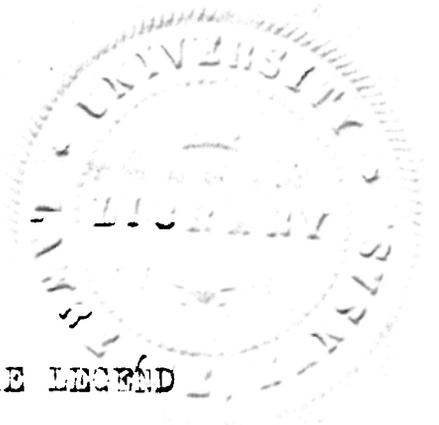


Ecclesiastical Influence on the  
Legend of the Holy Grail

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ECCLESIASTICAL INFLUENCE ON THE LEGEND  
OF THE HOLY GRAIL.

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It is now generally recognized by scholars that in the Legend of the Holy Grail, as well as in the branches of the Arthurian Legend proper to which it has become joined, there are present the evidences of four distinct influences, those of mythology, history, chivalry, and the Christian religion.<sup>1</sup> The influence of the last two is most apparent of all, and that of the Christian religion so manifest, perhaps, as to seem to demand no definite study; yet, if asked to state clearly the ecclesiastical thought present in the Legend and to point out the reasons for its presence, few readers would be able to give anything like a full and accurate reply.

In order to separate clearly the influence of Christian religious thought from other influences that played prominent parts in the development of the Legend, it is necessary to recall the differences that exist between the Grail story in its latest and best known forms and in its earlier and less familiar guise. The two earliest extant versions of the Grail Legend are

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1. For a discussion of the attitude of modern scholars on the subject, see Howard Maynadier, The Arthur of the English Poets, pp. 6 ff., 106 ff.

Chrétien de Troyes' Perceval le Gallois ou le Conte du Graal, written probably about 1175 and left uncompleted by its author, and Peredur the Son of Evrawc, composed undoubtedly in the twelfth century but existing only in the fourteenth-century manuscript translated by Lady Charlotte Guest under the title of the Mabinogion.

The two stories, based on the same or similar source material, coincide in telling the adventures of <sup>a</sup>youth, Perceval, or Peredur, who has been brought up by his widowed mother intentionally outside the world of chivalry. Contrary to the wishes of his mother, the lad leaves home, in time becomes a great knight, and achieves numerous adventures in behalf of wronged or oppressed ladies, to whose attractions, moreover, he is exceedingly susceptible. In Chrétien's story, he remains for some time in Blanchefleur's castle as her lover.<sup>2</sup> In Peredur, he "was entertained by the Empress fourteen years, as the story relates."<sup>3</sup> In these and in other respects, his character is that of the typical worldly knight.

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2. Ch. Potvin, editor, Perceval le Gallois ou le Conte Graal, Vol. III, pp. 45 ff.

3. Lady Charlotte Guest, translator, Peredur the Son of Evrawc, in The Mabinogion, Everyman's Library, p. 209.

Certain incidents in the knight's career demand special attention, in view of the later development of the Legend. In Peredur, he visits the court of the lame king, his uncle, where he sees wonders, described thus in the story:<sup>4</sup>

"And he beheld two youths enter the hall, and proceed up to the chamber, bearing a spear of mighty size, with three streams of blood flowing from the point to the ground. And when all the company saw this, they began wailing and lamenting. But for all that, the man did not break off his discourse with Peredur. And as he did not tell Peredur the meaning of what he saw, he forebore to ask him concerning it. And when the clamour had a little subsided, behold two maidens entered, with a large salver between them, in which was a man's head, surrounded by a profusion of blood. And thereupon the company of the court made so great an outcry, that it was irksome to be in the same hall with them. But at length they were silent."

The head, it develops at the end of the story,<sup>5</sup> was that of Perceval's cousin, who had been slain by the sorceresses of Gloucester. These women, moreover, had caused the lameness of the aged king, Peredur's uncle. The lance remains unexplained in the story.

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4. Lady Charlotte Guest, translator, op. cit., p.185.

5. Lady Charlotte Guest, translator, op. cit., p. 219.

In Chrétien's Perceval,<sup>6</sup> the knight likewise visits the castle of the lame lord, who is here a fisherman, and Perceval's cousin instead of his uncle. There appears, as in the Celtic story, a bleeding lance, but, in addition,<sup>are seen</sup> a sword, golden candlesticks, and a light-giving grail. As in Peredur, the knight asks no questions. This fact, he later finds out, is to cause great woe to the castle and its surroundings. He discovers, moreover, that his cousin is lame because of having been wounded by a dart, and on account of his lameness is unable to participate in any sport but fishing. The sword, the spear, and the candlesticks remain vague, perhaps because the author failed to complete his story; but the grail is a holy vessel containing a wafer, which for twenty years has fed the father of the fisherman.<sup>7</sup>

To any reader familiar with the later Legend, even as presented in modern poetry, most of the larger differences between it and the stories just summarized will be perfectly apparent. It should be remembered, however, that to late versions of the great Legend proper there is attached a long history of the Grail, of which Joseph of Arimathea is the personal hero. This addition,  
6. Ch. Potvin, Editor, op. cit.

7. For further details, the work itself, heretofore referred to, should be consulted, or else the excellent summary in Howard Maynadier, The Arthur of the English Poets, pp. 106-112.

as well as less formal additions that were made to the Legend, is in itself a general example of the attachment of religious significance to the story, and contains, as will be observed later, numerous specific details which make ecclesiasticism dominant in the Legend. These changes, which may best be observed in their full fruition in a few relatively late versions of the Legend, and most conspicuously in the late Grail history, Les-toire del Saint Graal, often known as Le Grand Saint Graal, may be divided into several groups, each characteristic, as will be carefully noted, of the ecclesiastical life of the time; namely, for the most part, the thirteenth century.

In the first place, there is found in these later versions of the Legend a direct association with Christ, remarkably different from the more or less perfunctory invocations common in mediaeval stories. In the very opening of the Perlesvaus (Perceval), a prose romance of the early thirteenth century, there is noticeable a definite, unconventional ecclesiastical tone:<sup>8</sup>

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8. Ch. Potvin, editor, op. cit., Volume I, Le Roman en Prose, p. 1. This prose romance has been accurately translated into English by Dr. Sebastian Evans under the title of The High History of the Holy Graal, from which some extracts are subsequently made in this paper.

"Oiez l'estoire du seintime veissel que l'en apele Graal, en quoi li precieus sanc au Sauveor fu recéuz au jor qu'il fu mis an croiz et crucefiez pour le sien peuple racheter des poignes d'anfer. Josephus le mist an remanbrance par l'anoncion de la voiz d'un ange, por ce que la vérité fust seue par son escript de bons chevaliers et de bons preudesommes, conmant il voudront souffrir poigne et traveillier de la loi Jhesucrist avancer, que il vost renouveler par sa mort et par son crucefiemant."

Aside from the marked ecclesiastical tone characteristic of this introduction, it will be noticed that inspiration is claimed for the story: Joseph is declared to have written it "par l'anoncion de la voiz d'un ange."

Each of the "branches," or parts, of this story, moreover, that deal specifically with the Holy Grail, begins with the characteristic ecclesiastical invocation, "el nom du pere et du fil et du seint esperit." To the branches which deal chiefly with secular adventures, the invocation is not prefixed.

In Lestoire del St. Graal, which, as has been suggested, recounts the history of the Grail previous to the time of the quest of the vessel, the connection of Christ with the Legend is much more boldly asserted. He is said actually to have written the history of the Grail, this being one of the only three things he ever wrote, the other two of which were the Lord's Prayer

and the judgment of the adulteress written in the sand. To the scribe Christ appears, according to the account, and gives the history, which the scribe, being a priest, locks up in the place where the Corpus Domini is kept.<sup>10</sup> The story states further that the Grail itself was returned to Joseph of Arimathea by Christ personally, after Joseph had lost possession of it for a time.<sup>11</sup>

The second phase of ecclesiastical influence that presents itself in the Legend is the presence of a large amount of Christian symbolism, part of it bestowed upon objects originally pagan, part without pagan associations. To any reader of early Church history, the bestowal of Christian signification upon pagan customs and ceremonies is thoroughly familiar, the most conspicuous example, perhaps, being evident in the retention of the Anglo-Saxon pagan term, "Easter."

The origin of the Grail itself, unquestionably an example of this superimposing of Christian symbolism, has been extensively treated by scholars, and a brief summary will be sufficient here. Magic cauldrons,<sup>12</sup>

possessing the power of restoring the dead to life or

10. H. Oskar Sommer, *The Vulgate Version of the Arthurian Romances*, editor, ~~op. cit.~~, Volume I, pp. 5, 8.

11. H. Oskar Sommer, editor, op. cit., Volume I, pp. 14.

12. John Rhys, *Studies in the Arthurian Legend*, chapter

13. Howard Maynadier, op. cit., pp. 121-129.

of satisfying the desires of man, are a part of Celtic mythology. The Grail which appears in Chretien's Perceval had merely the power to sustain by means of food--one of the attributes of the mythological cauldrons--though both it and the person whom it feeds are in an indefinite way regarded as holy. One of the magic vessels mentioned belonged, according to legend, to a god of the underworld named Bran. According to legend likewise, there was a missionary-king of Britain of the same name. The two characters early became confused, and with the introduction of Christianity as a motif into the Perceval story, the missionary Bran--with his name Gallicized to "Bron" or "Brons"--was made keeper, not of a magic cauldron or of a grail, but of what had become the Grail, "du seintime veissel.....en quoi li precieus sanc au Sauvéor fu receúz,"<sup>13</sup> and mystic symbol of the Holy Communion. Bron, too is classified as a brother-in-law of Joseph of Arimathea.

The exact description of the Grail itself varies in different treatments of the Legend, which fact does not, however, affect the symbolism of the object. It is by some romancers regarded as the dish from which Christ ate the Passover lamb with his apostles on Sher-Thursday, or Mandy Thursday;<sup>14</sup> by others, as the chalice in

13. Ch. Potvin, editor, op. cit., Volume I, p. 1.

14. Sir Thomas Malory, Le Morte D'Arthur, Book XVII, chapter 20.

Which was placed the wine for the institution of the Holy Supper on the same night.<sup>15</sup> While the second of these is the more pronouncedly ecclesiastical, the eating of the lamb would at once suggest to the medieval mind Christ's body in the Blessed Sacrament, for which the Grail stands. This is apparent in the hymn, Agnus Dei, regularly sung after the consecration of the elements at Mass, and <sup>in</sup> other Eucharistic hymns.

The Tuatha de Danann of Irish fairy lore possessed, in addition to a magic vessel, a stone of fate,<sup>16</sup> a sword, and a spear, all of them talismans. A sword and a spear, as has been observed, have a place in Chrétien's Perceval. In late versions of the Legend, the spear is that with which the centurion pierced the side of Christ after the Crucifixion, while the sword is that which beheaded St. John the Baptist.

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15. This is the later conception, never quite thoroughly separated from its predecessor in the romances proper, and made familiar to modern readers in the poems of Hawker, Tennyson, Lowell, and others.

16. In this connection it may be worthy of note that in Wolfram von Eschenbach's Parzival, composed very early in the thirteenth century, the Grail is neither a cup nor a dish, but a mystical stone. Wolfram's version of the Legend, while presenting a great deal of practical ethical teaching, is not extensively affected by definite ecclesiastical influence, and so is not treated in this study.

Another example of the attachment of Christian symbolism to originally pagan objects is found in the incident of the Fisher King, which has been noted in connection with Chrétien's version of the Perceval story. In this account, the Fisher King is so called merely because he is lame and therefore must content himself with fishing as a recreation. He is the son of a pious old man who is mysteriously sustained by a magic grail. The tale of the Fisher King is postulated by Mr. Rhys<sup>17</sup> as having originated in the story of how Elphin got the baby Taliessin in a fish weir--a distinctly Celtic origin. In connection with the general fish motif, if such it may be called, and in the light of the later development of the story, attention should be paid to the observation of Miss Kempe, that "a fish with magic properties is a prominent feature in many Irish mythological tales."<sup>18</sup>

While even to the ecclesiastically-minded reader of today the fish is not a highly suggestive symbol, it must be borne in mind that in the early ages and in

17. John Rhys, op. cit., pp. 316-317.

18. Dorothy Kempe, The Legend of the Holy Grail, its Sources, Character, and Development, Early English Text Society Publications, Extra Series, Volume XCV, p. xxi.

medieval times it stood for large and powerful concep-  
 tions.<sup>19</sup> Its most conspicuous place was as an ideo-

graph representing Christ, and also, as Tertullian  
 suggests in a familiar metaphor,<sup>20</sup> Christian people.

At the same time it typified the sacrament of Baptism,  
 and, most important of all in connection with the Legend  
 of the Holy Grail, Christ in the Holy Eucharist, this  
 being evidently derived from regarding the feeding of the  
 multitude with loaves and fishes as an antitype of the  
 institution of the Blessed Sacrament.

With all this mass of symbolism--and possibly  
 even more, which has been lost--it is not surprising that  
 the story of the Fisher King was given a definitely  
 ecclesiastical turn. No longer is the Fisher King a  
 wounded man who seeks recreation in the gentle sport of  
 angling. There is recounted, instead, a miracle in which

19. The matter is discussed at length by Mrs. Henry  
 Jenner in Christian Symbolism, pp. 4, 7, 33-35.

20. "But we, little fishes, after the example of  
 our <sup>great IXΘΥΣ</sup> Jesus Christ, are born in water, nor have we safety  
 in any other way than by permanently abiding in that  
 water." On Baptism, in The Writings of Quintus Sept.  
 Flor. Tertullianus, translated by Thelwall, Volume I,  
 pp. 231-232. Edinburgh, 1872.

21. H. Oskar Sommer, editor, op. cit., Volume I,  
 pp. 51-252. Eugene Hucher, editor, Le Saint-Graal ou Le  
 Joseph d'Arimatee, Volume III, p. 208.

all explained at length. The explanation for the most part follows the so-called "moral symbolism" which grew up largely from the ninth to the eleventh century, but introduces also the "typico-dogmatic" symbolism which was coming into use about the year 1200.<sup>25</sup> Examples of moral qualities symbolized by various vestments are chastity, virginity, humility, suffering, righteousness, charity, vengeance, and mercy. The other type of symbolism is represented in the making of certain other vestments typical respectively of Holy Church, repentance, and penance. The familiarity with these points shown by the writer, his speedy adoption of a symbolism just beginning to come into vogue, and his evident interest in all these details, show the distinct ecclesiastical bent of the author, who, if one may draw inferences from his own statements, was a priest.

In the same work the symbolism reaches, in some cases, the point of allegory, carefully conceived and explained, and corresponding closely with the symbolism common in medieval ecclesiastical art and in liturgical use. An illustration of this is the handling of the ship in which are the spindles of King Solomon.<sup>26</sup> Sailing in the sea, which typifies the world, the ship represents

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25. For a discussion of these two types of symbolism, see Joseph Braun, Vestments, in The Catholic Encyclopedia, Volume XV, p.392.

26. H, Oskar Sommer, editor, op. cit., Volume I, pp. 139-141.

Holy Church, containing truth and faith. As faith in the individual is necessary before he may enter the ship, so confession and repentance are necessary to entrance into the Church, which keeps Christ's servants free from sin. The bed within the ship symbolizes three things: ~~The~~ Holy Table, on which the Holy Eucharist is offered; the cross of Christ; and the place where Christ rested after his crucifixion. The white spindle stands for Christ's virginity; the red, for Christ's love; the green, for Christ's patience. These three qualities, the romancer declares, enabled Christ to conquer death.

Another instance of somewhat elaborate allegory is found in the vision of Label, who sees a meadow flowering in the morning, but fading at night.<sup>27</sup> The meadow is taken as a type of the world, the fading flowers as symbolical of man's life, evidently following the statement of the psalm, "In the morning it is green, and groweth up: but in the evening it is cut down, dried up, and withered."<sup>28</sup> The qualities of chivalry, beauty, prowess, and courtesy, are, the romancer specifically points out, flowers that fade.

In characteristic mediaeval fashion, too, the Scriptures are elaborated by addition of detail and of specific symbolism. A striking example of this is the

27. H. Oskar Sommer, editor, op. cit., Volume I, pp. 144-146.

28. Psalm XC:6.

statement that Abel's death took place on a Friday.

It is thus taken as an antitype, such as writers of the time delighted in, of the Crucifixion.<sup>30</sup> This, one may easily conjecture, was elaborated from the Scriptural accounts of the death of Abel and of the Crucifixion, and from suggestions in the fifteenth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians.

Symbolism is evident in connection with the receptacle prepared by Joseph, according to the Legend, for the keeping the Holy Grail. Originally, this was doubtless suggested by the Hebrew Ark of the Covenant,<sup>31</sup> which was regarded as prefiguring the Church. The Grail

29. H. Oskar Sommer, editor, op. cit., Vo. I, p. 129.

30. That this is not an individualistic, but a more or less authoritative ecclesiastical interpretation, is shown by the following statement, made by John J. Tierney in The Catholic Encyclopedia (Volume I, p. 36) : "His (Abel's) pastoral life, his sacrifice, his holiness, his tragic death made him a striking type of our Divine Redeemer."

31. W. W. Skeat (Joseph of Aramathie, Early English Text Society Publications, Volume XLIV, Introduction, p. xlv) believes the Grail Ark may have been suggested by the Holy Sepulcher, the object of the Crusades that were being waged.

is by this time, however, clearly associated with the Blessed Sacrament, and what would be more natural than that it should be handled in the same manner? Force is given to an interpretation of this sort by a passage in the Middle English Joseph of Aramathie, where the receptacle is described as "luytel," and where the Grail is evidently regarded as ever containing the blood of Christ; the suggestion in this passage is, of course, of a portable pyx, such as a priest might use in carrying the Sacrament to the sick;

"Iosep, marke on þe tree; and make a luytel whucche,  
Forte do in þat ilke blod; þou berest aboute."<sup>32</sup>

Another example of ecclesiastical influence upon the Legend of the Holy Grail is the introduction of Christian miracles to an extent paralleled only in ecclesiastical history and biography of the time. Among these wonders are the miraculous use by St. Veronica of the handkerchief with which she wiped Christ's face on his way to Calvary;<sup>33</sup> the walking of the hermit Hermones on the water,<sup>34</sup> based evidently on the miracle of similar character recorded in the New Testament; and the restoration of the dead to life by Joseph of Arimathea.<sup>35</sup> More important examples, so far as pure ecclesiasticism is concerned, are found in exorcism by means

32. W. W. Skeat, editor, op. cit., p. 2.

33. H. Oskar Sommer, editor, op. cit., p. 16.

34. H. Oskar Sommer, editor, op. cit., Volume I, p. 193.

35. H. Oskar Sommer, editor, op. cit., Volume I, p. 255.

of holy water<sup>36</sup> and of the sign of the cross.<sup>37</sup> By the latter, not only are devils vanquished, but on at least one occasion memory is restored.<sup>38</sup> Holy water, as a purifier and an expeller of evil spirits is to be used, the Estoire dogmatically asserts, wherever the service of Christ is celebrated. Christ himself figures as explainer of the purification that occurs by this means.<sup>39</sup>

Probably the most striking evidence of ecclesiastical influence on the Legend, however, occurs in the constant emphasis upon scholastic thought and ideals and the presence of scholastic methods of reasoning. The mediaeval ideal of a happy death--such an ideal as is manifest in the devotion known as Bona Mors--is presented as the goal of earthly life. Galahad, "servant of Christ" and full ideal of the late Legend, prays for entrance into the celestial life while he is in the joy of beholding the Holy Grail.<sup>40</sup>

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36. H. Oskar Sommer, editor, op. cit., Vol. I p. 234.

37 H. Oskar Sommer, Editor, op. cit., Vol. I, p.105.

38 H. Oskar Sommer, editor, op. cit., Vol. I, p.97.

39.H. Oskar Sommer, editor, op. cit., Vol. I,p. 35.

40.W. W. Newell, op. cit., Volume II, p. 197. In connection with the ideal of happy death as presented in the Legend of the Holy Grail, the following is also worthy of attention: "'Sir,' saith the Knight, 'He that would go before the Saviour of the World ought of right to

Into one version of the Legend is introduced an allegory of happy death, presenting also the Virgin Mary as the advocate of God. King Arthur enters a chapel, where, lying in his vestments, a hermit is dying. The King "had a mind to abide there until that the good man should have passed away. He would fain have sate him down before the coffin, when a voice warned him right horribly to begone thence, for that it was desired to make a judgment within there, that might not be made so long as he were there. The King departed, that would willingly have remained there, and so returned back into the little house, and sate him down on a seat whereon the hermit wont to sit. And he heareth the strife and the noise begin again within the chapel, and the ones he heareth speaking high and the others low, and he knoweth well by the voices, that the ones are angels and the others devils. And he heareth that the devils are distraining on the hermit's soul, and that judgment will presently be given in their favor, whereof they make great joy. King Arthur is grieved in his heart when he heareth that the angels' voices are stilled. The King is so heavy, that no desire hath he neither to eat nor to drink. And while he sitteth thus, stooping his head apparel him as fairly as he may. I am by confession purged of all wickedness and of all the misdeeds that ever I have committed, and do repent me truly thereof, wherefore at this moment am I fain to die." Sebastian Evans, translator, The High History of the Holy Graal. Branch VII,

toward the ground, full of vexation and discontent, he heareth in the chapel the voice of a Lady that spake so sweet and clear, that no man in this earthly world, were his grief and heaviness never so sore, but and he had heard the sweet voice of her pleading would again have been in joy. She saith to the devils: 'Begone from hence, for no right have ye over the soul of this good man, whatsoever he may have done aforetime, for in my Son's service and mine own is he taken, and his penance hath he done in this hermitage of the sins that he hath done.' 'True, Lady,' say the devils, 'But longer had he served us than he hath served you and your Son. For forty years or more hath he been a murderer and robber in this forest, whereas in this hermitage but five years hath he been. And now you wish to thieve him from us.' 'I do not. No wish have I to take him from you by theft, for had he been taken in your service in such-wise as he hath been taken in mine, yours would he have been, all quit.' The devils go their way all discomfit and aggrieved; and the sweet Mother of our Lord God taketh the soul of the hermit, that was departed of his body, and so commendeth it to the angels and archangels that they make present thereof to Her dear Son in Paradise. And the angels take it and begin to sing for joy Te Deum Laudamus. And the Holy Lady leadeth them

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and goeth her way along with them."<sup>41</sup>

In characteristic fashion, Mary, as saint and perpetual virgin, is given a high devotional place in the Legend. It is carefully explained how the Virgin lost not her virginity in bearing Jesus.<sup>42</sup> Late developments of the cultus of the Virgin Mary are suggested in the statement that the prophets and holy men remained in hell until her birth, rather than, according to apocryphal gospel and legend, until the crucifixion of Christ and his visitation of the place of the departed.<sup>43</sup> Emphasis upon reverence to be paid her is seen in the following lines:

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41. Sebastian Evans, translator, op. cit., Branch I, chapter 5, pp. 9-10.

42. H. Oskar Sommer, editor, op. cit., Volume I, pp. 25-26, 28-29.

43. Compare the following two selections, one from Lestoire del Saint Graal, the other from the apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemus:

"par les roses qui chaioient del rosier & schh sechoient & anientisoient dois tu entendre les boines prophetes & les boines preudomes qui par le pechie dor premiere mere estoient trebuchiet en enfer si tost com il departoient du siecle. & tant demorerent en chele dolereuse prison que la uraie flor des fours vint el rosier ce est nostre dame sainte marte & fu bele

sour toutes dames & sor toutes puceles." H. Oskar Sommer, editor, op. cit., Volume I, p. 223.

"And the Lord stretched out His hand, and said, Come to me, all my saints who have my image and likeness. Do you, who have been condemned through the tree and the devil and death, now see the devil and death condemned through the tree. Immediately all the saints were brought together under the hand of the Lord. And the Lord, holding Adam by the right hand, said to him, Peace be to thee, with all thy children, my righteous ones! And Adam fell down at the knees of the Lord, and with tearful entreaty praying, said with a loud voice: I will extol Thee, O Lord; for Thou hast lifted me up, and hast not made my foes to rejoice over me. O Lord God, I cried unto Thee, and Thou hast healed me. O Lord, Thou hast brought out my soul from the powers below; Thou hast saved me from them that go down into the pit. Sing praises to the Lord, all His saints, and confess to the memory of His holiness; since there is anger in His indignation, and life in His goodwill. In like manner also all the saints of God, falling on their knees at the feet of the Lord, said with one voice: Thou hast come, O Redeemer of the world: as Thou hast foretold by the law and Thy prophets, so hast Thou fulfilled by Thy deeds. Thou hast redeemed the living by Thy cross; and by the death of the cross Thou hast come down to us, to rescue us from the powers below, and from death, by Thy

"This is the virgine, and thou wylt wete,  
 That thou worschedest Neuere 3te.  
 and wilt þou wyte why worschepen hire þou ne May?  
 For thou ne Art not ful waschen In Fay,  
 In the Swete flood."<sup>44</sup>

Characteristic mediaeval antitype is present in the treatment of the Mary theme. For example, the redemption of the world is thus explained:

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majesty. O Lord, as Thou hast set the title of Thy glory in heaven, and hast erected as the title of redemption Thy cross on earth, so, O Lord, set in Hades the sign of the victory of Thy cross, that death may no more have domin<sup>ion.</sup>~~ion~~/

"And the Lord, stretching forth his hand, made the sign of the cross upon Adam and upon all His saints; and holding Adam by the right hand, went up from the powers below: and all the saints followed Him.....

"And the Lord, holding the hand of Adam, delivered him to Michael the archangel: and all the saints followed Michael the archangel, and he led them all into the glorious grace of paradise." Alexander Walker, translator, The Gospel of Nicodemus, in Apocryphal Gospels, Acts, and Revelations, pp. 206, 207.

44. F. J. Furnivall, editor, Herry Lovelich [Lovelich] The History of the Holy Grail, Englisht. Early English Text Society Publications, Extra Series, Volume XXVIII, p 147.

"... be womman the world was brouht to nowhite;  
 and be A womman Restored schal it be;  
 wheche Signefiet be be blessed virgine Maree." 45

The familiar allegory of a flower typifying the Virgin Mary--the figure embodied in the title of "Mystical Rose" which gives the rosary its name--appears conspicuously in the Legend:

"Ore regards la uerite de la flor. car tu ne  
 uis onques flor ne is ausi qui ne defaillist ne que sa  
 biaute ne fust alee en petit de tans fors seulement la  
 flour qui est apelee uirge marie." 46

The glass of Doctor Sommer entitling a passage  
 in Lestoire du Saint Graal "The immaculate conception" 47  
 seems, however, to be based on a misapprehension. The  
 passage referred to reads as follows:

"En ceste maniere nacompli il pas humanite car  
 il ne fu pas concheus dome. mais par lombrement del  
 saint esperit qui descendi par loreille de la uirgine  
 dedens le glorieus vaissel de son cors & en icel se  
 herberga li fiex dieu & i uesqui si saintement que onques  
 la uirginite ni fu enfrainte ne al entrer ne al issir.  
 Mais ausi comme li rais du soleil lust parmi la cleire  
 uerriere sans mal metre le tot ensi issi li fiex dieu  
 del uentre a la pucele sans mal metre le pucelage a son  
 acoucement auindrent."

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45. F. J. Furnivall, editor, op. cit., Volume XXIV, p.371.

46. H. Oskar Sommer, editor, op. cit., Volume I, p. 146.

47. H. Oskar Sommer, editor, op. cit., Volume I, p. 25.

The testimony of this passage<sup>is</sup> merely to the common doctrine that the virginity of Mary was uninjured by the birth or conception of Jesus, with emphasis upon her purity in the comparison to a ray of the sun shining through clear glass. This is entirely different from the doctrine of the immaculate conception, which is, to quote from the Constitution Ineffabilis Deus contained in part in Frederick G. Holweck's article in The Catholic Encyclopedia,<sup>48</sup> that the Blessed Virgin Mary "in the first instant of her conception, by a singular privilege and grace granted by God, in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the human race, was preserved exempt from all stain of original sin." "The formal essence of original sin," Mr. Holweck goes on to say in explanation of the dogma, "was not removed from her soul, as it is removed from others by baptism; it was excluded, it never was in her soul." In the passage quoted from Lestoire du Saint Graal, there is no reference whatever to any conception except that of Jesus Christ, while the belief in the perpetual virginity of Mary and the belief in her personal freedom from actual sin, which were all but universal throughout the early centuries of the Church, are by no means the same thing as the dogma of her freedom from the taint of original sin, which is the only doctrinal view known as "the immaculate conception."

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48. The Catholic Encyclopedia, Volume VIII, pp.674-675.

One of the most conspicuous evidences of scholastic thought in the treatment of the Legend is found in the close and extended theological controversy which is reported. The argument is regularly between Christian clergy and unbelievers, the latter class being as technical in their philosophical ideas as any of the heretics with whom the thirteenth-century Church was endeavoring to deal. Indeed, the arguments brought forward by the unbelieving Saracens in the Legend are exactly those held by certain groups of heretics. As might be expected, the Western view that the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father and the Son, is dogmatically asserted.<sup>49</sup> Aside from this, the main argument centers in articles of the Athanasian Creed and doctrines deduced from it. One heretical argument, "that if Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are but one God, they cannot each be a perfect God, for if each by himself is a God, there must be three Gods,"<sup>50</sup> is refuted by a miracle. The ordinary method of argument, however, is similar to that found in mediaeval theological treatises, such as those of Anselm and Thomas Aquinas.

In sacramental matters, the scholastic point of view is even more evident. The high place given to the sacrament of penance, referred to loosely as "confession," is perhaps unprecedented in romance. In the exposition

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49. H. Oskar Sommer, editor, op. cit., Volume I, p. 25.

50. H. Oskar Sommer, editor, op. cit., Volume I, p. 42.

of the symbolism of the vestments proper to a bishop, the hat, or miter, is taken to represent confession, while its horns typify repentance and satisfaction, the compunctio cordis and satisfactio operis of Peter Lombard and other scholastic writers.<sup>52</sup> The explanation of the reason for the attachment of this symbolism to the miter is highly suggestive: "por ce que confession est la plus haute cose qui siot quele restore a. j. cop tous le damages & tous les pertes por ce est ele senefije par cest capel qui est li plus haus de tous les uestimens."

With this high view of penance, it is natural that in dealing with the Holy Eucharist the sacrificial side should be emphasized. The altar is "la sainte table ou li fiex dieu est cascun iour sacrefijes."<sup>53</sup>

In one version of the Legend, the Virgin offers her Child into the hands of a holy hermit at the reading of the Gospel at Mass.<sup>54</sup> In the same version, the secret character of the ceremonies of the Mass, which is kept in the Greek rite by the closing of the ikonostasis during the consecration and in some other rites by the priest's reciting part of the service <sup>almost</sup> silently, is

52. J. E. Ryland, translator, Neander's Lectures on the History of Christian Dogmas, Volume II, pp. 536-537.

53. H. Oskar Sommer, editor, op. cit., Volume I, p. 140.

54. Sebastian Evans, translator, op. cit., p. 12.

strongly emphasized.<sup>55</sup>

The belief in eternal salvation and eternal damnation due respectively to right and wrong use of the sacrament, which doctrine followed closely the belief in the necessity of the sacrament of penance as a precedent to communion, is thus stated "car se vous crees

uralement que ce scit ues salueres vous recheures par-sauicement darme & se vous ne le creees vos<sup>56</sup> recheures pardurable durable/dampnement a arme & a cors." A comparison of

a portion of this with the mediaeval hymn written for the festival of Corpus Christi will illustrate the close correspondence of versions of the Grail Legend with ecclesiastical formula:

"Bad and good the Feast are sharing:

O what diverse dooms preparing:

Endless death or endless life.

Life to these, to those damnation;

See how like participation

Is with unlike issues rife."<sup>57</sup>

55. "The Graal appeared at the sacring of the mass, in five several manners that noneought not to tell, for the secret things of the sacrament ought none to tell openly but he unto whom God hath given it." Sebastian Evans, translator, op. cit., page 268.

56. H. Oskar Sommer, editor, op. cit., Volume I, p. 41.

57. Manual of the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament, American Branch, p. 38.

In the case of the Grail itself, those "polluted with sin" were not fed by the holy vessel, which had retained from Celtic mythology its power of sustaining persons of holy life. Gawain, for example, is not fed because he lacks the qualities of humility and simplicity,<sup>58</sup> which were ranked high as moral virtues in the Middle Ages. This point is, to a certain degree, an example of the attachment of Christian symbolism to pagan ideas, for the Cauldron of the "head of Hades refused to cook for the coward."<sup>59</sup>

Still greater stress is laid upon the doctrines of transubstantiation and concomitance, conflict about which was raging at the time.<sup>60</sup> In 844 Paschasius Radvert had propounded the doctrine of transubstantiation; namely, that in the celebration of the Mass the elements, upon pronouncement of the words of consecration, ceased to be material bread and wine and became instead the material body and blood of Christ. In support of his theory Radbert alleged miracles of the Host transformed into a lamb.<sup>61</sup> The doctrine gradually gained ground, but at the same time aroused violent opposition; and, by the period when the Grail Legend was receiving its final form, Western Christianity was widely divided over the

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58. H. Oskar Sommer, editor, Le Livre de Lancelot del Lac, in The Vulgate Version of the Arthurian Romances, Volume IV, p. 348.

59. J. Rhûs, op. cit., p. 310.

60. J. E. Ryland, translator, op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 530-533.

61. C. F. Fisher, History of Christian Doctrine, pp. 207-208.

matter. The writers on the Grail subject were regularly advocates of transubstantiation, as were most of the schoolmen, and represented, in support of it, miracles not greatly differing from those described by Radbert. In the Queste del Saint Graal, there appears, at the elevation--itself closely connected in popular thought with the doctrine of transubstantiation--a form like that of a child, which descends and smites itself into the bread.<sup>62</sup> In one of the other romances, *Josephe*, celebrating Mass, discovers suddenly that he has in his hands nothing that resembles bread, but the body of a child.<sup>63</sup> On another occasion, there issues from the Grail one with bleeding hands and feet.<sup>64</sup>

At the same Mass at which the Virgin offered her child, as noted heretofore, King Arthur "looked toward the altar after the preface, and it seemed to him that the holy hermit held between his hands a man bleeding from His side and in His palms and in His feet, and crowned with thorns, and he seeth Him in His own figure. And when he had looked on Him so long and knoweth not what is become of Him, the King hath pity of Him in his heart of this that he had seen, and the tears of his heart came into his eyes. And he looketh toward the

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62. W. W. Newell, op. cit., Volume II, p. 194.

63. H. Oskar Sommer, editor, op. cit., Volume I, p. 40.

64. W. W. Newell, op. cit., Volume II, p. 194.

altar and thinketh he see the figure of the man, and seeth that it is changed into the shape of the Child that he had seen before."<sup>65</sup>

The doctrine of concomitance met in the twelfth century with even more opposition than did that of transubstantiation, for it involved, and was used as justification for, the withdrawal of the cup from the laity.<sup>66</sup>

As early as the end of the eleventh century Anselm declared "in utraque specie totum Christum sumi," and in the twelfth century he was followed by Peter Lombard with the belief "integrum Christum esse in altari sub<sup>67</sup> utraque specie."

At the time of the development of the ecclesiastical significance of the Grail Legend, early in the thirteenth century, controversy over the matter was widespread. So bitter<sup>67</sup> did the conflict become, and so ambitious were some advocates of the doctrine, that they did not hesitate to wrench the meaning of "crede... in sanctorum communionem"

65. Sebastian Evans, translator, op. cit., p. 2.

66. "The Schoolmen contributed their share also to make the withholding of the cup more general, since they developed the doctrine of the concomitantia corporis et sanguinis Christi; that is, the position, that in either of the two forms the other was contained. Although the Body and Blood, says Anselm, are taken separately, yet the whole Christ is received only once, and not twice."

J. E. Ryland, translator, op. cit., Volume II, pp 534-535.

in the Apostles' Creed, into:

"And so I trow <sup>1</sup>pat housel es  
both flesshe & blode."<sup>68</sup>

It is not surprising, therefore, that writers of the Grail story, believing in scholastic philosophy, should seek to justify the doctrine of concomitance by the very effective method of alleged miracle. Thus Josephe places the species of bread in his mouth at Mass, and finds it to be a complete body. "Quant il ot rendu graces a nostre signor," says the romancer, "si ouuri la bouce & le urant metre dedens. si regarda & uit que ce estoit uns cors entiers."<sup>69,</sup>

One of the most conspicuous mediaeval ecclesiastical features of the Legend is the emphasis laid upon celibacy. Originally, as was noted heretofore, the Legend contained no suggestion of this, the first hero of the Grail quest, Perceval, being a worldly knight. Late versions of the Legend, following the growth of asceticism and the discipline of clerical celibacy, give all the highest

67. The Lay Folks Mass Book, Early English Text Society Publications, Volume LXXI, p. 225

68. The Lay Folks Mass Book, p. 20.

69. H. Oskar Sommer, editor, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 40.

honors to men who remain virgins. Virginity, charity, and  
 patience are classed together.<sup>70</sup> While one version of the  
 story admits that in the time of Hippocrates all clerks  
 were married,<sup>71</sup> the authority of Christ is claimed for  
 enforced celibacy of bishops.<sup>72</sup> Joseph, of course, was  
 a celibate:

"that tho was unMaryed, so was his grace:

and the beste knyht he was be Est oþer West."<sup>73</sup>

One one occasion, Joseph asks the twelve sons of Bron, the  
 Grail-keeper, if they wish to marry. Eleven of them do,  
 but there is one who desires to remain single and serve  
 God and the Grail, which choice is highly pleasing to  
 Joseph.<sup>74</sup>

The introduction of the motif of celibacy natur-  
 ally required some changes in the character of the story.  
 Perceval could no longer ride over the land, making love  
 to every maiden he met, yet finally achieving the adventure

70. H. Oskar Sommer, editor, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 141.

71. H. Oskar Sommer, editor, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 180.

72. F. J. Furnivall, editor, op. cit., Vol. XXVIII, p. 85.

73. F. J. Furnivall, editor, op. cit., Vol. XXX, p. 326.

74. H. Oskar Sommer, editor, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 249.

of the Holy Grail. The character of Perceval must be changed, or he must be pushed out of the leading place in the Legend. One Welsh story, written apparently under ecclesiastical influence, does the former, making Peredur (Perceval) a celibate, but introducing also Galath(Galahad).<sup>75</sup> A complete change in the character of the hero of a well-known romance, necessitating numerous alterations in incident, is likely, however, to be somewhat difficult to popularize, while a story with a similar basis but otherwise largely new may readily supplant the old. Consequently, a new knight was in other versions made the hero--Galahad, altogether unknown in early versions of the Legend.<sup>76</sup> Galahad is the ideal of ascetic purity, celibate, little interested in the affairs of the world, predestined of God to achieve the great quest.

75. J. Rhys, op. cit., p.159.

76. The fact that Galahad ~~is~~<sup>was</sup> represented as the son of the popular romance hero Lancelot added to the popularity of the Galahad versions of the Legend. Lancelot's own possible qualifications had been destroyed "par le foiblece do ses rains" (H. Oskar Sommer, editor, Le Livre de Lancelot del Lac, op. cit., Volume V, p. 301.)

In addition to making celibacy one of the chief ideals of the Legend, the introduction of Galahad as hero changes entirely the character of the Grail quest, and changes it, too, in a direction exactly in accord with the ecclesiastical conceptions of the time. Originally the quest was for one person, Perceval, and the interest of the reader was centered in the adventures and fortunes of this one character. The introducer of Galahad--whoever the unknown romancer was--retained in the story Perceval and other well-known knights of the Round Table, probably for two reasons; first, these knights were already popular heroes with the public, and their retention would gain for the new story a measure of influence from the beginning; secondly, the quest was to be a holy one, which Galahad should achieve simply because he was the purest and most pious of knights, consequently there must be a background of other knights with whom the hero might be compared. In such a story, naturally, all the knights engaged in the one quest, which thus became general. Lancelot failed because of his relations with Guenevere. Gawain, as has been noted, lacked the virtues of humility and simplicity. Bors and Perceval, admirable in all respects except in their lack of celibacy, received high honor, but not the highest. The new knight, Galahad, the medieval ascetic, was alone fit to achieve the quest. What, then, was the

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theme of the Legend as finally fixed by ecclesiastical influence? Namely, this: that, in addition to the commanded moral virtues, the evangelical counsel of celibacy was necessary to full realization of the highest spiritual things. The Grail represented, typically, the Holy Eucharist, including the sacrificial side and the sacramental side, with full revelation of its meaning, on the one hand, and with thoroughly worthy preparation, on the other. To any devout Catholic of the time, the Holy Eucharist was the safeguard of eternal salvation, the basis of all prayer, the greatest of the sacraments administered to the Christian soul; the reception of the sacrament represented, in theory at least, the highest moment of existence on earth. In the Grail romance, Galahad reaches the highest appreciation of this; Galahad, alone of all the knights, is a celibate. To the medieval mind, the whole quest is simply an allegory of the full achievement of the kingdom of heaven. Aside from the regular virtues, what is necessary for the achievement? Celibacy. In a striking way was justified to the minds of the people the application of the Scriptural statement so loved by the ascetic: "These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. . . . And in their mouth was found no guile; for they are without fault before the throne of God." <sup>77</sup>

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77. Revelation XIV:4-5.

The matters heretofore noted indicate the extent and the effect of ecclesiastical influence on the Legend. A further interesting problem concerns the means by which current ecclesiastical opinion touched the story and as to the reasons for this contact. As an organization, the Church took no action with reference to the Legend; consequently, any statement as to what the Church thought about it, is conjecture. On the one hand, we have the statement of H. Oskar Sommer, editor of The Vulgate Version of the Arthurian Romances, that "whatever may have been the attitude of individual members of the Church toward the growth and development of the Arthurian romances, there is no reason to doubt that the Church officially looked upon them as harmless and with benevolent neutrality." <sup>78</sup> On the other hand, we find Arthur F. J. Remy speaking thus at the close of his article on The Holy Grail in The Catholic Encyclopedia: "It would seem that a legend so distinctively Christian would find favor with the Church. Yet this was not the case. Excepting Helinandus, clerical writers do not mention the Grail, and the Church ignored the legend completely. After all, the legend contained elements of which the Church could not approve. Its sources are in apocryphal, not in canonical scripture, and the claims of sanctity made for the Grail were refuted

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78. Op. cit., Volume I, Introduction, p. viii.

by their very extravagance. Moreover, the legend claimed for the Church in Britain an origin well nigh as illustrious as that of the Church of Rome, and independent of Rome. It was thus calculated to encourage and to foster any separatist tendencies that might exist in Britain."<sup>79</sup>

With the Church, then, taking no official position with reference to the Legend, such ecclesiastical references as occur in the legend must be credited to individual action on the part of romancers. The amount of ecclesiastical symbolism and the technical knowledge of theology shown in some versions of the story indicate clearly the work either of clerics or of learned and devout laymen. Doctor Remy's statement as to lack of mention of the Grail by clerical writers is entirely correct, so far as certain evidence goes. The critic fails, however, to take into consideration the fact that a large proportion of medieval literature is unsigned, and that, with the clergy, as is well-known, doing a large amount of writing on not strictly ecclesiastical subjects, a considerable amount of this anonymous literature is probably the work of priests. This probability is largely increased in the case of any given writing when the author refers to himself as a priest, as the writer does in Lestoire del Saint Graal, or when, as in other Grail romances as well as in this one, the writer

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79. The Catholic Encyclopedia, Volume VI, p. 721.

shows himself to be thoroughly familiar with, and to be jealous for, a vast amount of ecclesiastical lore. It may be argued that the writer was merely a copyist, but this, if admitted, presumes an original prepared by some person having the characteristics suggested. It is not known who first attached Christian symbolism to the Grail and its story, but the introduction of Galahad into the Legend as predestined achiever of the quest, has been commonly ascribed to Walter Map, the scholarly, well-bred archdeacon of Oxford.

What inspired ecclesiastically minded persons to take hold of the Legend of the Holy Grail at this particular time, the early part of the thirteenth century? is the next question that confronts the student of the subject. In the first place, two apocryphal books, the Gospel of Nicodemus and the Avenging of the Saviour, more commonly known by its Latin title of Vindicta Salvatoris, were well-known in England at an early date. Doctor Maynadier, who traces briefly the conjectural relationship between the Nicodemus work and the history of the Grail, states that "traces of familiarity" with this apocryphal gospel "are found in England in the last quarter of the eighth century." <sup>80</sup> Of the Vindicta Salvatoris there is in the Cambridge Library an Anglo-Saxon manuscript presented to Exeter Cathedral by Bishop Leofric early

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80. Howard Maynadier, op. cit., p. 127.

in the eleventh century.<sup>81</sup> Possibly suggested by the Gospel of Nicodemus, which is a much more extended work than the other book mentioned, there existed in Britain a tradition<sup>82</sup> that Joseph of Arimathea preached there after the events recorded in the apocryphal gospel, the narrative portion of which ends rather abruptly.

This tradition, together with certain events recorded in the two works mentioned, accounts for the genesis of the early history of the Holy Grail. Events evidently derived from the Gospel of Nicodemus are the imprisonment of Joseph of Arimathea by the Jews and the miraculous appearance of Christ to him in the prison,<sup>83</sup> with details strongly suggestive of those later incorporated into stories of the appearance of the Holy Grail. The use of the napkin, or handkerchief, of St. Veronica for healing purposes, which has been noted in connection with the history of the Grail, occurs in the Avenging of the Saviour.<sup>84</sup> It is worthy of note that in the Grail Legend the final release of Joseph from prison, after which

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81. Alexander Walker, translator, op. cit., page. 245.

82. Howard Maynadier, op. cit., p. 128.

83. Alexander Walker, translator, op. cit., pp. 189, 194-195.

84. Alexander Walker, translator, op. cit., p. 254.

he starts on the journey that leads him to Britain, does not occur until the conquest of Jerusalem under Titus and Vespasian, the latter of whom occupies a prominent place both in the history of the Grail and in the Vindicta Salvatoris.<sup>85</sup>

Probably a more direct reason for the attachment of Christian significance to the Legend of the Holy Grail was the growing interest in allegory. From the days of the Fathers of the Church, antitype had been extensively employed in dealing with the Scriptures and with ecclesiastical tradition, and had grown steadily more popular. Symbolic reasons for the use of particular vestments and of other details of religious worship were occupying a larger and larger place in the medieval mind. Within a comparatively short time there was to burst forth the floodtide of allegory, in the morality play on the one hand, in such productions as Piers, <sup>the</sup> Plowman on the other. Under such circumstances, the alteration of a popular romance in such a manner as to teach Christian doctrine was natural and, indeed, to be expected.

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85. In the Vindicta Salvatoris, the Emperor Tiberius is healed of leprosy by means of the handkerchief of St. Veronica, while in the Grail history it is Vespasian upon whom the miracle is wrought.

Moreover, the Crusades and the rise of the Templars had a stimulating effect upon the more or less ecclesiastical romance, as witnessed by the quantity of writing of this type done. Most of these romances, however, possessed ecclesiastical quality in little except the fact that they dealt with battles against the Saracens. The very number and sameness of these romances must have made them, even to people of their time, a somewhat tiresome form of literature. With the genuine interest existing in the Crusades, a new story with scenes laid both in Palestine and in Christendom would become exceedingly popular. This fact was doubtless realized when the Grail was given Christian significance and was connected with the Crucifixion and with Joseph of Arimathea, who deposited the body of Christ in the Holy Sepulcher. The romancers, too, were probably not uninfluenced by the fact that there were coming from the East supposed portions of the True Cross and of Christ's blood. As was perhaps intended by the writers, the Legend must in turn have reacted in a stimulating way upon the Crusaders themselves and upon Western Christendom in general, or such portion of it as the Legend reached, in that it represented the Saracens as having once received and then later renounced the Christian faith.

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86. C. R. Conder, The Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem, pp. 171, 200-201, Dorothy Kempe, op. cit., p. xxxvi.

87. W. W. Skeat. op. cit., p. xlv.

The points that have been heretofore mentioned are subordinate, in all probability, to the desire of ecclesiastics to present Church doctrine in readable form. In this general desire, the writers must have been in harmony with <sup>the</sup> Church as a whole, for, as Cutts points out, <sup>88</sup> "in the eleventh and twelfth centuries heresies sprang up sporadically in many parts of the Church, the natural growth of the times," and the Church, with the aid of the civil authority, was making every effort to suppress them. The fact that England was almost entirely free from heresy does not affect the matter, for France, just across the channel, had practically all varieties of it and it must have been regarded as necessary to use preventive measures in the case of the English people, especially inasmuch as foreigners were known to have preached heretical doctrine on the island. Moreover, the Legend was intended to appeal to both the French and the English.

Besides, it is noticeable that the points of doctrine most emphasized in the Legend are those actually denied by heretics of the time when the Legend was given its Christian significance. Certain of the heresies attacked had had their origin, or were flourishing, in the Orient, and it is not unlikely that some of the returning Crusaders had been influenced by them. With the Saracens themselves presented in romance and by the Crusaders as

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88. Turning Points of General Church History, p. 358.

knights of chivalry, it would not be surprising if ecclesiastics feared the taint of strange Eastern doctrines.

The heretics against whose doctrines the Legend appears chiefly to be directed were the Albigenses, the Amalricians, the Bogomili, the Petrobrusians, and the followers of such teachers as Roscellinus. The Albigenses and the Bogomili were akin in doctrine, the systems of both possessing Jewish and Mohammedan elements.<sup>89</sup> They held a dualistic philosophy, and, believing all flesh to be evil, denied a real incarnation and made a fantastic explanation of what they regarded as an apparent incarnation. The Bogomili, who were found at Constantinople and the Balkan states in the Middle Ages, were conspicuous for their rejection of baptism by water and their denial of the real presence in the Holy Eucharist. The Petrobrusians rejected the Eucharist altogether,<sup>90</sup> while the Amalricians, who were condemned in France in 1210, just the time when ecclesiastical influence seems to have been most potent upon the Grail Legend, rejected the Law<sup>91</sup> (190) the Gospel. The followers of Roscellinus appear

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89. N. A. Weber, The Albigenses, in The Catholic Encyclopedia, Volume I, pp. 267-269; The Bogomili, in The Catholic Encyclopedia, Volume II, pp. 611-612.

90. N. A. Weber, The Petrobrusians, in The Catholic Encyclopedia, Volume XI, p. 781.

91. John J. a'Becket, The Amalricians, in The Catholic Encyclopedia, Volume I, pp. 379-380.

to have set up practically a triple deity through their ideas as to the Trinity.<sup>92</sup> It will be observed that the heretical doctrines mentioned are all specifically argued against in the Legend and that, except matters relating to discipline and devotion, few other purely ecclesiastical points are taken up.

Among matters of discipline and devotion, only two need specific mention at this place. These are the cultus of the Blessed Virgin Mary, which had begun its increasingly popular career and which appears distinctly favored in the Legend, and the ideal of celibacy. Celibacy had always had a place in the Church, but with the prohibition of clerical marriage in the Western Church and with revival of monasticism from the tenth to the thirteenth century, it became much more of an ideal, especially among scholastic philosophers, with which <sup>fact</sup> again we find the late versions of the Legend strikingly in sympathy.

Still more conspicuous as showing the scholastic bias of the writers of the late Legend, is their emphasis<sup>93</sup> upon the doctrines of transubstantiation and concomitance, neither of which had been passed upon by the Church, and for

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92. J. Forget, Holy Ghost, in The Catholic Encyclopedia, Volume VII, p. 409.

93. Transubstantiation became a dogma in 1215, by which time, according to Sommer (op. cit., Volume I, p. ix) the Legend must have reached its form.

opposing which, therefore, no one could be regarded as a heretic. The doctrine of transubstantiation, being merely a philosophical explanation of the real presence in the Holy Eucharist, which presence was generally accepted, aroused discussion chiefly among those familiar with philosophy. Except for fixing everywhere the ceremonial elevation of the consecrated elements at Mass, it involved no practical issues. The doctrine of concomitance met with a different reception; for it involved, or was involved with, the withdrawal of the cup from the laity. The proposed withdrawal of the cup was regularly ascribed to reverence for the sacred elements, there being danger of spilling the species of wine in administering the chalice to a number of communicants. The doctrinal justification for this withdrawal, however, was found in the belief that "under the appearance of bread alone, as well as under the appearance of wine alone, we receive Christ whole and entire."<sup>94</sup> This doctrine of

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94. Maurice M. Hassett, Eucharist, in The Catholic Encyclopedia, Volume V, p. 579.

concomitance became, in the minds of most people, inseparably connected with the withdrawal of the cup, and was the theme of bitter and extended controversy. The effort in the late versions of the Legend of the Holy Grail, and especially in Lestoire del Saint Graal, is to justify the doctrine, and evidently, as a consequence, the withdrawal of the cup.

The effort to exert a particular kind of influence through any form of literature presupposes a particular group of people upon whom the author thinks it necessary, or at least desirable, to exert the influence. To what group was the appeal of the Legend of the Holy Grail? The Arthurian Legend in general, scholars agree, has its origin in Celtic mythology, intermingled with exaggerated Celtic history. The earliest versions, which of course are not now extant, were undoubtedly sung by the wandering Mabinog, who would come into contact with the common people. The introduction of chivalry into the Legend was the result of courtly influence, not Celtic, but Norman-English. The natural consequence was, that the Legend became popular among the nobility and the knight-hood, though by such men of culture as Giraldus Cambrensis it was, to say the least, lightly regarded.<sup>95</sup> Nevertheless, that it continued for some time to be well-known in

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95. Giraldus Cambrensis, Itinerary through Wales, Part I, chapter 5.

aristocratic circles, is suggested by Geoffrey Chaucer's familiar comparison of the burlesque hero of decaying chivalry to the great Sir Perceval.<sup>96</sup> The introduction of ecclesiastical teaching into the Grail Legend, and, to a certain degree, into branches of the Arthurian Legend proper, was intended, I believe, not to restrict the appeal of the romances, but to extend it. Chivalry remains as prominent as before; there is apparantly, as has been noted, appeal to the Crusaders in their holy wars; vice, as well as virtue, is conspicuous. From the point of view of ecclesiastical ethics as applied to medieval life, the change in the Legend consists in the presentation of the inevitable reward of righteousness and the inevitable suffering that follows upon evil conduct. Lancelot and Gawain, one for unchastity, the other for pride, are, to their own great unhappiness, debarred from the highest pleasure and the highest honor; namely, the achievement of the Quest of the Holy Grail. Galahad, on the other hand, is a thoroughly chivalrous knight, yet at the same time perfect according to the ethical standards of the Church; and to him comes the great

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96. "Himself drank water of the wel

As did the knight sir Percivel."

--Chaucer, Sir Thopas, II, 204-205.

reward. In addition to these large conceptions, the emphasis placed upon the fact that even the less worthy knights performed their religious duties--such as confession and attendance at Mass--faithfully, suggests a lesson to the chivalrous knights of the time.

With the exertion of ecclesiastical influence upon the Legend, however, the appeal is no longer exclusively to the aristocracy. Nor is the appeal to the clergy, except incidentally. In the case of either of these two classes, much of the careful dogmatic exposition contained in the revised Legend would be superfluous: in the case of the aristocracy, because heresy, except what might unconsciously have been acquired by Crusaders in the East, seldom arose in the conservative nobility; in the case of the clergy, because the details mentioned were already familiar, except to the most unlearned, who probably would not read them, anyhow, even in the guise of romance. There was unquestionably a certain ethical and ecclesiastical appeal to the nobility, and many of the clergy doubtless read the romances as a form of pious recreation. There was fundamentally, however, an appeal to classes below the nobility and the clergy, to classes where heresy was likely to arise. The language is simpler than would be necessary if the audience were composed only of the learned. An example of this from the Estoire, the most definitely ecclesiastical

of the late versions of the Grail stories, is the use of the word "capel" instead of "mitre" in referring to the head-covering worn by the bishop. That the word refers to the mitre--the word is the same in modern English--is shown by the fact that it is described as having two horns, which was the characteristic form of the mitre in the early thirteenth century. The clergy and the nobility would be familiar with the technical term. The use of a general word instead, implies either that the writer did not know the technical word or that he was addressing people who were probably unfamiliar with it. The first hypothesis is out of accord with the knowledge of technical ecclesiastical symbolism shown by the author in various places in his work, and particularly in the explanation of the bishop's vestments, in which he uses the word "capel." This leaves only the explanation that the audience, in part at any rate, would not understand the more appropriate word. The introduction of ecclesiastical teaching into the Legend was thus intended to broaden the appeal of the story. In France, where the language in which most of the romances were written was generally understood, the appeal to the somewhat less educated probably became general very soon. In England, the romances, perhaps

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97. H. Oskar Sommer, editor, op. cit., Volume I, p. 39. The contemporary use of the word "mitre" is recognized in Frederic Godéfray, Dictionnaire de l'Ancienne Langue Francaise, Volume X, p. 159

for a while continued to appeal largely to the courtly classes, along with such persons among the middle classes as knew French. It is likely, however, that these stories, along with their ecclesiastical teaching, were retold orally in English. Within a comparatively short time, the retelling of the Arthurian and Grail stories in written English began. The earliest example extant is Sir Tristrem,<sup>98</sup> written late in the thirteenth century, or about seventy-five years after the Legend had taken full form in French. With the amount of material that has been lost to the modern reader in various ways, it is not improbable that written English versions occurred much earlier, thus introducing the Legends, ecclesiastically transformed, to the whole English people.

In the relation of the Legend of the Holy Grail to England, there is involved also the question of its relation to the Church in England, as distinguished from the Western Church in general. To the likelihood of such a relation, there is the testimony of a Roman Catholic writer, Arthur F. J. Remy,<sup>99</sup> already quoted, to the effect that "the legend claimed for the Church in Britain an origin well nigh as illustrious as that

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98. George P. McNeill, editor, Sir Tristrem. Scottish Text Society Publications, Volume VIII.

99. The Holy Grail, in The Catholic Encyclopedia. Volume VI, p. 721.

of the Church of Rome, and independent of Rome." "It was thus calculated," Doctor Remy goes on to say, "to encourage and to foster any separatist tendencies that might exist in Britain." The Legend gives to Joseph of Arimathea the honor of being the first missionary to Britain; to his son, the position of first Christian bishop, to which he was consecrated, according to the story, by Christ himself. The important position occupied by the Pope in other ecclesiastical romances of the time does not exist in the Grail Legend. That there was considerable dissatisfaction in medieval England with papal jurisdiction, while at the same time the realm was almost universally orthodox in matters of faith, is generally admitted. The suspension of Stephen Langton from the archbishopric of Canterbury by Innocent III, because Langton had led the movement for Magna Charta, with its provision that the Church of England should be free, is an example of ecclesiastical controversy between Rome and England. On the other hand, there was no definite movement for a separation from Rome. It would be futile to attempt to find in the Legend the theory of jurisdiction as proceeding from the Celtic Church. It is quite as futile to attempt to discover, as Mr. J. S. Tunison attempts to do, <sup>100</sup> the idea of a

universal spiritual kingdom of which the Pope should be head and a universal temporal kingdom ruled over by the King of England as a sort of second Charlemagne. This theory introduces the Legend as representing allegorically Henry II. of England as Lancelot, and his son Henry as Galahad. Aside from the somewhat fantastic and apparently far-fetched character of this theory, the best scholarship controverts it on the ground of the time when ecclesiastical character was given to the Legend. The work of Chretien de Troyes, who because he was a poet at the court of Marie, daughter of Eleanor of Aquitaine, would have been familiar with such an allegory as Mr. Tunison suggests, and who wrote his treatment of the Grail Legend about 1175<sup>101</sup>, makes Perceval the hero of his Grail romance and gives nothing of ecclesiastical character to the story. The continuators of Chretien's poem, Gautier,<sup>102</sup> Mennessier, and Gerbert, leave Perceval the hero, though they introduce ecclesiastical symbolism into the story. The son of Henry II., presumed by Mr. Tunison to

101. Howard Maynadier, op. cit., p. 69.

102. The work of these continuators is in part contained in M. Potvin's Perceval le Gallois ou le Conte du Graal, to which reference has been made earlier in this study.

be represented by Sir Galahad, died in 1182. From the time of Chrétien's poem, 1175, there is left a period of but seven years for the three continuators to add 52,000 lines to Chrétien's poem and thereafter for the Legend to be given a new hero and a new allegorical interpretation. As a matter of fact, the Quête du Saint Graal, in which is the first extant introduction of Galahad as the hero of the quest, was composed probably about 1220,<sup>103</sup> though the material perhaps existed in other form somewhat earlier. So far as the English Church is concerned in the Legend, the writers probably had in mind neither the theory of jurisdiction as proceeding from the ancient Celtic Church nor a theory of the spiritual, non-temporal sovereignty of the pope. Theories of ecclesiastical jurisdiction, always matters of some difficulty, could hardly have possessed, to these medieval chroniclers, the clearcut character that they assume in the minds of modern students of theology. There was probably, in the minds of the writers, no definite desire for separation from Rome. On the other hand, the British feeling of independence, in matters ecclesiastical as well as in those political, is apparent.

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103. Gaston Paris, Litterature Francaise, p. 251.

The Legend was, probably, as a matter of actual fact, never read at Rome, and Rome knew little or nothing about it. As to any actual effect that the Legend may have had in developing in England a tendency to separation from Rome, there is no evidence.

Nor is there evidence as to the effect of the Legend in other directions. Ecclesiastical and other influences may be traced in the Legend: their effect upon the actual thought and life of the persons who came into contact with the stories, must be a matter of conjecture.

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