

## Durham E-Theses

---

### *The Saint George legend in England up to the seventeenth century*

Newman, Timothy George

#### How to cite:

---

Newman, Timothy George (1966) *The Saint George legend in England up to the seventeenth century*, Durham theses, Durham University. Available at Durham E-Theses Online:  
<http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/9815/>

#### Use policy

---

The full-text may be used and/or reproduced, and given to third parties in any format or medium, without prior permission or charge, for personal research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes provided that:

- a full bibliographic reference is made to the original source
- a [link](#) is made to the metadata record in Durham E-Theses
- the full-text is not changed in any way

The full-text must not be sold in any format or medium without the formal permission of the copyright holders.

Please consult the [full Durham E-Theses policy](#) for further details.

THE SAINT GEORGE LEGEND IN ENGLAND  
UP TO THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS.

TIMOTHY GEORGE NEWMAN.

MARCH 1966.

The copyright of this thesis rests with the author.  
No quotation from it should be published without  
his prior written consent and information derived  
from it should be acknowledged.

	Pages
Introduction.	4 - 5
Chapter I.	6 - 18
The origins of the S. George cult in the Middle East - the legend of his martyrdom - his name was known to the saxons, but his popularity in England is largely due the crusades.	
Chapter II.	19 - 26
The origins of the dragon legend in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries - the increasing popularity of S. George until the beginning of the sixteenth century.	
Chapter III.	27 - 39
The literary treatments of the legend produced by Lydgate and Barclay - their uninspired conservatism contrasted with the freedom shown in the work of Spenser and Johnson.	
Chapter IV.	
The treatment of the S. George legend in Book One of Spenser's <u>Faerie Queene</u> .	
	40 - 69
Chapter V.	70 - 86
Richard Johnson's Treatment of the legend in his <u>Seven Champions of Christendom</u> .	
Chapter VI.	87 - 95
The influence of the S. George legend on Bunyan's <u>Pilgrim's Progress</u> .	
Chapter VII.	96 - 112
The ballads deriving from the S. George legend.	
Chapter VIII.	113 - 143
The Mummers' Play	
Conclusions.	144 - 148

	Pages
Appendix I. Caxton's translation of the S. George legend from the <u>Legenda Aurea</u> .	149 - 155
Appendix II. Spenser's debt to the <u>Revelation</u> of S. John.	156 - 163
Appendix III. A synopsis of the <u>Seven Champions of Christendom</u> in so far as it concerns S. George.	164 - 169
Bibliography.	170 - 179

## INTRODUCTION

The legend of S. George, the patron saint of England, has exerted considerable influence on English imagery and thought, and has been the main inspiration of one of the finest works of English literature, Book One of the Faerie Queene. It has also become, largely as a result of Richard Johnson's Seven Champions of Christendom, so inextricably bound up with popular Romance that S. George is often thought of as a traditional folk-hero.

This influence is the more surprising in that George was not a native English saint. If he ever existed he was a Cappadocian, and he appears to have been virtually unknown in England before the Norman Conquest; yet in 1394 he replaced Edward the Confessor as patron saint, and was universally famous as a dragon-killer. Therefore, before examining the influence of the George-and-Dragon legend in England, it is essential to examine the nature and origin of George's popularity in the land of his birth, and how that popularity was transferred to England.

The legend of S. George, unlike the legends of many other saints, has not remained constant, but since its origin has undergone a constant process of change and development. In order fully to appreciate this process, and in order to discover the relationships between the various branches of the English S. George tradition, it is again useful to look at the original versions of the legend as well as those which have had a more immediate effect on English literature.

2

Thus we need to examine, first, the origins of the S. George cult, secondly the development of the legend in England, and finally, the ways in which the legend has been used and interpreted by English writers. The seventeenth century is a convenient terminating point, for after 1700 the legend was so hackneyed that no writer could make extensive use of it, and only the Mummers continued to take S. George seriously.

## CHAPTER I

Of S. George himself, absolutely nothing is known with any degree of certainty. He has usually been identified, however, with an unnamed martyr mentioned by Eusebius in his history of the Church.<sup>1</sup> This man, says Eusebius, lived in Nicomedia, a city in Bithynia, and suffered in the year 303 A.D., during Diocletian's persecution of the Christians. The only ground for this identification seems to be that this is the only authentic reference to a martyr which can be made to tally with the story of S. George. In view of the dubious nature of this identification, and the fact that even the earliest versions of the S. George legend are manifestly fabulous, the very existence of the saint must be regarded as doubtful.

George was regarded as a Christian martyr as early as the year 346 A.D., however, for he is named as such in an inscription of that year in a ruined church at Ezra, Syria. If he is indeed the man referred to by Eusebius, this is very soon after his death, and it is all the more surprising that there is no reliable record of his martyrdom.

Whatever the origin of the popularity S. George so soon achieved, by the fifth century it rested on an extremely superstitious and uncanonical legend. In 494 A.D. Pope S. Gelasius, in the council of Rome, denounced the Acts of S. George as Apocryphal, saying that George was justly revered by the Church, but that his true deeds were known only to God.<sup>2</sup> The reason for this rejection was that the

1. Eusebius Historia Ecclesiastica Bk. VIII Ch.4.

2. Acta Sanctorum (Antwerp 1643-1867) Aprilis III (1675) Ed. Papenbrock  
P. 101.

traditional story is so ridiculously exaggerated as to be heretical. The compiler of the Acta Sanctorum considered that he had found the legend condemned by Gelasius, in a manuscript known as the Codex Gallicanus, which was later lost for a hundred years, but rediscovered in 1874. There are several other texts of this legend in existence, and these have been carefully compared by John L. Matzke<sup>1</sup>, but perhaps the most readily accessible is a Coptic text translated and published by Ernest A.W. Budge.<sup>2</sup> The substance of it may be given as follows:

Dadianus, king of Persia, decides to persecute the Christians. George, an officer in his army, immediately gives all his money to the poor and confesses his Christian faith. Dadianus orders him to sacrifice to Apollo and Poseidon (sic), but he refuses and curses them instead.

His punishment begins immediately: he is torn to pieces twice, rent with hooks and nails, cast into boiling water, and his head is beaten in with a hammer; but all is to no avail, and he is led back to prison, where a massive column is placed on his chest.

During the night God appears to him, and tells him that he will die four times, and that at the fourth death he will enter paradise.

The next day George again confesses his faith, and is flogged and taken back to prison. Dadianus then sends for the magician, Athanasius, to overcome the magical powers of the saint. He demonstrates his power by causing an ox to split into two equal halves.

1. 'Contributions to the S. George Legend' P.M.L.A. 17 (1902).  
 2. Saint George of Cappadocia. (London 1888). 464-535



George is then led out, and Athanasius gives him two poisonous potions to drink, but they have no ill-effect on him. Athanasius is converted to Christianity by this miracle, and is promptly executed by Dadianus.

On the next day, George is torn to pieces on a wheel covered with sword blades, and the ten pieces are thrown into a well. God and S. Michael then appear in a thunder-storm, and revive him. On seeing him alive again, 3,009 soldiers and one woman are converted to Christianity, and are executed.

George is then submitted to a new series of tortures, during which he is immersed in molten lead, nails are driven into his head, he is hung upside-down over a fire, and is ground to pieces in a bronze bull. He is then led back to prison, and God tells him that he must die twice more.

Magentius, one of Dadianus' governors, next challenges George, saying that if he can change seventy thrones back into trees, he will believe in Christ. When George performs the miracle, however, Magentius attributes it to the power of Hercules.

George is then sawn in two, and the pieces boiled away in a cauldron full of lead and pitch, and the cauldron is buried. God and the angels revive him, and renew the promise of paradise.

George next revives a dead ox for a peasant woman, and then accepts a challenge to revive the dead in a certain tomb. He prays to God, and five men, nine women, and three children come to life, having been dead for over two hundred years. When they have all been baptized into Christianity, they disappear. George is then taken to the house of a poor woman, and causes the gable-fork to grow and bear

fruit. He also cures her nine-year old son of blindness.

After this the torment is again renewed. George is beaten, burnt, and torn with hooks, until he dies, and his body is thrown out to be eaten by the birds. Again, however, he is revived by God and returns to the city, where the sight of him is the means of converting a large number of soldiers to Christianity.

Dadianus gives George another chance to sacrifice to Apollo, and he pretends to agree to the suggestion. Once inside the temple, however, he smashes the statues of Apollo, Hercules, and others, after forcing Apollo to admit that he is a false god. George is immediately taken back to prison, but this latest miracle convinces Alexandra, the Empress, that she must stop worshipping Apollo and profess Christianity instead. Her husband, however, remained stubbornly pagan, and ordered her to be executed. She was suspended by her hair from the branches of a tree and beaten to death.

Dadianus at last pronounces the death penalty on George, who offers up a long prayer in which he asks that those who pray in his name shall find favour in God's eyes. Soon after, George is beheaded, and Dadianus is destroyed in a fire-storm sent from heaven.

The sufferings of S. George lasted seven years, and (says the legend) were faithfully recorded by his servant Pasikrates, who stayed with him throughout that time.

After the condemnation of Gelasius the legend was modified in order to bring it more into line with Christian doctrine. Even so, it is scarcely more plausible than in the original version, which itself never became completely obsolete. The more important modifications,

which became incorporated in all the accepted versions of Western Europe, are as follows:

First, Dadianus becomes Diocletian, thus making the legend tally more closely with the identification of George with Eusebius' martyr of 303 A.D., and giving it the appearance of being historically accurate.

The place of martyrdom, too, is sometimes altered to Nicomedia, again bringing the legend into line with Eusebius, but is more often located at Lydda-Diospolis.

Perhaps the most important of all the modifications is that the nature of the tortures is radically altered, in order to meet the criticisms of Gelasius. The period of torture is reduced from seven years to seven days, bringing it within the bounds of possibility, and no longer does George outrival Christ by dying and reviving three times. The list of tortures remains substantially the same as in the original version, but God renders each torture harmless: in the original, for example, George is cut into ten pieces on a wheel and is then brought back to life, whereas in the revised version it is the wheel that breaks, leaving George unharmed.

.....ooOoo.....

The structure of this earliest known S. George legend is weak in the extreme, and suggests that there must have been a still earlier source for the story, which was lost at a very early date.

As it stands, the legend seems primarily to aim at shocking the reader by recounting an interminable series of tortures. If it is accepted that the basic theme of the legend is an attempt by Dadianus

to make George publicly renounce his faith, then the tortures clearly have a place in the legend, but have come to occupy so great a proportion of it that their purpose has been virtually lost sight of.

There are some possible traces of the original structure to be found in the existing legend; we are told that George was a prominent young army officer, whose apostasy would be useful to Dadianus in influencing his subjects away from Christianity. This impression is reinforced by the fact that Dadianus first asks George to renounce Christianity and sacrifice to Apollo. Only when he refuses to do this is he sent to prison and tortured. The joy expressed by Dadianus when George agrees to go to the temple and sacrifice is surely another remnant of this underlying theme.

Finally there is the anti-climax of George's execution: after tortures sufficient to kill him a hundred times over, he is despatched simply by beheading. What should have been a moment of climax, marking Dadianus' defeat and George's translation to heaven, becomes merely fatuous.

.....ooOoo.....

If there was an original story something like the one suggested, it would serve to explain George's ready and early acceptance as an important Christian martyr. It would also, however, pose some very serious problems. Gelasius, less than two hundred years after George's death, evidently knew nothing of such a story: on the contrary, the legend must have been unacceptable to the Church because of its very form.

If George ever really existed, his story was almost immediately confused with what can only be described as pagan material. It has even been suggested - by Baring-Gould, among others - that S. George is really a pagan god in Christian disguise.<sup>1</sup> There can be no doubt that the death-and-revival motif, in particular, is typical of pre-Christian religious literature. Moreover, it is well-attested that S. George is well known to the Mohammedans, who call him Gherghis, or El Khoudi, and say that he is not dead, but flies round the world occasionally revealing himself to its inhabitants. By the early Mohammedans, says Baring-Gould, Gherghis is identified with the Babylonian and Assyrian god Tammuz, who in turn is normally equated with the Phoenician Adonis, and thus associated with the death-and-revival gods familiar in Classical literature.

Whether S. George is a genuine saint or a faded pre-Christian god, the pagan influence in his legend is unmistakable, and later writers have usually been very careful to forestall criticism by stating that their version is authoritative.

.....ooOoo.....

It was the modified form of the S. George legend which spread throughout Europe during the early middle ages, reaching Britain during the eighth century. It seems to have reached the Celtic church some time before the Saxon, and it is at Iona that his name is first recorded. Adamnan, the ninth abbot (679-704 A.D.), says that in 701 A.D. a certain Arculf, 'episcopus, gente Gallus', brought

1. Sabine Baring-Gould Curious Myths of the Middle Ages. (London 1866). There are a number of other such saints - S. Bridget is a notable example.

news of 'alio confessore Georgius nomine', which seems to indicate that Adamnan had not heard of George before.<sup>1</sup> Arculf, however, does not appear to have told the story of George's martyrdom, but of two miracles which were well known in Constantinople. One concerned a man who thrust at a statue of the saint with his lance, which became embedded in the stone, and the other concerned the enforcement by the saint of a vow made to him. Neither miracle is of particular interest except in so far as it illustrates the reputation enjoyed by the saint - clearly he was not to be trifled with.

Even so, S. George remained a little-known saint in England until the eleventh century. He is mentioned in two Irish martyrologies of the ninth century,<sup>2</sup> but the first English vernacular reference to him is contained in a martyrology which was compiled in Mercia about the year 850 A.D.<sup>3</sup> It is a highly condensed account of the martyrdom which is unusual in that it is taken from the earlier version of the legend.

Other indications of a cult of S. George before the time of Aelfric are few indeed. The tenth century Ritual of the Church of Durham,<sup>4</sup> which is, in effect, a martyrology, briefly refers to him, and an abbey was dedicated to him at Thetford, Norfolk, during the reign of Canute (1016-35), as may have been S. George's church in Southwark.

The martyrologies appear to have been compiled primarily for

1. Adamnan. De locis Sanctis. Ed. D. Meehan. (Dublin 1958) p.111-2.
2. Martyrologies of Oengus and of Tallacht. Henry Bradshaw Society 29 (1905) and 68 (1929)
3. An Old English Martyrology. Ed. G. Herzfeld. E.E.T.S. 116 (1900)
4. Rituale Ecclesiae Dunelmensis. Ed. U. Lindelof. Surtees Society 140. (1927)

monastic use, so that references to S. George in these works cannot be taken as evidence that he was familiar to the general public. Indeed Aelfric (Archbishop of York, 1032-51), the writer of the first vernacular Life of S. George, states clearly in his preface to his collection of saints' lives that the story was previously unknown to people outside the Church:

'Ne secge we nán þincg niwes on þissere gesetnysse  
forþan ðe hit stod gefyrn awriten  
on ledenbocum þeah þe þa læwedan men þæt nyston'.

(We say nothing new in this book, because it has stood written down long since in Latin books, though lay-men knew it not).<sup>1</sup>

Aelfric's story of S. George is a translation of the modified version of the legend, and it is clear from the introduction that the censures of Gelasius were still remembered. Aelfric points out that, although heretics have false stories about S. George, the one he presents is the true one.

It was this poem which first brought the story of S. George within reach of the English layman, but there is no evidence of any increase in his popularity until the time of the Crusades - the English contingent for the first Crusade set out in 1096, some fifty years after Aelfric composed the poem.

.....ooOoo.....

It was the soldiers returning from the Crusades, particularly from the first and the third, who brought a truly popular cult of S. George to England.

1. Aelfric. Lives of the Saints. Ed. W. Skeat. E.E.T.S. 76 (1881).

There were two contributory factors which made George popular with the soldiers: first, he was a soldier himself, and there are not very many soldier-saints; secondly, he was picked out from the other soldier-saints by his immense popularity throughout Asia Minor and the Holy Land, where, of course, most of the fighting took place. The Crusaders were continually faced with reminders of George's popularity and power: in Constantinople there was a splendid church dedicated to him by Constantine, the Bosphorus was known as the 'Bracchium Sancti Georgii', Cappadocia was George's homeland, and there was a great deal of fighting in the neighbourhood of Lydda-Diospolis, which was commonly referred to simply as 'S. George's'.

The soldiers would also hear of many miracles performed by S. George, such as those recounted four hundred years earlier by Arculf, and could scarcely fail to place their faith in his protection. Out of this faith grew numerous legends of his appearance on the Christian side in battle. The following, from an account of the siege of Antioch, is typical:<sup>1</sup>

*'Persuadebantque sibi videre se antiquos martyres, qui olim milites fuissent, quique mortis pretio parassent praemia vitae, Georgium dico et Demetrium, vexillis levatis a partibus montanis accurrere, iacula in hostes in se auxilium vibrantes. Nec diffitendum est affuisse martyres Christianis, sicut quondam angelos Macchabaeis simili duntaxat causa pugnantibus.'*

(And they were persuaded that they saw the martyrs of old, who were once soldiers, and who obtained with the price of

1. William of Malmesbury. De Gestis Regum Anglorum Ed. Stubbs. Rolls Series. 90 Vol II (London 1889)P.420.



death the reward of life, that is, George and Demetrius, rushing down from the direction of the mountains with standards raised, hurling javelins at the enemy and bringing help to the Christians. Nor can it be denied that the Christian martyrs were there, just as once the angels were present in the same way on behalf of the Macchabees when they were fighting).

The Saracens too evidently believed in the supernatural leaders of the Christian army. According to one contemporary report, Pyrrhus, a Saracen general, once asked one of the Christian leaders to tell him about the army in white whose attacks his men could never resist. He was told, and believed, that it was an army of Christian martyrs led by George, Demetrius, and Maurice.<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps the most famous appearance of S. George was on July 15, 1099, when he led the crusaders over the walls into Jerusalem, and it was on this occasion that he is first recorded as wearing the white armour and red cross which later became his banner. The red cross was to cause, later on, during the third crusade, at least one error on the part of the Saracens, for in 1146 the Knights Templars adopted the same white armour and red cross as the uniform of the order. In 1187, in a battle near Nazareth, a Templar who had been fighting very bravely was eventually killed, and the Saracens left the field in great delight, thinking that they had killed S. George.

In view of these miraculous appearances, and his great reputation in the East, it is scarcely surprising that during the third crusade,

1. Itinerarium Regis Ricardi. Ed. Stubbs. Rolls Series 38 (London 1864) p.7.

the cry of 'S. George!' became the standard battle cry of the English and many other contingents of the crusading army. And when the soldiers returned home it was natural that they should, with their stories of him, bring him an unprecedented popularity in this country. This popularity, however, did not in any way depend on the story of his martyrdom - indeed, many of those who now held him in such esteem probably did not even know the story - what mattered was that he was a powerful soldier and martyr who could be relied upon to come to the aid of English people, and especially an English army. This, of course, is in marked contrast to the ascetic image presented by Edward the Confessor, who was then England's patron saint.

.....ooOoo.....

After the impetus given to the cult of S. George by the crusades, he inevitably became the patron of English soldiers, but his ascent to the status of national patron was a much more gradual process, not completed until the time of Edward III. It was King Edward who founded the Order of the Garter, which was correctly styled 'the Order of S. George,' and set up the chapel of the order at Windsor. Ashmole accounts for Edward's devotion to S. George thus:

'It is worthy of observation that du Chesne (a French Writer) acknowledges, 'it was by the special invocation of S. George, that King Edward III gained the battle of Crescy, which afterwards calling to mind, he founded (saith he) to his honour, a chapel within the castle of Windesor.'<sup>1</sup>

he goes on to claim a high, but fictitious antiquity for the patronage of S. George:

1. Elias Ashmole. The Order of the Garter. (London 1672) p. 189.

'But if we may go higher, and credit our Harding, it seems King Arthur paid St. George particular honours, for he advanced his picture in one of his banners: and this was about 200 years after his martyrdom, and very early for a country so remote from Cappadocia, to have him in so great estimation.'<sup>1</sup>

This would, of course, give authority to S. George as patron saint by giving his cult a higher antiquity than that of Edward the Confessor.

By the reign of Henry IV there was certainly no doubt as to who was England's patron saint, for Selden says that Richard Scroope, Archbishop of York, in his Articles of complaint against the King, appeals to George as:

'Martyr and knight, special protector and defendour of the Realm of England and advoket'.<sup>2</sup>

1. Elias Ashmole. The Order of the Garter. (London 1672) p. 189.
2. John Selden. Titles of Honor. (London 1656) p. 672

## CHAPTER II

It was during the thirteenth century that the association of S. George with the Dragon became part of his accepted tradition. The dragon fight first appears in the Golden Legend<sup>1</sup> of Jacobus de Voragine, the French martyrologist, who died in 1282. There is no known source for this lengthy version of the story, and this presents a problem which is still not entirely satisfactorily solved.

It might be expected that this adventure, like the earlier story of the martyrdom, might be Eastern in origin, and imported into Europe by the returning Crusaders. It was, however, completely unknown in the East until comparatively modern times, and is certainly a European invention. Even so, the germ of the story may be found in the emblem of the George-and-Dragon, which was undoubtedly well known throughout the Eastern Empire, and the territories which later evolved out of it.<sup>2</sup> Thus it appears that the dragon was familiar in emblematic form long before the story of dragon fight became current.

The emblem almost certainly owes its origin to the fact that the dragon has always been a symbol of evil, often representing the devil himself. In the Bible this device is used frequently (the dragon and the Biblical serpent may be considered as variations of the same creature), and the following examples are particularly relevant to the S. George legend:

1. See extract in Appendix I.
2. Two examples of early Coptic George-and-dragon emblems are in the British Museum.

'In that day the lord with his sore and great and mighty sword shall visit the dragon, that piercing serpent, even the dragon, that crooked serpent, and he shall slay the dragon that is in the sea.'<sup>1</sup>


and:

'And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels going forth to war with the dragon; and the dragon warred and his angels; and they prevailed not, neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast down, the old serpent, he that is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world; he was cast down to the earth, and his angels were cast down with him.'<sup>2</sup>

It was this second passage which must have given rise to the emblem of S. Michael killing the dragon, and the S. George emblem would surely have had a similar significance: it symbolised his victory, in his martyrdom, over evil. The Acta Sanctorum lends weight to this suggestion, pointing out that the Devil often assumes the appearance of a dragon, and in that shape is often overcome by holy men, so that the figure of S. George and the dragon is to be thought of as an allegory.<sup>3</sup>

Certainly such allegorical pictures were used by the Eastern Church at a very early date. The Emperor Constantine had such a tableau placed over the entrance hall of his palace in Constantinople. with himself in the dragon-killing role.<sup>4</sup> Milner, in his treatise

1. Isaiah. ch.27, v.i.
2. Revelation. ch.12, v.vii.
3. Aprilis III. 110.
4. Acta Sanctorum. Aprilis III. 104.

on S. George, prints illustrations of two coins, one of Constantine and one of Majorian, which provide further examples of this allegory.<sup>1</sup> The coin of Constantine has his own picture on the obverse, and on the reverse a picture of a serpent transfixed by a Roman standard, which in turn is surmounted by the Christian sign. The second coin, which is rather more elaborate than the first, has on the obverse a bust of the Emperor with the  on the left breast of his tunic. On the reverse Majorian is seen standing, and trampling on a serpent; in his right he holds a standard in the shape of a cross, and in his left a small image of a winged victory.

The significance of these allegorical pictures is clearly that the Emperors intended to uphold the Christian Church against the powers of evil: it is never suggested that they were in the habit of fighting serpents, and neither should the George-and-Dragon emblem be held to indicate that George was believed to have fought an actual, physical, dragon.

.....ooOoo.....

It is not known how the George-and-Dragon emblem became familiar in Europe, but there is a strong probability that it, too, was brought back from the Holy Land by the returning crusaders. By the mid thirteenth century the association of George with the dragon must have been habitual in the minds of most Europeans, in order for Jacobus de Voragine to create a story out of it. He would surely never have

1. John Milner. An Historical and Critical Inquiry into the Existence and Character of S. George. (London 1792)pp.33-4

radically altered the legend of a saint if he had not known that his inventions would receive a ready acceptance.<sup>1</sup>

What Jacobus in fact did was to fit S. George into the Greek legend of Perseus and Andromeda. In the commonest form of this legend Perseus, with his winged sandals, flies from Egypt along the coast of Philistia. He finds, chained to the cliffs near Joppa, the Princess Andromeda. The country is being devastated by a sea-monster, and Cepheus, the king, has been told by an oracle that the only way to preserve his kingdom is to sacrifice Andromeda to the monster. After obtaining the king and queen's agreement for him to marry Andromeda if he rescues her, Perseus takes to the air and beheads the approaching monster.

In this Greek legend we find the basic structure, and also much of the detail, to be found in the S. George story contained in the Golden Legend. S. George himself becomes a knight, and the location of the adventure becomes a city in Libya, but the only real differences between the legend of Perseus and Jacobus' story of S. George are that there is no mention of George marrying the princess, and that the Libyan city used to sacrifice sheep instead of people until the supply of sheep ran out.

The S. George story contained in the Golden Legend, dealing as it does with both the dragon fight and the ancient story of the

1. It is interesting to notice, however, that the S. George story in the South English Legendary, a compilation roughly contemporary with the Golden Legend, there is no mention of a dragon.

martyrdom, quickly became extremely popular in England, and remained so until well into the sixteenth century. The dragon fight almost immediately became the more familiar story, while the martyrdom gradually loses ground, until by the seventeenth century it is virtually unknown.

The story of the dragon, far from being treated allegorically in the Golden Legend, was presented as an historical incident, and was certainly accepted as such. People were quite ready to believe in fabulous monsters of every description which inhabited, or had once inhabited, distant lands; and the story of the death of such a monster at the hands of an already popular saint was no great strain on their credulity.<sup>1</sup> The story even found its way into the second Use of Sarum, where it formed part of one of the most important collections of church services in medieval England:

'O Georgi Martyr inclyte,  
Te decet laus et gloria,  
Predolatum militia;  
Per quem puella regia,  
Existens in tristitia,  
Coram Dracone pessimo,  
Salvata est.'<sup>2</sup>

(Renowned Martyr, George to thee  
Adorned with Knightly Dignitie,  
Glory and Praise do appertain,  
For having that fierce Dragon slain;

1. Vide Peter Heylin History of ... S. George of Cappadocia. (London 1633) p.19. He claims that dragons were especially common in Africa, where S. George's adventure took place.
2. Text given in Christian Remembrancer 45 (1874) p.316



Whose entrails were designed the Grave  
O' th' Royal Virgin thou didst save.)<sup>1</sup>

.....ooOoo.....

During the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the reputation of S. George reached its peak. He became a knight in shining armour, rather than a soldier, a rather aristocratic saint focusing all the qualities thought finest and noblest in a military sense: a King Arthur of the Kalendar, or a S. Michael without wings. He became a popular figure in church decoration, and was often placed next to, or directly opposite, the equally popular figure of S. Christopher.<sup>2</sup> Both these figures were intended to have allegorical significance, with Christopher representing the Common Man, and George the order of knighthood. The juxtaposition of the two was clearly intended to emphasise the social contract between the two orders they represented; a contract which formed the basis of medieval society. As Piers Plowman says to a knight on one occasion:

'Yow profre yow so faire,  
That I shal swynke and swete sowe for us bothe,  
And other laboures for thi loue al my lyf-tyme,  
In couenaunt that thow kepe holi kirke and myselve  
Fro wastours and fro wykked men that this worlde<sub>3</sub>  
struyeth'

Other indications that S. George was popular with the church at this time are that he came to be included among the 'Auxiliary Saints', whose intercession with God was thought never to fail,<sup>4</sup> and that his

1. As translated by the anonymous author of A History...of S. George (London 1661) p.5.
2. E.W. Tristram English Wall-Painting of the Fourteenth Century (London 1955) p.26.
3. Piers Plowman Ed W. Skeat. (Oxford 1873) p.399 C Text ll. 1362-93.
4. Johan Huizinga. The Waning of the middle Ages (Anchor Edn. New York 1954) pp. 171-2.

martyrdom formed the subject of a miracle play, now unfortunately lost.

It was, of course, in association with the dragon that S. George achieved his greatest popularity, and the 'George and Dragon' became a common inn sign. It was certainly well-known in Shakespear's day, for Philip Falconbridge in King John refers to:

'S. George, that swunged the dragon, and e'er since  
Sits on his horse' back at mine hostess' door.'<sup>1</sup>

From the fourteenth century S. George often figured in English pageantry, usually in the form of a procession, or 'riding', on April 23, S. George's day. Chambers says that these processions were generally in the hands of a guild,

'founded not as a trade guild but as a half-social, half-religious fraternity, for the worship of the saint, and the mutual aid and good-fellowship of its members.'<sup>2</sup>

Most of the larger towns supported such a guild, prominent among them being Norwich and Leicester. A tableau of the dragon fight was naturally included in the procession of every guild, and the dragon of the Norwich guild, which was in use until 1835, is preserved in the castle museum there.<sup>3</sup>

The George and dragon tableau was also a very popular element in pageants presented on the occasion of royal progresses. When Prince Edward visited Coventry in 1474 he was greeted by a series of pageants, one of which was,

1. Act II. Scene i. lines 288-9.
2. Edmund K. Chambers. Medieval Stage (Oxford 1903). I. 222.
3. Vide: Richard Withington. English Pageantry (Harvard 1918). I.28.

'seint George armed, and kynges dought<sup>r</sup> knelyng a fore hym w<sup>t</sup>  
 a lambe, and the fadyr and the moder beyng in a toure a boven  
 beholdyng seint George savyng their dought<sup>r</sup> from the dragon.'<sup>1</sup>

A similar pageant had already been performed at Bristol in 1461, before Edward IV, and others are recorded in 1486 (Hereford), 1522 (London), 1547 (London), with more London performances in 1604, 1609, and 1681. There must have been many other, less spectacular, S. George pageants, of which no record remains, for it is clear from the Faerie Queene that Spenser was familiar with them.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, during the period from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century S. George entered fully into the pattern of English life. It was not, however, as real, human, saint that he was made the subject of a cult but more as a symbol: the things he represented were valued, but the things he might, or might not, have done were of little interest. All that mattered was his fight with the dragon, and the innumerable allegories and moral lessons which could be constructed upon it. In this capacity he was revered by the Church, becoming a symbol of the victory of Good over Evil; he represented the best qualities of the English nobility, protecting the weak from the strong and wicked; for the soldiers he was an aid to the winning of battles; and under the influence of the guilds and the pageants he quickly became associated with merry-making.

1. The Coventry Leet-Book. Ed. M. Harris. (E.E.T.S. 135. 1908). II pp. 390 f.
2. See below: p. 43.

## CHAPTER III

The literary treatment of the S. George legend, from the fourteenth to the early sixteenth centuries, showed a development parallel to, but rather more restrained than, the development of his popular cult. Throughout this time the most popular written version of the legend was that contained in the Golden Legend, and other writers, few as they were, who attempted a treatment of the legend, showed great reluctance to make innovations.

One reason for this lack of invention must have been that this was the story of one of the most prominent of Christian saints, whose legend was to be regarded as historically accurate. An author could not make much alteration without being branded a liar. Another reason for lack of imagination in dealing with the legend, and also for the small number of writers to treat it, may be a general lack of interest on the part of the public in the details of the story. Everybody who went to church received an annual sermon on S. George, the lessons of his life, and, probably, the application of these lessons to their own lives. For most people this appears to have been quite sufficient, and they preferred to devote themselves to the more festive aspects of the saint's cult.

Whatever the reason for this lack of interest, it is certain that both John Lydgate and Alexander Barclay failed to tap the popular enthusiasm which centred round S. George himself. Lydgate's poem is represented by only two manuscripts, and Barclay's by a single copy,

which was believed lost for over three hundred years and only recently rediscovered.

Even so, during this period the legend does show signs of a development which was to culminate in two strikingly different versions, by Spencer and Richard Johnson. In either case their treatment of the story was indebted to medieval Romances, and it is a tendency towards this type of treatment that is discernible in the earlier versions.

In the Golden Legend the martyrdom is still the most important part of S. George's life, with the dragon fight forming a rather brief prologue. The fight itself is dealt with very briefly indeed:

'Thus as they spake togyder, the dragon appyered and came rennyng to them, and saynt George was vpon his hors, and drewe oute his swerde, and garnysshed hym with the sygne of the crosse and rode hardely agaynst the dragon, whiche came toward hym and smote hym with his spere and hurte hym sore and threwe hym to the grounde.'<sup>1</sup>

After this, the maiden leads the injured dragon into the city, where S. George converts the whole population to Christianity by the simple method of threatening to set the dragon free if they refuse.

The episode is clearly aimed at illustrating the power of God, in giving George strength to overcome the dragon. Even when the maiden's father, the king of the country ravaged by the dragon, attempts to reward him, George

'refused all, and commaunded that it should be gyuen to poore people for goddes sake'.

1. From Caxton's translation, (London 1512) See Appendix I.

The version of the legend which is contained in John Mirk's Festial,<sup>1</sup> a mid-fifteenth century compilation, is substantially the same as that in the Golden Legend, but is interesting in that it is given in the form of a sermon, and was probably typical of sermons given on the Sunday before S. George's Day.<sup>2</sup> The purpose of this homily is made plain in the opening words:

'Good men and woymen, such a day *3e* schull haue *pe* fest of Saynt George. *Pe* wheche day *3e* schull come to holy chyrch, in worschip of God and of *pat* holy martyr Seynt George *pat* bozt his day full dere.'

It was from this type of verbal narrative that the story of S. George was learnt by most people, and it may be for this reason that Mirk's account of the fight is a little more exciting than that of the Golden Legend. We find the maiden lamenting to S. George:

'I am sette here forto be deuoured anon of an horrybull dragon *pat* hape eton all *pe* chylder of *pys* cyte. And for all ben eten, now most I be eten; for my fadyr *3af* *pe* cyte *pat* consell,'

and we also find for the first time that the dragon

'put up his hed, spytting out fure.'

The first poetic treatment of S. George's life, and indeed, the first piece of writing devoted specifically to it, is the Legend of Saint George by John Lydgate.<sup>3</sup> Lydgate devoted much of his huge output of poetry (some 140,000 lines) to the translation of Romances

1. Ed.T.Erbe. E.E.T.S. Extra Series 96 (1905). pp. 132 ff.
2. a similar, but independent, text is given by A. Beatty, 'The St. George, or Mummers' Plays,' Trans. of Wisconsin Acad. of Arts and Science. 15 (1904-7). p.273.
3. In Minor Poems of John Lydgate. Ed.H.McCracken. E.E.T.S. Extra Series 107 (1910) I.145 ff.

(from French) such as the Storie of Thebes and the Troy Book, and the influence of the Romances is clearly discernible in his work on S. George.

It is an occasional poem, written in about the year 1430 at the request of the Armourers' Company of London. It forms a commentary on a

'steyned halle of **p**e lyf of Saint George'.

and was apparently intended to be read at some sort of unveiling ceremony, for it begins:

'O yee folk **p**at heer present be,  
Wheeche of **p**is story shal haue Inspeccion....'

After a brief introduction, Lydgate spends a considerable amount of time in emphasising the noble and knightly qualities of S. George. He points out that the Order of the Garter was founded in George's honour, and then, carefully selecting from the information given in the Golden Legend, discusses the etymology of George's name:

**p**is name George by Inter pretacioun  
Is sayde of tweyne, **p**e first of hoolynesse,  
And **p**e secound of knighthood and renoun,  
As **p**at myn Auctour lyke**p**e for to expresse,  
**p**e feond venqwysshing of manhoode and prowesse,  
**p**e worlde, **p**e flesshe, as Crystesvowen knight,  
Wher-euer he roode in steel armed bright.'

Significantly, among the interpretations of 'George' given in the Golden Legend, but rejected by Lydgate, are 'tiller of the soil' and 'pilgrim and counsellor'. The third stanza makes it quite clear that George was regarded primarily as a knight-errant:

'And thorough his nobleness and his chyuallerye  
 Trouthe to sousteene, who-so list to looke,  
 Many a Iournee he vpon him tooke,  
**P**e chirche defending with his swerd of equitee,  
**P**e right of wydowes, and of virgynytee.'

Thus the dragon-killing exploit begins to be seen as the culmination of a whole series of knightly adventures, even though these are not as yet narrated in detail. As a result of this, the dragon-fight becomes more important than the martyrdom as a climax in S. George's life; and paves the way for the omission of the martyrdom by both Spenser and Johnson.

Lydgate, since the fight is a climax, rather than a prologue, in his poem, carefully prepares for it by describing the dragon more fully than had been done before, and by describing the sufferings of the city and the preparations being made for the sacrifice of the princess.

The dragon is described as

'A gret dragoun, with scales siluer sheene,  
 Horryble, dreedful, and monstrous of sight,'

and the princess, as she leaves the city, is described quite movingly:

**P**is cely mayde quakyng in hir dreed;  
 Vpon hir hande a sheep did leed,  
 Hir fadir wepte, hir moder, bo**o****p**e tweyne,  
 And al **p**e Cytee in teerys did so reyne.

At hir oute goyng hir fader for **p**e noones  
 Arrayed her with al his ful might  
 In clo**o****p**e of golde with gemys and with stoones,  
 Which shoone ful sheene ageyne **p**e sonne bright.'



The religious significance of George's life is not forgotten, but becomes incorporated in his code of chivalry. He conducts himself proudly, and does not give the full credit for his victory to God: when the wounded dragon has been led into the city,

....'Saint George, to encresce his glory,  
 Pulled out a swerde and smote of his hed,  
**P**e people alwey taking ful good heed,  
 How God **p**is martyr list to magnefye,  
 And him to enhaunce thorughe his Chiuallerye.'

Thus it is George who brings glory to God, rather than God who makes George's achievements possible; an inversion of Christian teaching which becomes much more noticeable in Johnson's Seven Champions of Christendom. Lydgate's S. George is undoubtedly a hero who has affinities with the chivalric heroes of Romance, and the poem shows other marks of the influence of the Romances. In particular, there is one incident which embodies the magic which is typical of Romance, and of Johnson's and Spenser's work:

**P**e kyng affter in homnour of Marye  
 And in worship of Saint George hir knight,  
 A ful feyre chirche gan to edefye,  
 Rich of bylding and wonder feyre of sight,  
 Amiddes of which **p**er sprang vp anoon right  
 A plesaunt welle, with stremys cristallyne,  
 Whos drynk to seek was helthe and medecyne.'

.....ooOoo.....

Alexander Barclay's *Life of Saint George*<sup>1</sup> was written in, or about

1. Ed. W. Nelson. E.E.T.S. 230 (1955).

the year 1515, and like that of Lydgate adheres strictly to the traditional events of the saint's life. It is a close translation of the Georgius of Baptista Spagnuoli (Mantuanus),<sup>1</sup> and is therefore largely uninspired: it is also extremely long (over 2,500 lines), and each incident is narrated with laborious detail. There are in this poem, however, further signs that the S. George legend was viewed in an increasingly Romantic light.

Barclay, translating faithfully from Mantuanus, says

'Right so within this fortunate cytie  
Was borne saynt George the famous noble knyght  
The parfyte myrroure and flour of chyualrye  
Of noble stocke his parentes of great myght...'<sup>2</sup>

This is the first English reference to George's parentage, and it appears to follow as a natural result of the mention of his knightly prowess: it was evidently an automatic assumption that such a man should come 'of noble stocke'. Moreover, a great deal of time is spent in discussing the knightly achievements of the saint prior to his encounter with the dragon, so that the trend established by Lydgate is continued. The battle with the dragon is seen as the climax of a career in which George 'spent his lusty age' fighting 'in dyuers batayles' and 'subduyng tyrants'. In the course of some 350 lines devoted to this topic George is compared with such heroes as Hercules and Charlemagne, but no information is given about any of his actual adventures.

1. The text is given in Nelson's edition of Barclay's poem.
2. p. 18 lines 211-14

As might be expected in a work tending towards Romance, the more stirring aspects of the story, such as the plight of the princess, and S. George's fight with the dragon, are described by Barclay in much more detail than Lydgate had attempted. The princess is brought out of the city in procession, dressed 'in weddyng ornament', and when she is chained to a pillar outside the gates she makes a suitably lengthy and piteous speech. The dragon becomes a real monster, with, for the first time, qualities which might inspire fear:

'Styll stode the monstre with iyen bryght as fyre  
 Maruaylynge in maner of the ryche aray  
 And of the fayre virgyns precyous attyre  
 For the other were put nakyd forth alway  
 Yet by the bondys she knewe it was hyr pray  
 Wherfore with lawes and throte displayed wyde  
 Fast to the virgyne began she for to glyde.

Hyr myghty body somewhat made slowe hyr pace  
 So that hyr meuyng was slake as one myght se  
 Hyr body semyd a volt or some great place  
 If on from farre behelde hyr quantyte  
 Hyr tayle came after with great prolyxte  
 Leuyng the prent behynde hyr in the way  
 Hyr wynges abroad she drewe vnto hyr pray.<sup>1</sup>

Another significant innovation in this poem is the offer made by the parents of the rescued maiden to let George marry her. He, however, 'for the loue of chastyte refusyd to take ye sayde virgyn in maryage'. Such an offer might be expected in any medieval Romance, the only difference being that it would normally be accepted by the

1. p. 42. lines 834-47

hero. It is worthy of notice that this detail is not found in Mantuanus' poem, but is an elaboration introduced by Barclay himself; it shows that he must have thought of the poem he was translating as a Romance.

In spite of this step forward in the structure of the S. George legend, which, together with the descriptions in the dragon episode, bring it very close to Romance, the character of S. George himself does not show a parallel development; it is, if anything, more genuinely saintly than that of Lydgate's George. Here there is no arrogance displayed by the hero, who sincerely gives all credit to God and serves Him humbly. When the dragon is killed, it is 'by helpe of god and george the worthy knight'.

.....ooOoo.....

The S. George legend was thus regarded in an increasingly Romantic light during the years from the introduction of the dragon into the story until the publication of Barclay's poem in 1515; yet the structure of the story remained virtually unchanged. The section dealing with the dragon was altered only in detail from the original story of Jacobus de Voragine, while the martyrdom, although it did not find a place in the popular imagination except in so far as it may have been represented in a miracle play, was neither omitted nor substantially altered. And yet, new versions of the legend, radically different from anything that had gone before, were published almost simultaneously by Spenser (in 1590) and Johnson (in 1592).

One reason for the two centuries of conservatism in dealing with

the S. George legend may be found in the fact that the general public were apparently not interested in the details of the saint's life, and that therefore it was a subject unattractive to poets. Certainly, only Lydgate and Barclay attempted a treatment of the subject, neither of them with any great success.

However, it is equally likely that both the lack of interest and the lack of poetic success may be due to a feeling that innovations were an impossibility in this particular story. It is an attitude that one might expect to be held towards a saint's story: it was regarded as both true and sacred. Even in the seventeenth century scholars such as Peter Heylin might be found claiming that the dragon-fight was 'both feasible and ordinary'.<sup>1</sup>

Only in the mid-sixteenth century, during the Reformation, did saints' stories such as that of S. George begin to be criticised and treated with the suspicion they deserved. George was attacked especially bitterly by the Protestants because he was one of the 'Auxiliary Saints', whose intercession with God invariably met with success; such equality of saints with their maker could clearly not be tolerated in a Reformed church. The attitude of the Church of England on this point was later summed up by Richard Crakanthorpe in 1625:

'Nihil de eo quoque dixi, quod pro Sanctis saepenumero figmenta solum vestra colities, et invocatis. S. Georgium, S. Christophorum mihi vide. Non Sancti, non vel homines illi fuerent; sed Allegoriae et Symbola'<sup>2</sup>

1. History of .... S. George of Cappadocia (London 1633) p. 21
2. Defensio Ecclesiae Anglicanae (London 1847 Edn.) p. 372.

(I have said nothing about that which you repeatedly worship and pray to as Saints, but which is merely a creation of your own. S. George and S. Christopher spring to mind. They were not Saints, nor even men, but Allegories and Symbols).

S. George, however, was England's patron saint, and as a result of this attack on him there began a controversy which lasted with some heat well into the eighteenth century.<sup>1</sup>

Since the saints occupied a far less important position in the Church of England than they had done in the Roman Church, the reputations of all of them began to suffer, and that of S. George declined with the rest. The story of the fight with the dragon became generally regarded as a mere fable. George still retained his importance during the reign of Henry VIII, for when Henry reduced the number of Holy Days 'that so there might more scope bee left for the peoples labour',<sup>2</sup> S. George's Day was not among those removed from the Kalendar; but during the reign of Edward VI the holiday ceased to be regarded, and the significance of the legend ceased to be common knowledge.

This ignorance is well illustrated by a story of King Edward recorded by Heylin, who says that on one S. George's Day the young king asked the assembled nobles to tell him about S. George. The treasurer

'answered for all, 'that he had never reade of any George, but of him onely, who in the legend is reported manfully to have drawne his sword, and kill'd the Dragon with his spear.' And when the king being great with laughter, replied, 'I pray you

1. Vide: Peter Heylin, op. cit. John Pettingal, Dissertation on.... the Equestrian Figure of the George and of the Garter (London 1753)  
Samuel Pegge, Observations on the History of S. George (London 1773)  
John Milner, An Historical ... Inquiry into ... Saint George (Ldn1792)
2. Peter Heylin. History of ... S. George of Cappadocia (London 1633)

my lord, what did he with his sword the while'; he answered that he could not tell'.<sup>1</sup>

By the middle of the seventeenth century, moreover, the following verses had become common in England:

'S. George to save a maid, a dragon slew,  
And 'twas a noble act if it were true;  
Some say there was no dragon, and 'tis said,  
There's no S. George; pray God there be a Maid.'<sup>2</sup>

When the traditional exploit of S. George was falling into such disregard as to be thus made light of, it is hardly surprising that both Spenser and Johnson should feel themselves free to alter and amend the existing story as they pleased, suiting it to their own purposes. All that remained of the original cult of S. George was his secular appeal as an excuse for merry-making (though even the S. George's Day festivities and the guild processions were in decline), and as patron of soldiers in general, and of knighthood in particular. Apart from this, the saint seems to have become the mere symbol he is today.

It is as a symbol, however, that S. George assumes his least definite shape; and thus becomes most flexible, and as Spenser and Johnson found, most adaptable to literary purposes. An anonymous writer hinted as much in 1661, when he said:

'As this story of the mighty Dragon was very acceptable to the people of those times; so did it soon spread abroad, and in the close, when neglected by others became a principal Pageant in that doughty History of

1. Op. cit. p. 309

2. Anonymous. History . . . . of S. George (London 1661) p. 5

the seven Champions, the Author whereof has confidently made S. George to be a Coventry man by birth, and mother Daughter to a King of England'.<sup>1</sup>

Although this implies that any further development was necessarily a degeneration, Spenser's work shows that the new freedom to exploit the legend could also lead to inspired creative writing.

1. Op. cit. p. 3.



## CHAPTER IV

The Saint George legend undoubtedly achieved its finest expression in Book One of Spenser's Faerie Queene, which was first published in 1590, but which was probably drafted some ten or fifteen years earlier. In his ambitious plan to write twelve books 'fashioning twelve morall vertues', Spenser took S. George to be the embodiment of 'holinesse'.<sup>1</sup> He was by no means the first to attach a moral allegory to the story of S. George,<sup>2</sup> but no other writer has ever so subdued the legend to his own allegorical requirements, both moral and religious. He discarded the story of George's martyrdom, but utilised nearly all the basic elements of the George-and-Dragon story and revitalised them by the addition of numerous other elements, drawn mainly from medieval Romances, and from the Revelation of S. John.

The extent of the influence of the Revelation on Book One of the Faerie Queene cannot be accurately judged because it overlaps, to a certain extent, with the material from the Romances; but there can be no doubt that Spenser's Una, Redcrosse Knight, Arthur, dragon, and Duessa with her seven-headed monster, all owe something to the leading figures of the Revelation. Spenser can be shown to have been familiar with the numerous sixteenth century representations of the Apocalypse as a prophecy fulfilled by the Protestant Reformation.<sup>3</sup> However, the importance of this concept to Spenser can only be judged in accordance

1. This could well have been inspired by Lydgate's version. See above, p.<sup>30</sup>
2. Indeed, the story seems to owe its origin to an allegorical picture. See above, p. 19 ff.
3. Vide: Josephine W. Bennett. The Evolution of the Faerie Queene. (Chicago 1942) p. 110 ff.

with the extent to which the Faerie Queene may be considered as an apology for the Church of England.

The tendency of the S. George legend to gravitate towards the Romances has already been noticed in the work of Lydgate and Barclay. In Spenser's hands, however, it is the Romance tradition which is adapted to suit the needs of his essentially religious treatment of the S. George legend. He took from the Romances the ideal of Chivalry, and the constant endeavour of the knight to make himself more worthy of his rank. This ideal, although never maintained intact in any Romance, is found most clearly expressed in those connected with the legend of King Arthur; and it was from one of these, probably that of Gareth, that Spenser borrowed the framework for Book One of his Faerie Queene.<sup>1</sup>

The story of Spenser's hero and heroine, the Redcrosse Knight and Una, is very similar to that of Gareth and Linet. In both stories a lady comes to the court of a powerful monarch, and asks for the services of a knight, Linet in order to free her sister from the Red Knight, and Una to free her parents from a monstrous dragon. Both Linet and Una are given a young, untried, knight, who, however, manages to complete his allotted task. In both cases, the journey to the scene of the final battle involves numerous other adventures, and the achievement of the final adventure is followed by the marriage of the hero - Gareth to Linet's sister, and the Redcrosse Knight to Una. Also in both cases, the knight's true name is concealed until after the

1. There can be no doubt that Spenser was familiar with Malory's work.

performance of his task.

E.K. Broadus points out<sup>1</sup> that the Lybeaus Desconus<sup>2</sup> is an even closer parallel to the story of the Redcrosse Knight than is the Gareth legend, and it is quite possible that Spenser drew on this rather than on the Gareth. However, both stories deal with offspring of the same family (Gareth is Gawaine's brother; while Gingelein is his illegitimate son), and are presumably variants of the same original. Whichever of these two stories Spenser may have used, he altered the details and incidents quite freely, and, since the Gareth story has always been much better known than the other, it probably exerted the greater influence on him.

In either case, the important thing that Spenser gained from the story was the idea of a quest, undertaken by an inexperienced young knight at the request of a lady. It is this that gives its distinctive form to Book One of the Faerie Queene, and which had been sadly lacking in all previous versions of the S. George legend: for the first time the fight with the dragon is not brought about by sheer chance, but is carefully prepared for, and comes as the culminating event of the Book.

Although the structure of the book can thus be traced back to the Romances, it is by no means impossible that the theme of the beautiful woman driven into the wilderness by a dragon may spring ultimately from the Revelation and its account of the

1. 'The Red Cross Knight and Lybeaus Desconus' in M.L.N. 18. (1903)  
202-4
2. The Percy Folio Manuscript. Ed. Hales and Furnivall (London 1868)  
II. 415 ff.

'woman arrayed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars'.<sup>1</sup>

Whatever the ultimate source of this theme in Spenser's work, it necessitated one major divergence from the traditional version of the S. George legend. Since Una herself comes to find the Redcrosse Knight, she can no longer be represented as being sacrificed to the dragon. Consequently, we hear nothing from Spenser of the daily sacrifice of an inhabitant of the beleaguered town, and during the fight Una prays, from the comparative safety of a nearby hill, for her champion's victory.

Such a change would not be a difficult matter for Spenser, since he evidently felt himself free to adapt the legend, and, more especially since he was not interested in the legend itself, but in the allegorical possibilities of the characters it contained. Indeed, it is unlikely that he drew his S. George material from any written source, but rather depended on the main body of the tradition, as expressed in the pageants which were a frequent feature of English life,<sup>2</sup> and where, moreover, the rescued maiden was most frequently represented as leading a lamb.<sup>3</sup> If this was the case, it would explain that most incongruous feature of Spenser's first book, the lamb, being led for miles across the plain by Una on her horse, and vanishing without trace at some point in the first canto. Such a lamb might well have found its way into Spenser's work as a result of careless use of traditional

1. ch. 12.

2. See above: p. 28 and also: Edwin Greenlaw, 'Una and Her Lamb' M.L.N. 42 (1927) 515-6 and Ivan L. Schulze, 'The Maiden and Her Lamb' M.L.N. 46. (1931) 379-81.

3. This feature is rare in written versions of the legend, and where it does appear it is usually a sheep rather than a lamb.

material, rather than as a subtle allegorical invention of his own: if Spenser had been expending serious thought on the lamb, he would surely have made it more readily acceptable to the reader. Even so, it may be said that the presence of the lamb is justified by the poetic effect thus created.

The dwarf, who appears to fitfully throughout the first book, may also be an element taken over by Spenser from one of his sources; for both the Gareth story and the Lybeaus Desconus contain a dwarf, who is attendant on the knight and his lady. Certainly, the dwarf only twice serves a useful purpose in Spenser's story: once, in canto seven, when he brings the Redcrosse Knight's armour to Una and tells her that he has been captured by Orgoglio; and again in the House of Pride, when he warns the Redcrosse Knight of the dungeon where the victims of Pride are kept prisoner. At other times on the long journey the dwarf disappears altogether from the reader's memory, although presumably he accompanies the Knight throughout.

It has often been suggested that both lamb and dwarf have a primarily allegorical significance, but, although they may have such a significance in the few incidents in which they appear, they are not of sufficient importance to form any part of the sustained allegory of the book. Indeed, the presence of both these figures may well be attributable to the essentially pictorial nature of Spenser's imagination, which was clearly responsible for the tableau form of the first seven stanzas of the first canto. Here Spenser has given us a strongly pictorial impression of all the main figures from his sources, as they set out on their quest, and to omit either lamb or dwarf would have

been, perhaps, to offend against his conception of those sources.

This pictorial quality is one which is strongly felt throughout the book, and which is often detrimental to the narrative. The description of Lucifera's procession (I. iv. 16-36.), while it is a very fine piece of work in itself, impedes rather than helps the narrative; and some of the other descriptions, such as those of Dame Caelia's three daughters, (I.x. 12-16), appear, as regards the narrative, merely incongruous.

.....ooOoo.....

Undoubtedly the most important aspect of Book One of the Faerie Queene is Spenser's allegorical use of the fusion of the George-and-Dragon theme with that of the knightly quest. As the title of the book tells us, the Redcrosse Knight represents 'Holinesse', and displays all the characteristics of S. George formerly enumerated by Lydgate:

'Pis name George by Interpretacioun  
 Is sayde of tweyne, **p**e first of hoolynesse  
 And **p**e secound of knighthood and renoun,  
 As **p**at myn Auctour lyke**p**e for to expresse,  
**P**e feond venqwysshing of manhoode and prowesse,  
**P**e worlde, **p**e flesshe, as Crystes owen knight,  
 Wher-euer he roode in steel armed bright.'<sup>1</sup>

'Holinesse' is a singularly elusive quality. Ruskin identifies it as 'in general, Reverence and Godly Fear',<sup>2</sup> and there can be no doubt that it includes ideas of righteousness and obedience to God's laws. Spenser himself reaches a definition of this virtue by

1. The Legend of S. George, in The Minor Poems of John Lydgate.  
 Ed. H.N. MacCracken. E.E.T.S. Extra Series 107. (1910).p.145-6.
2. John Ruskin. Stones of Venice (London 1853) III 205

constantly pointing out the things to which it is opposed, and the result is a virtue, both moral and spiritual, which far surpasses all the others, and tends to make the heroes of the other books of the Faerie Queene seem to be portraying merely various aspects of this first virtue. And yet it is Spenser's Prince Arthur, not the Redcrosse Knight, who possesses all the twelve.<sup>1</sup> Spenser perhaps intended the reader to take all the twelve heroes as possessing Moral Virtue in its entirety, but each one excelling in one particular aspect of Virtue, while only Prince Arthur possesses all twelve aspects in a perfect balance. Thus, the Redcrosse Knight typifies that aspect of Virtue which is directed specifically towards God.

He does not, throughout the book, represent a perfected state of Holiness, but, like Gareth, is engaged in a quest. His goal is the destruction of the dragon which is oppressing Una's people, but he can only hope to succeed if he has attained, with the help of God, perfect Holiness; and it is only after a series of exacting tests that he achieves that state. When he arrives at the court of the Faerie Queene he is 'a tall clownishe younge man',<sup>2</sup> 'a fresh unproved knight',<sup>3</sup> whose only recommendation was his eagerness to 'have the atchievement of any adventure',<sup>2</sup> which might present itself during the Queen's feast.

He is further recommended, however, when the armour brought by Una fits him, for this, as Spenser tells us,<sup>2</sup> is the 'armour of a Christian man' specified by S. Paul:

1. In Spenser's letter to Sir Walter Raleigh, explaining the plan of the Faerie Queene.
2. In Spenser's letter to Sir Walter Raleigh.
3. Faerie Queene. I.vii.47.

'Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; withal take up the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God'.<sup>1</sup>

The choice of this text, a favourite one with the militant Protestant Reformers, immediately shows the reader what is the theological standpoint of the Faerie Queene. It is directly comparable to Bunyan's description of the arming of Christian at the House Beautiful, and presents the idea of the Pilgrimage of Man as one of the allegorical themes of Book One. Also its strongly Protestant flavour reinforces the probability that the most important allegorical influence on this book as the Revelation, for the two themes of the Christian Soldier and the Apocalypse formed the two central motifs of Protestant literature.<sup>2</sup>

Of all the armour given to the Redcrosse Knight, Spenser evidently considers the shield of faith to be the most important, for it is this that the monsters most frequently try to wrest from him. This, too, is typical of Protestant doctrine with its emphasis of man's reliance on salvation by faith in Christ's righteousness, rather than by personal righteousness and good works. It shows that the Holiness of the Redcrosse Knight is of no avail without faith, just as the presence of Una, or Truth signifies that Holiness needs to be guided by Truth.

1. Ephesians. VI. 13-17

2. Vide: Norman Cohn The Pursuit of the Millenium (London 1957)



The Redcrosse Knight's first task is to root out Error, at whose den he and Una arrive when lost in the 'wandring wood'. Error is a terrifying female monster, who nourishes a thousand offspring and typifies all errors of religion, and, since 'Her vomit full of bookes and papers was', especially errors of Doctrine. The fact that this vomit contained toads as well as books and papers must surely be a reference to part of the preparation for the Apocalypse:

'And I saw coming out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits, as it were frogs: for they are spirits of devils, working signs; which go forth unto the kings of the whole world, to gather them together unto the war of the great day of God, the Almighty.'<sup>1</sup>

It is thus doubly essential that this should be the knight's first task, since he must decide to follow the path of true religion before his moral virtue can have any meaning at all, and before he can look for salvation.

It is significant that when Error attacks the knight she leaps 'Fierce upon his shield' and winds herself about him ( a clear contrast with the girding of the loins with truth), thus seeking to deprive him of his main defences of Faith and Truth. Moreover, Una remains nearby during the fight, and exhorts him:

'Add faith unto your force, and be not faint:  
Strangle her, else she sure will strangle thee.' (I.i.19)

When he has overcome Error and found his way out of the 'wandring wood', the Redcrosse Knight is immediately faced with a more subtle

1. Revelation XVI. 13-14

opponent, Hypocrisy, in the shape of Archimago. Still an inexperienced young knight, he is completely deceived by Archimago's pretence of being a hermit. The significance is plain, that Holiness must be able to recognise and overcome falsehood, both when it assails him openly as did Error, and when it wears the disguise of honesty as does Archimago. Not until he has overcome both can the Redcrosse Knight possibly pursue the path of true religion, and so these are his first tests.

The potency of disguised falsehood is made manifest by the fact that Archimago not only deceives the Redcrosse Knight into thinking that he is a hermit, but also, by means of induced dreams, convinces him that Una is false. As a result, the knight steals away alone the next morning, and is separated from his guide.

In spite of the terrible delusion under which he labours, however, the Redcrosse Knight proves, in his next adventure, that he still retains his faith and the desire to lead a holy life. As might be expected after his separation from Una, he is soon assailed (in canto II) by Sans Foy, 'a faithlesse Sarazin', but manages to defeat him.

It is here that the need for a guide is made clear, for the knight's faith is abused and misled, and he takes Fidessa (in reality the false Duessa, confederate of Archimago) in place of Una. His suspicions should have been aroused by the fact that she had been the companion of Sans Foy, and he is given ample warning of his mistake by the example of Fradubio and Fraelissa, whom Duessa had transformed

into trees. The mistake Fradubio (Brother Doubtful) had made was to hesitate in choosing between the two ladies. Duessa, seeing his hesitation, had made Fraelissa ugly, and then transformed her into a tree. When Fradubio at length found out that Duessa was really a loathsome witch, she transformed him too into a tree. The Redcrosse Knight, however, fails to identify his lady with Fradubio's Duessa, and to compare their respective situations. Thus, although still intent on doing Right, he is diverted from his true quest of Holiness - the defeat of the monster which is ravaging the lands of Una's parents - and is guided by Duessa to the House of Pride. (canto iv).

Here Lucifera, epitome of Pride and chief of the Seven Deadly Sins, holds court, with the other six sins as her councillors. As had been the case with Error, the knight is proof against evils which reveal themselves openly, and

'Thought all their glory vaine in knightly vew,  
And that great Princesse too exceeding proud,  
That to strange knight no better countenance allowd.' (I.iv.15)

While Duessa and the Redcrosse Knight are staying with Lucifera, however, Sans Ioy, the younger brother of Sans Foy, also arrives there, thirsting for vengeance on his brother's killer. He is the youngest of the three brothers, Sans Foy, Sans Loy, and Sans Ioy, who together form a logical sequence on the road to eternal damnation: lack of faith leads to the disregarding of God's laws, which in turn leads to the despondency of total divorce from God. Sans Ioy is able to assail the Redcrosse Knight because, although the knight retains his faith in God and his desire to obey God, he has been deceived into

following a path totally opposed to that of the true Christian.

The Redcrosse Knight manages to overcome Sans Ioy, but it is a much more difficult fight than any he has had so far. Indeed, at one point he is all but defeated, until

'.... quickning faith, that earst was woxen weake,  
The creeping deadly cold away did shake.' (I.v.12)

He recovers, and overthrows Sans Ioy, but does not kill him, for Duessa spirits his almost lifeless body away to the underworld, where he is healed. Thus the knight retains his joy in God, but not so securely that it cannot be assailed again in the future. Moreover, it was the voice of Duessa, intended to encourage his opponent, which penetrated his dazed mind and revived his flagging faith during the fight. His faith thus continues to respond to the guidance of Duessa, rather than to that of Una, its proper companion.<sup>1</sup>

Although the knight has not been tempted by any of the sins of the House of Pride, his dwarf, having seen the dungeon containing the victims of Pride, warns him of the dangers of even remaining in the House at all. Therefore

'..... he no lenger would  
There dwell in perill of like painefull plight,  
But early rose, and ere that dawning light  
Discovered had the world to heauen wyde,  
He by a priuie Posterne tooke his flight,  
That of no enuious eyes he mote be spyde:  
For doubtlesse death ensewed, if any him descryde.'(I.v.52)

1. This exhortation of Duessa's (I.v.11) is surely intended to be contrasted with Una's in the fight against Error (I.i.19).

Duessa, on returning from the underworld, finds 'her hoped pray' departed, and sets out in pursuit of him. She eventually finds him resting beside a fountain, and again ingratiates herself with him. This repeated refusal of the Redcrosse Knight to recognise the true nature of his companion and reject her is explained and excused by Spenser:

'What man so wise, what earthly wit so ware,  
 As to descry the crafty cunning traine,  
 By which deceit doth maske in visour faire,  
 And cast her colours dyed deepe in graine,  
 To seeme like Truth, whose shape she well can faine,  
 And fitting gestures to her purpose frame,  
 The guiltlesse man with guile to entertaine?  
 Great maistresse of her art was that false Dame,  
 The false Duessa, cloked with Fidessaes name.' (I.vii.1)

Thus it is made clear that man cannot hope to gain perfection by his own unaided efforts; and that only when the Redcrosse Knight has come to recognise his own weakness and utter dependence on the grace of God can he be reunited with Una and continue his quest.

The recognition of weakness comes almost immediately, for he quite unwittingly becomes tainted with sin. He lies dallying with Duessa, his Christian laid aside.

'Pound out in loosnesse on the grassy grownd,  
 Both carelesse of his health, and of his fame.' (I.vii.7)

At the same time he drinks from the waters of the fountain, which are of such character that everyone who drinks of them loses all his vigour. While he is in this condition, sinful, enfeebled, and unarmed,

the giant Orgoglio, a

'..... monstrous masse of earthly slime,  
Puft vp with emptie wind, and fild with sinfull crime,'  
(I.vii.9)

assails him. The knight has only time to reach for his sword, and this he can scarcely wield: the giant crushes him to the earth so violently that

'..... were not heauenly grace, that did him blesse,  
He had beene pouldred all, as thin as flowre.'(I.vii.12)

The Redcrosse Knight is thus saved from, destruction, both physical and spiritual, by God's help, but he is taken prison by Orgoglio, to whom Duessa transfers her affections.

It is in this seventh canto that Spenser most clearly relates his work to the Revelation,<sup>1</sup> for Orgoglio gives Duessa a seven-headed monster to ride, so that she becomes identified with the Whore of Babylon. Although, as has been shown, the Redcrosse Knight has been overcome by these representatives of carnal sin, such is the mercy of God that he is rescued from his living death in the abyss of Orgoglio's dungeon by Prince Arthur, while Orgoglio and the seven-headed beast are killed, and Duessa is driven naked into the wilderness.

This adventure so shakes the knight's confidence, however, that even though Prince Arthur reunites him with Una, he is not entirely safe from the voice of Despair. While he and Una are continuing their journey, they meet Sir Trevisan, who is fleeing in abject terror from Despair, who, he says, has brought about the death of his companion, Sir Terwin. Trevisan goes on to describe Despair's method of attack:

1. See below, Appendix II

'Which when he knew, and felt our feeble harts  
 Embost with bale, and bitter byting griefe,  
 Which loue had launched with his deadly darts,  
 With wounding words and termes of foule reprieffe  
 He pluckt from us all hope of due relieffe,  
 That earst vs held in loue of lingring life;  
 Then hopelesse hartlesse, gan the cunning thiefe  
 Perswade vs die, to stint all further strife:

To me he lent this rope, to him a rustie knife.' (I.ix.29)

The Redcrosse Knight, determined to bring Despair to justice, immediately rides off to meet him. The knight, however, is so bowed down with feelings of guilt at having been defiled by contact with Duessa, and his spirit is so broken by his long imprisonment, that he cannot adequately deal with this transference of the fight against evil from the physical to the intellectual plane. And Despair knows very well how to take advantage of his spiritual unease:

'The lenger life, I wote the greater sin,  
 The greater sin, the greater punishment:  
 All those great battels, which thou boasts to win,  
 Through strife, and bloud-shed, and auengement,  
 Now praysd, hereafter deare thou shalt repent:  
 For life must life, and bloud must bloud repay.  
 Is not enough they evill life forespent?  
 For he, that once hath missed the right way

The further doth he goe, the further he doth stray.' (I.ix.43)

Thus even the knight's victories over Sans Foy and Sans Ioy are turned against him and become part of his blood-guilt. Even though he knows that suicide is a mortal sin, and is thus equipped to be victorious in the discussion with Despair, the growing conviction of his own

overwhelming sinfulness so plays upon his emotions that he takes the dagger offered him by Despair and,

'At last resolu'd to work his finall smart,  
He lifted vp his hand, that backe againe did start.' (I.ix.51)

It is at this point that Una intervenes, snatching the dagger from his hand, and reviving his faith by reminding him that he will certainly obtain heavenly mercy. The knight is thus able to leave Despair's cave, physically unharmed, but morally shaken.

Again Spenser explains for the reader the nature of the knight's battle:

'What man is he, that boasts of fleshly might,  
And vaine assurance of mortality,  
Which all so soone, as it doth come to fight,  
Against spirituall foes, yeelds by and by,  
Or from the field most cowardly doth fly?  
Ne let the man ascribe it to his skill,  
That thorough grace hath gained victory.  
If any strength we have, it is to ill,  
But all the good is God's, both powere and eke will.'(I.x.1)

So shaken is the Redcrosse Knight by this ordeal, and his recent series of mistakes and defeats, that he cannot possibly deal with the Dragon which is the object of his quest. Una therefore takes him to Dame Caelia's House of Holinesse, where he can be healed both spiritually and physically. The influences of the terrible companions and opponents, with whome he has passed so much time, are countered by association with Dame Caelia's three daughters, Fidelity, Speranza, and Charissa. He is also placed in the care of Caelia's physician, Patience, and his assistants, Amendment, Penance, Remorse and



Repentance, under whose painful but effective ministrations he is restored to health - that is, to that state of Holiness in which alone he can hope to combat the mighty Dragon.

While staying in the House of Holiness after his recovery, the Redcrosse Knight is taken to meet the hermit Contemplation. With Contemplation the knight goes to the top of a mountain, where he is shown a vision of the New Jerusalem, the future home of God's chosen people. This, says the hermit, is to be the eventual home of the Redcrosse Knight:

'For thou emongst those Saints, whom thou doest see,  
Shalt be a Saint, and thine owne nations frend  
And Patrone: thou Saint George shalt called bee,  
Saint George of mery England, the signe of victoree.'(I.x.61)

The hermit also considers it necessary to explain, for the benefit of the reader as much as for that of the knight, why an apparently foreign saint should become patron of England. To do this, he adopts the well-known device of the changeling, saying:

'And thou faire ymp, sprong out from English race,  
However now accopted Elfins sonne,' (I.x.60)

and also:

'For well I wote, thou springst from ancient race  
Of Saxon kings, that haue with mightie hand  
And many bloudie battailles fought in place  
High reard their royall throne in Britane land,  
And vanquisht them, vnable to withstand:  
From thence a Faerie thee vnweeting reft,  
There as thou slepst in tender swadling band,

And her base Elfin brood there for thee left.  
Such men do Chaungelings call, so chaunged by Faeries theft.'  
(I.x.65)

Thus Spenser establishes that S. George is, by birth, of the English royal house, and therefore a saint well qualified to be patron of England.<sup>1</sup>

This revelation of the hermit Contemplation's is, in fact, the climax of Book One of the Faerie Queene, for it shows the Redcrosse Knight what his glorious destiny is to be; from this point the knight knows that he will be able to overcome the Dragon, and will eventually join the ranks of the saints in the New Jerusalem. The fight with the Dragon now becomes, not an end in itself as it once had been, but merely an obstacle in his path, which he must pass as soon as possible. Indeed, when the full significance of the vision has penetrated the knight's mind, he is so impatient that he wants to by-pass the obstacle altogether, and the hermit has to recall him to a sense of his duty to Una:

'O let me not (quoth he) then turne againe  
Backe to the world, whose ioyes so fruitlesse are;  
But let me here for aye in peace remaine,  
Or streight way on that last long voyage fare,  
That nothing may my present hope empare.  
That may not be (said he) ne maist thou yit  
Forgo that royall maides bequeathed care,  
Who did her cause into thy hand commit,  
Till from her cursed foe thou haue her freely quite.'(I.x.63)

1. This radical alteration of the traditional material is a good illustration of the sense of freedom with which Spenser felt able to adapt the S. George legend.

Clearly, the, George's adventures have been a series of tests, or a process of purification, by means of which his character and prowess have been so refined that he is now of the calibre of a saint. The qualities which he had hitherto been assumed, by Lydgate and others,<sup>1</sup> to possess, have here been carefully tested, defined and proved by Spenser; and, moreover, Spenser makes it clear that it is these qualities alone which enable the Redcrosse Knight to overcome the Dragon.

Although the combat with the Dragon is extremely hard-fought, its result is never in doubt so long as George maintains these saintly qualities. Yet it is a contest that he cannot afford to lose, for the Dragon is none other than Satan himself. Spenser makes this identification clear when he refers to 'that oldnDragon' (a phrase used to describe Satan in Revelation XII.9.), and also when he arms the Dragon with poisonous stings, which are closely paralleled by the fiery darts of the evil one' mentioned by S. Paul.<sup>2</sup>

The fight does in fact last for nearly three days; several times the saint wavers, and is almost overcome, but the revival of his virtues brings him eventual victory. Again in this fight, as in his previous encounters, S. George is in danger of losing his shield of faith, and only manages to retain it after great effort, and after cutting off one of the Dragon's feet. (I.xi.40-43.)

1. See above, p.30

2. Ephesians. VI.13-17

In addition, the saint obtains refreshment, through God's help, in a more supernatural manner. At the end of the first day's fighting, S. George, wounded and exhausted, is knocked down by the Dragon and falls into the 'well of life', so named

'For unto life the dead it could restore,  
 And guilt of sinfull crimes cleane wash away,  
 Those that with sicknesse were infected sore,  
 It could recure, and aged long decay  
 Renew, as one were borne that very day.' (I.xi.30)

George spends the night in the well, and emerges next morning completely refreshed.

Similarly, after the second day's fighting, George falls into a stream flowing from the tree of life, and again emerges refreshed, to continue the fight. (I. xi.46-52).

Both of these incidents (which may, incidentally, have been suggested by the story of Bevis, who also falls into a magic well during his dragon fight)<sup>1</sup> have a clearly religious significance, and reiterate Spenser's argument that even the most saintly need direct help from God in order to combat evil, and also that that help will not be denied to anyone who has sufficient faith and humility. When the battle has been finally won, Una too, who has been watching from a nearby hill, emphasises this relationship between man and God:

'The God she prayd, and thankt her faithful knight,  
 That had atchieved so great a conquest by his might.'  
 (I.xi.55)

With the Dragon safely disposed of, Una's parents and their

1. Sir Beves of Hampton. Ed. E. Kolbing. E.E.T.S. Extra Series 46, 48  
 (1885,6) pp.125-132

subjects are liberated, and there is a general celebration. George and Una are betrothed, in spite of Duessa's making one last attempt to prevent it (I.xii.26-28), and S. George returns to the court of the Faerie Queene, 'her to serve six yeares in warlike wize'(I.xii.18) Spenser thus does not go quite as far as did Johnson two years later, who makes George marry and have children, but he does ignore the earlier traditions, since in no earlier version does George even contemplate marriage with the rescued princess.

.....ooOoo.....

Although Spenser has attempted to fit his treatment of the S. George legend into the narrative structure of a Romance, the moral and spiritual allegory often proves too powerful for such a structure. It has been noticed that the flow of the narrative is often impeded by such elaborate personifications as those of the Seven Deadly Sins and of Caelia's three daughters,<sup>1</sup> but there are also instances where, in order to serve an allegorical purpose, Una and the Redcrosse Knight are forced to act in a manner contrary to their characters.

Una, for example, in her behaviour towards Corceca and Abessa (canto iii), is far from admirable. When Una appears walking down the lane accompanied by a lion, Abessa is naturally terrified and runs home, where she bars the door behind her. But

'..... By this arriued there  
 Dame Una, wearie Dame, and entrance did require.  
 Which when none yeelded, her vnruely Page (i.e. the lion)

1. See above, p. 45

With his rude clawes the wicket open rent,  
And let her in.' (I.iii.12-13)

Moreover, when Kirkrapine, Abessa's lover, arrives at the house, that night both she and her mother, Corceca, are too frightened of the lion to get up and let him in. Eventually he loses patience and breaks his way in, but the lion leaps upon him and tears him apart. Una appears completely indifferent to this unruly conduct on the part of her companion, and

'Now when broad day the world discovered has,  
Vp Una rose, vp rose the Lyon eke,  
And on their former iourney forward pas' (I.iii.21)

presumably without a backward glance, or another thought for their unfortunate hostesses of the previous night. This incident, allegorically justifiable, impairs the effect of the narrative at this point for, for all Una knew to the contrary, they were perfectly respectable people, and there was no excuse for her trespass.

The conduct of the Redcrosse Knight, too, is not above criticism. He is far too ready to become involved in fights which, however necessary to Spenser's allegorical purpose, are only paralleled in the poorer Romances. His fight with Sans Ioy at the House of Pride, with Duessa as the prize for the victor (canto v), is somewhat distasteful, despite its allegorical propriety. Also, the final battle with the Dragon (canto xi), if considered purely from the point of view of the narrative, is far from convincing; although the reader may be happy to accept the idea of a dragon and of the magic power of wells and springs, he is scarcely likely to be happy with a hero who spends

two whole nights immersed in water.

Thus it is evident that the moral and spiritual significance of his work occupied Spenser's attention to the partial exclusion of the narrative aspect. In so far as the work has a narrative pattern, it is clearly supplied by a combination of the Gareth legend with the themes of a quest for Holiness and, probably, of the Pilgrimage of Man: the first of these themes being treated by part allegory and part personification, and the second purely by allegory.

In addition, however, there is clearly discernible an allegorical structure which is almost entirely independent of the narrative pattern. It consists of a symmetry created by balancing and contrasting allegorical figures and actions which are totally opposed to each other. By examining these contrasts it is possible to find a structure more consistent than that of the narrative, and also to reach an approximation to Spenser's own theological position.

The most obvious of the contrasts are those between Una and Duessa, and between the House of Pride and the House of Holiness: the one continuing throughout the book, and the other carefully balanced between cantos four and ten. The significance of these contrasts is quite clearly that evil is wont to imitate good, and that in spite of this, the wary Christian will, with God's help, always be able to distinguish between the two. A similar conclusion may be reached by comparing Archimago with Contemplation, and by making numerous other comparisons.

It is noticeable that Spenser attaches great importance not only to people's actions, but to the thoughts behind their actions. Both Caelia and Corceca, for example, are portrayed as having their rosaries always in their hands: Caelia's habit of thoughtful prayer is clearly to be admitted, whereas the blind devotion of Corceca is equally clearly worthless and unavailing.

Similarly, both Una and Duessa, by calling out during a fight, revive the Redcrosse Knight and enable him to win. After Una's exhortation the knight defeats Error and returns to his journey, whereas after Duessa's encouragement, which was intended for his opponent, he only finds himself in greater trouble, and further from the path he ought to pursue. The Redcrosse Knight also finds himself contemplating suicide on two separate occasions, and for two totally opposed reasons. In the cave of Despair he is so convinced of his own sinfulness that he feels that suicide is the only way to prevent further sins; but when Contemplation shows him the vision of the New Jerusalem, he feels that he cannot wait to get there. The difference in attitude towards death on the part of Despair and Contemplation is emphasised by the fact that the one offers the knight a selection of nooses and daggers, and tells him to commit the mortal sin, whereas the other sympathises with his feelings, but reminds him that it is his duty to continue living.

Perhaps most important of all the contrasts in the book is the way in which George's devotion to Duessa is paralleled by a whole series of 'champions' who attach themselves to Una. It is this series of companions of Una's which, more than anything else, shows by



contraries what sort of a man it is that can achieve Holiness. The first to appear to Una is a fierce lion, which is, however, subdued at the sight of Una's perfection. For a short while the lion serves adequately as her champion; its strength procures her a night's lodging and keeps her from harm. Its great deficiency is its inability to regard God's laws of conduct, and it is for this reason that it is so easily killed by Sans Loy. Archimago, too, makes a short-lived attempt to pose as Una's champion. He appears dressed in a copy of George's Christian Armour, and deceives her into thinking that he is indeed her Redcrosse Knight, but his intentions towards her are evil. His impersonation, however, also deceives Sans Loy, who promptly attacks him and all but kills him. Sir Satyrane, like the lion, is 'from lawes of men exilde', and the last we hear of him in this book is when he is engaged in a fierce battle with Sans Loy.

All this, together with the opponents who are matched against the Redcrosse Knight, shows the reader just what sort of champion it is who can be a fit companion of Una's Truth. He must, of course, have a desire to do good, but this desire must clearly be reinforced by faith in God, by sincerity, and by strict obedience to God's laws.

From such indications as these it is quite evident that Spenser was advocating a Protestant form of Christianity; his use of military imagery, his emphasis on the power of Faith, and his reverence for God's law, as opposed to the law of the Church, are sufficient to show this. He never refers to the value of a priest as an intermediary between God and Man, and the gift the Redcrosse Knight gives Prince Arthur -

'A booke, wherein his Saueours testament

Was writ with golden letters rich and braue' - (I.ix.19)

shows that guidance as to God's law is rather to be obtained from the Scriptures. Moreover, throughout the story of the Redcrosse Knight there is a Calvinistic insistence on the unworthiness of Man and his utter dependence on the Grace of God.<sup>1</sup>

The details of the allegory show, however, that in spite of his Protestant outlook, Spenser was very conservative in his regard for the ritual of the Roman Catholic Church. It has already been noticed that Caelia's use of the rosary is to be commended, and there are other approving references to Roman practises. The appearance of Kirkrapine (Despoiler of churches) in canto three, and his fate as victim of Una's lion, clearly indicate that Spenser did not feel at home in churches with plain walls and no ornaments, and the evil influence of Duessa's seven-headed monster reinforces this impression:

'His tayle was stretched out in wondrous length,  
That to the house of heauenly gods it raught,  
And with extorted powre, and borrow'd strength,  
The euer-burning lamps from thence it brought,  
And proudly threw to ground, as things of nought;  
And vnderneath his filthy feet did tread  
The sacred things, and holy heasts foretaught'. (I.vii.18)

Though this allusion clearly derives from the Revelation,<sup>2</sup> it is

1. It has been suggested, by F.M. Padelford among others, that Spenser was in fact a Calvinist, and there is no doubt that the Elizabethan clergy generally were Calvinistic in outlook. See, however, Grace W. Landrum, 'Spenser's use of the Bible and his alleged Puritanism' P.N.L.A. 41 (1926) 517-44
2. XII. 3-4. 'Behold a great red dragon having seven heads, and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth'.

quite applicable to the activities of the extreme Protestants who denied the validity of the Reserved Sacrament.

Naturally, it is canto ten, with its account of the House of Holiness, which gives most information as to Spenser's opinions on church practises. Fidelia, for instance,

'..... was araied all in lilly white,  
 And in her right hand bore a cup of gold,  
 With wine and water fild vp to the hight,  
 In which a Serpent did himself enfold,  
 That horroure made to all, that did behold;  
 But she no whit did chaunge her constant mood:  
 And in her other hand she fast did hold  
 A booke, that was both signd and seald with blood,  
 Wherein darke things were writ, hard to be vnderstood.  
 (I.x.13)

Thus the Sacrament of Holy Communion is preserved in almost its Roman Form, with the Serpent indicating a spiritual presence of Christ, if not actual transubstantiation. The power of the Communion, however, is equated with that of the Scripture. But far from allowing each man to interpret the scripture for himself, Spenser says that none could read Fidelia's 'booke', 'except she did them teach', for 'weaker wit of man could never reach' the wisdom it contained.

Penance, although a Sacrament according to the Roman Church, is not regarded as such by Spenser, but it is still of great importance, for 'bitter Penance with an yron whip' is instrumental in restoring the Redcrosse Knight to health. It is also made clear in this canto that Spenser retained the Roman view that Good Works were of value in saving the soul, for Coelia has an Almoner whose

'..... office was, the hungry for to feed,  
 And thirsty giue to drink, a worke of grace:  
 He feard not once him selfe to be in need,  
 Ne car'd to hoord for those, whom he did breede:  
 The grace of God he layd vp still in store,  
 Which as a stocke he left vnto his seede;  
 He had enough, what need him care for more?  
 And had he lesse, yet some he would giue to the pore.' (I.x.38)

This description smacks of supererogation, which was condemned by the more extreme Protestants as a rather mercenary method of achieving salvation.

The account of the dragon fight in canto eleven provides more evidence of Spenser's conservatism. The Well of Life, into which the knight falls after the first day's fighting, clearly represents baptism:

'For vnto life the dead it could restore,  
 And guilt of sinfull crimes cleane wash away,  
 Those that with sicknesse were infected sore,  
 It could recure, and aged long decay  
 Renew, as one were borne that very day.' (I.xi.30)

Thus Spenser supports the doctrine of original sin, and its washing away in baptism - an aspect of baptism which Calvin had rejected.

After the second day's fighting, however, S. George falls exhausted into a stream flowing from the Tree of Life. This tree has often been identified with the Holy Communion,<sup>1</sup> but there is no

1. C.F. V.K. Whitaker 'The Religious Basis of Spenser's Thought', Stanford University Publications (Language and Literature).VII. (Stanford, California. 1950)

possible reference here to the Last Supper, and a much more obvious identification is with the cross. That it is in fact the cross is indicated by the power of the balm from the tree:

'Life and long health that gracious ointment gave,  
 And deadly woundes could heale, and reare again  
 The senseless corse appointed for the grave,' (I.xi.48)

and also by the way in which the knight 'lay as in a dreame of deepe delight' while the balm's 'vertuous might did heale his wounds, and scorching heat alay'; surely not a condition in which to receive Holy Communion! Rather, the Tree of Life stands for the salvation brought to Man by Christ's death on the cross, and whose power does not depend on the fitness of Man to receive it.

Thus Spenser again balances his conservatism in describing the wiping out of sins by baptism, with a more Protestant emphasis on atonement for sins by the grace of God and Christ's death on the cross.

Hence it seems that Spenser was a typical adherent of the Anglican compromise. He evidently, like Parker and the more moderate clergy, appreciated most of the ritual of the Roman Catholic Church, but condemned the abuses of which the Church had been guilty for a century or more, and which robbed the ritual of much of its true significance. Throughout his treatment of the S. George legend he has deliberately balanced ritual with thought, and placed an equal emphasis on both. In this way he has shown that the ritual is only of value if accompanied by faith and by knowledge of the meaning of the ritual.

Indeed, the religious position presented in book one of the Faerie Queene is almost certainly that of Queen Elizabeth,<sup>1</sup> in whose honour the work was ostensibly written; and Spenser would appear to have used the legend of England's patron saint to justify England's own form of Christianity.

1. The Queen's views would be well known to Spenser, for he was at Cambridge immediately after the conflict between Cartwright and Whitgift (1569-70), and was also, from 1578 to 1580, secretary to John Young, Bishop of Rochester. In 1580 Spenser went to Ireland, where he began the Faerie Queene almost immediately.

## CHAPTER V

The Romance development of the S. George legend reached its climax in the Seven Champions of Christendom,<sup>1</sup> by Richard Johnson, part one of which was first published in 1592. The complete work is in three parts; evidently the other two were written separately at a later date, and then added to the already existing work. Part three is generally agreed to be of a much later date than the other two, and by a different hand; in any case, it deals only with the sons of the Champions, and is thus not strictly relevant to the S. George legend. Johnson himself says that he wrote the second part separately, 'being thereto encouraged by the great acceptance of my first part.'<sup>2</sup>

The work as a whole is a prose Romance dealing with the adventures of the seven Champions - S. George of England, S. Denis of France, S. James of Spain, S. Anthony of Italy, S. Andrew of Scotland, S. Patrick of Ireland, and S. David of Wales - and their nine sons (S. George, we are told, had three, and the others one each). It has none of the moral or spiritual significance with which Spenser enriched a similar blend of saint's legend and Romance. Where Spenser purified the Romantic ideal of Chivalry Johnson delighted in the purely physical aspect of his heroes' adventures, to the exclusion of almost all else. Indeed, he seems to have utilised the stories of the saints mainly because of their popular appeal, in order to revitalise and

1. The edition referred to throughout is the London edition of 1824.
2. In a note 'To the Gentle Reader' preceding Part II.

reissue a book of well-known Romantic adventures.

On Johnson's own evidence, and also by virtue of the fact that it ran through numerous editions (a number were brought out as late as the nineteenth century), the Seven Champions was clearly very popular in its own day, and a modicum of that popularity persisted well into the last century. It certainly enjoyed a much wider popularity than did Spenser's Faerie Queene, because its appeal is much more that of a simple adventure story.

Its popularity was due to those qualities which made any Romance popular. It is full of knights in armour, enchanters, monsters, and damsels in distress. Added to this, of course, for an English reader, there is the patron saint of England outdoing his rival Champions in the performance of exciting but improbable adventures; on occasions, indeed, George has to rescue the other six from the power of some giant or enchanter.

However, the Seven Champions suffers from the usual debility of Romances: excessive length and excessive complication. The Medieval reader (or listener) apparently expected this quality in his stories, and the sixteenth and seventeenth century reader was prepared to tolerate it; although the large number of abridged, chap-book versions of the Seven Champions which were very soon produced shows that during the seventeenth century a good many readers of adventure stories came to prefer a shorter and simpler approach. The modern reader's interest wanes during part two, and all but vanishes when faced with part three.

.....ooOoo.....



Of those parts of the Seven Champions which relate to S. George, those contained in part one of the book are by far the most important. They represent a fusion of the S. George legend with the well-known Romance of Bevis of Hampton.<sup>1</sup> J.L. Matzke suggests that this fusion had in some measure taken place before Johnson wrote the Seven Champions,<sup>2</sup> but the evidence he brings forward is in the shape of an obscure French manuscript, which Matzke himself had never seen, and of which there is no evidence that Johnson had. Therefore, in England at least, this fusion seems to be original with Johnson.

The pattern of the Bevis story is as follows:

- 1) After the birth of Bevis his mother procures his father's death, and marries the murderer.
- 2) Because he has accused his mother of the murder, Bevis' death is arranged, but he is saved by a faithful forester, Saber.
- 3) Bevis causes trouble to his step-father, and is eventually sold to some merchants, who take him to Armenia and present him to King Ermin.
- 4) Bevis goes boar hunting, and the Princess Josian, seeing him in action, falls in love with him. On his return from the hunt he is waylaid by twelve foresters, but manages to kill them all.
- 5) Bevis is maligned by two knights, and is sent away to Damascus. On his arrival he interrupts a sacrifice to the local deity, and when brought before King Brademond is insolent to him. He is thrown into prison, where he remains for seven years.
- 6) Josian is married, against her will, to Yvor of Mombraunt, but preserves her virginity by a magic charm.

1. Ed. E. Kolbing E.E.T.S. extra Series 46,48,65 (1885,1886,1894)  
 2. 'Contributions to the S. George Legend' P.M.L.A. 19 (1904) p.449

George and Sabra, in order to transform the one story into the other.

Even before the appearance of the Seven Champions, the S. George legend had had a great deal in common with that of Bevis. Both heroes spend their youth adventuring in the East. George wins (but does not accept) the love of a princess by killing a dragon, in much the way as Bevis wins the love of Josian by killing a boar. Both of them arrive in a foreign land, where they interfere with the local religion and overthrow statues of the local deities. For this offence both are thrown into prison, and the Bevis legend and some versions of the S. George legend make the term of imprisonment seven years. In addition, Bevis fights a dragon near Cologne, so that both heroes are associated with a dragon fight.

Thus the two stories were always likely to be mutually attractive, and Johnson had very little work to do in running them together. Structurally, the Bevis story was the more useful to him, since it already had a complex pattern of adventures, whereas the S. George legend consisted of only two adventures, still independent of each other and only arbitrarily drawn together.

The only significant structural alterations to the Bevis story made by Johnson are in the first chapters, where he adopts an elaborate supernatural birth for S. George, and in that section of the Seven Champions which deals with the adventures of S. George and Sabra in the land of the Amazons.<sup>1</sup> This latter alteration is merely an addition, but the introduction of an entirely new account of the hero's birth is, perhaps, more interesting.

1. Part I. ch. 16. pp. 146-58

- 7) After his seven years in prison Bevis kills his gaolers and escapes.
- 8) He goes to Mombraunt, and carries off Josian. Two lions, by refusing to harm her, show Bevis that she is still a virgin.
- 9) Bevis fights and defeats the giant Ascopart, who becomes his page. The trio make their way to Cologne.
- 10) Bevis fights and kills a dragon which has been ravaging the district of Cologne. During the fight he refreshed by the water of a holy well into which he falls.
- 11) Bevis departs for England, leaving Josian in the care of Ascopart. The giant is decoyed away, and the wicked Earl Miles marries Josian against her will. She murders him, and is condemned to death.
- 12) Bevis returns just in time to save her from burning at the stake.
- 13) Bevis, Saber, and Ascopart declare war on Bevis' stepfather, the Emperor of Almaine, who is captured and put to death by being cast into a cauldron of molten lead.
- 14) Bevis marries Josian, and they have two children, who, because of a misadventure, are born in a forest. The children are given into the care of a forester and a fisherman, because Ascopart turns traitor and carries off Josian, intending to deliver her over to Yvor.
- 15) Ascopart is killed by Saber, and Josian is eventually restored to Bevis.
- 16) Their two sons are recalled; one of them becomes heir to the Kingdom of England, and the other becomes ruler of Armenia. Bevis and Josian then die, locked in each others' arms, and are buried with great ceremony.

With very little alteration, this plan of the Bevis story becomes that of the S. George sections of the Seven Champions. For the most part, indeed, it is only necessary to replace Bevis and Josian with<sup>1</sup>

1. A synopsis of parts I and II of the Seven Champions is given in Appendix 3.

Since the original S. George legend contained no account of the saint's birth, it might have seemed natural for Johnson to have utilised the account of Bevis' birth. The reason for his not doing this may be, as Matzke suggests, that S. George's 'later prominence and glorious career called for a birth attended by omens and supervised by fairies and supernatural powers.'<sup>1</sup> According to Johnson, George's mother dreamt, before his birth, that it was a dragon that was in her womb. When S. George comes to be born he has to be cut from his mother's womb, and she dies immediately afterwards. The infant George has three birth-marks: a dragon, a red cross, and a golden garter. Finally, soon after his birth, George is stolen by Kalyb, the enchantress of the woods, who keeps him prisoner for the first fourteen years of his life.

Johnson's devotion to classical literature is quite evident in this account of the saint's birth, and he himself parallels the mother's dream with that of Hecuba when about to give birth to Paris. Hecuba's dream that her womb contains a fire-brand has always been a well-known example of a dream heralding the birth of a heroic child, but in view of Paris' disastrous career the parallel is not a happy one.

The hero who is cut from his mother's womb as also figure familiar to Elizabethan and Jacobean readers. Shakespeare uses the same device in Macbeth, for Macbeth bears 'a charmed life, which must not yield To one of woman born'; but the charm is no avail against MacDuff, who 'was from his mother's womb Untimely ripp'd.'<sup>2</sup> King

1. 'Contributions to the S. George Legend' P.M.L.A. 19. (1904) p.473

2. Macbeth V. 8.

Richard III is another example of a man whose premature birth showed that he was destined for an outstanding career, and abnormal births of an even stranger nature occur in classical literature. Athene was said to have been born out of Zeus' head, with the aid of a mallet and wedge, while Dionysus was sown up in Zeus' thigh to mature and be born. A closer example to that of Johnson's S. George is the birth of Eurystheus, whom Hera hurried into the two months premature in order that he should be born before Heracles, and thus become heir to the Kingdom of Mycenae.

The most familiar of all the ominous circumstances of George's is his exile from home, which serves to unite his birth with the structure of the Bevis story, which is utilised for the rest of George's adventures. All the heroes of Greek and Roman legend, and most of those of Romance, from Oedipus to King Arthur, seem to have suffered this childhood exile. Many of these heroes, indeed, were stolen by fairies, just as George is stolen by Kalyb, and it is noteworthy that Spenser, too, adopted this device when recounting the birth of his Redcrosse Knight.

George's birthmarks, of course, denote the three things, dragon, cross, and garter, which were to serve as the symbols of his cult in England.

S. George's fight with the dragon, which had once formed his only known adventure, and which Spenser used as the Redcrosse Knight's culminating achievement in book one of the Faerie Queene, is, in the Seven Champions, the knight's very first adventure after escaping from the clutches of Kalyb. It replaces the boar hunt of the Bevis story, and serves the same purpose of sparking off a whole series of complicated

adventures. Sabra, the King of Egypt's daughter, who is about to be sacrificed to the dragon, but is rescued from it by S. George, immediately falls in love with him; and it is this love of George and Sabra which provides a theme for the rest of George's adventures in part one of the Seven Champions.

The fight itself is described in far more detail than had ever been attempted before, except by Spenser, and Johnson has evidently borrowed ideas from Bevis' fight with the dragon of Cologne. This dragon, like that in the S. George legend, has poisonous breath, with the aid of which it almost overcomes Bevis. He, however, refreshes himself in the water of a well so holy that the dragon dare not come near it. Bevis emerges from the well, but the poison festers his skin and rots his armour; he falls back into the well, which restores his health so that he can continue the fight and eventually kill the dragon. Johnson, for S. George's fight replaces the well with an

orange tree 'which has that rare virtue in it, that no venomous creature durst come within the compass of its branches'. Like Bevis, George twice retires to the protection of the tree, and on the second occasion he eats an orange which so revives him that he continues the battle and kills the dragon. There is no apparent reason why the orange tree should have replaced the well,<sup>1</sup> but in most other respects Johnson's account of the dragon fight is a copy of the account of the Bevis' fight.

1. But it may be noted that Johnson uses the orange tree on two other occasions: a) Part I, ch.17. p. 167 when George fights off the animals which have carried off his children. b) Part II, ch. 3. p. 201. three Moors tie a maiden to an orange tree, intending to rape her, but she is rescued by George's three sons.

In addition to these adaptations of the Bevis legend, there are two details in the Seven Champions which Matzke suggests are echoes of the story of George's martyrdom. First, the poisoned cup of wine which the jealous Almidor offers to S. George after he has killed the dragon<sup>1</sup> may be derived from the attempt of the magician Athanasius to defeat the power of the saint by the same means. Secondly the sentence pronounced on S. George by the Soldan of Persia - 'First, thy skin shall be flayed from off thy flesh alive; next, thy flesh shall be torn with red-hot pincers from thy bones; and lastly, thy limbs parted from each other by wild horses'.<sup>2</sup> - recalls very strongly the first few torments to which he was subjected by Dacian in the accounts of the martyrdom.

There are a number of other details which appear in Johnson's account of S. George, but not in Bevis of Hampton. Some, like the account of the Amazons, almost certainly derive directly from classical literature, and almost all are of a very minor character. A few, such as the account of George digging his way out of prison, would seem to afford examples rare in part one of the Seven Champions, of Johnson's reliance on his own invention.

.....ooOoo.....

The second part of the Seven Champions is even more complicated than the first, since it follows the adventures not only of the champions themselves, but also those of S. George's three sons. These two threads, complicated in themselves, are quite skilfully woven

1. Part I, ch.3.p.18.
2. Part I, ch.3.p.23.

together, and the structure appears to be of Johnson's own invention, for no other story can be found bearing any striking structural resemblance to it. The individual adventures contained in it, though, are of stock Romance type, and parallels can be found for most of them. Johnson cannot, however, be said to have drawn his material from any one Romance, or group of Romances.

The section begins with the return of George's three sons, now grown into young men, to England to see their parents. Soon after, while out hunting with her family, Sabra dies as a result of a fall into a bramble bush. The seven Champions then set off on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, leaving George's three sons behind. The otherwise separate stories of the two groups of heroes are held together by the appearance of Sabra's ghost to her sons. She warns them to follow their father in order to save him and his companions from great danger. The two groups meet at the Black Castle, where the three sons save the seven Champions from their long sleep in the cave.

For S. George's last adventure the story returns to his native Coventry. While he has been on his pilgrimage a dragon has appeared in Warwickshire and is ravaging the district. George assails the dragon and manages to kill it, but dies soon afterwards of the wounds inflicted by the dragon's tail.

Johnson uses this fight to explain the George-and-Dragon device; the fight ends, he says, because

'the dragon, having no stay of his strength, fell with his back downward to the ground, and his feet upward; whereat the champion taking advantage, kept him still down, with his horse standing



upon, fighting as you see in the plate of Saint George, with his lance goring him through in divers parts of the body.'<sup>1</sup>

Except in this one instance, it has always been assumed that the dragon in the device is the one from which George rescued the princess. The dramatic value of making the traditional picture of the saint represent his last, rather his first, battle evidently appealed to Johnson. Moreover, this dramatic value is heightened by a suggestion, before the fight, that George is here fulfilling his destiny; there was, we are told, a prophecy that 'a Christian knight never born of woman' should destroy the dragon.

Although S. George and the other six Champions all meet their deaths at the end of part two of the Seven Champions, there is in part three an echo of one other tradition concerning S. George. In chapter seven we find that, Arthur-like, the seven Champions are not properly dead, but only asleep, and that they can be revived by 'laying the herb bazil to the roots of their tongues'. All seven are duly revived, and take part in a great Christian battle against the pagans.

This recalls the traditions of S. George and other warrior saints, who, during the crusades, helped the Christian armies to storm Antioch and Jerusalem, and whose appearance struck terror into the Saracens.

.....ooOoo.....

The Seven Champions quite clearly depended for its popularity on its host of heroic adventures, but this Romantic quality is reinforced by a rather crude form of patriotism. Not only is Johnson's S. George

1. Part II, ch. 24. p.338

destined to become patron saint of England, but he is also born at Coventry, in the heart of England, and is a descendant of the English royal house.

All seven Champions are, of course, virtually invincible, and in point of honour Johnson deals fairly by them all, only giving precedence to S. George and treating the others with absolute equality. Much as it must have pleased the contemporary English reader, George is perhaps given too much prominence, and the quality of the story suffers as a result.

After freeing himself from the enchantress Kalyb, George's very first feat is to free the other six Champions from her prison; and this is not the only time he comes to their rescue. During the battle between the Christians and the Persians it is S. George who overcomes the army of spirits conjured up by Osmand, and thus saves the day<sup>1</sup>; in the adventure of the fountain of Damasco it is S. George who releases the other six when they have been captured by the giant<sup>2</sup>; again, in the cave below the Black Castle it is S. George who kills the mighty serpent while the others are asleep.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, S. George seems to spend much of his time looking after his six companions, and it is only when the heroes split up, as they occasionally do, and go their separate ways, that the other six become Champions in their own right.

When the seven Champions are seen working together, this English patriotism extends to include the countries represented by the other

1. Part I, ch.19. pp.173-188.
2. Part II, ch.4. pp.205-215.
3. Part II, ch.8. pp.242-255

six Champions, and it is implied throughout the book that the inhabitants of Western Europe are, as it were, a superior race. The adventures of the seven generally involve the destruction of numerous Moors, Saracens, and Jews. Johnson evidently took the view that since these seven were his heroes, anything they might do was automatically right, and that their superior military prowess was sufficient justification for their actions.

The most flagrant example of gangsterism, however, occurs in Italy, S. Anthony's own country. S. George visits a nunnery near Rome, when the seven are guests of the Emperor, and falls in love with one of the nuns, who happens to be the Emperor's daughter. Even though she has taken a vow of chastity, George declares his love for her, and begs her to satisfy his desires (which in anyone else Johnson would have described as base). When his pleading has no effect he resorts to threats of violence against all the inmates of the nunnery. Eventually the lady manages to put him off for a while and commits suicide. The death of the Emperor's daughter naturally leads to resentment against S. George, and the seven Champions - including S. Anthony - are forced to fight their way out of Italy.<sup>1</sup> Throughout this act of banditry and treachery to a host, Johnson attaches not one word of blame to the conduct of S. George.

Another example of unsaintly conduct on the part of S. George is the execution of Almidor, the Black King of Morocco.<sup>2</sup> It was he who

1. Part II, ch.15. pp.293-302.

2. Part I, ch.14. p.117.

had treacherously married Sabra after sending George to Persia, where he was imprisoned. Once George has won his lady back, and has taken Almidor prisoner, he prepares a cauldron of lead and brimstone for Almidor's execution, saying,

'Thou seest the torment prepared for thy death, this brazen cauldron filled with boiled lead and brimstone, wherein thy body shall be speedily cast, and boiled till thy detested limbs be consumed to a watery substance in this sparkling liquid.'

Ostensibly, the purpose of this torment is to convert Almidor to Christianity, for George promises that his life will be spared on condition of his conversion. The reader's sympathy, however, is aligned against Almidor not because he is a pagan, but because he had so treacherously married Sabra, and his death appears as an act of revenge on the part of S. George.

Not only the execution of Almidor, but all the deeds of the seven Champions, are carried out in the name of Christianity. But it is a very vague and shadowy form of Christianity which has no spiritual significance, and serves rather as a means of distinguishing friends from foes. Because of Johnson's predilection for classical legend, his Christian outlook seems very much entangled with paganism. His constant references to pagan deities, such as 'bright Phoebus entering the zodiac of heaven',<sup>1</sup> seem reasonable and such as might be found in the pages of any contemporary author, but there are more serious features that are alien to Christian attitudes.

1. Part I, ch.15. p.140.

When George and Sabra find themselves lost in a wilderness, and Sabra is approaching the time of her confinement, she sends George away so that he shall not be present at the birth of her children.<sup>1</sup> During the birth of her three sons she is attended, not by any Christian spirit, but by Proserpine. Again, the Italian nunnery where George caused the suicide of the Emperor's daughter is dedicated to Diana, and the nuns are permitted to wear white satin dresses and flowers in their hair.<sup>2</sup>

Moreover, during the execution of Almidor,<sup>3</sup> we find that one of the simplest of Christian beliefs is either misunderstood or completely disregarded, for Almidor's subjects address the English Champion as 'Saint George' while he is still quite obviously alive. It is also rather surprising that Johnson should turn Almidor into a pagan martyr by making him die for his faith. In fact, he suffers torments almost identical with some of those suffered by S. George in the earliest traditions, while George appears in the rôle of Dadianus.

Much of the enchantment and superstition, of which the book is full, is merely a degenerate form of something which has always been a feature of Romances; though it should be noticed that the Christians as well as the pagans frequently resort to magic. Sabra, for instance, preserves her virginity by a charm throughout seven years of marriage to Almidor. The conjurings of Johnson's wizards, too, seem strangely powerful over Christian tokens such as the red cross which George wears

1. Part I, ch.17.p.161.
2. Part II, ch.15. pp.294-5
3. Part I, ch.14. p.119.

on his breast and shield. Indeed, when the seven Champions have been magically put to sleep in the Black Castle, it is only by fulfilling the conditions of the spell that they are set free.

Thus all the achievements of the seven Champions are made to appear the result of their own efforts or of sheer good fortune, and they owe nothing to the power of God. Both the Christian religion and the ideal of chivalry, which S. George and his companions profess to hold so dear, are nothing more than pretences on the part of Johnson, and are primarily a means of readily aligning the reader's sympathies correctly.

.....ooOoo.....

The Seven Champions of Christendom is, then, a very free handling of the S. George legend, apparently drawing on all the traditions connected with the saint, but rendering many of them almost unrecognisable by an admixture from other sources, mainly Romances. It makes no claim to do anything more than present a series of adventures performed by the English patron, S. George, who is aided by the patrons of six other European countries. In doing this, it satisfies both the appetite for adventurous reading, and also the desire to identify oneself with the hero on a patriotic basis.

Johnson completely ignores George's character of saint and martyr, and the moral and spiritual significance which can so easily be infused into his fight with the dragon, and the rescue of the maiden. Instead, we are presented with a typical hero of Romance, who is never particularly saintly, and who is occasionally lustful.

However, it was this work which became the inspiration, if it may be called that, of a series of very popular ballads and of two chap-book versions which ran into numerous editions. It thus exercised an influence out of all proportion to its quality, and was at least partly responsible for making the S. George legend known to every Englishman, and has enabled writers and artists to evoke a response to it ever since.

## CHAPTER VI

Among the multiplicity of allegorical threads to be found in Book One of Spenser's Faerie Queene, one of the clearest is that of the Pilgrimage of Man, the view of life on earth as a painful journey of preparation for the heavenly goal. Anyone reading Spenser's story of the Redcrosse Knight is immediately struck by the similarity, both in overall pattern and in detail, between it and the story of Christian's adventures in the Pilgrim's Progress. As was pointed out by Harold Golder, 'The parallel between a series of incidents in Spenser's first book and a series in Pilgrim's Progress is fully as close as many another which has been held sufficient to establish a literary relationship.'<sup>1</sup>

The more obvious parallels are: Spenser's House of Holinesse and Bunyan's House Beautiful; the Redcrosse Knight's view of the New Jerusalem from the Mount of Contemplation and Christian's view of the Celestial City from the Delectable Mountains; above all, the fact that both heroes fight with a monster, and both are revived during the fight by supernatural power. There are many more such parallels, and when the similarity between the allegorical significances of the two books is also taken into account, the possibility that Spenser's work was a source for the Pilgrim's Progress deserves serious consideration. And if Bunyan did use material from Spenser's work, then the S. George legend, as adapted by Spenser, will have found its way into his work.

1. 'Bunyan and Spenser' P.M.L.A. 45. (1930) p. 216



The great difficulty in the way of this suggestions is that of showing that Bunyan ever read the Faerie Queene. Golder, having examined Bunyan's reading habits, says, 'To include the Faerie Queene among Bunyan's books - the Seven Champions of Christendom and Bevis of Hampton in his earlier period - Luther's Commentary on Galatians, Foxe's Martyrs, The Practice of Piety, The Fearful Estate of Francis Spira, The Looking-Glass for Sinners in the period after his conversion - would have something humorous in its incongruity. In neither period of his life was it at all inevitable that Bunyan should have read the Faerie Queene.'<sup>1</sup>

This by itself would be no more than an indication that it was not part of his normal reading, for people do not necessarily seek for 'congruity' in their reading matter. However, Golder goes on to show that the style and the intellectual content of the Faerie Queene would be utterly foreign to Bunyan's untutored mind, and also that Bunyan's work shows no trace of Spenserian influence - other than the one in question - even in his poetry, where one would most expect to find it.

Moreover, the theme of the Pilgrimage of Man was in common use during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and by no means confined to Spenser and Bunyan. It was in fact the motif of a large number of devotional tracts, all of which are very close, in structure and in content, to the Pilgrim's Progress, and many of which Bunyan is likely to have read.

1. Op. Cit. p. 217

One of the more interesting of these, both because of its relevance to the Pilgrim's Progress, and if its near contemporaneity with the first edition (1590) of Book One of the Faerie Queene, is the Pilgrimage to Paradise, published in 1591.<sup>1</sup> Although it is not a narrative, its clearly foreshadows that of the Pilgrim's Progress, and might well suggest such a narrative work to its readers. It takes its imagery, as did many contemporary tracts and sermons, directly from the Revelation, and hence

'The grande Captaine of our ennemyes part: is the great red Dragon; the old crafty serpent: the deceaver of the world: accuser of his brethren: and governor of darkness: which is Satan himselfe.'<sup>2</sup>

The qualities of the Christian pilgrim, the aids to which he can turn, and the temptations likely to beset him, are all examined in this book, much in the same order as in the Pilgrim's Progress, and, like most such tracts and sermons, is equally full of Bible quotations.

Although it would be foolish to suggest that any one work of this type was a source for Bunyan's work, the following idea might well have suggested the different fates of Faithful, Christian, and the other pilgrims:

'In which spirituall conflict, are three kinds of soldiours. Some painefull warriours: placed for a tyme, to be tryed in this irkesome vale of miserie, on earth. Some triumphant conquerours: for whom is appointed a crowne of victorie, in

1. By Leonard Wright, and printed in London.

2. P. 16

the glorious kingdom of heaven. And some cowardly fugitives: for who are reserved most greivous torments, in the lothsome prison of hell.<sup>1</sup>

Another and similar, but much vaster, work is John Downname's Christian Warfare. This employs the idea of the Pilgrimage of Man, as well as that of the battle between good and evil. Golder makes no doubt that Bunyan 'knew Downname's work well', and quotes from the epistle prefixed to the fourth edition (1634):

'..... the Christian in the Scriptures is compared to a Pilgrime or Travaiiler, and his life to a tedious and painful pilgrimage; in which he meeteth with few friends and many dangers, finding in all places harsh usage and hard entertainment, and running many hazards by reason of Theeves and Robbers that lie in his way .....

The elaborate frontispiece to this edition reinforces the idea by showing the Pilgrim, in his Armour of God, at various stages in the journey.

Thus, the ideas incorporated in the Pilgrim's Progress were, many of them, very common in the religious thought of the time; and therefore Bunyan is much more likely to have inherited them as part of the religious tradition into which he was converted than to have taken them from any one source, particularly one so alien to him as the Faerie Queene.

The fact remains, however, that many of the episodes in Pilgrim's Progress bear the stamp of Romance as much as that of Religion. There is no doubt that Bunyan, before his conversion, delighted in 'a ballad, a news-book, George on horseback, or Bevis of Southampton', and that

1. Leonard Wright. Pilgrimage to Paradise (London 1591) p.19.
2. A Few Sighs from Hell. John Bunyan. Works. Ed. G. Offor. (London and Edinburgh 1860-2) III. 711

this love of Romances must have provided him with plenty of material which could be put to use in his religious allegories. His own mention of 'George on horseback' proves that he was familiar with the Seven Champions of Christendom, either in its original form, or in one of the many abridgements and chap-book versions. If, therefore, any traces of the S. George legend have found their way into Bunyan's work, they are far more likely to have come by way of the Seven Champions than of the Faerie Queene.

R. Sharrock makes the following comparisons between the Seven Champions and the Pilgrim's Progress:

'S. George, when wounded in the fight with the dragon, is healed by the leaves of a miraculous tree: in Christian's combat with Apollyon, the hero is restored by leaves from the tree of life. The giant Blanderon, like giant Maul in Part Two, wields an enormous club. The mysterious episode of the Enchanted Ground where the pilgrims fall asleep may owe something to the garden of the magician Ormandine where S. David falls under a spell.'<sup>1</sup>

To these similarities might be added S. George's escape from the Persian dungeon, using an iron tool, and Christian's escape from the dungeon of giant Despair, using the key of Promise; the fact that both S. George and Christian encounter a pair of lions; and the possibility that Bunyan's Valley of the Shadow of Death may derive, as well as from the Scriptures, from S. Andrew's visit to a vale of walking spirits.

All these similarities, however, are only in minor points, or in mere details. All of them could, no doubt, be paralleled a

1. Roger Sharrock. John Bunyan. (London 1954) p.98

dozen times from any selection of Romances popular in the seventeenth century. Moreover, there are numerous other Romantic echoes in the Pilgrim's Progress which cannot be derived from the Seven Champions; and it should also be pointed out that there is a much closer similarity in such details between the Seven Champions and book one of the Faerie Queene (where there is no real possibility of interdependence) than there is between either of these and the Pilgrim's Progress.

Bunyan himself, although often accused of plagiarism even in his own lifetime, was most emphatic that the Pilgrim's Progress was entirely of his own invention:

'It came from mine own heart, so to my head,  
And thence into my fingers trickled;  
Then to my pen, from whence immediately  
On paper did I dribble it daintily.  
Manner and matter too was all mine own.'<sup>1</sup>

Therefore the book was not consciously modelled on any one source or set of sources, but rather represents a welling up of all the traditions, literary and otherwise, previously absorbed by Bunyan. Not only were his borrowings unconscious, but his militant creed must have required him to try to avoid any mixture, in his writing, of Scripture with profane material. His inevitable failure to do this - for it meant eradicating the influence of the culture within which he grew up - resulted in the unconscious blending of material which is characteristic of the Pilgrim's Progress.

R. Sharrock, in discussing the emblematic qualities of the book

1. 'An advertisement to the reader' in the Holy War. Ed. M. Peacock (Oxford 1892) p. 253

points out that Bunyan 'was not just a sum total of literary influences and old wives' tales, but a man with a strong visual imagination and a mind that delighted in pictures and similitudes'.<sup>1</sup> It was his visual imagination which enabled Bunyan to reinforce Biblical material with the naively adventurous spirit of the Romances, and to make spiritual and moral symbols out of adventures.

There can be no doubt that the universally-known emblem of the George-and-Dragon, with its immediately intelligible symbols of good and evil, must have made a great impression on Bunyan early in his life. Thus the influence exerted by this emblem must have contributed in large measure to Bunyan's representation of Christian in his armour, and his fight with Apollyon. This is not to say that there is anything in Pilgrim's Progress which can be traced directly to the George-and-Dragon emblem, but that the emblem depicted the most important hero and dragon in the popular imagination, from which Bunyan drew much of his imagery. He gained his impressions of it primarily from the Romances, which we know he once read avidly, but also from divers other sources, such as pageants and inn-signs.

Bunyan's Apollyon,

'..... cloathed with scales like a Fish (and they are his pride), he had Wings like a Dragon, feet like a Bear, and out of his belly came fire and smoak, and his mouth was the mouth of a Lion'<sup>2</sup>

clearly owes a great deal to the Revelation, where Apollyon is lord

1. 'Bunhan and the English Emblem Writers' R.E.S. 21 (1945) p. 105.
2. Pilgrim's Progress Ed. J.B. Wharely. Rev. R. Sharrock. (Oxford 1960) p. 56

of the scorpions from the fiery abyss (ch. IX, 1-11), and some of the description used by Bunyan is taken from S. John's description of the beast:

'And the beast I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion'. (ch. XIII, 2)

However, the scales, the wings, and the fiery breath, link Christian's opponent with all the dragons that had ever appeared in popular literature. When Apollyon speaks, and he and Christian have an argument before their fight, the reader is reminded of the style of the writers of popular religious tracts. Parts of it are, indeed, reminiscent of the Redcrosse Knight's encounter with Despair. Christian refers to the glorious reward he expects from God at the end of his pilgrimage, and Apollyon replies:-

'Thou has already been unfaithful in thy service to him;  
and how doest thou think to receive wages of him?

Christian: Wherein, O Apollyon! have I been unfaithful to him?

Apollyon: Thou didst faint at first setting out, when thou wast almost choked in the Gulf of Dispond; thou didst attempt wrong ways to be rid of thy burden, whereas thou shouldst have stayed till thy Prince had taken it off; thou didst sinfully sleep and lose thy choice things; thou wast, also, almost perswaded to go back, at the sight of the Lions; and when thou talkest of the Journey, and of what thou hast heard, and seen, thou art inwardly desirous of vainglory in all that thou sayest or doest.<sup>1</sup>

During the fight itself there are references to the shield of faith

1. Pilgrim's Progress Ed. J.B. Wharey. Rev. R. Sharrock (Oxford 1960)  
p. 58.

and the 'fiery darts of the evil one', which clearly derive from S. Paul;<sup>1</sup> and Christian's recovery by means of the leaves of the tree of life contains echoes of both the Redcrosse Knight and Johnson's S. George.

Such a complicated blending of imagery and ideas is typical of the Pilgrim's Progress, and lends weight to Bunyan's own claim that the whole story came to him spontaneously. The idea of the pilgrimage once in his mind, the images suggested themselves when Bunyan came to set his emotions on paper. They are the outpouring of his mind rather than a carefully planned structure, and owe their coherence entirely to the coherence of Bunyan's central idea.

The Pilgrim's Progress thus appears to be a book in which the author unconsciously calls on the material of the S. George legend, and the readers of which can be relied on to respond automatically to that material. Heroes and dragons of the S. George type had become part of the traditional lore of literature, and could be confidently used whenever an apt simile, metaphor, or allusion was required.

If the Pilgrim's Progress owes any more direct debt than this to any account of the S. George legend, then it must be to Spenser's Faerie Queene (for the fact remains that Bunyan could have read it, even though this appears unlikely), and to Johnson's Seven Champions, with which he undoubtedly was acquainted.

1. Ephesians ch. VI, 13-17.



CHAPTER VII

During the seventeenth century, as we have seen in discussing Bunyan's work, the George-and-Dragon story became ingrained in the popular imagination to such an extent that any writer could use it and confidently expect the required response in his readers. This progression is well illustrated in the large number of ballads deriving, directly or indirectly, from the S. George legend, all of which were produced in this century. The earliest of them derive from Johnson's Seven Champions of Christendom, and therefore deal with the purely physical aspects of George's adventures; while some of the later ones are rather crude parodies, showing that the legend itself was by this time so well-known that it had lost all its religious significance and could now be treated lightly.

There appears to have been no traditional S. George ballad (for I can find no trace of such a ballad)<sup>1</sup>, and this is scarcely surprising, for, as has been shown, S. George was not an indigenous folk-hero in this country. Indeed, the only verses referring to S. George which may be said to be traditional are these six lines, which form a sixteenth century charm against nightmares:

'S. George, S. George, our Ladye's knyghte,  
He walkt by daie, so did he by nyghte,  
Until such tyme as hir he founde,  
Hir he beat, and hir he bound,  
Until hir troth to him she plyghte,  
She woulde not come to him that nyghte.'<sup>2</sup>

1. No S. George ballad is included, for instance, in Francis Child's English and Scottish Popular Ballads.
2. The History of . . . S. George of Cappadocia. Anonymous (London 1661) (quoting from Scott's Discoverie of Witchcraft. London 1584)

All the ballads deriving from the S. George legend were quite clearly written as broadsides by professional ballad-makers, and there is no indication that any of them owe their material to a previously existing traditional ballad.

There are only two narrative ballads dealing with S. George himself, and both of these follow very closely the account of his adventures which is given in the Seven Champions. One of them, which tells the story of George's birth only, is of little interest, since it seems never to have been very popular, and is somewhat late in date. The only copy of it seems to be the one printed by Percy in his Reliques of Ancient English Poetry<sup>1</sup>, and Percy himself declares that the ballad 'is for the most part modern', though he gives no indication of its source. The account of the saint's birth given in the ballad differs from that of the Seven Champions only in that Kalyb's name is withheld, and George's father is here named as Albret.

The other narrative ballad, however, is far more important. It can be dated to a little after the year 1600, and was evidently immensely popular, for it was reprinted periodically for over a hundred years: exemplars of broadside editions are to be found in most important ballad collections.<sup>2</sup> It is entitled S. George and the Dragon, and deals with a section of the Seven Champions beginning with George's arrival in Egypt and ending with the proof of Sabra's virginity, and their subsequent return to Coventry. There are numerous differences

1. Series III, book iii, number 1.

2. E.g. Roxburghe: I.128, III.620, and III,849.

Printed in Roxburghe Ballads. Ed. W. Chappell, Ballad Society (1871)  
I.380.

between the ballad and the original Romance; so many, indeed, that J.L. Matzke goes so far as to suggest that the ballad had an origin entirely independent of the Seven Champions.<sup>1</sup> However, most of these differences are merely omissions, made in order to compress the material to ballad length. For example, in the Seven Champions, after George has killed the dragon he has to contend with twelve knights treacherously sent to attack him by Almidor, the Black King of Morocco; this incident is omitted from the ballad quite safely, for it makes no difference to the course of the rest of the story.

Even so, the ballad is not simply a versification of a section of the Seven Champions, for there are one or two differences more important than this. The ballad spends a great deal more time than does the Romance in describing the situation in Egypt before the arrival of S. George. We are told of the bitter arguments between king and people; that the dragon can only be appeased by the offering of a virgin each day; and of the wise men who discovered this fact. None of this material appears in the Seven Champions, and, indeed, it is not to be found in the same form in any of the earlier versions of the dragon fight.

Matzke's suggestion, prompted largely by such differences as these, of an independent origin for the ballad stems from his apparent belief that a ballad is necessarily a spontaneous folk composition, a view widely held in the nineteenth century.<sup>2</sup> He therefore thought that a ballad, although exhibiting some differences in detail, would not

1. 'The Legend of S. George', P.M.L.A. 19 (1904) p.475.
2. Though it may be doubted whether a spontaneous composition of the type envisaged by Matzke has ever, in fact, existed.

diverge from its source in any major point.

Since the ballad was written by a professional ballad-maker,<sup>1</sup> however, all these differences have a perfectly natural explanation. The writer would want his ballad to be a unit complete in itself, and well balanced. The dragon fight is the central action of the ballad, whereas in the Seven Champions it had been only preliminary adventure which set in motion the events of much of the rest of the book. The ballad-maker was thus compelled to elaborate the preliminaries to the dragon fight in order to make it the climax of his work, and give it an importance which it does not have in the Seven Champions.

Thus this ballad is essentially an extract from the Seven Champions and served the same purpose as the chap-book abridgements of that book. It helped bring the story of S. George's most famous adventure within reach of everybody who was able to read or willing to listen.

The popularity of the dragon fight as an entertaining story is well attested by a third early ballad, which was itself very popular. The Pepys Collection contains an example of it dated 1612,<sup>2</sup> and it may well be older than this. It is this ballad, which is normally, but not invariably, entitled Saint George for England, which is referred to by Nightingale in Ben Johnson's Bartholomew Fair:

'Ballads, ballads! Fine new ballads!

Hear for your love, and buy for your money,

1. It may even have been written by Johnson himself, for he lived until about the year 1630.
2. Pepys Collection: I.87. Printed in Roxburghe Ballads Ed. J.W. Ebsworth. Ballad Society (1888) VI. iii. 724

A delicate ballad o' the ferret and the coney .....  
 Or Saint George that O! did break the Dragon's heart.'<sup>1</sup>

This is clearly an allusion to the eighth stanza of the ballad,  
 where the chorus begins:

'But Saint George, Saint George pluckt out the Dragon's heart.'

The popularity of this ballad is the more difficult to understand  
 since it is not a narrative at all, but compares the achievements of  
 S. George with those of the more famous heroes of the Romances and  
 the Bible. The following stanza, the first of the 1612 version, is  
 typical of the whole:

'Why doe you boast of Arthur and his Knightes,  
 Knowing how many men have endured fightes?  
 For besides King Arthur, Lancelot du Lake,  
 Or Sir Tristram de Lionel, fought for Ladies' sake.  
 Read old histories, and there you shall see,  
 How Saint George, Saint George, he ma de the dragon flee.

Saint George he was for England, Saint Denis was for France,  
 Sing, Honi soit qui mal y Pense! '

Percy considers that it is a burlesque of the ballad style,  
 'particularly of the rambling transitions and wild accumulations of  
 unconnected parts, so frequent in many of them.'<sup>2</sup> Yet the ballad  
 does not seem to be a burlesque, for it was popular at a time when  
 ballad-making was at its height, and moreover it would be a burlesque  
 of singularly little point: merely a display of all the things it set  
 out to criticise, without any attempt to turn them to humorous  
 advantage.

1. Act II scene i. (October, 1614)

2. Series III, book iii, number 14. Introduction.

Therefore the ballad must have had a direct appeal of its own which is largely lost on the modern reader. It is noticeable that all the heroes mentioned in it are either Biblical heroes, or have been the heroes of other well-known ballads. Ebsworth may well have pointed out the secret of its success when he wrote:

'Even the absurdity of the perpetual shifting of characters throughout our present "S. George and the Dragon" made it the greater favourite. It became a roll-call of chivalric tales, and helped to amuse those who remembered the goodly books which are now found unreadable; prized as specimens of early printers in black-letter or MSS. for the Early English Text Society.'<sup>1</sup>

.....ooOoo.....

The popularity of the two older S. George ballads is further attested by the fact that in the later seventeenth century they became the basis for three successful burlesque ballads. The earliest of these is one which takes the form of a continuation of the catalogue of heroes: Percy includes it in his Reliques as the Second Part of that ballad.<sup>2</sup>

Its origin was rather unusual, in that it was not deliberately written as a ballad, but was composed, a verse at a time, over a period of years. The author was John Grubb, a student of Christ Church, Oxford. It is said that he wanted to join a college society, whose annual feast was on S. George's Day, and all of whose members were christened George. In order to overcome the disqualification of

1. Roxburghe Ballads Ed. J.W. Ebsworth. Ballad Society (1888) VI.iii.

2. Series III, book iii, number 15.

having been christened John, Grubb was required to produce, each year, some new verses in praise of S. George. The verses were first collected together and published in 1688, but because of the piecemeal nature of its composition, copies of it are to be found with the stanzas in almost every conceivable order.

Grubb's humorous intentions cannot be doubted: it is sufficient to compare the first stanza of the original ballad<sup>1</sup> with the following:

'The story of King Arthur old is very memorable,  
 The number of his valiant knights, and roundness of his table,  
 The knights around his table in a circle sate, d'ye see:  
 And all together made up one large hoop of chivalry.  
 He had a sword, both broad and sharp, y-cleped Caliburn,  
 'T would cut a flint more easily than pen-knife cuts a corn;  
 As case-knife does a capon carve, so would it carve a rock,  
 And split a man at single slash, from noddle down to nock.  
 As Roman Augur's steel of yore dissected Tarquin's riddle,  
 So would this cut both conjuror and whetstone through the middle.  
 He was the cream of Brocknock, and flower of all the Welsh;  
 But George he did the dragon fell, and gave him a plaguy squelch  
 S. George he was for England; S. Dennis was for France,  
 Sing, Honi soit qui mal y pense!'

Grubb's 'ballad' proceeds for twelve stanzas, by the method as its original: listing the names of numerous heroes, and referring to some of their exploits. Invariably, however, the formerly heroic is reduced to ribaldry. Speaking of the awe-inspiring appearance of Pendragon, Grubb says:

1. See above, p.100.

'On top of burnished helmet he did wear a crest of leeks;  
 And onions' heads, whose dreadful nod drew tears down hostile  
 cheeks.'

and the ballad is not without touches of bawdy humour, as in the account of the Amazon Thalestris:

'She kept the chastness of a nun in armour as in cloyster:  
 But George undid the dragon just as you'd undo an oyster.'

As a piece of humorous writing it is fairly successful, but could be compressed to about half its length without loss of effect. Indeed, much of it, including the stanza on King Arthur, would benefit greatly from compression, for it is extremely repetitious.

At about the same time as Grubb was writing this ballad, there was produced a much more bawdy burlesque of the same original, entitled A New Ballad of King Edward and Jane Shore. The only existing broad-side copy is dated 1671,<sup>1</sup> and Ambrose Phillips, writing in 1723, affirmed that it was 'really old'.<sup>2</sup> His warning to the ladies, 'that they may not unwarily go to read or sing this song unless by themselves', is a very necessary one, for the ballad is full of disgusting innuendo and would undoubtedly prove embarrassing in mixed company.

It employs exactly the same technique as the original S. George for England. Jane Shore's praises are sung, just as S. George's had been, by comparing her favourably with the courtezans of the classics and of English history. Indeed, so closely does this ballad follow the pattern of the original, that in many stanzas a mere substitution of

1. Roxburgh Collection III.258
2. A Collection of Old Ballads. (London 1723) I.153.



names is sufficient to transform the one into the other. The first stanza of this ballad, for instance, should be compared with that of the earlier ballad:<sup>1</sup>

'Why should we boast of Lais and her Knights,  
 Knowing such Champions entrapt by whorish lights?  
 Or why should we speak of Thais' curled locks?  
 Or Rhodophe that gave so many men the pox?  
 Read in old stories, and there you shall find  
 How Jane Shore, Jane Shore, she pleased King Edward's mind.  
 Jane Shore she was for England, Queen Fridegond for France:  
 Sing Honi Soit Qui Mal Y Pense.'

The obvious limitations of this 'roll-call' method of balladmaking also made it impossible to write a really effective burlesque of the style, and it is not surprising that, although they were apparently quite popular in their own day, these ballads are unattractive to the modern reader. A far more effective burlesque, and one which has largely retained its popularity, is The Dragon of Wantley, based on the narrative ballad of S. George and the Dragon. The earliest known copy of this ballad is dated 1685,<sup>2</sup> and it has been reproduced many times since.<sup>3</sup>

It is basically a parody of the extravagantly far-fetched adventures which formed so necessary a part of the Romances and Romantic ballads. It centres round a typical S. George dragon-fight, and contains reminiscences not only of the S. George ballad, but also of

1. See above, p.100.
2. Pepys Collection, V.391.
3. In 1737 Henry Cary even made an opera of it, which was performed at Covent Garden.

numerous other similar tales. More of More-Hall, the hero of the Dragon of Wantley resembles Bevis of Hampton in that he fights the dragon, not to save a maiden, but in order to save the countryside from its ravages; and again like Bevis, he dives into a well during the fight. More's armour, also, is very similar to that worn by the young Lambton during his fight with the Worm, for it is covered all over with spikes.

Percy brings evidence to show that, as well as the general satire on Chivalry, the ballad may contain a more particular reference to a dispute between landowners in the neighbourhood of Warncliffe (Wantley), near Rotherham.<sup>1</sup> If this is so, then it must contain a certain amount of innuendo which it is no longer possible to appreciate, but this in no way interferes with the more general burlesque of the ballad, as Ebsworth seems to think.<sup>2</sup> He says that 'it rationalises into dull commonplace, in the petty lawsuits and scandalum magnatum, the brilliantly coarse sham-chivalry of the ballad'. In any case, however, its primary appeal depends on just this sham-chivalry.

Its first stanza:

'Old stories tell how Hercules  
 A dragon slew at Lerna,  
 With seven heads and fourteen eyes,  
 To see and well discern-a:  
 But he had a club, this dragon to drub,  
 Or he had ne'er done it, I warrant ye:  
 But More of More-Hall, with nothing at all  
 He slew the dragon of Wantley'

1. Reliques III, 3, xiii.

2. Roxburghe Ballads. Ed. J.W. Ebsworth. Ballad Society (1895) VII.ii.

is clearly working on the same formula of comparison with a better-known story as is the opening stanza of the earlier Saint George and the Dragon:

'Of Hector's deeds did Homer sing,  
 And of the sack of stately Troy,  
 What grief fair Hellen did them bring,  
 Which was Sir Paris' only joy.  
 And with my pen I must recite  
 S. George's deeds, an English knight.'

Having thus established both his connection with the earlier ballad and his intention to parody it, the author of the Dragon of Wantley ridicules the whole idea of the dragon fight.

As did S. George's dragon, the Wantley dragon causes great consternation among the people of the district, for it eats three children, as well as numerous cattle and trees: but the poisonous breath of the dragons encountered by George and Bevis has here become 'burning snivel'. More himself is the epitome of the debased Romantic hero of such late productions as the Seven Champions. Instead of the usual epithets of chivalry and courtesy, however, we are told that

'Hard by a furious Knight there dwelt,  
 Of whom all towns did ring;  
 For he could wrestle, play at quarter-staff,  
 Kick, cuff and huff, call son of a whore,  
 Do any kind of thing; .....

The maiden whom George had rescued from sacrifice to the dragon has her counterpart in this ballad, but she presents a very different figure from her original. The result is an obvious gibe at S. George's

achievement, and at his motives in performing the rescue. When the people offer to reward More if he will kill the dragon,

'Tut, tut, quoth he, no goods I want;  
 But I want, I want, in sooth,  
 A fair maid of sixteen, that's brisk, and keen,  
 With smiles about the mouth;  
 Hair black as sloe, skin white as snow,  
 With blushes her cheeks adorning;  
 To anoynt me o'er night, ere I go to fight,  
 And to dress me in the morning.'

The fight with the dragon, of course, is a complete farce. More's descent into the well is not an accident as had been that of Bevis, but is a deliberate trick in preparation for the fight. When the dragon comes to drink from the well it is taken completely by surprise, for More 'rose up and cry'd Boh! and hit him on the mouth'. The end of the fight comes when More kicks the dragon in a delicate place, and,

'Murder, murder, the dragon cry'd,  
 Alack, alack for grief;  
 Had you but mist that place, you could  
 Have done me no mischief.  
 Then his head he shaked, trembled and quaked,  
 And down he laid and cry'd;  
 First on one knee, then on back tumbled he,  
 So groan'd, kickt, shudder'd, and dy'd.'

.....ooOoo.....

The very existence of these three burlesque ballads shows that, towards the end of the seventeenth century at least, the story of S. George and the Dragon was part of the atmosphere of the public houses and the College halls. It was clearly thought of, by a large

section of the community, as nothing more than a rather improbable adventure story. It was in this way, rather than through the church or any religious writing, that S. George must have become part of the instinctive knowledge of all English people.

That this was in fact the case is shown by existence of a large number of ballads connected with the name of S. George, but referring to some contemporary event. As early as 1488 a poem in ballad form had been presented to Henry VII 'at the Saint George's feast of the Garter'. Heylin suggests that it might have been written by Skelton,<sup>1</sup> but it is of very inferior quality. It consists of five stanzas, praising King Henry and asking S. George to protect him. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries a number of similar ballads were produced, like this one, to celebrate a particular occasion or person. They fall basically into two groups, one connected with the wars in Ireland, and the other with the collapse of the Cromwellian Commonwealth.

The first of the Irish ballads is, like the ballad of 1488, in celebration of S. George's Day.<sup>2</sup> It is an account of the military parade held on that day in Dublin in the year 1599, soon after the Earl of Essex had taken command of the English army. Although its main interest lies in its account of the army itself and the details of the soldiers' weapons, it shows that S. George was still the patron saint of English soldiers, for it contains numerous exhortations to them to pray to him for victory.

1. Peter Heylin. History of ... S. George (London 1633) p. 594.
2. Shirburn Ballads. No. 78 (Ed. A. Clark. Oxford. 1907)

Two other Irish ballads deal with Mountjoy's Irish campaign. One of them, celebrating his victory over Tyrone in the winter of 1601-2,<sup>1</sup> is similar in character to the ballad of 1599. It incorporates the name of S. George in the time-honoured English battle cry:

'Courage, brave Marshall! for our queene we fight.  
 Let us goe forward: 'tis for England's right.  
 God and Saint George for England! still we cry.  
 Let us proceed: methinks the cowards fly.'

The other ballad dealing with Mountjoy<sup>2</sup> is far more interesting in that it employs an allegory similar to that of the Faerie Queene. It does, in fact, antedate the other ballad, having been written to celebrate Mountjoy's departure for Ireland, and was published in 1601. It begins with a brief account of the S. George legend:

'A virgin Princesse and a gentle lamb,  
 domb'd both to death to gorge this ugly beast:  
 This valiant victor like a souldier came,  
 and of his own accord, without request:  
 With never daunted spirit the Fiend assaild,  
 preserv'd the Princesse, and the Monster quaild.'

Mountjoy is then, of course, identified with S. George throughout the rest of the ballad, and Queen Elizabeth becomes the 'virgin Princesse', while the dragon represents Ireland in general and Tyrone in particular. In addition, a conscious comparison is made between S. George and Christ:

1. Shirburn Ballads. No. 31.
2. Saint George for England, contained in Richard Vennard's The Right Way to Heaven (London 1601).

'Saint George, the Dragon, Iesus, Sathan kild,  
 Saint George, the Princesse and the Lambe preserv'd:  
 Iesus his bitter combat fulfild,  
 and by the Divels death his Church reserv'd:  
 That spotless Dame whose ravishment was sought,  
 by tirants rage that bloody ruine brought.'

Thus the ballad is quite close in spirit to Spenser, and also shows that the allegorical possibilities of the S. George legend were familiar to readers of Elizabethan ballads.

This reliance of ballad-writers on the popular knowledge of the George-and-Dragon idea is pushed to its fullest extent by the writers of a number of ballads in the year 1660. The ballad-makers seized on the christian name of General George Monk, and cast the Rump Parliament as the Dragon: each of the ballads is thus an exhortation to General Monk to restore the monarchy. One, bearing the title Saint George for England,<sup>1</sup> is subheaded, 'Printed in the year of our redemption', which would seem to indicate that it was printed only after the Restoration had actually taken place, and the same may well be true of the others.<sup>2</sup>

Saint George for England is typical of this group of ballads, except that, like Spenser before him, its author drew freely on the Revelation of S. John for his allusions to the Rump as a dragon, and for evidence that it was of the devil's party. Amid numerous crude jests with the word 'Rump' are lines such as:

1. British Museum.
2. Part II of Saint George for England, British Museum.  
 and Saint George and the Dragon, Anglice, British Museum.

'Tis much disputed who Antichrist is,  
 I think 'tis this Rump, nor am I in jest,  
 For indeed, although of the number it miss,  
 Of this I am sure, 't has the Mark of the Beast.'

This is clearly an allusion to Revelation XIII. 16-8. :

'And he causeth all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free and the bond, that there be given them a mark on their right hand, or upon their forehead; and that no man should be able to buy or to sell, save that he hath the mark, even the name of the beast or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. He that hath understanding, let him count the number of the beast; for it is the number of a man: and his number is Six hundred and sixty and six.'

The remnant of the Rump, forty-two members in all, thus fell far short of the number of the beast, and the cryptogram does not seem to have been intended to be solved.

Again, the Rump is referred to as the 'Rump of the Whore of Babylon', who, in the Revelation, was seen as riding on the beast with seven heads and ten horns.<sup>1</sup>

These references to the Revelation must have been quite deliberate, for millennial speculation was rife throughout the period of the Commonwealth, and Cromwell had, in the early days of his power, seemed to subscribe to the idea that the Commonwealth was paving the way for the Millenium: his Parliament of Saints had been intended merely to hold the reins of office until the Second Coming of Christ. The ballad calls attention to the fact that these plans had failed utterly,

1. Revelation XVII



and that the Rump, which had just been recalled by the military leaders, was as petty and worldly in outlook as any Parliament could possibly be.

The correspondence between the S. George legend and the contents of this ballad of Saint George for England is slight, but in the other two ballads of the group it scarcely exists at all. The writers of these ballads evidently considered that it was sufficient to indicate in the title that a comparison was intended with the S. George legend. They were thus depending on their readers to have sufficient knowledge of S. George to be able to interpret the ballads for themselves.

.....ooOoo.....

Of this whole series of ballads only four ever achieved any very great popularity: the original Saint George and the Dragon and Saint George for England, the Dragon of Wantley, and John Grubb's Saint George ballad. These alone are sufficient to show that in the sixteenth century the legend was very popular, and that it was treated light-heartedly, as though it owed its origin to Romance only.

The very existence of the other, less popular, ballads, and particularly those of the Restoration, goes further than this. It shows that S. George and his Dragon had become part of the common knowledge of the English people - something so familiar to them that they did not consciously learn it, but which was in their minds ready to be recalled and used by the slightest suggestion on the part of any writer.

## CHAPTER VII

Perhaps the most intriguing version of the S. George legend, and certainly the most divorced from the normal tradition, is that contained in the Mummings' Plays. The performance of these plays is a custom which has died out almost completely over the last hundred years, and, apart from occasional deliberate revivals, the play is now performed at very few places in Britain; if, indeed, it is still performed at all. Most of the existing texts of the play were collected at the end of the last century, or at the very beginning of this, and the earliest of all is a chap-book version which is recorded as being in existence in 1777.<sup>1</sup> The earliest village text is that of the Revesby Plough Play, written down in 1779.

All evidence for the earlier existence of the play is purely circumstantial, but the problem of its origin and early history has been exhaustively examined by the leading authorities on the play, Reginald J.E. Tiddy,<sup>2</sup> Edmund K. Chambers,<sup>3</sup> and Cecil J. Sharp:<sup>4</sup> all are agreed that the play must have achieved the form of the recorded texts during the seventeenth century.

The productions of the play varied considerably from village to village and from district to district, each village producing a highly individual version. Although the majority of productions had S. George as their hero, the play was never, it seems, performed on S. George's day, but usually at Christmas time. In parts of Yorkshire and Lancashire,

1. John Brand, Popular Antiquities (London 1777) p. 185
2. The Mummings' Play (Oxford 1923)
3. The Medieval Stage (Oxford 1903) vol. I. ch. 10. and The English Folk Play (Oxford 1933)
4. The Sword Dances of Northern England (London 1951)

however, the play was performed at Easter, and was known as the Pace-Egg (i.e. Pasch-Egg) Play, while the closely allied Plough Play of Lincolnshire was, as its name suggests, performed on Plough Monday.

Some form of the play seems to have been throughout the British Isles, including the east coast of Ireland, but the highest concentrations of collected village texts are from Wessex and the Cotswold district. The North of England seems to have relied much more on chap-book versions than did the South and Midlands, for chap-book versions of the play were produced at Newcastle, Whitehaven, Leeds, Otley, and Manchester, but not in any of the more southerly towns.

Although, as might be expected, most of the existing texts are remarkably corrupt, all of them show a very close relationship to each other. The same verses, verse formulae, and speeches, are traceable throughout Britain, although this is not nearly so true of the actual characters in the play. The conformity of the texts to a single pattern was sufficiently close to allow Chambers to piece together what he calls a normalised text, 'put together, as far as possible, from constantly recurring formulas, and representing the general succession of incidents and run of dialogue which one may conceive to lie behind the widely variant versions'.<sup>1</sup>

This normalised text is worth reproducing, in order to show what the typical Mummers' Play was like. It will, as Chambers says, provide a 'basis for discussion':

1. The English Folk-Play pp 6-9.

(Enter the Presenter)

Presenter.

I open the door, I enter in;  
 I hope your favour we shall win.  
 Stir up the fire and strike a light,  
 And see my merry boys act to-night.  
 Whether we stand or whether we fall, 5  
 We'll do our best to please you all.

(Enter the actors, and stand in a clump)

Presenter.

Room, room, brave gallants all,  
 Pray give us room to rhyme;  
 We're come to show activity,  
 This merry Christmas time; 10  
 Activity of youth,  
 Activity of age,  
 The like was never seen  
 Upon a common stage.  
 And if you don't believe what I say, 15  
 Step in S. George - and clear the way.

(Enter Saint George)<sup>1</sup>

Saint George.

In come I, Saint George,  
 The man of courage bold;  
 With my broad axe and sword  
 I won a crown of gold. 20  
 I fought the fiery dragon,  
 And drove him to the slaughter,  
 And by these means I won  
 The King of Egypt's daughter.

1. It should be noted that Saint George often appears as King George, Great George, or Royal George, but these are almost certainly Hanoverian 'improvements'.

Show me the man that bids me stand; 25  
 I'll cut him down with my courageous hand.

Presenter.

Step in, Bold Slasher.

(Enter Bold Slasher)

Slasher.

In come I, the Turkish Knight,  
 Come from the Turkish land to fight.  
 I come to fight Saint George, 30  
 The man of courage bold;  
 And if his blood be hot,  
 I soon will make it cold.

S. George.

Stand off, stand off, Bold Slasher,  
 And let no more be said, 35  
 For if I draw my sword,  
 I'm sure to break thy head.  
 Thou speakest very bold,  
 To such a man as I;  
 I'll cut thee into eyelet holes, 40  
 And make thy buttons fly.

Slasher.

My head is made of iron,  
 My body is made of steel,  
 My arms and legs of beaten brass;  
 No man can make me feel 45

S. George.

Then draw thy sword and fight.  
 Or draw thy purse and pay:  
 For satisfaction I must have,  
 Before I go away.

Slasher.

No satisfaction shalt thou have, 50  
 But I will bring thee to thy grave.

S. George.

Battle to battle with thee I call,  
To see who on this ground shall fall.

Slasher.

Battle to battle with thee I pray,  
To see who on this ground shall lay.

55

S. George.

Then guard thy body and mind thy head,  
Or else my sword shall strike thee dead.

Slasher.

One shall die and the other shall live;  
This is the challenge that I do give.

(They fight. Slasher falls.)

Presenter.

O cruel Christian, what hast thou done?  
Thou hast wounded and slain my only son.

60

S. George.

He challenged me to fight,  
And why should I deny't?

Presenter.

O, is there a doctor to be found  
To cure this deep and deadly wound?  
Doctor, doctor, where art thee?  
My son is wounded to the knee.  
Doctor, doctor, play thy part,  
My son is wounded to the heart.  
I would put down a thousand pound,  
If there were a doctor to be found.

65

70

(Enter the Doctor)

Doctor.

Yes, there is a doctor to be found,  
 To cure this deep and deadly wound.  
 I am a doctor pure and good,  
 And with my hand can stanch his blood. 75

Presenter.

Where hast thou been, and where hast thou come from?

Doctor.

Italy, Sicily, Germany, France and Spain,  
 Three times there and back again.

Presenter.

What canst thou do and what canst thou cure?

Doctor.

All sorts of diseases, 80  
 Just what my physic pleases;  
 The itch, the stitch, the palsy and the gout,  
 Pains within and pains without;  
 If the devil is in, I can fetch him out.  
 I have a little bottle by my side;  
 The fame of it spreads far and wide. 85  
 The stuff therein is elecampane;  
 It will bring the dead to life again.  
 A drop on his head, a drop on his heart.  
 Rise up, bold fellow, and take thy part. 90

(Slasher rises)

(Enter Big-Head)

Big-Head.

In come I, as ain't been yet,  
 With my big head and little wit,  
 My head so big, my wit so small,  
 I will dance a jig to please you all.

(Dance and song ad libitum)

(Enter Beelzebub)

Beelzebub.

In come I, old Beelzebub 95  
 On my shoulder I carry a club,  
 In my hand a dripping-pan.  
 Don't you think I'm a jolly old man?

(Enter Johnny Jack)

Johnny Jack.

In come I, little Johnny Jack,  
 With my wife and family at my back, 100  
 My family's large and I am small,  
 A little, if you please, will help us all.

(Enter Devil Dout)

Devil Dout.

In come I, little Devil Dout;  
 If you don't give me money, I'll sweep you out.  
 Money I want and money I crave; 105  
 If you don't give me money, I'll sweep you to the grave.

(Quête)

This crude play was performed by groups of men and boys, who travelled round their town or village calling at all the larger houses, and also the public houses, and requesting permission to come in and act. In most cases they were made very welcome, but the performance was often merely an excuse for begging, and along the Welsh borders their arrival was apparently something to be dreaded:

'In the olden days, so I have been told by an eye-witness, at the first alarm of their approach, all the household hurried to bar the door, and if they were not in time to do so, in rushed the rabble rout of masquers without leave asked or given, and interlarded their performance with all sorts of antics and mischievous



pranks. Finally, when the last player, Little Jack Devil Doot, pronounced his threat of sweeping them all into the grave, they proceeded with mock energy to sweep up the hearth, but in reality to scatter the sticks and make the dust fly all abroad.<sup>1</sup>

Once the players had gained admittance to the house, an acting space was cleared in the principal room, and the first mummer, or presenter, introduced his cast one by one. The main part of the entertainment, the combat and death and revival of one of the combatants, followed immediately. Then came the introduction of players (in the normalised version, Big-Head, Beelzebub, Johnny Jack, and Devil Doot) who had no real connection with the action of the play itself. Their main purpose seems to have been to take the lead in the series of songs and dances, and to collect the money at the end of the entertainment. In many cases the audience (the households, of the larger houses, and more especially, the customers at the public houses) probably took part in the singing and dancing.

The costumes of the players seem to have varied considerably from district to district, and to have degenerated in quality over the last hundred years as the play was given up by the men and performed more and more exclusively by boys only. In general, however, the combatants, the combatants wore either old army uniforms or imitation armour, and carried wooden swords. The presenter was often characterised as Father Christmas, and conventionally dressed as such, while the players involved in the Finale (which Chambers refers to as the 'quête') always carried the equipment mentioned in their speeches - Beelzebub, for instance, carried a club and a frying-pan, and Johnny Jack carried a

1. Charlotte S. Burne, Shropshire Folk-Lore (London 1883) p. 140

set of dolls representing his wife and family. In many villages all the players blacked their faces, and wore tall hats from which fell a large number of ribbons almost completely hiding the face. This custom probably explains the name 'guisers', which was applied to the mummers in Scotland and in Cornwall, and also the fact that the characters in the Plough Plays were often referred to as 'ribboners'. In the Hampshire parishes of Overton and Longparish, until very recently, the mummers wore not only tall, beribboned hats, but also wore large numbers of ribbons on their bodies, arms, and legs.<sup>1</sup> There are also indications that in some areas the characters of the quête wore on their heads a fox-skin, or occasionally the skin of some other animal.

The length of the play varied considerably from place to place. Many of the collected texts were clearly deliberately lengthened at some period in their history, either by making new characters go through the combat a second time (as at Overton),<sup>2</sup> or by giving the Doctor a clowning assistant, usually called Jack Finney (as at Weston-sub-Edge and some other Gloucestershire villages),<sup>2</sup> who spun out the action of the play with his patter. Large numbers of texts, however, particularly those collected more recently, are the merest fragments, much shorter than the text given above - for example, Pillerton, Warwickshire, and Badby, Northamptonshire.<sup>2</sup> These had evidently been reduced to a mere excuse for the village boys to collect some easy pocket-money.

.....ooOoo.....

1. Described and photographed by George Long, The Folk-Lore Calendar (London 1930) p. 217 ff
2. Texts printed by Reginald J.E. Tiddy in The Mummers' Play

The text of the play, in many versions, owes something to the Seven Champions of Christendom. In a few areas, notably in Sussex, the play was known by the title of The Seven Champions, even though the play was of the normal type, and of the seven, only S. George was represented.<sup>1</sup> There is, however, a report of a play from the West Riding of Yorkshire which did contain all seven champions<sup>2</sup> (although S. Anthony was replaced by either S. Thewlis,<sup>3</sup> or S. Peter). Here S. George fought each of the other six champions in turn, in order to win the King of Egypt's daughter. Since the recorder of this play did not consider the text worth preserving, but only gives descriptions and photographs, there is little more that can be said about it. It does, however, appear to have been unique, and was possibly a degenerate version of Kirke's play of The Seven Champions<sup>4</sup>, where there is just such a series of combats.

Some of the characters who appear in the majority of versions of Mummers' Play must also owe their origin to Johnson's work, possibly directly, but more probably by way of the chap-book and ballad versions of the story. Among these are the King of Egypt, the Black Prince of Morocco, S. Patrick, and possibly the Turkish Knight, whom Chambers suggests might be derived from the Soldan of Persia.<sup>5</sup> S. George's opponent is usually the Turkish Knight, though very often he is an anonymous hero, simply known as Bold Slasher or Valiant Soldier; those more certainly derived from The Seven Champions are to be found much

1. S. Arnott. 'The Seven Champions' Notes and Queries, Series V, vol 10 (1869) p. 489.
2. Thomas M. Fallow, 'Yorkshire Sword Actors' Antiquary 31 (1895)
3. A saint who cannot be traced in any other context. p. 138-40
4. An adaptation of the first part of Johnson's Romance. An edition was printed in London in 1648, and its title page claims that it was 'acted at the Cocke-pit and at the red Bull in St. Johns Streets with a general liking'. Its popularity, however, seems to have been  
Cont. footnote next page.

less frequently, and that work cannot, in this respect, be said to have had any very great influence on the play.

In the main body of the text there is often a much more definite reference to the Seven Champions, for George is found to make speeches such as:

"Hear comes I son George from England have I sprung sum of my wondras works now for to begin first into a closet I was put then into a cave was lock I sot my foot upon a Rokke stone their did I make my sad and greivus mone. how many men have I slew and runnd the firche dragon thru I fought them all Courrageously and still got thire Victory England's wright England admorratation now ear I drow my bloody weepo ho is the man that doth before me Stand I will cut him down with my courrageous hand.'<sup>1</sup>

Here there appears to be a reference to George's imprisonment, first by Kalyb, and then by the Soldan of Persia, as well as to the dragon fight. More often, however, the reference is to the dragon fight only, with its reward of the King of Egypt's daughter:

'In comes I King George,  
A champion stout and bold,  
I fought the fiery dragon  
With my bright sword  
And brought it to a slaughter;  
By these deeds I won the King of Egypt's daughter.'<sup>2</sup>

These echoes of Johnson's Seven Champions are by no means

4. cont. moderate and extremely short-lived; it was reprinted only once, in 1830.
5. The English Folk Play p.177.
1. From a cornish version. Tiddy. op. cit. p. 149
2. From Clayworth, Nottinghamshire. Tiddy op. cit. p. 246

universal in the plays, and a large number of quite typical versions contain no such echoes at all. Moreover, with the single exception of the West Riding 'sword play', none of the recorded texts shows any evidence that the Seven Champions had any effect whatsoever on the action of the play. It certainly cannot provide any basis for the combat, death, and revival, which is the central episode of every existing version of the play. The characters introduced from the Seven Champions do not even play their part as in that story, but usually appear as George's opponent in the combat. They probably result from a renaming of older characters, brought about by the popularity of Johnson's Romance.

Finally even the speeches which clearly derive from the Seven Champions all put the events of the story into the past, including the dragon-fight; they are, in fact, part of George's boast of his prowess, and are used to intimidate his opponent in the play.

Manifestly, the Seven Champions cannot be the source of the Mummers' Play, and the presumption must be that the traces of it found there were introduced into an already existing folk-drama because of their association with S. George. Thus there is a very strong presumption that the play was already in existence by the seventeenth century, and that S. George was already its hero.

.....ooOoo.....

In order to determine the age and earlier character of the play, it is probably advantageous to consider separately the various elements of it; for although the play itself is not documented before 1777, some

of its components are. Thomas F. Ordish points out that the play consists of four basic elements:<sup>1</sup> Christmas masking, or disguising; the sword-dance; the death-and-revival play; and wassailing. Each of these can be shown to have existed independently before 1777, and, indeed, before the eighteenth century.

Of these four elements, the custom of wassailing is the least interesting, and has the least obvious connection with the play. It is true that the players, at the end of their performance, often sang for their audiences, but there appears to be no record of what they sang, apart from occasional references to such well-known airs as Greensleeves. In any case, it is not an integral part of the play, but could easily have been tacked onto the end of the play to give extra value for money. An indication that this was in fact the case is that there is nowhere any reference to special or secret songs such as are associated with true wassailing.

A more interesting custom, in this connection, is that of masking, disguising - it was once known, of itself, simply as mumming. Probably the best account of this practice is given by Glyn Wickham,<sup>2</sup> who shows that it was well-known even as early as the fourteenth century, when there was a mumming before Richard II. Both Wickham and Miss Enid Welsford<sup>3</sup> claim that it was even then an ancient custom, having been introduced into court circles from somewhere lower in the social scale:

'Mumming was the prerogative of those without claim to noble birth and, in all probability, a direct survival of Celto-Teutonic or Graeco-Roman religious rituals. It took the form

1. English Folk Drama - Part II, in Folk Lore 4 (1893) p.162
2. Early English Stages (London 1959) I. 191-228
3. The Court Masque (Cambridge 1927) p.40.

of processional visitation: and while the visitors assumed disguises they did this to conceal their identity, not as professional actors. In short, as a sophisticated entertainment in the fourteenth century, it was both amateurish and occasional: it is highly unlikely that the participants were consciously aware of the history or origins of the customs they were perpetuating and embellishing.<sup>1</sup>

Wickham also says that the Christmas mummers had a right of entry into any house, similar to the present Scottish custom of 'first-footing'. Suggesting reasons for the continual prohibitions of mumming during the fifteenth century, he says:

'The answer may well lie in ..... the citizen-actor participants: for, clearly, mumming was a custom open to abuse at several points. Large assemblies of people in festive mood can quickly become riots: disguise offers a convenient anonymity to professional agitators: and, as host to unknown and uninvited guests, the house-owner translates his dwelling into public property for the duration of the visit.'<sup>2</sup>

There is no evidence that these mummers ever gave a play of the type now associated with mumming; they seem to have concentrated on allegorical mimes, the dice game known as mum-chance, and dancing of a general type, in which the audience often took part. Yet the method of gaining entry into houses by a procession of disguised actors is immediately reminiscent of Miss C.S. Burne's account of Shropshire mumming,<sup>3</sup> and of many other similar but more favourable accounts. The Mummers' Play is the only custom surviving into relatively modern times which preserves the medieval mumming custom, and must therefore

1. Wickham. op. cit. p. 198.
2. Wickham. op. cit. p. 202
3. Above, p. 19-20.

be presumed to have had an early connection with it: especially as the medieval records are all of sophisticated court-mummings. The more usual mummings of the time may possibly have embodied a death-and-revival play of the S. George type.

The connection of the Mummers' Play with the sword-dance, though at first sight not at all obvious, is well attested, and is another pointer to the antiquity of the Mummers' Play. Unlike the medieval mumming, the sword-dance element is contained in only a few of the recorded village plays. However, there are a number of both plays and sword-dances which may be said to be on the borderline between dance and play. The Revesby Plough Play, for instance, contains some dance figures from the sword-dance, while some dances, for example those recorded by Cuthbert Sharpe<sup>1</sup> and William Henderson<sup>2</sup>, are liberally supplied with commentary by the leading dancer, so as to become as much a mime as a dance.

In addition, many collectors of plays and dances have been confused by the fact that the terms Mummer, Sword-dancer, and even Morris-dancer, were considered by many of the performers to be interchangeable. The following comment from C.J. Sharp illustrates the point:

'What is a Morris-dancer? Anyone who is familiar with normal Morris-dance of the Midlands and South of England will be ready with an answer. But let him question the sword-dancers of Grenoside and Earsdon, and he will find them also insisting that they are Morris-dancers. Next let him follow up a few

1. A Bishoprick Garland (Sunderland 1906) p.58.
2. Folk-Lore of the Northern Counties (London 1879) p. 67.



vague, verbal clues of supposed Morris-dancers, in the hope of discovering the Morris-dance proper: he will find time after time that he has been sent in quest of Mummers - a class to him quite distinct. In due course it will dawn on him that the sword-dancers Northern England, the Morris-dancers of the Midlands and South, and the mummers of all England and Scotland, are in the popular view as one, and pass under the same name.<sup>1</sup>

Above all, the one incident which binds the mumming play and the sword-dance together is the central and inescapable one of the death-and-revival. It is central to all the mumming plays, and in those sword-dances which have a commentary, there is always a death, usually accidental, and the dead man is always revived. Even in the dances which have no commentary, there are indications of a mock beheading, for the typical sword-dance figure, ending in an interlocking of the swords known variously as the 'rose', the 'knot', or the 'lock', results in the locked swords being placed round the neck of one of the performers, whence they are suddenly withdrawn with a flourish.

The sword-dance, like the medieval mumming, has a well-documented history going far beyond the eighteenth century. Chambers reproduces a painting of one by the Flemish artist Brueghel (1530-69), and also cites a description of a Swedish sword-dance dating from 1555. In Germany and Austria too, he says, sword-dances were performed at least as early as the fifteenth century.<sup>2</sup>

Thus the sword-dance element of the Mummers' Play, and with it the death-and-revival motif, can be shown to have as long a history as the mumming element. There is, however, no evidence that the

1. The Sword-Dances of Northern England (London 1951) pp.10-11.
2. The English Folk Play pp.200-202

Mummers' Play was ever acted in anything like its modern form before the seventeenth century.

.....ooOoo.....

The death-and-revival theme is clearly central to the Mummers' Play, and it is thus necessary to examine this theme more closely in order to determine why and when S. George made his appearance in the play. Before this can be done, however, it is necessary to examine the commonly held idea that the play is, or was originally concerned with S. George's dragon fight. It is an interesting example of the depth to which the dragon story is ingrained in English thinking that those who collected the plays often assumed that because S. George was represented, the dragon must be also.

In fact, the dragon appears in very few - half a dozen at the most - of the plays, and one of these (the Thame play)<sup>1</sup> is unique in its abnormality: it becomes a general mêlée in which all the characters are killed, and all but the dragon are revived. It was almost certainly deliberately reshaped late in its history.

The dragon appears in one Cornish version as George's second victim with a suitable dragon speech:

'Who's he that seeks the Dragon's blood,  
And calls so angry and so loud?  
That English dog, will he before me stand?  
I'll cut him down with my courageous hand.  
With my long teeth and scurvy jaw,  
Of such I'd break up half a score,  
And stay my stomach, till I'd more.'<sup>2</sup>

1. Frederick G. Lee 'An Oxfordshire Christmas Mircale Play'.  
Notes and Queries, Series V, vol 2. (1853) p. 503.
2. William Sandys, Christmastide (London 1852) p. 298

Apart from the 'courageous hand' this speech must have been written for a dragon, and the same speech is delivered at Weston-sub-Edge by the Turkish Knight,<sup>1</sup> so presumably a dragon was once featured there, too.

Apart from these few examples, traces of a dragon are very rare indeed in the plays. Yet there are numerous collectors of the plays who assume that the play features a dragon, and then contradict themselves by failing to produce one in their own version. Typical of these is Miss Gwen Jones, who under the title of The Derbyshire Mumming Play of Saint George and the Dragon gives a fairly typical text in which George kills or wounds Slasher, the Black Prince, and Hector, but in which there is no sign of a dragon.<sup>2</sup> Another is Richard Chambers, who, in describing the play, speaks glibly of George's antagonist as the Dragon, and even prints a drawing of a group of mummers with the Dragon prominent among them - yet here again there is no Dragon in the perfectly ordinary and typical text he prints.<sup>3</sup>

Even E.K. Chambers assumes that the almost universal lack of a Dragon is due to his having been lost from the play over the years. Chambers' main evidence lies in the boast, usually given to the Bold Slasher, that:

'My head is made of iron,  
My body is made of steel,  
My arms and legs of beaten brass;  
No man can make me feel.'

1. Tiddy, op cit. p. 163.
2. Folk Lore 32 (1921) p.181
3. Book of Days pp. 177/8.

Chambers attempts to show, by comparison with ballads and other poems, that these lines are typical of many dragon descriptions,<sup>1</sup> but there seems to be no reason why they may not be equally applicable to a man in armour. That they describe a dragon is something that would not normally occur to the reader unless he were diligently looking for references to a dragon.

Against those who advocate the former participation of the dragon in the play is the vital fact that a dragon cannot fit into the accepted structure of the play. The mummers' combats invariably ends in the death of one of the warriors, but it must be remembered that he is almost invariably revived. If the defeated combatant was originally the dragon, there could surely be no possible reason for reviving him: he is a representative of evil, and in the legend is killed outright by S. George.

Moreover, as was pointed out by F.W. Moorman;

'.... we must notice one all-important point of difference in the various renderings of the folk-play. S. George is by no means universally victorious; indeed, in something like half of the versions which have come down to us it is his antagonist who triumphs, while St. George is wounded or slain outright, and then restored by the Doctor.... The probability is that those versions of it in which St. George is represented as victorious are so far corrupt.'<sup>2</sup>

This would presumably make the dragon, if he appeared in the original versions of the play, victorious over S. George - and this would be ridiculous!

1. The English Folk Play pp. 177-8.

2. 'A Yorkshire Folk-Play' Essays and Studies 2 (1911) p.146

If Moorman is correct in suggesting that George was originally the victim in the fight, the different versions of his rôle which now exist can be easily explained. As S. George grew in popularity in this country, it would seem natural to many of the performers to make him victorious in the fight. The presence of the dragon, in a few cases, too, would seem to be a direct result of the popularity of the George-and-dragon legend. The play in these few villages would seem to have been taken over and embroidered by the parson or schoolmaster, for whom S. George was immediately associated with the dragon.<sup>1</sup>

The explanation of the curious part played by S. George in the folk-drama is, therefore, unlikely to be found in the dragon legend,<sup>2</sup> but must rather be sought in some connection with the death-and-revival motif. The idea of S. George as a death-and-revival hero is clearly reminiscent of the legend of his martyrdom, and also recalls many of the beliefs examined by James G. Frazer in volume four (The Dying God) of his major work, The Golden Bough. While many of Frazer's conclusions are intuitive, and must therefore be treated with caution, there can be no doubt of the existence, or former existence, of widespread belief in such heroes as Hypollitus, Attis, Osiris, and Adonis.

Seeking an explanation for this belief in a hero who is killed and then revived, Frazer points out that all these heroes, and many others to whom similar legends are attached are thought of as having special control over trees and vegetation; and that their annual death

1. This would certainly seem to be the case with the Thame play, at least
2. And thus there is unlikely to be any connection between the Mummers' Play and the S. George 'ridings' (see above, p. 25,) although such a connection has often been suggested.

seems always to occur in the spring. He concludes that:

'The general explanation which we have been led to adopt of these and many other similar ceremonies is that they are, or were in their origin, magical rites intended to ensure the revival of nature in spring. The means by which they were supposed to effect this end were imitation and sympathy. Led astray by his ignorance of the true causes of things, primitive man believed that in order to produce the great phenomena of nature on which his life depended he had only to imitate them, and that immediately by a secret sympathy or mystic influence the little drama which was acted in forest glade or mountain dell, on desert plain or windswept shore, would be taken up and repeated by mightier actors on a vaster stage.'<sup>1</sup>

The annual death, it is suggested, was originally an actual one, the power of the earthly representative of the hero having waned along with the vegetation of his year, and having to be reborn in his successor. Chambers has suggested how the practice was probably in the course of time:

'Anthropology has shown in detail how out of the medicine man grows the priest, and out of the priest grows the semi-divine king. Unfortunately the potency thus acquired does not endure. It fades in the winter, and another arises to slay the exhausted leader, and takes his place in the festival of a new spring. The story does not end quite here. The medicine man is, after all, the most cunning, as well as the boldest, of his clan. He proves his value in war or government. And he manages to prolong his reign; for a second year perhaps at first, then for three, or eight, or nine, or twelve, or until his vitality does in fact show signs of decay .... And if somebody must be slain

1. The Golden Bough (London 1926) IV 266-7

annually, then let it be a substitute .... Ultimately, as manners soften, nobody is really slain, but the festival has still its Mock King, and very likely a Mock Death.<sup>1</sup>

Chambers, Tiddy, Moorman, and many others link these beliefs and practices with the mock death which is so universal a feature of both Mummings' Play and sword-dance. All point out that there are similar customs in most parts of Europe, and that the very universality of the theme argues an ancient and important origin.

In order to derive the Mummings' Play from the myths of spring-time, it is, of course, essential to show that it was originally performed in the spring rather than, as is the case with most versions, at Christmas. In fact, it is generally agreed that this was once the case: Chambers sums up the argument thus:

'The answer is that .... none of the Christmas folk-customs are proper to midwinter. They have been attracted by the ecclesiastical feast from the seasons which in the old European calendar preceded and followed it, from the beginning of winter and the beginning of summer or spring. The folk-play has come with the rest. But the transference has not invariably taken place. The Norfolk versions belong not to Christmas but to Plough Monday, which lies immediately outside the Christmas season proper, and is indeed, though probably dislocated from its primitive date, the first of the spring feasts. The St. George play itself was occasionally performed at Easter, and even perhaps on May-day, whilst versions, which in their present forms contain clear allusions to Christmas, yet betray another origin by the title which they bear of the 'Pace-egggers' or 'Pasque-egggers' play.'<sup>2</sup>

1. The English Folk Play p. 218-9.
2. The Medieval Stage. I. 226-7.

Thus there seems to be very little doubt that the Mummers' Play is a descendant of a former spring festival; and that the hero who is killed and then revived by the doctor is descended from a hero of the Adonis type.

.....oo0Ooo.....

In order to explain the presence of S. George in such a performance as the Mummers' Play

'.... we must endeavour to show that the militant saint of Christendom, or the more primitive hero whom he has displaced was also connected with tree-worship - was, indeed, 'the one in the tree'.<sup>1</sup> (a reference to Dionysus' title of 'Endendros')

Moorman suggests that the link may be found in the figure of 'Green George', and cites Frazer's account of the S. George's day custom in Austria:

'In Carinthia, on St. George's Day the young people deck with flowers and garlands a tree which has been felled on the eve of the festival. The tree is then carried in procession, accompanied with music and joyful acclamations, the chief figure in the procession being the Green George, a young fellow clad from head to foot in green birch branches. At the close of the ceremonies the Green George, that is, an effigy of him, is thrown into the water. It is the aim of the lad who acts Green George to step out of his leafy envelope and substitute the effigy so adroitly that no-one shall perceive the change. In many places, however, the lad himself who plays the part of Green George is ducked in a river or pond, with the express intention of thus ensuring rain to make the fields and meadows green in summer.'<sup>2</sup>

This custom was apparently once current throughout most of Europe, and there are traces of it in this country. Frazer and others have

1. F.W. Moorman in Essays and Studies, 2 (1911) p. 151.
2. The Golden Bough II. 75.



described a figure known as Jack-in-the Green; who used to lead a May-Day procession of young chimney-sweeps on a round of begging. He was dressed similarly to the Austrian Green George, 'in a pyramidal framework of wickerwork, which is covered with holly and ivy, and surmounted by a crown of flowers and ribbons.'<sup>1</sup>

It is possible that another representative of this tradition is to be found in the character of George a Green. He is best known for his part in the cycle of Robin Hood stories, but Moorman points out that he was once a well-known figure in the May-Day festivities,<sup>2</sup> and thus probably has a more ancient origin than can now be discerned. The sixteenth-century play of George a Green appears to contain one or two reminiscences of this earlier origin, as in, for example, this speech of Jenkin's:

'Marie, my master may giue for his armes the picture of Aprill  
in a greene ierkin with a rooke on one fist and an horne on the  
other.'<sup>3</sup>

However, it must be emphasised that any correlations between these figures and the S. George of the Mummings' Play are necessarily extremely tentative, and rest entirely on the name George, and on the fact that they appeared as leading figures in the spring time celebrations. There is no evidence that George a Green ever met with a death such as that suffered by the hero of the Mummings' Play; and the Green George would appear to have met his mock death by drowning rather than by the sword.

1. The Golden Bough II. 82.
2. Essays and Studies 2 (1911) p. 152.
3. Robert Greene Plays and Poems Ed. J.C. Collins (Oxford 1905)  
II. 196. 455-60

In the Mummers' Play itself, there is little evidence of the use of leaves and branches. There is a report that in at least one Dorset village, towards the end of the performance,

'The Mummers then carried into the hall a bush gaily decorated with coloured ribbons, and the ladies present were asked to tie on more pieces, which we did, my cousins wife having previously collected a supply.'<sup>1</sup>

The peculiar costumes worn by the Mummers in some districts have frequently been interpreted as attempts to represent leaves,<sup>2</sup> but this appears unconvincing, since it is far easier to obtain real leaves than to make imitation ones.

The only really secure link between the mock death of the Mummers' Play and the sword-dance, and the Green George type of figure was pointed out by E.K. Chambers, when he suggested that

'Romance may perhaps preserve one hint of the theme for which we are in search. That is the 'beheading game', as we find it in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight and elsewhere.'<sup>3</sup>

The appearance of the Green Knight, in the first place, is reminiscent of the Green George: he is dressed all in green, and when he enters King Arthur's hall he is carrying a holly branch - an apparently pointless symbol which is nevertheless strikingly similar to the holly and ivy decorations of the English Jack-in-the-Green and Austrian Green George.

Moreover, this group of Romances contains the only English references, outside of the Mummers' Play itself, to the death-and-revival of a magical hero. In most variants of the story the weapon

1. J.S. Udall 'Christmas Mummers in Dorsetshire' Folk Lore Record 3
2. Sir George L. Gomme 'Christmas Mummers' Nature 57 (1881) p.113  
(1897) p. 175.
3. The English Folk Play p. 161.

used is an axe, but this is sometimes replaced by a sword, and in some versions noticed by Miss Jessie L. Weston the encounter becomes a combat rather than a ritualistic exchange of blows.<sup>1</sup> Thus some forms of the story are very close to the action of the Mummers' Play. In particular, there is Gareth's adventure after he has rescued Dame Liones. On two consecutive nights he is attacked by an unknown knight whom he eventually defeats and beheads on both occasions. The episode as told by Malory<sup>2</sup> has no relevance to anything else whatsoever, and must surely be the remnant of a story, half-remembered and inserted here by Malory, rather than an invention of Malory himself. The important point is that here there is a combat similar to that in the Mummers' Play, and also a resurrection of the dead man - not, indeed, by a doctor, but by Linet.

Thus the Mummers' Play, crudely simple though it is as a dramatic presentation, contains a death-and-revival theme which is familiar in the Romances, and is well-known throughout most of Europe. This would seem to preclude any very close connection between the Mummers' Play and the miracle play of S. George. The miracle play is no longer extant, but was once very popular, and has often been suggested as the source of the S. George figure of the folk play. It would certainly have centred round the accepted Christian feats of S. George, the dragon-fight and the martyrdom - a very different story from that presented in the Mummers' Play.

1. The Legend of Sir Gawain (London 1897) ch.9.
2. Le Morte D'Arthur VII 22-3

The most probable explanation of S. George's presence in the Mummers' Play would seem to be that the original hero of the play was named George, or possibly Green George; and that he was superceded by the popular saint, just as, in many versions of the play, Saint George has given place to King George: medieval and Hanoverian 'improvements' respectively. That the original hero was of pagan origin, and a leading figure in the spring celebrations, there seems to be no doubt. Surprisingly enough, there is no evidence in the existing texts of the play that there was ever any attempt by the Church to Christianise it.

.....ooOoo.....

Tiddy attributes the degenerate nature of the Mummers' Play to the fact that for centuries it has been entirely the province of the poorer sections of the rural communities of Britain.<sup>1</sup> He points out that never since the time of the Canterbury Pilgrims has Britain had a homogeneous society, and that competition from the miracle play, and later, Elizabethan drama, would certainly render the Mummers' Play unacceptable in most sections of society,

'.... and the Mummers' Play was left to the care of men who, whatever may have been their imaginative powers, have never been gifted with much power of verbal expression. In the inarticulate arts of dance and music even the poorest of the folk can express themselves. But for literary and dramatic expression I believe a homogenous people is needed. No one section, and certainly not the poorest, is enough.'<sup>1</sup>

Even so, there is a certain amount of evidence that the Mummers' Play was not allowed to stagnate in complete isolation from all other forms of theatre. Until the beginning of the nineteenth century it

1. The Mummers' Play. p. 89.

was not unusual for theatre companies to travel about the countryside performing not only in the towns, but for single performances in quite small villages.<sup>1</sup> By this means traces of numerous professionally written plays have found their way into the Mummers' Play, without, however, having any effect on its structure, but merely being used to supplement its speeches. Chambers finds numerous echoes and fragments from Mucedorus in different versions of the play, as well as speeches borrowed from many other stage-plays. At Mylor, in Cornwall, the Turkish Knight exclaims, when he is revived:

'What places is are!  
 What seems appare!  
 Where ever I torn mine eye,  
 Tis all around  
 In chantin ground  
 And soft delusions:  
 Flowry mountains,  
 Mossy fountins,  
 What will verietty Surprize.  
 Tis on the alow walks we walks  
 An hundred ecos round us stock:  
 From hils to hils the voices tost,  
 Rocks rebounding,  
 Ecos resounding,  
 Not one single words was lost.'<sup>1</sup>

This, as both chambers and Tiddy point out, is taken from Addison's opera Rosamund. Another piece of borrowing noticed by both these authorities is the first part of the Ampleforth play, which is in large part taken from Congreve's Love for Love. In addition, Chambers records

1. Edmund K. Chambers. The English Folk Play p. 185-6

records borrowings from Youth, Wily Beguiled, Buxom Joan, and Singing Simpkin.<sup>1</sup>

The Mummers' Play not only borrowed from the professional stage, but in several cases can be shown to have contributed to it. In each case it was the structure of the Mummers' Play, or a character from it that was borrowed: the verses seem never to have been of sufficient quality to warrant professional use.

What appears to be an early piece of borrowing by the religious drama, is contained in the Croxton Play of the Sacrament. The Mayster Brendyche and his servant Colle who appear in this play are clearly the counterparts of the Doctor and his impudent servant who are so characteristic a feature of the Mummers' Play.

Some of Ben Jonson's Masques present even more conclusive evidence of the influence of the Mummers. In particular, the Masque of Christmas, written in 1616, is structurally almost identical with the Mummers' Play, and especially the sword-dance versions. The presenter is Father Christmas, who introduces his sons and daughters one by one, describing their good qualities as he does so, just as happens in the sword dance. Father Christmas and some of the other characters, such as Mince-Pie seem to derive from the more orthodox Mumming Play. Jonson's Masque of Owls is introduced by Captain Cox in similar fashion, as is Middleton's Inner Temple Masque.

Tiddy notices many other parallels between the Mummers' Play and

1. The English Folk Play p. 186

professional drama,<sup>1</sup> which he suggests represent borrowings on the professional side, but most of these are rather dubious textual fragments. He himself admits:

'I do not think anything more can be claimed in the way of textual connexion, though it is likely that there was a good deal of give-and-take between the jokes of the stage-clown and of his elder brother or country cousin of the Mummings' Play.<sup>2</sup>

It seems even more likely that both stage clown and Mumping clown were indebted to jokes and proverbs in common knowledge throughout the country, and that where parallels exist between the two they merely reflect the idiom and the time-honoured jokes of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

.....ooOoo.....

The tragedy of the Mummings' Play is that all the known versions of it are so degenerate, and the records of it before the eighteenth century are so meagre, as to give us no very clear indication of what its earlier form might have been. Indeed, there is barely enough evidence to prove that the play existed at all before 1777.

The play as it stands now is a tantalising hotch-potch of themes and characters collected from a variety of sources and covering several centuries. S. George was probably adopted into the play in the thirteenth or fourteenth century, when he was already very popular in Britain, but not yet inescapably associated with dragon. His popularity at this time was largely dependent on his miraculous appear-

1. The Mummings' Play. pp. 119-137.

2. *op. cit.* p. 132.

ances to the English army during the Crusades, and this would seem to be the reason why George's opponent in the Mummers' Play is so often called the Turkish Knight.

It is possible that George owes his presence in the play to his having replaced an earlier hero whose name was also George; but it is also possible that the story of his martyrdom, in one of its more lurid forms, may have suggested that S. George was a suitable hero for the play. Some versions of the martyrdom claim that George died and was revived three times before his soul finally entered heaven, and in the play also he would be required to die and revive.

Certainly George's adoption into the play did not involve the dragon also, for the dragon cannot fit into the essential structure of the play. That part of the S. George legend concerned with the dragon had influence on the play only in so far as some villages had their versions of it taken over in the nineteenth century by the parson or schoolmaster. By that time it was impossible to visualise S. George without the dragon, and so the dragon found its way into the play. In all other versions of the play where the dragon is mentioned, it is quite clearly thought of as belonging to one of George's previous adventures, with no direct bearing on the course of the play.

Thus the S. George of the Mummers' Play seems to have persisted for several centuries virtually unaltered, and in isolation from the development of the main body of the S. George legend.



## CONCLUSIONS

The S. George we know is quite clearly not an indigenous folk-hero, like king Arthur or Robin Hood. His entry into this country, and the growth of his popularity can be traced fairly accurately, but so well ingrained has he become in the minds of English people that he is now, and was by the end of the seventeenth century, the equivalent of a folk-hero. Indeed, his popularity, and the knowledge of his legend, have steadily declined since the eighteenth century, largely because it has become less fashionable to be ostentatiously patriotic - and the patriotic connotations of S. George are as inescapable as the dragon.

The earlier legend of S. George, that of his martyrdom, never seems to have been very popular in this country, although it was known to the clergy at least, some time before the Norman Conquest. The popular cult of S. George in this country owes its origin to the Crusades, and it is doubtful if the soldiers who paid him so much respect had any reliable information about him. They knew him primarily as a soldier who helped them against the Saracens, and probably knew all sorts of stories of miracles he was supposed to have performed. It was what he stood for that really matter, for he provided a focus and symbol of victory for the English army: 'England and Saint George' was a battle-cry to which they could all respond.

The legend of S. George and the dragon almost certainly derives from the George-and-Dragon emblems which were well-known in the Middle East from a very early date. They were intended to be symbolic of his

victory over evil, and not representative of an actual achievement. Quite possibly some of these emblems were brought back to Europe and to England by the returning crusaders and thus originated the association of S. George with a dragon. Certainly there must have been some basis of belief that George had fought a dragon for Jacobus' invention of the dragon legend to have been accepted so readily and so universally. At all events, from the thirteenth until well into the seventeenth century it was generally believed that George had actually fought and killed a dragon.

Once it had been established, the popularity of the dragon legend is quite easy to explain. The very idea of man fighting monster evokes an immediate response in the person seeing the picture or hearing the story. There is no need to point out that the man is good and the monster evil: it is self-explanatory. Therefore it could be appreciated on a purely physical level, or used to illustrate any number of moral and spiritual lessons. With the addition of other details such as the rescued princess and the city freed from the dragon, the legend could be used for quite complicated, as well as the most simple, purposes. In fact, the history of the legend shows that there was a continual rediscovery of the basic ideas which the original emblem had been intended to convey.

Even so, it is noticeable that the finest and most influential literary works are only on the fringe of the legend. It seems that while the legend was supported by the authority of the Church no very great deviation from the original story was possible. The result was that no major writer even attempted a treatment of the legend; and

those, like Lydgate and Barclay, who did attempt, it, could only reproduce the work of others, with slight modifications and changes of emphasis. Only in the sixteenth century when S. George, together with many other saints, had been discredited, could an inspired writer do as he wished with the S. George legend.

The results of this freedom were twofold. First, Spenser was able to use the legend, and extract from it every ounce of moral and spiritual allegory it was capable of yielding. John Bunyan, in certain sections of the Pilgrim's Progress, followed in the same tradition as Spenser, but the completeness of Spenser's work seems to have left no scope for further writing in this direction; no-one since has tried to explore the allegorical value of the S. George legend.

A second tradition of S. George writing originated with Johnson's Seven Champions of Christendom. Although of inferior quality, this tradition exerted far greater influence than did Spenser. By concentrating on the purely physical aspect of George's adventures, and by appealing to the patriotism and feeling of national superiority of the reader, this type of writing achieved a very wide audience. It was largely by means of the ballads and chap-books stemming from Johnson's work that the S. George legend became part of the inherited lore of every Englishman. It was this tradition, also, which initiated the final decline of the S. George legend into the state we find it now. Even during the seventeenth century, as can be seen from some of the burlesque ballads, there was a tendency for the legend to be regarded as something of a joke. John Grubb, for instance, clearly found it impossible to think seriously of the legend. One of the main reasons for this light-hearted treatment

must surely be that Johnson and his followers had taken the adventures of S. George beyond the bounds of credulity of their more sophisticated readers. The legend thus lost its appeal, both as an adventure story and as the story of a national, patriotic, hero.

The Mummers' Play version of the S. George legend, which is the only truly native version, appears to be completely divorced from the main development of the legend; even the popularity of the Seven Champions seems to have had virtually no effect on it, and the very dragon has no proper place in it. The presumption must be that the structure of the play was more important than the individual characters in it, and that S. George has here replaced an earlier, pagan, hero. There are two possible reasons for S. George's adoption into the play: one is that there is a certain amount of evidence to suggest that the original hero of the play was named George, and the other is that both the hero of the play and S. George, at his martyrdom, are killed and brought back to life again.

There is a strong possibility that 'S. George of Cappadocia' is in reality a pagan death-and-revival hero who was adopted by Christianity, and whose original legend has been transformed into a martyrdom. This hero had a British counterpart in the Gawain of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, and it is not impossible that these two heroes represent two branches of a single tradition, which once embraced the whole of Europe and the Middle East.

If this is indeed the case, then the legend of 'S. George' has been reintroduced into Britain at least twice in Christian times, and has

had an existence almost entirely separate from the earlier, pagan, legend. Even so, this earliest 'S. George' apparently survives in the Mummings' Play and in the legend of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, while the Christian martyrdom legend, which reached Britain in the eighth century, had little influence, and had passed into virtual oblivion by the sixteenth century. The S. George who is patron saint of England was introduced here by the returning crusaders, and it was in the thirteenth century that he became accredited with the dragon legend which has had such an important influence on English literature.

From the 'Legenda Aurea' of Jacobus de Voragine, translated into English by Caxton, and printed by Wynkyn the Worde in 1512.

---

Here foloweth the lyfe of saynt George martyr, and fyrst the interpretacion of his name.

George is sayd of geos, whiche is as moche to saye as erthe and orge, that is tilyenge, so george is to saye as tilyenge the erthe, that is his flesshe, and saynt Austyn sayth in libro de trinitate that good erthe is in the heyght of the mountaynes in the temporouce of the valeyes, and in the playne of the felde. The fyrst is good for herbes beyng grene the ii to vynes and the thyrd to whete and corne. Thus the blessyd george was hyghe in despysynge lowe thynges and therefore he had verdeur in hymselfe. He was attemperate by discrecion and therefore he had wyne of gladnes, and within he was playne of humylyte, and thereby put he forthe whete of good werke. Or George may be sayd of gera: that is holy, and of gyon that is a wrasterler, that is an holy wrasteler. For he wrasteled with the dragon. or it is sayd of george that is a pylgrym, and geyr that is cut or detrenched out and us that is a counseyllour. He was a pylgryme in the syght of the worlde, and he was cut and detrenched by the crowne of martyrdome, and he was a good counseyllour in prechyng. And his legende is nombred amonge other scryptures apocryfate in the counseyll of Nycene by cause his martyrdome hath no certayne relacion. For in the kalender of bede it is sayd that he suffred martyrdome in parysdye in the cyte of dyspoyn, whiche tofore was called lyde, whiche is by the cyte of Ioppem or Iaph. And in an other place it is sayd that he suffred dethe vnder dyoclesyan and max- myan which that tyme were emperours. And in an other place vnder Dioclesyan, Emperour of Perse beyenge presente lxx kynges of his empyre. And it is sayd here that he suffred dethe vnder dacyan the prouoste. Then Dyoclesyan and Maxymyan beyng emperours.

Saynt George was a knyght and borne in capadoce. On a tyme he came in to the prouince of Lybye to a cyte whiche is sayd Sylene, and by this cyte was a stagne or a ponde lyke a see, wherin was a dragon whiche enuenymed all the countree. And on a tyme the people were assembled for to slee hym, and whan they sawe hym they fledde. And whan he came nyghe the cyte he venymed the people with his breeth and therefore the people of the cyte gaue to hym euery daye two shepe for to fede hym by cause he sholde do no harme to the people. And whan the shepe fayled, there was taken a man and a shepe. Than was an ordynauce made in the towne that there sholde be taken the chyldren and yonge people of them of the towne by lotte, and eueryche as it fell were he gentyll or poore sholde be delyuered whan the lot fell on hym or her. So it happed that many of them of the towne were than delyuered, in so moche that the lotte fell vpon the kynges doughter wherof the kyng was sory and sayd vnto the people. For the loue of the goddes take golde and syluer and all that I haue and lete me haue my doughter. They sayd how syre ye haue made and ordeyned the lawe and our chyldren ben now deed and now ye wolde do the contrarye, your doughter shall be gyuen, or elles we shall brenne you and your houses. Whan the kyng sawe he myght no more do he began to wepe and sayd to his doughter. Now shall I neuer see thyne espousayles. Than retourned he to the people and demaunded viii dayes respyte and they graunted it to hym. And whan the viii dayes were passed, they came to hym and sayd: thou seest that the cyte peryssheth. Than dyde the kyng do araye his doughter lyke as she sholde be wedded, and enbraced her and kyssed her, and gaue her his benedyccyon, and after ledde her to the place where the dragon was. Whan she was there saynt George passed by, and whan he sawe the lady, he demaunded to the lady what she made there, and she sayd. Go ye your waye fayre yonge man that ye perysshe not also. Than sayd he, telle to me what haue ye, and why ye wepe, and doubte ye no thyng. whan she sawe that he wolde knowe, she sayd to hym how she was delyuered to the dragon. Than sayd saynt George, fayre doughter doubte ye no thyng therof. For I shall helpe the in the name of Ihesu cryste. She sayd

for goddes sake good knyght go your waye, and abyde not with me, for ye may not delyuer me. Thus as they spake togyder, the dragon appyered and came rennyng to theym, and saynt George was vpon his hors, and drewe oute his swerde, and garnysshed hym with the sygne of the crosse and rode hardely agaynst the dragon, whiche came toward hym and smote hym with his spere and hurte hym sore and threwe hym to the grounde. And after sayd to the mayde, delyuer to me your gyrdell, and bynde it aboute the necke of the dragon, and be not aferde. Whan she had done soo, the dragon folowed her as it had be a make beest and debonayre. Than she ledde hym in to the cyte, and the people fledde by mountaynes and valyes and sayd, alas alas we shall all be deed. Than saynt George sayd to theym ne doubt ye no thyng, without more beleue ye in god Ihesue cryst and do ye to be baptysed and I shall slee the dragon. Than the kynge was baptysed and all his people, and saynt George slewe the dragon and smote of his heed, and commaunded that he sholde be drawen in the felde, and they toke foure cartes with oxen that drewe hym out of the cyte. Than were there well xv. thousande men baptysed, without women and chyl dren. And the kynge dyde do make a chirche there of our lady and of saynt George. In the whiche yet sourdeth a fountayne of luyng water, whiche heleth the seke people that drynken therof. After this the kynge offred to saynt George as moche money as myght be nombred but he refused all, and commaunded that it sholde be gyuen to poore people for goddes sake. And enioyned the kynge foure thynges, that is that the kynge sholde haue charge of the chirches, and that he sholde honour the preestes, and here theyr seruyce diligently, and that he sholde haue pyte on the poore people, and after he kyssed the kynge and departed.

Now it happed that in the tyme of dyoclesyan and maxinyen which were emperours was so grete persecucion of crysten men that within a moneth were martred well xxii. thousand, and therefore they had so grete drede that some renyed and forsok god and dyde sacryfyce to the ydolles. Whan saynt George sawe this, he lefte the habyte of a knyght and solde all that he had, and gaue it to the poore, and toke the habyte of a



crysten man and went in to the mydle of the paynymes, and began to crye all goddes of the paynymes and gentylls ben deuylls. My god made the heuens and is very god. Than sayd the prouost to hym, of what presumption cometh this to the that thou sayest that our goddes ben deuylls and saye to vs what thou art, and what is thy name. He answered and sayd. I am named George I am a gentyll man a knyght of Capadoce, and haue left all for to serue god of heuen. than the prouost enforced hymselfe to drawe hym fro the fayth by fayre wodes. And whan he myght not brynge hym therto, he dyde do reyse hym on a gybet and so moche bete hym with grete staues and broches of yron, that his body was all to broken in pyeces and after he dyde do take brondes of yron and ioyned them to his sydes and his bowels whiche than appyered he dyde do frote with salte, and soo sente hym in to pryson but our lorde appyered vnto hym the same nyghte with grete lyght and confortd hym moche swetely. And by this grete consolacyon he toke to hym soo good herte that he doubted no tourment that they myght make hym suffre. Than whan dacyen the prouost sawe that he myght not surmounte hym, he called his enchantour and sayd to hym. I se that these crysten people doubt not our tourmentes. The enchantour bonde hymselfe vpon his heed to be smyten of yf he ouercome not his craftes. Thenne he dyde take stronge venyme and medled it with wyne, and made inuocacyon of the names of his false goddes and gaue it to saynt George to drynke Saynt George toke it and made the sygne of the crosse on it, and anone dranke it without greuynge hym ony thyng. Than the enchauntour made it moche stronger than it was tofore of venyme and gaue it hym to drynke, and it greued hym no thyng. Whan the enchauntour sawe that he kneled downe at the fete of saynt George and prayed hym that he wolde make hym crysten. And whan Dacyen knewe that he was becomen crysten, he made to smyte of his heed, and after on the morowe he made saynt George to be sette bytwene two wheles whiche were full of swerdes sharpe and cuttyng on bothe sydes But anone the wheles were broken, and saynt George escaped withoute. And than commaunded Dacyen that he sholde be put in a cawdron full of molten leed. And whan saynt George entred therin by the vertue of our lorde hym semed that he was in a bayne well at ease. Than Dacyen

seyng this began to aswage his yre: and to flatre hym by fayre wordes and sayd to hym. George the patience of our goddes is ouer grete vnto the whiche hast blasphemed them and done to them grete despyte. Than fayre and ryght swete sone I praye the that thou retourne to our lawe and make sacryfyce to the ydolles and leue thy folye, and I shall enhance the to grete honour and worshyp. Than began George to smyle and sayd to hym, wherfore saydest thou not to me thus at the begynnyng I am redy to do as thou sayst. Than was Dacyen glad, and made to crye ouer all the towne that all people sholde assemble for to see George make sacryfyce whiche somoche had stryued there agaynst Than was the cyte arayed and feste through out all the towne, and all came to the temple for to see hym. Whan saynt george was on his knees, and they supposed that he wolde haue worshypped the ydolles he prayed our lorde god of heuen that he wolde destroye the temple and the ydolle in the honour of his name for to make the people to be conuerted. And anone the fyre descended fro heuen and brente the temple and the ydolles and theyr preestes, and sythen the erthe opened and swallowed all the cendres and asshes that were lefte. Thenne Dacyen made hym to be brought tofore hym and sayd to hym, what ben the euyll dedes that thou haste done, and also grete vntrouth. Thenne sayd to hym saynt George. A syr beleue it not but come with me and se how I shall sacryfyce Than sayd Dacyen to hym. I see well thy frawde and thy barate thou wylte make the erthe to swalowe me lyke as thou hast the temple and my goddes. Thenne sayd saynt george. O caytyfe telle me how may thy goddes helpe the whan they maye not helpe themselfe. Than was Dacyen so angry that he sayd to his wyfe. I shall deye for angre yf I may not surmounte and ouercome this man. Than sayd she vnto hym euyll and cruell tyraunt ne seest thou not the grete vertue of the crysten people I saye to the well that thou sholdest not do to theym ony harme for theyr god fyghteth for them and knowe thou well that I wyll become crysten. Than was Dacyen moche abashed and sayd to her wylt thou be crysten, than he toke her by the heere and dyde doo bete her cruelly. Than demaunded she of saynt george, what may I become by cause I am not crystened. Thenne answered the blessyd George, doute the no thyng fayre daughter

for thou shalte be baptyseed in thy blode. Thenne began she to worshyppe our lorde Ihesu cryst: and so he deyed and wente to heuen. On the morowe Dacyen gaue sentence that saynt George sholde be drawen through all the cyte, and after his heed sholde be smyten of. Than made he his prayer to our lorde that all they that desyred ony bone myght gete of oure lorde god in his name, and a voyce came fro heuen whiche sayd that it whiche he hadde desyred was graunted. And after he had made his oryson his heed was smyten of aboute the yere of our lorde, ij Clxxxvii. whan Dacyen went homewarde from the place where he was byheded towarde his palays fyre fell downe fro heuen vpon hym and brente hym and all his seruauntes.

George of Turonense telleth that there were some that bare certeyn relyques of saynt George and came in to a certeyn oratorye in an hospytall. And on the mornynge when they sholde departe they coude not moeue the dore tyll they had lefted there parte of the relyques.

It is also founden in the hystorye of antyoche that whan the crysten men went ouer see to conquere Iherusalem that on a ryght fayr yonge man appyered to a preest of the hoost and counseyllid hym that he sholde bere with hym a lytell of the relyques of saynt George, for he was a conduytour of the batayle and so he dyde so moche that he had some. and whan it so was that they had assyeged Iherusalem and durst not mounte ne go vpon the walles for the quarelles and defence of the sarrasyns: they sawe appertely saynt George whiche had whyte armes with a reed crosse that went vp tofore them on the walle and they folowed hym, and so was Iherusalem taken by his helpe and bytwene Iherusalem and porte Iaphe by a towne called Ranus is the chapell of saynt George, whiche is now desolate and vncouered, and therin dwelle crysten grekes. And in the sayd chapell lyeth the body of saynt Georges but not the heed, and there lyen his fader and moder and his vncler not in the chapell but vnder the walle of the chapell, and the kepers wyll not suffre pylgrymes to come therin but yf they paye two duckettes. And therefore come but fewe therin but offre withoute the chapell at an aulter, and there is vii yere and vii lentes of pardon, and the body of saynt George lyeth in the mydle of the quere or chore of the sayd

chapell, and in his tombe is an hole that a man may put in his honde.

An whan a sarrasyn beyng madde is brought thyder, and yf he put his heed in the hole he shall anone be made parfytely hole, and haue his wytte agayne. This blessyd and holy martyr saynt George is patrone of this royaume of Englonde, and the crye of men of warre. In the worshyp of whome is founded the noble ordre of garter, and also a noble college in the castell of Wyndesore by kynges of Englonde, in whiche college is the herte of saynt George whiche Sygysmonde the emperour of almayne brought and gaue it for a grete and precyous relyque to kyng Harry the fyfte And also the sayd sygysmonde was a broder of the sayd garter, and also there is a pyece of his hede whiche college is nobly endowed to the honour and worshyp of almyghty god and his blessed martyr saynt George. Thenne lete vs praye vnto hym that he be specyall protector and defensor of this royaume.

APPENDIX 2

SPENSER'S DEBT TO THE REVELATION OF S. JOHN

It is in cantos seven and eight of book one of the Faerie Queene that the influence of the Revelation on Spenser's work is most marked. When the Redcrosse Knight has been captured by Orgoglio, Duessa transfers her affections to the giant. He gives her a seven-headed monster on which to ride, and this monster, 'ybred in filthy fen.... kept long time in darksome den' (I.vii.16), cannot be other than that mentioned in the Revelation as the mount of the Whore of Babylon.

This identification is sustained, for when Una brings Prince Arthur to rescue the Redcrosse Knight, Duessa rides out with Orgoglio to meet him. She is

'High mounted on her many headed beast,  
And every head with fyrie tongue did flame,  
And every head was crowned on his creast,  
And bloudie mouthed with late cruell feast.' (I.viii.6)

Moreover, she bore a golden cup,

' ..... replete with magick artes;  
Death and despayre did many therof sup,  
And secret poyson through their inner parts,  
Th'eternall bale of heauie wounded harts.' (I.viii.14)

Duessa thus corresponds almost exactly with the woman riding on

'a scarlet-coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns .... having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations .... drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus.' (Revelation XVII.1)

Her influence over the Redcrosse Knight, also, derives from the Revelation, for she defiles him with the pleasures of the flesh and brings him to destruction, just as does the Whore of Babylon:

'For by the wine of the wrath of her fornication all the nations are fallen; and the kings of the earth committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth waxed rich by the power of her wantonness.' (Revelation XVIII.3)

The reference to the monster's tail pulling down the stars from the heavens has already been noticed,<sup>1</sup> and parallels of detail such as this abound between cantos seven and eight of Spenser's work, and chapters seventeen and eighteen of the Revelation.

Moreover, Spenser follows the Revelation in assigning to this monster of Duessa's only a subservient rôle, for he consciously identifies the dragon of canto eleven with Satan himself, when he refers to it as 'that old dragon', a phrase used to describe Satan in Revelation XII.9. Indeed, Spenser's dragon represents not only Satan, but hell itself,

'..... for his deepe devouring iawes  
Wide gaped, like the griesly mouth of hell,  
Through which into his dark abisse all rauin fell,' (I.xi.12)

and

'A cloud of smothering smoke and sulpher seare  
Out of his stinking gorge forth steemed still  
That all the ayre about with smoke and stench did fill.' (I.xi.13)

The imagery continues in the same vein when S. George wounds the dragon:

'For grieffe thereof, and diuelish despight,  
From his infernall founnace forth he threw  
Huge flames, that dimmed all the heauens light,  
Enrold in duskish smoke and brimstone blew  
As burning Aetna from his boyling stew  
Doth belch out flames, and rockes in peeces broke,  
And ragged ribs of mountaines molten new,  
Enwrapt in coleblacke clouds and filthy smoke,  
That all the land with stench, and heauen with horror choke.'  
(I.xi.44)

1. See above, p. 65.

All of this derives ultimately from chapter nine of the Revelation:

'And he opened the pit of the abyss; and there went up a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit',

and from the same chapter derive the poisonous stings of Spenser's dragon:

'And they have tails like unto scorpions, and stings; and in their tails is their power to hurt men five months.'

One other portion of book one of the Faerie Queene which undoubtedly derives from the Revelation is the vision of the New Jerusalem contained in canto ten. The Redcrosse Knight is shown

'An little path, that was both steepe and long,  
Which to a goodly Citie led his view;  
Whose wals and towres were builded high and strong  
Of perle and precious stone, that earthly tong  
Cannot describe, nor wit of man can tell;  
Too high a ditty for my simple song;  
The Citie of the great king hight it well,  
Wherein eternall peace and happinesse doth dwell.' (I.x.55)

It is

'The new Hierusalem, that God has built  
For those to dwell in, that are chosen his,  
His chosen people purg'd from sinfull guilt,  
With pretious bloud, which cruelly was spilt  
On cursed tree, of that vnspotted lam,  
That for the sinnes of all the world was kilt:  
Now are they Saints all in that Citie sam  
More deare vnto their God, then younglings to their dam.' (I.x.57)

.....ooOoo.....

Since so much of this book of the Faerie Queene undoubtedly derives from the Revelation, it seems reasonable to suggest that a great deal more including some of the basic patterns of the book, may well stem from the same source. Moreover, the possibility of a sustained connection between the two works is strengthened by the fact that

Spenser's work contains a historical, as well as a spiritual allegory, while the Revelation was often interpreted as referring to the Reformation.<sup>1</sup> Thus it would be quite natural for Spenser to create an allegory of the Reformation in England, in terms of the Revelation.

Spenser's pattern of evil influences conforms well with that of the Revelation, particularly with the seven-headed monster and the dragon. In addition, it is not difficult to see in Archimago the false prophet, ally of the monster and the dragon, who

'had two horns like unto a lamb, and he spake as a dragon....  
And he doeth great signs, that he should even make fire to  
come down out of heaven upon the earth in the sight of men.  
And he deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by reason of the  
signs which it was given him to do in the sight of the beast.'

(Revelation XIII 11-16)

This imitation Christ is immediately contrasted by S. John with the real Lamb standing on mount Zion, just as Spenser contrasts Archimago with the real hermit, Contemplation, on his mountain; and both the False Prophet and Archimago are characterised as the deceivers of mankind.

Duessa, of course, is clearly identified by Spenser as the Whore of Babylon, and the dragon and the seven-headed monster are openly presented by him, so that the four most prominent evil influences of the Revelation are all assembled in the pages of Spenser's work.

The Antichrist of the Revelation was interpreted by the clergy of Elizabethan England as referring chiefly to the Turks and to the

1. Vide: John Bale, The Image of Both Churches, printed in Select Works of Bishop Bale, Ed. H. Christmas, Parker Society (1849); William Fulke, A Discovery of the Dangerous Rock of the Popish Church, printed in Answers to Stapleton, Martiall, and Sanders, Ed. R. Gibbings. Parker Society (1848); John Foxe, Acts and Monuments (London 1563)



Papacy. Bishop Bale succinctly states the position regarding the Papacy in his account of the examination of Lord Cobham:

Cobham is asked, 'Then what do ye say of the Pope?' He replies, 'As I said before, he and you together maketh whole the great antichrist; of whom he is the great head, you bishops, priests, prelates, and monks are the body, and the begging friars are the tail, for they cover the filthiness of you both with their subtle sophistry.'<sup>1</sup>

Elsewhere Bale essays to show that the seventh head of the beast is the Roman Church, and that the healed wound represents the shortlived Reformation under Henry VIII.<sup>2</sup> John Foxe identifies the

'Bishop of Rome to be the second beast (i.e. the false prophet), with the two horns of the Lamb, for that he only hath and doth cause the said empire of Rome to revive and to be magnified...'<sup>3</sup>

Working from this basis, it is easy to agree with commentators such as Lillian Winstanley that the imprisonment of Spenser's Redcrosse Knight by Orgoglio and Duessa corresponds to the reign of Philip and Mary over England.<sup>4</sup> Throughout the episode Spenser emphasises that Orgoglio and Duessa are bloodthirsty killers, and that the very altar in Orgoglio's castle reeks with blood:<sup>5</sup> this may be taken to refer to the Marian persecution of Protestants. There is no need to claim that Duessa represents Mary Tudor throughout Book One of the Faerie Queene; rather, Mary was an agency through which Antichrist could work, and Spenser identifies her with Duessa only where Mary was active on behalf of Antichrist. In such cases the identification is extremely close,<sup>6</sup> but elsewhere it breaks down altogether.

1. John Bale, Select Works. Ed. H. Christmas. Parker Society (1849)p.38

2. Bale. op. cit. pp.426-8.

3. Acts and Monuments IV.i. (London 1856) p.108.

4. Vide: The Faerie Queene, Book One, Ed. L. Winstanley (Cambridge 1915 Introduction.

5. The Faerie Queene. I.viii.36.

6. Vide: The Faerie Queene, Book One. Ed. L. Winstanley (Cambridge 1915) Introduction.

Since Spenser follows Elizabethan clerical thought in using the seven-headed beast and the Whore to represent the Papacy as a whole, and since Archimago is Spenser's equivalent of the false prophet, he probably follows Foxe and identifies Archimago with the Pope, either in person or as represented by his cardinals and hishops. Miss Winstanley identifies Archimago with Bishop Gardiner,<sup>1</sup> but, as with Duessa and Mary, this identification with a single historical personage holds good only for a small section of Spenser's book.<sup>2</sup> The deeds and character of Archimago should rather be taken to mean the efforts of the Roman Clergy to separate the true church (Una) from the protection of England (the Redcrosse Knight), and subordinate England to the power of Rome.

It is perhaps more difficult to relate Spenser's heroes and heroines to those of the Revelation, but there are links to be found. The woman who, in the Revelation, flees into the wilderness from the dragon, and gives birth to a child there,<sup>3</sup> may well have had a considerable influence on the character of Una. Both are frequently taken to represent, among other things, the Church on earth, and both are described as having been driven from home by a dragon. Moreover, Una, when she lays her veil aside, is described as:

'So faire and fresh, as freshest flowers in May;  
And on her now a garment she did weare,

1. Vide: The Faerie Queene, Book One. Ed. L. Winstanley (Cambridge 1915) Introduction.
2. Vide: The Faerie Queene, Book One. Variorum Edn. (Baltimore 1932) p. 465.
3. That Una has no child does not mar the parallel, for the child was interpreted, in the sixteenth century, as Christ himself. Bale (Select Works p. 409) says: 'Never is the true church idle, but conceiveth Christ at the gospel preaching, retaineth him in faith, and bringeth him forth in teaching the same.'

That seemd like silke and siluer wouen neare,  
 But neither sil nor siluer therein did appeare.  
 The blazing brightness of her beauties beame,  
 And glorious light of her sunshiny face

To tell, were as to striue against the streame.' (I.xii.22-3)

This description could derive from Revelation XII.1.:

And a great sign was seen in heaven; a woman arrayed with  
 the sun and moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown  
 of twelve stars.'

Prince Arthur, too, in his role in book one of the Faerie Queene,  
 seems to owe a good deal to Revelation XIX.11-21:

'And I saw heaven opened; and behold a white horse, and he  
 that sat thereon, called Faithfull and True; and in  
 righteousness he doth judge and make war, And his eyes are  
 a flame of fire, and upon his head are many diadems....  
 and his name is called the Word of God.... And I saw  
 the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies,  
 gathered together to make war against him that sat on the  
 horse and against his army.'

This lends support to the suggestion that Prince Arthur represents the  
 power of God (rather than any historical person), which comes to the  
 aid of Christian men when they are hardpressed. Moreover, Spenser  
 would be familiar with Foxe's detailed account of how the wrath of  
 God brought disaster, misery, and premature death to Mary and all who  
 supported her.<sup>1</sup>

If the Redcrosse Knight owes anything to the Revelation, it is as  
 a combination of St. Michael and Christ himself. The similarity  
 between St. George and St. Michael, both of them famous as dragon-  
 slayers, need owe nothing directly to the influence of the Revelation,

1. Acts and Monuments, VIII,ii (1868) pp 625-671.

but the resemblance of Spenser's St. George to the Christ of the Revelation would seem to be deliberate. It is not difficult to see St. George and the dragon as allegorical representations of Christ and Satan,<sup>1</sup> so that it would be quite possible for Spenser to associate the two. Moreover, both the Revelation and Book One of the Faerie Queene end with the destruction of the dragon and the marriage of the hero to his expected bride; George is betrothed to Una, representative of Truth and the reformed Church, while the bride of Christ is the New Jerusalem, habitation of 'they which are written in the Lamb's Book of Life'.

.....ooOoo.....

If all these identifications are accepted, they reinforce Alastair Fowler's thesis that one aspect of the structure of the Faerie Queene is astrological, and that much of the imagery it contains is astrological in origin;<sup>2</sup> for the imagery of the Revelation is undoubtedly astrological, and is used to make clear the structure of the book, whose time sequence depends on star and planet movements.<sup>3</sup>

Again, if the identifications of Spenser's characters with those of the Revelation are accepted, they suggest that the allegory of Book One of the Faerie Queene will support, in addition to many others, an Apocalyptic interpretation. And this in turn suggest that Spenser may have made use of the well-known device of representing the Reformation in terms of the Apocalypse. Since Spenser was undoubtedly an adherent of the Anglican compromise, it seems likely that he might have used his great work in praise of Queen Elizabeth to welcome the Church of England as if it were the dawn of the Millenium.

1. That this comparison was known to the Elizabethans is shown by the S. George ballad quoted on pages 109-110.

2. Spenser and the Numbers of Time (London, 1964)

3. Vide: Austin Farrer, The Revelation of St. John the Divine: (Oxford:1964)

## APPENDIX III

A synopsis of the Seven Champions of Christendom in so far as it concerns Saint George.

Part One.

## Chapter 1

George's birth at Coventry is foretold by omens, and immediately after his birth he is stolen by Kalyb. At the age of fourteen he escapes from her, imprisons her in a rock, and sets the other six champions free from her prison.

## Chapter 2

Kalyb is torn to pieces by spirits, and the seven champions separate to go in search of adventures.

## Chapter 3

S. George slays the fiery dragon in Egypt and rescues Sabra, the Egyptian princess. George and Sabra fall in love, but the jealous Almidor, King of Morocco, conspires against George. George is attacked by twelve knights, but manages to kill them all. He is then sent to Persia, where he interrupts a local religious festival and is then insolent to the Soldan. He is thrown into prison, where he remains for seven years.

Chapter 10

George digs his way out of prison and flees from Persia. On his travels he reaches the castle of the Necromancer, Ormandine, where he manages to release S. David from a magic sleep.

## Chapter 11

Sabra has by this time been married to Almidor for seven years, but has preserved her virginity by means of a magic charm. George arrives

in Morocco and steals her away. Her virginity is later proved by the fact that two fierce lions refuse to harm her; they sit quietly beside her enabling George to kill them one at a time.

#### Chapter 12

The seven champions arrive in Greece for the Emperor's wedding, and prove invincible in the tournaments. As a result, the embittered pagan knights declare war on Christendom, and the Champions depart to their own countries to raise an army.

#### Chapter 13

The seven champions muster their army in the bay of Portugal. Their numbers are counted, and S. George makes a speech to the soldiers.

#### Chapter 14

There is dissention in the pagan army, and a battle takes place between the Christians and the Moors in which the Moors are routed. Almidor is captured and, because he refuses to profess Christianity, is scalded to death in a cauldron of boiling lead and brimstone.

#### Chapter 15

The seven champions arrive in Egypt, where they fight another victorious battle. Meanwhile Sabra, who has remained behind in England, is attacked by the Earl of Coventry. In order to repel his advances she is forced to kill him, and is condemned to be burnt at the stake unless some champion will fight to redeem her. S. George eventually hears this news and hastens back to England, where he is just in time to save her. The King of Egypt, his army destroyed and his daughter having betrayed him, throws himself from the top of his tower and breaks his neck.

## Chapter 16

George and Sabra journey towards Persia, and on the way arrive in a country inhabited only by maidens. Sabra and seven of these maidens are attacked in the woods by a giant, who intends to ravish them. They put up such resistance however, that he eventually kills all but Sabra, who preserves herself by using a magic herb which makes her look ugly and undesirable. The giant is later killed by S. George.

## Chapter 17

George and Sabra get lost in a wilderness, where their three sons are born. The Fairy Queen prophesies their illustrious future. The children are stolen by animals, but George recovers them and kills the animals. The family return into Bohemia, where S. George finds his father's grave and erects a splendid tomb over it.

## Chapter 18

They arrive in Egypt, where Sabra is crowned queen.

## Chapter 19

A great battle takes place between the Christians and the Persians. The wizard Osmand raises up an army of spirits on the Persian side, but George manages to break the spell and save the day. The Soldan of Persia brains himself against a marble pillar.

Part Two

## Chapter 1

George's three sons, having been educated in Europe, arrive in London and rejoin their parents. While out hunting with her family Sabra falls into a bramble bush and is killed. The seven champions decide to set out on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

## Chapter 2

The three sons make offerings at their mother's tomb, and begin to quarrel among themselves. Sabra's ghost appears, reproves them for their unseemly conduct and tells them to go after their father, for he is in great danger.

## Chapter 4

The seven champions arrive at the house of a Jew whose fountain at Damasco has been stolen by a terrible giant. The giant also has fourteen of the Jew's sons prisoner. Each of the seven champions goes to attack the giant, but each in turn is captured, until only S. George remains to defeat the giant and release his twenty prisoners.

## Chapter 5

The champions journey on S. George kills a giant, whose dinner they eat. They find an old man sitting beside a crystal portrait of a murdered maiden. He offers no explanation, but gives them a book to read.

## Chapter 6

George reads the book to the other six, and they learn how Leoger of the Black Castle has killed one of the old man's daughters and carried off the other. The seven champions immediately set out to avenge the two maidens



## Chapter 8

The seven champions arrive at the Black Castle, which is defended by enchantment. They manage to kill seven giants, but are then tricked and fall into a cave. The six fall into a magic sleep and George saves all their lives by killing a serpent. Eventually George himself falls asleep. The spell on the seven champions is such that none of them can be wakened until seven magic lamps, which burn at the entrance to the cave, are extinguished.

## Chapter 9

The three sons arrive before the Black Castle, bringing with them Rosana, a maiden they found in distress in the forest. They meet the old man, who tells them of the fate of the seven champions.

## Chapter 10

The three sons enter the castle, and Rosana, because of her rose-shaped birth-mark, is able to put out the seven lamps and end the enchantment. Leoger and his Enchanter have fled, but Rosana departs to hunt them down.

## Chapter 11

S. George is roused from his sleep in the Black Castle, and finds a knight lying on a tomb which is placed over a fire, and a lady in the tomb.

## Chapter 12

The knight and the lady tell their story to S. George. It transpires that the knight is the King of Babylon, and the lady's name is Fidelia. George releases them from their torment in the tomb.

## Chapter 15

The seven champions restore the Babylonian king to his throne, and he marries Fidelai. The seven then move on to Rome, where S. George visits the nunnery of Diana and falls in love with a nun who, it transpires, is the Emperor's daughter Lucina. George attempts to satisfy his desires, but the lady commits suicide and the seven champions are forced to fight their way out of Italy.

## Chapter 16

The seven champions win great honour at a tournament held in Constantinople.

## Chapter 17

The seven champions again meet with George's three sons.

## Chapter 24

George returns to his native Coventry, where he is told that there is a terrible dragon ravaging the land. He succeeds in killing it, but has received such severe wounds that he shortly dies in the arms of his sons.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abbreviations

E.E.T.S.	Early English Text Society
F.L.	Folk Lore
F.L.J.	Folk-Lore Journal
F.L.R.	Folk-Lore Record
M.L.N.	Modern Language Notes
M.P.	Modern Philology
P.M.L.A.	Proceedings of the Modern Language <u>Association</u> of America
R.E.S.	Review of English Studies
S.P.	Studies in Philology

- 1) Texts of different versions of the legend, and editions of literary treatments.

Texts of the Martyrdom, or Passion, of Saint George are to be found in:

Budge, Ernest A.W. Saint George of Cappadocia. (London 1888)

Matzke, John L. 'Contributions to the History of the Legend of S. George'  
P.M.L.A. pp 464-535.

Aelfric. Lives of the Saints. Ed. W. Skeat. E.E.T.S.p76. (1881)

\_\_\_\_\_. An Anglo-Saxon Passion of Saint George. Ed. C. Hardwick.  
Percy Society p28 (1851)

The South English Legendary. Ed. C.D'Evelyn and A.J. Mill E.E.T.S.  
pp. 235, 236, 244 (1951,52,59)

.....ooOoo.....

The dragon legend, from its origin to 1590, is represented in:

Voragine, Jacobus De. Legenda Aurea. Ed. F.S. Ellis (London 1900)

\_\_\_\_\_. The Golden Legend. Trans. William Caxton. (London 1512)

\_\_\_\_\_. The text of the S. George legend in the above is included in  
Alexander Barclay,  
The Life of Saint George. Ed. W. Nelson E.E.T.S. pp 230 (1955)

Mirk, John. A Festival. Ed. T. Erbe. E.E.T.S. Extra Series 96 (1905)

Beatty, Arthur. 'The Saint George, or Mummers' Plays' Transactions of the Wisconsin Academy of Arts and Science 15 (1904-7)

Lydgate, John. Minor Poems I. Ed. H.N. McCracken. E.E.T.S. Extra Series 107 (1910)

Barclay, Alexander. The Life of Saint George. Ed. W. Nelson E.E.T.S. 230 (1955)

.....ooOoo.....

Spenser, Edmund. The Faerie Queene, Book One. Variorum Edn. Ed. E. Greenlaw, C.G. Osgood, and F.M. Padelford. (Baltimore 1932)

..... The Faerie Queene, Book One. Ed. L. Winstanley. (Cambridge 1915)

Johnson, Richard. The Seven Champions of Christendom. (1st. Edn. 1592) (London 1670 and 1824) and (Halifax 1862)

Bunyan, John. The Pilgrim's Progress. Ed. J.B. Wharey. Rev. R. Sharrock (Oxford 1960)

Kirke, John. The Seven Champions of Christendom. (London 1638)

The Renowned History of the Seven Champions of Christendom. (An abridged, chap-book version) (London 1679)

The Life and Death of Saint George, the Noble Champion of England. (a chap-book) (London 1750?)

An Excellent Ballad of Saint George for England, and the King of Egypt's Daughter. (London 1670)

A New Ballad of Saint George and the Dragon. (non-narrative) (London 1679)

Saint George for England. (referring to General Monk) (Oxford 1660)

The Second Part of Saint George for England. (referring to Monk) (London 1660)

Saint George and the Dragon, Anglice. (referring to Monk) (London 1660)

The S. George ballads (those that deal with George himself) are also contained in many printed collections, but especially:

(Thomas) Percy, Reliques of Ancient English Poetry. Ed. H.B. Wheatley (London 1887) Vol. III.

.....ooOoo.....

Texts of Mummers' Play are to be found in almost every article on the subject, but chiefly in:

Chambers, Sir Edmund K. The Medieval Stage. (Oxford 1903)

\_\_\_\_\_. The English Folk Play. (Oxford 1933)

Tiddy, Reginald J.E. The Mummers' Play. (Oxford 1923)

2) Books and Articles.

Acta Sanctorum. (Antwerp 1643-1867) Aprilis III. Ed. Papenbroch (1675)

Adamnan. De Locis Sanctis. Ed. D. Meehan. (Dublin 1958)

Arnold-Forster, Frances. Studies in Church Dedications. (London 1899)

Arnott, S. 'The Christmas Play of the Seven Champions' Notes and Queries  
V. 10. (1878) pp 489

Ashmole, Elias. The Order of the Garter. (London 1672)

Bale. Select Works. Ed. H. Christmas. Parker Society (1849)

Baring-Gould, Sabine. Curious Myths of the Middle Ages. (London 1866)

Baskervill, Charles R. 'Mummers' Wooing Plays in England' M.P. 21 (1923-4)  
pp. 225-270.

Beatty, Arthur. 'The Saint George, or Mummers' Plays' Transactions  
of the Wisconsin Academy of Arts and Science 15 (1904-7)

Bell, Robert. Ancient Poems, Ballads, and Songs. (London 1857)

Bennett, Josephine W. The Evolution of the Faerie Queene. (Chicago 1942)

Brand, John. Observations on Popular Antiquities. (1st Edn. 1777)  
Ed. W.C. Hazlitt (London 1905)

Broadus, Edmund K. 'The Red Cross Knight and Lybeaus Desconus' M.L.N. 18  
(1903) pp. 202-4.

Budge, Ernest A.W. Saint George of Cappadocia. (London 1888)

Bunyan, John. Works. Ed. G. Offor (London Edinburgh 1860-2)

Bunyan, John. The Holy War Ed. M. Peacock (Oxford 1892)

- Burne, Charlotte S. Shropshire Folk-Lore. (London 1883)
- \_\_\_\_\_. 'Guisers' Plays, Songs, and Rhymes from Staffordshire' in F.L.J. 4  
(1886) pp 350-8.
- Caxton, William. The Ordre of Chivalry. Ed. A. Byles. E.E.T.S. 168(1925)
- Chambers, Sir Edmund K. The Medieval Stage. (Oxford 1903)
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Elizabethan Stage. (Oxford 1923)
- \_\_\_\_\_. The English Folk Play. (Oxford 1933)
- Chambers, Richard. Book of Days. (London 1864)
- Child, Francis J. English and Scottish Popular Ballads. (Boston and New York  
1882)
- Cocks, Alfred H. 'The Wooburn Version of the Mummers' Play' Records of  
Buckinghamshire 9 (1904-9) pp. 222-3.
- Cohn, Norman. The Pursuit of the Millenium. (London 1957)
- The Coventry Leet-Book. Ed. M. Harris. E.E.T.S. 135 (1908)
- Crackanthorp, Richard. Defensio Ecclesiae Anglicanae. (1st. Edn. 1625)  
(London 1847)
- Ditchfield, Peter H. Old English Customs. (London 1896)
- Douce, Francis. Illustrations of Shakespeare. (London 1807)
- Downname, John. The Christian Warfare. (London 1634)
- Dyer, Thomas F.T. British Popular Customs. (London 1876)
- Eusebius. Historia Ecclesiastica. published as A New Eusebius.  
Ed. J. Stevenson (London 1957)
- Fairman-Ordish, Thomas 'FolkeDrama' F.L. 2 (1891) pp. 314-34
- \_\_\_\_\_. 'English Folk Drama' F.L. 4 (1893) pp. 149-62.
- Fallow, Thomas M. '&Yorkshire Sword-Actors' Antiquary 31 (1895) pp 138-40.
- Farrer, Austin. The Revelation of S. John the Divine. (Oxford 1964)

- Fletcher, Jefferson B. 'The Painter of the Poets' S.P. 14 (1917) pp 153-66.
- Fowler, Alastair. Spenser and the Numbers of Time. (London 1964)
- Foxe, John. Acts and Monuments. (1st English Edn) London 563)  
Ed. J. Pratt (London 1853-70)
- Frazer, Sir James G. The Golden Bough. (London 1926)
- Freeman, Rosemary. English Emblem Books. (London 1948)
- Fulke, William. Answers to Stapleton, Martiall, and Sanders  
Ed. R. Gibbings. Parker Society. (1848)
- Golder, Harold. 'Spenser and Bunyan' P.M.L.A. 45 (1930) pp. 216-37.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 'Bunyan's Valley of the Shadow of Death' M.P. 27 (1929)
- Gomme, Alice B. 'The Character of Beelzebub in the Mummings' Play' F.L.  
40 (1929) pp. 292-3.
- Gomme, Sir George L. 'Christmas Mummings' Nature 57 (1897) pp. 175-6.
- Graves, Robert. The Greek Myths. (Penguin, London 1955)
- Green, Robert J. Saint George and the Dragon. (1961) Unpublished thesis  
in the possession of Leeds University.
- Greene, Herbert E. 'The Allegory as employed by Spenser, Bunyan, and Swift'  
P.M.L.A. 4 (1888-9) pp. 145-93.
- Greene, Robert. Plays and Poems. Ed. J.C. Collins (Oxford 1905)
- Greenlaw, Edwin. 'Una and Her Lamb' M.L.N. 42 (1927) pp. 515-6.
- Hamilton, A.C. The Structure of Allegory in the Faerie Queene(Oxford 1961)
- Hammerle, Karl. 'The Hours of Saint George' Archiv für das Studium der  
Neueren Sprachen. 166 (1939) pp. 199-203.
- Hartland, Sidney. The Legend of Perseus. (London 1894-6) 3 Vols.
- Heffner, Ray. 'Spenser's Allegory in Book One of the Faerie Queene' S.P.  
27 (1930) pp. 142-61.
- Henderson, William. Folk-Lore of the Northern Counties. (London 1879)

Heylin, Peter. The History of . . . . Saint George of Cappadocia. (London 1633)

A History of . . . . Saint George. Anonymous (London 1661)

Hole, Christina. English Folk Heroes. (London 1948)

Hough, Graham. A Preface to the Faerie Queene. (London 1962)

Huizinga, Johan. The Waning of the Middle Ages. (Anchor Edn. New York 1954)

Hurd, Richard. Letters on Chivalry and Romance. (London 1771)

Itinerarium Regis Ricardi. Ed. Stubbs. Rolls Series 38 (1864)

Jones, Gwen. 'The Derbyshire Mumming Play of Saint George and the Dragon'  
F.L. 32 (1921) pp. 181-92.

Judson, Alexander C. The Life of Edmund Spenser. (Baltimore 1945)

Ker, William P. Epic and Romance. (London 1897)

Landrum, Grave W. 'Spenser's use of the Bible and his Alleged Puritanism'  
P.M.L.A. 41 (1926) pp. 517-44.

Langland, Williams. Piers Plowman. Ed. W. Skeat. (Oxford 1873)

Lee, Frederick G. 'An Oxfordshire Christmas Mircale Play' Notes and Queries  
V. ii. (1874) pp. 503.

Long, George. The Folk-Lore Calendar. (London 1930)

Lover, Christopher. The Holy Pilgrime. (London 1618)

The Mabinogion. Ed. G. and T. Jones (London 1949)

Mackenzie, George. The Lives and Characters of the Most Eminent Writers  
of the Scots Nation Vol II (Edinburgh 1711)

Malmesbury, William of. De Gestis Regum Anglorum. Ed. Stubbs. Rolls Series  
90 (1889)

Malory, Sir Thomas. Works. Ed. E. Vinaver (Oxford 1947)

Malynes, Gerard De. Saint George for England. (London 1601)



- Matzke, John L. 'Contributions to the History of the Legend of St. George'  
P.M.L.A. 17 (1902) pp. 464-535  
 18 (1903) pp. 99-172  
 19 (1904) pp. 449-478
- Meres, Francis. Palladis Tamia. (London 1598)
- Mill, Anna J. Medieval Plays in Scotland. (Edinburgh 1927)
- Milner, John. An Historical and Critical Inquiry into the Existence and Character of Saint George. (London 1792)
- Moorman, F.W. 'A Yorkshire Folk-Play' Essays and Studies 2 (1911)pp. 134-57
- Murray, Margaret A. The Witch Cult in Western Europe; A Study in Anthropology. (Oxford 1921)
- Nichols, John G. London Pageants. (London 1831)
- Nicoll, Allardyce. Masks, Mimes, and Miracles. (London 1931)
- Oengus, Martyrology of. Ed. W. Stokes. Hentry Bradshaw Society 29 (1905)
- An Old English Martyrology. Ed. G. Herzfeld.(116 E.E.T.S.) (1900)
- Osgood, Charles G. 'Comments on the Moral Allegory of the Faerie Queene'  
M.L.N. 46 (1931) pp. 502-7.
- Padelford, Frederick, M. The Political and Ecclesiastical Allegory of the First Book of the Faerie Queene. (Boston 1911)
- \_\_\_\_\_ . 'Spenser and the Theology of Calvin' M.P. 12 (1914-5) pp. 1-18
- \_\_\_\_\_ . 'Spenser and the Pilgrimage of the Life of Man' S.P. 28 (1931) pp. 211-8.
- \_\_\_\_\_ . and O'Connor, Matthew. 'Spenser's Use of the Saint George Legend' S.P. 23 (1926) pp. 142-56.
- Panofsky, Erwin. Studies in Iconology. (Oxford 1939)
- Pegge, Samuel. Observations on the History of Saint George. (London 1773)
- Percy, Thomas. Reliques of Ancient English Poetry. Ed. H.B. Wheatley (London 1887) 3 Vols.
- The Percy Folio MS. Ed. Hales and Furnivall. (London 1868)

- Pettingal, John. Dissertation on the Original of the Equestrian Figure of of the George and of the Garter etc. (London 1753)
- Piggott, S. 'Berkshire Mummers' Plays, and other Folk-Lore' F.L. 39 (1928) pp.271-6.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 'Mummers' Plays from Berkshire, Derbyshire, Cumberland, and the Isle of Man' F.L. 40 (1929) pp. 262-92.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 'The Character of Beelzebub in the Mummers' Play' F.L. 40 (1929) pp. 193-6.
- Pollard, Alfred J. English Miracle Plays, Moralities, and Interludes. (London 1895)
- Rees, Alwyn and Rees, Brinley. Celtic Heritage. (London 1961)
- Rituale Ecclesiae Dunelmensis. Ed. U. Lindelöf Surtees Society 140 (1927)
- Rollins, Hyder E. Old English Ballads. (Cambridge 1920)
- \_\_\_\_\_. 'The Black-Letter Broadside Ballad' P.M.L.A. 34 (1919) pp 258-340
- Rouse, William H.D. 'Christmas Mummers at Rugby' F.L. 10 (1899) pp 187-9
- Rowell, G.A. 'Notes on some Old English Customs' F.L.J. 4 (1886) pp 97-110
- The Roxburgh Ballads. published by the Ballad Society: Vol I Ed. W.Chapell (London 1871)  
Vol. VI. part 3. Ed. J.W. Ebsworth (London 1888)  
Vol. VIII part 2 Ed. J.W. Ebsworth (London 1895)
- Salmon, Thomas. A New Historical Account of Saint George for England. (London 1704)
- Sandys, William. Christmas Tide. (London 1852)
- Sawyer, Frederick E. 'A Sussex Tipteerers' Play ' F.L.J. 2 (1884) pp. 1-8
- Schulze, Ivan L. 'The Maiden and her Lamb' M.L.N. 46 (1931) pp.379-81
- Selden, John. Titles of Honor. (London 1656)
- Sharp, Cecil J. The Sword Dances of Northern England. (London 1951)
- Sharpe, Sir Cuthbert. A Bishoprick Garland. (Sunderland 1906)
- Sharrock, Roger. John Bunyan. (London 1954)
- \_\_\_\_\_. 'Bunyan and the English Emblem Writers' R.E.S. 21 (1945)

- The Shirburn Ballads. Ed. A. Clark (Oxford 1907)
- Sir Beeves of Hampton. Ed. E. Kobling. E.E.T.S. Extra Series 46, 48  
(1885,6)
- Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. Ed. I. Gollancz. E.E.T.S. 210 (1938)
- Spiers, John. Medieval English Poetry. (London 1957)
- Stanley, Arthur P. Lectures on the History of the Eastern Church.  
(London 1861)
- Tallacht, Martyrology of. Ed. R.I. Best and H.J. Lawlor. Henry Bradshaw  
Society 68 (1931 for 1929)
- Talon, Henri. John Bunyan. Trans. B. Wall. (London 1951)
- The Templars. in Secret Societies of the Middle Ages. Anonymous (London 1837)
- Tiddy, Reginald J.E. The Mummers' Play. (Oxford 1923)
- Tristram, E.W. English Wall-Painting of the Fourteenth Century. (London 1955)
- Tuve, Rosamund. 'The Red Cross Knight and Medieval Demon Stories' P.M.L.A.  
44 (1921) pp. 706-14.
- Udall, J.S. 'Christmas Mumming in Dorsetshire' F.L.R. 3 (1881) pp.113-6.
- Wells, Whitney. 'Spenser's Dragon' M.L.N. 41 (1926) pp. 143-57.
- Welsford, Enid. The Court Masque. (Cambridge 1927)
- Weston, Jessie L. From Ritual to Romance. (London 1957)
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Legend of Sir Gawain. (London 1897)
- Whitaker, Virgil K. The Religious Basis of Spenser's Thought in Sanford  
University Publications (Language and Literature) VII  
(Stanford, California 1950)
- Wickham, Glyn. Early English Stages. (London 1959)
- Wimberley, Lowry C. Folk-Lore in the English and Scottish Ballads.  
(New York 1928)
- Withington, Richard. English Pageantry. (Harvard 1918)

Wright, Leonard. The Pilgrimage to Paradise. (London 1591)

Wright, Louis B. Middle-Class Culture in Elizabethan England.  
(Chapel Hill, North Carolina 1935)

Young, Karl, The Drama of the Medieval Church. (Oxford 1933)

Zurich Letters. 2 vols. Ed. H. Robinson. Parker Society (1842, 1845)