St George and the Dragon

St George is famous for the legendary killing of the dragon and as the patron saint of England. He is also the patron saint of soldiers, boy-scouts and titular saint of numerous churches throughout the world. He was one of the most famous of the early martyrs, and his reputation is still alive, especially in the east. No historical particulars of his life have survived; and such are the vagaries of his legend that earnest endeavours have been made to prove that he never existed, or that he was somebody else, or that he represents a Christianised version of one or other of the pagan myths. Veneration for St George as a soldier saint was widespread from early times, and its centre was in Palestine, at Diospolis, now Lydda. St George was probably martyred there, at the end of the third or beginning of the fourth century. That is all that can be reasonable surmised about him; as early as the beginning of the sixth century he was referred to as a good man ‘whose deeds are known only to God.’

Legends of St George exist in a large variety of forms, and the story popularised by the book called the Golden Legend in the later middle ages represents him as a ‘knight’ from Cappadocia, who at Silene in Libya rescued a maiden from a dragon, which led to the baptism of thousands of people. Then, after a number of crude miraculous happenings, George fell a victim to Diocletian’s persecution, and was tortured and beheaded at Nicomedia for his Christian faith. The thing everybody knows about St George, the killing of the dragon, has been much used in the efforts to show that the saint was no more than a myth; it is therefore of importance that this incident does not figure in any of the earlier versions of the legend; it was a late medieval addition.

How St George came to be adopted as the protector of England is not altogether clear. His name was known in England (and Ireland) long before the Norman conquest, and it is probable that returning crusaders did much to establish his popularity. He may have been named the national patron when King Edward III founded the order of the Garter under his patronage, c 1348. In 1415 his day was made the festival of the highest rank in England. The badge embodied in St. George’s flag, a red cross on a white ground, was known in the fourteenth century, and perhaps earlier. St George as an embodiment of spiritual qualities of nobility, courage and strength have long been accepted. As a symbol for Englishness it is a challenge, but all that is most noble about the English can be summed up in the symbology. Traditionally the image of the English as being tolerant, rooted in tradition and honourable is one that is recognised by many – even if modern society has allowed the yob culture to influence our thinking and behaviour, the underlying response to the archetypal image is strong.

St George is one of many heroes whose tales come down to us in myth and legend: a courageous hero who rescues maidens in distress, or saves her from the dragon who demands
her life to save the many. He battles against the enemies of the country within and without. Now this fighting to destroy the evil forces would appear to be contrary to the teaching of the Master Jeshu to love your enemies. What has to be learned is that by directing the powerful energy of Ultimate Love towards the “enemy”, the enemy turns out to be a non-entity, therefore nobody gets hurt. In truth we learn that all there is, is the reality which never can be destroyed.

Now let us look in more depth at this legend of St. George and the Dragon and its meaning. As previously stated, the historical story of St George is shrouded in mystery but according to the Christian version, in 303 A.D. George, who was a high ranking officer in the Roman army, dared to protest to and rebuke Diocletian, the Roman Emperor, for his persecution of the Christians. Diocletian banished George to Asia Minor and because he continued his protests, was put to death, and he was eventually canonised at a time when the Church was flourishing and triumphant. However, since then the story of St George seems to have been involved with that of Perseus the Greek hero who, some centuries BC, arrived in Lydia to rescue Andromeda the maiden being attacked by the sea-monster. It must be remembered that all religions, including the Greek, took many of their myths and legends from those of previous civilisations; therefore, in this light it is conjecture as to whether St. George ever really lived.

The various myths, legends and traditions held by the many nations are symbolical and allegorical, embodying certain fundamental truths that have been carried down through the ages. One nation would take over the entire Pantheon of Gods of another and, by changing their names, accept them for their own. The Old Testament stories are really modified traditional stories taken from Babylonia and accepted by the Jews as their own history. The Greeks accepted the myths and legends of the lost Atlanteans, as has been clearly shown in Ignatius Donnelly’s *Atlantis*. Jesus, Jason, Joseph, Mithra, Orpheus, etc. were all originally the hero-gods of various nations. St. George must also be included in this type of hero as we shall try to show.

All of the hero-gods were symbolic of the Divine Soul of Man and were given a Divine title, and when the Soul descended into its human tabernacle to teach mankind, the personality was also given another name, for instance: Jesus Christ, Jupiter-Ammon, Osiris-Ra, Horus-Ra, Bacchus-Dionysus, and so on. It simply indicates, for example, that Jesus, the Man, was overshadowed by his Divine Self, the Christos.

All the legends of the guardian angels and race spirits, the gods and the divine heroes, are not merely childish stories. There are facts lying behind them. We shall find that these realities produce a definite effect and teach us a specific lesson down here in the world that we can reach and realise and understand. In the Legend of St. George, when taken as referring to the eternal conflict between the Soul and the false images that menace us and that are to be found in the subconscious mind, we find that this story presents to us a definite form of psychological teaching.
In this conflict, St. George represents the Soul of Man who does battle with the Dragon of the subconscious mind in order to rescue the oppressed human soul on the other side of the river (the ‘river’ in this instance, refers to the emotional stream of energy which divides the conscious mind from the mental vesture.)

In mythology and Roman Catholic legend, the Dragon is representative of the whole host or hierarchy of Demons who beset and tempt man at every turn he makes. These Demons are simply the menacing images created by us in our subconscious mind through our thoughts of fear, resentment, frustration, hatred and feelings of loss. These images may cause us to weep and sigh, but this sighing and weeping is worthless if our sentiments are derived from these demon-images.

When we awaken to the power that these images exert over us, all the artificial impulses will finally return to the place from whence they came namely the Dragon of the subconscious mind. Consequently, as these images are perishable, the sentiments that they excite will duly perish with them. The Dragon with his images will always make the life of the human soul in the body a hell on earth; for as long as we keep perpetuating their life by continually thinking on them. In order to help us eradicate them, we have only to call upon the Soul (St. George) who will grant us true faith that is more powerful than, and superior to, natural light, and which is stronger than all our images of menace. Just as we have misused our faith and imagination to create our tempting demons, so we must learn to use this faith and imagination to dissolve the images, and then accomplish whatever we may desire. These psychological images of menace living in our minds are caused by the emotional currents set into motion by our wrong thinking. Thus, the emotional currents created by the imagination of a disturbed mind will produce certain states in man as the Soul, and will affect the external man. We can, however, by right thinking, change these emotional currents and thereby destroy the demons that reside therein.

Thus the story of St George and the Dragon describes to us how we can call upon the Power of the Soul with faith and imagination to slay the Dragon and its images of menace. Let us give a few examples of how our faith can dissolve these awful and distressing conditions.

A woman who is in love with a man who is already married will create her images of menace by brooding, worrying and being anxious for her love. Once the images have been formed, they will seek to perpetuate this mental condition causing sickness, nervous tension, a diseased blood stream and a feeling of hopelessness. The cure for this situation is this: If she has faith in herself and in her Divine Soul, stops thinking about her condition and has the patience to wait, she will dissolve the tempting demons in her mind which will allow the body to correct itself.

The man who cannot hold a position of employment for very long has turned his emotional current into avenues of short-lived activity causing them to form into images of menace which will prevent him from working. The cure for this is also simple. He must turn the emotional currents into faith and imagination that he will stay at his position and work with it. The chopping and changing of jobs is derived from the images. He must ignore any
emotional feeling of wanting to escape, and be determined that he will stay and make a success of his position.

In these cases described above, we can see that it was doubt which caused these people to destroy their faith in themselves. What they have done is to throw the power of themselves away to the images that have turned this power against them. It is the faith in ourselves and in the God within ourselves that renders us strong and thus able to destroy the Dragon of the subconscious mind. The prize we seek is the Divine Soul, comely and full of all that is beautiful. And so we put on the Armour of Faith, gird ourselves with the Sword of Imagination and then go forth within ourselves to kill the Dragon of the animal nature.

The more we dwell upon our supposed misfortunes, the more strength we give to the Dragon of our animal nature, and it will devour our every good thought. However, once we bring ourselves to stop pandering to the effects of the images, they will shrink and die for we have refused to feed them with our vital energy. Think on these things, and if you feel that you have an unwanted image of menace, then you will know what to do about it.

It is obvious therefore from the preceding explanation of the legend of St. George and the Dragon that everyone has responsibility for themselves, their misfortunes as well as their fortune and well-being. It is as we begin to understand ourselves and take responsibility for our inner life, thinking and feeling, that we can overcome the difficulties encountered in our daily life. Once we can accept the situations in which we find ourselves, we are then able to do something about it. The development of a strong will and implementing this through our imagination to bring about a positive outcome according to the guidance from within our own consciousness, we find that we learn how the forces within man work and are able to direct our path. This then enables us to see more clearly to be of assistance to others and help them with their demons, or dragons. It is not necessary to believe in ‘God’ but rather a faith in the life force itself as manifesting in the Soul of Man, this then enables one to speak with confidence when seeking to help one’s self, as well as others, to bring about a harmonious and just society.

The life of a knight or dame is one of self-development, refinement and of service to those who are less fortunate. Chivalric Orders, especially in Europe, are concerned with maintaining and protecting the Christian Faith, however the Order of St. Michael and St. Raphael accepts the concept of a universal religion, therefore it is in position to accept members from other religions, or none, who support the ideals and standards of conduct within The Order, as well as maintaining a deep interest in teaching the ideals of right thinking, right living, and right action, without thought of remuneration.

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**Exercise:** In the light of the above article, can you identify any ‘dragons’ that are preventing your from fulfilling your path in life by engender fear, worry, doubt, etc. If you have one of these images menacing you, think carefully about the qualities of character that are required to overcome this difficulty. Make a record of your findings and then formulate a positive affirmation that encompasses the situation free from all hindrances – acknowledge the Divine Soul within seeking its direction and strength. Then trusting in your inner guidance, conscientiously work to bring your mind under control and think only on the positive outcome. Don’t be impatient but persist and you will find the way clearing for you to fulfil your aspirations.