

A Sermon on Dragons

Sermon by Rev. Minister Angela Smith of COPE for November 17th, 2024 (and beyond)

This sermon is a meditative sermon in dialogue format for your consideration.

DIALOGUE

Imaginative Person: I think dragons existed at some point. It would explain all the lore.

Geologist: I believe dragons are simply mythologized volcanoes imagined into being to explain volcanic eruptions as an act of defense against miners where the myth suggests the dragon is protecting its hoarded gold.

Historian: That's an interesting theory and would explain some European myths. However, sometime between 4700 BCE and 2900 BCE the Hongshan of China first introduced dragons into their language and written characters. There are many birds and reptiles in Asia, particularly China. Some reptiles in China are named after dragons even today like the dragon water skinks. Iguanas are native to China as well and do look like dragons or how dragons are depicted often. But, gunpowder wasn't invented until the 9th Century CE so assuming any fire-breathing element is due to the invention or use of it in pyrotechnics or explosives would not explain the advent of dragons. The catapult wasn't invented until 400 BCE by Dionysius the Elder of Syracuse. So, for any who think it was flying balls of fire catapulted at enemies or innocent civilians that inspired the myth, they should revisit the history of the character. However, the catapult may explain some of the inspiration. The bow and arrow however was invented in Africa around 71,000 years ago. People began making fire, rather than preserving it from natural fires by keeping a main pyre burning with fuel, around 300,000 years ago. So, there is potential for seeming fire or flames falling from the sky as a result of enflamed arrows shot from bows at least 71,000 years ago.

Imaginative Person: None of your so-called theories explain how they fly.

Historian: I believe they both did. Volcanic eruptions can hurl molten (hot/fiery) rock up to 20 miles and lava flows, airborne ash, and noxious fumes can spread over 100 miles during an eruption. You might be 20 miles from an eruption and be hit by a big fiery rock falling from the sky. I hope you don't mind me saying so.

Geologist: I don't mind at all. Your data on that is correct. Nice to have a fellow scholar to discuss this matter with and I may step on your toes here a bit. I hope you don't mind either. Volcanic eruptions contributed to the collapse of Chinese Dynasties over the last 2000 years. So, there are also such eruptions where other cultural elements, like many species of reptile, may explain the inspiration behind the myth. It is also possible that a large bird like a wandering albatross, which is a species that Japan is moving out of harm's way now because it has been nesting at Torishima that is a volcano anticipated to erupt soon, has had their nest catch fire during an eruption and dropped it when

attempting to fly to safety being seen from below as a flying creature breathing fire even though it was likely just trying to save its hatchlings or eggs.

Imaginative Person: But, birds aren't reptiles.

Zoologist: Birds and reptiles share a common ancestor in the Archaeopteryx and the closest living relative based on DNA research of the Tyrannosaurus Rex is the chicken.

Imaginative Person: Chickens are flightless birds. They can't fly.

Zoologist: Chickens can fly up to 300 feet in distance and up to 10 feet high. While I'm not a paleontologist, I must let you know that the bat is a flying mammal and that pterodactyls were flying lizards. Many modern bird species are descended from pterodactyls and some say the wood stork is related with similar features. What's interesting about wood storks is that they tend live near alligators because the alligators help protect their nests from predators. So, some familial benefit through shared ancestry or just a coincidence.

Imaginative Person: But, all the lore, you can't discount that.

Artist: I recognize that the lore was likely inspired by everything the Geologist, Historian, and Zoologist suggested while in no way discounting the lore, simply exploring it while considering additional information that would reasonably explain the myths. If anything, it makes me appreciate the lore more. I find much of my own inspiration in the world around me as well.

Imaginative Person: Where's the imagination in that?

Artist: I believe you self-identify. I do too. But, I also have degrees in the arts as my fellows here do in their respective sciences.

Imaginative Person: I imagine so.

END DIALOGUE

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"And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." John 8:32 KJV Willful blindness is an abomination.

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