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THESIS APPROVAL

The abstract and thesis of Nora Jane Peacock for the Master of Arts in French were presented April 30, 1997, and accepted by the thesis committee and the department.

COMMITTEE APPROVALS:

Gina Greco, Chair

DeLys Ostlund

Christine Rose
Representative of the Office of Graduate Studies

DEPARTMENT APPROVAL:

Louis Elteto, Chair
Department of Foreign Languages and
Literature

*****

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ABSTRACT

An abstract of the thesis of Nora Jane Peacock for the Master of Arts in French presented April 30, 1997.

Title: The Redemptive Role of Chivalry in Old French Arthurian Romance (12th and 13th Centuries).

Many medieval authors used religious imagery to influence their religious-minded audiences. Old French Arthurian romances are laden with religious images and allegoric undertones drawn from contemporary religious beliefs. The purpose of the present study is to examine the changes in redemptive imagery as represented through certain characters in the romances studied and to demonstrate how the religious views of the Middle Ages were assimilated into this body of Arthurian literature. Two main themes arise from this study: the dynamic quality of the religious images and the functions and purpose of redemption in regards to the final spiritual quest in the four texts analyzed.

In Chrétien de Troyes's Le Chevalier de la Charrette, the use of Christian imagery is studied with regards to the ever-changing savior-image of Lancelot and his chivalric exploits. The 13th-century Vulgate Lancelot presents many of the same Christ-like images of Lancelot, but proceeds to allude to Lancelot's insufficiencies and a higher chivalric standard. Chrétien de Troyes's Le Conte du Graal introduces the Grail into literature and succeeds in creating a new chivalric adventure. The

main characters, Perceval and Gawain, are presented as exact opposites in order to emphasize their divergent intents. The final text, La Quête du Graal, contains the culmination of all the chivalric pursuits and either exalts those who repent or condemns those who refuse to join the spiritual quest.

The shift in focus from 12th-century Arthurian romance to 13th-century Arthurian romance is marked by its spirituality and its move towards a self-reflective philosophy. The conclusion of this thesis suggests that this shift reflects changes occurring in the society.

THE REDEMPTIVE ROLE OF CHIVALRY IN OLD FRENCH ARTHURIAN
ROMANCE (12TH AND 13TH CENTURIES)

by
NORA JANE PEACOCK

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS
in
FRENCH

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1997

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THE REDEMPTIVE ROLE OF CHIVALRY IN OLD FRENCH ARTHURIAN ROMANCE (12TH AND 13TH CENTURIES)

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the role of religious imagery in Old French Arthurian romance. This exploration of religious imagery will focus on the theme of Christian redemption and, particularly, on the shift in the role of redemption between 12th- and 13th-century Arthurian romances. I will examine this shift by analyzing the Christian redemptive notions in four romances: Chrétien de Troyes's Le Chevalier de la Charrette and Le Conte du Graal (Perceval) (12th-century texts), and two anonymous works from the 13th-century Vulgate Cycle: Lancelot and La Quête du Graal.

The theme of redemption plays a significant role in Lancelot's portrayal as Savior in both Chrétien de Troyes's Le Chevalier de la Charrette and the Vulgate Lancelot. The Christian imagery in all four romances has a dynamic quality that helps to transform the chivalric representations from worldly (in the early texts) to spiritual (in the later texts).

The spiritual dynamic appears within these texts if one regards them chronologically. Lancelot, the knight of main interest, appears as a

“Christ-like” Savior in the early romances, yet falls from glory in the later texts as a result of his own humanity and as the new chivalric representative arrives. Chrétien’s Grail romance offers an example of this shift between the two types of chivalry within one text: Chrétien’s narrative voice glorifies Perceval’s spiritual pursuits and condemns Gauvain’s self-seeking worldly pursuits. The final Grail text of this analysis, La Quête du Graal, presents the culmination and unraveling of the redemptive literary “build-up.” In other words, this text is the “dénouement” of a certain Old French tradition and brings together into one romance the former and future Savior, the spiritual enlightenment to be obtained, the do’s and don’t’s of the spiritual quest, and the judgment of those who repent and those who don’t. La Quête succeeds in transforming the theme of redemption. Each knight either obtains glory or falls from glory in either the “worldly” physical sense or the spiritual sense, according to his choices.

For the purpose of this analysis of redemptive imagery, it is important to discuss briefly the redemptive theology of the Bible and Christianity of the Middle Ages. Redemption is “the deliverance from some evil or bondage by payment of a price or ransom” (New Concise Bible Dictionary). In particular, redemption in the Bible refers to Christ’s willing death on the cross as payment for the sins of man, in

order for man to be reconciled to the righteous God of the universe and have eternal life in Heaven. The Bible states that “all have sinned and fall short of the Glory of God” (Rom. 3.23). The Apostle Paul continues by giving a solution to this “fallen” situation by stating that all who believe “are justified freely by grace through the redemption that came by Jesus Christ” (Rom. 3.24). It is Paul who offers an understanding of redemption, its purpose and how it is attained. In Ephesians, Paul writes,

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment- to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ. (1.7-10)

Paul explicitly explains that through Christ’s redemptive works, one receives salvation (redemption), forgiveness, the riches of God’s grace and ultimately eternal life. Biblical interpretations, however, are always quite numerous, and the Middle Ages was a time when Christianity underwent many changes and acquired many new doctrinal additions.¹

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¹ Jeffrey Russell, A History of Medieval Christianity (Arlington Heights: Harland Davison, 1968).

The concept of redemption itself was the center of many controversial debates between theologians of the time.

Many of the early theologians thought that redemption served two purposes. The first was to reconcile man to God, as I have already explained. But the second was to free humanity from the power of the devil. Many theological debates centered on this belief. According to Biblical doctrine, it is apparent that redemption saves man from the power of the devil and eternal damnation in hell. However, the devil's power is what came under scrutiny in theological debates. Early theologians wondered if the devil had rights. In other words, was the devil given permission by God to have some power over humanity? Following this line of thought, theologians wondered if God purposely deceived the devil by sending Christ in human form to be sacrificed for humanity. Such beliefs concerning the devil seem to have been widely held in the Middle Ages.² However, since this aspect of redemption does not directly influence my analysis of redemption in Arthurian romance, I will not examine it further. I have included this example here in order to demonstrate the dynamics of much of Biblical doctrine, as well as the active debates and discussions surrounding the notion of redemption during the time of my study.

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² C.W. Marx, The Devil's Rights and the Redemption (Cambridge: Brewer, 1995).

The relevance of redemptive imagery within these romances is its allegoric value. An allegory is a story or a fable which relates several levels of meaning. Jesus's parables can be considered allegories. Jesus told a relevant story to his listeners, but expected the "hearers" to extract further significance from it. For example, one of Jesus's parables relates a story about seeding good and bad soil. Jesus, probably addressing agriculturally knowledgeable people, expected these listeners to realize a spiritual truth beyond the surface tale. Assuming that Jesus anticipated a spiritual understanding and not a literal interpretation, it seems logical to presume that a literal interpretation fails to meet spiritual criterion. D.W. Robertson explains that within medieval literature a distinction was made between the "letter," the "sense," and the "sentence" of a text, the "letter" being the written orthography or grammar, the "sense" the obvious or literal meaning and the "sentence" the doctrinal content or higher meaning. Since it seems that most medieval authors followed such a Scriptural exegetical formula for their works, it then follows logically to assert that the purpose of such texts was to elicit a spiritual interpretation.

Assuming that a spiritual interpretation was the goal of such texts, it then becomes somewhat obvious that the characters (knights) within these texts were expected (by both the narrator and the audience) to

discover the “sentence” of the information or advice they received. The audience was also expected to arrive at a “sentence” interpretation. There are many examples of such “higher” interpretation from each of the four romances of this study.

In Le Chevalier de la Charrette, Chrétien portrays Lancelot in a paradoxical manner (as Redeemer and redeemed), possibly in order for the medieval readers to extract an allegoric meaning from his actions. Lancelot was good and accomplished many feats, yet he was, quite simply, a human-being like everyone else. Lancelot therefore serves as an example of both exalted hero and condemned sinner. The same allegoric interpretation arises from the Vulgate Lancelot. Lancelot, again represented as a Savior and hero-figure, fails to achieve spiritual understanding. Therefore, Lancelot loses his Savior-image as the new chivalric representative and allegoric representation of a good Christian (Galahad) arrives. In the final adventure, La Quête du Graal, Lancelot once again appears as the Savior-figure who struggles to understand why he has failed to be included in the final Grail Quest. Lancelot represents an allegoric example of earthly/worldly action who learns, ultimately, that the spirituality of chivalry and salvation are what he should have been seeking. Perceval, in Chrétien’s Le Conte du Graal, receives advice, yet interprets everything literally, which is later shown to be a

fault or a sin. Perceval, thus, represents allegorically another Christian “Everyman” who fails at first, yet rectifies his thoughts and actions in order to achieve salvation through a learned spiritual interpretation. An allegoric reader can safely conclude that had Perceval pursued the “sentence” of the advice given, he would have avoided certain obstacles and achieved his goal more rapidly. The lessons learned by each knight in each of the texts are lessons to be interpreted allegorically by the readers both of the Middle Ages and now. Such allegoric representations as the ones elaborated upon in each text demonstrate perfectly the spiritual transformation from the 12th century to the 13th century.³

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³ For a more complete understanding of this transformation, see Brigitte Cazelles, The Unholy Grail (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996).

PART I: LANCELOT

CHAPTER ONE

Redemption in Chrétien de Troyes's Le Chevalier de la Charrette

Redemptive themes and religious imagery from the Bible play a significant role in Le Chevalier de la Charrette. Lancelot's portrayal as Savior or Redeemer is the central religious image of Chrétien's romance. However, Chrétien simultaneously and paradoxically presents Lancelot as both the Savior and as an adulterous, idolatrous sinner, possibly in order to allegorize Lancelot's characterization to the medieval audience.

The meaning of redemption from Biblical perspectives is a reconciliation with God or God's forgiveness of man's sins. The schema of redemption in Le Chevalier de la Charrette appears as man's (the people of Logres) captivity by the Evil One (Mélégant) in Hell (Gorre) and the subsequent need for a Savior or Redeemer (Lancelot) to defeat the captor and rescue those in captivity. This allegoric schema parallels the underlying theme of the Bible: man is held captive by sin (the work of the devil) and needs the redemptive work of Christ (God incarnate). Christ came to sacrifice himself so that humankind would be set free from the devil and captivity in sin. This parallelism between the Biblical theme of redemption and the redemptive themes in this text, as well as a

paradoxical representation of Lancelot's Savior-status, will illuminate the shift in chivalric ideals that occurs between the 12th- and 13th-century literary works.

Chrétien's romance begins at court one day when a knight-messenger from another court brings a message to King Arthur:

Roi Arthur, je retiens prisonniers des chevaliers, des dames, des
jeunes filles qui sont de ta terre et de ta compagnie, mais je ne
t'apporte pas de leurs nouvelles dans l'intention de te les rendre!
Je veux te dire au contraire et te faire savoir que tu n'as pas la
force ni la richesse grâce auxquelles tu pourrais les ravoir. Sache-
le bien, tu mourras sans jamais pouvoir leur venir en aide.

(43-45)

The messenger emphasizes that it is not within Arthur's power to save his people, who are being held captive, and there is no hope of regaining them. If one reads this passage allegorically, the message reminds the reader of the consequences that Adam and Eve faced as a result of Original Sin. Paradise cannot be regained, except by belief in the Mediator who is alluded to in prophecies of the Old Testament of the Bible. The messenger coming to Arthur's court represents prophetic evidence that a way to free the captives exists. Yet this freedom must come from someone other than Arthur. Whether or not the Savior will

come, and when, is left to destiny. News of the “unknown coming” of the Savior is found in the message-challenge that the messenger presents to the court:

S'il se trouve à ta cour un seul chevalier à qui tu ferais assez confiance pour osez lui donner la charge de mener la reine à ma suite dans ce bois là-bas où je vais, je m'engage à l'y attendre et à te rendre tous les prisonniers qui vivent en exil sur mes terres, s'il est capable contre moi de la conquérir et s'il réussit à la ramener.

(45)

This passage presents the possibility of the captives' deliverance upon the condition that there is “one knight” who can conquer the captor. Warfare (both physical and spiritual) is inevitable in order to liberate the captives. The battle between Good and Evil exists to perpetuate the need for the Redeemer, both in the Biblical world and in the literary realm. Evil occurs for a foreordained reason, so that all things work out according to God's sovereign will. The same phenomenon occurs in the romance: the evil of the people's captivity exists in order for Lancelot to rescue them and complete that for which he was foreordained (God's will).

Redemption in Le Chevalier de la Charrette encompasses all aspects of the text. In the Biblical context, the need for redemption

came into the world the moment Man put himself before God. How did the Evil One lay siege to the people and take them captive? Was he given the right to do so in order to fulfill divine prophecy? The Fall is explicit in the Bible, but in Chrétien's text, it is not. One could say that the people strayed away from God or the king and entered into the evil realm, parallel to the episode in Genesis when Eve took the fruit from the forbidden tree. One could also speculate that the people were seduced away by the Evil One, again, like the serpent's seduction of Eve in the Garden of Eden. These speculations are not mutually exclusive. Whether one action came before the other is insignificant. What is important is that there is a need for redemption. The people have been separated (whether by choice or by chance is also insignificant) from their Creator/king and therefore need a form of reconciliation to bring them back into his presence.

The purpose of the redemptive theme does not seem to be to equate Arthur's court with mankind for the sole purpose of convincing the courtly readers to identify themselves with the captives in Gorre (the lost) and seek reconciliation. However, Gregory L. Stone argues that "Chrétien has been regarded as someone who had certain ideas for the amelioration of his society and who wrote romances in order to disseminate those ideas, in order, ultimately, to alter the material life

and social reality of medieval Europe” (70). Stone also explains that Chrétien “who attempted, above all else, to promote his ideals, regarded his art (and art in general) as a tool or instrument by which to change or shape society” (70). Chrétien’s use of the literary mode is the means by which he (like most authors) conveys his beliefs. The “romance begins as an ideal in Chrétien’s head, an ideal that is then expressed in the literary work, which in turn is heard by an audience who then, if all goes well, adopt this ideal as their own, ultimately altering their material behavior and practices” (Stone 70). It seems, however, that if Chrétien’s sole intent lies in the amelioration of societal beliefs, there would be criticisms (made by the narrator) within the text. Yet Chrétien does not seem to include his own moralistic observations within the text. Pamela Raabe writes that “to a great extent, Chrétien asks us to believe in Lancelot without closely identifying with him” (261). Raabe quotes Fanni Bogdanow’s argument from “The Love Theme in Chrétien de Troyes’ Chevalier de la Charrette,” that Chrétien is “ideologically uncommitted” (266). Obviously, we will never know Chrétien’s intent in writing this romance, but it is possible to draw our own opinions from what he does write. He does not judge Lancelot and Guinevere in the scenes of the text which can be interpreted by society as immoral or sinful, such as their adulterous affair and Lancelot’s idolatrous

exaltation of Guinevere. Therefore, it is possible that much of Chrétien's intention seems to be the glorification of his "Savior-knight" Lancelot. I would argue that the captives serve as a means to exalt Lancelot's (the Savior's) chivalric capabilities. The need for redemption precedes the coming of the Redeemer, which returns to the prophetic evidence of the existence of this "Redeemer": "un seul chevalier" (45). Just as the Old Testament foretells the coming of the Messiah, the "pre-history" of the people of Logres in this text is necessary for the fulfillment of the coming of the Savior (Lancelot). The coming of Lancelot (the end), justifies the prelude of the need of redemption of the people of Logres (the means).

The religious imagery that Chrétien incorporates throughout the romance is strikingly similar to both Old and New Testament stories. These representations occur alternately throughout the text. The romance begins "un jour de l'Ascension" (41), which refers to the day in the New Testament when Christ ascended into Heaven as his apostles looked on (Acts 1). The knight-messenger's message to Arthur, however, refers to the captives "qui vivent en exil sur mes terres" (45). This passage clearly echoes two Biblical histories: the Israelites' wanderings in the desert for forty years as a result of disobeying God

(Exodus) and the Israelites' exile in Babylon as a consequence for sinning against God (II Kings 17).

Another religious image which emanates from the text is that of prophecy. As previously discussed, the passage in which the knight-messenger prophetically informs Arthur of "un seul chevalier" (45) who will defeat the captor and deliver and save the captives serves a double purpose. The idea of the Savior who will come and deliver the people implies that the deliverer is releasing them from physical captivity (God's righteousness in the Old Testament), but the second sense of "saving" the captives implies that they are being rescued spiritually from Hell (Christ's redemptive works in the New Testament). Other religious images in the text relate more specifically to the Savior and Redeemer images of Lancelot.

Raabe describes Lancelot's illustrious knightly status in the following terms:

Lancelot is not simply the best and fairest of knights... but a knight whom everyone he meets is forced to describe as uniquely perfect. His many deeds, too, are recounted in terms of their uniqueness among the accomplishments, not only of living knights, but of all men who ever lived: he alone dares to mount the cart, he alone of all men is fit to sleep in the enchanted bed, cross the

sword bridge, and fulfill the prophecies of a perfect knight who will rescue the Queen and free the people of Logres from their long captivity in the land of Gorre. Moreover, the rhetoric Chrétien uses to describe Lancelot as the greatest of all knights invites us to see him as a saint, a martyr, the perfect Christian pilgrim, even Christ himself. (259)

The images of Lancelot's role as Savior/Redeemer are the most obvious religious references in the text. The fact that the prophecy leads to the imminent coming of a "Savior" has been evidence enough to show Lancelot's symbolic representation of Christ. Furthermore, there are numerous images with striking similarities to Biblical images of Christ and his work. Lancelot's first appearance in the romance occurs as he arrives in order to save Guinevere from her captor and release the people of Logres. The interesting or mystical part of this scene is that he arrives out of nowhere and with no one having informed him of the situation. He seems to have intuitively known of the abduction, of the need for deliverance, and arrives armed and ready for the battle: "Le chevalier, à pied, et seul, tout en armes, le heaume lacé, l'écu à son cou, l'épée ceinte" (61). The image of the knight's readiness for battle and his arms refers to Christ's readiness and the girding of one's self with the Armor of God for spiritual warfare:

Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of the evil in the heavenly realms. (Ephesians 6.11-13)

Christ is referred to in Revelations as a warrior who will return to defeat Satan and rescue the righteous. It is fitting that the first image of the Savior-knight is that of his readiness to do battle to save those in captivity.

The knight's likeness to Christ as Savior and his redemptive role is demonstrated by his coming to rescue the captives. The knight comes to "descend into the valley," defeat the Evil One and deliver the captives. The descending into the valley parallels Christ's becoming human in order to rescue Mankind from the Evil One. Christ descended from Heaven to Earth in order to reconcile Man to God. The knight descends into the valley of Gorre to rescue the people from Méléagant and bring them back into the presence of their lord.

Prophecy plays a large part of the messianic (religious) imagery in the romance. Prophecy has already been mentioned in reference to the imminence of the knight-messenger's prophecy to Arthur; however, the role of prophecy becomes more apparent as the romance continues.

Many prophetic situations and undertones contribute to the Savior-knight's status as the chosen Savior of the people of Logres. The first major prophecy appears as the knight arrives at a church and is lead by a monk to the cemetery. In the cemetery, the monk shows tombs to the knight who, in turn, asks questions about the tombs and their significance. The monk tells the knight that he inquires in vain because he will never know the significance or the secrets of the tombs. However, the inscription on the tomb foretells that "celui qui lèvera cette dalle par lui seul délivrera tous ceux et celles qui sont en prison au pays dont nul ne sort, ni serf ni noble, à moins d'y avoir été né. Personne n'en est jamais revenu" (169-171). The reader knows that, since this knight has come to rescue the people, he will lift the slab from the tomb and prove that he is the chosen liberator. Raabe states that,

this same tomb turns out to be reserved for Lancelot himself, suggesting both his eventual death and the promise of salvation through his faith and good works. At this moment, then, Lancelot is simultaneously the Saviour and the saved, the Christian pilgrim imitating Christ and Christ himself, freeing those who have faithfully imitated him. (262)

Raabe emphasizes Lancelot's double representation of Redeemer and redeemed. This interesting paradox of Lancelot occurs frequently throughout the text and will be elaborated upon further on in this study.

The stage is set: the people have been in captivity (the time-frame is unknown) and the liberator has been foreordained. The time has arrived for the knight to take his place as the Redeemer of the people. Thus, he lifts the slab from the tomb in the cemetery and proves that he is the chosen liberator. "Aussitôt le chevalier empoigne la dalle et il la soulève, sans trace de la moindre peine, mieux que dix hommes n'auraient fait en y mettant toute leur force" (171).

In reevaluating the opening scenes of the text, the set-up of the knight's exclusive role as Savior becomes apparent. Keu, who leads Guinevere into the forest, is defeated by the Evil One. Keu is a good knight, but this serves only to emphasize that the chosen knight is better. The next knight that serves as a contrast to Lancelot is Gauvain who, unsure of Keu's abilities to defeat the Evil One and liberate the people, goes after Keu and the queen in the hope of saving them both. However, Gauvain's worthiness pales in comparison to the "Savior-elect" in two early scenes before Lancelot's identity has been revealed. The first scene occurs when the unidentified knight and Gauvain are lead by a damsel to her castle. The damsel shows the two to a chamber where

there are two beds that have been prepared for them. A third bed in the room is prohibited from the two knights. The unidentified knight questions the damsel about the bed and she responds by telling him, “nul ne se couche s’il ne l’a mérité. Il n’a pas été fait pour vous... un chevalier a perdu tout honneur sur terre après avoir été en charrette. Il vous en coûterait très cher s’il vous en venait seulement la pensée” (73-75). The knight does not heed the damsel’s warning and chooses to sleep in the bed anyway and at midnight the bed unleashes fire and a lance by which he is wounded. Although wounded, the knight goes back to sleep. The fact that the unidentified knight survives the peril of the “marvelous bed” shows that he is not only the best knight, but has been chosen to withstand the peril. Gauvain does not attempt to sleep in the bed, therefore the unidentified knight (Lancelot) is the best, according to the logic of the text.

The second scene prophesying the unidentified knight’s future success in contrast to Gauvain’s failure occurs when the two reach a path where they must choose between “Le Pont dans l’Eau” and “Le Pont de l’Epée.” Gauvain chooses the Underwater Bridge (unsuccessfully), but the unidentified knight succeeds in crossing the Sword Bridge. In fact, not only does Gauvain fail in his attempt to cross the Underwater Bridge, but furthermore, the unidentified knight has to

save him from drowning because he had fallen into the water. The Savior-knight's success in contrast to Gauvain's failure yet again indicates that he has been foreordained to be successful in the deliverance of the captives. It seems that the "best knight" succeeds in every task with which he is faced. The chosen status and best knight status seem to coexist in this text. There is no in-between status. Therefore, the unidentified knight is at the same time foreordained and best knight. When he arrives at Méléagant's castle, Méléagant's father, Bademagu, recognizes that he who crossed the Sword Bridge is best. "Le roi savait avec certitude que l'homme qui était passé au pont était bien le meilleur de tous" (257). The news of the successes of this knight seem to precede him at every step of his journey. The knight arrives at a battle where the people of Logres are present and the knight's companion tells them that the knight is their liberator:

C'est lui qui nous sortira tous d'exil, nous arrachant au grand malheur où nous avons longtemps vécu. Nous devons l'honorer de notre mieux quand, pour nous tirer de prison, il a passé et devra encore passer par tant de lieux si dangereux. Beaucoup lui reste à faire et il a fait beaucoup. (205)

This passage again emphasizes Lancelot's role as Redeemer in that "il a passé... tant de lieux si dangereux" thus paralleling the acts that Christ performs as the Savior and Redeemer in the Bible.

The many manifestations of prophecy parallel those of Christ and his fulfillment of the prophecies of the Old Testament. The book of Isaiah in the Old Testament supplies many of the prophecies that the Christ would come to save Mankind. The Old Testament prophecies about Christ are fulfilled in the New Testament by his coming. Isaiah 7.14 states, "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: the virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel." Isaiah 11.1-5 gives an even more specific prophecy about Christ's role when he comes: "A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him... He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth; with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked." Another Old Testament prophecy that foreshadows the Passion of Christ is found in Psalms: "They divide up my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing" (22.18). The prophecies about Christ are fulfilled in the New Testament recountings of his birth, ministry, death and resurrection. Because most people tend, generally, not to believe prophecy, hindsight (by human nature) forces one to reevaluate the prophecy, both in the

Biblical and literary realms. Thus, in this text, once the Savior-knight arrives (fulfilling prophecy), the tendency of others to believe the prophecy increases, much like the phenomenon of the Biblical realm.

The worthiness of the liberator is, of course, the natural qualifier that demonstrates the knight's chosen purpose. Chrétien concentrates much on the "supreme" abilities of this knight as he makes his way to rescue the people of Logres. Naturally, the best way for Chrétien to emphasize the knight's virtues and abilities was to liken him to Christ who was the supreme teacher and possessed all virtues. The best "Christ-like" parallels occur in two different scenes of the text. The first scene is that from which the romance takes its name, the knight's ride in the cart. This scene appears at the beginning of the romance, just after Keu has led the queen into the forest. The unidentified knight appears out of nowhere and seems to have already been in pursuit of something because his horse is exhausted. The knight asks Gauvain for one of his horses which he grants. The knight leaves in haste, leaving Gauvain behind. When Gauvain catches up to this knight, "il retrouva mort le cheval qu'il avait donné au chevalier" (61) and sees that he is following a cart. Chrétien informs the reader of the notoriety of the cart in those days, which is similar to the shame of the cross in Jesus's day.

Les charrettes servaient à l'époque au même usage que les piloris de nos jours. Dans chaque bonne ville, où elles sont à présent plus de trois mille, il n'y en avait qu'une en ce temps-là, et elle était commune, comme le sont nos piloris, traîtres ou aux assassins, aux vaincus en champ clos et aux voleurs qui ont pris le bien d'autrui furtivement ou qui s'en emparent de force sur les grands chemins. Tout criminel pris sur le fait était placé sur la charrette et mené à travers toutes les rues. Il s'était mis tout entier hors la loi, il n'était plus écouté à la cour ni accueilli avec honneur ou dans la joie. Parce que telles étaient à l'époque les charrettes, et si barbares, on entendit dire pour la première fois: quand charrette verras et rencontreras, fais sur toi le signe de croix et pense à Dieu, qu'il ne t'arrive malheur! (63).

Biblical historians have described the strong negative connotations associated with death on a cross. The cross was a form of execution used by the Romans for non-Roman citizens who had committed the foulest of crimes. There are many places in the Bible that convey the shame of the cross. The Apostle Paul wrote to the Philippians telling them that their "attitude should be the same as that of Christ" (2.5) who "humbled himself and became obedient to death -- even death on a cross!" (2.8-9). The writer of Hebrews expresses the shame of the cross in the

same way: "Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (12.2). The unidentified knight "endures" the shame of the cart much like Christ endures the shame of the cross, so that the joy or the deliverance of the people might be accomplished.

As the text progresses, the knight in this romance endures ridicule for the sake of having ridden in the cart. At one point in his journey to save the people of Logres, the unidentified knight is told by a knight that joins him on his journey, "tu auras dû te souvenir aussi de la charrette où tu es monté. Je ne sais si tu gardes la honte d'avoir été mené dedans mais jamais personne de sensé ne se serait chargé d'une si haute entreprise après avoir encouru un tel blâme" (217). L.T. Topsfield argues that Lancelot's "ride in the death-cart... is a formal cleansing process which frees his mind of fetters of Arthur's world and sets him apart as the Elect who alone will succeed in the quest for Guinevere and the liberation of the prisoners in the land of Gorre" (117). Topsfield alludes to the idea that Lancelot's intent lies in saving both the queen and the people and that neither is a priority over the other. The knight voluntarily mounts the cart, demonstrating his willingness to give himself as a sacrifice for the good of others. Topsfield writes that

Lancelot “knowingly commits his sin against the knight code, and accepts the consequences, giving proof of the humility which overcomes self-love” (120). Topsfield’s view of Lancelot is that he can balance his good “knightly” status and his good “Christian” status at the same time. Lancelot’s ride in the cart seems to be nothing more than a selfless act on Lancelot’s part and the motives behind the act are not important. Lancelot’s act does resonate of Christ’s selfless and willing act of dying on the shameful cross for the sins of Man. However, as will be shown later, evidence reveals that Lancelot’s motivation stems from his love for Guinevere and not from his selfless love of humanity.

The second scene in which the likeness of Christ’s Passion occurs as the unidentified knight crosses the Sword Bridge. At this point in the text, the knight has yet to arrive at the castle where the queen and the other captives are being held. The crossing of the Sword Bridge brings to mind Christ’s Passion in the way that the unidentified knight’s faith in God’s protection motivates him to cross it despite the damage he will do to himself. “J’ai foi en Dieu, en qui je crois: en tout lieu Il saura me protéger. Ce pont ni cette eau me font peur, pas plus que le sol ferme où je suis. Oui, je veux courir l’aventure de le franchir, et m’y préparer: plutôt mourir que retourner!” (251). This sacrificial act on the part of the Savior-knight illuminates his irrefutable status as best knight. In his

crossing of the bridge there exist unquestionable similarities with the images of Christ's crucifixion.

Il désarme ses pieds et ses mains. Il n'en sortira pas indemne ni tout à fait valide, s'il parvient de l'autre côté. Il s'était tenu fermement sur l'épée, plus affilé qu'une faux, à mains nues et tout déchaussé, car il n'avait gardé au pied soulier, chausse ni empeigne. Il ne s'inquiétait guère de s'entailler les mains et les pieds, il aimait mieux se mutiler que tomber du pont et nager dans cette eau d'où plus jamais il ne sortirait. En grande souffrance, il passe au-delà comme il l'a voulu, dans les tourments. Il se blesse aux mains, aux genoux et aux pieds. (251-253)

The allusions to the Passion of Christ are obvious. Like Christ, the knight endures physical suffering (self-sacrifice) in order to fulfill prophecy and reconcile the people to their lord. The similarities between the knight of the cart and Christ render an image of the knight as Savior, Messiah, Redeemer, Liberator, and Deliverer, many of the adjectives the Bible uses to describe Jesus Christ and his redemptive work for the world. In arguing against Lancelot's "Christ" status, Topsfield writes that

in this supreme test of devotion to Love, Chrétien uses the imagery of the bleeding hands and feet, not to show Lancelot as a

Christ-figure, but to make his audience reach down into their profound religious experience and feel, by comparison with the Crucifixion, the extremity of suffering which Lancelot endures.

(143)

Topsfield emphasizes Chrétien's use of religious imagery for its impact on his readers. These comparisons seem to imply that Chrétien desired to make a dramatic impression on his readers through his use of Biblical imagery.

In light of the romance as a whole, a paradoxical presentation of Lancelot as the "Redeemer" or "Savior" emerges. The Redeemer of the people of Logres is portrayed as the best knight, yet still falls short of perfection and himself needs redemption (in the Biblical sense). The ambiguity of the "redeemer-redeemed" relationship and the implementation of redemptive imagery heighten the contradictory nature of Chrétien's use of redemptive themes throughout the text. Although Lancelot is portrayed as the best knight and a sort of Redeemer or Savior, he still is in the fallen state of humanity. He is human and, therefore, sinful. The fact that Chrétien presents Lancelot as "Savior-knight" and paints him as "Christ-like" is in direct opposition to Christ himself. Christ, according to the Bible, is at the same time fully man (human) and fully God (divine). Lancelot is quite simply a man, as is

proven by his sins and flaws, and cannot fully live up to his “Christ-like” representation.

In the cart episode, Lancelot sacrifices himself, yet in analyzing his motives, it is evident that his motivation is sinful. Lancelot’s hesitation (as Chrétien’s aside and Guinevere’s rebuke would have us believe) is not what detracts from his “Christ-likeness.” Christ himself asked in the Garden of Gethsemane that “this cup” (death and suffering) be taken from him (Mark 14.36). However, Christ’s prayer ends with “yet not what I will, but what you will” (14.36). Christ was driven by God’s will. He knew it and obeyed it. Lancelot, on the other hand, mounts the cart, not for God’s will, but for his desire for Guinevere. Lancelot’s act can be interpreted many different ways, and there are different levels entangled in his “self-sacrificial” act. Lancelot may have mounted for the people of Logres (as one might first believe). He may have mounted as the fastest way to get to where he was going to save the queen. However, in looking closely at the text, the importance of Guinevere as a motivator for his action is clear:

Il poursuit aussitôt son chemin [sans l’attendre l’espace d’un instant. Le temps seulement de faire deux pas.] Le chevalier tarde d’y monter. Ce fut là son malheur! Pour son malheur il eut honte d’y bondir aussitôt! Car il n’en sera que plus maltraîné à

son gré! Mais Raison qui s'oppose à Amour lui dit qu'il se garde de monter; elle lui fait la leçon et lui enseigne à ne devoir rien entreprendre qui lui vaille honte ou blâme. Raison qui a eu cette audace, le lui fait dire des lèvres, sans que le coeur y soit. Mais Amour qui est enclos dans son coeur lui commande vivement de monter aussitôt dans la charrette. Amour le veut, il y bondit, sans se soucier de la honte puisqu'Amour le veut et l'ordonne. (65)

Love has ordered Lancelot to climb into the cart. Lancelot's love is neither for the people, nor for God, but for Guinevere. The fact that Lancelot acts for the love of the queen becomes obvious in subsequent scenes, such as the one in which he arrives at Méléagant's castle and comes before the queen who rebukes him. She rebukes him (jokingly) because of his hesitation, when he briefly placed his reputation in front of his love for and devotion to her. Another scene that suggests that "Love" refers to Guinevere occurs when, after having been rebuked by her, Lancelot sadly leaves her presence and decides to leave in search of Gauvain. Lancelot simply says, "sa volonté soit faite" (319) and leaves. According to the Christian codes which have been alluded to in the text, Lancelot, unlike Christ, has committed idolatry by doing the will of Guinevere and not of God. Guinevere's desires dictate Lancelot's actions in such a way that he becomes mindless of himself and others.

There are several episodes in the romance that demonstrate not only Lancelot's allegiance to Guinevere, but also his obsessive preoccupation with her and over-zealous willingness to do her will. When Lancelot first sees the queen after she has been abducted, it is from the window of a castle where he and Gauvain have been lodged. He sees the queen from a window, does not take his eyes off of her for a moment and nearly falls from the window.

Il la suit du regard sans avoir de cesse, tendu à l'extrême,
dans la joie qui est sienne, le plus longuement qu'il lui fut
possible. Et quand il ne put la voir, il eut le désir de se laisser
tomber, de laisser basculer dans le vide. (79)

Lancelot's preoccupation with seeing the queen leads him to forget his well-being and become ambivalent about his own life. The irony of the conversation that follows is what is striking. Gauvain and the young damsel speak with one another in Lancelot's presence. Gauvain tells Lancelot, "vous avez grand tort de haïr votre vie" (79) and the damsel responds, "Non, il a raison, Ne sera-t-elle pas connue de partout la nouvelle de son malheur? Après avoir été dans la charrette, il ne peut que souhaiter d'être mort. Vivant, il aurait moins de valeur que mort" (79). Although Lancelot sacrificed his well-being and his reputation to save others (including Guinevere), there are those who believe that his

value has diminished. Not unlike the Pharisees and the non-believers of Christ's time, those still of the world failed to understand his self-sacrificial act. In looking closely at the last statement of the damsel, "Vivant, il aurait moins de valeur que mort," one sees an echo to the Christian notion of redemption: had Christ not died for the redemption of the world, where would the world be? His death proved to be more valuable than his life. Similarly, had Lancelot not ridden in the cart, the liberation of the queen and the people of Logres would never have taken place, regardless of the motivation.

As Lancelot reaches Méléagant's castle and participates in battles in order to enter the castle, he is empowered by the knowledge that Guinevere is present and watching. When Lancelot is wounded so extensively that the people watching fear that he might be overcome, a young damsel watching from a window realizes that Lancelot would fare better if he could position himself to view the queen while he fights. Therefore the young girl asks the queen the knight's name. The damsel then shouts Lancelot's name to get his attention and show him that Guinevere is present in the window. When Lancelot sees the queen, he gains the upperhand over Méléagant: "car Amour le soutient sans réserve et il n'avait, d'autre part, jamais haï personne autant que cet homme... Amour, ainsi qu'une haine mortelle... le rendent si terrible, si

ardent que l'affaire n'a plus rien d'un jeu pour Méléagant, qui maintenant a peur" (295). Obviously, Lancelot's adulterous and immoral love for Guinevere determines his actions and abilities against others in defending her and the people of Logres.

Lancelot continues to carry out Guinevere's will at a tournament in which he has disguised himself and where only she knows his true identity. Guinevere acts instinctively and asks that a message be taken to the "unknown valiant" knight requesting that he do his worst in the tournament. Lancelot does as the queen asks and, in humbling himself to do his worst, "il fit tout du pis qu'il pouvait, puisqu'ainsi le voulait la reine" (427). Lancelot is mocked and ridiculed by other knights. However, as the tournament continues, the queen changes her suggestion and asks that Lancelot do his best. When the damsel takes the message to Lancelot, he requests her to inform the queen that "rien ne peut m'être pénible à faire, si cela lui plaît, car sa volonté fait tout mon désir" (443). Lancelot carries out the wishes of the queen, whether humiliating or exalting for him. He does her will and seeks solely her acceptance and permission for what he has done or will do. He lives to satisfy her desires.

At another point in the romance, after he has been rebuked by the queen upon his arrival in Gorre and has set out in quest of Gauvain,

Lancelot is taken captive and held in a castle. The news that Guinevere has died reaches him and he becomes depressed to the point of attempting suicide.

Certainement, pour peu qu'il me laisse serrer ce noeud autour de ma gorge. J'espère ainsi que la Mort en sera réduite malgré elle à m'ôter la vie. La Mort, qui a toujours cherché ceux qui ne veulent pas d'elle, refuse de venir, mais avec ma ceinture je vais la saisir et elle sera là. Quand elle dépendra de moi, elle répondra à mon désir. Non! Elle sera trop longue à venir, tant j'ai de hâte à la trouver! (331-333)

Lancelot places his belt around his neck "attendant que son cheval le traîne jusqu'à l'extinction de sa vie. Il ne veut pas vivre une heure de plus" (333). He later decides that living is punishment and pain enough for having lost the queen. He welcomes the thought of suffering and willingly endures the pain for her sake and memory. When Lancelot discovers that Guinevere is still alive, he is thrilled and makes his journey back to her.

There are two bedroom scenes in the text that show Lancelot's allegiance and devotion to Guinevere. The first scene appears at the beginning of Lancelot's journey. A damsel confronts Lancelot with a request that he lodge with her and sleep with her at her castle.

Lancelot, "faute de mieux, s'accorde à tout ce qu'elle veut. Mais d'accepter, son coeur se brise"(105). Lancelot's heart aches because he has no choice but to abide by the knightly code and appease the wishes of a damsel, thus committing a "sin" in his devotion to Guinevere. As the damsel and Lancelot prepare for bed, Lancelot hears the screams of the damsel from another room. When Lancelot arrives at the room, he sees that she is being accosted by some men. At the sight of the damsel's bare body, "il ne ressentait nulle jalousie" (115) and hesitates a moment in the doorway before coming to her aid. The reason for his hesitations are clear as he thinks to himself, "Je suis parti pour une noble cause, celle qui touche à la reine Guinièvre. Je ne doit pas avoir un coeur de lièvre quand je suis, pour elle, en cette quête!" (115). Lancelot is in quest of the queen and her only. All other obstacles or hinderances further his frustration as he tries to rescue her.

Lancelot's preoccupation with the queen has blurred his abilities to think of and come to the aid of others in need, which are his obligations as a knight. Once Lancelot saves the damsel and sees that the rape had been concocted as a test of his honor, he becomes angry and "il se serait fort bien passé d'elle" (121). Lancelot, however, is obligated by his promise to sleep with the damsel. But when the two lie down in bed together, despite the tempting situation and the damsel's

beauty, Lancelot remains faithful to his love. Lancelot cannot betray his love to Guinevere because Love will not allow it.

Il a le regard fixe, sans tourner les yeux vers elle ni ailleurs. Il est incapable de lui faire meilleur visage. Pourquoi donc? Le coeur n'y est pas! Elle était belle pourtant, et pleine de charme, mais ce qui est charmant pour tout un chacun est sans attrait ni plaisir pour lui, car le chevalier n'a qu'un coeur, et encore n'est-il pas à lui, il l'a déjà confié à autrui; il ne peut donc le prêter ailleurs.

Le sien s'est tout entier fixé en un seul lieu, comme le veut

Amour qui gouverne tous les coeurs. Tous? Non, mais ceux qui ont son estime. Il doit en être d'autant plus fier, celui dont

Amour daigne être le maître! Amour avait en telle estime le coeur de celui-ci qu'il régnait sur lui mieux que sur tout autre, et il le rendait si fier que je ne veux en rien le blâmer s'il laisse à faire ce qu'Amour lui défend, pour ne tendre que là où Amour veut.

(123-125)

Love compels Lancelot to act sacrificially, but it is neither the love of God nor the love of humanity that moves him to act, it is the sensual and adulterous love of Guinevere. Here exists another instance where the Christ-like Lancelot differs from Christ: this kind of sinful love did not exist in Christ's person. Christ's love was unadulterated holy love of

God the Father and of Man. Lancelot's love, being unholy, causes him to be in need of a redemption that he cannot fulfill himself.

The second bedroom scene which demonstrates Lancelot's misplaced devotion to Guinevere occurs after Lancelot has reached Méléagant's castle. The lovers commit themselves to a rendez-vous and Lancelot comes to the queen's chambers at night. In this scene, Chrétien explicitly depicts the adulterous nature of the love affair. Lancelot comes to the window where he finds himself separated from the queen by iron bars. "Ils souffrent à l'extrême de ne pouvoir se réunir maudissant les barreaux de fer" (353). However, Lancelot "se fait fort avec l'agrément de la reine d'entrer lui aussi dans la chambre: les fers ne l'arrêteront pas" (355). Lancelot bends the bars, cutting his hands in the process. Lancelot and Guinevere have their adulterous affair and as dawn arrives, Lancelot realizes that he must leave so that no one discovers them. Chrétien portrays Lancelot as a martyr (this scene offers the most evident comparison to Christ in the text). A martyr is someone who loses his/her life for the sake of his/her beliefs and/or the benefit of others in the faith. Christ gave himself and his life for the sake of others. He was not a martyr *per se*, but he offered his life in the same way that martyrs do. Chrétien again portrays Lancelot in Christ-like martyrism in this scene where he writes, "et sa tristesse, quand il

doit se lever d'auprès de son amie, et il connut le sort des vrais martyrs, si douloureux fut cet arrachement. Oui, il endure le martyre" (361).

Lancelot's depiction as a martyr seems, on Chrétien's part, blasphemous and counter-productive if one believes that Chrétien's sole intent lies in an idealistic amelioration of his society. Although sacrificing himself physically, Lancelot does so to be with the queen in an adulterous encounter, thus demonstrating his sin and consequent need for redemption.

Raabe reasons that Chrétien's portrayal of Lancelot's immoral or sinful love for Guinevere is not a question of blasphemy or religious slander, but simply a poetic manner in which Chrétien portrays Lancelot "like a saint and a martyr precisely because of his illicit love" (259). Thus emphasizing Lancelot's faithfulness to the religion of Love. Raabe continues with her reasoning that

were Chrétien literally saying that adultery is the path to salvation, one might be justified in regarding the poem as immoral, or at least a parody whose hero is an antihero. But Chrétien's message does not lie in the literal events of the poem; nor does it lie in their allegorical reference to the Christian pilgrim in search of salvation. Chrétien's message... lies in the central similitude itself, in his requirement of our unquestioning

faith in a paradox. We are not asked to imitate Lancelot's adultery, but to imitate his faith that the impossible is possible.
(266)

While I do not agree with Raabe's rejection of the allegoric value of Lancelot's portrayal, I agree that Chrétien's intent lies not so much in the immorality of Lancelot's actions, but in his desire to engage his readers in the romance of a man who follows his heart. Contrary to Raabe's belief, Lancelot's portrayal (even if unintentional on Chrétien's part) can be interpreted allegorically. Perhaps the allegoric value arises from over-interpretation and "reading into" a neutral text. However, I think that this is highly unlikely. I propose that Chrétien did intend to portray Lancelot as a Christian in pursuit of salvation/redemption and that this romance can be allegorically valuable. Some moralistic criticisms emerge from this literary work. Chrétien may have used Lancelot as a paradoxical Christian Savior/pilgrim and adulterous sinner in order to demonstrate to readers that everyone has both good and bad capabilities. Chrétien may be portraying Lancelot as the chosen Redeemer of the people and also as a foreordained sinner in order to appease his "allegorically-minded" society. No matter what Chrétien's intentions, the allegoric value remains in the text and emerges quite strikingly from Lancelot's paradoxical representation.

Subsequent Lancelot and Grail romances bring about a change in Lancelot's Redeemer and best knight status and portray him more as a sinner who needs to be redeemed by the efforts of someone other than himself. A transition in the way chivalric values are represented throughout these texts appear in Le Chevalier de la Charrette (one of his early romances) and Le Conte du Graal (his last romance). Throughout the subsequent analyses, a rise and fall and then a different kind of ascent will occur in Lancelot's portrayals in the Vulgate Cycle's Lancelot and La Quête du Graal.

CHAPTER TWO

Redemption in the Vulgate Cycle's Lancelot

In the Vulgate Cycle's Lancelot, the hero is transformed from his "Redeemer-redeemed" representation in Chrétien's Le Chevalier de la Charrette to an "earthly" knight whose failure to acknowledge and participate in the new chivalric ideal points towards his ultimate failure to be included in the Grail Adventures. The religious imagery used throughout the romance lead to a messianic portrayal of Lancelot's deeds. However, within Chrétien's text, a foreshadowing of Lancelot's vices of adultery and idolatry which lead to his exclusion from the Grail Quest are evident. In the present analysis, Lancelot's chivalric abilities and ignorance of the new spiritual chivalry are elaborated upon. A transformation from Lancelot's Savior portrayal in Chrétien's romance to a different Savior portrayal in this text will arise.

In the extensive Lancelot volume of the Vulgate Cycle of Arthurian Literature, Lancelot emerges as the perfect knight and Redeemer-hero of all of those in need of his help throughout the text. Although the author (or authors) of this work elaborate(s) upon Lancelot's chivalric exploits, a definite metamorphosis occurs within the text. The theme of redemption, Lancelot's role as Savior and Redeemer,

and the presence of religious imagery progressively take on a different, more spiritual tone as evidence of the impact of Lancelot's sins and human frailties arise. In Lancelot, the status of best knight and Redeemer shifts from Lancelot to Galahad. Lancelot's former representation becomes overshadowed by the foretelling of a higher spiritual chivalry and the coming of Galahad (le Bon Chevalier).

Redemption in the Vulgate Lancelot emanates from Lancelot's role as Redeemer of the people. In Chrétien's Le Chevalier de la Charrette, the hero's exploits, virtues and accomplishments as the foreordained best knight and Redeemer are glorified and equated with the acts of Christ in the Bible. The author of Lancelot in the prose cycle continues Lancelot's portrayal as Savior and best knight. However, this text concentrates more on his exploits rather than on a development of Lancelot's character and emotions as did Chrétien in La Charrette. This text exhibits Lancelot's non-stop accomplishments in a way that hints at his preoccupation with doing rather than believing. This preoccupation is ultimately shown to be one of his failings. Some passages depict Lancelot's status as liberator and healer of people in need. Yet these passages seem present in order to prepare the readers of the romance for his later expulsion from success in the Grail Quest.

As the Vulgate romance begins, Lancelot's noble lineage is emphasized, perhaps as a way of legitimizing his representation as Savior, since Jesus, the Savior, was the Son of God (a king). As the text continues, Lancelot's father (le roi Ban), expelled from his lands, evokes the Biblical image of Joseph leading Mary and the infant Jesus to Egypt to escape Herod's slaughter of male infants (Matt. 2). Ban's consequent death evokes powerful images of Christ's Passion as "le coeur s'est crevé dans sa poitrine et il reste mort à terre, les mains étendues, le visage tourné vers le ciel et la tête vers l'Orient" (I 36). With these images in mind, it is easy to understand Lancelot's foreordained noble status as Redeemer. Soon after the king's death, Lancelot is abducted by a maiden and raised by an "adoptive" mother, la Dame du Lac. The other-worldly element of Lancelot being raised by someone other than his biological parents supports his similarities with Christ. Lancelot's noble lineage also legitimizes the many virtues that are inherent in his character, including physical beauty. His beauty is elaborated upon greatly in the text, yet his "qualités morales lui furent pas refusées" (I 45).

C'était l'enfant le plus doux et le plus riche de bons sentiments. En face de la félonie, il réglait son compte au félon; aucun enfant ne fut son égal en largesse, car il

distribuait tout à ses compagnons d'aussi bon coeur qu'il recevait. Il honorait les hommes de noble naissance en y mettant tous ses soins. Jamais on ne vit enfant de la sorte, on ne le surprit jamais à faire mauvais accueil sans une juste raison, dont personne ne le dût légitimement blâmer... Il était d'un sens si lucide et de sentiments si droits qu'il n'accomplissait guères d'actes contraires à une honnête éducation; et s'il avait l'intention... d'agir conformément à la bonté et à la raison, on avait de la peine à l'en faire déborder et il passait outre les conseils de son précepteur. (I 45)

Since Lancelot possesses so many virtues it seems natural that the Lady of the Lake's ultimate goal for Lancelot is that he join the Order of Chivalry. She is conscious of his virtues and abilities and "à la certitude qu'il deviendra un chevalier accompli, avec l'aide de Dieu et la sienne, grâce aux mérites qu'elle découvre en lui" (I 53). The Lady of the Lake resembles Hannah and her consecration of Samuel to God in the temple (I Samuel 1-2).

The expectation that Lancelot become a knight seems imperative since he inherently possesses many virtues and abilities. When Lancelot reaches the age of eighteen, the Lady of the Lake realizes that "si elle l'empêchait d'être chevalier sans tenir compte de l'âge de requis, elle

commettrait un péché mortel, aussi grave que celui de trahison” (I 85).

As the Lady and Lancelot prepare for Lancelot’s departure to the Order of Chivalry, Lancelot asks about “la charge qui incombe au chevalier” (I 88). The Lady of the Lake proceeds to describe the privilege of being a knight and the duties that pertain to such status. She tells him that one must

être courtois sans bassesse, bon sans félonie, pitoyable envers les nécessiteux, généreux et toujours prêt à secourir les miséreux, à tuer les voleurs et les meurtriers, à rendre d’équitables jugements sans amour et sans haine, sans faiblesse de coeur pour avantager le tort en portant atteinte au droit, et sans haine pour ne pas nuire au droit en faisant triompher le tort. Un chevalier ne doit, par crainte de la mort, accomplir aucun acte entaché d’un soupçon de honte, mais il doit redouter la honte plus que la mort. La chevalerie a pour mission essentielle de protéger la Sainte Eglise, à qui il est interdit de prendre une revanche par les armes et de rendre le mal pour le mal, et de protéger aussi celui qui tend la joue gauche, après avoir été frappé sur la droite. Et sachez qu’à l’origine, comme en témoigne l’Ecriture, personne n’avait l’audace de monter sur un cheval sans être chevalier; d’où le nom qui leur fut donné. (I 89-90)

In accepting the obligations that come with being a knight, Lancelot must also accept to protect and defend the Church. However, Lancelot seems not to have fully understood his undertakings: he gives in to his fleshly desires, which leads to his later failings.

As the Lady of the Lake prepares Lancelot to leave, she bestows upon him his arms and describes the significance of each piece of armor with which she girds him.

Les armes que porte le chevalier et qui lui sont réservées ne lui furent pas données sans raison, mais elles ont une signification de grande portée. L'écu qui pend à son cou et dont il est protégé sur le devant signifie que, comme l'écu fait obstacle entre lui et le corps, de même le chevalier fait rempart devant la Sainte Eglise contre tous les malfaiteurs, brigands et mécréants... Le haubert dont le chevalier est revêtu et tout enveloppé signifie que la Sainte Eglise doit trouver une muraille de défense dans le chevalier... Le heaume que le chevalier porte sur la tête, visible par-dessus toute l'armure, signifie que de la même façon le chevalier doit être bien en vue devant tous les gens contre ceux qui voudraient nuire à la Sainte Eglise ou lui faire du mal... La lance du chevalier, assez longue pour toucher l'adversaire en avançant sont attaque a aussi sa signification: de

même que la crainte de la lance au bois robuste et au fer tranchant fait reculer ceux qui n'ont point d'armes, par peur de mourir, de même le chevalier par sa combativité, sa hardiesse et sa vigueur répand la peur au loin et arrête l'audace des brigands et des malfaiteurs d'approcher de la Sainte Eglise... L'épée est de toutes les armes la plus honorée, la plus noble, celle qui a le plus de dignité. (I 90-91)

In this passage that closely resembles the girding of oneself with the Armor of God in Ephesians 6 of the Bible (quoted above), Lancelot seems essentially to be preparing himself for physical warfare at the service of the Church. He has overlooked the need to be girded against the spiritual warfare that will ultimately bring about his downfall and exclusion from the Grail Adventure.

The reader is continuously reminded throughout every Lancelot romance of his many virtues. Yet as he discovers throughout his journeys, these acts and virtues are not enough for him to remain in the "best knight" or Redeemer role. There has been a change in chivalric values. The necessary and sufficient virtues now include a spiritual aspect and sinless quality of which Lancelot has little understanding and even less motivation to pursue. Lancelot gradually becomes aware of his failures and sins as he is confronted with the evidence that he is no

longer Savior to the lost, but one of the lost. It is apparent that while Lancelot has been the “meilleur chevalier du monde,” he will be replaced and upstaged by “Le Bon Chevalier.” The metamorphosis is evident: Lancelot changes from “la fleur de la chevalerie” to “un chevalier terrestre.” Lancelot’s futile efforts and failing status as the best knight become apparent in this text as Lancelot epitomizes the “Redeemer-redeemed” paradox. Lancelot’s confession to Bohort clarifies this contradiction and Lancelot’s awareness of the change.

Je suis condamné... c’est la vengeance que Dieu a prise des excès d’orgueil dont je me suis rendu coupable jadis. Et si je pouvais par cette souffrance terrestre être quitte de la damnation éternelle, je m’en estimerais bienheureux. J’ai fait tant de mal en ma vie que j’obtiendrai difficilement le pardon divin malgré mes tortures en ce monde. Mais j’ai bien mérité, en vérité, le châtiment que j’endure. (II 348)

It is quite obvious that he is transformed from the Redeemer to the redeemed as he realizes the consequences of succumbing to his humanity and suffers from his weaknesses and sins. Lancelot’s inabilities and weaknesses begin to surface as recurrent hindrances to his best knight status as allusions to the new chivalric ideals and to Galahad arise. This transformation between chivalric ideals represents allegorically an

anticipated shift of ideals within the audiences own values. Ideally, the audience should interpret the “sentence” of the shift which represents a shift of adherence from worldly ideals to spiritual ideals.

Lancelot’s chivalry, up to this point, has been presented as a sort of courtly chivalry; as has already been discussed in Chrétien’s work, Lancelot’s beliefs in the ideals of such chivalry appear as acts that benefit Guinevere’s well-being and add to his own chivalric renown and reputation. However, chivalry in its ideal form seems to have risen as a protectorate of the Church and as a “missionary” class that imposed its religious beliefs on non-believers, especially during the Crusades. Chivalry’s military might and social status attracted many young men, promising them land and other privileges. F.J.C. Hearnshaw describes the “original” chivalry as feudal knighthood whose function arose as a sort of mercenary employment for men with martial knowledge and abilities. Knighthood’s origin was that of protection for kings’ and lords’ lands. Hearnshaw writes that “the knights required to beat back such assailants as Saracens, Slavs, Magyars and Danes during the dark and dreadful ninth and tenth centuries were not ‘perfect gentlemen’ full of piety and poetry, pitiful and proper” but were “tremendous bullies, terrific in wrath, overflowing with animal courage and martial fury; men good at the battle-cry and with the battle-axe” (6). It seems that

although chivalry's origins may have been "feudal" and aggressive, the influence of the Church had a great impact on the shift from such a martial feudal chivalry to the religious chivalric purposes that arose in the following centuries. Arthurian romances seem to romanticize the actions of good knights combatting bad knights. The "romanticized" chivalry of Arthurian literature glorifies individual knights' attributes and chivalric prowess. And as can be seen in this study, this "glorified" chivalry also acquires different levels of value: the transitions between earthly chivalry and spiritual chivalry. Thus, there is a shift in the historic and literary representations of chivalry, from the feudal chivalry of epic poems to Lancelot's courtly chivalry to Galahad's spiritual chivalry. This transition illustrates a shift from the most physical chivalry of hired mercenaries to the most spiritual chivalry of Galahad.

The reasons, privileges and purposes for chivalry were as various as the knights who belonged to the Order. Throughout the various Lancelot romances, the transition of chivalric values is striking. The first generation of romances, composed in the latter 12th century, seem to make reference to chivalry as protection and to knights as members of a vengeful socio-political martial class who were to hold to a certain honor and code of service.

The true knight gave up all thought of himself. At the moment of investiture he swore to renounce the pursuit of material gain; to do nobly for the mere love of nobleness; to be generous of his goods; to be courteous to the vanquished; to redress wrongs; to draw his sword in no quarrel but a just one; to keep his word; to respect oaths; and, above all things, to protect the helpless and to serve the women. (Chivalry in English Literature 4-5)

The later Lancelot romances, beginning in France in the 13th century, give rise to a “higher” spiritual purpose for chivalric exploits. These higher purposes appear through Lancelot’s portrayal as a failing knight and Galahad’s emergence as the perfect Savior-knight. The fact that Lancelot’s sins are what destroy his best knight status is proof of the shift in chivalric values from worldly exploits to spiritual enlightenment in preparation for the Grail Quest. This transformation becomes more apparent throughout this study, but now it seems appropriate to give a more informed idea of the meanings and purposes of chivalry.

The Lady of the Lake explained a great deal about the significances and duties of knighthood to Lancelot as she prepared him to leave for the Order. The whole of the chivalric body is made up of individual knights whose personal beliefs and desires influenced their chivalric endeavors. It is possible that a knight could protect and defend

others to a selfish extent. Many times knights were rewarded with material possessions by the people they defended. A knight could also acquire the booty of those unfortunates he vanquished. A knight must cautiously guard and balance his motives against the corruption that could easily arise as a result of his privileged status. He had to be careful not to take advantage of those he has sworn to protect and defend. Jean Fiori states that “la chevalerie ne devrait donc pas être un titre, mais l’accomplissement permanent de la fonction originelle voulue par Dieu: la protection de son peuple désarmé, des faibles, des clercs, de la Saint Eglise surtout” (152). Fiori emphasizes the religious origins of chivalry. Sydney Painter’s French Chivalry concentrates on the significances of every aspect of chivalry (i.e. arms, motives etc.) and presents many statesmens’ opinions about the purposes and duties of knighthood. Painter quotes John of Salisbury’s Policraticus as a type of chivalry that one might categorize as worldly:

These chosen and oath-bound men should then be rigorously trained in military science and bodily exercise. They should eschew luxury and display--should be temperate and chaste. Courage, hardihood, and knowledge of strategy and the use of arms should be their characteristics. If they failed to observe their

oath or if they prove cowardly and incompetent, they should be deprived of their knightly belts and be severely punished.

(69)

John of Salisbury seems to have believed that the status of knighthood was more of a reward or honor given to a knight who demonstrated his abilities in martial exploits and who has an “inherent” good that proves he is worthy of such an honor. John also seems to believe in the religious origins of the office of knighthood. John states,

But what is the office of the duly ordained soldiery? To defend the church, to assail infidelity, to venerate the priesthood, to protect the poor from injuries, to pacify the province, to pour out their blood for their brothers (as the formula of their oath instructs them), and, if need be, to lay down their lives. The high praises of God are in their throats. (Quoted in Painter 69)

Yet, John of Salisbury is not oblivious to the possibilities of corruption within this “ordained” organization: “The two-edged swords are in their hands to execute punishment on the nations and rebuke upon the peoples, and to bind their kings in chains and their nobles in links of iron. But to what end? To the end that they may serve madness, vanity, avarice, or their own private self-will?” (Quoted in Painter 69). John,

seemingly an idealist, continues in his discourse with the belief that knights are basically good and would not succumb to corruption or selfish will: "By no means. Rather to the end that they may execute the judgment that is committed to them to execute; wherein each follows not his own will but the deliberate decision of God, the angels, and men, in accordance with equity and the public utility" (Quoted in Painter 69). It is idealistic to hope that knights would be honest and trustworthy, but most likely human frailty gives way to dishonesty and selfishness. However, the fact that corruption exists everywhere, even in Church institutions, does not nullify the many efforts made by the pure-at-heart that did exist, both in the world and the chivalric realm.

Chivalry is a complex concept in which knightly virtues seem later to be of utmost importance. F.J.C. Hearnshaw divides chivalry into three components with three "primary virtues" for each element. The first is war, whose necessary virtues are courage, loyalty and generosity. The second is religion, which requires fidelity to the church, obedience and chastity. The third is gallantry, which requires courtesy, humility and beneficence. Chivalry can be categorized in many different ways. However, each "virtue" of Hearnshaw's categorizations can be classified in one of the other "elements" and still be valid. For example, courage, loyalty and generosity are not only "military" virtues, they could easily

be applied in the “religious” element of chivalry. All virtues are necessary for knightly conduct. What is important to determine is the necessary and sufficient qualities and quantities of these virtues.

Although Hearnshaw makes a weak effort to define chivalry through categorization, he clarifies his definition in a later discussion: Chivalry

held up a high standard of honor, and required it to be maintained, without any diminution. It insisted on a truthfulness, a trustworthiness, an adhesion to plighted word, a fidelity to engagements... It required a liberality which lavished largesses... It demanded a regular observance of the offices of religion; a full acceptance of the Catholic faith; a complete submission in things spiritual, to the authority of the clergy, and a council of perfection for the elect... It instilled a courtesy (courtoisie), a code of fine manners... Above all, it inculcated an ideal of social service. (32-33; emphasis mine).

The virtues necessary for chivalry are obvious and these virtues depend upon the goodness and badness of mankind, but the decision by the knights to observe these virtues remains with the individual knight. If chivalry’s motives, ideally religious, required a knight to possess already the virtues necessary, then what was the ultimate goal of a knight if he possessed the virtues and abided by the chivalric code? Jean

Fiori argues that the main reasons knights abided by the “religious” chivalric code was to receive spiritual rewards and, ultimately, salvation. Fiori writes, “Si les chevaliers protègent la vie, les biens, et les oeuvres des clerks sur cette terre, ceux-ci, en retour, procurent aussi la vie aux chevaliers; la vie éternelle, par leur oraisons, leurs prières, les aumônes que les clerks offrent à Dieu” (154). This mutual salvation between the church clerics and the knights seems to be the ultimate motivation for the knights to flee corruption and embrace the necessary and sufficient virtues that would eventually lead them to spiritual enlightenment and redemption and can explain the importance of knighthood’s and chivalry’s Christian and spiritual representations in the romances of the Middle Ages. Unfortunately, in the Vulgate Lancelot and Chrétien’s Charrette, Lancelot has mistakenly placed his belief and faith in the “religion of Love” for Guinevere and lacks the proper esteem for God. This misplaced allegiance and conflict between adulterous love and holy love is what excludes Lancelot from the final Grail Quest. Lancelot’s paradoxical representation is an allegory which exemplifies the conflict between holy righteousness and sin to readers.

As the Lady of the Lake prepared Lancelot to leave for the Order, she armed him in such a way as to guard him against external attacks. However, she seems to have forgotten to warn him of the underlying

need of protecting himself against the evil that comes from within. Fiori addresses this aspect of Lancelot's failure, leaving much of the blame on la Dame du Lac: "le 'meilleur chevalier du monde' met moins son épée au service de l'Eglise que de l'Aventure et surtout de l'Amour, un amour adultère exalté, sublimé par l'absolu. De ces valeurs-là, la Dame du Lac n'avait pas soufflé mot" (156). If Lancelot misinterpreted or failed to understand a double-meaning in the advice given him by the Lady of the Lake, then he must also be lacking a virtue that should be included among the many definitions of chivalric virtues. Prudence is mentioned as a virtue; however, common-sense or discernment are perhaps more appropriate virtues to include. This lack or imbalance of discernment and other virtues becomes significant in reference to Perceval in Chrétien's Grail romance.

Of the many virtues needed by knights in their exploits in Arthurian romances, most of them coincide with the religious aspect of chivalry and, indeed, reiterate the "Fruits of the Spirit" and the "Virtues of Godly wisdom" from the Bible. The "Fruits of the Spirit" are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5.22) and the "Virtues of Wisdom" are purity, peace, gentleness, entreatability, mercy, fruitfulness, steadfastness, and honesty (James 3.17). These seventeen virtues from the Bible are hinted

at throughout the Lancelot texts as virtues that the knights should possess, although some knights, especially Lancelot, seem to misinterpret or underestimate them (as when Lancelot twists his faithfulness and love into virtues for Guinevere and not for God or others). The power and the legitimacy of possessing a balance of all the Biblical virtues and not the worldly virtues propels Galahad to the forefront of all knights in the final Grail romance La Quête du Graal. Lancelot's inability to understand the spiritual level of these virtues hinders him. Lancelot possesses many of the virtues required of a knight. He loves Guinevere. He is gentle, faithful, long-suffering and steadfast in his love and devotion to her. He is good, as opposed to Méléagant's villany. He is entreatable because he is willing to help others and defend good. He is merciful when he battles against someone who asks mercy for his life because, without fail, Lancelot grants mercy. However, Lancelot is not meek, temperate, pure, honest, or fruitful (in the religious sense). These virtues seem to deal mostly with the spiritual status of Lancelot's being. He is incapable of balancing all of the virtues and, as a result, remains at one extreme in some and lacks others. It is evident that not only was the "sentence" of knightly conduct to be interpreted but the spiritual state also. Because of the shift in chivalric value between Lancelot and Galahad, the profundity of a knight's

personal spiritual status becomes more important than the “letter” of his actions.

Despite the fact that Lancelot lacks certain virtues that are needed by the perfect knight, the world throughout these romances seems oblivious to a knight’s need for these spiritual virtues. This representation of the world’s ignorance legitimizes the allegoric value of the text because the Bible implies that the world does not understand spiritual ideals. Thus, the world in this text seems only to see the physical and material acts of a knight, functioning on a visual- and action-based plane, but Lancelot, in receiving the “Order” must now operate on the spiritual plane. According to the world, before “Le Bon Chevalier’s” arrival, Lancelot is “le meilleur chevalier du monde.” Lancelot, even from the beginning of his chivalric career, is able to heal and liberate others. The first task that he accomplishes soon after becoming a knight is to care for another knight who has recently been injured in battle and who had the iron of a sword left in his wounds. Lancelot removes the iron from the knight’s wounds in the name of God. He, in the preliminary stages of his status as a knight, seems to have the spiritual power he should as a religious knight. From the beginning of Lancelot, the hero’s renown as a Savior-knight grows as he accomplishes certain tasks, such as restoring the lands of La Dame de Nohaut, healing

the injured knight and liberating numerous captives. However, the second half of the volume is where Lancelot's Savior-status diminishes. Lancelot's previous acts earn him a renown and the title of "le meilleur chevalier." Many of the references to Lancelot as best or perfect knight are spoken by his friend Galehot, who, if we parallel these texts with Christ's acts, can be seen as a "John the Baptist" who preceeds and introduces Lancelot. Over and over throughout this volume, Lancelot is referred to as "le meilleur chevalier du monde," "le libérateur," "l'homme merveilleux," "le chevalier parfait," "le meilleur chevalier sur terre," to name a few honorifics. The fact still remains that there is another knight who will come to surpass him. In taking note of such titles as "le meilleur chevalier du monde" and "le meilleur chevalier sur terre," one notices that both titles are limiting and finite. The titles refer to Lancelot's knightly abilities on earth or worldly renown. The knight to come will surpass Lancelot in such a way as to become "le chevalier parfait" and "le meilleur," with no reference to boundaries. Up until the point where Galahad's new spiritual chivalry arises, Lancelot and other knights have been battling and defending others on a worldly plane. However, the Grail Quest now provides a spiritual quest, which is the ultimate and final quest to be achieved.

The first allusion to the coming of the perfect knight comes about midway through the Lancelot volume. Prophecy has played a major part in determining and alluding to acts to come throughout the Lancelot romances. Galehot's dreams reinforce the fore-ordained images of Lancelot's failure and the perfect knight to come. The interpretation of Galehot's dream about the leopard and the lion by Hélié de Toulouse is the first foretelling of Lancelot's fall and the coming of Galahad.

"Assurément, c'est (Lancelot) le meilleur chevalier de ceux qui existent, mais il y en aura un meilleur que lui" (I 304). As the second volume of the romance begins, Lancelot is in the presence of a monk in the monastery, "le Saint Cimetière," where he lifts the stones from the tombs. Lancelot recognizes that others view him as the best knight, but admits to the monk that he is no longer the best. "On me tient pour le meilleur chevalier, or je sais bien que je ne le suis pas" (II 29). After Lancelot has lifted the stones from the tombs a voice affirms Lancelot's admission and proceeds to say that "Le Bon Chevalier n'est pas encore venu, mais sa venue est proche" (II 29).

Although Lancelot, up until this time, has accomplished many miraculous deeds and was the "Savior" of many quests, he is mocked by an infirm knight from whom he wishes to remove an arrow. The man refuses to let Lancelot attempt to remove it, saying, "Vous n'y réussirez

pas... vous n'en retireriez pas le moindre bout et vous m'infligeriez une souffrance que je ne pourrais endurer... parce que vous n'êtes pas le meilleur chevalier du monde" (II 281). Lancelot is continuously reprimanded by "advisors" and holy men at every step of his journey. One hermit in particular gives Lancelot reasons for which he is no longer the best knight and why Galahad will be.

Vous n'êtes pas le Bon Chevalier dont je parle; je ne dis pas que vous n'êtes pas le meilleur de tous ceux qui dans le présent portent les armes, mais l'autre vous sera supérieur en tout, car il sera vierge et chaste tous les jours de sa vie, ce que vous n'êtes pas; vous êtes vil, impur et luxurieux et vous avez passé votre jeunesse dans l'esclavage et dans l'ordure. (II 311; emphasis mine)

The necessary or deciding virtue which has excluded Lancelot from the Grail Quest, ultimate spiritual enlightenment and best knight status, is virginity, which Galahad will possess. The hermit continues to enlighten Lancelot with evidence of his loss of best knight status.

Lancelot is told that if he had been "celui qui menera à terme les aventures du Saint Graal, la chaleur de cette source aurai cessé" (II 313). Lancelot was formerly able to accomplish such miraculous tasks that he now cannot. The hermit continues by telling Lancelot that

si vous étiez aussi pur et intègre que le sera l'être parfait
dont je vous parle, grâce aux éminentes vertus qui sont en
vous, vous auriez pu réussir cette aventure et les autres...
mais les graves péchés dont vous êtes chargé sont la cause de
votre échec. (II 313-314)

The importance of this information for Lancelot is that he once possessed the virtues needed to be the best knight, but squandered them as he gave in to his human lust, desires and concupiscence. While Hélié de Toulouse interprets Galehot's dream, he tells Galehot the qualities that are necessary for success in the Grail Adventure.

The culmination of Lancelot's sins and Galahad's virtues appears later in La Quête du Graal in which, as will be explained later, virginity plays an important role. It seems, however, that the most striking information about this metamorphosis of Lancelot's status of "best knight" to "best knight in the world at present" is that it is his sins of adultery, loss of virginity, perversion and mortification of his virtues that eliminate him from the Grail Quest. What is interesting is that while Lancelot has failed to be the best knight, he is the father of this "chevalier celestiel" and "chevalier parfait" who will achieve the Grail Quest. In Autour du Graal, Jean Frappier explains that the reason for

which “la chevalerie” has transformed from earthly to spiritual is to exalt chivalry.

L'opposition dramatique de la chevalerie 'terrienne' et de la chevalerie 'celestielle' est fondamentale... Les erreurs de la chevalerie 'terrienne' sont condamnées et non la chevalerie elle-même. Plus encore: la 'celestielle' sort de la 'terrienne' tout en la dépassant; le meilleur chevalier de la chevalerie 'celestielle,' Galaad, est le fils du meilleur chevalier de la chevalerie 'terrienne,' Lancelot. Remplacer idéalement la 'terrienne' par la 'celestielle,' c'était une manière d'exalter la chevalerie. (116)

The fact that Lancelot's sins bring about a greater good echoes passages throughout the Bible. Adam and Eve's sin eventually results in Salvation through Jesus Christ. Jacob's sins against his brother Esau result in Jacob becoming the Father of Israel. God proves himself sovereign by rectifying the sins and, in this text, provides a way for Lancelot to be saved:

Mais le Seigneur, en qui habite toute pitié et qui ne juge pas seulement les pécheurs à leurs actes, considéra cette union d'après le profit des habitants du pays, refusant de les voir à jamais dans le malheur. Il leur accorda d'engendrer et de concevoir un fruit tel qu'en échange de la fleur de virginité... De cette fleur perdue fut

donné en retour Galaad, le vierge, le chevalier hors de pair, celui
qui mena à terme les aventures du Graal. (II 199)

Lancelot's son and the Grail Quest provide the opportunity for Lancelot's redemption. Lancelot's purpose in the chivalric world seems to have been to bring about the "new" chivalric representative. Lancelot, like anyone, has been given free will. He could have opted not to commit adultery with Guinevere, guard his virtues and, above all, his virginity. He could have been the Savior and the knight who brings an end to the Grail Adventures. It seems, however, that since Lancelot started out as the chosen Savior and Redeemer of others, but ends up as one of the redeemed, that a higher task (an allegoric representation) is being accomplished through his portrayal. Lancelot serves as an example to every Christian who reads both Le Chevalier de la Charrette and Lancelot. Lancelot's rise, fall and ultimate reconciliation through his son's works serve an allegoric purpose. In keeping with the Biblical imagery, one could say that Lancelot of the Vulgate Cycle resembles Joseph, the father of Christ, or Adam, the father of Man. Thus, the belief that if Joseph believes in his son, the Savior, he also will be redeemed. The same reasoning can be applied to Adam. Adam existed before Christ, yet Christ's redemptive works functioned retroactively. The same relationship emerges between Lancelot and Galahad. Lancelot

was the perfect knight, unaware of the spirituality of chivalry.

Lancelot's perfect knight status was not enough to lead him to spiritual knowledge or eternal life in the presentation of the new chivalric ideal.

A Savior is needed for this. Lancelot's virtues and abilities can serve him well only in the worldly realm. It is the actions of someone else that bring about Lancelot's redemption. Lancelot learns this lesson through his own misadventures and experiences. Fredrick Whitehead argues that Lancelot is in the text "not as a warning, but as an encouragement demonstrating that, low as human nature may descend, a restoration is always possible through the way of humility and love" (739). The reality of Whitehead's statement appears through Lancelot's ascent through humility and love in moving into the final Grail romance, La Quête du Graal.

The authors of the Lancelot and Grail romances hoped that readers would deduce and apply the same learnings to their own lives. This appears to have been the motivation behind the rewriting of Chrétien's Le Chevalier de la Charrette, and in doing so showing the limits of Lancelot's greatness.

PART II: THE GRAIL

CHAPTER ONE

Redemption in Chrétien de Troyes's Le Conte du Graal (Perceval)

Up until this point, this study has been concerned exclusively with the character of Lancelot and his representations and functions. The purpose of this current chapter is to focus on two other knights, Gauvain and Perceval, who vie for different quests in the earliest Grail romance. Perceval pursues the spiritual knowledge and redemption that Lancelot fails to attain in the preceding chapters of this study. Lancelot reappears as a principle character in the romance La Quête du Graal, which will be examined in the fourth and final chapter of this study. What is interesting to notice in the next two chapters is the way in which the representation of chivalry has changed since the earlier Lancelot romances and how, although both Lancelot and Perceval rectify their respective spiritual lives, Lancelot fails and Perceval succeeds in the final stages of the ultimate Grail adventure, La Quête du Graal.

In Chrétien de Troyes's Le Conte du Graal, the “grail” first appears as an object in the Grail Castle's procession. With the Grail's introduction into literature, scholars have argued for various theories of the origin of the Grail object including Christian redemptive notions and

Celtic mystical influences. The Grail has become a principle element associated with Arthurian and medieval literature. The Grail's vague origins, meanings and significances continue to hold the attention of scholars. It is obvious that the Grail's functions have evolved throughout the centuries, indeed, within decades of Chrétien's work. Such Grail scholars as Roger S. Loomis believe that Chrétien's Grail romance may have been influenced by Celtic folklore (which will be examined shortly). However, by the time of the Vulgate's La Quête du Graal (the early 13th-century), the Grail had taken on a Christian religious and spiritual tone as it became the goal in an ultimate chivalric adventure. In this analysis, I will explore the origins of the Grail, the ways in which it is presented by Chrétien and its redemptive function in Le Conte du Graal and subsequent Grail romances.

Since Roger S. Loomis (and many other Grail scholars) have made extensive studies and analyses related to the origins of the Grail and the legends which surround it, I will not attempt an in-depth discussion of such interests, but instead offer a summary of their findings in order to create an introduction and a context for this part of my analysis. The word "grail" first appears in Chrétien's work Le Conte du Graal, yet its description is, unfortunately, quite vague. The object appears in the Grail procession in the Grail Castle where Perceval watches the Grail

pass, yet remains silent. As the romance continues, one discovers that Perceval's silence has caused a major disruption in the Grail Castle. At first, his silence appears to have prevented a much-anticipated "healing" of the Roi Pêcheur and of the land surrounding the castle. The significance of the Grail's healing power, as I will discuss later, originates from Celtic mythology. It is, however, at Perceval's absolution with the hermit that we discover a Christian or mystical element to the Grail's function at the Grail Castle. The hermit tells Perceval that the Grail carries "une hostie" (120) and that what is brought forth to the "Roi Pêcheur" is "assez pour le conserver en vie, tant le graal est une sainte chose: cet homme est si spiritualisé que l'hostie qui se trouve dans le graal suffit à le maintenir en vie" (120).

The "hermit episode," as it is called by scholars, remains the single most debated section of Chrétien's work. Many scholars, D.D.R. Owen in particular, believe that the "hermit episode" is, in fact, not Chrétien's own work. In "From Grail to Holy Grail," Owen analyzes the details of the text and gives evidence supporting his belief that Chrétien did not include a Christian religious aspect in his work. Owen argues:

I am prepared to accept for the sake of argument that Chrétien might have shown some spiritual preoccupations in this, the work of his later years, though we have been little prepared for it by his

other romances (and the prologue to the *Conte du Graal* I take as an indication of Count Philip's piety rather than of Chrétien's).

(33)

Owen argues further that the hermit's description of the Grail as a sacred object "is in conflict with the scene of its first appearance" (34).

With his polemic and evidence of various techniques within the work,

Owen concludes his analysis with an assertion that solidifies his stance:

Let me reiterate the fact that without the(hermit) episode there is no hint in the romance that the Grail has any Christian connotations... With all the evidence weighed, the balance of probability must surely be recognised as supporting the rejection of this controversial scene as unworthy, untypical and stranger to the pen of the Master of Troyes. (37)

Owen is one of many scholars whose beliefs about the Grail are that

Chrétien's original work was "profane" and that what Owen calls a

"pious interpolator" was responsible for "Christianizing" the romance after Chrétien died.

Paule Le Rider has outlined the opposing opinions of two scholars with regards to the chronology and its influence on the

"Christianization" of Chrétien's work. Le Rider writes that E. Köhler's research supports the argument that Robert de Boron's romance

L'Estoire del Saint Graal was written before Chrétien's romance and, therefore, was Chrétien's Christian source, thus supporting the theory that Chrétien himself wrote the whole text (61). On the other hand, Le Rider discusses E. Hoepffner's view that Chrétien's romance preceeded Robert de Boron's and, furthermore, that the religiousness of the text was indeed of Chrétien's hand:

dans le Conte du Graal de Chrétien, le motif du 'Graal', vase lié à des croyances religieuses à la fois chrétiennes et légendaires, se trouve intégré dans le schéma d'un conte des bons conseils. Que Chrétien ait eu lui-même l'idée de cette jonction ou qu'il l'ait trouvée dans quelque récit, il a conservé dans son texte la forme 'graal' propre à la langue d'oc. (64)

Whether or not the religious element of this romance was intended by Chrétien now seems insignificant because it does not change the fact that it is present in the text that circulated at the time.

Evidence of the Grail's association with Celtic origins and elements of fertility is found in such images as the Fisher King's injuries and the role of the question in healing the King's injuries and restoring the lands. Loomis examines the Celtic origins in The Grail: From Celtic Myth to Christian Symbol and explains that much of the ambiguity surrounding the Grail's origins and purposes arises from

misinterpretations of the early text. While Loomis acknowledges that Chrétien must have borrowed the Celtic “question game” motif from Irish folklore, he also hypothesizes that the word “cors” in Chrétien’s text divided its meaning between “horn” and “body.” From here, interpretations were divided into the Celtic themes of the “horn o’ plenty” (i.e. fertile lands, nourishment and rejuvenation) and the “body” as host, signifying healing, the abundance of spiritual nourishment (i.e. Christ’s body, the blood of the redemption and eternal life) derived from the Christian perspective. The Christian religious element of Christ’s Passion and the Eucharist seem to arise out of the “hermit episode” and have been analyzed by a variety of scholars such as Roger S. Loomis, Urban T. Holmes and Jean Frappier. Frappier expresses the ambiguity of Chrétien’s original text perfectly. He writes, “either the Conte du Graal paganizes the Christian input or it Christianizes the pagan input” (Chrétien de Troyes 148). In a sense, he answers his own conundrum by arguing that Chrétien purposely introduced the Grail as a profane object in order to “elevate” its religiousity as the text continued, thereby paralleling Perceval’s own chivalric development:

The creative continuity, whereby profane manifestations are elevated to religious ones, parallels, in part, Perceval’s

own development from a war-savage and quasi-heathen
 (he has some inkling of Christian dogma, but lacks charity)
 to knighthood, courtesy, and spirituality. (154)

Again, whether or not the religious (Christian) aspect was intended by Chrétien is debatable. The existence of pagan Celtic origins and influences alongside Christian themes are evidently not mutually exclusive and can quite obviously serve to introduce the other in a strategic literary technique. Despite these various theories, for the purpose of this study of Perceval's function in the text, the most relevant role of the Grail is that of the Christian notion of the "dispenser of grace" which leads Perceval into redemption in the spiritual sense. In Autour du Graal, Jean Frappier writes that Le Conte du Graal's "valeurs proprement religieuses, apparaissent comme le couronnement de l'apprentissage chevaleresques, ou plutôt de l'ascension morale du chevalier" (95).

I agree with such scholars as Frappier, who believe that the purpose of the Grail in this text is that of illustrating a transformation of chivalric values from "profane" to "spiritualisé" through the grace that Perceval receives as he tries to overcome his previous failures. Grace is obviously a theological topic whose meaning St. Augustine "revolutionized" in such a theological treatise as The City of God.

While I acknowledge the complexity of the issue, for simplification, I would say that grace means God's forgiveness for mankind's imperfections due to Original Sin and the consequential sins due to free will. The importance of the role of grace in the Grail's function is that Perceval, having failed to ask "the question" at the Grail Castle, retains a spiritual knowledge and succeeds in being absolved of his sins and in being redeemed. Perceval, as we will see in this study, is not ousted, like Lancelot in subsequent Grail romances, because of his imperfections. Although we cannot be certain why Perceval succeeds and Lancelot fails, I would suggest that the reason is the difference in their intentions. I will analyse this difference in my chapter on La Quête du Graal.

There is a multitude of theories surrounding the origins and meanings of the Grail, three of which Frappier outlines as the "3 Traits du Graal" in Autour du Graal. These three traits are "la production spontanée, l'auto-production de la nourriture dans ou par le récipient du contenu dans ou par le contenant; le renouvellement ininterrompu ou répété de la nourriture; et son abondance merveilleuse" (142). For this discussion, however, I will focus on the Christian religious functions of the Eucharist, grace, spiritual knowledge and redemption in the "new" chivalry.

In Le Conte du Graal, Chrétien parallels the chivalric exploits of two knights: Perceval and Gauvain. Unfortunately, it seems that Chrétien died before he completed the work, and consequently left Gauvain's (and to a certain extent Perceval's) adventures unfinished. Evidently, Chrétien intended to compare and contrast the exploits of Perceval to those of Gauvain. It seems likely that the intended outcome of the comparison was to exalt Perceval's "spiritual" conquests and condemn Gauvain's vain "worldly" conquests.⁴ Virtues, chivalric abilities and spiritual awareness are what cause Perceval to succeed along his chivalric path. While we cannot know for certain Chrétien's intentions for Perceval's quest, I am not alone in conjecturing that Perceval, had Chrétien finished the work, would probably have ended in Perceval's successful discovery of the secrets of the Grail. In "Le Pêché de Perceval," D.G. Hoggan quotes Jean Frappier's Le Roman Breton, in order to support his own view that had Chrétien finished the romance, Perceval would have rectified his "sin" and won the Grail: "Si jamais il retourne au château du Graal, le miracle pourra s'accomplir" (272). The secrets of the Grail and, consequently, redemption seem accessible only to a knight who has a charitable character, an ability to interpret advice and, above all, spiritual receptivity. Although the word "redemption" is

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⁴ For a further presentation of this interpretation, see D.G. Hoggan, "Le Pêché de Perceval" Romania 93 (1972): 50-76; 244-275.

never mentioned, its eternal reward is pursued (at one level or another) in every act that knights in the text perform. The pursuit of redemption can be seen as either performing chivalric acts (Gauvain) or seeing the Grail and obtaining the spiritual knowledge represented by or contained within it (Perceval). This divergence of quests thus becomes an all-inclusive allegory in which Perceval represents the sinner who repents and, as a result, ultimately obtains salvation and Gauvain represents the sinner who rejects spiritual knowledge in lieu of worldly glory.

As Perceval sets out on his quest, he receives advice from either family members or friends who are cognizant of the ways of the spiritual life or by various holy men who seem to hold the keys to “spiritual perfection.” What is interesting about this text are the ways in which Perceval learns about himself along his journeys and the insight he gains at each step because of the advice he receives. The purpose of such advice is increasingly for Perceval to learn about and accept spiritual chivalry and renounce worldly chivalric renown. Although Perceval often misinterprets the advice, his willingness to listen to and act upon the advice given to him is in direct opposition to Gauvain’s inability to attain spiritual enlightenment because of his interests only in worldly desires (i.e. he is hindered by the Original Sin that he cannot overcome). Perceval’s and Gauvain’s chivalric paths reflect what Carol Chase

categorizes as “chevalerie celestielle” and “chevalerie terrienne” (414).

“Chevalerie celestielle” can be defined as a vertical relationship, meaning a knight whose chivalric acts are focused on obtaining spiritual knowledge in the hope of gaining eternal life in Heaven which turns out, ultimately, to be what Perceval sincerely pursues. “Chevalerie terrienne” can be defined as a horizontal relationship, meaning a knight whose chivalric code is focused on other human beings or the world. Gauvain fulfills this type of chivalry. The two knights’ paths diverge: Perceval unknowingly witnesses the spirituality of the Grail procession, yet fails to be aware of its significance. Gauvain, on the other hand, is aware of the worldly elements of his chivalric exploits, but is blind to the “higher” significance of his acts. There are many episodes in the text that show how Perceval’s and Gauvain’s goals diverge and the reasons why Gauvain’s efforts are pursued in vain.

The divergence between Gauvain’s and Perceval’s chivalric paths seems to be one of Chrétien’s techniques for exemplifying the two kinds of chivalries. Brigitte Cazelles argues that Chrétien’s romance epitomizes his efforts to demonstrate the metamorphosis of chivalry into a “spiritualized ideal of a new kind of chivalry governed by a universal vision of chivalry’s redemptive mission” (1). Cazelles supports some scholars’ opinions that Chrétien’s own views had changed regarding

chivalry and knighthood's functions from his early Lancelot romance (Le Chevalier de la Charrette) to Le Conte du Graal (his last romance). In The Sower and His Seed, Harry Williams concludes his essay with an open-ended remark about changes in Chrétien's beliefs and intentions in his last romance.

After weighing repeatedly all the theories proposed after reading widely in Arthurian literature, I still return to my own published interpretation... The work is eschatological: why are life and death the relentless fate of each human? Perhaps I should now add that the author leads us to this conclusion by the staging of two kinds of chivalry, one superior to the other, and by the tantalizing suggestion of a resurrection which, in a Christian text, quite properly fails; hence, the *Conte del graal* is a palinode to the Lancelot story. (151)

Williams's view that Le Conte du Graal is a palinode, "a poem in which the poet retracts something said in a previous poem" (American Heritage Dictionary) supports the belief that Chrétien intended a religious aspect in this romance. Chrétien's reputation as a master poet leaves no doubt that he could have easily changed his style, technique, personal view about chivalric redemption, and even his narrative voice from his early Lancelot romance to his last romance. Neither an author nor a poet is

immune to the changes in his society. Chrétien quite easily adjusts and changes his own attitudes as those of his society change.⁵

Chrétien introduces Perceval as a young boy who, having recently seen a knight for the first time, wishes to be knighted. As he sets off on his journey to be knighted, his mother (who had raised him purposely ignorant of chivalry) gives him advice which a knight should obey. She tells him,

mettez-vous au service des dames et des demoiselles, et vous aurez l'estime de tous... Une jeune fille accorde beaucoup quand elle se laisse prendre un baiser; si elle y consent, je vous interdis de pousser les choses plus loin- renoncez-y... Si elle a au doigt un anneau ou à la ceinture une aumônière et si elle vous en fait don dans un mouvement d'affection ou à votre demande, acceptez cet anneau... L'anneau, je vous autorise à le prendre et l'aumônière aussi... sur la route comme à l'étape, ne manquez pas de demander son nom à celui qui vous tient longuement compagnie. Arrangez-vous pour connaître ce nom, car c'est par le nom qu'on connaît l'homme. Entretenez-vous, mon fils, avec les hommes sages et droits, allez avec eux: à fréquenter de tels hommes, on ne risque pas de s'égarer... Par dessus tout je vous demande instamment d'aller dans les églises... pour prier Notre Seigneur de vous

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⁵ For a further discussion of these societal changes see Brigitte Cazelles.

accorder l'honneur en ce monde et une conduite telle que vous
puissiez faire une sainte fin. (22-24)

The advice of Perceval's mother is a complete and concise summary of how he should conduct himself as a young knight and Christian as he leaves her to go out into the world from which he has been separated since birth.

Chrétien scholars such as Hoggan have concentrated not so much on the Grail, but on Perceval's character, in particular, his naïveté, the advice given to him and his interpretations of the advice. It is the ignorance and innocence, caused by his mother's seclusion, that contribute to his tendency to misinterpret the advice given he receives as he sets out on his journey. Perceval's inability to interpret correctly becomes apparent soon after his mother explains what a church (un moutier) is. Although Perceval leaves against his mother's wishes, she realizes that he must be equipped with the knowledge he will need as a knight. As his mother explains why it is important that he go to church, she describes the work of Jesus Christ and, as a result, redemption. She continues that a church is

une demeure belle et sainte, pleine de reliques et de trésors, où
l'on célèbre la sacrifice de Jésus-Christ, le saint prophète, que les
juifs ont si indignement traité. Il fut trahi et condamné

injustement, il souffrit les affres de la mort pour les hommes et pour les femmes, dont les âmes jusqu'alors allaient en enfer quand elles se séparaient de leur corps- et lui les en arracha. Il fut attaché au poteau, frappé et crucifié ensuite, et il porta une couronne d'épines. C'est pour entendre messes et matines et pour adorer ce Seigneur que je vous demande de vous rendre au moutier. (24)

Perceval is given all the advice that he needs for his purpose of becoming a knight. He understands one level of the advice, but is unable to extract further meaning from it. Perceval seems to lack common sense and discernment which, as we found out with Lancelot, are two very important virtues for a knight to possess if he wishes to proceed and accomplish his tasks. A lack of balance in certain aspects of a knight's life seem to render him a victim to his own insufficiencies if he does not take care to rectify the virtues that are in imbalance or replenish those that are absent. It seems that since his mother, having secluded him from knighthood and everything having to do with chivalry, has indirectly secluded him from the Church and spirituality. Since knighthood and the Church (as represented in this text) are so interdependent, it seems logical that Perceval would, consequently, be ignorant to spirituality. This interdependence represents an allegorical

interpretation which intends for readers to deduce that humanity, as represented through knighthood in this text, is inextricably linked to the Church. Therefore, the Christian reader should see that he cannot disassociate himself from either knighthood or the Church without debilitating consequences.

As Perceval leaves his mother and commences his journey to become a knight, he meets Gornemant, who gives him advice similar to that of Perceval's mother. Gornemant tells Perceval,

si d'aventure il vous faut combattre quelque chevalier (et)... si vous avez le dessus au point que votre adversaire ne puisse plus se défendre ni vous résister et qu'il lui faille demander grâce, ne le tuez pas délibérément. Gardez-vous aussi de vous abandonner au bavardage et au commérage. A trop parler on ne peut manquer de dire quelque chose qu'on vous impute à bassesse... Et je vous demande également si vous rencontrez une jeune fille ou une femme, demoiselle ou dame, que se trouve privée d'appui, de lui venir en aide, pour peu que vous soyez capable de le faire et en ayez les moyens- ce sera une bonne action... ne la négligez point, car elle n'est pas à dédaigner: ne manquez pas de vous rendre à l'église y prier le Créateur de toutes choses d'avoir pitié de votre

âme et de protéger en ce bas monde le chrétien que vous êtes et qui lui appartient. (44-45)

Thus, Gornemant charges Perceval with the Order of Chivalry before he leaves on his journey. Gornemant, like Perceval's mother, explains the religious aspect of chivalry while girding him and sending him on his way:

Le noble seigneur s'est lors saisi l'épée; il la lui ceinte et lui donne l'accolade en lui déclarant qu'avec cette épée il lui confère l'ordre le plus élevé que Dieu ait établi et créé, l'ordre de chevalerie qui n'admet aucune bassesse. (44)

Perceval's mother had explained the purpose of going to church and the significance of Christ's redemptive works, but Gornemant explains the explicit religious significance of chivalry, the same chivalry from which Perceval's mother had tried so hard to protect him. It seems that this "ordre le plus élevé que Dieu ait établi" and the charge of going to church to remember "la sacrifice de Jésus-Christ" are inextricably connected in this text in order to illuminate the redemptive function of chivalry. The image of Perceval taking up his sword (symbolic of Christ's cross) shows that he, too, is taking up his "cross" of chivalry in order to pursue a quest of knowledge (the secrets of the Grail) that will lead him to redemption.

Perceval's pursuit of spiritual chivalry is perpetuated and strengthened by the advice he receives from various people. Unfortunately his inability to interpret the advice correctly causes him much strife. It seems that although Perceval has been given spiritual prompting by whomever he comes into contact with, he still either interprets incorrectly or is doomed to fail. He simultaneously misinterprets the advice his mother gave him about going to church to worship "le Seigneur" and the advice about taking a maiden's ring if she offers it. Perceval, having reached the tent of a damsel, and thinking (incorrectly) that it is a chapel and he should worship, enters to do so, and discovers a damsel whom he forcefully kisses and from whom he takes a ring without permission. This leads him to a battle with the lover of the maiden. However, in the process of battling the angry lover of this maiden and sending him to Arthur's court, he avenges the maiden whom Kay slapped for laughing because of Perceval. Thus Perceval adheres to knightly conduct and part of the "knightly" advice which he had received from Gornemant.

Perhaps the gravest misinterpretation that Perceval makes from the advice he was given is when he arrives at the Grail Castle and is confronted by the Grail and the lance during the procession. The Roi Pêcheur's niece sends Perceval a sword which was destined for him and

he watches as the procession enters the room and passes before him. A young man enters the room carrying “une lance à l’éclatante blancheur qu’il tenait par le milieu de la hampe...Une goutte de sang perlait à la pointe de la lance, et jusqu’à la main du jeune homme coulait cette goutte vermeille” (70). The young man with the lance is followed by two young men carrying candelabra of pure gold, who are followed by a young woman carrying “un graal... qui se présentait en tête du cortège” (70). Finally, a young damsel enters carrying “un plat à découper en argent” (70). Perceval watches the procession in silence. He has realized his previous misinterpretations with the damsel at her tent and seems not to want to make the same mistake.

Il se retint de demander comment cela pouvait se produire, car il se souvenait de la recommandation reçue de celui qui l’avait armé chevalier: il lui avait enjoint de se garder de tout excès parole. Aussi craint-il, s’il pose une question, de se le voir imputer à grossièreté. (70)

Perceval’s inability to interpret correctly has resulted in a failure to ask “à qui l’on en faisait le service” (71) which, unknown to him, would have resulted in a restoration of the lands and the healing of Le Roi Pêcheur.

The “question-to-be-asked” is what drives this Grail romance.

The fact that Perceval leaves the vital question “unasked” is what motivates his pursuit of spiritual chivalry and the need he has to rectify his mistake. Perceval believed that he was doing the right thing in not asking too many questions which would be going against the advice that the “sage seigneur” Gornemant had given him. However, he is unable to find a balance of discernment and, unfortunately, discovers the consequences of his mistakes having already made them. It seems that such a situation as the consequences of Perceval’s misinterpretations allude to a significant reason that Chrétien may have included. A literal interpretation seems not to have been the goal of advice given, but the expectation of those who gave Perceval advice was that he interpret on another level (the “sentence”), much like Jesus hoped his disciples and followers would interpret his parables. The “higher” spiritual meaning (allegory) seems to be the goal of showing Perceval’s failure through his literal interpretations. The success of a “higher” interpretation receives a reward (i.e., Perceval’s realization of another interpretation, which leads to his salvation).

After Perceval leaves the castle, he encounters a young maiden (his cousin). She informs him of his mistake in not asking the questions of the Roi Pêcheur and asks him the very questions that he should have

asked during the Grail procession. Yet Perceval tells her he did not ask about any of it. The damsel tells him that if he had asked questions such as the ones she had just asked him “tu aurais bien guéri le bon roi qui est infirme qu’il aurait recouvré totalement l’usage de ses membres en même temps que le pouvoir sur ses terres” (76). The damsel also informs him that he was incapable of asking these questions because he has sinned against his mother who died of grief after he left. This information becomes detrimental to Perceval’s ability to continue on his journey. I will discuss later the reasons for which this sin of his not having asked the question resulted from the original sin against his mother.

The ambiguity of the balance between talking too much and asking questions at the right time seems to be too confusing for Perceval. This vital balance is where a key ingredient to the redemptive function of chivalry lies. The relevance of this same situation has already appeared in the Lancelot texts. A knight’s redemptive success or failure (i.e., Perceval asking the questions or Lancelot avoiding sin) seems to stem from his destiny as we have already discussed and will see again in La Quête du Graal. There seem also to be different levels of success. Perceval succeeds in finding the Grail Castle and seeing the Grail procession, but he stops short of witnessing the Grail’s spiritual and mystical powers because of his past sins of which he is ignorant and

consequently of which he has not yet been absolved. Although Perceval's young cousin informs him of some of the consequences of not asking the questions, he seems still unable to comprehend all of the ramifications of his sins. The "Ugly Damsel" reveals the wide-spread consequences when she arrives at Arthur's court. She addresses Perceval:

Tu es allé chez le Roi Pêcheur, tu as vu la lance qui saigne... tu n'as pas été capable de demander pourquoi cette goutte de sang perle à la pointe du fer éclatant de blancheur! Et le graal que tu as vu, tu n'as pas seulement demandé à quel puissant seigneur on en faisait le service... C'est toi, ce misérable... Si tu avais posé les questions, le puissant roi qui est dans la peine serait maintenant guéri de sa blessure... Sais-tu ce qu'il adviendra du fait de ce roi qui ne gouvernera pas sa terre et qui n'est pas guéri de ses blessures? Les dames en perdront leurs maris, les terres en seront dévastées, les jeunes filles, privées d'appui, resteront orphelines, bien des chevaliers mourront-- et tous connaîtront le malheur à cause de toi. (94)

Perceval's personal misinterpretations spiralled into something bigger which have grave and far-reaching consequences for others besides himself. The facts that these events happen because of Perceval's

imbalance and have such critically devastating consequences for others lead one to believe that they happen regardless of Perceval's failures. Perceval seems to be the foreordained "question asker" and may be the chosen liberator, but he needs to repent of his sins and acquire some spiritual knowledge before he can be successful and achieve the tasks that have been set before him.

The ambiguity surrounding Perceval's sin has been a focal point of scholarly debate for a long time. Many have disputed Perceval's sin, but most scholars agree that Perceval's silence in the presence of the Grail was caused by his mortal sin of contributing (indirectly) to his mother's death. As a result of this sin, Jean Frappier argues that Perceval was "déserté par la grâce" (Roman 82) and that his "défaut de discernement qui, dans l'ordre de la psychologie, a empêché Perceval de poser la question libératrice" (175). Other scholars believe that Perceval's ignorance and lack of discernment are major contributors to this sin, but that the core of the matter lies more in Perceval's failure to rectify (i.e., repent of) his sin than in the sin and the loss of grace. D.G. Hoggan explains the three canonical conditions of a mortal sin and Perceval's satisfaction of all three:

gravité de la matière: il y risque de mort pour la personne de sa mère; pleine conscience de la gravité du cas: sa mère ne lui a pas

caché le risque et effectivement elle tombe et demeure comme morte; volonté librement engagée dans l'acte: il a dit 'Et je irai, cui qu'il em poist', ce qu'il fait, ayant vu sa mère gisant à terre.
(255)

If Perceval's sin lies in leaving his mother behind to pursue his chivalric career, then what about the men to whom Jesus says, "let the dead bury their own dead" (Matt. 8.22)? Perceval's higher calling of chivalry has made it necessary for him to leave his mother; therefore, it must not be a mortal sin or the sin which causes his silence. Perceval's sin could lie in his lack of discernment, thus making repentance a practical step in the right direction. Perceval makes the effort to be absolved of his sins when he repents and decides to ignore all other adventures "jusqu'à ce qu'il sache à qui l'on fait le service du graal, jusqu'à ce qu'il ait trouvé la lance qui saigne et qu'on lui ait dit en toute certitude pourquoi elle saigne" (95). In doing this, Perceval puts himself back into a vertical relationship (chevalerie celestielle) in pursuit of spiritual knowledge which will lead him to redemption.

The hermit to whom Perceval confesses and repents gives more exclusively spiritual advice:

Rends-toi chaque jour à l'église plutôt qu'en tout autre lieu...

Crois en Dieu, aime Dieu, adore Dieu. Honore les gens de bien,

hommes ou femmes. Lève-toi devant le prêtre: c'est un geste qui coûte peu, mais Dieu l'apprécie vraiment car il est manifestation d'humilité. (120)

Although he has sinned and lacks a precise balance in motivation, Perceval has succeeded in putting himself back on the right path. Perceval's search for the Grail "as emblem of redemption thus becomes, in turn, emblematic of a chivalric pilgrimage for spiritual maturity and salvation" (Cazelles 3). Although we do not see Perceval acquire the Grail, we know that he is on the correct path of redemption through his chivalric exploits. Consequently, the appearance that Perceval's sin lay in his inability to interpret at the necessary level furthers the allegoric value of his recent ability to search for another level of meaning and, as a result, successfully attain spiritual knowledge.

Gauvain, on the contrary, seems to be unable to attain the level of spiritual insight that Perceval achieves in this unfinished text. The stark contrast between Gauvain and Perceval seems to have been intentionally engineered by Chrétien as a means of glorifying a higher chivalry, the chivalry of Perceval. In support of the higher chivalric values found in Perceval, Frappier writes that this romance "celebrates the chivalric ideal by which worldly glory gives way to Christian humility and divine love" (128). In discussing Chrétien's intentions behind the contrast and,

in particular, the worldly chivalry of Gauvain, David Fowler writes that if Chrétien had lived to finish the text “this quest would have presented an unmistakable challenge to the accepted ideals of Arthurian society, and hence to those of chivalry in twelfth-century France” (52).

Gauvain’s “vaine gloire” and attention to courtly or worldly chivalry are similar to Lancelot’s, as I have already discussed. Although Gauvain is touted as a good and courageous knight, he falls short of the “chevalerie celestielle” status because of his allegiance to the courtly code and refusal to adhere to spiritual chivalry.

Gauvain is the nephew of Arthur and is described as a “glorieux modèle de toutes les vertues chevaleresques.” Gauvain is the knight who does not interrupt Perceval’s contemplation of the blood drops on the snow. Seeing that two knights fail to gain Perceval’s attention at this point in the text, Gauvain abides by Arthur’s belief that “il n’est pas normal... qu’un chevalier en arrache un autre à sa méditation, quelle qu’elle soit” (90). Gauvain seems to be following Arthur’s own courtly beliefs. Although Gauvain is renowned for his knightly accomplishments and virtues, he, unlike Perceval, does not opt to pursue the spiritual knowledge that leads to eternal life. At the time that Perceval decides to go in quest of the Grail mystery, Gauvain is tempted by what the Ugly Damsel presents to the court about the adventures at Proud Castle (le

Château Orgueilleux): “quel immense honneur reviendrait à celui qui réussirait à lever le siège et à délibrer la jeune fille! Il connaîtrait une pareille faveur, et il pourrait en toute sûreté ceindre l’épée à l’étrange baudrier” (95). Thus Gauvain pursues a horizontal path (terrienne) of worldly chivalric glory. He desires to win glory for himself and is unaware of or blind to the glory he can achieve in pursuing a higher quest.

In Chrétien de Troyes, Frappier ardently criticizes Gauvain’s chivalric values and contrasts them with those of Perceval in the text.

The chivalric Gawain lets himself be carried along in a whirlwind of frivolous, worldly adventures or misadventures... Arthur’s nephew remains unchanged: ever courteous, tactful, preoccupied with mundane glories and chivalric honor (131). Gawain indeed possesses the merits of faultless prowess, scrupulous attachment to chivalric honor and tact, elegance and politeness, but this varnish hides a basic frivolity, a preoccupation with earthly glories, and an incurable weakness for casual amours. (154)

Frappier’s main argument about Gauvain’s “vain” chivalric values is that he never seems to “go” anywhere in the romance. He attempts one task after another and never gains any ground. What tasks he does accomplish do not serve any specific purpose within Chrétien’s work

(154). Frappier enumerates Gauvain's "misadventures:" when he goes to Montesclaire and is accused by Guingambresil of killing his father (the king of Escavalon), yet gets "side-tracked" into battling for the young maiden "aux manches étroites" (154); when Gauvain arrives at Escavalon and winds up in love with the king's daughter (the king whom Gauvain allegedly killed) (154); and when Gauvain arrives at the "Château des Reines" and succeeds in surviving the Marvelous Bed, yet liberates no one. The fact that Gauvain was good enough to withstand the peril of the "fracas" from the "Le Lit Merveilleux" serves no alternate purpose. Gauvain's story ends at a point when he has reached the "Gué Perilleux" where he discovers his grandmother and sister and becomes a victim/prisoner of an enchantment. Gauvain stays at the castle and knights the squires, never returning to Arthur's court. Gauvain's end demonstrates the consequences of his refusal to seek his higher calling as a knight. The significance of Gauvain staying in the castle is that he, in a way, loses his chivalric ability and status of honor which seems to be the worst of all ends for a once-glorified knight. Death would have been a much more honorable end for Gauvain. But since this does not happen, it only serves to emphasize the shameful circumstance of idleness in which his episode closes. Gauvain

epitomizes the earthly knight, whereas Perceval's emergence as spiritual knight is the aspiration for the "new" chivalry demonstrated in this text.

"Gauvain," explains Frappier, "yearning for no other equilibrium but his own, more a tourist than a quester of worldly prowess, always led on by his love of universal praise, ends up... lowering himself" (155). Frappier's view is that Gauvain's chivalry demonstrates a circular or spiralling movement into nothing. Perceval, on the contrary, "dissatisfied with himself, tormented by the unfulfilled desire of a new ideal, enters the path of repentance, thus holding a more austere, nobler, and purer message" (155), and becomes the "new" glorified knight after having humbled himself and "righting" his past wrongs. Throughout Gauvain's adventures, he performs the chivalric acts that are required of a knight. We remember the advice given Perceval about how a knight conducts himself and succeeds in life. However, Gauvain's ultimate goal is for himself and others, not for the glory of God or a desire to attain the spiritual knowledge that Perceval pursues. Gauvain performs in vain and is counter-productive in his efforts, thus becoming Chrétien's example of a fruitless worldly knight.

Gauvain's portrayal in this romance is similar to the portrayals of Lancelot in both Le Chevalier de la Charrette and Lancelot. Both Lancelot and Gauvain are good knights and quite possibly the best in

their respective texts. Yet Gauvain in Le Conte du Graal is unaware of the spiritual ideals that have been adopted by the chivalry to which he belongs in Chrétien's last romance. Lancelot, in Le Chevalier de la Charrette, seems not unaware, but purposely unengaged with the religious (Christian) aspects of the text. His pursuit is religious only to himself, in his love for Guinevere. Gauvain, like Lancelot, accomplishes many tasks that give him the renown that he possesses as a knight of Arthur's court. Gauvain in Le Conte du Graal withstands the Bed of Marvels which was Lancelot's accomplishment in Le Chevalier de la Charrette. In Du Philtre au Graal, Jacques Ribard states that "Lancelot, comme... Gauvain,... est à la fois une figure de l'homme et une figure du Christ - qu'on rapproche seulement la 'crucifixion' du Pont de l'Épée et celle du Lit de la Merveille" (89). Gauvain, in Le Conte du Graal, represents a type of Christ-figure similar to Lancelot's Savior portrayal in Le Chevalier de la Charrette. However, Gauvain's "Christ-likeness" terminates with the episode of the Bed of Marvels because it is the only "Christ-like" image that is manifested in the text. Lancelot, on the contrary, is constantly portrayed as "Christ-like" throughout Le Chevalier de la Charrette.

The transition from Lancelot who survives the Bed of Marvels to Gauvain who survives the Bed of Marvels is interesting because Gauvain

is no longer glorified as the ideal knight of the text (unlike Lancelot).

Perceval's portrayal as "spiritual" quester has already surpassed Gauvain's representation as a "mundane" knight. The fact that this transition takes place marks the possibility of a shift in Chrétien's own beliefs⁶ about "chevalerie terrestre" and "chevalerie celestielle". Brigitte Cazelles argues that at the time Chrétien was writing Le Conte du Graal, the societal view of chivalry was in the process of changing and that Chrétien's "awareness of the failure of traditional chivalry" (7) was a major contributing factor to his conversion of chivalric values from Le Chevalier de la Charrette to Le Conte du Graal. Cazelles refers to the process in which the values surrounding chivalry change as "regeneration." This regeneration favors Perceval's type of chivalry over Gauvain's.

Unfortunately, Le Conte du Graal ends so abruptly that the results of either Perceval's or Gauvain's adventures remains unfinished. However, a pattern emerges throughout the romance which reinforces the "horizontal" or "terrestre" and "vertical" or "celestiel" theories of progression. Perceval, having confessed his sins, progresses towards a "celestiel" path of acquiring spiritual knowledge. Gauvain, on the other hand, seems to wander aimlessly in a circular motion (horizontal), yet never breaks free of the monotony to join the eternal quest. No matter

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⁶ See Brigitte Cazelles

how virtuous Gauvain is (or Lancelot for that matter), the virtues are not what help a knight to achieve the ultimate goal of eternal life and redemption that the two Grail romances, Le Conte du Graal and La Quête du Graal, embody.

CHAPTER TWO

Redemption in La Quête du Graal

The Vulgate Cycle's La Quête du Graal offers the culmination of chivalric works and presents the pinnacle of the knights' redemptive pursuits. I will discuss how the past three romances, which concentrated on Biblical and religious imagery, redemptive notions, chivalric transitions and knight's receptivity, led up to the "dénouement" and ultimate chivalric adventure of this Grail text. Although Lancelot repents of his past sins and puts himself on the correct path to redemption, his past sins hinder him from the final privilege of succeeding in the Grail Quest. Lancelot's failure will be contrasted with Bors's, Perceval's and finally Galahad's successes and other knights' (i.e. Gawain's and Hector's) complete failures in the Grail Quest.

The Christian religious images of La Quête are abundant. Since much of the imagery in this text is allegorical, it will not be necessary to make Biblical interpretations of the text. I will, therefore, concentrate on several aspects of this text: each knight's (Lancelot, Bors, Perceval and Galahad) individual quests, comparing and contrasting the reasons for which Lancelot fails and the "Elect-three" succeed; the Grail's depicted meaning and function with regards to its redemptive role; and

the allegoric value of each knight's pursuit of spiritual knowledge and redemption.

La Quête du Graal presents explicit guidelines for how a knight attains (or in Lancelot's case, fails to attain) spiritual knowledge from the source: the Holy Grail. This romance is full of chivalric adventures which are told at one level, a literal level. However, another level, a spiritual level, is intended as a guide to spiritual life. All of the adventures in the text can be interpreted allegorically, demonstrating levels of a knight's representation as a "Christian every-man" example for the reader. Knights on this quest are "sifted through" one-by-one, leaving Galahad as the only knight left to behold the secrets of the Holy Grail. A concept of redemption through the Holy Grail will become evident through analyzing the principle knights' (Bors, Lancelot, Perceval and Galahad) quests.

In this romance, Lancelot fails in the spiritual quest because of his sin of adultery with Guinevere. Not only is it the adulterous act that has caused him to fail, but his allegiance to or idolatry of her. This misplacement of allegiance from God to Guinevere has been engrained in his chivalric, courtly mindset. He has been misled by the chivalric codes presented to him ("chevalerie terrienne") and by his courtly exposure. From the beginning of this text, there is a different portrayal

of Lancelot from those in previous romances. In Le Chevalier de la Charrette and Lancelot, he was portrayed as the best knight and Savior. He was fearless and had honor. In this text, he seems reluctant and unworthy of his knightly status in comparison to the “new” chivalric representation. It would seem that the authors of this text (widely held to have been Cistercian monks) intended to characterize Lancelot as less than worthy of a spiritual quest because of his previous over-zealous perpetuation of courtly chivalry. Thus, Lancelot refuses to try his hand at the sword that was seen in a rock in the river and fails to recognize Galahad as his own son.

As the quest begins and Galahad is introduced, Lancelot is told by a maiden that his “sort est changé depuis hier matin” (61). The maiden continues to rebuke Lancelot by telling him,

vous étiez hier matin le meilleur chevalier du monde, et qui vous eût appelé ainsi, eût dit vrai; car alors vous l’étiez. Mais qui le dirait maintenant, on le tiendrait pour menteur, car il y a meilleur chevalier que vous. Preuve en soit cette épée à laquelle vous n’osâtes toucher. Tel est le changement de votre renom, dont je vous ai fait souvenance afin que désormais vous ne prétendiez plus être le meilleur chevalier du monde. (61)

As in Lancelot, La Quête du Graal elaborates upon the transition from Lancelot's worldly chivalry to Galahad's spiritual chivalry. In the past it was true that Lancelot was the best knight, but presently, it is becoming more evident to the society represented in the text that Lancelot will be replaced by a higher chivalric representative. The maiden's rebuke of Lancelot has brought to light one of the reasons that Lancelot has lost his status as best knight. I shall show further on in this study that Lancelot's carelessness with the virtues that were born naturally in him exclude him from succeeding in the Grail Quest. Allegorically, Lancelot's former conduct serves as an example of the kind of life to avoid. Lancelot, at this point, has been unable to change his attitudes and comprehend the recent shift from courtly chivalry to the heavenly chivalry that Galahad represents. With the introduction of the "new" chivalry and the higher quest, Lancelot is in the beginning stages of his realization (self-contemplation). His realization comes gradually as he learns about himself along his journey. Lancelot's former renown and virtues have been nullified and, as the text progresses, the evidence that his paradise will not be regained becomes apparent.

As Lancelot and the other knights commence their journeys in this text, Lancelot pursues the knight with the white shield (Galahad) and wishes to learn his name. Lancelot arrives in a forest by himself,

symbolically “au pied de la croix.” This is Lancelot’s self-reflection and contemplation. At the foot of the cross, he is unable to move and is tormented as the Holy Vessel passes him. He is reprimanded for not having moved at the sight of the Grail. A knight rebukes him:

“Lancelot, plus dur que pierre, plus amer que fût, plus nu et plus dépouillé que figuier, comment as-tu été si hardi que d’entrer en ce lieu où était le Saint-Graal? Va-t’en d’ici, car le lieu est déjà tout infecté de ta présence” (105). This passage echoes Perceval’s inability to ask the question as he witnessed the Grail procession in Le Conte du Graal.

Lancelot’s past sins, like Perceval’s, have silenced him and impeded his ability to speak. In “La Mystique de la Grâce,” Etienne Gilson argues,

nul doute qu’il ne soit parvenu jusqu’à un certain degré
d’initiation mystique, mais une longue vie consumée dans le péché
lui interdit l’accès des extases purement spirituelles. Il ne verra
donc qu’une partie des secrets divins et encore ne le verra-t-il que
sous la forme d’un songe; récompense à la fois et châtiment. (338)

It seems that the purpose of the castigations that Lancelot receives from the maiden and from the knight is to impress upon him his previous sins and short-comings to the point of making him repent and be humbled.

These castigations are successful and lead Lancelot to make his confession:

Ah Dieu! c'est la suite de mes péchés et de ma mauvaise vie. Je vois bien que ma faiblesse m'a confondu. Quand je devrais m'amender, l'Ennemi l'emporte et me prive de la vue, si bien que je ne peux voir ce qui est de Dieu. Ce n'est pas merveille; depuis que je fus chevalier, il n'y eut pas une heure où je ne me couvrisse de péché mortel, et plus que nul autre j'ai vécu dans la luxure et le mal de ce monde. (106)

Lancelot progresses towards rectifying his past sins and making the transition from “chevalier terrestre” to “chevalier celestiel,” like Perceval in Le Conte.

Lancelot, through the castigations of others and the advice he has received from holy men, has recently comprehended the profound effects that his sins have had on “his” chivalry and his redemptive or spiritual status. He realizes that he has slandered his knightly status through “luxure.” According to Albert Pauphilet, there are seven steps of Catholic confession (78), of which Lancelot has just taken the first: recognizing the sin. Lancelot gradually moves through Pauphilet’s seven steps (recognition of sin, repentance, contrition, spoken confession, penance or “amendment de vie” and contemplation) as he progresses in his journey. Illustrating Pauphilet’s schema, Lancelot begins to recognize his sin and follow the steps of confession. At a hermitage,

Lancelot meets a hermit who illustrates his sins through Jesus's Parable of the Talents and guides him spiritually. The hermit tells Lancelot that he owes "à Dieu très grande gratitude de ce qu'il... a fait beau et vaillant plus que nul autre" (107). He continues to tell Lancelot that if he were to squander the bounty which he had received from God he would be "fort blâmé." The hermit brings him through his spoken confession, motivates him towards an "amendement de vie," and explains God's mercy by telling Lancelot, "je vous dirai en vérité que si vous lui criez merci, Il est si débonnaire, Il préfère tellement le repentir du pécheur à sa chute, qu'Il vous rendra plus fort et vigoureux que vous ne fûtes jamais" (108). Lancelot confesses his sin with Guinevere and is thus freed to continue his quest.

As Lancelot continues on his journey, he lodges in many hermitages, is told repeatedly what his visions have meant and receives more spiritual encouragement. A certain "prud'homme" who continues the tradition of enlightening him about his past, how he can rectify himself and proceed on his quest, tells Lancelot that he may seek the adventures of the Grail, but warns him that he will not be successful because he has squandered his former virtues. This holy man elaborates upon the Parable of the Talents by specifying the virtues that Lancelot

lost and the sins into which he fell after coming to the Order of Chivalry.

He tells Lancelot,

tu avais hébergé en toi toutes les bonnes vertues, si
naturellement que je ne sais nul jeune homme qui fût ton
pareil. En premier lieu, tu hébergeais la virginité que tu
n'avais enfreinte ni de désir ni d'acte... Après cette si haute vertu,
tu avais aussi l'humilité... Après ces deux vertus, tu avais en toi la
patience... Et il y en avait une autre encore que tu hébergeais
comme si elle t'était venue de nature: c'était la droiture... Et tu
avais encore en toi la charité, si hautement hébergée que c'en
était merveille... Ainsi pourvu de toutes bontés et vertus
terriennes, tu entras dans le grand ordre de chevalerie. (162-163)

Not only does this discourse specify the virtues that had abided in
Lancelot, it demonstrates the new view of chivalry, that of the
"chevalerie celestielle." These virtues are the guidelines by which a
"knight of God" should abide.

In the Redemption of Chivalry, Pauline Matarasso compares Lancelot
to Adam from the Bible (115). Lancelot is tempted by Guinevere (the
Arthurian manifestation of Eve), thus illustrating the Fall. Although
Lancelot is redeemed through his confessions and his pursuit of "la
chevalerie celestielle," he is still not able to regain the paradise that he

lost (knowing the secrets of the Holy Grail) because of Original Sin (136). Lancelot's quest for spiritual knowledge has been stunted by his past failures. However, he succeeds in putting himself back in a "right" or vertical relationship, as does Perceval in Le Conte. Unfortunately, the damage is already done and, consequently, Lancelot is still unable to attain the ultimate knowledge (which Perceval has attained in this text) of the Grail.

Although Lancelot fails, he is still a level above knights such as Gawain and Hector, who pursue nothing but earthly glory and selfish interests. These knights are excluded from the "elect" Grail-seekers because of their ignorance of ambivalence to the spiritual level of this final quest. Allegorically, the "separation" of these knights echoes the Biblical belief that "many are called, but few chosen" (Matt. 20.16). This romance demonstrates, to a certain extent, the Biblical views about free-will and those "who are called." It isn't that the Grail Quest has not presented itself as a spiritual journey to these knights, but that they were not receptive enough to understand the meaning of the quest in the way that the successful knights (the chosen) were able to understand and be receptive. I will discuss this further when I address grace and the Grail's redemptive functions.

Gawain and Hector are portrayed as the non-receptive knights, probably as a parallel image to the Biblical passage about the Parable of the Sower. Jesus's parable describes a farmer scattering his seeds and the "receptivity" of different soils.

A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop. (Matt. 13.3-8)

Throughout the text, Gawain and Hector remind the reader of the seeds that were scattered among the bad soil. They hear the higher calling but they are seen pursuing earthly glory and other people instead of heavenly glory. They seek Galahad, but not the redemption he represents. In "An Interpretation of the Meaning and Purpose of the Vulgate 'Queste del Saint Graal'," Fanni Bogdanow explains that the "knights all wish to be with Galahad, yet few seek to imitate him or heed his advice" (35).

They are impressed by his prowess and the wonders he performs because

of their curiosity. They cannot see past Galahad's works to fully comprehend the higher meaning behind his coming.

Gawain's earthly pursuit becomes apparent as he follows Galahad's path to an abbey. In asking which direction he had gone, he says to himself: "Je suis vraiment malchanceux! Je suis le plus malheureux chevalier du monde, de le suivre ainsi de si près sans pouvoir l'atteindre. Certes, si Dieu faisait que je le puisse rejoindre, jamais je ne le quitterais plus" (97). At this time, Gawain is confronted by one of the monks of the abbey who tells him that his "fellowship" with Galahad "ne serait pas convenable" (97) because Gawain is a "sergent mauvais et déloyal, alors que lui est un chevalier irréprochable" (97). The monk continues to tell Gawain of his fault of following earthly codes:

Car, lorsque vous fûtes admis dans l'ordre de chevalerie, ce ne fut pas pour que vous fussiez désormais le sergent de l'Ennemi, mais pour que vous servissiez Dieu et la Sainte Eglise, et que vous rendissiez à Dieu le trésor qu'il vous avait remis en dépôt, votre âme. Or, vous avez mené la vie la plus déréglée et la plus mauvaise que mena jamais chevalier. (79)

Gawain's chivalric exploits have surpassed Lancelot's chivalric exploits to a "sinful" counter-productive extreme. Gawain's ambivalence and

rejection of a higher chivalry have lead him into a state of blindness. He stands in direct opposition to Galahad's "good knight" and "Savior knight" status. Gawain is worse than a non-believer because he has been presented with the chivalric truth and has refused it completely. Gawain's rejection of confession with the monks of the abbey quickens his allegorically abysmal trajectory.

As Gawain and Hector (Gawain's equally ignorant companion) travel on to seek adventures, they encounter none. They seem to be moving on an empty plane of chivalry that leads one to think that the knights who are on the higher chivalric adventure are literally on a higher plane. Evidence of the possibility of their higher plane rests in Hector's comment that Galahad, Bors and Perceval "*semblent si perdus qu'on n'en voit plus trace*" (185). Gawain's and Hector's misadventures accumulate as they battle against and kill other companion knights of the Grail Quest. When Gawain and Hector arrive at another abbey along their path and request that the monks interpret the dreams that they have had, the monks again counsel the two knights about their base and futile chivalric deeds. The interpretation of the dreams informs Gawain and Hector that they, "*chevaliers de pauvre foi et de mauvaise croyance*" (195), lack the three key virtues, "*charité, abstinence, vérité*" (195), and that they cannot take part in the Grail adventures. Once again, Gawain

(speaking for himself and for Hector) refuses the call to confession and repentance that the monks request of them. These two knights' adventures end in vain. Gawain is not mentioned after leaving this last abbey. Hector, however, arrives at Corbenic and knocks at the gate asking that someone open and let him in. Hector's request is refused and a knight advises Hector,

vous n'entrerez point; tant que le Saint-Graal sera ici, nul n'y pénétrera qui soit monté comme vous l'êtes. Allez-vous-en en votre pays, car vous n'êtes certes pas des compagnons de la Quête, mais de ceux qui ont quitté le service de Jésus-Christ pour celui de l'Ennemi. (289)

Hector's rejection echoes the Biblical text in Matthew which states that

not everyone who says to me 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord have we not prophesied in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name? And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness! (7.21-23)

Hector, along with Gawain, accomplished many chivalric wonders in "His" name, yet their intentions were equal to those of the men Jesus

was addressing when he said he would say he never knew them. The allegoric value of Gawain's and Hector's portrayals are meant as motivation to act in direct opposition to how these knights acted in the text. Emmanuèle Baumgartner argues in L'Arbre et le Pain that the representation of the "erreurs de la chevalerie terrestre à travers Gauvain, d'Hector... est moins une condamnation de la chevalerie qu'une exaltation de sa fonction" (148). The function of chivalry (especially in the Quête) is presented as a manner in which knights could pursue salvation. Knighthood was its own class, similar to the Church, yet at the same time, different. The relationship between the Church and knighthood was rather symbiotic. Knights represented the population which, in turn, was addressed through knightly allegories in contemporary romances.

The next two principle knights of this text are Bors and Perceval who are presented as equals in their spiritual pursuits. They, unlike Lancelot, have not fallen short of their quests because of their past sins, nor do they possess all of the "Christ-like" virtues that Galahad possesses. However, they, on their equal plane of virtue, differ from one another. Matarasso states that "Bors and Perceval, are like mirror-images of one another and each must strive, not only to perfect his own qualities, but

to acquire those which inhere more naturally in the other" (154). Only Galahad is the epitome of all virtue.

Like Lancelot at the beginning of the quest, Bors and Perceval decide against trying their hands at the sword in the river. They realize that if Lancelot, a great knight, will not try to loosen the sword, then they also are not worthy to try. However, as the knights go their separate ways in search of the Grail, each knight is tempted in ways that enlighten him about his personal struggles and what he must overcome in order to succeed in the Grail Quest. Perceval, on his journey, meets an anchoress (his aunt) who explains the destiny of the Quest. She tells him that,

à la fin trois chevaliers auront, plus que tous les autres, la gloire de la Quête: deux seront vierges, et le troisième chaste. Des deux vierges, l'un sera le chevalier que vous cherchez, et vous l'autre; le troisième sera Borhort de Gaunes. Ces trois-là achèveront la Quête. (118)

She later tells Perceval,

jusqu'ici vous avez pris garde que votre virginité ne fût entamée, et jamais vous n'avez su ce que c'était qu'union charnelle. Vous avez bien fait; car si votre chair eût touchée par la corruption du péché, vous ne pourriez être principal compagnon de la Quête et vous ressembleriez à Lancelot, qui, par échauffement de sa chair

et mauvaise luxure, a failli depuis longtemps au but que les autres se proposent aujourd'hui. Gardez donc votre corps pur comme au jour où Notre Sire vous mit en chevalerie, afin d'arriver vierge et sans tache devant le Saint-Graal. Ce sera une des plus belles prouesses que chevalier ait jamais faites, car de tous ceux de la Table Ronde, il n'en est pas un qui n'ait souillé sa virginité, hors vous et le Bon Chevalier. (124)

Perceval's aunt's exaltation of virginity emphasizes that it is one of the determining factors for which Perceval and Galahad are the two knights who see the Grail. This discourse is also a foreshadowing of how Perceval will be tested in his faithfulness in the Grail Quest.

It seems that the virginity and chastity that are so valued by those that give the successful knights advice are two virtues that demand self-control and lead to a focus on the heavenly. In the Middle Ages, such early theologians as St. Augustine, St. Jerome and St. Anselm promoted the status of virginity, believing that virginity was a superior status to the wedded status of believers in the Church. This attitude towards virginity seems to have stemmed from the Apostle Paul's first letter to the Church of Corinth that

he who is unmarried cares for the things that belong to the Lord- how he may please the Lord. But he who is married

cares about the things of this world- how he may please his wife... The unmarried woman cares about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit.

(NKJV 1 Cor. 7.32-34)

Virginity seems to have been valued above the married status because a virgin was seen as a spouse of Christ, holy and free from worldly ties and preoccupation. A married person, however, defiled his- or herself through sexual contact and preoccupation with a worldly co-being.

In following Perceval's quest, we see that his temptation is such that it attacks his status of virginity. He, like Christ in the desert (hungry, and tempted with food), is tempted by a woman. Perceval is led on so that he gets into the bed, but comes to his senses when he sees the shield with the cross. He remembers his celestial duty by seeing the symbol of Christ's "pouring out his blood of Redemption"- the Cross. Perceval has persevered and is thus stronger as a result. The embodiment of a faithful follower, Perceval reminds the reader of Peter in the Bible, because of his pursuit of and fidelity to his friend Galahad who resembles Christ.

Perceval often acts impulsively and over-emotionally, such as when his horse is killed beneath him and he panics because he will be held back from pursuing Galahad. Matarasso observes that "Perceval's is an emotional nature, but his enthusiasms and affections are often ill-

regulated" (155). Perceval lacks the virtues of temperance, fortitude and prudence, which he eventually acquires through the temptation that he successfully overcomes. Albert Pauphilet explains that Perceval "est un type de ceux qui se justifient par la foi" (133). On the contrary, "Bors, unlike Perceval, has prudence in plenty. He conducts himself with circumspection in every situation... Temperance comes natural to him" (Matarasso 155). Bors is an intellectualizer who seems to take advice and implement it as some of the steps necessary for success. Pauphilet writes that Bors "est de ceux qui se justifient par les oeuvres" (133). When Bors is in a hermitage he meets a priest and asks him "de me conseiller comme un père conseille son fils, c'est-à-dire le pécheur qui se confesse à lui... Conseillez-moi donc au profit de mon âme et pour l'honneur de la chevalier" (201).

Bors seems to be works-oriented, yet at the same time, understands the religious aspect of his chivalrous duties and holds them in balance with the redemptive status of his soul. In each situation, he seems to focus mostly on what he should "do." He decides to eat only bread and water, he chooses to sleep on a hard floor instead of a bed that was prepared for him. When Bors is tempted, he is tempted in a way, again, that fits his character, his strengths and weaknesses. Among the various temptations, he is faced with the dilemma of choosing to

save his brother, Lionel (an ambivalent knight), or save the damsel (and her virginity) in distress. This challenge is, to him, a logic problem (suitable for his virtue of prudence/discernment). He must choose between saving a family member and saving the maiden whose virginity (hence a “holy” status) is in danger. After he chooses to save the maiden, he is accosted by his angry brother. Bors meets with a holy man who interprets his temptations and visions and explains that he did the right thing by saving the damsel. The monk says that “si elle eût perdu son pucelage par péché, Notre Sire en eût été affligé, parce que tous deux auraient été damnés et perdus de corps et d’âme par mort subite. Vous l’avez empêché, aussi doit-on vous tenir pour bon et loyal sergent de Jésus-Christ.” (221) It is obvious that Bors’s dilemma is meant as an allegoric test of choosing between two difficult situations. This “catch-22” situation seems to be a supernatural concoction testing a knight’s ability to discern the more worthy mission. By supernatural, I mean to imply that Bors is in the middle of spiritual warfare, thus making it almost unbearable and impossible for a human to correctly choose the worthy mission.

The ability to reorient one’s thoughts parallels the teachings of Jesus dealing with a reversal of natural tendencies and order. Jesus tells his confused disciples that the “first shall be last, and the last shall be

first" (Mark 10.31). Many times in the text, knights are faced with a situation purposely "ill-equipped" so that they may learn what they must do in order to acquire the virtues and abilities they lack. This reorientation is part of the presentation of the "new" chivalry. Chivalry, in this text, is no longer the battling crusade of bad knights against good knights, but of knights vying individually for their own souls' status. This redemptive chivalry exists on another plane where the receptive knights must function and lead others to knowledge of such a new chivalric ideal. Obviously, both Bors and Perceval succeed in such tests because they, along with Galahad, advance to the final stage of the ultimate adventure.

Galahad's elusive chivalric exploits and incessant comparisons to Christ create diverse interpretations about his redemptive role in this text. Galahad first appears as Lancelot arrives at King Pellès' castle to knight the young boy. From this minor introduction, the evidence of Galahad's foreordained role as savior-knight becomes apparent. Soon after Galahad is knighted, the author refers to the Siège Perilleux, the sword in the stone in the river, and the end of the Grail Adventures, all of which will be mastered by Galahad. The prophecies about Galahad arise in such forms as the inscriptions on the Siège Perilleux which reads: "QUATRE CENT ET CINQUANTE-QUATRE ANS SONT

ACCOMPLIS DEPUIS LA PASSION DE JÉSUS-CHRIST; ET AU
 JOUR DE LA PENTECÔTE CE SIÈGE DOIT TROUVER SON
 MAÎTRE” (54). However, the inscription on the sword informs the
 knights that “NUL JAMAIS NE M’ÔTERA D’ICI, SINON CELUI AU
 CÔTÉ DUQUEL JE DOIS PENDRE. ET CELUI-LA SERA LE
 MEILLEUR CHEVALIER DU MONDE” (55). This is the point where
 the allusions made in the Lancelot become reality.

Titles for Galahad include the “Chosen,” the “Desired,” and the
 “Good” knight, resembling in some ways the titles describing Christ
 (Savior, Redeemer, Deliverer, Good Shepherd, etc.). The prophecies
 leading up to the coming of Galahad are fulfilled in his claim upon the
 Siège Perilleux. The inscription on the seat reads: “C’EST ICI LE
 SIÈGE DE GALAAD” (57). As those who believed witnessed the
 fulfillment of the prophecies in Galahad’s claim, “la joie fût grande; on
 fit honneur au chevalier, pensant que c’était celui qui devait accomplir
 les mystères du Saint-Graal, ainsi qu’on pouvait le connaître par
 l’épreuve du Siège” (58), the existence of the “foreordained one” also
 becomes reality. Galahad’s coming (which illustrates the transition to
 the “new” chivalry) and the end of the Grail Adventures are shown to be
 one and the same:

Cette Quête n'est point quête de choses terrestre, mais doit être la recherche des grands secrets de Notre Seigneur et des mystères que le Haut Maître montrera ouvertement au bienheureux chevalier qu'il a élu pour son sergent entre les autres chevaliers terriens; il lui découvrira les merveilles du Saint-Graal et lui fera voir ce que coeur mortel ne pourrait penser, ni langue d'homme terrestre prononcer. (67)

Galahad's character and actions throughout the text parallel Christ's acts in the Bible. At a boy's tearful and humble request, Galahad "en a grand'pitié,...et consent" (83). Galahad's act echoes the many passages of the Bible that say that Christ "was deeply moved" or "moved to compassion." Galahad, like Christ, calms the waters of the spring in the Forêt Perilleuse, and heals a paralytic at the gate of a castle. Even the Devil acknowledges that Galahad, like Christ, is the "Chosen One": "Ha! Galaad, sainte créature, je te vois si entouré d'anges que je ne puis rien contre toi. Je t'abandonne la place" (84). These striking Christ-like parallels serve mostly to perpetuate Galahad's status as the chosen knight of prophecy, but it is his inherent virtues that earn him the privilege of seeing the secrets of the Grail, "ce que coeur mortel ne pourrait penser, ni langue d'homme terrestre prononcer" (67). Galahad's virtues are the virtues of Christ: virginity, humility, long-

suffering, rectitude, charity, compassion, prudence, temperance, faith, hope and mercy.

Although Galahad is repeatedly represented as a Christ-like Savior, he is never portrayed as a deity or the Son of God. A holy man clarifies the comparison of Galahad and Christ:

Notre Sire vous a élu parmi tous les autres chevaliers pour aller en pays étranger triompher des plus dures aventures et faire connaître au monde quelles en étaient les raisons. C'est pourquoi, par la semblance sinon par la grandeur, on doit comparer votre venue à celle du Christ. (85)

Galahad possesses the virtues of Christ in his humanity, yet is a knight who performs chivalric tasks and battles to save others both physically and spiritually. Our description of religious chivalry culminates with and is defined by Galahad. He is at the same time knight and Redeemer. He, like Christ, came for a foreordained reason and does not separate chivalry into an earthly category and spiritual knowledge into another category: to Galahad the two are one. Unlike Lancelot, whose allegiance and devotion were solely to the "religion of love" for Guinevere (any good done for others is a coincidental by-product), Galahad knows his purpose for coming and he stays focused on the Quest, discovering the secrets of the Grail and leading others into

redemption and spiritual enlightenment. Galahad's "Christ-likeness" is not a coincidence, but an allegorical technique to emphasize Galahad's redemptive mission to the medieval reader. These are the virtues that bring Galahad to the forefront of chivalry. Since Galahad possesses these virtues naturally, he henceforth stands between the deity of Christ and the fallen or imperfect status of man.

The virtues mentioned are those which will lead a knight to his "success" in the text. The success in this text is multi-leveled. Lancelot's redemption is successful, as are both Perceval's and Bors's successes in seeing the Grail and Galahad's viewing of its secrets. The virtues of this romance are the conduit through which certain knights can follow Galahad into the "chevalerie celestielle" of the new chivalric realm. It would be a matter of deduction to see that since the other knights did not possess all of the virtues, they were excluded from seeing the Holy Grail. Since Perceval and Bors (Perceval a virgin and Bors chaste) succeed in the Grail Quest and Galahad, a virgin who possesses all virtues, succeeds in seeing the ultimate secrets of the Grail, it seems logical to deduce that virginity of body and mind is the determining factor for the success of a Grail knight. "La virginité du corps, signe de la parfaite pureté de l'âme, est dans la Queste la vertu par excellence, la condition nécessaire, notamment, pour mener à bien

les aventures du Graal” (Baumgartner 149). However, in reinterpreting the text from its beginning and heeding the advice given to the knights by the holy men, it seems that Galahad represents allegorically a symbol of the best Christian (a status that every Christian in the Middle Ages was required to live up to). Redemption and chivalry’s redemptive mission are significant because of the Grail Quest and the contents of the Grail.

Earthly chivalry has now been replaced by spiritual chivalry. Lancelot is no longer the best knight in the world because Galahad has come to replace him and lead others into spiritual chivalric redemption. Galahad is simultaneously the best knight in the world and Savior figure. Galahad’s replacement of Lancelot as the best knight emphasizes the ideal of the new chivalry. Lancelot was the best knight according to worldly codes and ideals. He had prowess and honor in the world’s perspective, but his chivalric exploits were not glorifying to God, nor were they accomplished with a higher intent. Galahad’s chivalric exploits direct all focus on the higher realm of chivalry. Lancelot’s Savior status referred to humanity’s physical salvation, but Galahad’s Savior status refers to humanity’s spiritual Salvation.

After discussing the knights, their successes, failures and quests, it is now appropriate to analyze the purpose of their quest: the Holy Grail.

As has already been discussed in Chapter 3, theories and hypotheses surrounding the Grail, its meaning and functions are multitudinous. Many scholars have discussed the “grace-giving” quality of the Grail in this text. I, too, will explain my interpretation of the Grail’s grace-giving function. Other scholars have concentrated more on its liturgical representation (i.e. allusions to the Biblical doctrines about Pentecost, the Host and Christ’s Passion). In avoiding a theoretical study of liturgical history and doctrine, I will show that there seems to be a *mélange* of these themes in La Quête du Graal used in such a way as to evoke powerful religious emotions from the “allegorically minded” medieval society (i.e. medieval readers). Biblical images were an obvious and effective manner by which authors of the Middle Ages could influence an audience. By profiting from Biblical myths and legends about Joseph of Arimathea’s role in Christ’s final days, authors could join mystical legend about the Grail history and societal religious beliefs together into one influential romance. The author’s “persuasion” in this text seems to focus mostly on the “grace” aspect of the Grail’s functions. Gilson argues that “le Graal, c’est la grâce du Saint-Esprit, source inépuisable et délicieuse à laquelle s’abreuve l’âme chrétienne” (324) and “un don de Dieu” (326). Gilson believes that the grace of the Grail is the ultimate reward of the quest and that the quest itself is the

process through which the knights' hearts change. "En ce monde, la vue de Dieu est impossible; le mystique ne peut donc y atteindre Dieu que par l'amour et le sentiment, non par l'intelligence" (Gilson 345).

Gilson's beliefs echo Jesus's counsel that one must become like a child in order to truly believe.

Knights like Gawain, blind to spiritual things, seem lost in the visible aspects of the world, trying to intellectualize and follow what they know and can see. The successful knights, in particular Galahad, lead the spiritual ideal of believing in what they cannot see and the simplicity of blind faith (l'amour et le sentiment, non... l'intelligence).

W.E.M.C. Hamilton argues that La Quête is "une figure de la vie de l'âme à la recherche de Dieu et l'effort des hommes de bonne volonté vers la connaissance de Dieu, car le but de la Queste n'est pas de conquérir quelque chose, mais de voir plus clairement le Graal" (98) and that "pour les hommes de bonne volonté le monde devient clair et Dieu intelligible: l'effort austère concilie à l'homme la miséricorde divine et conduit à la connaissance qui est la récompense suprême" (98). For Hamilton, the quest is the goal of good men (knights) whose intentions are to follow the spiritual knowledge of God which emanates from the Grail and that the grace becomes a by-product of this pursuit. The assertion that only the good knights seek the Grail's secrets and that the

grace therein becomes the reward appears to be contradictory to Scripture. It seems evident in Biblical doctrine that God's grace is given freely and unconditionally to all and that its function is forgiveness and regeneration. In a letter to the Ephesians, the Apostle Paul states "For it is by grace you have been saved through faith - and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God" (Eph. 2.8, emphasis mine). How can it be that only the good knights receive grace as a reward for seeking spiritual knowledge and therefore God? Is it not the bad knights that need grace also? It is now explicit (because of the Apostle Paul's explanation of salvation, above) that grace is accessible to all, if he or she is willing to accept it as the gift that God offers. Lancelot received forgiveness and grace in his acts of confession and repentance. Galahad, a sinless knight, receives only a privilege by being allowed to look at the secrets inside the Grail. Thus, it seems that the process of the quest is what is important in the transition of a knight into the spiritual realm and not the ultimate goal, which only the three-elect were allowed to witness. A knight's individual pursuit for redemption seems to be what is important in this text. The varying levels of spiritual acceptance and redemption by the knights are important because individual and personal spirituality arise through the author's portrayal of each knight's spiritual acceptance.

In The Redemption of Chivalry, Matarasso argues that Lancelot is portrayed as an Adam-figure in this text. I agree with this view, and I think that an important key of the text lies within this illustration. Lancelot, like Adam, lived and acted sinfully before the coming of and redeeming works of Galahad (Christ). Galahad's redemptive chivalric works (like Christ's) have a retroactive quality that works to save those who came before and after the Savior. Galahad's redemptive works do not erase Lancelot's faults and fallen state, but they allow him to repent and enter by grace into a redeemed state; much like the Christian beliefs of Christ's sacrifice on the cross and God's grace allow sinners to enter heaven. Therefore, it seems not so much the quest itself that brings spiritual achievement but the act of confessing and of a sincere repentance. The holy men's advice to Lancelot seem to be where "the" way lies:

nul ne peut venir à son Créateur sinon par la porte de netteté, qui est la confession; car nul ne peut être purifié et nettoyé si ne le visite la vraie confession, qui chasse l'Ennemi. Lorsqu'un chevalier, ou un homme, quel qu'il soit, pèche mortellement, il reçoit l'Ennemi, il le mange et désormais ne l'empêchera plus d'être toujours en lui... s'il va à confesse, il le vomit, le rejette de son corps, et y héberge un autre hôte, qui lui fait honneur; c'est

Jésus-Christ, qui a prêté longtemps à la chevalerie terrienne la nourriture du corps; mais maintenant il se montre plus généreux et plus doux, puisqu'il offre aux chevaliers la nourriture du Saint-Graal, qui repaît l'âme en même temps qu'elle soutient le corps... Mais, de même que la nourriture terrestre s'est changée en céleste, il convient que ceux qui jusqu'ici furent terriens, c'est-à-dire pécheurs, deviennent célestes en abandonnant leur souillure pour venir à confession et repentance. Qu'ils se fassent chevaliers de Jésus-Christ... lorsqu'il vainquit sur la Croix où il souffrit la mort pour ôter ses chevaliers de la mort d'enfer et du servage où ils étaient. C'est par cette porte de la confession, qui seule mène à Jésus-Christ, qu'il faut entrer dans la Quête. (199-200)

In defending her view that this text glorifies chivalry by using Christian themes, Emmanuèle Baumgartner writes in L'Arbre et le Pain that La Queste is a "texte allégorique et mystique, qui n'emprunterait à la fiction arthurienne et à la légende du Graal qu'un transparent déguisement, ou réécriture concertée du mythe chrétien, à l'usage exclusif de la chevalerie" (45). Baumgartner continues her argument in stating that

La Queste... redéfinit la mission terrestre de la chevalerie, reproduisant toutes les figures possibles, l'errance de Gauvain, la

persévérance de Lancelot, de Bohort et de Perceval, la marche triomphale de Galahad, et lui donnant les moyens de mener à bien cette mission: l'apprentissage douloureux et difficile de la prouesse spirituelle, seule capable de la vivifier et de lui assurer la victoire. (148)

In her introduction to The Quest of the Holy Grail, Matarasso argues that in writing La Queste, the “author did not write a single paragraph for the pleasure of story-telling... it is a guide to the spiritual life aimed at the court rather than the cloister” (9). She goes on to explain that “the story of the Holy Grail is to be seen as a renewal of the Covenant,... the redemption of chivalry through the life and death of Galahad, the perfect knight” (37). A knight’s individual spiritual status is of utmost importance in this quest. The new chivalric representation of the quest itself is not the end-all, accomplishment or reward, it is a motivation of sorts, to urge these knights into their own personal salvation.

CONCLUSION

Throughout this thesis, I have shown how chivalry's allegorical representation in Old French Arthurian romance underwent a transformation between the 12th- and 13th-century works. This transformation between the 12th and 13th centuries seems to occur as a result of increasingly spiritual imagery associated with the chivalric representations of each text.

In Chrétien de Troyes's Le Chevalier de la Charrette, the religious imagery centered around Lancelot's paradoxical "Redeemer-redeemed" representation. Lancelot, in the beginning of the text, exhibits Savior-like qualities that parallels with those of Christ. However, his motivations, clearly sinful, conflict with his Christ-like comparison. The rift between his "Redeemer" and "redeemed" status grows wider and becomes more apparent as one considers the Vulgate Lancelot and compares Lancelot's portrayal in the two works. In Lancelot, the hero appears, once again, as a Savior. Yet allusions to a new chivalry and a new chivalric representative arise. The coming of Galahad marks a shift from "worldly-based" action to an increasingly spiritual chivalry. In Chrétien's Le Conte du Graal, Perceval and Gauvain epitomize opposite chivalric extremes. Gauvain represents worldly "vaine gloire" chivalry,

whose deeds serve no moral or higher purpose. Perceval represents the spiritual chivalry whose sincere intentions will ultimately receive an eternal reward and salvation, which is represented by the Grail. La Quête du Graal integrates the story-lines from each of the four texts studied and creates an influential allegory. This final text reveals the ultimate goal, the Grail, and the fulfillment of each knight's individual spiritual end.

Over the course of the four texts, the transformation becomes more striking. The "profane" 12th-century texts have evolved into the "spiritualized" texts of the 13th century⁷. Although I cannot prove that society influenced the writers of these romances in such a way that their romances reflect the religious beliefs of the time, it seems natural that society's influence and contemporary beliefs determined many of the religious images that emerge from the romances.⁸ For example, the focus in Chrétien's texts changes from La Charrette (an early romance) to Le Conte (his last). Thus, it seems plausible that society's evolving attitudes, possibly even Chrétien's own changing attitudes, towards literature and Christianity (i.e., religion and the Church) influenced the content, focus and goals of Chrétien's works. The same shift occurs between the Vulgate Lancelot and La Quête du Graal: the values

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⁷ For further discussion of the profane and the spiritual see, Jean Frappier Chrétien de Troyes trans. Raymond J. Cormier (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1982).

⁸ For analysis of the role of societal influence on these texts, see Brigitte Cazelles.

demonstrated through chivalric exploits and knightly intent transform from worldly-based action to spiritually-focused action. Consequently, it seems that both Chrétien and the authors of the Vulgate works succeeded in influencing and profitted from the impact of such religiosity on their audiences and society. Changes in societal beliefs and individual spirituality seem to coincide with the reasons for which the authors of the time used religious imagery in their texts.⁹ As I have already stated, the use of religious imagery may have had a major impact on the readers of romances at the time and I believe that there is a positive correlation between both a rise in curiosity (i.e. literacy) and the author's use of religious imagery. For example, it seems that the rise in the use of religious imagery in literature motivated readers to seek out the source of such imagery. This curiosity may have been a contributing factor to an increase in individual worship. It would be quite interesting to investigate the historical and sociological effects that the literary realm had on contemporary society and how the author's presence in his society influenced the images that appear in his works.

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⁹ Rosalind Brooke, Popular Religion in the Middle Ages (London: Thames and Hudson, 1984).

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