

What religious allegory do you find in Canto 1 of “The Faerie Queene”?

Writer: Edmund Spenser | Generated: Jan 26, 2026

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An Allegory is a type of poem or story where the characters, places, and events all have a hidden meaning. Spenser’s *“The Faerie Queene, Canto 1”* (1590) is a religious allegory. This poem is not only about knights and monsters. Here, Spenser clearly shows the fight between true religion and false belief. Let us find out the religious allegory briefly below.

Red Cross Knight: The Red Cross Knight is the symbol of holiness. The red cross on his chest is a reminder of his dear lord, Jesus Christ.

“On his brest a bloudie Crosse he bore”

So, the knight represents a true religious man, a Christian hero. He is on a mission to defeat a dragon and save Lady Una’s parents. The dragon symbolizes sin or Satan. So, the knight’s mission shows us a good Christian’s journey to be holy.

Lady Una: In this allegory, Lady Una is the symbol of truth and goodness. She stands for true religion, which is the Church of England in Spenser’s view. She is beautiful, pure, and innocent. Spenser describes her as,

“So pure an innocent, as that same lambe.”

The journey of Lady Una and the knight symbolizes that a good Christian must be guided by truth or true religion.

Monster Error: The knight fights against a vile monster named Error. Monster Error is the symbol of falsehood. It stands for the lies of false religion. The knight defeats the monster in a fierce battle. This fight is a symbolic struggle against the dangers of false religion and sin. The monster’s thousands of offspring are the followers of false religion.

Archimago: Archimago is another important allegorical character in Canto I. He is a powerful sorcerer. He pretends to be a pious man, but he tricks the knight into leaving Lady Una. So, Archimago is the symbol of hypocrisy and lies. He stands for the Roman Catholic priests who are full of tricks and lies, according to Spenser's view.

So, in this allegory, all the good characters stand for the Protestant Church of England, while all the evil characters stand for the Roman Catholic Church, in Spenser's view.

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