Queen's Champion' that he received upon his installation to the order, that explicitly religious connotations remained:

St George in Heaven, this year did hold a feast
 In honour of his knight, this day installed
 And there into all other Saints he called
 That martial were; or love in arms at least
 Invited likewise were the Knights deceased
 In this Queen's reign (Happy Elizabeth).
 Whose fame, revives their fames, now after Death;
 Nor can by Death, nor Time, be ever ceased.
 The feast performed; in Tempe was proclaimed
 A solemn firsts; Tournament; and Barriers;
 Whereat appeared infinity of warriors:
 To answer all...⁴⁰⁸

The Metaphysical content of the poem goes a long way in demonstrating the malleability of St George's image (see Figure 6.5). The choice to place St George in heaven in this piece of writing is a significant one as it stops the saint from becoming a strictly secular figure; it even goes so far as to mention other saints with George in heaven. Although the poem is not making points about doctrine, it is a prime example of how the religious aspect of sainthood has been blended with the chivalric ideals and practices. Rather than solely focusing on a temporal tournament, Segar has drawn on religious imagery to make the Order, and its recipients, more important and significant. Like his counterparts, the portrait of Sir Henry Lee, dated after 1597 (see Figures 6.6 and 6.7) portrays him wearing the elaborate Garter chain with the Great George. Like the latter portraits of Leicester and Burghley, these are not men at the pinnacle of their physical strength or military

⁴⁰⁷ Felicity Heal, 'Giving and Receiving on Royal Progress' in *The Progresses, Pageants and Entertainments of Queen Elizabeth I* Jane Elisabeth Archer, Elizabeth Goldring and Sarah Knight (eds), (Oxford, 2007), p. 61.

⁴⁰⁸ Strong, *Gloriana*, p. 140.

prowess. Taking this into consideration, they promulgate the ideals of the ancient order, over which St George remained a very visible patron.

Imagery related to the Garter can also be used to chart the career of courtiers dependent on royal favour. One example of this occurs when studying the portraiture of Robert Devereux, earl of Essex. As the earl slowly grew in stature, so did the allusions to the Garter and St George. In an earlier portrait by William Segar dated between 1590 and 1592 (see Figure 6.8), it is possible to see a lesser George hanging from the earl's neck. The viewer's eye naturally carries on the earl's left hand which is resting on his sword, a reference to his military prowess. As Essex's career progressed and he became a member of the Privy Council, his portraits became grander and the iconography related to the Garter became more noticeable.

The portrait by Marcus Gheeraerts, painted between 1592 and 1596, show the earl with the Order's garter around his leg and the larger Lesser George around his neck. Once again, the earl is portrayed holding his sword and giving another direct mode of address to the viewer (see Figure 6.9). Essex is also wearing a neck plate which further suggests the martial nature of the portrait.

After his involvement in the sacking of Cadiz, Essex's final but official Garter portrait shows the earl in all his splendour. Painted in 1597, the earl of Essex gives another confident pose in his robes whilst holding on to his sword. He is attired completely in iconography related to both the Tudors and St George (see Figure 6.10). The Greater George hangs from a garter chain that is composed of Tudor roses, on the earl's left shoulder is the Garter insignia.

The importance of the Order to Essex can also be seen in the way that he and his soldiers marked St George's day during the Irish campaign in 1599. The ceremony and military procession that Essex ordered were recounted at the time in a popular ballad. What is interesting to note is both the chivalric references, and the reference to St George as the patron saint of England:

In Ireland St George's Day
Was honoured bravely every way,
By lords and knights in rich array
As though they had been in England.

Full many a bold renowned Knight,
Well trained to arms and martial fight,
Were seen that day, with great delight,
To honour St George of England.

With gentlemen of high degree,
Our choicest flowers of chivalry,
As brave a sight as one might see
To honour St George of England.

Who had been there for to behold
 Our captains and lieutenants bold
 Attired brave in cloth of gold
 To honour St George of England
 Might truly then report and say
 Our Champion bold, Saint George's day
 Was nobly graced every way
 To the honour of famous England.⁴⁰⁹

St George's legend and chivalric representations are being referred to throughout these verses. The saint's role as the patron saint of England is invoked throughout the piece which also alludes to other famous English victories such as that at Agincourt.⁴¹⁰ It is clear that the saint is portrayed as being a representation of English national strength and identity. Insofar as the presentation of the ballad is concerned, the printers used woodcuts that included imagery associated with St George and his role of patron saint (see Figure 6.11). A flag with St George's Cross acts as a focal point around which the strong, uniformed English army marches. The image speaks to the association between St George and the English forces, fighting for their monarch and country in Ireland.

Elizabeth is also mentioned in the ballad as the 'sergeants there that day were seen/ In purple velvet, red and green/In honour of that maiden Queen/ which wears the crown of England'. As Queen of England, Elizabeth was intrinsically linked to these ceremonies and although she was not physically present, her role as monarch acted as the catalyst for the ceremonies dedicated to England's patron saint. At the same time, it is important to note that within the ballad she was not assigned a subservient role. Rather than being portrayed as a 'Margaret' or the princess in the legend of St George, she is the figure for whom these men are fighting, the personification of England.

Perhaps the best example of this occurs in the portrait 'Elizabeth Triumphant', circa 1601, where it is possible to see Elizabeth, flanked by her Garter knights whilst being carried on a litter above them (see Figures 6.12 and 6.13). At once it elevates the queen above her subjects but the positioning of the knights around her suggests that they are protecting their sovereign. Iconography related to the Garter is apparent through the Great George and the Garter chains hanging about the knights' necks as well as the Garter emblems on the queen and her lady-in-waiting on the far right of the picture.⁴¹¹ Upon closer inspection, the emblem worn on the sleeve by the queen and her lady-in-waiting is a bejewelled cross, once again a more religious choice in terms of imagery associated

⁴⁰⁹ *The Shirburn Ballads: 1585 – 1616*, A. Clarke (ed.), (Oxford, 1907), pp.322-324; a portion of this ballad is also discussed in Strong, *Cult of Elizabeth*, pp. 175 – 176.

⁴¹⁰ See Chapter 2. For Elizabethan fictional interpretations of St George's intercessions in battle see Chapter 8.

⁴¹¹ Strong, *Cult of Elizabeth*, p. 17.

with the Order. As this painting was commission towards the end of Elizabeth's reign it is apparent that the Order remained important to the monarch as well as to those who were installed. Not only does it demonstrate the high regard in which the knights held the order, but it also reasserts Elizabeth's command over them. It reinforces Elizabeth's wish to have the patron saint, his Order and knights orbit around her figure and authority.

Elizabeth was also presented as a chivalric figure within the context of her title of Defender of the Faith and queen of her dominions; initially she was presented as a traditional queen with the sceptre, orb and Garter emblem. As her reign progressed however, these tropes became more elaborate. The engravings of Crispin van der Passe dating from circa 1590 until 1603 portray Elizabeth with her full royal regalia including the Garter emblem (see Figures 6.14 to 6.16). Where there is a Bible present, it is possible to see that Elizabeth is defending the word of God with a sword. Directly above the sword and the Bible is affixed an emblem for the Order of the Garter. The crown, sceptre and orb, combined with the chivalric symbols of the Garter and the sword defending the English Bible put Elizabeth into an active role, similar to that of her father Henry VIII, as well as St George, rather than the princess or virgin who needs to be rescued.

In his work on royal iconography, Sydney Anglo argues that the Garter celebrations would have had very little significance to the rest of England.⁴¹² Yet it is going too far to say that the iconography and the sentiments attached to the Garter would have been entirely lost on the general public. As we have seen previously, it was acknowledged by contemporaries that the Great Seal was one way through which the monarch's image could be promulgated to her subjects. In Elizabeth's Great Seal the queen is flanked on either side by the Garter emblems (see Figure 6.17). This speaks to the fact that Elizabeth, despite admitting to being a member of the weaker sex, also wished to be seen as a powerful leader and defender of the English religion to whom unwavering allegiance was owed. This dichotomy was channelled and utilised by Elizabeth throughout her realm. In extending from the Order of the Garter, St George was also used by the monarchy and government to promulgate the queen's cult, just as her male predecessors had done.

St George, Gloriana and England

The image of Elizabeth, throughout her reign, was imperative for the successful promulgation of her royal authority. The image of the queen was a source of interest amongst the general population and St George had a significant role to play in this process of representation.

⁴¹² Anglo, *Images of Tudor Kingship*, p. 111.

Interest in the production and acquisition of the queen's image is alluded to in the 1563 proclamation *Prohibiting Portraits of the Queen*. In it, Elizabeth

Commandeth all manner of persons...to forbear from painting, graving, printing, or making any portrait of her majesty until some special person, that shall be by her allowed, shall have first finished a portraiture thereof; after which finished, her majesty will be content that all other painters or gravers...shall and may at their pleasures follow the said painter or first portrayer.⁴¹³

The great concern surrounding the representation of Elizabeth is obvious. In addition to the images of the queen that associated her directly with the chivalric Order of the Garter, she also drew on the association with St George in other ways. In a portrait, dated around 1575, it is possible to see Elizabeth painted with the image of St George hanging about her neck. Elizabeth gives the viewer a direct mode of address, further bringing them into the portrait (see Figures 6.18 and 6.19). One's eyes are then drawn to the St George medallion. The manner in which Elizabeth is dressed is also quite significant as the slits in the dress are reminiscent of the doublet Henry VIII wore in the Holbein paintings.⁴¹⁴ Despite portraying herself as a member of the weaker sex, there are definite yet subtle masculine allusions in terms of the costume worn. Interestingly, the portrait of Elizabeth began as another female sitter who was then changed to Elizabeth. Although the exact situation or context cannot be known, it would suggest that the queen's image was popular enough to be an alternative when the initial plan fell away.

In another version of the painting, Elizabeth actually holds the medallion outward for the audience to see the saint (see Figure 5.20). Again, a direct gaze is used which creates a distinct link between the sitter and the object that is being presented to the viewer. The objects, including what the queen is wearing, presents an image to the audience of a female in male garb with a chivalric male patron saint.

In what is perhaps the most iconic image of her reign, the Armada portrait, references to St George are also found (see Figure 6.21). The image portrays Elizabeth as 'Gloriana' with her hand on the globe, a symbol of her dominance and authority. Behind the queen, the battle of the Armada takes place with the Spanish galleons being thrown asunder in the sea by the storms God brought to destroy England's enemies. To the left of the queen, in the sunlight and calm, it is possible to see the English entourage. Atop all of the ships flies the flag of St George. It is obvious that this is a

⁴¹³ 'Prohibiting Portraits of the Queen' (1563) in *Tudor Royal Proclamations* Paul L. Hughes and James F. Larkin (eds), 3 Vols. (New Haven, 1969), ii, p. 241.

⁴¹⁴ There is evidence that this doublet, in the Italian fashion, was given to Elizabeth by the earl of Leicester. Of all the types of doublets that Elizabeth wore, this type is the least prolific therefore further suggesting its significance and possible reference to Henry VIII. See Susan Doran, *The Tudor Chronicles: 1485 – 1603* (London, 2008). See also Ulinka Rublack, *Dressing Up: Cultural Identity in Renaissance Europe* (Oxford, 2010) and Anna Whitelock, *Elizabeth's Bedfellows: An Intimate History of the Queen's Court* (London, 2013).

factual detail; from the reign of Henry VIII all of England's navy flew St George's Cross as their standard (see Figure 6.22). This is also apparent in a drawing from the time of *The Ark Royal* which presents the ship with iconography including the Tudor Rose and the Cross of St George. Above the ship's heraldry it is possible to see that a tempest's wind is blowing to scatter England's enemies whilst a sun shines on the ship.⁴¹⁵ When coupled with contemporary writings and rhetoric, however, it is clear that St George's Cross, and the saint himself, had religious and nationalistic connotations within an English context throughout the latter half of Elizabeth's reign.

Perhaps the most famous piece of writing for the Elizabethan court is Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*. Within this text more traditional representations of St George can be found. It has been argued that the Redcrosse Knight in the first canto of the poem is a figure of St George. John N. King has argued that Spenser reinterpreted the hagiography of St George in a 'counter-generic strategy [which] assimilates an iconoclastic attack against *The Golden Legend* and other collections of saints' lives at the same time that it appropriates some of their conventions'.⁴¹⁶ At the same time, he argues that Spenser was rebelling against the perception of St George in armour which was an image of which Edward VI had not approved.⁴¹⁷ There is, however, strong evidence to support the fact that Spenser is alluding to and not simply attacking *The Golden Legend*. Furthermore, it has already been established that Edward VI disliked and removed St George as a challenger to the true Protestant faith; it must be remembered that although St George's image was removed from the insignia of the Garter, a secular knight in full armour remained.⁴¹⁸ At the same time, however, Elizabeth Heale asserts that Spenser used the figure of St George to censure Elizabeth for not being a more stalwart Protestant reformer.⁴¹⁹ This view is shared by David Norbrook who compares Spenser's desire for greater religious change to those of noted reformers John Bale and John Foxe.⁴²⁰

The symbolism that Spenser uses is striking and refers to imagery related to St George: 'And of his brest a bloudie Crosse he bore,/ The dear remembrance of his dying Lord'.⁴²¹ The reference to Christ's martyrdom but not St George's is striking. It is the image of a chivalric warrior who fights for Christ that is emerging in the text. Similar to *The Golden Legend*, the knight must 'prove his puissance in battell brave/ Upon his foe, and his new force to learne;/ Upon his foe, a Dragon

⁴¹⁵ For more details about the image see Neville Williams, *The Life and Times of Elizabeth I* (London and Edinburgh, 1972), pp. 156-157.

⁴¹⁶ John N. King, *Spenser's Poetry and the Reformation Tradition* (Princeton, 1990), p. 190.

⁴¹⁷ King, *Spenser's Poetry*, p. 193.

⁴¹⁸ See Chapter 5.

⁴¹⁹ Elizabeth Heale, *The Faerie Queene: a Reader's Guide* (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 34. 44.

⁴²⁰ David Norbrook, *Poetry and Politics in the English Renaissance* (Oxford, 2002), p. 106.

⁴²¹ Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, 1590, p. 37.

horrible and stearne'.⁴²² After killing the dragon, whose body was 'full and filthie [of] sin', Redcrosse is described as a chivalric hero similar to St George: 'A bloudy crosse, and on his craven crest/A bounch of haire discoloured diversely:/ Full jolly knight he seemde, and well addrest,/ And when he sate upon his courser free,/ Saint George himself ye would have deemed/ him to be'.⁴²³ The fact that Spenser mentions the saint without saying that Redcrosse is him allows the poet to reference St George for secular and religious purposes, without appearing to invoke a religious reference that could be perceived as superstitious. By simply likening Redcrosse to St George, Spenser is able to retain faith whilst promoting reforming beliefs, whilst accessing the popularity of the saint's legend. The canto retains the moral message of *The Golden Legend* in addition to key points of the narrative. Alison Chapman argues that the fact the Redcrosse Knight, representing St George, acts as a 'client' to the Faerie Queene, representing Queen Elizabeth, even though this was not the case in reality.⁴²⁴ She states that Spenser maintained this hierarchy despite the fact that Elizabeth would not have minded being cast as the 'devotee' of St George.⁴²⁵ This is clearly inaccurate as it has already been established that Elizabeth made herself the figure to which St George would be subjugated. Despite this, Spenser's detailed allusion to the legend of St George demonstrates its importance to Elizabeth.⁴²⁶ Aside from this, *The Faerie Queene* must be taken as a witty and satirical piece of poetry and not simply a piece that was written to appease a monarch. Spenser is using familiar images and tropes to present the current concerns about Elizabeth's hesitancy for religious reform.

Despite, or perhaps with these criticisms in mind, Elizabeth and her advisors strove to create a sense of English unity in the battle against foreign Catholics threats. Whilst one might not be able to say what a true Englishman was, it was quite easy to state what he was not in the eyes of the crown: foreign, Catholic, or a religious radical. The first point ended up being an all-encompassing identity for anyone who posed a threat to the security of Elizabeth's reign. Legislation between the 1570s and the 1590s reflect the growing fear of foreign influences who would threaten England's stability. One such example is 'An Act to retain the Queen's Majesty's subjects in their due obedience'. This act warned of punishments for anyone who might

put in practice to absolve, persuade or withdraw any of the Queen's Majesty's subjects or any within her Highness' realms and dominions from their natural obedience to her Majesty, or to withdraw them from that intent from the religion now by her Highness' authority established within her

⁴²² Spenser, *Faerie Queene*, p. 37.

⁴²³ Spenser, *Faerie Queene*, p. 70.

⁴²⁴ Chapman, *Patrons*, p. 56.

⁴²⁵ Chapman, *Patrons*, p. 56.

⁴²⁶ Elizabeth's preference for the saint can also be seen at the opposite end of the social spectrum at the court. In the list of New Year's Gifts to the Queen in 1589, it was noted that John Smithson, Master Cooke gave the queen 'one faire march-payne with St George in the midst'. Strong and Trevelyan Oman, *Elizabeth R*, p.27.

Highness' dominions to the Romish religion, or to move them or any of them to promise any obedience to any pretended authority of the see of Rome.⁴²⁷

Just over ten years later, in 1593, 'An Act against popish recusants' blatantly associated Catholics with foreign threats when it decried 'not only...her Majesty's foreign enemies but also ... rebellious and traitorous subjects born within her Highness' realms and dominions and hiding their most detestable and devilish purposes under a false pretext of religion [who do attempt] to corrupt and seduce her Majesty's subjects'.⁴²⁸ Throughout these pieces of legislation the 'foreign' element of the Catholic threat remains at the fore. It is this un-English faith and evil mentality that threatens to subvert the stability of England, harm its queen and give its subjects over to a foreign power.

It is within this context that St George acts as an antithesis to foreign allegiance. Despite his ironically foreign origins, the fact that the saint was so entrenched within the English psyche allowed him to symbolise a specifically English bravery, loyalty and religiosity. With the fear of the foreign threat being firmly established, the nationalistic sentiments portrayed in the Armada portrait were echoed by popular ballads at the time, thereby demonstrating these fears were widely disseminated. The role that each Englishman was to play is clearly presented in the ballad entitled 'A warning to London by the fall of Antwerp'. The ballad warns Londoners about the threat of foreign powers, encouraging them to be 'Champions' and 'guard [Elizabeth] with grace' from the 'sword [which wishes] to bring her graces reign to end'.⁴²⁹ In this instance it is the English subjects who are cast in the role of the chivalric knight who were to defend their Virgin Queen against foreign threats.

A few years later, another popular ballad, 'My Lord Willoughbies Welcome Home', described the fighting between the English and the Spanish and Dutch. After a resounding defeat at the hands of the English (who have 'praised God devoutly' before the battle), the Spanish commander is quoted as telling his men that he 'fear[s] we shall be spoiled all, if that we longer stay' as the English Lord Willoughby 'will not give one inch of the way for all the Devils in Hell'.⁴³⁰ Despite this, the English 'pursued courageously and rout their forces quite, /And at last they gave a shout, which echoed through the sky, / "God and St George for England!" the conquerors did cry'.⁴³¹ In this text St George is not only portrayed as a figure of national identity, he retains some of his religious connotations as well. The manner in which the soldiers and sailors invoke his name upon their victory bears resemblance to the medieval accounts of Henry V and the battle of Agincourt.

⁴²⁷ *An Act to retain the Queen's Majesty's subjects in their due obedience* (1581: 23 Eliz. I, c.1), p. 432.

⁴²⁸ *An Act against popish recusants* (1593: 35 Eliz. I, c. 2), p. 437.

⁴²⁹ *A Warning to London by the fall of Antwerp* (London, 1577).

⁴³⁰ *My Lord Willoughbies Welcome Home* (London, c. 1590), STC/IJD 33.

⁴³¹ *My Lord Willoughbies Welcome Home* (London, c. 1590), STC/IJD 33.

Although there is no mention of the soldiers praying to St George for intercession before the battle, by mentioning him alongside God and England in their oath, the saint is placed in a special and privileged position. This blended representation of St George is also reflected in popular writings and celebrations throughout Elizabeth's reign.

Rather than being side-lined during the reign of the Virgin Queen, or becoming entirely secularised during a period of Reformation, representations of the saint were adapted and used for various purposes. Elizabeth, far from being a submissive female, rearranged court and national celebrations so that they centred on her and key events in her reign. St George also remained firmly entrenched as the patron saint of the Order of the Garter, despite the Edwardian attempt at obscuring him from the tradition. The role of the Order remained of the utmost importance to those at the Elizabethan court and continued to be a way through which the monarch could reward loyalty from her courtiers. The image of St George allowed Elizabeth to draw correlations between herself and the nostalgia surrounding the reigns of Henry VII and Henry VIII. In keeping with the representation of Henry VIII as defender of the English faith, Elizabeth was able to assume this role as her reign progressed. The proliferation of this image increased in the latter half of Elizabeth's reign, coinciding with sense of English nationalism and identity. These visual references retained allusions to St George as a chivalric warrior and defender. It was not only the upper echelons of Elizabethan society who accessed and reinterpreted the role and representations of St George. The popularity of the saint was a feature of greater Elizabethan society throughout the latter half of the sixteenth century and was adapted accordingly, retaining some old meanings whilst acquiring new ones.

Images



Figure 6.1 Robert Dudley, earl of Leicester, 1575



Figure 6.2 Robert Dudley, earl of Leicester, c. 1584



Figure 6.3 Sir William Cecil, c.1571



Figure 6.4 William Cecil, Lord Burghley, c.1585

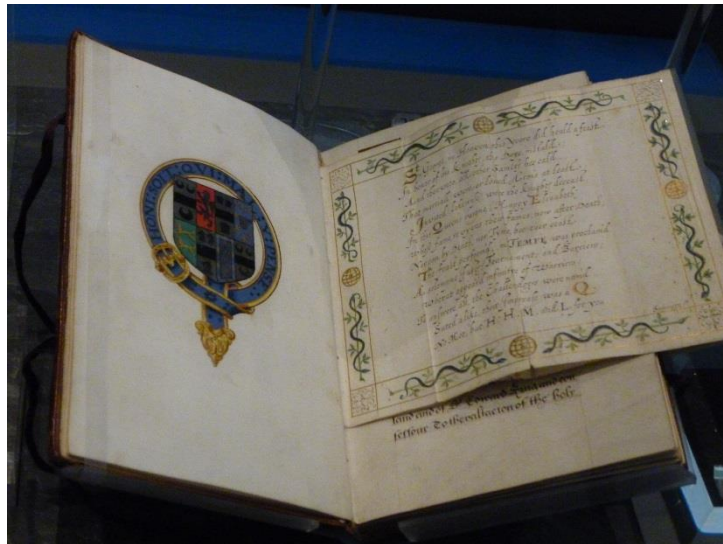


Figure 6.5 Sir Henry Lee's Garter Book



Figure 6.6 Sir Henry Lee, c. 1597



Figure 6.7 Medal used as Sir Henry Lee's seal



Figure 6.8 Robert Devereux, second earl of Essex, 1590-1592



Figure 6.9 Robert Devereux, second earl of Essex, 1592-1596



Figure 6.10 Robert Devereux, second earl of Essex, 1597



Figure 6.11 Woodcut of Essex's celebration of St George's Day in Ireland, 1599



Figure 6.12 Eliza Triumphans, c. 1601



Figure 6.13 Detail of Eliza Triumphans with the shoulder Garter jewel



Figure 6.14 Elizabeth I, Crispin van der Passe, c.1580 and Figure 6.15 Elizabeth I, Crispin van der Passe, c. 1592



Figure 6.16 The Entrance of Elizabeth I, Crispin van der Passe, c. 1603 copied from 1590



Figure 6.17 Great Seal of Elizabeth I



Figure 6.18 Elizabeth and St George, c. 1575



Figure 6.19 Henry VIII, c. 1540



Figure 6.20 Elizabeth I and St George c. 1575



Figure 6.21 Armada Portrait, c. 1588

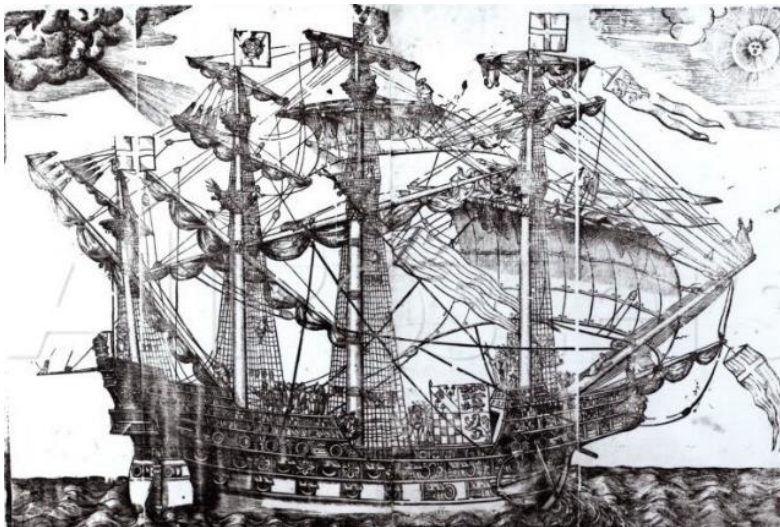


Figure 6.22 The Ark Royal, c. 1588

7. St George and the Jacobean Court

Even before his arrival in England, James wished it to be known to the leading councillor, Robert Cecil, that he was well aware of the challenges that awaited him in England. In a letter dated December 1602, James wrote:

I know it may be justly thought that I have the like beam in my own eye but, also, it is a far more barbarous and stiff-necked people that I rule over. Saint George surely rides upon a towardly riding horse where I am daily burstin in daunting a wild unruly colt. And I protest, in God's presence, the daily increase that I hear of popery in England and the proud variety, that the papists make daily there of their power, their increase, and their combined faction that none shall enter to be king but by their permission, this their bragging, I say, is the cause that moves me, in the zeal of my religion and in that natural love I owe to England, to break forth in the digression and to forewarn you of these apparent evils'.⁴³²

This comparison made to St George speaks to the saint's popularity as a point of reference. In terms of the topic of religion, it also represents the saint as a figure who upheld and represented the true Protestant faith in England, especially when compared to the kings more unruly and troublesome subjects to the north. By comparing himself to the saint, James demonstrates the degree to which he had struggled with his Scottish subjects on the point of religion. His knowledge and experience in this area then led him to believe he was in a position to warn Cecil about the dangerous strength of the Catholics in England. It is important to note that James uses the analogy to speak about his intolerance of Catholics and the strength of his own, Protestant faith. This is somewhat ironic given that in earlier correspondence, Elizabeth often rebuked James for not expelling Jesuits from his kingdom, as well as for not putting his Catholic lairds under 'further restraint'.⁴³³ Given that this letter was written only four months before Elizabeth I died, it is likely that these sentiments were the equivalent of James flexing his monarchical muscles in anticipation of his ascending to the English throne; the reference to the country's patron saint demonstrates that James understood the significance of English popular figures and their wider connotations.

From the moment that he entered London as the new King of England, St George was a key reference point for James. An account written by Thomas Dekker, entitled *The Magnificent Entertainment*, describes in detail the procession of James, Anne of Denmark and Prince Henry

⁴³² G.P.V. Akrigg (ed.), *Letters of James VI & I* (Berkeley and London, 1984), Letter 89, p. 201.

⁴³³ Susan Doran, 'Loving and Affectionate Cousins? The Relationships between Elizabeth I and James VI of Scotland 1586 – 1603', *Tudor England and its Neighbours*, Susan Doran and Glenn Richardson (eds), (Basingstoke and New York, 2005), p. 210. Jenny Wormald seconds this by pointing out that for a number of years Elizabeth paid James 'virtually an *annual* pension in an attempt to ensure that Scottish politics would not undermine English ones'; Jenny Wormald, 'Politics and Government of Scotland' *A Companion to Tudor Britain*, Robert Tittler and Norman Jones (eds), (Oxford, 2004), p. 153.

Frederick's in their entrance into London. Towards the beginning of the event, the figures of St George and St Andrew, in armour, ride out to greet the royal family on their progress into the city:

Saint George and Saint Andrew, (the Patrons of both kingdomes) having a long time lookt upon each other, with countenances rather of mere strangers, than of suche near Neighbours, upon the present aspect of his Majesties approach towards London, were (in his sight) to issue from two severall places on horseback, and in complete Armour, their Brestes and Caparisons suited with the arms of England and Scotland, (as they are now quartered) to testifie their leagued Combination and new sworne Brother-hood.⁴³⁴

Whilst both saints appear equal to one another it must be noted that the biblical Saint Andrew has assumed the martial appearance of St George. This would have likely been more fitting for the entrance of the chivalric new king to his new capital city and also matches with previous tradition throughout the Tudor reigns of St George riding out on horseback to greet the new sovereign.

Later, after riding up to the King holding hands, both saintly knights are intercepted by the figure of Genius, representing the rebirth of the City. When questioned as to their identities, both St George and St Andrew said they were 'Knight at Armes' who were representing the 'honour' of their respective countries although they were now 'sworne into a league of unitie'.⁴³⁵ Whilst the unification of the two kingdoms is very much a prevalent theme, neither saint alludes to giving up their own identity. This importantly demonstrates that James and his councillors were extremely careful not to make the Scottish kingdom's accession to the throne too offensive to the English subjects. Whilst both kingdoms were to be governed and unified under one monarch, at this stage they were to remain two independent countries with their own national identity.

The reasoning behind this presentation and choice of words can also be seen in James' speeches to the English Parliament upon his accession to the English throne. In a speech that was delivered to the House of Lords on 29 March 1603, the new king made it perfectly clear to the Lords that his claim to the throne of England was a strong one as his lineage was equally legitimate in both kingdoms. In one of his first speeches upon arriving in England, and in the same vein as one of Elizabeth's speeches, James likened himself to the biblical figure of Daniel, praying 'that God who preserved me from the devouring jawes of the Beare and of the Lion, and delivered them into my hands, shall now grant me victory over the uncircumcised Philistine' who might challenge his claim to the throne.⁴³⁶ Furthermore, James declared himself king as a result of what 'God... by my

⁴³⁴ Thomas Dekker, *The Magnificent Entertainment* (London, 1604), p. 5. See also Gilbert Dugdale, *The time triumphant declaring in briefe, the arrival of our soveraigne liedge Lord, King James into England* (London, 1604).

⁴³⁵ Dekker, *Magnificent*, p. 8.

⁴³⁶ James I, 'A Speech as it was delivered in the Upper House of the Parliament to the Lords Spirituall and Temporal, and to the Knights, Citizens and Burgess there Assembled on Monday the XIX day of March 1603,

Birthright and lineall descent and in the fulnesse of time provided for me'.⁴³⁷ Shortly afterwards James made another reference to his 'descent lineally out of the loynes of Henry the seventh' and reassured those assembled that 'as I am no stranger to you in blood, no more am I a stranger to you in Faith, or in the matters concerning the house of God'.⁴³⁸ It is clear that James wished to accentuate his claim through the now venerable reign of the Tudors. By referring to the reign of Henry VII, the first Tudor monarch, James was able to affiliate himself with almost one hundred and twenty years of the previous dynasty.

Although Sharpe argued that the new king did little to promulgate his image amongst his subjects in the first years of his reign in England, there is significant evidence to suggest that James did make bold written and visual statements to legitimise his claim to the new throne. One way James managed to achieve this was through republication of some of his earlier written works upon his accession to the English throne in 1603.

One example is James' epic poem *Lepanto*. As Peter Herman has argued, James 'arrogated' the victory of Lepanto for himself to ingratiate himself with his new English subjects. It is for this reason that the 1603 edition's title was changed from simply *Lepanto* to *The King's Lepanto or His Majesties Lepanto or Heroicall Song*.⁴³⁹ It should also be noted that James adopted many of the tropes of saints' hagiographies for his account of the battle. For instance in the sonnet which acts as the preface to the work, James refers to 'the monstyres fayre' and 'All these for teaching man, the LORD did frame/ To doe his will, whose glory shines in thame'.⁴⁴⁰ This is quickly followed with the description of the outbreak of the conflict which is described as 'Cruell martial warre,/ A bloody battell bold...Betwixt the baptiz'd race,/ And circumcised Turband Turks'.⁴⁴¹ In many ways, the mythological and hyperbolic language is reminiscent of *The Golden Legend* where warrior saints like St George fought against the evil Pagans in the name of Christianity and the Church. Links can also be drawn with more recent texts such as *The Seven Champions of Christendom* who were also presented as part of a Christian collective, battling against the Ottoman Empire. This comparison is

Being the first day of the first Parliament' in *The Political Works of James I* Reprinted from the Edition of 1616, Charles Howard McIlwan (ed.), (Cambridge, 1918), Speech, p. 270.

⁴³⁷ James I, 'A Speech as it was delivered in the Upper House of the Parliament to the Lords Spirituall and Temporal', p. 269.

⁴³⁸ James I, 'A Speech as it was delivered in the Upper House of the Parliament to the Lords Spirituall and Temporal', pp. 271, 274.

⁴³⁹ Peter C. Herman, 'Authorship and the Royal I: King James VI/I and the Politics of Monarchic Verse' *Renaissance Quarterly*, Vol. 54, No. 4, Part 2 (2001), pp. 1510, 1523.

⁴⁴⁰ James I, *His Majesties Lepanto or Heroicall song*, (London, 1603), STC/1796:25.

⁴⁴¹ James I, *His Majesties Lepanto or Heroicall song*, (London, 1603), STC/1796:25.

furthered when James describes the battle as being between agents of 'Satan' and 'Christian Princes'.⁴⁴²

Later in the poem, the characterisation of the Christian nations portray them as individual entities yet joined together as chivalric warriors who were fighting together as champions of Christ: 'Their Flags and Ensigns were displayed,/ At Zephyrs will to wave,/ Each painted in the colours cleare. Of every owner brave... And that the glory of God in earth,/ Into their manhead stands,/ Through just reliefe of Christian soules/ From cruell Pagan hands.'⁴⁴³ The language used demonstrates a direct correlation with traditional accounts of medieval and Christian hagiographies and popular legends. The simple rhyme scheme of the poem and the hyperbolic sentiment makes it clear that it was meant to be disseminated widely and ideally recounted to larger audiences. At the same time the heavy religious overtones gives the piece a strong moral message about the legitimacy of the Christian faith and nations over non-Christian threats. By republishing this poem and sending it to England in order to coincide with his arrival as monarch, James portrayed himself as a devout Christian and appealed to the popular presentation of Christian legends and the battle between the forces of good and evil.

It was not just in the printed word however that James presented himself as the new monarch. James used a wide range of imagery to secure his claim to the thrones of both Scotland and England. For example, the broadsheet entitled *The most happy Unions contracted betwixt the Princes of the Blood Royall of theis towne Famous Kingdomes of England & Scotland*, printed and disseminated in 1603, reinforces James' legitimacy as ruler to its audience (see Figure 7.1). It was also partially meant to bolster a proclamation that was made to the English and Scottish borders in 1603 that it was the king's wish that 'in the hearts of all the best disposed subjects of both the Realms' there was 'a most earnest desire that the said happy Union should be perfected'.⁴⁴⁴ In the print, not only is his lineage reinforced but the symbolism on the sheet speaks volumes. Whilst the page has the royal line and their relations from both England and Scotland, the page is dotted with Tudor roses, symbolism directly linked to the preceding English dynasty. Looking at the top of the page to the images of James and Anne of Denmark, it is the English iconography that flanks the king whilst the Stuart coat of arms and the unicorn holding the flag with St Andrew's Cross is set next to the queen. The number of references to St George and the king is also striking. In the image, James

⁴⁴² James I, *His Majesties Lepanto or Heroicall song* (London, 1603), STC/1796:25. For further elaboration on the wider Christian collective during the Battle of Lepanto see Peter Marshall, "'Rather with Papists than with Turks:' The Battle of Lepanto and the Contours of Elizabethan Christendom', *Reformation*, Volume 17, Issue 1 (January 2012), pp. 135-159.

⁴⁴³ James I, *His Majesties Lepanto or Heroicall song* (London, 1603), STC/1796:25.

⁴⁴⁴ Pauline Croft, *King James* (Basingstoke, 2003), p. 54.

is wearing the chair of the Great George about his neck, whilst beside him is the motto and coat of arms for the Order of the Garter. Further beyond, is the lion holding the English flag with the Cross of St George. Although it would be too much to say that the iconography related to Scotland has been completely under-valued, it is significant that the king's image is only placed directly next to the symbolism related to England and the country's patron saint.

The thin line between appealing to the two kingdoms and trying to demonstrate unity within a larger collective of Great Britain can be seen when one looks at the potential designs of flags for the new kingdom (see Figure 7.2). Both the St George and St Andrew crosses are used to denote the individual kingdoms but also the fact they had been joined under one union. It is also significant to note that two thirds of the designs show the George Cross to be in a dominant or more obvious location than the Cross of St Andrew; this might be one of the reasons that none of these designs ever came to fruition. It does mark, however, the importance of the two distinct nations and the fact that both had a national identity that was embodied in the symbolism associated with their countries' patron saints.

The time at which the broadsheet portrait was commissioned also coincides with proclamations by the king about his rule over a united Britain. On 20 October 1604, a proclamation 'by the cleerenesse of our Right' proclaimed him King of Great Britain. James' vision of a unified Britain was reiterated as 'evident to sense': the island had 'one common limit or rather Gard of the Ocean Sea making the whole a little world within itself'.⁴⁴⁵ At the same time, however, James was sensitive to the tensions that could arise from trying to combine two nations with distinct identities. This consideration can be seen with the *Proclamation declaring what Flaggs South and North Britaines shall beare at Sea*, dated 12 April 1606. In the proclamation, James states that:

Whereas some difference hath arisen betweene our Subjects of South and North Britaine travayling by Seas, about the bearing of their Flagges: For the avoyding of all such contentions hereafter, Wee have with the advise of our Councill ordered; That from hencefoorth all our Subjects of this Isle and Kingdome of great Britaine and the members thereof, shall beare in their Mainetoppe the Red Crosse, commonly called St Georges Crosse, and the White Crosse commonly called S Andrewes Crosse, joyned together according to a forme made by our Heralds, and sent by us to our Admirall to bee published to our said Subjects: And in their Fore-toppe our Subjects of South Britaine shall weare the Red Crosse onely as they were wont, and our Subjects of North Britaine in their Fore-toppe the White Crosse onely as they were accustomed.

Wherefore wee will and command all our Subjects to be conformable and obedient to this our Order, and that from hencefoorth they doe not use to beare their Flagges in any other sort, as they will answere the contrary at their perill.⁴⁴⁶

⁴⁴⁵ Croft, *James*, p. 63.

⁴⁴⁶ Robert Barker Printer to the Kings most excellent Majestie, *By the King: A Proclamation declaring what Flaggs South and North Britaines shall beare at Sea* (London, 1606).

The attempt to mediate between the presentation of national identity and the idea of a united Britain is highly apparent. Beyond the contentions that existed between the English and the Scots, the direct reference to St George's Cross and St Andrew's Cross being representative of national identity speaks to the fact that both kingdoms saw themselves as separate entities and were not agreeable to losing their independent status under a new monarchical arrangement. The fact that the heralds' uniforms remained the same also indicated James' wish not to alienate his subjects on the matter that evidently meant a great deal to them when threatened with losing it. James was very conscious of the importance of image.

Perhaps the most important method through which James disseminated his new role to his English subjects was the visual medium of coins and medals. New coins with the king's image were minted as soon as he arrived in London. The Accession Medal portrayed James as 'Imperator of Britain' and the Coronation Medal as 'Caesar Augustus of Great Britain'. This choice is highly significant as it demonstrates a further unification of England and Scotland through the existence of the shared monarch.⁴⁴⁷ In addition to these coins, James also had a new medal struck as he assumed the title of *Defensor Fidei*, thereby following in the steps of his Tudor ancestors. Despite the classical allusions on the initial coins from James' reign, in this medal the king wears the Great George about his neck. On the reverse side of the medal was an image of the Ark after the flood, with a verse from Psalm 72 which read: 'Unto the king give thy judgement, O God'. Not only does this demonstrate that James was God's anointed representative on earth, it also speaks to the importance of involving the figure of St George when taking the title of Defender of the Faith. Just as Henry VIII and Elizabeth had in their own respective methods, James wished it to be made clear to his subjects, right from the beginning of his dual reign, that he would uphold the English, Protestant faith from any potential threats. Despite these monarchs having different views of religion and varying levels of tolerance for dissenting factors, all three invoked the figure of St George when presenting themselves as Defenders of the Faith, therefore continuing the representation of the saint as England's religious protector and champion.

⁴⁴⁷ See also Pauline Croft, *King James* (Basingstoke, 2003), p. 40. Sharpe notes that James was the first monarch to liken himself to a Roman Emperor. Kevin Sharpe, *Image Wars: Promoting Kings and Commonwealth in England 1603 – 1660* (New Haven and London, 2010), p. 83.

St George and King James of Scotland, England or Great Britain

With regards to royal portraiture, the king and his advisors proved themselves astute in their use of imagery. Although James' portraits were arguably not as ostentatious as his Tudor predecessors, it should not be discounted as being ineffectual. As mentioned above, James' situation was considerably different from that of his Tudor predecessors. He was already the ruler of one kingdom and had been for over twenty years by the time that he acceded to the English throne. The constant panic over succession that had plagued the Tudors did not apply to James. He had already secured his dynasty with two male heirs who could succeed him. Taking this into consideration, it is not surprising that James' approach to visual propaganda took a different focus. Rather than it being inferior, it should be argued that James was asserting his authority in a different way. The 1605 portrait of John de Critz provides a subtler representation of monarchy and power; however, the meaning is still apparent (see Figure 7.3). Sharpe argues that this image is unremarkable, noting that James 'sports no royal regalia'.⁴⁴⁸ When examining the picture, however, there is ample evidence that the king is projecting his authority, and is using traditional methods of doing so. James' white doublet, a stark symbol of purity and divinity juxtaposes him with the darker background and makes him the sole focal point of the image. This dress code was used numerous times in Elizabeth's reign to connote her virginity and purity. Here, James is showing his religiosity in terms of being God's appointed monarch of both England and Scotland. With respect to symbolism, the large jewel in James' hat, known as the 'mirror of Britain' which sends a key message out to the audience reinforcing his claim and legitimacy to both thrones. This again is in many ways similar to the pearls or Garter jewels that Elizabeth wore in her portraiture, or the hat jewel of St George or the St George pendant that Henry VIII wore in some of his portraits. Although there is not a proliferation of jewels, it could be argued that James is sending a very clear and concise message about his interpretation of his reign.

The use of the Garter regalia in the portrait also sends a very powerful message, especially when one considers James' hand resting near his sword. By wearing the Greater George and chain around his neck, and the actual Garter around his calf, James invokes a long-established tradition from all the preceding monarchs dating back to the fourteenth century. The viewer can see that the monarch has chosen the well-respected and distinctly English order as the main example of royal regalia. The presence of the sword also suggests James' role as defender, further presenting him as a chivalric figure.

⁴⁴⁸ Kevin Sharpe, *Image Wars*, p. 5.

With regards to the setting of the portrait, the Turkish rug can in many ways been seen as a sign of power and opulence. The size and decoration of the rug are no doubt meant to represent luxury, much like the hangings in the in the Armada portrait or the tapestries in the Whitehall mural during the reign of Henry VIII. The fact that James stands on it, however, may also suggest dominance and a further reference to Christian victory and superiority over the heathen Turks. This sentiment was already apparent in the king's written works, and this image portrays him as the confident ruler, adorned with the Christian chivalric knight St George and his Noble Order, who was exerting his authority as part of wider Christendom.

Sharpe states that the large numbers of copies ordered of the original Critz painting is indicative of the scarcity of royal portraits.⁴⁴⁹ Whilst this might be the case, it does not suggest that the image of the king was any less effective. A portrait dating from 1606, also by de Critz, although having a more colourful and ornate background, keeps the main points of the initial image (see Figure 7.4). Rather than suggesting a lack of originality, it reinforces the king's image as a Christian king who was powerful enough to rule over England and Scotland jointly and legitimately. It should also be noted that the majority of these images, despite being copies or variations, all incorporated the image of St George through references to the Order of the Garter. A copy of a portrait after Critz, also painted around 1606, shows that whilst details about his costumes may have been altered, the reference to the Garter and the king wearing the George around his neck remains a constant trope.

At the same time, James not only promulgated his own image through coinage, medals and portraits, but also ensured that his heir was well known too. In order to maintain tradition within England, James created his heir, Henry, Prince of Wales in 1610.⁴⁵⁰ Upon his appointment to the title, James commissioned a portrait of his son by Robert Peake (see Figure 7.5). In the painting, Henry assumes a confident and similar stance to his father's previous portraits. Henry also stands on a Turkish rug in an ornately decorated room with his hand on his hip, near his sword. About his neck, Henry also wears the Lesser George and has the Order's garter around his leg. Finally, Henry gives the viewer a direct mode of address. The message of the picture is clear: the Prince of Wales was meant to promise hope and a secure continuation of the Stuart dynasty.

The 1610s further demonstrated James' wish to solidify the Stuart dynasty in England, and St George remained an important figure in this effort. In Thomas Lyte's print *Brittan's Monarchie*, it is

⁴⁴⁹ Sharpe, *Image Wars*, p. 61.

⁴⁵⁰ Keith M. Brown, 'Monarchy and Government in Britain, 1603 – 1637', *The Short Oxford History of the British Isles: The Seventeenth Century* Jenny Wormald (ed.), (Oxford, 2008), p. 19.

possible to see a further link drawn between the genealogy of the Stuart dynasty and that of the Tudors (see Figure 7.6). Even seven years after his accession to the throne, the print is adorned with Tudor roses and references to Henry VII and Henry VIII. In the top centre of the image is James VI and I, sitting in the chair of state with the sceptre and orb; about his neck hangs the Great George. Similar to *The Most Happy Union*, James is pictured again to the right of the print with his queen; he also wears the Great George in that image. To his left is the Garter insignia and motto. The proliferation of imagery and symbolism related to England's patron saint is striking and demonstrates the degree to which St George was integral to the monarchical image.

The importance of this imagery to James is reinforced by the gift that James gave Lyte to thank him for his work (see Figure 7.7). The Lyte jewel, with the miniature of James as presumably he would have wanted to be seen by his subjects, shows a conventional image of the king wearing the Lesser George. The repetition of this representation of the monarch further suggests the constant image James and his advisors wanted to promulgate.

The wedding of James' oldest daughter, Elizabeth, to Prince Frederick, Count Palatine of the Rhine in 1613, allowed the royal family to draw upon the legend of St George to create a public spectacle. As part of the fireworks display after the wedding, the Stuarts arranged to have the legend of St George played out in the sky for all to witness. An account of the fireworks entitled *Heaven's Blessing and Earth's Joy* describes that

Saint George being mounted on horsback, makes towards the Castle of Brumond, which being perceaved by the watchfull Dragon...is encountred by him, where as Saint George (being armed at all points (but especially) with an unrebated courage) having in his Helmet a burning flaming Feather, and in one hand a burning Launce, and in the other a fiery Sword, with which weapons he assailes the dreadfull Dragon, with such fury and Monster-quelling streakes...where in conclusion, after a terrible and long endured Combat, with his Launce he gores the Hellehound under the wing, that he presently aftermost hideous roring, and belch|ing of fire, is vanquished and slaine: at which the terrible shaped Giant rises (who hauing sate as a spectator of this bloody battel upon a great stump of a trée at the Castle Gate) and adresses himselfe towards Saint George, meaning to revenge the death of the Dragon, and to swallow his enemy for a modieum: but at their first encounter, the blowes on both sides fell like Thunder clappes, enforcing lightning, and fiery exhalations to sparkle, from whence their powerfull stroakes lighted: at last the Monstar gaping wide, as an Arch in London Bridge, runnes furiously, intending to swallow his adversary at a bit: which Saint George seeing, upon the suddaine thrust his Sword into his gréedy throat and over threwe him: at which the Monster yelles and rores forth such a terrible noyse, as if the Center of the earth had crackt, that with the vncouth dinne thereof, the Neighbouring hills, woods, and valleyes, séemed to tremble like an earth quake.⁴⁵¹

The hyperbolic account speaks to the popularity of St George as a drgaon-slayer and how it was used and directly drawn upon for the purposes of royal display. The saint, as patron of the royal family, is

⁴⁵¹ John Taylor, *Heaven's Blessing and Earth's Joy* (1613), STC (2nd ed.,)/23763. For a similar account, see also Johannes Maria de Franchis, *Of the Most Auspicious marriage*, (1613), STC (2nd ed.,)/ 11309.

portrayed as a brave and chivalric figure who always triumphs over evil. The royal preference for the saint was also apparent in a poem by Anthony Nixon, written in honour of the marriage and entitled *Great Brittaines generall ioyes*. In the poem, Nixon draws upon the history of the royal family and St George:

But how shall euer Time forget to tell,
The Tragicke actions of that bloody Warre,
That in this Kingdome many yeeres befell
Betwixt the Houses Yorke and Lancaster?
VVhere Englands honour 'gainst it selfe was arm'd-
Saint George against Saint George, did lift his hand:
Nature by Nature, was vnkindly harm'd-
Blood did 'gainst Blood, in opposition stand...

Then I cal'd to minde
What Princely Edward of that name the third,
King Edward for his great atchiuement fam'd
What he began: The order of Saint George,
That at this day is honoured through the world
The order of the Garter now t'is cal'd.
Famous through all the world for honour and antiquity
Grac'd by a King, and fauoured of his peeres,
Fam'd by his followers worthy kings & queenes
That to his day are soueraignes of the same.

The traine of all thiese hardy Knights enstal'd
Cast in a ring about olde Windsor Castle,
Vnder the glorious spreading winges of fame,
I saw Great Brittaines King, richly attyrde,
Leading with him a sort of goodly Knights,
With Garters and with collours of Saint George
Iacobus Rex on a compartiment
Of Golde, in Bisse was writ and hung a skue
Vppon his head, vnder an imperiall crowne:
Hee was the Soueraigne of the Knights he led,
His face me thought I knew: as if the same,
The same great King, that wee doe here enioy,
Had climb'd the clowdes, & been in person there
To whom the earth, the Sea, and Elements
Auspicious are.⁴⁵²

In this section of the poem, Nixon calls on the history of the royal family whilst expressing hope for the future: sentiments in keeping with the general theme of a wedding. He refers to the unnatural situation in which the country found itself during the civil war between Lancaster and York. At this point, St George is used to symbolise the English people when they are pitted against one another. To re-establish the stability of the monarchy, Nixon reverts even further back to the reign of Edward

⁴⁵² Anthony Nixon, *Great Brittaines generall ioyes. Londons glorious triumphes Dedicated to the immortal memorie of the ioyfull mariage of the two famous and illustrious princes, Fredericke and Elizabeth* (London, 1613), STC (2nd ed.)/18587.

III and the long established Order of the Garter. The references to the patron saint, his order and of its seat in Windsor, where the wedding was taking place, added even more legitimacy and gravity to the proceedings and to the Stuarts as the new rulers of 'Great Britain'. It is a further example of how James and his government entrenched the Stuart dynasty into the English, if not British, tradition.

Even as James' reign progressed, and he became more secure in England, the key messages of his portraiture remained the same (see Figures 7.8 and 7.9). The 1618 and 1620 Paul van Somer portraits of James VI and I are slightly more ornamental, but they still present a chivalric king who is God's representative on earth. In the 1618 portrait, which too had alternative versions and copies made, Somer presents James standing erect whilst giving a direct mode of address to the viewer. In one hand he holds the medal of the Lesser George in his hand, a symbol of his role of Defender of the Faith and of being a brave, chivalric figure.⁴⁵³ This is reinforced by the garter that James wears around his neck with the Order's motto. Whilst James does not wear any royal regalia, the sceptre, orb and crown are at his side by his other hand on the table, symbolising his power and reign. In one version of the painting lies a suit of armour, suggesting that the king as been victorious in securing peace with Britain's enemies and securing a royal marriage with the Habsburgs.⁴⁵⁴ He does not require the armour at present but it is nearby in the event that his Britain needs a defender. Once again, James puts sole emphasis on symbolism related to the monarchy, the two most important being the royal regalia and the Order of the Garter.

The 1620 Paul van Somer portrait of James VI and I, although more ostentatious as the king is wearing his coronation robes, still maintains these two key areas of symbolism (see Figure 7.10). In addition to the robes, James wears the crown and holds the sceptre and orb. The Great George hangs about his neck and the garter about his leg. Behind the king, through the window, is an image of the Banqueting House which was being constructed at the time on the orders of James. The purpose of this painting is to portray the might and success with which James has reigned to date. James looks out again at his audience, showing them the culmination of over fifteen years on both thrones which James is highlighting and celebrating; the wealth and power of his as king. As ever, St George remains a permanent fixture in his image of kingship.

⁴⁵³ See Chapter 5 for examples of the exact same pose assumed by Queen Elizabeth I for a portrait dated c. 1575.

⁴⁵⁴ Kevin Sharpe argues that James uses these portraits to 'assert' his Englishness. Whilst this is the case, this was not a new image for James and readings of this portrait should not be limited to this. Somer's 1618 portrait contains the same messages James conveyed from 1605 onwards with Critz's works.

St George, King James and the Order of the Garter

The Order of the Garter played an extremely important role in securing James in his role as king of England when he arrived in 1603. James was astute in using well known symbolism and imagery to fold himself in to the English tradition. The long established, and much respected, Order of the Garter was one vehicle through which James could bestow favour upon those whose loyalty he needed.

From the moment James acceded to the English throne, he began using the Order of the Garter for his own ends. He immediately set about re-establishing the Order around the castle at Windsor. James did not acknowledge Elizabeth's rule which stated that the Garter ceremonies were to occur wherever the monarch was, proroguing the 1603 feast of St George until the second, third and fourth of July, 1603 so that he could attend the celebrations at Windsor.⁴⁵⁵ This was acknowledged by James' contemporaries as evidenced by John Stow's *English Chronicle* which cited that 'his Majesty deferred [the feast day of St George] until his personal coming onto some of his owne palaces' that that in July 'the King solemnised he feast of St George at Windsor'.⁴⁵⁶

Even before the celebrations occurred however, James was already making appointments to the order. On 14 June, James elected as knights his eldest son Henry and his brother-in-law Christian IV of Denmark. The latter received his Garter regalia from the earl of Rutland in an elaborate ceremony the following month.⁴⁵⁷ Insofar as Henry was concerned, even before James had new portraits commissioned of himself, he ensured that one was painted of Henry by Robert Peake to mark his creation as a Garter Knight (see Figure 7.11). In the painting, Henry stands astride in his full Garter robes, with one hand on his sword. He is the very image of a chivalric English prince. That this painting was commissioned so soon after James' accession in England indicates the king's wish to entrench his family in the nation's tradition and the importance of the Order of the Garter for doing so.

James also used the Garter to show his benevolence. For example, in October 1603 the king doubled the salaries of the Poor Knights and commanded that they were to receive a further twelve pence a day to be paid from the Exchequer'.⁴⁵⁸ James also decreed, obviously trying to reinstate the more ancient traditions of the Order, that £20 was to be given annually to the 'use and ornament of

⁴⁵⁵ Begent and Chesshyre, *Noble Order*, p. 256.

⁴⁵⁶ John Stowe, *The Abridgement of the English Chronicle* (London, 1618), pp. 440, 443.

⁴⁵⁷ Jørgen Hein, 'An Unknown Cameo of James I and the Order of the Garter', *The Burlington Magazine*, Vol. 148, No. 1239, Decorative Arts and Design (Jun., 2006), p. 402.

⁴⁵⁸ Begent and Chesshyre, *Noble Order*, p. 44.

the altar and the chapel of St George in Windsor'.⁴⁵⁹ These grants demonstrate James' wish to use the Order to emulate his English predecessors and endear himself to his English subjects with him at court.

At the same time however, the king was very careful not to alter practices too much from Elizabeth's reign. For example, the Garter Prayer, which from 1559 read: 'God, save the queen and all the Companions of this Most Noble Order of the Garter', was moderately altered for the sake of gender in 1603 to 'O Lord, long preserve James our King and all the Companions of this most Noble Order of the Garter'.⁴⁶⁰

Later on, James added a prayer into the services of Morning and Evening Prayer at the Feast, asking God 'to direct and endue King James our most worthy Governor with the continual and plentiful grace of thine Holy Spirit, that he is as anciently and rightly descended from the valiant and prudent Princes of the Realm, the first Founders and Creators of this Most Noble Order of the Garter; so he may abound and excel in all things acceptable to thee'.⁴⁶¹ On the other side of the coin, the prayer continued and hoped that the 'Companions of this most Honourable Order; may [...] be truly devoted to Godliness, valour, and virtue, in such sort that God may be thereby the better honoured, their Sovereign served, the Commonwealth secured, and the memorial of their well-doing remain to their posterity'.⁴⁶² The purpose of this new addition further bolstered James' belief in the divine right of kings. As God's representative on earth James was meant to be obeyed, which was the most basic prerequisite from the individuals appointed to the Order. At the same time, however, James' exalted position meant that it was imperative that he was a just king. The Order of the Garter with its religious, moral and chivalric ideals, was a perfect way through which James was able to manifest himself as the epitome of monarchy.

The effectiveness of James' method can be seen through the political advancement of Robert Cecil, earl of Salisbury. As mentioned above, Cecil as one of Elizabeth's key advisors played a major role in securing the English throne for James. James rewarded Cecil by giving him a baronetcy in 1603, creating him Viscount Cranborne in 1604 and giving him the earldom of Salisbury in 1605. In 1606, Salisbury was elected to the Order of the Garter. The importance of the Garter can be seen in his reaction to his appointment. Salisbury arranged a 'magnificent procession' from London to Windsor where he was appointed to the Order.⁴⁶³ The number of references to James I and the

⁴⁵⁹ Sharpe, *Image Wars*, p. 102.

⁴⁶⁰ Begent and Chesshyre, *Noble Order*, pp. 30, 31.

⁴⁶¹ Begent and Chesshyre, *Noble Order*, p. 268.

⁴⁶² Begent and Chesshyre, *Noble Order*, p. 256.

⁴⁶³ Croft, *James*, p. 69.

Order of the Garter at Salisbury's Hatfield House, which was built after his appointment to the Order, also suggests the importance of the appointment.

A full-length portrait of Salisbury, which still hangs in Hatfield House today, shows him standing next to a table with papers, a reference to his office (see Figure 7.12). Giving a direct mode of address, Salisbury holds the Lesser George in his hand, directly referring to his appointment. Salisbury ensured that copies were made to promulgate his status as a knight of the Garter. This, in many ways, replicates the image of James that also hangs at Hatfield which shows James assuming a similar position.

Salisbury's celebration of his appointment to the Order and the demonstration of his loyalty to the monarch can be seen elsewhere at Hatfield. A 1608 Venetian mosaic which has a central position in the library presents Cecil in his full Garter regalia (see Figure 7.13). Again, he holds a piece of paper, a further reference to his office, whilst his other hand rests on his sword. This portrays a chivalric image of the courtier.

At the same time, Salisbury commissioned a statue of James, in his coronation robes with the Greater George hanging around his neck (see Figures 7.14 and 7.15). The association with St George is prevalent in the imagery and speaks to the importance of the Order. The fact that the King is the focal point of the entire room also suggests that Salisbury is more than aware of to whom he owes all his recent success. Salisbury also ensured that he owned one of the copies of James' portrait. The portrait is one where the king is holding the Lesser George and giving a direct mode of address to the viewer (See Figures 7.16 and 7.17).

William Fennor's 1616 poem, *The original and continuance of the Most Noble Order of the Garter* provides a contemporaneous opinion of the Garter.⁴⁶⁴ Read before the king at the Garter celebrations, Fennor immediately connects the present celebrations with the origins of the Order during the reign of Edward III: 'Edward the Third, that truly potent King,/ Whose temples worthily wore England's Crowne,/ This Noble Order, of whose fame I'll sing,/ Invents for Britaine's trophy of renowne'.⁴⁶⁵ The reference to 'Britain' rather than 'England' is very telling and would have appealed to James' desire to be seen as the King of a united Britain. Later in the poem, Fennor writes:

St Patrick's Crosse did to the Garter vayne,/ Saint Jaques' Order was with anger pale;/ St David's leeke began to droupe i' the' tail,/ Saint Dennys, he sate mourning in a dale;/ Saint Andrew looked with cheerful appetite,/ As though to the Garter he had future right./ But dragon-killing George, that still depends/ Upon the Garter since Third Edward's dayes,/ In this age present hath as many friends,/ As

⁴⁶⁴ Sharpe, *Image Wars*, p. 103.

⁴⁶⁵ William Fennor, 'The original and continuance of the Most Noble Order of the Garter' (1616), John Nichols, *The Progresses, Processions, and Magnificent Festivities of King James the First, His Royal Consort, Family and Court*, Volume 3 (London, 1828), p. 155.

well deserving high eternall praise;/ As many ages ever had before,/ Never at one time better, never more.⁴⁶⁶

The importance of St George as a figure to the monarchy and to the English people is perhaps nowhere more clearly highlighted than in this passage. Fennor chooses to disempower many of the other countries' patron saints. Even St Andrew, although he is not emasculated like the other saints, is only smiling because he knows he will be allowed into the Order as a result of the nationality of his king. Similar to Henry Lee's sonnet in the reign of Elizabeth I, St George takes on a metaphysical representation being a blend of the religious and the secular. He is at once referred to as a dragon killer, whilst maintaining his position as a saint and bringing those devoted to him 'high eternall glory'. This religious ambiguity would have suited James who, whilst being against 'papacy' and the 'puritans', did not want to alienate any of his subjects from him, and – as seen in *Lepanto* – was prepared to glorify individual Catholics as representatives of a wider Christendom.⁴⁶⁷

The importance of the Garter remained throughout James' reign. In 1621, in addition to the solemn ceremony conducted at Windsor, James held an elaborate Garter procession at the newly constructed Banqueting House with ceremonies taking place there the following year.⁴⁶⁸ This timing corresponds with the aforementioned portrait of James VI and I by Paul van Somer, as well as another portrait that was commissioned in 1621 of James in his Garter Robes by Daniel Mytens (see Figure 7.18). Sharpe has argued that this portrait of the king does not 'convey regality' but when considering the ostentatious nature of the portrait, as well as the promulgation of the Order at court, the opposite seems to be the case.⁴⁶⁹

In the portrait James is seated in a confident position, wearing his full Garter robes including the large Greater George around his neck and the garter around his leg. Above his head is a rose somewhat resembling the Tudor symbolism, suggesting a continuation of dynasty. The decorations surrounding the king are rich fabrics, suggesting great wealth and power but at the same time moving the focus back onto the bright white and red garments on the king, to make him and the

⁴⁶⁶ Fennor, 'The Most Noble Order of the Garter', p. 156.

⁴⁶⁷ Even after the Gunpowder Plot and despite rhetoric, James remained tolerant of recusants. From May to November, 1611, 88 baronetcies were bestowed. One quarter were given to recusants or Catholics or individuals known to be related to them. Four were closely related to the Gunpowder Plotters. There was also a degree of tolerance towards recusant landowners who were peaceful. See Croft, *James*, p. 81. Furthermore, recusants were reported to be welcomed at the Court of the St George's Day celebrations in 1615. Alastair Bellany, *The Politics of Court Scandal in Early Modern England: News Culture and the Overbury Affair, 1603 – 1660* (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 64 – 65.

⁴⁶⁸ Sharpe, *Image Wars*, p. 85.

⁴⁶⁹ Sharpe, *Image Wars*, pp. 63 – 64.

Order the sole focal point. The whole point of this portrait is to display the king's regality through the ancient Order of the Garter.

The significance of the Garter and its regalia can also be seen in James' correspondence. Whilst his son was on a diplomatic mission to Spain, James wrote to Charles, now Prince of Wales and his favourite the Duke of Buckingham. In a letter dated 27 February 1623, whilst the men were travelling through France incognito, James wrote 'Kirke and Gabriel will carry Georges and garters to you both with speed, but I dare send no jewels of any value to either of you by land, for fear of robbers, but I will hasten all your company and provision to you by sea.'⁴⁷⁰ This speaks to the importance of these robes and the related symbolism to St George. As representatives of England, or James' Britain, it was importance for them to be bedecked in an appropriate manner on the feast of the patron saint. Symbolism can also be seen in the ships that escorted Prince Charles to Spain. In addition to the Prince-Royall and the Charles, the prince was also accompanied by The Saint Andrew and the Saint George.⁴⁷¹ This fleet, in addition to the symbolism of the Garter, lent itself to the representation of James' kingdom abroad.

The importance of national identity in terms of James' kingdoms is manifested further in the following month when, on St Patrick's Day, James writes again that 'I send you also your robes of the order, which ye must not forget to wear upon St George's Day and dine together in them, if they can come in time, which I pray God they may for it will be a goodly sight for the Spaniards to see my two boys dine in them'.⁴⁷² The symbolism associated with the Order was of the utmost importance to the king. This suggests that references to St George and the regalia associated with the Order were ways through which representatives could identify themselves as English when they were abroad.

It is evident that St George remained an important figure in the Jacobean Court. Rather than being totally reinvented, St George was used by the Scottish king to accommodate himself to his new English subjects, both at court and further afield. This was done through various media such as his own writings, proclamations, broadsheet prints and portraiture. His enviable position of having an already established dynasty complete with heirs gave him a sense of security which he tried to sell through Anglicising himself and his family through links with the Tudor dynasty and England's patron saint. As a ruler of two kingdoms, St George played an integral role in ensuring that the English did not feel side-lined in favour of the king's homeland of Scotland. Whilst James has been

⁴⁷⁰ *Letters of James VI & I*, p. 389.

⁴⁷¹ The other ships that made up the fleet were The Switft-sure, The Defiance, The Bonaventure, The Rainbow, The Antilope and the Seaven Starres. Andres Almansa y Mendoza, *The joyfull returne, of the most illustrious prince, Charles Prince of great Brittain, from the court of Spaine* (1623), STC/1132.06, p. 41.

⁴⁷² *Letters of James VI & I*, pp. 397, 399.

justifiably criticised for his favouritism at court, his adoption of the Order of the Garter and persistent references to St George ensured that he did not totally alienate himself from his English courtiers. The continued popularity of the Garter and the acts and ceremonies with which it remained associated, kept St George in the Jacobean Court as a chivalric hero its inhabitants could strive to emulate.

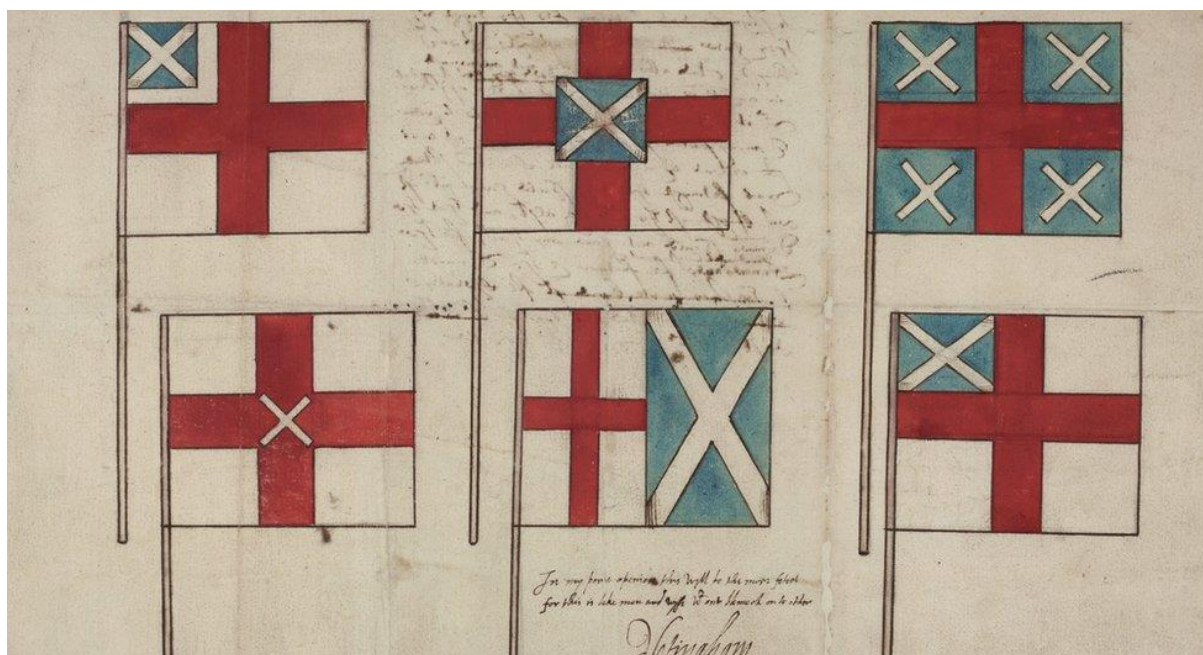


Figure 7.2 Suggested combinations for the flag of Britain, c. 1604.



Figure 7.3 James VI and I, John de Critz, c. 1605



Figure 7.4 James VI and I, John de Critz, c. 1606



Figure 7.5 Henry, Prince of Wales, Robert Peake, 1610

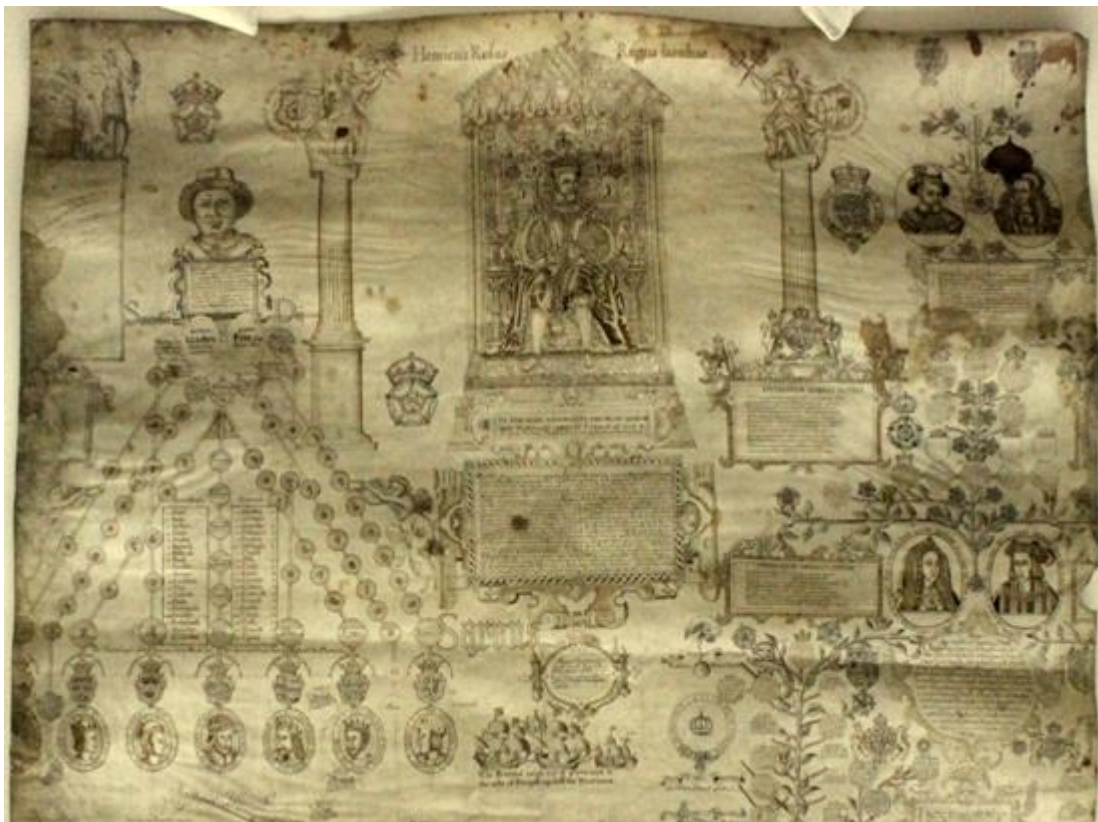


Figure 7.6 Brittan's Monarchie, Thomas Lyte, c. 1610



Figure 7.7 Lyte Jewel, c. 1612



Figure 7.8 and Figure 7.9 James VI and I, Paul van Somer, c. 1618



Figure 7.10 James VI and I, Paul van Somer, 1620



Figure 7.11 Prince Henry, Robert Peake, c. 1604



Figure 7.12 Robert Cecil, earl of Salisbury, c. 1606



Figure 7.13 Robert Cecil, earl of Salisbury, c. 1608



Figure 7.14 and Figure 7.15 Statue of James VI and I, Hatfield House, c. 1611



Figure 7.16 and Figure 7.17 Portrait of James VI and I, Hatfield House, c. 1612



Figure 7.18 James VI and I, Daniel Mytens, c. 1621

8. St George and the English, 1558 – 1625

The England of the latter half of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the seventeenth century was a complex socio-political landscape. Historians have debated the degree to which the concept of a distinct English nation had emerged during this period and, as a result of the religious settlement, the extent to which secularisation had taken the place of popular religious practices. In terms of these debates, the figure of St George can serve as a mirror of English society during the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods. In many ways, St George can illuminate in microcosm the wider debate surrounding nationhood and secularisation in the Elizabethan and Jacobean eras, and, as I will argue, the saint acted as a malleable symbol that helped the country deal with the challenges of post-Reformation life.

John C. Somerville puts forward the argument that secularisation began in England during the reign of Henry VIII when the king appointed fewer clerics to high government office and as a result throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries religion became only one facet of a wider national identity.⁴⁷³ Some scholars have seen the fate of St George as indicative of this process. Jonathan Good notes that St George's Day was celebrated throughout Elizabeth's reign and suggests that 'such Elizabethan neo-medievalism certainly helped to preserve the place of St George in English culture'. Nonetheless, he was 'now purely a figure of romance and chivalry whose story writers were free to embellish with all manners of intervention, since the Catholic hagiographical tradition of Jacobus de Voragine was no longer relevant'.⁴⁷⁴ Ronald Hutton asserts that whilst the cult of St George 'expanded considerably at all levels of English society during the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries', by the end of the reign of Edward VI, all public processions linked to St George stopped, with the exception of Norwich.⁴⁷⁵ Most recently, Margaret Aston has argued that St George was always by far the most popular patron saint in England but that the sixteenth century saw his 'demotion' which 'resulted in the loss of much art and imagery made in his honour, even at the heart of his royal cult'.⁴⁷⁶ Although the monarchy did protect St George to some extent, it would not be until the reign of Charles I that St George would enjoy a full restoration to his former glory.⁴⁷⁷

⁴⁷³ John C. Somerville, *The Secularisation of Early Modern England: From Religious Culture to Religious Faith* (New York and Oxford, 1992), pp. 14, 17.

⁴⁷⁴ Jonathan Good, *The Cult of St George in Medieval England* (Woodbridge, 2009), pp. 126-127.

⁴⁷⁵ Ronald Hutton, *The Rise and Fall of Merry England: The Ritual 1400 – 1700* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 26, 115.

⁴⁷⁶ Margaret Aston, *Broken Idols of the English Reformation* (Cambridge, 2016), pp. 361, 403.

⁴⁷⁷ Aston, *Broken Idols*, p. 443.

In the most detailed consideration to date, Muriel McClendon argues that the cult of St George disappeared after the reign of Henry VIII and was replaced by a secular alternative. Also citing Norwich, McClendon goes into greater detail than Hutton in arguing that by making the St George ridings a civic rather than a religious event, the city was able to maintain its long-established traditions. Furthermore, it allowed the city's magistrates and council to assume the role of St George and act in the 'role of champion against wickedness, danger and disorder'.⁴⁷⁸ By moving the date of the celebration into the summer and making the focal point the dragon instead of the saint, McClendon argues that St George, although still a popular figure, ceased to be a religious one.

Moving beyond societal calendrical celebrations and looking at the literature of the Elizabethan age, Alison Chapman concurs with Hutton and McClendon's sentiments that, throughout the early modern period, 'references to saints are not just religious references' as they also consider 'hierarchy, obligation and dependence' all of which are not exclusively religious.⁴⁷⁹ Samantha Riches disputes this argument, claiming that St George became a 'simple figure of chivalry' by the reigns of Charles I and Charles II.⁴⁸⁰

Considering the role of St George during the Elizabethan period also involved addressing the idea of nationhood at all levels of society. St George was England's patron saint and had been since the fourteenth century. What is a matter of much debate, however, is the meaning of the word 'nation' and the degree of national consciousness which existed in England. Hutton argues that St George celebrations before the Reformation 'can still be described as one of the festivals of early sixteenth-century England' yet it has been seen already that the medieval and early modern cult of St George, whilst sizeable, did not extend itself to the entirety of the kingdom.⁴⁸¹ Richard Helgerson goes further than Hutton stating that the concept of an English national identity arose during the Elizabethan period, when the idea of England as a state with a separate, national church necessitated an identity to accompany it.⁴⁸² As a result, for 'men born in the 1550s and 1560s, things English came to matter with a special intensity both because England itself mattered more than it had and because other sources of identity and cultural authority mattered less'.⁴⁸³ These statements

⁴⁷⁸ Muriel McClendon's 'A Moveable Feast: Saint George's Day Celebrations and Religious Change in Early Modern England', *Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 38, No. 1 (Jan., 1999), p. 23. Both Hutton and McClendon focus on the secular St George celebrations in Norwich which extended well into the eighteenth century.

⁴⁷⁹ Chapman, *Patrons*, p. 5.

⁴⁸⁰ Samantha Riches, *St George: Hero, Martyr, Myth* (London, 2000).

⁴⁸¹ Hutton, p. 27. See also Chapter 2.

⁴⁸² Richard Helgerson, *Forms of Nationhood: The Elizabethan Writing of England* (Chicago and London, 1994), p. 4.

⁴⁸³ Helgerson, *Nationhood*, p. 3.

also raise the question of the extent to which nationalistic sentiment was linked to loyalty to the monarch, as opposed to the nation as a more abstract entity.

Anne Dillon asserts that St George was attacked by the state in the latter half of the sixteenth century and, as a result, became a symbol of dissention. Dillon acknowledges the 'dominant position' which St George held in the pre-Reformation Church but states that he was 'eradicated' during Elizabeth's reign and therefore became a symbol for Roman Catholic recusants who were exiled from England as a way to express their religious and national identity.⁴⁸⁴ Christopher Highley also discusses English recusants' insecurity about manifesting their national identity and feeling a sense of 'national belonging'.⁴⁸⁵ This leads to a questioning of whether the English national identity was solely a Protestant one and how English Catholics, both at home and abroad, constructed their own alternative identity.

This chapter will argue that there was a distinct national identity throughout this period depending on one's place in society and religious beliefs. It will also challenge the idea that it was a time of secularisation, as it would have been impossible for anything to totally exist outside religion. It remained a way through which individuals, and nations, defined themselves. The figure of St George offers an insight into national and religious sentiments of the period. Rather than his cult simply being abolished, devotions to the saint evolved and took various forms including popular prose, poems and plays. As patron saint of the monarch and the country, the broad engagement with St George allows the observer to view the complex nature of nationalist sentiment during the Elizabethan and Jacobean reigns.

St George and Religious Identities

Despite the uniformity imposed by the Elizabethan settlement, there remained numerous religious identities in England through the latter half of the sixteenth and into the seventeenth. Through examining how different groups interacted with and adopted the saint and his legend, it is possible to see the complex religious landscape that existed at that time.

Although St George's legend was born in Catholic hagiography, his popularity as a devotional figure began to wane with Catholics after the Reformation. This was likely a pragmatic decision.

⁴⁸⁴ Anne Dillon, *The Construction of Martyrdom in the English Catholic Community, 1535 – 1603* (Aldershot, 2002), p. 195.

⁴⁸⁵ Christopher Highley, *Catholics Writing the Nation in Early Modern Britain and Ireland* (Oxford, 2008), pp. 2, 4.

Catholics, whose doctrine was attacked for being 'superstitious' or 'heretical', would not want a dragon-slaying saint to be the equivalent of their poster boy. In the few Catholic or recusant references to St George during this period, he was used as a way through which English national identity could be demonstrated by Catholics abroad. The Martyr Murals at the English College in Rome included an image of St George killing the dragon. This was reproduced in Giovanni Battista de Cavalieri's engravings, *Ecclesiae Anglicanae Trophaea*. In the book St George is presented both as a chivalric figure and as a martyr (see Figure 8.1). In the engraving, St George slaying the dragon is in the foreground, as is the princess he is defending. The St George Cross adorns his helmet and shield. In the background, one can see St George being martyred. The saint, however, is not shown to be suffering a tortuous death: the indignities that St George suffers in *The Golden Legend* are not present. Instead, St George is fully clothed in ancient, martial clothing, as he kneels before his execution who is wielding the sword, a symbol of status for the saint. The text below characterises St George as 'England's protector', much like he is protecting the princess in the image. It is this image of protector upon which a greater emphasis is placed, rather on the suffering endured in his martyrdom. Although the over-arching theme of the text, and the subsequent murals is to depict famous martyrdoms, those dedicated to St George, Constantine and Gregory the Great have a greater focus on their authority and deeds during life. Clearly, recusants identified with the legend of St George and saw the saint as their protector. Despite the fact that they were in exile due to their faith, they still saw themselves as English. His role as an allegory for the triumph of God's goodness over evil and the imagery related to his cross were ways through which they could express their loyalty to their country, if not the monarch by whom they were being persecuted.

As the seventeenth century began, St George remained a point of reference for recusant Catholics and religious conservatives, both those living at home in England and abroad. The suffering experienced by St George during his martyrdom made him a ready figure to be invoked by those who felt they were being persecuted. As early as 1605, an English recusant writing under the name Jan van Paeschen referred to St George in his work, *The Spiritual Pilgrimage of Jerusalem*. Paeschen's pilgrimage is a metaphorical one. He advises his readers that they must 'first by Confession make cleane thy soule from sinne' as 'it is impossible with an unclean soul to receive the grace of God, or to walke the journey of a perfect Pilgrime'.⁴⁸⁶ As part of the meditations Paeschen then writes that the reader should reflect upon 'Lidda...where Saint Peter healed Eneas of a palsie. There Saint George suffered his martirdome'.⁴⁸⁷ Here the writer focuses on the original story of the

⁴⁸⁶ Jan van Paeschen, *The spiritual pilgrimage of Hierusalem, contayninge three hundred sixtie five dayes iorney wherin the devoute person may meditate on sondrie pointes of his redemption* (London, 1605), STC (2nd ed.) / 12574.

⁴⁸⁷ Paeschen, *Spiritual Pilgrimage*, STC (2nd ed.) /12574.

saint and neglects the allegorical tale of fighting a dragon. This could be a direct result of the attacks on Catholic superstition at the hands of the Protestants. By moving the start and end point of the pilgrimage, away from the continent to London, it reinforces St George's importance to the country.⁴⁸⁸ This is not to say that the legend involving the dragon was completely abandoned by Catholics. These accounts of St George from recusant sources attest to the traditional elements of the saint's hagiography. It is also significant that the writers present him as an English icon. This would suggest that the recusants' focus on the saint is his act of martyrdom and devotion to God which transcends geographical locations.

At a time when the image and legend of St George continued to be promulgated at the English court, St George was still an object of suspicion to the most ardent Protestants. The idolatry and superstition that the Elizabethan Injunctions had warned against were seen as being all too apparent in the legend of St George. The saint was a prime example of all that was wrong with the Church of Rome. The quintessential reformed view of St George can be seen in a sermon by John Calvin, given on 26 June 1556, and published in English translation in 1583:

For euen the Idolaters themselues wil oftentimes through desperation defie their owne Idols. Wee see that when the Saint George of the Papistes or some other of their Idols haue beguiled them, so as there commeth some great frost, they fall to dragging of him about in a Corde, like a galloweclapper, whom they had worshipped a little afore. Wee shall see some, yea euen men of honour, which to spite their idols, doe breake downe their puppets, yea euen their blessed Ladie and all.⁴⁸⁹

As St George was not a biblical figure, any religious belief associated with him was seen as a form of popish superstition. This sentiment is also apparent in the sermons of Calvin's successor, the French Protestant Theodore Beza, who reminded his listeners in the 1560s that the original Christians 'could never abide any Image or portrait to be brought into the assembly and congregation of Christians'. After highlighting the images of St Christopher and St George, Beza writes that 'the devil found afterwards the mean to bring into the Church both these pictures, and a million of swarms of other idols, even to put God and his truth out of doors'.⁴⁹⁰ It is apparent that to a number of the most ardent reformers, the acknowledgement of St George as a religious being was tantamount to blasphemy. The fact that these reformers chose to attack the saint, however, suggests his continued popularity. Had St George been largely forgotten within society, there would be no need to attack him or his legend.

⁴⁸⁸ Alexander Soetaert, 'British Catholics and Walloon printers. Printing English Catholic literature in the ecclesiastical province of Cambrai (c.1560-1640)' presented at the *Sixth Annual RefoRC Conference*, Copenhagen, 27 May, 2016.

⁴⁸⁹ John Calvin, *The Sermons of Master John Calvin vpon the fifth booke of Moses called Deuteronomie* (London, 1583), p. 1164.

⁴⁹⁰ Theodore de Beze, *Master Bezaes sermons* (London, 1565), p. 206.

Other authors in Elizabeth's reign also spoke out against St George, seen as an embarrassing relic of the papist past. In an instructional text about horses, dedicated to Robert Dudley whilst he was Master of the Queen's horse, the English humanist Thomas Blundeville sought to mock popular superstitions:

Saint George our Ladyes knyght,/ He walked day so did he night,/ Untill he her founde,/ He her beate and he her bounde,/ Till truly her trouth she hym plyght,/ That she woulde not come within the night, There as Saynt George our Ladyes Knight/ Named was three tymes, Saint George./ And hang this Scripture ouer him, and let him alone. With suche proper charmes as this is, the false Fryers in tymes paste were wonte to charme the money out of playne folkes purses. Onelye teacheth howe to cure it with a fonde folishe charme, which bicause it may perhappes make you gentle reader to laugh, as well as it did me, for recreation sake I will here rehearse it. Take a Flynte stone that hath a hole of his owne kinde, and hang it ouer hym, and write in a bill. *In nomine patris. &c.*⁴⁹¹

Not just the devotion to saints, but the chivalric nature of St George and his legend is roundly mocked in this piece. The fact that he is not in the Scripture, argues Blundeville, allowed the saint to be associated with superstitious practices that led people's souls astray.

This belief is furthered in the works of the English cleric and fervent Protestant William Bullein, who in 1566 wrote a satirical dialogue between characters who were attempting to save themselves from an outbreak of plague and tempests. After one of the characters admits to praying to St Barbara to defend him whilst hanging St John's Gospel around his neck and coral bracelets around his arms, hoping for God's defence, another character calls to them saying 'come into this vallis, and lette vs sitte in that same deepe close pitte, vnder the hill side, vntill this storme be past: saincte George to borrowe, mercifull God, who did euer se the like'.⁴⁹² Once again, St George is associated with superstitious beliefs that were seen as tainting the English church; the call for spiritual reform leaps off the page.

Further direct attacks came from published sermons. Thomas Cooper, a friend of the noted reformer John Foxe, gave sermons that warned against the 'friendes and favourers of Rome', accused Catholics of breaking the first commandment by praying to false gods through the 'merities of the Saintes' and outlined the form which these prayers would take:

Graunt vs O Christ by the blood of Thomas which he shed for thee, thether to goe whether he is ascended. And to Saint George they pray thus,... Let him saue vs from our sinnes, that we may rest with the blessed in heauen. And touching Saint Anne, they say thus,.. O God, thou which wouldest Saint Anne to become the mother of thy mother, graunt we beseeche thee, that by the merites of the

⁴⁹¹ Thomas Blundeville *The fower chiefyst offices belongyng to horsemanshippe* (London, 1566), p.18.

⁴⁹² William Bullein, *A dialogue bothe pleasaunte and pietifull wherein is a goodly regimete against the feuer pestilence with a consolacion and comfort against death / newly corrected by Willyam Belleyn, the autour thereof* (London, 1564), p. 75.

mother and the daughter, we may obtaine thy heauenly kingdome. In thys you heare three Sauours beside Christ, and in like maner doe they acknowledge a thousande more.⁴⁹³

The use of the word 'they' by Cooper suggests a distance between the English and the Catholics. The idea of St George being inflicted on the English as a patron saint is more directly addressed by the evangelical Calvinist and Archbishop George Abbot in one of his sermons from the late 1620s when he writes that:

The Church of Rome thinketh scorn for idolatry to come short of either of them, when for every day in the year, they have an he Saint or a She Saint, as appeareth in the common calendar, for their swine Saint, and another for their horses, for Spain a Saint as Saint James, for us a Saint as Saint George, akin to running with the word of God.⁴⁹⁴

At once Abbot acknowledges the distinct role of St George whilst criticising its religious veracity.

Thomas Goad, the domestic chaplain to Archbishop Abbot, wrote *The Friers Chronicle* in 1623 and mocked the legend relating that 'The King's Daughter of Silena loved Saint George so well, that for his sake shee cast her Girdle about the Dragons necke, and led him about like a Spaniell'. After the dragon broke loose however, 'Saint George was compelled to kill [it]'. The narrative also includes elements of St George's martyrdom including when he 'being cast into a Caldron of boiling Lead, by making the signe of the Crosse, escaped vn. hurt, &c'.⁴⁹⁵

Many of those who held strict or Puritanical beliefs with regards to the purging of the English church did not look kindly on England's patron saint during James' reign either. The Scottish bishop John Gordon addressed the King in his 1604 work *England and Scotlands happinesse is being reduced to unitie of religion*. He compares James to a Roman emperor, saying 'the religion which for your Majestie hath established in your realmes, is conformable to that of your predecessor Constantine, who worshipped...but one onely God,' adding that the Emperor never 'did consecrate his Empire to Saint Andrew or Saint George, as some of your predecessors in the time of Error and blindness'.⁴⁹⁶ The wish expressed here at the beginning of the reign is the hope that James will continue in a

⁴⁹³ Thomas Cooper, *Certaine sermons vverhin is contained the defense of the gospell nowe preached against such cauils and false accusations, as are obiected both against the doctrine it selfe, and the preachers and professors thereof, by the friendes and fauourers of the Church of Rome. Preached of late by Thomas by Gods sufferance Byshop of Lincolne* (London, 1580), p. 237.

⁴⁹⁴ George Abbot, *An exposition upon the prophet Jonah contained in sermons preached in St Mary's Church in Oxford* (Glasgow, 1847), pp. 72-73.

⁴⁹⁵ Thomas Goad, *The friers chronicle: or, The true legend of priests and monkes lives* (London, 1623), STC (2nd ed.) / 11511.

⁴⁹⁶ John Gordon, *England and Scotland's happinesse in being reduced to unitie of religion, under our invincible monarke King James* (London, 1604), STC (2nd ed.)/12062.3, p. 27.

Protestant vein as he did during his time in Scotland. The use of St Andrew and St George is noteworthy as it demonstrates that in both England and Scotland they were seen in a way Gordon did not approve of, as representative figures of the two distinct kingdoms.

The following year, Thomas Bell, in his *Woefull Crie of Rome*, attacked St George as a symbol of 'popery'. In this text, Bell, a once Catholic priest who recanted his faith and became an ardent representative of the Church of England, sarcastically lists the intercessions with which certain saints were associated:

they haue peculiar saints for their seuerall necessities: viz. Saint Loy, for their horses, S. Anthonie, for their Pigges, S. Roch, for the pestilence: S. Steuen, for the night: S. Iohn for the day: S. Nicholas, for their studies, Saint George, for their warres: S. Cosma, and S. Damian, for their sores: S. Appolonia, for their teeth: S. Agnes, for their Virginitie: and others innumerable, for the like ende and effect.⁴⁹⁷

The effect of this is to undermine the religiosity of St George, and the other saints, as figures of importance. It also trivialises St George, completely ignoring his title of England's patron saint, as Gordon also wished to do.

Weariness from some reformers continued into the middle years of James' reign and a number of Protestant writers attacked the popular legend associated with England's patron saint. Theologian and clergyman Thomas Beard, writing in 1616, mocked the account of St George's martyrdom. He begins by warning there is no evidence of Saint George's existence, that the Catholics 'are not able to prove by any approved Historie: Nay it is confessed, that many are worshipped in the Church as Saints, which are tormented in hell fire for their sinnes'.⁴⁹⁸ Later in the text, Beard notes that 'Saint George being put into a frying pan full of boyling lead, made but the signe of the crosse, and he was therein refreshed as if he had bin in a bath'.⁴⁹⁹

Whilst many of the Protestant reformers rejected any notion related to St George and his legend, there were others who chose to ignore the more superstitious elements of his legend and portray his saintly acts in a more positive light. The Elizabethan poet Barnabe Barnes, about whom little is known, displays a surprisingly traditional view of St George in his Petrarchan 'Sonnet 57' when he writes:

Through Sathans malice and my nature weake,
When in my soule I finde my faith is deade,
Those sacred schoedes of comfort, then I reade
Whose powrefull words the gates of hell can breake:

⁴⁹⁷ Thomas Bell, *The woefull crie of Rome containing a defiance to popery* (London, 1605), STC (2nd ed.)/1833, pp. 30-31.

⁴⁹⁸ Thomas Beard, *A retractive from the Romish religion contayning thirteene forcible motives* (London, 1616), p. 178.

⁴⁹⁹ Beard, *Romish Religion*, p. 435.

Then faith in kindleth fresh, and then I wreake
 My wrath on Sathan, and vpon his head
 Mee thinks (like Michaell or Saint George) I treade:
 Whilst hee that earst against the Sunne did beake
 His foreswolne poysonous bulke, doth vanquishd lie
 In his owne filth: and I (which lately was
 Like to bee swallowd by mineemie)
 Now safely like a conquerour may passe.
 Behold my Captaines puissance, who did this
 To ridde my soule from hell, and ransome his.⁵⁰⁰

Through making a direct reference to warrior saints like St Michael and St George, Barnes invokes the more traditional representation of the saint. The purpose of this piece is to suggest the strength of good and that it will triumph over evil. Barnes' use of violent imagery as he 'treads' on Satan's head to demonstrate his righteous 'wrath' against evil are not intended to have any chivalric meaning. The allusion to Saints Michael and George is not chivalric: both figures are presented as religious warriors whom Barnes wishes to emulate in order to turn his back on Satan. The reference to Christ at the end also shows that the saints were seen as independent figures who could be invoked to bring one closer to Christ. Although Barnes does not overtly make this statement, the subtext of the poem suggests a purified Protestant belief in the symbolic value of saints.

Remarkably, the noted Protestant reformer John Foxe marked St George's feast day in his *Acts and Monuments* as part of a Protestant appropriation of the saint. Although one might argue that the reason for this could be the popularity of the saint within England and his affinity with the monarchy, there is a lot more to be said about Foxe's potential motivations. St George's martyrdom, which had been largely forgotten in favour of his more martial deeds, was in keeping with the purpose of Foxe's work. St George is further described in Foxe's work as a one who stood 'against the impious idolatry of the Emperors' and was 'cast in prison, then torne with hooked irons, burnt with hot lyme, stretched with cordes, after that his hands and feet and other members of his body being cut off, at last with a sword had his head cut off'.⁵⁰¹ The account of St George's martyrdom is a return to the medieval representations of St George that focused primarily on the painful nature of his death. By acknowledging the saint's martyrdom, but not partaking in any of the more fantastical elements of the legend, Foxe may be trying to find some acceptable middle ground for England's patron saint.

One need look no further than the dedication of his *Actes and Monuments* to see the blending of the Scriptural with monarchical symbolism (see Figure 8.2). Just as Foxe likens Elizabeth

⁵⁰⁰ Barnabe Barnes 'Sonnet 57', *A divine centurie of spirituall sonnets* (London, 1595), STC / 636:05.

⁵⁰¹ John Foxe, *Actes and Monuments*, (London, 1563), STC (2nd ed.) / 11222a, p.93.

to Salome and praises her for leading the English church away from that in Rome, the visual imagery portrays her in a martial stance with a sword and orb as well as the Great George hanging around her neck.⁵⁰² Her three subjects, including Burghley and Foxe, kneel at her feet looking to her for guidance whilst an image of the Pope is pushed down in the bottom left hand corner of the 'C', representing an allusion to the Emperor Constantine. The image shows Elizabeth as a martial figure; the choice to have the Great George in the image demonstrates that the Order was intrinsically linked to the monarch and her role as Defender of the Faith. The narrative of this image, however does not end here. As Thomas S. Freeman argues, historians are too quick to claim that Foxe is merely a 'propagandist' of Elizabeth. Alec Ryrie agrees with this point, writing that Foxe, in no way, attended to be a medium for the 'voice of compromise'.⁵⁰³ Rather than being a text which lauds Elizabeth as a religious reformer, it criticised the limited move into the Protestant fold and subtly put pressure on her to be a champion for the new English faith.

This juxtaposition is present when one considers that the image of Elizabeth with the letter 'C' mirrors a similar image of Henry VIII which also adorned Foxe's work from the second volume of the 1570 editions onwards.⁵⁰⁴ If Foxe's martyrology was to ultimately lead to Elizabeth's enlightened Protestant reign, then it was the reign of her father that set a precedent for her that Foxe was challenging her to follow. The woodcut shows Henry VIII, being given the bible in English from Cranmer and Cromwell (see Figure 8.3). Like Elizabeth, he holds a sword, reinforcing his role as Defender of the Faith. The Great George is also hanging around his neck and both Elizabeth and Henry have the same physical posturing, in as much as the former's dress will allow. Henry is also resting his feet upon Pope Clement VIII who is surrounded by the 'traitorous' John Fisher and other cardinals whilst Henry's closest advisors look on in a mixture of amusement and disgust. The distressed bishop of Rome can also be seen at the bottom of Elizabeth's image, secured by the serpent with which he is affiliated. Anyone seeing these woodcuts could not be confused about Foxe's meaning. By the same token, it makes it all the more significant when the allusion was removed from the 1570 edition onwards due to Protestant reformers disillusionment with Elizabeth's religious reforms.⁵⁰⁵ At the same time, however, the importance of St George is not undermined by Foxe's criticisms. The reference to the English patron saint was uniform with the

⁵⁰² Although it is widely believed now that Foxe meant Solomon rather than Salome. See John N. King, *Foxe's 'Book of Martyrs' and Early Modern Print Culture* (Oxford, 2006), p.116.

⁵⁰³ Alec Ryrie, 'The Unsteady Beginnings of English Protestant Martyrology', *John Foxe: An Historical Perspective*, David Loades (ed.), (Aldershot, 1999), p. 66.

⁵⁰⁴ See William Haller, *Foxe's Book of Martyrs and the Elect Nation* (London, 1963). Although to date there has been no comprehensive exploration into the symbolism behind monarchs wearing the Great George in Foxe's works.

⁵⁰⁵ Susan Doran, 'Virginity, Divinity and Power: The Portraits of Elizabeth I', *The Myth of Elizabeth*, Susan Doran and Thomas S. Freeman (eds), (Basingstoke, 2003), p. 180.

hope that Elizabeth would assume the role as a virulent Protestant who would bring about drastic religious change.

Foxe's references to St George are in direct contrast with allegations which were made by the Jesuit Robert Persons, a contemporary of Foxe, who attacked him for marginalising St George, amongst other saints, in the *Actes and Monuments*. Although Foxe listed the date of St George's martyrdom, 23 April, in his *Kalendar of Martyrs*, Persons objected as '[Foxe] so leveth him disgraced in small black letter (putting many of his owne [saints] in flourishing redde) as he might with as much honour have left him out also'.⁵⁰⁶ This is perhaps ironic, given that many recusant Catholics seemingly limited their own references to the legend of St George, for fear of being seen to engage in superstition. This argument has been more recently picked up by Margaret Aston, who claims that Foxe has 'reservations' about St George and even took to mocking him in his work.⁵⁰⁷ Upon taking a closer look, however, it would appear that rather than side-lining him, Foxe had due reverence for the saint's martyrdom. Had Foxe not appreciated St George, he would not have included him in the martyrology; no one could accuse Protestant reformers of bowing to popular demand if they contradicted their beliefs.

The ambiguous Protestant attitude towards St George continued into the Jacobean era. The clergyman Thomas Mason's 1615 work, *Christ's Victorie over Sathan's tyrannie*, combined an abridged version of Foxe's *Actes and Monuments* with other selections from religious texts. The references and legends to St George remained in the text and the allegory of the legend was retained:

Saint George that killed the Dragon, to deliver the Kings Daughter from that terrible beast which had destroyed all Capadocia: By Capadocia is meant the world: The Dragon signifieth the Divell: The Kings Daughter the Church: And Saint George represents Christ: of which fable the Papists have made a great Saint and pray unto it. The Papists have transformed all the heathen Gods of Rome to be their Gods onely by giving them other names.⁵⁰⁸

Foxe, and Mason through his selection, do not attack St George as a Christian figure. Instead, it is the mistreatment of the legend to which Foxe objects and there is a concern to explain the deeper meaning behind the legend. Just as Foxe's *Actes and Monuments* refers to St George's martyrdom in his *Kalendar* he reiterates the saint's holiness before attacking Catholics for abusing and worshipping him as an idol. It is not the allegory or the figure of St George to which the reformer takes

⁵⁰⁶ Robert Persons, *A Treatise of Three Conversions of England*, Volume 2, (1603-1604), p. 54. See also Ceri Sullivan "'Oppressed by the Force of Truth": Robert Persons Edits John Foxe', *John Foxe: An Historical Perspective*, David Loades(ed.), (Aldershot, 1999), pp. 154-166.

⁵⁰⁷ Margaret Aston, *Broken Idols*, p. 427.

⁵⁰⁸ Thomas Mason, *Christs victorie over Sathans tyrannie* (London, 1615), p. 389.

exception, but rather the way that the moral story had been bastardised by papists. Mason's choice of passage also indicates St George's continued popularity, but also that mainstream Protestant religion at the time still allowed for some non-biblical figures in an effort to relate the struggle between good and evil. Even more interesting is Mason's choice of language in saying that St George represents 'Christ'. Here, Mason directly relates St George to God in an act that would have horrified stalwart Puritans. The metaphor demonstrates that St George was still seen as a religious figure by some Protestants. The attack on the Catholics that follows shows the blame that Mason puts on them for tainting St George through their 'fables'.

A similar attack was made on the Catholic superstition, rather than St George himself, by the clergyman Thomas Adams who focused on the intercession of the saints. In his 1617 work, *The Soldier's Honour*, Adams asserts that 'England was to have a warlike Saint George'. The figure, however, was ruined by 'Iacobus de Voragine for his leaden Legend of our English George. And others haue inueighed against the authentike truth of that storie. Sure it is their malice, that haue robbed England of her Saint'.⁵⁰⁹ Adams then compares England to its Roman Catholic counterparts who have retained their patron saints and comes to the conclusion that England has been 'bereaved' of St George, and has 'none but God to reuenge [their] quarrells', which to Adams is a 'fauour and an honour'.⁵¹⁰ Adams has a similar message in his 1619 work *The Happines of the Church* when he instructs the reader that 'The deuill will tyrannize ouer thee: thou canst hardly grapple with that great Red Dragon, when thou art mounted like Saint George on the backe of faith'.⁵¹¹ As good Christians were not as strong as St George, it was required that they clothe themselves in the 'armour of God'.⁵¹² Adams' works speak to the importance of St George in the English consciousness and how English Protestants might adopt him as their own. This sentiment is evident in a sermon that was delivered by the preacher Richard Montagu to James I towards the end of this reign in 1624, and subsequently printed. Montagu's Arminian beliefs show another layered aspect of religious identities during this period. In his sermon, Montagu characterises the idea of patron saints based on Roman traditions as unnecessary, saying that 'Saint George is accounted the Patron of England: Saint Andrew of Scotland: Saint Iames for Spaine; others for other People and Countries anciently chosen and deputed. It needs not bee tendred or held as *de fide*; it is no point of necessitie

⁵⁰⁹ Thomas Adams, *The Soldier's Honour* (London, 1617), pp. 32-33.

⁵¹⁰ Adams, *Soldier's Honour*, p. 33.

⁵¹¹ Thomas Adams, *The Happines of the Church*, (London, 1619), p. 411.

⁵¹² Adams, *Happines*, p. 411.

to Saluation'.⁵¹³ Devotional practices to St George may not have been necessary anymore, but he was still seen very much as a religious character and one who represented England.

Popular displays and references to St George

The resonance of St George, and his emergence as a truly national figure become even more apparent upon investigating the popular practices in which St George was still invoked in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. St George still remained a prominent figure in a wide variety of celebrations in different areas in the country. These visual displays also provide an insight into individual and groups' religious beliefs and their identity. For example, in Chester, the town crier was recorded as being dressed as St George in 1575.⁵¹⁴ Further south, where the tradition of St George was firmly entrenched in Bristol, a play entitled the 'Red Knight' was performed by the Chamberlain players between 1575 and 1576.⁵¹⁵ In Louth (Lincolnshire), the parish church kept a gilded statue of St George with sword and horse in the Church.⁵¹⁶ In Norwich, a city that had a long established relationship with St George and had already proved itself committed to retaining its links with the saint, the inhabitants demonstrated their devotion to the saint and the monarchy when Queen Elizabeth visited the city in 1578. In an account of the Queen's entrance into the city 'the Queen's Arms were most richly and beautifully set forth in the chiefe front of the gate, on the oneseide thereof but somewhat lower, was placed the escutcheon of St George, or St George's crosse'. On the other side of the gate were 'the arms of the city: and directly under the Queen's Majesty's arms was placed the falcon, her highness' badge in due forme and under the same were written these words 'God and the Queen we serve'.⁵¹⁷ In making the correlation between God, the monarchy and St George, it is evident that the citizens of Norwich were declaring their unwavering loyalty. St George's presence speaks to the continuance of his traditional relationship, not just with the English monarchy but also with the inhabitants of Norwich. That the chosen symbol for St George remained his cross, and that the text at the gate was religious, further suggests that he was not a purely secular figure, although an established national one.

⁵¹³ Richard Montagu, *Immediate addresse unto God alone First delivered in a sermon before his Maiestie at Windsore*, (London, 1624), STC (2nd ed.) / 18039.

⁵¹⁴ REED *Cheshire including Chester*, pp. xl – xli. The Red Knight, as in Spenser's work, was commonly associated with St George.

⁵¹⁵ See below for further links between the Red Knight and the legend of St George.

⁵¹⁶ REED *Lincolnshire*, p. 427.

⁵¹⁷ B.G. The joyful receiving of the Queen's most excellent majesty into her Highness' city of Norwich (London, 1578), STC/343:12.

Although the devotional practices related to St George had diminished by the late 1500s, it would be a mistake to say that the new celebrations were just secular affairs. Perhaps one of the best examples of this is provided by the Chester races. This event represented both an alteration and continuation of the medieval devotional practices that strengthened bonds between St George, the monarch and his people. McClendon argues that these races, which were held on St George's Day from 1610, symbolised the rise of the middling sorts from the merchant class whilst being solely dedicated to the royal family.⁵¹⁸ This led to the poorer members of society, such as those belonging to the more traditional guilds, being excluded from the event and relegated to the role of spectators. Furthermore, these traditions supposedly 'bore little resemblance to the older rituals' signifying the end of the 'solemn religious procession[s] or play[s]'.⁵¹⁹ When one looks closer at the St George's Day Races, however, it becomes clear that these celebrations neither entirely secular, nor exclusive and in many ways acted as a means through which the more traditional celebrations related to St George could be put on display without appearing subversive.

An allusion to Chester's past traditions can be seen the year before the races started, in 1609, when the antiquarian David Rogers wrote his *Breviary* which included an antiquarian account of the medieval mystery plays and devotional practices that were related to St George's Day and Whitsun plays.⁵²⁰ In giving his account of the medieval ridings, Rogers writes that 'there was a man which did Ride as I take it upon St Georges daye through the Cittie and there published the tyme and the matter of the playes in brief the weare played upon Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday in Whitsun weeke'.⁵²¹ Along with this, in the past a man dressed as St George did ride in 'warlike apparel like St George through every streete with drume and musicke and trumpetes'.⁵²² The reference to St George suggests that the races and the associated pageantry were to be based on Chester's medieval traditions. Whilst one might argue that the accuracy of Rogers' research may have been wanting, or that details may have been altered, it still speaks to the fact that instead of breaking with traditions, the inhabitants of Chester, in particular the organisers of the races, wished to be associated with pre-Reformation practices. This would add an additional level of gravitas to the proceedings and gave it a further air of legitimacy. The descriptions of the pageant also

⁵¹⁸ McClendon, 'Moveable Feast', pp. 25, 26

⁵¹⁹ McClendon, 'Moveable Feast', p. 24.

⁵²⁰ For further information about Rogers' *Breviary* see Ronald W. Vince, *Ancient and Medieval Theatre: A Historiographical Handbook* (London, 1984) and Margaret Rogerson, *Playing a Part in History: The York Mysteries, 1951 – 2006* (Toronto, 2009). The term 'breviary' was used to refer back to and draw links between the present and medieval practises. This was the main purpose of the text.

⁵²¹ REED *Cheshire including Chester*, (Vol. 2), p. 331.

⁵²² REED *Cheshire*, p. 442.

demonstrate St George's chivalric representation. The sensory references also harken back to more conservative religious practices, blending them with secular celebrations.

The proclamations which were issued in 1609, informing people what was to be expected from the races and the reasoning behind it, also presents a link to the past. The initial proclamation, which was issued on St George's Day stated that 'the right worshipfull the Maier of the Cittie of Cheshire willeth and require...and in his Majesties name straitly chargeth and commandeth all and every person and persons that are here assembled...[to]...this ancient race'.⁵²³ The use of word 'ancient' reinforces to those who heard or read the proclamation that this event was long entrenched in the city's history. The fact that it was released on St George's Day reinforces the saint as the figure to whom the event is dedicated, made all the more significant as he is the country's patron saint. Furthering this idea was the reference to the races being in honour of the monarchy as being 'more addition to continue being for the Kynges crowne and dignity and homage to the Kyng and prynce with that noble victor St George to be continued for ever. God save the kyng'.⁵²⁴ When comparing this proclamation or the associated practices with popular events in the reigns of the Tudors or even earlier, there is no great disparity. This is no attempt to uproot the existing social order to make a secular statement; the traditional links between St George and the monarchy as well as subjects' reference to this affinity to demonstrate their loyalty to their king or queen had been in existence since the reign of Edward III and was widespread during the reign of Henry V, especially after the Battle of Agincourt.⁵²⁵

The articles that were published concerning and outlining St George's Day Race also speak to the religiosity of the event. The significance of St George for the event can be seen when after stating that the prize would be two silver cups donated by Robert Amery, the race itself would be 'runne for at ringe upon St George his day beinge the three and twentieth day of April. It shall be houlden and kepte upon St George his day, excepte if [falls on a weekend]. Then they shall be upon Saturday or the day next St George [his] day not beinge the Sabbath'.⁵²⁶ Although gambling and competition would have been inappropriate for a Sunday, the fact that the races were otherwise to be held on St George's Feast Day also shows the continuing affinity that the English people felt towards their patron saint.

The description of the great procession on the actual Race Day in 1610 also underlines the traditional nature of the celebrations. Two men were dressed in green with black hair and black

⁵²³ REED *Cheshire*, p. 348.

⁵²⁴ REED *Cheshire*, p. 351.

⁵²⁵ See Chapters 2 and 3.

⁵²⁶ REED *Cheshire*, p. 349.

beards with garlands in their hair. They were to carry 'great Clubs' with 'fier works to scatter abroad to mantaine way for the rest of the shewe'. Apart from their practical purpose, the use of garland and greenery with these figures also speak to the closeness of St George's Day to May Day and the start of spring. This blending of the natural world with the religious was in existence long before the reformation of English church practices. After these two men cleared the path in the crowd they were to be followed by 'one man on horseback with the buckler and headpiece of St George and two men to guide him with a drum Before him for the honor of Engle land. One man on horseback called fame with a trumpet in his hand and three men to guide him and he to make an Oration with his habit in pompe.'⁵²⁷ By drawing the correlation between St George and the 'honour of England' one is able to see the saint in the capacity of patron saint of the country, without any direct reference being made to the monarch. This suggests that in addition to being a symbol of the monarchy, St George also held a distinct place in the rising national consciousness of England.

Further along in the procession there was

One called Mercury to descend from above in a cloude his winges and all other matter in pomp and heavenly Musick with him and after his oration spoken to ryde on horseback with the music before him. One called Chester [to give an oration], one with Kynges armes on a shield, one on horseback concernge the kynges crowne and dignity, one on horseback with a bell dedicated to the kyng being double gilt with the kynges armes upon, carried upon a sceptre in pompe. Also the princes armes with an oration given by another. One on horseback with bells dedicated to the princes. One on horseback with cup for St George with sceptre. One on horseback with an oration dedicated to St George, St George himself on horseback in complete Armour with his flagg and buckle in pompe and before him the noise of drums.⁵²⁸

In this description the blending of the secular and the religious is striking. The presence of Mercury lends itself to the secular element of the procession. His patronage of trade and finance would have been particularly appealing to the organisers of the race and would at the same time appeal to the allusions the king had made to himself as a Roman Emperor. The personification of Chester adorned with the king and prince's arms also suggests the city's demonstration of loyalty to their monarch and speaks of the deeper symbolism within the event. What is significant to note, however, is that St George is not included within this section of the procession. The patron saint has his own separate figure and separate oration. Instead of being involved with the actions or garb of the mythological or monarchical figure, he is independent with his own armour and flag. The flag itself is noteworthy as a Christian symbol of both his and Christ's martyrdom whilst also referring to the English nation; a symbolic blending of the secular and the religious. In addition to this, the city

⁵²⁷ REED *Cheshire*, p. 349.

⁵²⁸ REED *Cheshire*, pp. 351 – 352.

officials, including the mayor, also became involved in the symbolism, wearing scarlett, the saint's colour.⁵²⁹

Another of the organisers, Robert Amery, the iron monger who created St George's silver bells that were to be given as prizes also 'caused a show to be made at the high Crosse. Before the maier by younge ympes who made eich one of them a speech in honour of St George'.⁵³⁰ Although these speeches are not recorded, a poetic address written by Richard Davies and performed on the day does survive. In the poem, entitled *Chester's Triumph in Honour of her Prince*, the character Rumor cries out 'Saint George for England, is the Patrone Knight,/ Whose ever-conquering, and all-daring hand,/ Did put whole Hoasts of Heathens foes to flight'.⁵³¹ The poem characterises St George as 'beloved' by 'heaven and earth' for which he was 'made a glorious saint'.⁵³² It also states that he is the protector of 'Britaines Crowne', ending with the cheer 'Saint George for England to this day'.⁵³³ All of these elements demonstrate that the St George's Day Race was not a purely secular event that was a departure from Chester's past. The popularity of the St George's Day Race continued throughout James' reign as in circa 1619, *Rogers' Breviary* gave the premonition that the races would 'remayne forever'.⁵³⁴ The pageantry appears to have grown as time progressed. The 1620 and 1621 *Order of the Chester show* recounts that St George fought a dragon prior to the race, reflective of the medieval and early to mid-sixteenth-century practices associated with St George. There was also the appearance of the nine worthies: three Israelites, three Infidels and three Christians. These allegorical figures were all part of the show and rode on white and red horses. There were also men playing soldiers present who wore white jackets with St George's Cross on their red breeches along with white stockings and red garters.⁵³⁵ Not only does this show an increase in the symbolism and popularity of the proceedings, the presence of the individuals from different religions highlights that this was not a completely secular affair and was likely an invocation of Christendom. Although elements of St George celebrations may have changed, there is much evidence that indicates the inhabitants of Chester reflected the actions of their predecessors in wishing to demonstrate their loyalty to both their monarch and their patron saint.

Finally, there is the point of who these inhabitants were, and to what degree individuals from the various strata of Jacobean society participated. The argument that the St George

⁵²⁹ REED Cheshire, p. 352.

⁵³⁰ REED Cheshire, p. 353.

⁵³¹ Richard Davies, *Chester's Triumph in Honour of her Prince*, (London, 1610), STC (2nd ed.)/5118.

⁵³² Davies, *Chester's Triumph*, STC (2nd ed.)/5118.

⁵³³ Davies, *Chester's triumph*, STC (2nd ed.)/5118.

⁵³⁴ REED Cheshire, p. 440.

⁵³⁵ REED Cheshire, pp. 460 – 462.

celebrations became more elitist does not appear to be substantiated, if only because there was no precise register of attendees taken at the medieval and early Tudor celebrations. Instead of excluding the lowlier members of Chester society, the race day seems to have been a communal and inclusive affair. For example, the mayor petitioned inn holders, cooks and victuallers to make a contribution to the St George races.⁵³⁶ Ledgers show that local painters, glaziers, embroiderers were all employed to prepare the decorations and costumes for the procession and Stationers' Accounts show 30 shillings being paid to Mr Amery for St George.⁵³⁷ Those in attendance would also be catered for as the race remained an annual tradition. Throughout 1614 and 1615, '2 shillings 6 pence [was] paid by master maiors appointment for a pottle of Sack and sugar spent in the pentice at the cominge upp from the Roodle from St George's race'. A further '12 shillings [was] paid to the guest drummer of St George's day'.⁵³⁸ In 1616 Cordwainers and Shoemakers' account 'paid money at Alderman younges upon gorges day, 2 shillings and six pence'.⁵³⁹ These accounts suggest that even the smaller gilds or skilled tradesmen of Chester were involved in preparations for the day. The fact that the organisers felt they needed two large men with torches to break up the crowds also speaks to the popularity of the day with many people in Chester, if not further afield. The St George Day Races are indicative of the continued popularity of England's patron saint who acted as an inclusive figure both in terms of social standing as well as within the secular and religious worlds. Furthermore, they show how St George remained a popular figure through acting as the patron of the country.

St George was also a popular figure on stage as he was invoked and referred to by numerous Elizabethan playwrights and poets. William Shakespeare also referred to St George in his history plays for much the same purpose.⁵⁴⁰ In both *King John* and *Richard II*, characters call upon the saint for his intercession. In the latter text, Elizabeth's ancestor Henry of Bolingbroke calls upon his 'innocence and Saint George to thrive' when he is banished by the king.⁵⁴¹ Henry V famously calls upon St George before the battle of Agincourt. Later on when he is wooing his intended, Katherine

⁵³⁶ REED *Cheshire*, pp. 358-359.

⁵³⁷ REED *Cheshire*, p. 360.

⁵³⁸ The labelling of the drummer as a 'guest' suggests that others who were employed in the creation of the procession and celebrations were local to the Chester area. REED *Cheshire*, pp. 401, 422.

⁵³⁹ REED *Cheshire*, p. 419.

⁵⁴⁰ In addition to the histories, there is one account of St George being sworn as an oath in *The Taming of the Shrew* in Act II, i, 1088 and a satirical reference to the saint's cheek in a 'broach' in *Love's Labour's Lost* in Act V, ii, 611. R. Chris Hassel also confirms that St George is used within Shakespeare plays, mainly as a source of invocation. See R. Chris Hassel, *Shakespeare's Religious Language: A Dictionary* (London and New York, 2007). Also Donna B. Hamilton, *Shakespeare and the Politics of Protestant England* (London, 1992), Jean-Christophe Mayer, *Shakespeare's Hybrid Faith, History, Religion and the State* (Basingstoke, 2006), Allison Shell, *Shakespeare and Religion* (London, 2010) and Jennifer Waldron, *Reformations of the Body: Idolatry, Sacrifice and Early Modern Theatre* (London, 2013).

⁵⁴¹ William Shakespeare, *Richard II*, Act I, Sc. ii, 84.

of France, he tells her that they will together be 'a good soldier-breeder: shall not thou and I, between Saint Denis and Saint George, compound a boy, half French, half English, that shall go to Constantinople and take the Turk by the beard?'⁵⁴² Here, Shakespeare refers to St George within a religious context of Christian Europe and the Islamic 'other'. In this passage, Shakespeare is marking out England's national identity. He is distinguishing England as a separate nation whilst creating an account of one of the country's most famous military victories and arguably England's most famous monarch. Here, Shakespeare develops a strong link with the past and reveals the traditions that still existed within the consciousness of a contemporary Elizabethan audience.

As the topics of Shakespeare's history plays become closer in time to the reign of the Tudors, St George remained a way through which their claim to the throne was justified. This reflected the initial intentions of the earlier Tudor monarchs and also suggests that their propaganda was largely successful and was now part of a larger consciousness. Perhaps the greatest example of the use of St George is in *Richard III*. In the final act of the play before the battle of Bosworth, Richmond challenges Richard's claim to the throne. In his monologue, which is meant to be a speech to his soldiers he cries out 'Sound drums and trumpets boldly and cheerfully:/ God and Saint George! Richmond and victory!'⁵⁴³ Richard III also invokes the name of St George in the play. Whilst preparing for his battle against Richmond, Richard III is shown to be confident about the battle: 'They thus directed we will follow/ In the main battle, whose puissance on either side/ Shall be well winged with our chieftest horse./ This and Saint George to boot!'⁵⁴⁴ Even when he finds out he has been betrayed, however, the king's devotion to St George remains and he is certain for victory despite the overwhelming chances for defeat. Richard cries out 'Advance our standards, set upon our foes/ Our ancient word of courage, fair St George,/ Inspire us with the spleen of fiery dragons!/ Upon them! Victory sits on our helms.'⁵⁴⁵ It is significant that St George is invoked so many times and in a religious and chivalric context and in the forming of England as a nation. The fact that Shakespeare is recounting these key events in English history to a wide audience also suggests the popularity of St George and the extent to which he was part of national traditions.

The Jacobean period saw a further proliferation of St George in the literature of the time, both religious and secular.⁵⁴⁶ When looking at the literature that references the saint it is evident that at no point did St George become a purely secular figure. The works of poets and playwrights

⁵⁴² William Shakespeare, *Henry V*, Act V, Sc. ii, 188-191.

⁵⁴³ William Shakespeare, *Richard III*, Act V, Sc. iii, 270-271.

⁵⁴⁴ William Shakespeare, *Richard III*, Act V, Sc. iii, 298 – 301.

⁵⁴⁵ William Shakespeare, *Richard III*, Act V, Sc. iii, 350 – 353.

⁵⁴⁶ See Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago, 2005) and Adam Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture in England, 1500 – 1700* (Oxford, 2000).

such as Michael Drayton, continuing his work into James' reign, and Thomas Dekker are indicative of the contemporary representations of St George. Drayton and Dekker portray an amalgamated St George: a national hero, patron of the monarch, a brave warrior and a Champion of Christendom. In their historical works, both writers invoke the figure of St George. Drayton's 1603 work, *The Barrons' Wars in the Raige of Edward the second*, represents St George as one from whom intercession was sought as well as a national symbol. Drayton writes that during the Barons' War it was 'Peere against Peere, the crowne against the crowne,/...Englands red Crosse vpon both sides doth flie,/ Saint George the King, S. George the Barrons cry'.⁵⁴⁷ A similar trope is found in Thomas Dekker's 1607 play, *The Famous History of Sir Thomas Wyatt*, when the doomed rebel cries out 'Saint George for England, Wiat for poore Kent' whilst the duke of Norfolk instructs his army that 'You shall charge the Traitor in the Vantgard/ Whilst my selfe with noble Arundell / And stout larningam, second you in the maine, /God and Saint George, this day fight on our side. /While thus we tame a desperate Rebels pride'.⁵⁴⁸ As with Shakespeare's plays, Drayton and Dekker have their characters invoke the saint as means of achieving victory as they consider their respective causes just. This perception shows the degree to which St George was held in their audience's estimation. A later topographical poem by Drayton, *A chorographically description of tracts, rivers, mountains, forests, and other parts of this renowned isle of Great Britain*, also shows that St George was certainly part of the English fabric. Drayton blends pastoral imagery with religious language.⁵⁴⁹ After referring to 'holie Dee' and the 'hartie prayer [that] religiouslie beginner[s] in England' along with the 'godlie sort' in Glastonbury, the English people are said to 'humblie to Saint George their Countries Patron pray,/ To prosper...now in this mightie day'.⁵⁵⁰ The continued references to Saint George in more popular literature demonstrates that he remained a figure with religious resources. By charting out the topography of the country using poetic and emotive language, Drayton is also reflecting patriotic, if not nationalistic sentiments. In many ways this is in a similar vein to Shakespeare's writing which presents England as a distinct nation through its geography. Drayton goes further than Shakespeare, however, as he characterises the inhabitants of 'this scepter'd isle', in addition to the topography of the nation.⁵⁵¹

⁵⁴⁷ Michael Drayton, *The barrons wars in the raige of Edward the second. With Englands heroically epistles* (London, 1603), STC (2nd ed.) / 7189.

⁵⁴⁸ Thomas Dekker, *The famous history of Sir Thomas Wyat With the coronation of Queen Mary, and the coming in of King Philip* (London, 1607), STC (2nd ed.)/ 6537.

⁵⁴⁹ A topographical poem is one in which the landscape of a specific area is written about, usually in a favourable tone.

⁵⁵⁰ Michael Drayton, *A chorographically description of tracts, rivers, mountains, forests, and other parts of this renowned isle of Great Britain with intermixture of the most remarkable stories, antiquities, wonders, rarities, pleasures, and commodities of the same* (London, 1622), STC (2nd ed.) / 7228.

⁵⁵¹ Shakespeare, *Richard II*, Act 2, scene i, 50-60.

St George's role was not confined to pageants and plays, and he provides an insight into the multi-layered nature of English society during this period. Individuals from each strata of society could relate to the saint, whether it be through the allegory of his hagiography, or his representation of England as a distinct nation with a long history. Despite their deep antipathy to the cult of the saints, a large number of Protestants accepted St George in his role as patron saint of England.

St George and the Wider Christian Collective

Representations of St George are one way to see the rise of a sense of nation in England. Popular prose including novels, ballads and imagery associated with St George, display a deep sense of nationhood if not a singular national identity. For example, the controversial idea of the saintly intercession was still apparent in various texts throughout Elizabeth's reign. In *The tragical and true historie which happened between two English lovers* from 1565, distressed mariners call on St George for his intercession during a terrible storm.⁵⁵² Thomas Blenerhasset, in a history of England from the invasion of Julius Caesar until William the Conqueror used an anachronistic but emotive reference to St George when recounting the Battle of Hastings. In a speech before the battle the soldiers are told by 'the English King' Harold: 'March forth my men, we must no longer stay:/Let euery man abandon faynting feare,/ And I as guyde wyl leade you on your way:/Euen I my selfe the formost in the fray,/ Wyl teach you how you shal abate his pride./ Fight fight my men, *Sainct George* shalbe your guyde'.⁵⁵³ This reference to St George's intercession speaks to the more traditional representation of the saint as an active spiritual force that was referred to in the literature about Agincourt.⁵⁵⁴ Blenerhasset also chooses to use the reference to St George at a time when he had not yet been established as the patron saint of England, suggesting the saint's popularity at the time the piece was written. The retroactive reference demonstrates the significance of St George to English national identity and history. The use of symbolism is reflective of Blenerhasset's interest in widening England's area of influence. As a land owner in Ireland, he also wrote extensively about England's right to exert control over Ireland such as in his 1610 work, *A Direction for the Plantation in Ulster*. When compared with popular ballads around the time which promoted England's presence in Ireland, it is reflective of the start of an expanding English empire.

⁵⁵² Ben Gar, *The tragical and true historie which happened between two English lovers* (London, 1565), p. 48.

⁵⁵³ Thomas Blenerhasset, *The seconde part of the Mirrour for magistrates containing the falles of the infortunate princes of this lande, from the conquest of Caesar, vnto the commying of Duke William the Conquerour* (London, 1578), p.65.

⁵⁵⁴ See Chapter 2.

The use of St George to represent England and to express a sense of English nationhood, is also seen in texts that discussed or outlined contemporary events such as the anonymous account of *The Honourable actions of that most famous and valiant Englishman, Edward Glemham*, an Elizabethan voyager and privateer who attacked the vessels of the Spanish and the Holy League. f Glenham's exploits which included fighting against the Spanish of St George's Ile were 'published for the encouragement to our English adventurers (gentlemen, sailors and soldiers) that serve against the enemies of God and our country'. Within the text it is possible to see the invocation of St George being explicitly linked to the identity of an Englishman. Whilst parlaying with the Governor of the Ile, Glemham was told that he would not be able to speak to the Governor. He refused to speak to a subordinate and stated that 'if the Governor would come himself, he promised on the honour of an English Gentleman, he should passe and repasse in safetie'. When it was thought that a battle with the Spanish was imminent, Glemham told his men that 'if I have but twenty of you stand by me, Saint George for all: I will end my life before I distaine the reputation of an English Gentleman'. As a result of this rousing speech 'the company hearing his resolute mind [decided] to take part with him so far as their lives would go'.⁵⁵⁵ Glemham's actions present the English as both measured and brave, juxtaposed against the Spanish, their established enemies.

The idea of St George representing English national identity is also described in two popular texts: *The Seven Champions of Christendom* by writer Richard Johnson and *St George for England, Allegorically Described* by the merchant, Gerrard de Malynes. In Johnson's text, which blends his own fantastical creations with *The Golden Legend*, St George is described as a 'valiant champion and titular saint of England' who was born in Coventry. He was born with a 'dragon on his breast...red cross on his right hand and a golden garter on his left leg'.⁵⁵⁶ By having St George born in England, Johnson exerts ownership over the saint, making him fully English. In the first chapter, which details the birth of St George, the saint is described as the 'first Christian hero of England' who was 'held in high esteem through all parts of Europe'.⁵⁵⁷ The idea of national identity being important is reinforced by the fact that St George is informed by an enchantress who kidnaps him as a child and raises him as her own that he is to join St Denis of France, St James of Spain, St Anthony of Italy, St Andrew of Scotland, St David of Wales and St Patrick of Ireland and that he is 'destined to be the

⁵⁵⁵ Anonymous, *The honourable actions for that most famous and valiant Englishman, Edward Glemham* (London, 1591), STC/639:05.

⁵⁵⁶ Richard Johnson, *The Seven Champions of Christendom*, 1596, p. 5. See also Naomi Conn Liebler, 'Bully St George: Richard Johnson's Seven Champions of Christendom and the creation of the bourgeois national hero', *Early Modern Prose Fiction: The Cultural Politics of reading*, Naomi Conn Liebler (ed.), (New York and London, 2007), pp.115-129.

⁵⁵⁷ Johnson, *Seven Champions*, p. 2.

seventh by the appellation of St George of England'.⁵⁵⁸ In addition to differentiating between the various nations, the departure from any conventional pattern of canonisation also blends the religious language with the more secular elements of the story. All of the figures are born as saints, they have not undergone beatification or performed any good works to have the title bestowed upon them. There is no reference to St George's martyrdom, nor is there any mention of Catholicism or Protestantism. Despite this, however, the idea of the saints being Christian and standing up to injustices at home and abroad, permeates the text. The reference to a national patron saint also goes against the grain of the more ardent Protestant reformers who spoke out against such patrons as symbols of superstition. The 'Englishness' of St George remains to the fore, as on his arrival in Egypt a hermit identifies him: 'you seem to be an Englishman for I perceive the arms of England engraven on your armour'. The bravery of the English is also described after he rescues the Egyptian princess, Sabra, from being eaten by a dragon. She is impressed by St George's courage 'as 'the Egyptian champions had shrunk with dismay'.⁵⁵⁹ In this sense, the text differs from *The Golden Legend* which identifies St George as the patron saint of England. The legend of St George, according to Johnson's scenario, is no longer an allegory for the triumph of good over evil, nor is it only a validation of Christianity over paganism. The *Seven Champions* notes a sense of national identity developing throughout the latter half of the sixteenth century. In *The Seven Champions*, therefore, St George is identified as the 'English knight' or the 'English champion'. This reference is made throughout the text, not only to distinguish him from the other saints, but to establish him as the patron of a distinct country with a distinct identity, superior to that of his counterparts.

Johnson's text is another example of the blending of the secular and religious within literature. The fact that Johnson chose Egypt as one of his settings acts as an allusion to the book of Exodus in the Old Testament. The reference to the dragon bringing 'a mortal plague' to the people of Egypt when they refuse him a sacrifice suggests Biblical allusions within the secular tale.⁵⁶⁰ For example, St George fights against the 'idolatry' of the Sultan of Persia where 'he performed such prodigies of valour, whilst fighting for the honour of God and Christendom, that in one day he slew several hundreds of Persians, so they were obliged to call in the military forces before they could secure him'.⁵⁶¹ After battling Moors, St George intercepts Almidor in Barbary. Almidor expects 'little mercy' as he is not Christian but before being tortured to death by the saint as revenge for imprisoning him, St George offers him redemption by telling him 'that the only means to avoid

⁵⁵⁸ Johnson, *Seven Champions*, p. 8.

⁵⁵⁹ Johnson, *Seven Champions*, p. 14.

⁵⁶⁰ Johnson, *Seven Champions*, p. 10.

⁵⁶¹ Johnson, *Seven Champions*, p. 19.

immediate death, was to renounce his false gods and embrace the pure doctrines of Christianity'.⁵⁶² Although Almidor refuses to repent, and is burned to death in a cauldron for his transgressions, St George's acts are looked on 'favourably' by the majority of those in attendance at the execution. As a result, his conviction in his faith prompts mass conversions, similar to those in *The Golden Legend* and *Mirk's Festial*. Later in the narrative, Sabra's father, the king of Egypt is also apologetic towards St George for being prejudiced against the Christian faith. St George once again is seen as a benevolent and honourable Christian warrior as he is 'so deeply affected at this pathetic speech and the tears of the aged speaker, that he immediately raised the king from his knees, and assured him of free forgiveness on condition that he and all his nobles should embrace Christianity'. As a result of this forgiveness he is bequeathed the throne of Egypt upon the death of the king.⁵⁶³ Due to his actions the other champion saints decide that when fighting pagans, St George should 'unanimously' be elected as 'champion' to lead the Christian forces' and that 'living or dying, they might immortalise their names in defence of their honour and religion'.⁵⁶⁴

In addition to appearing as religious and chivalric warriors, the seven champions, including St George also take part in knightly activities they 'held a variety of tilts, tournaments, balls &c and here the Christian champions performed such prodigies of valour in combating with the knights of Greece, Hungary and Bohemia, that they acquired trophies of immortal honour and renown'.⁵⁶⁵ Through these various representations it is evident that St George, as a national hero and patron saint, could reflect many different interests within Elizabethan society. Furthermore, the use of nationalities is pertinent as it combines a sense of national identity with the wider notion of Christendom. In this instance, it is inhabitants from the Middle East who are the 'other', not kingdoms like Spain and France. At the same time, however, it should also be noted that individual countries did not lose their own identities in this text as part of a wider Christian collective. Johnson, as an Englishman, goes to great lengths to ensure that St George of England is by far the most valiant and brave of the warriors and the majority of the narrative is centred around him and his deeds.

Indeed, Johnson's text proved so popular, it was used in a popular ballad at the time. 'Of Hector's deeds did Homer sing' gives an account of St George's legend that is clearly based on popular narratives at the time (See Figure 8.4).⁵⁶⁶ The ballad also demonstrates that there was a definite sense of ownership of St George amongst the English. The use of St George's Cross to

⁵⁶² Johnson, *Seven Champions*, p. 51.

⁵⁶³ Johnson, *Seven Champions*, p. 55.

⁵⁶⁴ Johnson, *Seven Champions*, pp. 48.

⁵⁶⁵ Johnson, *Seven Champions*, p. 43.

⁵⁶⁶ See below to the works of Richard Johnson and Gerrard de Malynes.

represent England is also noteworthy in the accompanying imagery. The chivalric representation of St George is also upheld in the text to show the continuing tradition of the saint's legend.

The ballad begins with an introduction stating that just as Homer wrote of Hector and the sacking of Troy, so too would the balladeer tell the 'deeds' of St George, 'an English knight'.⁵⁶⁷ As in the prose accounts, St George fights heathens such as the Saracens 'where many gyants he subdu'd in honour of the Christian way'.⁵⁶⁸ It is when he meets Sabrine, the princess he must rescue, that the imagery related to St George becomes most apparent. On learning that the princess is about to be sacrificed to the dragon, St George reassures her saying: "'What person thus abused thee?/ And low! by Christ his Cross, I vow/ which here is figured on my brest/ I will revenge it on his brow,/ And break my Lance upon his chest'".⁵⁶⁹ The image that accompanies the ballad shows the chivalric representation of St George with a cross on the breastplate of his armour. Although St George's cross was initially the universal Christian symbol of martyrdom, this ballad makes it clear that the image was also directly acquainted with St George by this period. St George's Cross had its basis in Christ's sacrifice for humankind, but in England the red cross on the white background remained synonymous with the patron saint as it had been since the reign of Henry VIII. The English ownership of St George remains throughout the rest of the ballad. After facing many challenges on their quest, both St George and Sabrine 'speed' to England where, with her father's permission they wed and 'lead their lives at Coventry'.⁵⁷⁰ The use of the present tense in the ballad upholds the whimsical nature of the ballad whilst reinforcing the fact that St George remained both a Christian figure and a national hero. The form of the piece also speaks to the popularity of the saint amongst the middling sort.⁵⁷¹

Another text which presented St George as a Christian hero is Gerrard de Malynes' *St George for England Allegorically Described*. This work, dedicated to Lord Thomas Egerton, Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal, has the saint being presented as both a secular and religious figure to all levels of English society. Where this text differs from Johnson, however, is that St George is seen as a distinctly Protestant hero rather than a more general Christian one. In the initial dedication to Lord Egerton, De Malynes admits that his work is an 'invented history of St George'.⁵⁷² He directly compares St George to Elizabeth I: 'for wheras under the person of the noble champion St George

⁵⁶⁷ Anonymous, 'Of Hector's Deeds did Homer Sing' Number XXIII, (c. 1596), *The Shirburn Ballads*, p. 96.

⁵⁶⁸ Anonymous, 'Hector's Deeds', p. 97.

⁵⁶⁹ Anonymous, 'Hector's Deeds', p. 99.

⁵⁷⁰ Anonymous, 'Hector's Deeds', p. 103.

⁵⁷¹ For more on readership and purchasers for ballads see Tessa Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety, 1550–1640* (Cambridge, 1993).

⁵⁷² Gerrard de Malynes, *Saint George for England Allegorically Described* (London, 1601), p. 1.

our Saviour Christ was prefigured delivering the Virgin (which did signify the sinful souls of Christians) from the dragon or devil's power [,] so her most excellent Majesty by advancing the pure doctrine of Jesus Christ in all truth and sincerity hath...performe[d] the valiant role of champion, delivering an infinite number out of the devil's power'.⁵⁷³ St George is characterised as not only being the 'patron of the noble order of the Garter', but also as the 'head and patron of our eternall glorie'.⁵⁷⁴ The significance of the comparison within the dedication cannot be overstated. Much like in the reign of Henry VIII, Elizabeth is seen as continuing the role of 'Defender of the Faith' and has been put in the role of St George. Although her gender may prevent a full comparison being made throughout the text, her role as the Governor of the Church gives her a firm position within De Malynes' allegory.

De Malynes' work was not just meant for the Elizabethan Court, however. After the initial dedication to his patron, the writer addresses his wider audience. In the foreword, he writes that *Saint George for England* is for all Englishmen whether they are well born or of low birth: 'knights of the noble order, and all other of what decree or calling soever have cause to rejoice & to expect their deliverance purchased by the spilling of [Christ's] most precious blood'.⁵⁷⁵ This point is elaborated upon further when the dragon, which is a symbol for injustice and 'rebellion' within a country, causes 'too much enriching [for] some [...] by oppressing and impoverishing some others, bringing the instrument out of tune'.⁵⁷⁶ De Malynes states that 'every member of the same [society] should live contented in his vocation and execute his charge according to his profession'.⁵⁷⁷ In this sense the figure of St George brings together God, the monarch and the English people. The monarch is called upon to serve God and rule justly, just as subjects are meant to obey the laws of God and their monarch. The allegory of St George's legend acts as an extended metaphor for the order of Protestant England.

De Malynes informs the readers that they too have a role in defending the English Protestant faith. He uses the comparison that 'soldiers, having the sign of marching forwards given them do take up all their trinkets: but hearing the note of battle, lay them down again, preparing and making themselves ready with heart, eyes and ears, to execute whatsoever is by their general commanded'; Christians should be the same.⁵⁷⁸ The allegory therefore allows the readers, on all

⁵⁷³ De Malynes, *St George*, p. 2. This point is briefly made in the epilogue of Jonathan Good's *Cult of St George*, p. 129. See also Samantha Riches, *St George: Hero, Martyr, Myth* (Stroud, 2000), p. 185.

⁵⁷⁴ De Malynes, *St George*, p. 5.

⁵⁷⁵ De Malynes, *St George*, p. 5.

⁵⁷⁶ De Malynes, *St George*, p. 5.

⁵⁷⁷ De Malynes, *St George*, p. 5.

⁵⁷⁸ De Malynes, *St George*, p. 6.

levels of the society, to relate to St George. Therefore, at both a monarchical and popular level it is clear that St George remained an integral figure to the English consciousness. Rather than becoming a solely secular figure, St George remained a malleable religious symbol who was able to be used by various groups across Elizabethan society. The way that these groups approached St George and his narrative demonstrates both the tensions between them and the visions each had for Protestant England. It also speaks to the wider matter of the complexities of what constituted English national identity. In these works, Johnson saw St George as a representative of the country of England; de Malynes saw the English consciousness in terms of religion and the monarch.

Both Richard Johnson and Gerard de Malynes continued to use St George as a trope during James' reign to promulgate national and religious identities. Their works demonstrate St George's popularity amongst the middling sort and merchant classes. *A Crowne Garland of Goulden Roses* is a collection of poems and songs that at once reflect St George's relationship with the monarchy and a sense of English national identity within James I's Great Britain. In 'A delightful song of the foure famous feasts of England', dedicated to Prince Henry of Great Britain. Johnson classifies England as 'a kingdome,/ of all the world admired' for its 'bravery', 'wealth' and 'law [which] preserveth unity'.⁵⁷⁹ There is no mention of Scotland in terms of being part of Great Britain. As part of aligning the Stuarts with the history of England, the song outlines the 'foure greate feasts of England' starting with the feast of St George. The feast day is described as being 'maintained by kings:/ Where much renowne and royalty, / there of new dayley rings'.⁵⁸⁰ The prestigious nature of the order is also highlighted through the fact that 'Princes come from foraigne lands,/ to be Saint Georges knights'.⁵⁸¹ Although these references to Saint George only outline the highest levels of society, Johnson also makes a point of calling him 'our English champion'. Here the ownership of St George is extended beyond the family to the English people drawing attention to the accessibility of the national patron saint.

An example of St George reflecting both the identity of the merchant class and of the wider English nation can also be seen in an anonymous account of an arch that was erected by a company of English Merchants in Lisbon in 1619. The arch was built to represent the company upon the arrival of the King of Spain into the Portuguese town. The arch is described as having St George's battle with the dragon on its base: 'Upon the Base, which is the full Continent of the Architecture, stood Saint George on horsbacke treading upon the Serpent, in manner and forme as the Kings of

⁵⁷⁹ Richard Johnson, 'A delightful song of the foure famous feasts of England' in *A Crowne Garland of Goulden roses Gathered out of Englands royall garden* (1612), STC (2nd ed.) / 14672.

⁵⁸⁰ Richard Johnson, 'A delightful song'.

⁵⁸¹ Johnson, 'A delightful song'.

England weare him, for their Patrone, and beareth such an inscription'.⁵⁸² The inscription shows the power of St George in saying that 'He did, being Patron to great Englands King/ Assist the Portugall in every thing'.⁵⁸³ Although one might argue that this shows an elitist side to the saint, it is more likely that the monarchy was invoked due to the arch's intended purpose; it was designed to represent the English nation to a foreign king in a foreign land. St George is still being presented as a religious figure whilst being linked to national identity.

Gerard de Malynes applies the legend of St George to the life of the middling sorts of Jacobean society in his 1622 work *The Ancient Law-Merchant*. Whereas his Elizabethan work, *Saint George for England, Allegorically Described*, presented the religious allegory of the saint in greater detail, this particular piece used St George's legend to describe the economic situation in England for law-merchants. De Malynes reiterates the religious element of the legend: 'Saint George whereby our Saviour Christ was prefigured, delivering the Virgin (which did signifie the sinfull soules of Christians) from the Dragon, or Devils power'.⁵⁸⁴ The allegory is then applied to the merchant law in England:

So by the person of Saint George is understood the Kings authoritie, armed with the right armour of Christians, who with the sword of the Spirit of Gods most holy Word, explained and corroborated with several other Lawes, signified by the Pybald horse whereon hee was mounted, did destroy the Dragon (Usurie) having two wings to advance himselfe, being Usura palliata, and Usura explicata, and his inconstant taile Cambium; the Virgin or Kings daughter (being treasure and moneys) to be devoured by his meanes and forraine nations...This Dragon bringeth inequality in a Commonwealth by the meanes of his tayle, wherein lieth his greatest strength, making the expences thereof to surmount the revenues.⁵⁸⁵

Here, not only is the King likened to St George in the role of protector, the situation of borrowing, lending and interest is also presented in a religious context. Within this explanation de Malynes attacks the Jews for their usury insisting that 'nothing is amisse for them...they dread not take tenne upon the hundredth if it were for a weeke'.⁵⁸⁶ It is clear that Jewish 'otherness' did not entitle them from being protected by England patron's saint as he was a figure for just English Christians.

Subsequently, de Malynes also describes an English 'Bank of Charitie' that was established to rescue those in Genoa who had been 'oppressed' by debt:

⁵⁸² Anonymous, *The triumphant and sumptuous arch erected by the Company of English Marchants residing in Lisbon, vpon the Spanish Kings entry made thereinto* (London, 1619), STC (2nd ed.) / 19843.

⁵⁸³ Anonymous, *The triumphant and sumptuous arch*, STC (2nd ed.) / 19843.

⁵⁸⁴ Gerard de Malynes, *Consuetudo, vel lex mercatoria, or The ancient law-merchant Diuided into three parts* (London, 1622), p. 328.

⁵⁸⁵ De Malynes, *The ancient law-merchant*, p. 328.

⁵⁸⁶ De Malynes, *The ancient law-merchant*, p. 328.

Whereas the like House called Saint George, was heretofore erected at Genoua in Italie by noble Knights bound in honour to see the people relieved from oppression, biting usurie and extortion, which by all vertuous Knights is at all times approved and commended; There shall be kept one paire of tables in euerie house, containing the names of such honourable persons, and vertuous Knights' as shall be yearely contributaries (by quarterly paiments) during their naturall liues, or lend any summe of money (gratis) for a time, together with the names of such well disposed persons as by their Wills and Testaments doe bequeath any summe of money for the maintenance of this pious worke, in perpetuall remembrance of the said benefactors.⁵⁸⁷

This suggests that St George, as England's patron saint, was used in both a religious and secular sense to protect the vulnerable, showing they were not mutually exclusive of one another. The fact that the house was also established by knights shows that St George remained close to his chivalric roots, both at home and abroad. He remained a protector of the English people. The actual physical space of the bank, like the arch, marks out the area for England. This provided those living abroad with a way to exhibit their national and religious identities.

St George and Outward Expansion

The link between national identity at home in England and abroad is further illustrated by the international expansion of the Cross of St George. The use of St George's Cross in England, on the European continent and in the New World suggests both correlations and complexities around the idea of nationhood at the time. Collinson has stated that the symbol of the cross was a contentious one throughout the period of the Reformation, noting that some people were so worried about invoking the sign that they were careful not to cross themselves after they sneezed.⁵⁸⁸ Collinson also states that crosses began to disappear at the same time as public devotional practices and were all but gone by the end of the 1580s and that the crucifix in churches was directly replaced by Elizabeth I's royal arms.⁵⁸⁹ Margaret Aston agrees with this and explains the continued use of St George's cross by asserting that 'the red cross was to be seen as not specific to St George' and it was only kept so as not to 'disrupt' soldiers who were used to it as their ensign.⁵⁹⁰ Through associating the religious imagery with the country's patron saint, however, it is clear that the sign of the cross became in some contexts acceptable and indeed, a national symbol. The question must also be asked: who at the time would have interpreted the cross as a secular symbol? How would those

⁵⁸⁷ De Malynes, *The ancient law-merchant*, p. 342.

⁵⁸⁸ Patrick Collinson, *The Birthpangs of Protestant England: Religious and Cultural Change in the 16th and 17th centuries* (Basingstoke, 1988), pp.51, 52. See also Margaret Aston, *England's Iconoclasts: Volume 1: Laws Against Images* (Oxford, 1988).

⁵⁸⁹ Collinson, *Birthpangs*, p. 52 and p. 9.

⁵⁹⁰ Aston, *Broken Idols*, p. 418. Also, Margaret Aston, *England's Iconoclasts Volume 1: Laws Against Images* (Oxford, 1988), pp 302, 307. This view is also shared by Timothy Wilson, *Flags at Sea* (London, 1986).

outside of England have perceived it? Even today, it is impossible to see a cross as purely secular. At the time in question, Catholics, or England's 'enemies' would not have seen it as secular; crosses would have been used in their daily devotional practices. Conversely, stalwart Puritans did not see it as secular either, as they were consistently opposed to its use throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The monarch, as the Governor of the Church of England was not a secular position. The fact that the cross was still referred to as the Cross of St George throughout this period also argues against the claim that the patron saint was slowly forgotten until the Caroline period.

It is certainly evident in the navigational literature of the time that imagery related to St George has an important role to play. Helgerson argues that the maps of the period serve as 'narratives' for the nations involved, asserting that 'their interest is rather in the extra-European world and its descriptions than in the political and cultural divisions of Europe itself'.⁵⁹¹ By studying maps, heraldry and other forms of imagery during the latter half of the sixteenth century, it is apparent that the English sense of national identity did exist to some extent albeit in need of further definition.

In order to understand the significance of England's flag abroad, one must first see how it was promulgated at home. William Smith's *The Particular Description of England* from 1588 gave a history of England and created plates that provided examples of heraldry from various cities (see Figures 8.5 to 8.7). Smith claimed that the concept of England as a country had existed since the reign of Egbert who 'commanded all the land to be called England and people Englishmen'.⁵⁹² After giving a history of the country, Smith then presents a number of plates with the heraldry from English cities. A number of them including London, Lincoln, Rochester and York all contained St George's Cross by the late 1580s. In the panorama view of London, St George's Crosses are also positioned on top of the turrets of the White Tower. Smith's choice to draw the Tower with the cross highlights the strength of the fortified capital city. This is similar to the representation of Rochester which also has the St George Crosses on the masts of the ship, again a further reference to the strength of the English navy. The date of publication is also significant as it coincides with the threatened invasion of the Spanish Armada.

⁵⁹¹ Helgerson, *Nationhood*, pp. 151-152.

⁵⁹² William Smith, *The Particular Description of England* (1588), Edmund William (ed.), (Hertford, 1879), p. 1. For more examples of Jacobean images of the English counties see John Speed, *The Theatre of Great Britaine*, 1611. Much like Smith's work Speed uses the George Cross on ships when drawing the counties that were bordered by the sea.

The rivalry between England and Spain over religion and in the race to establish colonies created new imperatives for references to national identities. This was achieved through many forms, but a prevalent one was use of the Cross of St George to mark out English vessels and the territories which they were either conquering or protecting. A hieroglyphic of John Dee's *Arte of Navigation* from 1577 (Figure 8.8) portrays England as a powerful Christian nation. On the right-hand side of the page one can see Elizabeth enthroned on a ship with the symbolism of the shepherd's staff and cross on top of each of the masts. Ahead of the ship forges an armed angel with the Cross of St George on its shield. Surrounding them are other ships of English explorers and the exotic locations which they have claimed in the name of their country, faith and monarch. The hieroglyphic portrays England as a Christian nation, of great fortitude and divine right to claim land for itself and the true faith.⁵⁹³

Identifying and referencing the English nation through St George's Cross can also be seen in an English chart by Augustine Ryther that shows the course of the Spanish retreat (see Figure 8.9). The defeat of the Spanish Armada marked a significant point within the narrative of the English nation. The chart is a prime example of how national identity was accentuated through this event. In the centre of the map of England lies St George's cross blended with the royal arms juxtaposed with the far-flung line representing the panicked escape of the Spanish.

It is also clear that the defeat of the Armada held a significance with individual communities and parishes within England. For example, a triptych in St Faith's Church in Gayward, Norfolk, portrays the queen's arrival at Tilbury, with the simultaneous victory over the Armada in the background (see Figure 8.10). Although the focal point of the piece is Elizabeth, the proliferation of St George flags around the monarch, on the fortifications and English fleet cannot be ignored. The triptych seems at once to be praising the monarch and the English nation for the victory over the Spanish. The inscription 'Blessed be the great God of my salvation' further demonstrates that the symbolism related to St George was not totally secularised and that it helped to facilitate England as a separate Christian, Protestant nation.⁵⁹⁴

Popular ballads at the time show the proliferation of St George's Cross to mark out English ships and sailors. In the ballad *A Dainty new Ditty of a Sailor and his Love*, the Cross of St George can be seen on the English flag ship during a naval battle (see Figure 8.11). Where this text differs from others, however, is that the image is not directly related to the monarch, but merely a reference to the nationality of the sailors. There are no monarchical or Christian allusions made in the text. For

⁵⁹³ For more on Dee's imperial vision see Glyn Parry, *The Arch-Conjuror of England* (New York, 2013).

⁵⁹⁴ See Robert Hutchinson, *The Spanish Armada* (London, 2013).

example, the sailor sing to his love that he has ‘oft on the Sea beene in danger,/ for my true lover’s sake,/ Now I am returned again, like a stranger:/ Turn to me, Love; and awake’.⁵⁹⁵ The balladeer then makes a mythological allusion by having the sailor ask: ‘Neptune, why, from the wind and the weather,/ didst thou my body keepe,/ And didst now raise the floudes altogether/ and drowne me in the deepe?’. It is clear that the imagery associated with the ballad was meant to use a symbol that would have been understood and accessible across a wide stratum of society. The use of the George Cross has no other significance in this case but to highlight the sailor as being English.

A similar use of the George Cross can be seen in the ballad *When Troy town for ten years’ war*. Once again, although the entire narrative is based around the Trojan Wars, it is St George’s Cross on the ships that is used as a familiar sign on the ballad sheet to appeal to the audience (see Figure 8.12). Queen Dido also bears a striking resemblance to Queen Elizabeth, furthering the belief that familiar images and symbols were used for the broad audience base of ballads. Although these images of St George’s Cross serve as symbolism and, in some cases, propaganda, the presence of this cross was an accurate representation of reality. In the inventories of the ships that fought against the Spanish Armada, ‘flags of St George’ are listed for every ship.⁵⁹⁶ The *Ark Royal*, which led the offence against the Spanish, flew the Royal Standard together with the Cross of St George at the fore of the ship whilst all the vice and rear admirals in the fleet flew the St George Cross at the fore and the mizzen of their ships.⁵⁹⁷ The cross was still linked to St George around fifty years later when naval captain Nathaniel Boteler wrote of how the crosses served to ‘[distinguish] nations’, noting that St George’s Cross ‘of old for England, and of late, the British flag’ whilst ‘St Andrew’s cross [was] for Scotland; the white cross for France; and so for Denmark and the rest’.⁵⁹⁸ The fact that St George’s Cross was seen by that captain to represent England and now Britain at once shows the symbol’s importance to national identity but it also speaks to the ambiguousness of the existence of ‘Britain’ at the start of the seventeenth century. Regardless the reference to St George remains constant.

Beyond the accounts of battles and ballads, English explorers used St George’s Cross as a symbol of their presence in the New World. The Elizabethan explorer John White made maps from his various voyages in the 1580s and 1590s. On his 1585 and 1590 maps of the colony of Virginia, the only two references that are used to denote the colony’s ownership are the royal insignia, bearing the arms of the Order of the Garter, and the St George Cross which fly from the ships’ masts.

⁵⁹⁵ Anonymous, ‘A Dainty new Ditty of a Sailor and his Love’ (London, c. 1590s), *The Shirburn Ballads*, p. 88.

⁵⁹⁶ J.K. Laughton, *The Defeat of the Spanish Armada II*, (NRS 2, 1894), pp. 242-9.

⁵⁹⁷ Sir William Slyngesbie, *Naval Miscellany I*, (NRS 20, 1902), pp. 25-99.

⁵⁹⁸ Extracts from Nathaniel Boteler’s discussion of flags in *Dialogues about sea services* (London, c. 1634), Timothy Wilson, *Flags at Sea* (London, 1986), p. 95.

Their presence demonstrates that, as a visual marker, the imagery related to St George was known well enough to represent the English nation (see Figures 8.13 and 8.14).

It was during the 1580s and 1590s, that foreign cartographers demonstrated the nationhood of England through the use of imagery related to the country's patron saint. An Italian cartographer, Giovanni Battista Boazio, used imagery related to St George to identify England and the country's ventures into the New World. Boazio illustrated an account of Sir Francis Drake's 1585-1586 voyage to the Caribbean and the Americas (see Figures 8.15 – 8.17). In all the images it is possible to see the flag of St George marking the English ships. In addition to the flags on top of the ships, St George's Cross is also used to demarcate the land that has been acquired by England by having the soldiers carry flags whilst marching, a further reference to St George's chivalric traditions. The cross is proliferated throughout the images, more so than the royal coat of arms. The focus of these images is the conquest in the name of England as a kingdom. Whilst there is a monarch for whom these acquisitions are made, the expansion of England is demonstrated through the link to the country's patron saint. The use of St George is seen in other imagery in the late sixteenth century. Boazio's work was produced within a year of the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588, when the iconic Armada Portrait showed the English fleet, adorned with St George's flag, defeating the Spanish with the help of a tempest.⁵⁹⁹

In the reign of James I, references and imagery related to St George to represent the English nation proliferated as the colonies of New England expanded. The work of the famous English explorer John Smith provides insight into the use of St George as the colony grew. On the map, Smith, the Admiral of New England, is depicted as being a civilising force on the 'savages' of the country; a subtle reference to Smith's Christianity in addition to his nationality as an Englishman (see Figure 8.18). Behind Smith is the coast with the names of the colonies, dedicated to members of the royal family and key places in England, again exerting ownership of the new territory. The naming of the places after locations in England is another way that national identity was being manifested in the new colony. In keeping with a common trope, a number of St George Crosses are on the top of the fleet of English ships that are heading to the colony.

Smith's 1624 work, *The Generall historie of Virginia, New-England*, shows the full extent of the use of St George to exhibit national identity (see Figure 8.19). In the text, Smith refers to a channel being dedicated to the saint as well a town being named after St George. Smith writes that 'Upon the first of August, according to the Companies instructions from England, began the generall

⁵⁹⁹ See Chapter 6.

assembly at the towne of Saint George, which was the first these Iles ever had'.⁶⁰⁰ The choice of the first assembly to be held in the town of St George cannot be seen as coincidental, especially when one considers the associated imagery of the saint, reinforced by the frontispiece of Smith's work.

There are numerous images related to the saint which show his various representations. At the top of the frontispiece are the portraits of Elizabeth I, James I and, at that time, Charles, Prince of Wales, symbolising England's illustrious past, present and future. Elizabeth, with the scepter and orb and pearls about her neck connoting her virginity, calls upon England's past. In the centre is the current monarch, James I, also with the scepter and orb but also with the Great George hanging around his neck. He is seen in full regalia. His son, Charles, is also presented wearing the blue ribbon of the Lesser George about his neck, creating a correlation between the father and the son. The reference to the Order of the Garter, and to St George as the patron saint, shows the close and complex affinity the monarchy had with him.

Further down the image it is possible to see another reference to the chivalric representation of the saint. In addition to the ships encircling the coastline with the English flag, the Coat of Arms for Virginia has two soldiers with the Cross of St George on their breastplates. This acted as imagery to show the national identity of the army in New England. The symbol of the cross also promulgated the English religion. The tradition of English troops wearing the St George flag also harkens back to the medieval period and the reign of Henry VIII where the flag was used with regularity. With the country's imperial expansion into the New World, it would appear that England still maintained a number of the well-established practices it had long used to present an image of a distinct Christian country.

Rather than being eradicated, St George was adopted by various groups including Protestant reformers, religious conservatives, the expanding merchant class and recusants who had been exiled. This last group is perhaps the most revealing of national sentiment as they saw the saint as a representative of their struggle and their country. If they were unwilling to pledge loyalty to a monarch who, due to their religion they refused to acknowledge, they were still able to express loyalty to their country through devotions and references to its patron saint. Similarly, those living abroad through business ventures or exploration, were able to use the symbolism related to the patron saint to exert their own identity as being English.

⁶⁰⁰ The 'Iles' in question here are in present day West Virginia and not to be confused with St George's Island in Bermuda, also founded in the reign of Elizabeth I. John Smith, *The Generall Historie of Virginia, New England*, (1624), STC (2nd ed.) / 22790.

In terms of St George as a religious figure, it would be wrong to assert that he was secularised during this period. His position as the patron saint of the monarch made it impossible solely on the basis that Elizabeth and James were also Governor of the English church. In a country where the state and church were ruled by one individual, it is implausible to suggest that their saintly standard bearer could be completely secularised. Rather, the way St George and his legend were approached by scholars, reformers, recusants, merchants, labourers, playwrights, poets and explorers all speak to the complexities of religious belief and national identity in the latter half of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

Despite some opposition from more Puritanical Protestants, St George still remained an entrenched presence within the English nation and aided its outward expansion. Through the malleable nature of St George, his figure and legend were easily accessible to a number of different groups within society. For the labouring classes, he was a saint invoked in popular pageants, plays and ballads who represented the bravery of the country through his role as protector. For the merchant class, he was a way through which one could express loyalty to the monarch and continue with past traditions. His legend also acted as an allegory for their increasing wealth and business transactions both at home and abroad. For those who were engaged in business on the European continent, St George proved a way through which they could visually demonstrate their loyalty to their monarch and their country, a way to express their national identity. On the other hand, for recusants, both within England and abroad, St George allowed them to express their loyalty to their country if not their monarch. Furthermore, the saint's legend also gave them solace in terms of having a shared sense of persecution and a need to endure for their loyalty to their faith. At the same time, the appeal of the allegory of good triumphing over evil was also applied by Protestant reformers who accepted St George as a figure of virtue and only disapproved of what they perceived to be superstitious devotional practices which were now eradicated under the new religious settlement.

In terms of the strength of nationhood, St George continued to be a ready trope for the country and its identity. St George's Cross acted as a symbol which allowed England to be perceived, both at home and abroad, as a powerful Christian nation. St George's history and representation as a brave, chivalric, spiritual warrior and patron saint, although altered, did not abate during this period and, if anything, the period saw its expansion beyond England and Europe and into the New World.

Images



Figure 8.1 Engraving of St George in 'Ecclesiae Anglicanae Trophea', 1584



Figure 8.2 First letter from Foxe's Book of Martyrs, 1563



Figure 8.3 Woodcut of the first page of the second volume of Actes and Monuments, c. 1570



Figure 8.4 Woodcut accompanying the ballad 'Of Hector's Deeds did Homer Sing, c. 1596



Figure 8.5 London in 'The Particular Description of England', 1588



Figure 8.6 Panorama of London in 'The Particular Description of England', 1588

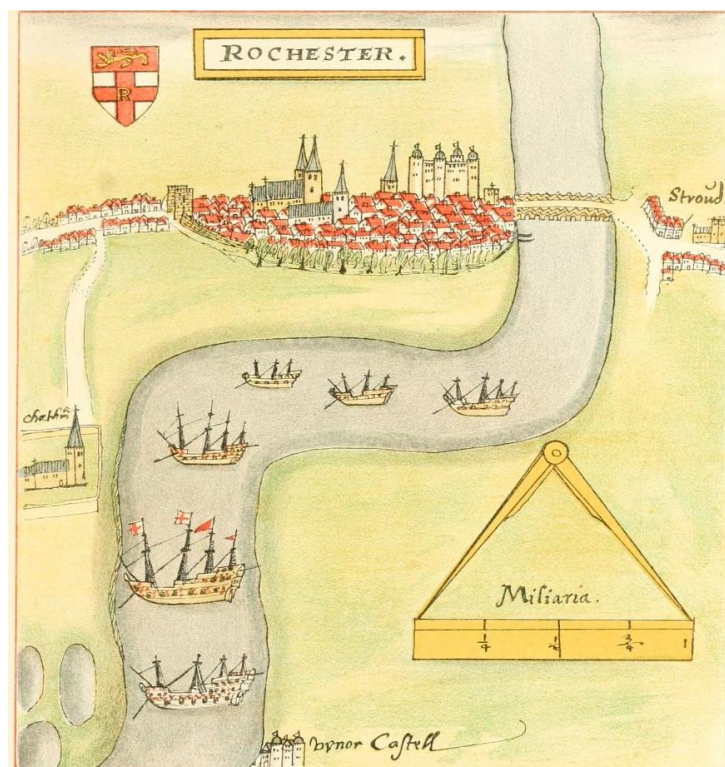


Figure 8.7 Rochester in 'The Particular Description of England', 1588



Figure 8.8 Hieroglyphic from John Dee's *Arte of Navigation*, 1577



Figure 8.9 Augustine Ryther, chart of the Armada's retreat, 1588



Figure 8.10 Triptych of Elizabeth at Tilbury, 1588



Figure 8.11 Woodcut from 'A Dainty new Ditty of a Sailor and his Love', c. 1590s



Figure 8.12 Woodcut from 'When Troy town for ten years' war', c. 1590s

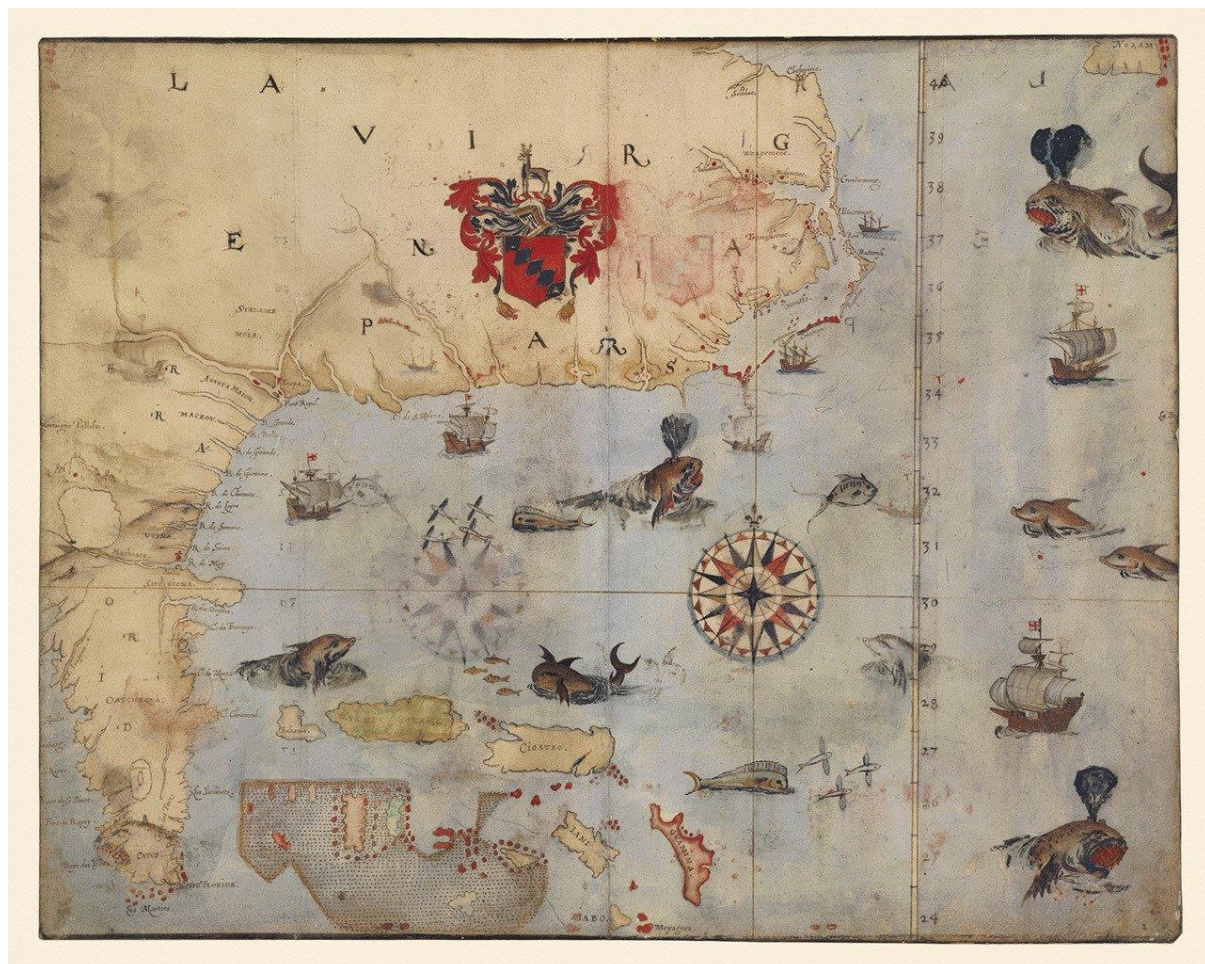


Figure 8.13 John White, Map of Virginia, 1585



Figure 8.14 John White, Drawing of Virginia from his fifth voyage, 1590

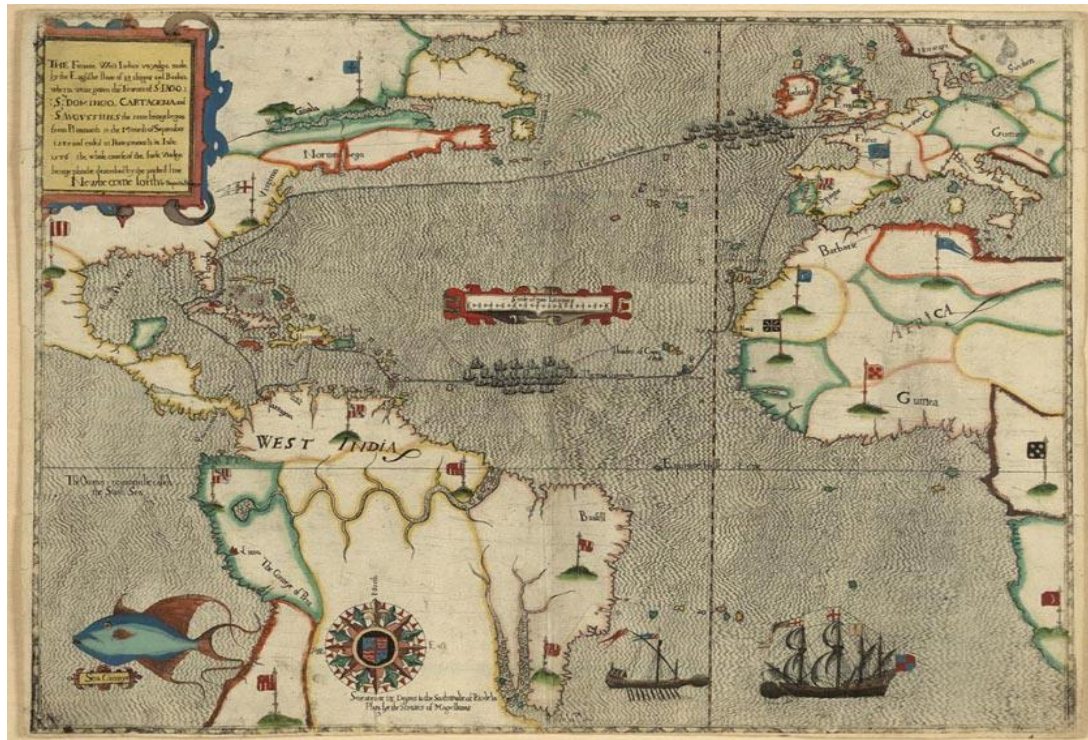


Figure 8.15 Giovanni Battista Boazio, *Drake's West Indian Voyage, 1589*. A map of the route that Drake took, c.1590s

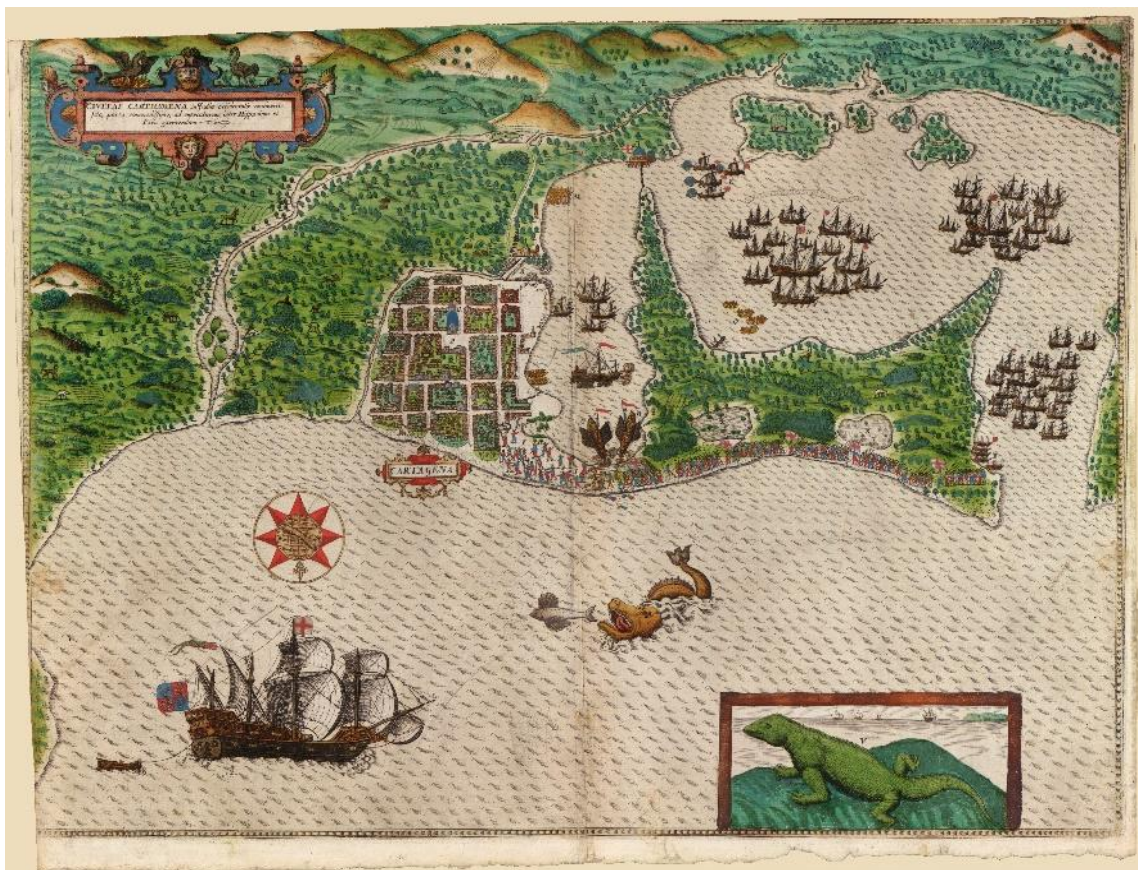


Figure 8.16 Boazio, A map of Cartagena, Colombia with Drake's fleet arriving, c.1590s



Figure 8.17 Boazio, A map of Roanoke, Virginia with Drake's fleet arriving, c.1590s



Figure 8.18 John Smith, copy of a map depicting New England, original 1616

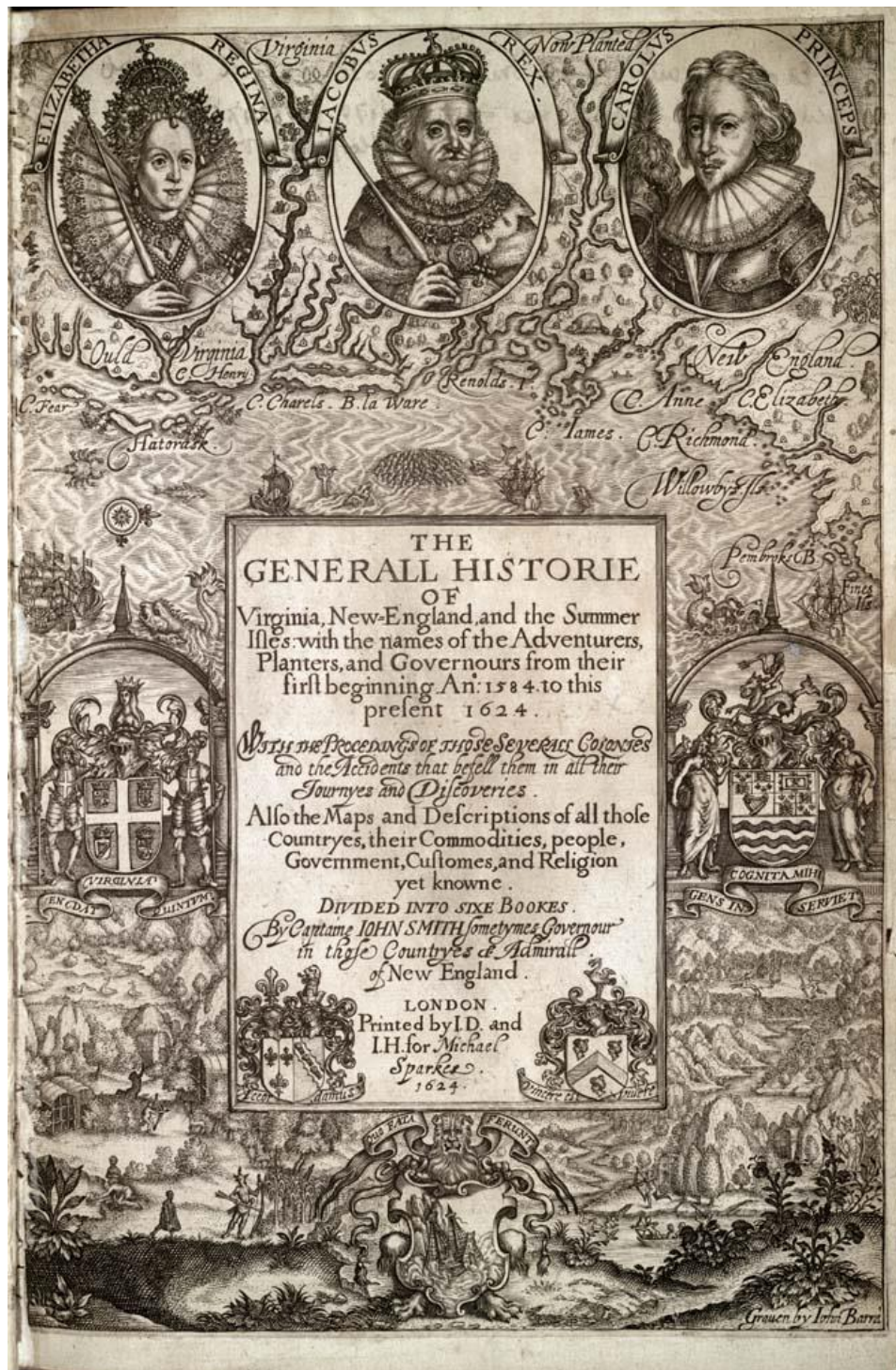


Figure 8.19 Frontispiece of John Smith's *The Generall Historie of Virginia, New England*, London, 1624

9. EPILOGUE: THE LEGACY OF ST GEORGE

In many ways, the controversy surrounding MP Thornbury's tweet stems from similar feelings that were felt by the English in the sixteenth and seventeenth century: St George was their saint who protected them and deserved their protection in return. The fact that he was adopted into the English tradition meant that he and his associated iconography could be interpreted in numerous ways. In the twenty-first century, although his flag is sometimes associated with white British nationalism, at the same time it is hung from windows, buildings and cars whenever there is an international football game, waved during royal weddings, painted on children's faces during summer fetes and is still used by the Scouts for their annual St George Day celebrations. Every year, on the weekend closest to St George's Day, the patron saint helps to headline the Shakespeare birthday celebrations in Stratford-upon-Avon. Due to the happy coincidence of Shakespeare's birthday falling on St George's Day, the town comes alive with processions and parades that take place over the same bridge and streets that the St George ridings occurred almost five hundred years ago. It is still possible to walk a little way up the road and visit the Guild Chapel, where the painting of St George slaying the dragon, hidden during the reign of Edward VI, is due to be uncovered and displayed to the public once again in the early 2020s.⁶⁰¹

St George's entrenchment in English history was constant from the late medieval period. Rather than disappearing to be brought back by the later Stuart monarchs, St George remained and was adapted for the duration of the Long Reformation in England. The medieval period saw St George become a patron and symbol of the monarchy, in part due to this heroic martyrdom and in part due to his chivalric representations, which fit perfectly with the English warrior kings. These attributes equally appealed to the wider populace which explains the cult of St George slowly moving northward from the capital city.

St George also proved useful in anglicising the Welsh Tudor dynasty after the Battle of Bosworth and continued to be used throughout the Henrician Reformation. Henry VIII's affinity with St George led to his iconography, namely the Cross of St George, to proliferate. Rather than disappearing with the cult of the saints, St George continued to thrive and devotions to him became one way his subjects could demonstrate loyalty to their monarch. This was never more apparent than during the Pilgrimage of Grace when St George's Cross became the symbol by which

⁶⁰¹ Chris Smith, 'Work starts to uncover historic Guild Chapel murals' *The Stratford Herald*, 17 October, 2016 <http://www.stratford-herald.com/60042-work-starts-onto-uncover-historic-guild-chapel-murals.html>, (Date accessed: 20 August, 2018).

households showed their acquiesce to the king's religious changes and the Cross of St Cuthbert was abandoned by all but the staunchest rebels.

At the same time, Henry also styled himself as his own version of St George, the brave protector who was determined to rescue his people and kingdom from the tyrannical and serpentine church in Rome. The legend of St George acted as a perfect allegory for how the king wished to be perceived.

Although Edward VI and his councillors had a completely opposite view on St George, they were ultimately unwilling or unable to remove him completely from the fabric of English tradition both at court and further afield. Whilst large processions or St George ridings stopped, evidence suggests that St George still served as a relevant metaphor for morality. Edward also did little to alter the Garter ceremonies, of which St George was now sole patron. Although the iconography on the Great and Lesser George medallions were said to no longer represent the saint, the figure remained unchanged thereby leading one to question to what extent people relinquished references to St George.

This question gains more momentum when exploring the reign of Mary I and her attempt at a Counter Reformation. Devotional practices to the saint resumed in some areas whilst Protestant reformers continued to appropriate St George for their cause. There also appeared to be very few changes required to reinstate St George as the patron of the ancient Order of the Garter. What did differ, however, was the monarch's relationship to St George. As the first crowned queen of England, Mary did not choose to engage with the saint on a personal level, instead invoking the saint's chivalric representations and using him to anglicise her Spanish consort, in the same vein as her grandfather after usurping the throne from Richard III.

In direct juxtaposition to this is the reign of Elizabeth I, who despite being a female, reclaimed the tradition of St George for herself. Rather than side-lining the patron saint, the Elizabethan age saw a proliferation of St George across the social strata. At the court, Elizabeth raised the profile of the Order of the Garter with her courtiers and increased the pomp of the regalia associated with the Order. She also altered the Garter Statues so that the monarch was the focal point of the festivities, it was no longer mandatory to hold the ceremonies at the Chapel of St George, Windsor thereby ensuring that they would not be delayed by the monarch's absence from the location. By doing this, Elizabeth reinforced her authority with her courtiers. Elizabeth also copied the representations of her father and St George insofar as she was able. By mimicking certain portraits of her father with allusions to the patron saint, both Elizabeth and Protestant reformers were able to show that the queen was following in the tradition of her father, the initial

great Protestant reformer. This fitted well with their desired narrative of the English Reformation and St George assisted in these efforts.

In addition to religious reformers, popular poems, plays, ballads and woodcuts all show links between St George and Elizabeth. With England becoming more established as a Protestant power on the European stage, the Cross of St George also began to represent the idea of an English nation more and more. At a time when the image of the cross came under assault from the most ardent Protestant reformers, the Cross of St George remained in use with its original, religious connotations. Cartography from the period demonstrates that the English flag, the cross, was used both at home and abroad to demarcate England and areas they had researched during their exploration.

The symbol of the Cross of St George became all the more important with the accession of James I of England to the throne in 1603. As the king of Scotland, St James used references to St George to ameliorate his arrival in England with his new subjects. His ultimate abandonment of the idea of 'Great Britain' shows that both the England and Scottish nations wished to remain distinct kingdoms, despite sharing a monarch. The further expansion and settlement during the Jacobean period also saw the establishment of St George in the New World, both with the use of his flag and the naming of key settlements after the homeland's patron saint.

Rather than disappearing during the Long Reformation and waiting in the wings to be brought back by the later Stuart monarchs, St George played an integral role during the reigns of the Tudors and early Stuart monarchs. The irony of a foreign saint becoming the patron saint of England was ignored and the figure was adopted, adapted and appropriated by people in all levels of society and walks of life. St George also retained his religious image and did not become secular during this period. His role in the story of the Reformation cannot and should not be understated. St George's legend of being a brave and chivalric warrior and protector encapsulated the ideals of an emerging English nation during this tumultuous era in its history, the legacy of which can still be seen today. This all-important construct is perhaps best, if not ironically, summed up in Shakespeare's *Richard III*:

Advance our standards. Set upon our foes.

Our ancient word of courage, fair Saint George,

Inspire us with the spleen of fiery dragons.

Upon them! Victory sits on our helms.

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