

58// OF ST. GEORGE, MARTYR

He was a pilgrim in the sight of the world, and he was cut and detrenched by the crown of martyrdom, and he was a good councillor in preaching. And his legend is numbered among other scriptures apocryphal in the council of Nicene, because his martyrdom hath no certain relation. For in the calendar of Bede it is said that he suffered martyrdom in Persia in the city of Diaspolin, and in other places it is read that he resteth in the city of Diaspolin which tofore was called Lidda, which is by the city of Joppa or Japh. And in another place it is said that he suffered death under Diocletian and Maximian, which that time were emperors. And in another place under Diocletian emperor of Persia, being present seventy kings of his empire. And it is said here that he suffered death under Dacian the provost, then Diocletian and Maximian being emperors.

ST. GEORGE AND THE DRAGON

St. George was a knight and born in Cappadocia. On a time he came in to the province of Libya, to a city which is said Silene. And by this city was a stagne or a pond like a sea, wherein was a dragon which envenomed all the country. And on a time the people were assembled for to slay him, and when they saw him they fled. And when he came nigh the city he venomed the people with his breath, and therefore the people of the city gave to him every day two sheep for to feed him, because he should do no harm to the people, and when the sheep failed there was taken a man and a sheep.

Then was an ordinance made in the town that there should be taken the children and young people of them of the town by lot, and every each one as it fell, were he gentle or poor, should be delivered when the lot fell on him or her. So it happed that many of them of the town were then delivered, insomuch that the lot fell upon the king's daughter, whereof the king was sorry, and said unto the people: For the love of the gods take gold and silver and all that I have, and let me have my daughter.

They said: How sir! ye have made and ordained the law, and our children be now dead, and ye would do the contrary. Your daughter shall be given, or else we shall burn you and your house.

When the king saw he might no more do, he began to weep, and said to his daughter: Now shall I never see thine espousals.

Then returned he to the people and demanded eight days' respite, and they granted it to him. And when the eight days were passed they came to him and said: Thou seest that the city perisheth.

George is said of geos, which is as much to say as earth, and orge that is tilling. So George is to say as tilling the earth, that is his flesh. And St. Austin saith, in Libro de Trinitate that, good earth is in the height of the mountains, in the temperance of the valleys, and in the plain of the fields. The first is good for herbs being green, the second to vines, and the third to wheat and corn. Thus the blessed George was high in despising low things, and therefore he had verdure in himself, he was attemperate by discretion, and therefore he had wine of gladness, and within he was plane of humility, and thereby put he forth wheat of good works. Or George may be said of gerar, that is holy, and of gyon, that is a wrestler, that is an holy wrestler, for he wrestled with the dragon. Or George is said of gero, that is a pilgrim, and gir, that is detrenched out, and ys, that is a councillor.

Then did the king do array his daughter like as she should be wedded, and embraced her, kissed her and gave her his benediction, and after led her to the place where the dragon was.

When she was there St. George passed by, and when he saw the lady he demanded the lady what she made there and she said: Go ye your way fair young man, that ye perish not also.

Then said he: Tell to me what have ye and why weep ye, and doubt ye of nothing.

When she saw that he would know, she said to him how she was delivered to the dragon. Then said St. George: Fair daughter, doubt ye no thing hereof for I shall help thee in the name of Jesu Christ.

She said: For God's sake, good knight, go your way, and abide not with me, for ye may not deliver me.

Thus as they spake together the dragon appeared and came running to them, and St. George was upon his horse, and drew out his sword and garnished him with the sign of the cross, and rode hardily against the dragon which came towards him, and smote him with his spear and hurt him sore and threw him to the ground. And after said to the maid: Deliver to me your girdle, and bind it about the neck of the dragon and be not afeard.

When she had done so the dragon followed her as it had been a meek beast and debonair. Then she led him into the city, and the people fled by mountains and valleys, and said: Alas! alas! we shall be all dead.

Then St. George said to them: Ne doubt ye no thing, without more, believe ye in God, Jesu Christ, and do ye to be baptized and I shall slay the dragon.

Then the king was baptized and all his people, and St. George slew the dragon and smote off his head, and commanded that he should be thrown in the fields, and they took four carts with oxen that drew him out of the city.

Then were there well fifteen thousand men baptized, without women and children, and the king did do make a church there of our Lady and of St. George, in the which yet sourdeth a fountain of living water, which healeth sick people that drink thereof. After this the king offered to St. George as much money as there might be numbered, but he refused all and commanded that it should be given to poor people for God's sake; and enjoined the king four things, that is, that he should have charge of the churches, and that he should honour the priests and hear their service diligently, and that he should have pity on the poor people, and after, kissed the king and departed.

THE ARREST AND TORTURE OF ST. GEORGE

Now it happed that in the time of Diocletian and Maximian, which were emperors, was so great persecution of Christian men that within a month were martyred well twenty-two thousand, and therefore they had so great dread that some renied and forsook God and did

sacrifice to the idols. When St. George saw this, he left the habit of a knight and sold all that he had, and gave it to the poor, and took the habit of a Christian man, and went into the middle of the paynims and began to cry: All the gods of the paynims and gentiles be devils, my God made the heavens and is very God.

Then said the provost to him: Of what presumption cometh this to thee, that thou sayest that our gods be devils? And say to us what thou art and what is thy name.

He answered anon and said: I am named George, I am a gentleman, a knight of Cappadocia, and have left all for to serve the God of heaven.

Beaten and Imprisoned

Then the provost enforced himself to draw him unto his faith by fair words, and when he might not bring him thereto he did do raise him on a gibbet; and so much beat him with great staves and broches of iron, that his body was all tobroken in pieces. And after he did do take brands of iron and join them to his sides, and his bowels which then appeared he did do frot with salt, and so sent him into prison. But our Lord appeared to him the of same night with great light and comforted him much sweetly. And by this great consolation he took to him so good heart that he doubted no torment that they might make him suffer.

The Poisoned Wine

Then, when Dacian the provost saw that he might not surmount him, he called his enchanter and said to him: I see that these Christian people doubt not our torments.

The enchanter bound himself, upon his head to be smitten off, if he overcame not his crafts. Then he did take strong venom and meddled it with wine, and made invocation of the names of his false gods, and gave it to St. George to drink. St. George took it and made the sign of the cross on it, and anon drank it without grieving him any thing. Then the enchanter made it more stronger than it was tofore of venom, and gave it him to drink, and it grieved him nothing. When the enchanter saw that, he kneeled down at the feet of St. George and prayed him that he would make him Christian. And when Dacian knew that he was become Christian he made to smite off his head.

The Cutting Wheels

And after, on the morn, he made St. George to be set between two wheels, which were full of swords, sharp and cutting on both sides, but anon the wheels were broken and St. George escaped without hurt.

The Cauldron of Molten Lead

And then commanded Dacian that they should put him in a caldron full of molten lead, and when St. George entered therein, by the virtue of our Lord it seemed that he was in a bath well at ease.

The Lord Destroys the Temple

Then Dacian seeing this began to assuage his ire, and to flatter him by fair words, and said to him: George, the patience of our gods is over great unto thee which hast blasphemed them, and done to them great despite, then fair, and right sweet son, I pray thee that thou return to our law and make sacrifice to the idols, and leave thy folly, and I shall enhance thee to great honour and worship.

Then began St. George to smile, and said to him: Wherefore saidst thou not to me thus at the beginning? I am ready to do as thou sayest.

Then was Dacian glad and made to cry over all the town that all the people should assemble for to see George make sacrifice which so much had striven there against. Then was the city arrayed and feast kept throughout all the town, and all came to the temple for to see him.

When St. George was on his knees, and they supposed that he would have worshipped the idols, he prayed our Lord God of heaven that he would destroy the temple and the idol in the honour of his name, for to make the people to be converted. And anon the fire descended from heaven and burnt the temple, and the idols, and their priests, and sith the earth opened and swallowed all the cinders and ashes that were left.

Then Dacian made him to be brought tofore him, and said to him: What be the evil deeds that thou hast done and also great untruth?

Then said to him St. George: Ah, sir, believe it not, but come with me and see how I shall sacrifice.

Then said Dacian to him: I see well thy fraud and thy barat, thou wilt make the earth to swallow me, like as thou hast the temple and my gods.

Then said St. George: O caitiff, tell me how may thy gods help thee when they may not help themselves!

The Conversion of Dacian's Wife

Then was Dacian so angry that he said to his wife: I shall die for anger if I may not surmount and overcome this man.

Then said she to him: Evil and cruel tyrant! ne seest thou not the great virtue of the Christian people? I said to thee well that thou shouldst not do to them any harm, for their God fighteth for them, and know thou well that I will become Christian.

Then was Dacian much abashed and said to her: "Wilt thou be Christian?" Then he took her by the hair, and did do beat her cruelly.

Then demanded she of St. George: What may I become because I am not christened?

Then answered the blessed George: Doubt thee nothing, fair daughter, for thou shalt be baptized in thy blood.

Then began she to worship our Lord Jesu Christ, and so she died and went to heaven.

ST. GEORGE IS MARTYRED

On the morn Dacian gave his sentence that St. George should be drawn through all the city, and after his head should be smitten off. Then made he his prayer to our Lord that all they that desired any boon might get it of our Lord God in his name. And a voice came from heaven which said that it which he had desired was granted; and after he had made his orison his head was smitten off, about the year of our Lord two hundred and eighty-seven.

When Dacian went homeward from the place where he was beheaded towards his palace, fire fell down from heaven upon him and burnt him and all his servants.

MIRACLES OF ST. GEORGE

Gregory of Tours telleth that there were some that bare certain relics of St. George, and came into a certain oratory in a hospital, and on the morning when they should depart they could not move the door till they had left there part of their relics.

It is also found in the history of Antioch, that when the Christian men went over sea to conquer Jerusalem, that one, a right fair young man, appeared to a priest of the host and counselled him that he should bear with him a little of the relics of St. George. for he was conductor of the battle, and so he did so much that he had some. And when it was so that they had assieged Jerusalem and durst not mount ne go up on the walls for the quarrels and defence of the Saracens, they saw appertly St. George which had white arms with a red cross, that went up tofore them on the walls, and they followed him, and so was Jerusalem taken by his help.

And between Jerusalem and port Jaffa, by a town called Ramys, is a chapel of St. George which is now desolate and uncovered, and therein dwell Christian Greeks. And in the said chapel lieth the body of St. George, but not the head. And there lie his father and mother and his uncle, not in the chapel but under the wall of the chapel; and the keepers will not suffer pilgrims to come therein, but if they pay two ducats, and therefore come but few therein, but offer without the chapel at an altar. And there is seven years and seven lents of pardon; and the body of St. George lieth in the middle of the quire or choir of the said chapel, and in his tomb is an hole that a man may put in his hand. And when a Saracen, being mad, is brought thither, and if he put his head in the hole he shall anon be made perfectly whole, and have his wit again.

This blessed and holy martyr St. George is patron of this realm of England and the cry of men of war. In the worship of whom is founded the noble order of the garter, and also a noble college in the castle of Windsor by kings of England, in which college is the heart of St. George, which Sigismund, the emperor of Almayne, brought and gave for a great and a precious relique to King Harry the fifth. And also the said Sigismund was a brother of the said garter, and also there is a piece of his head, which college is nobly endowed to the honour and worship of

Almighty God and his blessed martyr St. George. Then let us pray unto him that he be special protector and defender of this realm.

The [iconography of St. George](#) is available at the [Christian iconography website](#).

For other saints, see the [index to this Golden Legend website](#).

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