

Spiritual Science



Deep Dive Article

The Arthur Stream

Adapted from Free Man Creator, https://anthroposophy.eu/Arthur_stream

Introduction



The Order of King Arthur, a high initiate, was founded around the 9th century on instructions of Merlin, and was a Mystery Center representing the Northern stream (see [Christ Impulse - meeting of two streams#Southern and Northern streams](#)). They represent an esoteric order in the tradition of pagan christianity, to find Christ in nature and the elemental forces of nature (1924-09-10-GA238), in the age of the sentient soul (1913-02-07-GA144), but also had a task to cultivate and civilise Europe in a spiritually difficult times.

Near the village of Tintagel, on the Atlantic coast of Cornwall in England, one can still find the remains of Tintagel Castle associated with the Arthurian legends of King Arthur and the twelve knights of his Round Table.

Overview

- The Knights of King Arthur's Round Table
 - They were a humanized representation on Earth of cosmos and the transit of cosmic influences through the zodiac signs: the inspirations from the twelve directions of the Zodiac flowed into the twelve Knights. The inspirations which came from the spiritual forces of the Sun and Moon were represented by King Arthur and his wife Guinevere. (1913-02-07-GA144)
 - They received inspiration from the workings of the Sun through the elemental spirits of light and air, water and earth (1924-09-10-GA238)
- King Arthur's Round Table was like a the pedagogical high school for the Sentient Soul of the West (1913-02-07-GA144)
- Historicity:
 - The first written copy of the story remaining today is the version by Geoffrey of Monmouth dated around 1130s. It states that Tintagel Castle was the site of Arthur's conception, founded in that region by the instructions of Merlin. Most elements in the Arthurian story appear in Geoffrey's Historia, including Arthur's

father Uther Pendragon, the magician Merlin, Arthur's wife Guinevere, the sword Excalibur, Arthur's conception at Tintagel, his final battle against Mordred at Camlann, and final rest in Avalon.

- Historical Time Period:
 - W.J. Stein did an extensive study and dates King Arthur around the year 1000 and puts him at a time of founding the cities and establishing a stable structure in the English nation.
- Individualities:
 - King Arthur was a high initiate that made known the secrets of the Mysteries to his pupils (1909-08-27-GA266/1)

It was the task of the Order of King Arthur to cultivate and civilise Europe at a time when all Europe in its spiritual life stood under the influence of the strangest elemental beings.

Background

The first written copy of the story is the 12th century *Historia Regum Britanniae* (History of the Kings of Britain, written around 1132-35) by Geoffrey of Monmouth (ca 1095-ca1155). It chronicles the lives of the kings of the Britons over the course of two thousand years, beginning with the Trojans founding the British nation and continuing until the Anglo-Saxons assumed control of much of Britain around the 7th century.

The Arthurian legend knew a revival in the 15th century, see Sir Thomas Malory's book 'Morted'Arthur' (written by 1469 and published as one of the first books by then-modern printing in 1485). This book was republished in 3 volumes after extensive research by H.O. Sommer in 1889-91.

Background info, adapted from wikipedia:

The Matter of Britain is the body of Medieval literature and legendary material associated with Great Britain and Brittany, and the legendary kings and heroes associated with it,

particularly King Arthur. Arthur is a central figure in the legends making up the Matter of Britain. The legendary Arthur developed as a figure of international interest largely through the popularity of Geoffrey of Monmouth's Historia Regum Britanniae. In some Welsh and Breton tales and poems that date from before this work, Arthur appears either as a great warrior defending Britain from human and supernatural enemies or as a magical figure.

A second (Latin) work by Geoffrey of Monmouth that circulated from about 1130-1135 is the 'Prophetiae Merlini' or 'Libellus Merlini'. The work contains a number of prophecies attributed to Merlin, the wizard of legend, whose mythical life is regarded as created by Geoffrey himself although Geoffrey himself claims to have based on older Brittonic traditions some of which may have been oral but now lost. The Prophetiae preceded Geoffrey's larger Historia Regum Britanniae of c. 1136, and was mostly incorporated in it, in Book VII; the prophecies, however, were influential and widely circulated in their own right.

Furthermore there is also 'Vita Merlini' (The Life of Merlin), a Latin poem written around the year 1150. Though doubts have in the past been raised about its authorship it is now widely believed to be by Geoffrey of Monmouth. It tells the story of Merlin's madness, his life as a wild man of the woods, and his prophecies and conversations with his sister and the poet Taliesin.

Although the themes, events and characters of the Arthurian legend varied widely from text to text, Geoffrey's version of events often served as the starting point for later stories. Geoffrey depicted Arthur as a king of Britain who defeated the Saxons and established a vast empire. Many elements and incidents that are now an integral part of the Arthurian story appear in Geoffrey's Historia, including Arthur's father Uther Pendragon, the magician Merlin, Arthur's wife Guinevere, the sword Excalibur, Arthur's conception at Tintagel, his final battle against Mordred at Camlann, and final rest in Avalon.

The 12th-century French writer Chr  tien de Troyes, who added Lancelot and the Holy Grail to the story, began the genre of Arthurian romance that became a significant strand of medieval literature. In these French stories, the narrative focus often shifts from King Arthur himself to other characters, such as various Knights of the Round Table.

Steiner Lectures

Mysteries have existed in all ages. In the mysteries, man received a knowledge that was at the same time religion, and he received a religion that was at the same time wisdom.

It is impossible to have a correct conception of a mystery if one has no conception of a spiritual world. We are surrounded here by the various kingdoms of nature; minerals, plants, animals and human beings. We regard the human kingdom as the highest of the four. But now just as man has thus around him kingdoms that are lower than himself, so has he above him higher beings in many stages. The beings that stand at different stages higher than man have from time immemorial been designated as "Gods." The kind of wisdom imparted to man in the mysteries enabled him to hold conscious intercourse with the Gods. He was then called an initiate. Such an initiate possessed no mere wisdom of words; he had, in the mysteries, experienced facts. Even still today there are mysteries, although they are of another kind than those of olden or medieval times.

At the time when the Crusades were beginning, and even a little before, we find in a district in the North of Spain an important mystery. The mysteries that were still extant in that time have generally been known as the later Gothic Mysteries. Those who were initiated were called the Templars, or the Knights of the Holy Grail. Lohengrin was one of these. The Order of the Knights of the Grail had a different significance

from another order or brotherhood which had its location in England and Wales; all the stories that are told of King Arthur and his Round Table relate to this other order of initiation.

...

It was known in the Mysteries that what streams upwards in the Chalice of the Flower lives also in the blood of man. The blood needs, however, to be made clean and pure again, it must be as chaste as the sap that flows in the blossom. And in these Mysteries that had become depraved, this was brought to expression in a gross and materialistic manner. (In Northern Europe sublimated blood was used as a symbol, and in the Eleusinian mysteries were the wine of Dionysus and the blood of Demeter.) The Vessel of the Grail turned into an abomination by being made to hold within it the bleeding head — this we find again in the story of Herodias who uses for the head of John the Baptist, making mock in this way of the Mysteries. The essential secret of the high mysteries passed into the hands of Templars in Northern Spain, the Guardians of the Grail.

*While the Knights of King Arthur concerned themselves rather with the events and affairs of this world, The Templars were able to be prepared to receive a still more sublime Mystery — even to understand **the Great Mystery of Golgotha, which is the secret of the history of the world.***

Parsifal, GA97 (a must read)

In the dawn of the fifth epoch, accordingly, there were persons who, not exactly through their training but through certain mysterious influences, became the instruments, the vehicles, of cosmic influences issuing from the Sun and Moon during their passage through the signs of the Zodiac. The secrets that could then be won for the human soul through these individuals were a repetition of what had once been experienced through the Sentient Soul.

*And **the persons who expressed the transit of the cosmic forces through the signs of the Zodiac were those called 'The Knights of King Arthur's Round Table'**. Twelve in number, they had around them a band of other men, but they were the principal Knights. The others represented the starry host; into them flowed the inspirations which were more distantly distributed in cosmic space; and **into the twelve Knights flowed the inspirations from the twelve directions of the Zodiac**. The inspirations which came from the spiritual forces of the Sun and Moon were represented by King Arthur and his wife Guinevere.*

*Thus in King Arthur's Round Table we have the humanised Cosmos. What we may call **the pedagogical high school for the Sentient Soul of the West proceeded from King Arthur's Round Table**. Hence we are told - and the legend here refers in pictures of external facts to inner mysteries which were taking place in the dawn of that epoch in the human soul - how the Knights of King Arthur's Round Table journeyed far and wide and slew monsters and giants. These external pictures point to the endeavours of human souls who were to make progress in refining and purifying those forces of the astral body which expressed themselves for the seer in pictures of monsters, giants and the like. Everything that the Sentient Soul was to experience through the later Mysteries is bound up with the pictorial concepts of King Arthur's Round Table*

The Mysteries of the East and of Christianity, GA144

*And so on the one hand we have **the story of the Mystery of Golgotha, legible in the Book of Nature** for those who were able to read it, **working from West to East**. It represented, as it were, the science of the higher graduates of **King Arthur's Round Table**.*

And on the other hand we have a stream flowing from East to West, not in wind and wave, in air and water, not over hills or in the rays of the Sun, but flowing through the blood, laying

hold of the hearts of men on its course from Palestine through Greece into Italy and Spain.

*The one stream flows through nature; the other through the blood and the hearts of men. These two streams flow to meet one another. The pagan stream is still working, even to-day. It bears the pre-Christian Christ, the Christ Who was proclaimed as a Sun Being by those who were Knights of the Round Table, but also by many others before the Mystery of Golgotha actually took place. The pre-Christian Christ was carried through the world by this stream even in the age of the Mystery of Golgotha. And a great deal of this wisdom was carried forth into the world by the stream known as that of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table. It is possible, even today, to discover these things. **There is a pagan Christianity, a Christianity that is not directly bound up with the actual historical Event of Golgotha.***

And coming upwards to meet this stream there is the form of Christianity that is connected directly with the Mystery of Golgotha, flowing through the blood, through the hearts and souls of men. Two streams come to meet one another — the pre-Christian Christ stream, etherealised as it were, and the Christian Christ stream. The one is known, subsequently, as the Arthur stream; the other as the Grail stream. Later on they came together; they came together in Europe, above all in the spiritual world.

How can we describe this movement? The Christ Who descended through the Mystery of Golgotha drew into the hearts of men. In the hearts of men He passed from East to West, from Palestine, through Greece, across Italy and Spain. The Christianity of the Grail spread through the blood and the hearts of men. The Christ took His way from East to West.

And to meet Him from the West there came the spiritual etheric Image of the Christ — the Image evoked by the Mystery of Golgotha, but still picturing the Christ of the Sun Mysteries.

Behind the scenes of world-history, sublime and wonderful events were taking place. From the West came pagan Christianity, the Arthur-Christianity, also under other names and in another form. From the East came the Christ in the hearts of men. And then the meeting takes place — the meeting between the Christ Who had Himself come down to earth and His Own Image which is brought to Him from West to East. This meeting took place in the year 869 A.D. Up to that year we have two streams, clearly distinct from one another. The one stream, more in the North, passed across Central Europe and bore the Christ as a Sun Hero, whether the name were Baldur or some other. And under the banner of Christ, the Sun Hero, the Knights of Arthur spread their culture abroad.

...

When we consider this significant Arthur stream from West to East, it appears to us as the stream which brings the Impulse of the Sun into earthly civilisation. In this Arthur stream is working and weaving the Michael stream as we may call it in Christian terminology, the stream in the spiritual life of humanity in which we have been living since the end of the seventies of last century. The Ruling Power, known by the name of Gabriel, who had held sway for three or four centuries in European civilisation, was succeeded at the end of the seventies of last century by Michael. And the Rulership of Michael will last for three to four centuries, weaving and working in the spiritual life of mankind. And so we have good cause at the present time to speak of the Michael streams, for we ourselves are living once again in an Age of Michael.

*We find one of these Michael streams if we look back to the period immediately preceding that of the Mystery of Golgotha, to the Arthur Impulse going out from the West, from England, **an Impulse which was kindled originally by the Hibernian Mysteries.***

And we find a still more ancient form of this Michael stream if we look back to what happened centuries before the Mystery of Golgotha, when, taking its start from Northern Greece, in Macedonia, the international, cosmopolitan stream connected

with the name of Alexander the Great arose under the influence of the conception of the world that is known as the Aristotelian. What was achieved through Aristotle and Alexander in that pre-Christian age took place under the Rulership of Michael, just as now once again we are living under his Rulership. The Michael Impulse was there in the spiritual life at the time of Alexander the Great, just as it is there now, in our own time. Whenever a Michael Impulse is at work in humanity upon the earth it is always a time when that which has been founded in a centre of spiritual culture spreads abroad among many peoples of the Earth and is carried into many regions, wherever it is possible to carry it.

Cosmic Christianity and the Impulse of Michael, GA240 (an essential lecture, read in full)



During our recent stay in England ... at Torquay in the West of England, not far from the place [Tintagel, North Cornwall] where Arthur was with his followers once upon a time, a result of spiritual research was given to me, pointing to a belated working of this kind in a pre-Christian Christianity. For at this place it had indeed been preserved into a far later time.

*The **content of the King Arthur Legend** referred to later times by a scholarship which is not at all scholarly in respect of the real facts, reaches back in reality into a very early epoch, and it is indeed a deep impression which one may receive when one stands at that place, looking down into the sea, even as once upon a time the Knights of the Round Table looked out upon the sea from there. Even today, if one is receptive to these things, one receives a very real impression which tells one what it was that the Knights of the Round Table of King Arthur did in their gigantic castle. The last relics of the castle, the crumbling stones, the latest witnesses to its existence, stand there to this day. Gigantic is the impression of this place of ruins, entirely broken down as it is, and from there one looks out into the ocean.*

*It is a mountainous promontory with the sea on either side. The weather changes almost hour by hour. We look out into the sea and watch the glittering sunshine reflected in the water. Then the next moment there is wind and tempest. Looking with occult vision at what takes place there to this day, we receive a magnificent impression. **There live and weave the elemental spirits evolving out of the activities of the light and air**, and of the foaming waves of the sea that turn and beat upon the shore. The life and movement and interplay of these elemental spirits **gives even today a vivid and direct impression of how the sun works in its own nature in the earth, and meets with that which grows forth from the earth below by way of powers and spirits of the Elements.***

*There we receive even today the impression: **such was the immediate original source of inspiration of the twelve who belonged to King Arthur.** We see them standing there, these Knights of the Round Table, **watching the play***

of the powers of light and air, water and earth, the elemental spirits. We see too how **these elemental spirits were messengers to them**, bringing to them the messages from sun and moon and stars which entered into the impulses of their work, especially in the more ancient time. And much of this was preserved through the centuries of the post-Christian time, even into the 9th century of which I was just speaking.

It was the task of the Order of King Arthur, **founded in that region by the instructions of Merlin**, to cultivate and civilise Europe at a time when all Europe in its spiritual life stood under the influence of the strangest elemental beings. More than will be believed today, the ancient life of Europe needs to be comprehended in this sense. We must see in it on all hands the working of elementary spiritual beings, right into the life of man.

The Arthurian life goes back into pre-Christian times, and before the Gospel came there, even in its oldest forms, there lived in it the knowledge, at any rate the practical instinctive knowledge of Christ as the Sun Spirit, before the Mystery of Golgotha. And in all that the Knights of the Round Table of King Arthur did, this same Cosmic Christ was living, the Christ who though not under the name of Christ, was also living in the impetus with which Alexander the Great had carried the Grecian culture and spiritual life into Asia. There were, so to speak, later 'campaigns of Alexander' undertaken by the Knights of the Round Table of King Arthur into Europe, even as the real campaigns of Alexander had gone from Macedonia to Asia.

I mention this as an example, which could be investigated in the most recent times, to show how the worship of the sun, that is to say, the ancient worship of the Christ, was cultivated in such a place, though needless to say it was the Christ as He was for men before the Mystery of Golgotha. There all things were cosmic, even to the transition of the cosmos into the earthly Elements, the elemental spirits who lived in light and air and water and in the earth, for even in these there lived the cosmic forces. It was not possible at that time in the knowledge of these Elements to deny the cosmic principle that

they contained. Thus even in the 9th century, in the paganism of Europe, there still lived much of the pre-Christian Christianity. That is the remarkable fact. Moreover even in that time the belated followers of European paganism understood the Cosmic Christ far more worthily and truly than those who received the Christ in the Christianity that was spread officially under that name. Strangely we can see the life around King Arthur radiate into the present time, continued even into our time, placed into the immediate present by the sudden power of destiny. Thus I beheld in seership a member of the Round Table of King Arthur, who lived the life of the Round Table in a very deep and intense way, though he stood a little aside from the others who were given more to the adventures of their knighthood. This was a knight who lived a rather contemplative life, though it was not like the Knighthood of the Grail, for this did not exist in Arthur's circle. What the knights did in the fulfilment of their tasks, which in accordance with that age were for the most part warlike campaigns, was called by the name 'Adventure' (Aventure). But there was one who stood out from among the others as I saw him, revealing a life truly wonderful in its inspiration. For we must imagine the knights going out on to the spur of land, seeing the wonderful play of clouds above, the waves beneath, the surging interplay of the one and the other, which gives a mighty and majestic impression to this very day. In all this they saw the Spiritual and were inspired with it, and this gave them their strength. But there was one among them who penetrated most deeply into this surging and foaming of the waves, with the spiritual beings wildly rising in the foam with their figures grotesque to earthly sight. He had a wonderful perception of the way in which the marvellously pure sun-influence played into the rest of nature, living and weaving in the spiritual life and movement of the surface of the ocean. He saw what lived in the light nature of the sun, borne up as it were by the watery atmosphere as we can see to this day, the sunlight approaching the trees and the spaces between the trees quite differently than in other regions, glittering back from between the trees, and playing often as in rainbow colours. Such a knight there was among them, one who had a peculiarly penetrating vision of these things. I was much concerned to follow his life into later time to see the

individuality again. For just in this case something would needs enter into a later incarnation of a Christian life that was almost primitive and pagan, that was Christian only to the extent that I have just described. And this in fact was what appeared, for that Knight of the Round Table of King Arthur was born again as Arnold Böcklin. This riddle which had followed me for an immensely long time, can only be solved in connection with the Round Table of King Arthur.

Karmic Relationships IV, Lecture III, GA238



Gunther Wachsmuth in: 'The Life and Work of Rudolf Steiner' on his visit to Tintagel and King Arthur's Castle:

On an unforgettable day Rudolf Steiner went with us to the place on the Rocky western coast of Cornwall, Tintagel, where the castle of King Arthur had once stood, where he and the Knights of the Round Table carried on their battle for victory against evil and to rescue the impulse of esoteric Christianity and the current of the grail for a new Epoch. That strangely densified spiritual atmosphere we shall never forget, so intensely felt as Rudolf Steiner climbed the strange projecting cliff on the lonely Coast of Cornwall where the last walls of the castle of King Arthur towered over the Roaring sea. The unceasing struggle of the Sun forces against the clouds and fog rising from the sea surrounded the cliffs and the castle with an atmosphere of an eternal Elemental battle

He spoke their standing on the cliff, about the experiences of the Knights of King Arthur, who experience in this external struggle of the forces of light with the elements of the earth a reflection of their own inner battles, where in the realm of soul and spirit light and darkness battle for the mastery, of the I-force, the illuminated consciousness of Man, strives to achieve in ceaseless battle mastery over the clouds and fog of passions.

He spoke of the teaching of Merlin, which was there fostered, of the service to the spiritual sun practice by Arthur's circle and their knowledge of the cosmic deed of Christ.

As he then surveyed on the highest point of the cliff the remains of the walls of the ancient castle, which indicated the structure of the mystery place of King Arthur and it's external lines, the past became present to him in his spiritual vision, and he described to us in living pictures pointing with his hand to the various parts of the castle where the Hall of the Round Table had once been, the rooms of the king and his Knights. The immediacy of the spiritual vision in this place was so intense that, during his descriptions, the entire reality, the external life and action, the inner willing and achievement of the circle of King Arthur's knights, stood before us as actual experience.

That such an occurrence is in our time actually possible making the past livingly present through spiritual vision and the resulting real union of present experience and will with a spiritual stream of a past age, this fact gave to those hours on the cliff of Arthur's castle in Tintagel the sacred character of a deed which is inscribed in the annals of history.

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