modern dispatch ☼19

The Sword of St. George
by James Maliszewski

St. George was born in the latter half of the third century A.D. in the town of Diospolis (now known as Lod) in Palestine. After his conversion to Christianity, he found his Roman military service incompatible with his new faith and he left the army, although not without suffering great persecution. George then set out on horseback as an evangelist, traveling through Palestine, Judea, and North Africa. In addition to spreading the Gospel, the future saint helped those in need of his assistance, employing a combination of wisdom and his good sword arm to right wrongs and establish justice. Though George could no longer serve the pagan emperor of Rome as a soldier, he did not see soldiery as inherently opposed to his beliefs. Indeed, he saw his sword made holy by his faith and endeavored to defend the weak, the innocent, and those unable to defend themselves. It is little wonder St. George became a patron of Christian soldiers and numerous chivalric orders in the years after his death.

While traveling in Libya, near a city called Selena, George came across a young woman dressed as a bride in a swamp. She looked afraid and told George to flee the swamp for his life, for within it dwelled a pestilential dragon. For years the people of Selena had offered the dragon two sheep each day to prevent it from menacing them. In time, though, the dragon's hunger could no longer be sated by mere sheep and human sacrifices became necessary. Each day, a lottery determined which person would be offered to the dragon to save the city. Eventually, the king's own daughter – the young woman – was selected as the next sacrifice. The king implored the people of Selena to spare her this fate, offering them all his riches and power in exchange for her life. However, the people would have none of it and the princess was offered to the dragon as its next sacrifice.

George would not abandon the princess. He stood by her side until the disease dragon came. He then stood bravely before the dragon and made the sign of the Cross. Caught off-guard by this symbol of God's power, the dragon stood still, allowing George to transfix the creature on the end of his sword. Having incapacitated the dragon, the soldier then asked the woman for her girdle, which he used to make a leash for the beast. Together, they led the dragon back to Selena and its terrified populace. George told them not to be afraid and that they would never again live in fear of evil if they, like him, accepted baptism and were converted to Christianity. That day, all 15,000 people in the city converted and George's fame was assured.

Not long thereafter, George was captured in a general persecution of Christians by the Roman government. Unlike his previous experiences, George did not escape this persecution with his life. He was subjected to numerous tortures in an effort to get him to renounce his faith. When he would not do so, the Romans killed him. His body was eventually transported back to the city of Ramallah in Palestine, where it remained undisturbed for centuries, and quickly became the center of a cult that spread through the West and the East, where he was known as the *Megalomartyros* or "Great Martyr." Throughout history, St. George has been revered for faith, integrity, and skills as a warrior. Unsurprisingly, this reverence reached a high point during the European Middle Ages, when many orders of knighthood looked to him as a paragon of their ideals. He also became the patron saint of several countries, most famously England, whose flag bears the cross of St. George as its emblem.

Relics associated with St. George can be found in many places, although few have any reputation as miraculous. The greatest exception is the Sword of St.

George, a late Roman *spatha* or cavalry longsword reputed to have been the one the saint used to pierce the dragon and then slay it. The Sword first surfaced during the First Crusade in the late 11th century A.D. and was taken back to England, where it eventually passed into the hands of the royal family. The Sword was rarely used and its sacred power even less rarely invoked. During the Reformation, the Sword was spirited away by those who feared it would be destroyed like so many other artifacts and relics. Its whereabouts since then have been mysterious, with numerous unconfirmed reports placing it in no fewer than a dozen places.

None of these reports has been corroborated and the search for the Sword of St. George continues, especially among occult and conspiratorial groups that look to the soldier-saint as an inspiration. Chief among these are the Vehmgerichte, a group of self-appointed European "righteous judges" who battle evil supernatural beings, and the Society of St. Albert, a band of Catholic occultists who undertake a similar mission, albeit with official ecclesiastical sanction. Other groups, like the Prieuré de Sion and the Templars also seek out the Sword, with the Prieuré in particular believing that one of its own members might be the fabled scion of St. George, a person capable of wielding the Sword and using it in support of their cause.

(More information on these and other occult conspiracies can be found in RPGObjects' *Blood and Relics* and Ronin Arts' *Thirteen Conspiracies*)

Scion of St. George

The scion of St. George is a worthy individual who has earned the right to fight with the Sword of St. George, the legendary weapon used by the soldier-saint to slay a dragon in the late third century A.D. While characters of any class may qualify for this singular prestige class, those who wield weapons professionally in the service of good are the most likely candidates. For all the powers the Sword of St. George gives him, the scion is distinguished from other warriors by the fact that his weapon is leading him toward a particular destiny, if only by virtue of shaping his future advancement choices.

Requirements

Any character can wield the Sword of St. George as a +2 longsword and also gain the benefit of the bravery special ability described below. If the wielder of the Sword meets the following criteria, he gains additional special abilities.

Allegiance: Good (at the GM's discretion, this can be made more specific, such as Christianity)

Base Attack Bonus: +7

Skills: Knowledge (theology and philosophy) 6 ranks

Feats: Weapon Focus (longsword)

Class Information

The following information pertains to the scion of St. George prestige class.

Hit Die

The scion of St. George gains 1d10 hit points per level. The character's Constitution bonus applies.

Action Points

The scion of St. George gains a number of action points equal to 6 plus one-half his character level, rounded down, every time they advance a level in this class.

Class Skills

The scion of St. George's class skills are as follows: Climb (Str), Diplomacy (Cha), Handle Animal (Cha), Jump (Str), Knowledge (art, history, theology and philosophy) (Int), Profession (Wis), Research (Int), Ride (Dex), and Swim (Str).

Skill Points at Each Level: 3 + Intelligence modifier.

Class Features

The following features pertain to the scion of St. George prestige class.

Bonus Feats

At 1st, 4th, 7th, and 10th levels, the scion of St. George gets a bonus feat. The bonus feat must be selected from the following list, and the scion of St. George must meet all of the prerequisites for the feat to select it.

Blind-Fight, Combat Expertise, Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Great Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Disarm, Improved Trip, Power Attack, Sunder.

Special Abilities

The Sword of St. George provides a number of special abilities to its wielder, depending on the character's class level in the scion of St. George prestige class (see the table below). Because these abilities are functions of the Sword rather than the wielder, they are lost if the Sword is lost. The class features of the scion of St. George prestige class listed above, however, are retained if the Sword is lost, although the character can no longer advance in the class if he does not possess the Sword.

When first acquired, the Sword of St. George functions as a +2 longsword. Anyone who wields it, whether the scion of St. George or not, also benefits from the bravery ability (see below).

The Sword of St. George has the following attributes.

Hardness/Hit Points: 20/55

Caster Level: 15th.

Abilities Granted by the Sword of St. George

Scion Level	Ability Gained
-	Bravery
1st	Bane (dragons)
2nd	Disease Immunity
3rd	Enhancement bonus +3 (+5 against dragons)
4th	Reassuring Presence
5th	Lay on Hands
6th	Enhancement bonus +4 (+6 against dragons)
7th	Dodge bonus
8th	Remove Disease
9th	Divine Presence
10th	Enhancement bonus +5 (+7 against dragons)

Table 1: Scion of St. George

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	Defense Bonus	Reputation Bonus
1st	+1	+2	+0	+0	Bonus Feat	+1	+1
2nd	+2	+3	+0	+0		+1	+1
3rd	+3	+3	+1	+1		+2	+1
4th	+4	+4	+1	+1	Bonus Feat	+2	+2
5th	+5	+4	+1	+1		+3	+2
6th	+6	+5	+2	+2		+3	+2
7th	+7	+5	+2	+2	Bonus Feat	+4	+3
8th	+8	+6	+2	+2		+4	+3
9th	+9	+6	+3	+3		+5	+3
10th	+10	+7	+3	+3	Bonus Feat	+5	+4

Bravery (Ex)

The wielder of the Sword of St. George has immunity to a dragon's fear aura. All allies within 30 feet of the wielder gain a +4 morale bonus on saves against the fear aura of dragons.

Bane (Dragons) (Su)

When wielded by the scion of St. George, the Sword gains the bane (dragons) special ability. Its enhancement bonus is treated as 2 points higher when attacking a dragon and it deals an extra 2d6 points of damage on a successful strike against a dragon.

Disease Immunity (Ex)

At 2nd level, the scion of St. George gains immunity to all diseases, including supernatural and magical diseases.

Reassuring Presence (Ex)

The scion of St. George of 4th level or higher wielding the Sword may add his class level as a bonus on all Diplomacy checks.

Lay on Hands (Su)

Beginning at 5th level, the scion of St. George can heal wounds (his own or those of others) by touch. Each day he can heal a total number of hit points of damage equal to his scion level x his Wisdom bonus (minimum one per level). A scion may choose to divide his healing among multiple recipients, and he doesn't have to use it all at once. Using lay on hands is a full-round action.

Alternatively, the scion can use any or all of this healing power to deal damage to creatures with an allegiance to evil. Using lay on hands in this way requires a successful melee touch attack and doesn't provoke an attack of opportunity. The scion decides how many of his daily allotment of points to use as damage after successfully touching an evil creature.

Dodge Bonus (Ex)

At 7th level and higher, the scion of St. George wielding the Sword gains a +2 dodge bonus to Defense against creatures at least two size categories larger than himself.

Remove Disease (Sp)

At 8th level, the scion of St. George can produce a *remove disease* effect, as the spell, a number of times per week equal to his Wisdom modifier (minimum one).

Divine Presence (Su)

A righteous aura surrounds the scion of St. George. Any hostile creature within a 20-foot radius of the scion must succeed at a Will save (DC 10 + class level + scion's Cha modifier) or take a –2 morale penalty on attacks, Defense, and saves for one day or until they successfully injure the scion. A creature that has resisted or broken the effect cannot be affected again by the scion's divine presence for one day.

Disease Dragon

A disease dragon is a rare and horrible beast. Reputed to have been spawned in hell itself, the dragon is a huge reptilian creature with black scaly skin and a terrible mouth containing hundreds of razor-sharp teeth. Even more terrifying is its pestilential breath,

which gives the dragon its name. This breath causes a terrible disease that saps the strength and health of those who contract it. The dragon prefers to live in fetid swamps and other unwholesome environments, far from human habitation. However, its voracious appetite for flesh is so great that it regularly leaves its lair in search of food. Being intelligent as well as evil, a disease dragon can be bargained with and it will gladly enter into pacts with humans or other creatures in exchange for a steady supply of food. Of course, being a servant of hell, it is utterly unreliable and will sometimes change the terms of such pacts arbitrarily to suit its own ends better.

Disease dragons are rare in the modern world. Most exist in places far removed from civilization. Consequently, most examples of this beast live in Africa and Asia, with a few in remote areas in North and South America. Reports are circulating among various occult groups that the number of disease dragons is increasing and that the beasts are becoming bolder in their actions. This might signal the beginning of a new offensive by the forces of evil or it might simply be that the wars and dislocations of recent years have provided disease dragons with greater opportunities for mayhem. Whatever the truth, there is no doubt that these monstrous creatures are a great threat to good and should be dealt with appropriately.

Species Traits

Disease dragons have the following traits:

Breath Weapon (Su): A disease dragon's breath weapon spreads a virulent disease that effects all living creatures within its area of effect. All such creatures must make a Fortitude save (DC 26) or contract a disease with an incubation period of 12 hours. The disease deals 1d6 points of Strength damage and 1d3 points of Constitution damage.

Using a breath weapon is a standard action. Once a disease dragon breathes, it can't breathe again until 1d4 rounds later. A blast from a breath weapon always starts at the dragon's mouth and extends in a direction of the dragon's choice, with an area as noted in the description below. The breath weapon of a disease dragon is a 50-ft. cone.

Fear Aura (Ex): A disease dragon can unsettle foes with its mere presence. The ability takes effect automatically whenever the dragon attacks. Creatures within a radius of 180 feet are subject to the effect if they have fewer Hit Dice than the disease dragon.

A potentially affected creature that succeeds at a Will save (DC 26) remains immune to that dragon's fear aura for one day. On a failure, creatures with 4 or fewer HD become panicked for 4d6 rounds and those with 5 or more HD become shaken for 4d6 rounds. Dragons ignore the fear aura of other dragons.

Crush (Ex): A jumping disease dragon can land on opponents as an attack action, using its whole body to crush them. Crush attacks are effective only against opponents three or more sizes smaller than the dragon (though it can attempt normal overrun or grapple attacks against larger opponents).

A crush attack affects as many cratures as can fit under the dragon's body. Creatures in the affected area must succeed at a Reflex save (DC 26) or be pinned and automatically take the listed damage during the next round unless the dragon moves off them. If the dragon chooses to maintain the pin, treat it as a normal grapple attack. Pinned opponents take crush damage each round if they don't escape.

Grappling: A disease dragon can always use its breath weapon while grappling. If grappled by a creature the same size or larger, a disease dragon can attack the grappling creature with its bite and all four limbs (each doing claw damage). If crushed by a larger dragon, a dragon can respond only with grapple attacks, or with bite or breath weapon attacks. If grappled by a creature smaller than itself, the dragon can respond with any of its physical attacks other than a tail sweep.

Immunities (Ex): All disease dragons are immune to *sleep* and paralysis effects, as well as natural and supernatural diseases.

Blindsight (Ex): A disease dragon can ascertain creatures by nonvisual means (mostly hearing and scent, but also by noticing vibration and other environmental clues) with a range of 30 feet x the dragon's age category.

Keen Senses (Ex): A disease dragon has low-light vision and darkvision with a range of 600 feet.

Disease Dragon: CR 15; Huge dragon; HD 22d12+110; hp 253; Mas 24; Init +0; Spd 40 ft.; Defense 29, touch 8, flat-footed 29 (–2 size, +21 natural); BAB +22; Grap +38; Atk +28 melee (2d8+12, bite); Full Atk +28 melee (2d8+8, bite), +23 melee (2d6+4, 2 claws), +23 melee (2d6+12, tail slap); FS 15 ft. by 15 ft.; Reach 10 ft.; SQ breath weapon, fear aura 180 ft., crush 2d8+12, immunities, SR 22, damage reduction 5/+1, blindsight 180 ft., low-light vision, darkvision 600 ft.; AL evil; SV Fort +18, Ref +13, Will +18; AP 0; Rep +0; Str 27, Dex 10, Con 21, Int 20, Wis 21, Cha 20.

Skills: Concentration +9, Bluff +17, Diplomacy +17, Hide –8, Jump +20, Knowledge (arcane lore) +17, Knowledge (current events) +6, Knowledge (history) +8, Listen +19, Read/Write Draconic, Read/Write Language (any five), Search +17, Sense Motive +17, Speak Draconic, Speak Language (any five), Spot +19.

Feats: Alertness, Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Damage Threshold, Power Attack.

Advancement: 17-22 HD (Huge); 23-25 (Gargantuan)

OPEN GAMING CONTENT

Designation of Product Identity: The following terms are designated as product identity as outline in section 1(a) of the Open Gaming License: Modern Dispatch, Darwin's World, Blood and Guts, Blood and Fists, Blood and Vigilance, Blood and Circuits, Blood and Relics.

Designation of Open Gaming Content: The following sections of *Modern Dispatch #17* is designated as open gaming content except for terms defined as product identity above. All illustrations, pictures, and diagrams are Product identity and property of RPGObjects™.

The Introduction and Scion of St. George description are close content. All other text is open content.