Fyrst he watz funden fautlez in his fyue wyttez,
And efte fayled neuer þe freke in his fyue fyngres,
And alle his afyaynce vpon folde watȝ in þe fyue woundez
Þat Cryst kaȝt on þe croys, as þe crede tellez.
-*Sir Gawain and The Green Knight* (II.640-3)

The soul of a knight should be a thing remarkable,
His heart and his mind as pure as morning dew.
With a will and a self-restraint
That's the envy of ev'ry saint
He could easily work a miracle or two.
— "C'est Moi," Lerner and Lowe's *Camelot*

"Very interesting," he [Merlin] said in a trembling voice. "Very interesting. There was just such a man when I was young—an Austrian who invented a new way of life and convinced himself that he was the chap to make it work. He tried to impose his reformation by the sword, and plunged the civilized world into misery and chaos. But the thing which this fellow had overlooked, my friend, was that he had had a predecessor in the reformation business, called Jesus Christ. Perhaps we may assume that Jesus knew as much as the Austrian did about saving people. But the odd thing is that Jesus did not turn the disciples into storm troopers, burn down the Temple at Jerusalem, and fix the blame on Pontius Pilate. On the contrary, he made it clear that the business of the philosopher was to make ideas available, and not to impose them on people."—T.H. White, *The Once and Future King* (266-267).

University of Alberta

Look With the Eyes of Faith: The Vocation of Knighthood in *The Works* of Sir Thomas Malory

by

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The Very Reverend Father Keith F. Sorge, V.F.

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For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is My Body which is broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” In the same way also the cup after supper saying, “This cup is the new covenant in My Blood. Do this as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes. —1 Cor 11:23-26, RSV-CE.

Abstract

The world presented to readers of *The Complete Works of Sir Thomas Malory* is, as the character of Galahad notes, "unstable." The story begins following the death of Uther Pendragon, when Arthur attempts to bring order to his unstable kingdom through the institution of the Round Table, a fellowship of knights who are bound together by the Pentecostal oath, which requires the knights to live by a set of rules that stresses the concept of knighthood as a quasi-religious vocation. This thesis will analyze the concept of chivalry as a vocation within Malory's text, through a reading of the Pentecostal Oath in light of chivalric manuals, Church texts, and Sacred Scripture, in order to determine whether Malory believes that it is indeed possible for one to achieve stability through a knightly vocation.

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Author's Note

This project makes use of the third edition of *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory* edited by Eugène Vinaver, and revised by P. J. C. Field. This edition is based primarily off of the Winchester Manuscript, but makes use of several copies of Caxton's text and various sources to attempt to reconstruct "the entire text of Malory" (Vinaver cxxiii). As Field himself has noted in his afterword, he goes to great lengths to ensure that the book is "Vinaver's edition," so much so that he has separated his individual commentary, and marked off of the sections of Vinaver's commentary he has substantially revised (Malory 1746). Although I read Professor Field's commentary, none of his notes made it into the final version of the thesis. Any quotations from the footnotes or afterword of *The Work's*, therefore, are taken from the scholarship of Professor Vinaver. I have reproduced the square brackets used by Professor Vinaver to mark his emendations to the Winchester MS based on Caxton and the French sources, as well as the caret brackets used to mark the expansion of abbreviations found in the MS text, within my quotations. Professor Vinaver, most likely for the sake of convenience and space, abbreviated Malory as *M*, and French source as *F* throughout his notes. I have silently expanded these abbreviations when I reproduce his notes in quotation. Readers will also note that the English Biblical quotations found within this text are marked "DRV" or "Douay-Rheims Version." This version is a direct translation from Latin to English of "The Vulgate of St. Jerome," which was the standard Bible used by clergy and scholars during the Middle Ages.

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Introduction

Although the historical identity of Sir Thomas Malory can never be confirmed beyond a reasonable doubt, as P. J. C. Field has shown via his examination of fifteenth-century historical records, the most likely candidate for the authorship of *The Hoole Booke of Kyng Arthur & of His Noble Knyghtes of the Rounde Table* (hereafter *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory*) is Sir Thomas Malory of Newbold Revel, Warwickshire (Field 115). The son of John Malory, a Warwickshire sheriff and M.P., Thomas Malory was born sometime between 1415 and 1417 (115). The fact that the author's birth occurs within this three-year window is significant, according to Felicity Riddy, as it places Malory's birth around the same time as King Henry V's victory at the Battle of Agincourt. This battle was, unsurprisingly, nothing like its depiction in the final play of William Shakespeare's major tetralogy. Shakespeare's "happy few" (IV.III.60) were, in reality, members of "exhausted armies, knee-deep in mud" (Riddy 67), who were forced to fight in the cold and wet of the rain until the length of the "roll-call of the dead nobility . . . [resembled] Malory's summoning-up of the Round Table for the healing of Sir Urry" (67). This record number of French dead was due to the infamous order issued by Henry, when facing an unanticipated French cavalry charge, to "kill the prisoners" (67). Riddy notes that contemporary accounts speak of Henry's "chastened demeanor" upon his return from battle, following his realization that his actions were "a story of slaughter-yard behaviour and outright atrocity" (Riddy 67). This did not stop chivalric chroniclers from turning the story into a legend, which "provided a touchstone . . . of what it meant to be English" during the later part of the Hundred Years War. Henry died on campaign in 1422, at the age of thirty-five, from a bout of dysentery. After his death the touchstone of

Englishness, provided by the memory of the battle, proved to be necessary. Henry VI, the heir to the thrones of England and France, lacked both his father's military skill and political shrewdness. By 1429 Jeanne d'Arc, the unofficial commander of the French forces, had recaptured Orléans, and the Dauphin had been crowned as King Charles VII of France. In 1445, following his marriage to Margaret of Anjou, Henry surrendered more territories in English-occupied France to the French crown. In 1450 he ceded Aquitaine. The loss of Aquitaine led to a period of "national shame," which increased the dissatisfaction that several English nobles were already feeling with Henry's ineffectual ruling. This dissatisfaction reached its climax in May of 1455 when Richard, the Duke of York, raised a private army, marched on London, and engaged the royal army outside of St. Albans. This was the first battle of the civil war now commonly known as "The War of the Roses."

Although he was initially a supporter of the Duke of York, Malory would not have been amongst the Duke's knights at St. Albans, as he was already a prisoner of the Crown. As Field notes, the *Calendar of Patent Rolls* records the King's commission of 26 March 1453 to the Duke of Buckingham, Sir Edward Grey of Groby, and the Sheriffs of Warwickshire and Leicestershire to arrest Malory (Field 123). Public records show that following this arrest Malory was moved to and from various prisons, often escaping and being recaptured. Malory was later released on bail, but was then re-arrested. He was returned to prison until 24 October 1462 when he was included in Edward IV's first pardon roll (125). At some point between 1462 and 1468, Malory was once again re-arrested and returned to prison. The nature of his offence is unknown; however, it was enough to cause Edward to exclude, or to be persuaded to exclude, him from both his

second and third general pardons in 1468 (126) and 1470 respectively (Tieken-Boon van Ostade 115). The fact that the third pardon is dated 1470, a year after the date that Malory gives as the time of *The Works*' completion, supports Malory's colophonic references to himself as a "knight-prisoner." This allows scholars to conclude that the majority, if not all, of *The Works* (and at the very least its conclusion) was written while Malory was in prison.

Following Malory's completion of *The Works*, his manuscript was taken and copied. One of these copies eventually reached William Caxton who in 1485, after heavily abridging parts of the text, printed *The Works* as one long continuous story. Caxton titled his version *Le Morte d'Arthur*, a common name for texts that told the story of the fall of Camelot and the death of King Arthur. Caxton's version of Malory was the only known version of the text until 1934 when Walter Oakeshott discovered the Winchester Manuscript. The manuscript, which is believed to have been one of Caxton's copy texts—based both on the ink smudges found on the manuscript and references by Caxton to a manuscript he copied from in his prologue *to Le Morte d'Arthur* (11)—was soon examined by Eugène Vinaver. Based upon his discovery of heretofore-unknown sections of the text, Vinaver came to believe that Malory's intention was not for the text to be read as Caxton had presented it, but rather as eight separate stories. As Vinaver notes in his introduction to the second edition of *The Works*, this conclusion was soon challenged by a group of American scholars led by R.M. Lumiansky. These scholars reject Vinaver's claim, insisting that the various romances in *The Works* do in fact create a unified tale. As Vinaver notes, their argument depends primarily on cross-references made in the different sections of *The Works* (Malory xlii). Vinaver counter-argues that

"the view that Malory wrote eight separate romances does not imply that there are any serious discrepancies" within the texts, but merely that the "principle of 'singleness' in the composition of these romances . . . operated within the limits of each individual romance, not for *Le Morte Darthur* as a whole" (xlii-xliii). While Vinaver's argument is certainly more convincing than those put forward by Lumiansky and those who agree with his conclusion, it still lacks the logic of the argument presented by C. S. Lewis in his essay "The English Prose *Morte*." In this essay Lewis states:

> I do not for a moment believe that Malory had any intention either of writing a single "work" or of writing many "works" as we should understand the expressions. He was telling us about Arthur and the knights. Of course his matter was one—the same king, the same court. Of course his matter was many—they had many adventures (22).

This position is both supported and further clarified by D. S. Brewer, who established the theory of "connectedness" in *The Works.* In his essay "The Hoole Book," Brewer argues that "[i]f I were contending that there was a modern organic unity of design in Malory's work, the *Tristram* would in itself be enough to refute me. But my contention is more modest: the tales are structurally connected, and fit into a particular order" (56). This more modest position seems to be the most probable, explaining both the stand-alone structure of each tale emphasized by Vinaver, and the appearance of unified themes and characterization emphasized by Lumiansky and others. Therefore, for the purposes of this project, *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory* will be approached as eight separate tales,

which should be read in a specific order so as to be seen as contributions to an overarching story.

Scholars are still divided on Malory's reason for composing *The Works*. The author's colophons, found at the end of various sections of *The Works*, suggest both his desire for a return by society to traditional Christian values, and a need to make some sort of contrition for his own past sins. However, as some scholars such as Ingrid Tieken-Boon van Ostade argue, this contrition may well have been made for political reasons rather than a religiously motivated desire for repentance. Tieken-Boon van Ostade proposes that Malory had powerful political friends (she specifically names Anthony Woodville, Earl Rivers) who encouraged him to write *The Works* in order to prove that "he knew the highest codes of behaviour both moral and chivalrous" (Tieken-Boon van Ostade 115), and was therefore fit to be released. Still others argue that Malory was already an accomplished author prior to his imprisonment—Field suggests that he is the author of *The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnell* (115)—and merely desired to undertake a more ambitious work (115). Regardless of the manner by which *The Works* came to be, the primary intention remains clear: to extoll "the virtues of England's most 'noble kyng and conquerour'" and his knights (Tieken-Boon van Ostade 115). Although Malory may have begun *The Works* with the idea of reconfiguring *The Alliterative Morte Arthur* into a tribute to the idealized version of King Henry V, the focus of his project clearly shifted upon his decision to include an adaptation of the French Arthurian cycle as well (Malory xxxi). As Vinaver notes, "the 'great books' of the French Arthurian Cycle failed to provide a worthy continuation of his first Arthurian work, [so] he proceeded to supplement them with remarks of his own on the art and meaning of chivalry" (xxxiii).

This was done in order to transform Arthur from the "benevolent and passive king of Fairyland" into a "champion of chivalry and the founder of its greatest traditions" (xxxiii).

Although the characters in *The Works* may interact with Arthur in his role as a king and as head of the Round Table, Malory makes it clear that they are also interacting with an Arthur who is a visionary and a dreamer. The Pentecostal oath, which Malory's Arthur requires all his knights to swear, can be read as the embodiment of this dream. Through the Pentecostal oath, Malory has Arthur present a distinct set of chivalric values that serve to define the order of knighthood as a higher calling, which Vinaver classifies as an example of Malory's being a "belated yet sincere exponent of the moral ideas of chivalry" (xxx). Written in the fifteenth century, during a time of war and strife, Malory's text presents an able king ruling over a peaceful land. This same king imagines a form of knighthood that serves to increase justice, fellowship, and morality. In turn the devotion to these virtues will further his knights' spiritual and worldly prowess, emphasizing the role that the Christian faith plays in stabilizing both the knight personally and society in general.

This project will analyze the Round Table's specific form of chivalry, and its key requirement of maintaining a balance between martial prowess and spiritual stability. In order to facilitate this, I will offer a critical reading of aspects of Malory's texts and his sources, and compare and contrast my findings with contextual documents from the time period in question. The first chapter of this project will focus on the influence of the Western Christian Church on the historical development of chivalry. Particular attention will be paid to the rise of military orders in the Holy Land, following the First Crusade,

and the influence of Bernard of Clairvaux on the concept of knighthood as a vocation. The second chapter will cover the beginning of Arthur's reign, the implementation of the Fellowship of the Round Table, and its specific practices in the context of what Malory refers to as "the high order of knighthood." The final chapter will discuss the merits of this chivalry when it is put to the test, particularly by contrasting Sir Galahad, the best knight in the world, and Sir Lancelot, the best worldly knight. I will conclude by discussing the feasibility of the Arthurian form of chivalry, and whether or not Malory deems Arthur's ideals to be practically achievable on both personal and social levels.

Chapter One: "Gird Thy Sword Upon Thy Thigh, O Thou Most Mighty": The Dawn of Celestial Chivalry

The Cistercian Reform and the Beginnings of the Knights Templar

The concept of knighthood as a vocation was first thought of by the institutional Christian Church following the Council of Clermont in 1095 when Pope Urban II, following the advice of several prominent European churchmen and lay rulers and leaders, inaugurated the First Crusade. At least five versions of Urban's supposed speech to the council exist. The earliest version of the text, found in the *Gesta Francorum et aliorum Hierosolymytanorum*, represents Urban sending out clerics to urge men throughout Gaul to have "crosses to be sewed on their right shoulders, saying that they followed with one accord the footsteps of Christ by which they had been redeemed from the hand of hell" (Krey 30). Later versions of Urban's plea began to focus more on the militaristic nature of what the Crusades were to become. Balderic of Dol has Urban state, "we speak with the authority of the prophet: 'Gird thy sword upon thy thigh O mighty one.' Gird yourselves, everyone of you, I say, and be valiant sons; for it is better for you to die in battle than to behold the sorrows of your race and of your holy places" (36). Similarly Robert the Monk, writing twenty-five years after the council, has Urban declare, "[t]herefore I say to you that God, who implanted this in your breasts, has drawn it forth from you. Let this then be your war-cry in combats, because this word is given to you by God. When an armed attack is made upon the enemy, let this one cry be raised by all the soldiers of God: It is the will of God! It is the will of God!" (Munro 8). Regardless of what was actually spoken at the council, Urban's message was clear. Priests, such as Peter the Hermit, soon began to travel the countryside preaching the crusade, and

convincing thousands to take the cross. From the point of view of the institutional Church, the First Crusade was a major success. Christian states were established for the first time in the Holy Land not through preaching but rather through force of arms. Thus, while it is true that the Church had somewhat ignored knighthood up until this point, the successes of the First Crusade showed ecclesiasts that the skill sets possessed by knights might be of some use in the spread of Christianity, the protection of pilgrims, and the maintenance of these new Christian states. Therefore, by the middle of the twelfth century, the Church had set out to leave its own mark on the institution of knighthood. The key figure in this task was the Cistercian abbot Bernard of Clairvaux, a man whose own experience during the early stages of the Cistercian monastic reformations heavily influenced his understandings both of vocation and of the lifestyle that a member of an institution devoted to Christ and his Church must maintain.

Bernard entered Cîteaux Abbey in A.D. 1112, fourteen years after its foundation, at the age of twenty-two. It is extremely doubtful that anyone at this time could have predicted the impact that this young man was to have on the world. Stephen Harding, the abbot of Cîteaux, identified Bernard's aptitude for the monastic lifestyle early on, and, in 1115, a mere three years after Bernard's entry into the order, sent him to Clairvaux, in the Champagne region of France, to found the order's third daughter-house. Already an abbot by the age of twenty-five, it was not long before "the charismatic Bernard became [one of] the most influential churchmen in Europe" (Logan 139). Bernard exercised a great influence not only in the realms of the spirituality, theology, piety, and ascetic qualities of the institutional Church, but also in more secular domains such as literature, politics, and warfare (Merton 9). As the eighteenth-century hagiographer Alban Butler notes,

"[t]hough he lived after St. Anselm, the first of the scholastics, . . . he is himself reckoned among the [church] fathers" (365). This is a highly appropriate statement given that Bernard's tremendous influence would eventually reach the point at which he was able to write to his former pupil Pope Eugene III stating, "They are saying that it is not you but I who am the Pope" (Letter 206). Bernard for his part remained loyal to the pontiff. Eugene was allowed to use Bernard's celebrity as he saw fit. The most notable example of this occurred in the year 1146 when Eugene ordered Bernard to travel to Burgundy, stand before the Parliament of Vezelay, and preach the Second Crusade.

The planning for the Second Crusade began on 1 December 1145, when Eugene wrote to the French king directly addressing the fall of Edessa:

> we cannot speak of it without much grief and lamentation—the city of Edessa, called Rohais in our language[,] . . . has been captured by the enemies of Christ. They have occupied many Christian castles and they have killed the Archbishop of the city, his clergy and many other Christians there. . . . We therefore beseech, admonish, and command all of you, . . . [to] liberate the Eastern Church, and strive to wrest many thousands of captive brethren from their hands (qtd. in Brundage 87).

Inspired by this letter, Louis anxiously began to await the coming of the Pope's messenger. As Odo of Deuil records, upon Bernard's arrival at Vezelay, the King quickly and enthusiastically received the crusader's cross from the monk's hands. Following this, Bernard began to preach to the populace. The sermon had such an effect that "[w]hen he had sowed, rather than passed out, the parcel of crosses which had been prepared, he was forced to tear his clothing into crosses and sow them too" (Brundage 90). Following the

recruitment of Louis to the Pope's cause, Bernard travelled around Europe recruiting other Christian nobles and princes, most notably Conrad III, the king of the Germans. Bernard also wrote to the people of England addressing the need for a crusade, and urging them to use this opportunity to end the anarchy created by the civil war (the succession dispute between Stephen and Matilda), which he deemed "not fighting but foolery" (Brundage 92). Given the instability of the English crown at this time, neither Stephen nor Matilda was capable of sparing the knights needed to respond to Bernard's call. Although certain nobles did take the cross, the majority of them refused Bernard's offer. As Jonathan Phillips points out, due to "the civil war between Stephen and Matilda[,] . . . many prominent figures were either unwilling or unable to leave their lands for any length of time" (98).

Despite the minimal English involvement in both the First and the Second Crusades, the honour associated with serving the Church as a crusader began to work its way into English literary culture. Stephen and Matilda's contemporary Geoffrey of Monmouth employs crusader imagery within his *Historia Regnum Brittaniae,* most notably in the sections concerning King Arthur. The blessing of Archbishop Dubricius before the Battle of Bath is "obviously not a call for a crusade" in and of itself, but it does show the relevance that the First Crusade had for English culture (Phillips 98). The use of the crusades as a literary motif would only increase following Richard I's participation in the Crusade of the Five Kings. Despite the negative consequences of Richard's crusade back home, by the late Middle Ages the crusades had become a common motif in English literature. Geoffrey Chaucer includes a crusading knight among his pilgrims in *The Canterbury Tales*, and Sir Thomas Malory ends the final section of his *Works* by having

the surviving members of the Round Table travel to the Holy Land to combat heathens, a decision that will be discussed in more detail later on in this text.

Bernard failed to convince either Stephen or Matilda to lend Eugene soldiers from their armies; however, there was already a group of knights stationed in the Holy Land willing to take up the cross. Perhaps due to the extraordinary privileges, such as the ability to consecrate their own oratories and cemeteries, granted to them by Eugene in the papal bull *Militia Dei*, the Poor Fellow-Soldiers of Christ and of the Temple of Solomon, more commonly known as the Knights Templar, were willing and able to respond to the Pope's call to arms (Barber 66). To attempt to suggest a direct relationship between the Knights Templar and Malory's *Works* would be foolish. Pope Clement V suppressed the Templars in March of 1312, and in May of the same year the order's property was transferred to the Knights Hospitallers, by the papal bull *Ad Providum.* Two years later the Temple's final Grand Master, Jacques de Molay, was burned as a heretic. By the time Malory began work on his Arthuriad, in the second half of the fifteenth century, the official status of the order was that of a defunct and disgraced heretical sect, the complete opposite of what the Fellowship of the Round Table is meant to be in *The Works*. However, the influence of the Templars, particularly their formation, is, as P. M. Matarasso notes, infused into the source texts from which Malory derived his concept of the epitome of the knightly vocation (*Queste* 20). Therefore, in order to understand the concept of a knightly vocation in Malory, one must have some understanding of the history and formation of the Knights Templar.

The founders of the Knights Templar did not set out to start a new religious order; rather, they were a group of knights who banded together in order to protect

pilgrims travelling through the Holy Land on their way to Jerusalem. As Malcolm Barber notes, "[n]o contemporary thought them sufficiently significant to record their establishment, but three chroniclers in the second half of the twelfth century . . . gave their versions of how this came about" (M. Barber 6). Of the works of the three chroniclers, the nearest to contemporary account, by William, Archbishop of Tyre, is considered the most accurate, followed by the account of Michael the Syrian. The final account is an inaccurate pseudo-history attributed to Walter Map, the archdeacon of Oxford, which concerns a Burgundian knight named Paganus who decides to protect pilgrims at a pool outside of Jerusalem, and who begins to recruit other knights to aid him when this duty becomes too great for him to handle alone.

William describes a group of knights, including Hugues de Payns, who took the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience administered by Jerusalem's Patriarch in 1118, swearing loyalty to King Baldwin II. The men began living in community, following the daily order of the monastic office, and maintaining the roadways to Jerusalem through force of arms, thus contributing to the safety of pilgrims. While William does not establish exactly who entrusted the Templars with this particular mission, Michael suggests that it was, in fact, Baldwin's idea. No matter who came up with the original mission, the Templars soon gained the support of the king of Jerusalem, as well as other great lords of western Christendom. One of these lords, Hugues de Champagne, renounced his secular life and became a member of the order five years after its foundation. Although Hugues's choice to become a Templar was a momentous event in and of itself, it was made more so by the fact that, as Hugues was the benefactor of the

Abbey of Clairvaux, his entry into the order cemented its growing relationship with Bernard (M. Barber 6-12).[1]

When Hugues de Champagne became a Knight of the Temple, Bernard did not attempt to hide his mixed emotions. In a brief letter he informs Hugues, who had been extremely generous to the Abbey of Clairvaux, that "[i]f it is for God's sake that you from being a count have become a simple soldier, from being a rich man have become poor, then it is right that I should congratulate you, and glorify God in you, seeing in this a 'change of the right hand of the Most High'" (Letter 32). Bernard goes on to say that, despite his acceptance of Hugues's choice, he will miss his friend, stating, "[h]ow willingly would I provide for your soul and body were it but granted to us to live in the company of each other! But because this is not to be[,] . . . it only remains for me always to pray for you absent" (Letter 32). Although this letter is the last extant piece of correspondence between the abbot and the former count, it is unlikely that it marked the end of their relationship, as Bernard's influence would soon expand into the temple of Solomon.

The Primitive Rule

Barber is not wrong in suggesting that Bernard would most likely have been sympathetic to the cause of expanding the order in Jerusalem, given that just a few years earlier, in his letter to Pope Calixtus II, he quite vocally opposed his fellow abbot Arnold of Morimond's plan to bring the Cistercian Order to the Holy Land (12-3). At the end of

[1] Bernard was both a distant cousin of Hugues de Payns and the maternal nephew of André de Montbard, another of the Order's nine founders (M. Barber 71).

the letter, he states that, if a group of monks did travel to the Holy Land, "who would not be able to see that what is wanted there is soldiers to fight not monks to sing and pray!" (Letter 5). Given this desire to bring some type of Christian soldiers to the Holy Land, his affinity with members of the Templars, and his prominent position in secular society, it is no surprise that Bernard was approached by Baldwin II in October 1125 with a request to help the new Order "obtain apostolic confirmation and to have a certain way of life" (qtd. in M. Barber 12). As Barber notes, the primary result of this letter was not the creation of a constitution for the Templars, but rather the setting of the stage for Hugues de Payns's tour of Europe (12). The tour reached its climax in January 1129.[2] In that month, Matthew du Remois, Cardinal Archbishop of Albano and Papal legate, the archbishops of Sens and Reims, ten suffragan bishops, and seven abbots, including both Bernard and Stephen Harding, "in all joy and all brotherhood, at the request of Master Hugues de Payens, . . . assembled at Troyes . . . on the feast of my lord St Hilary, in the year of the incarnation of Jesus Christ 1128," in order to establish a rule for the Knights Templar (*The Rule of the Templars* 3). The document itself attests to the importance of Bernard's

[2]Although *The Primitive Rule* established the date of the Council as 13 January 1128, Rudolf Hiestand has made a very credible case for dating it in 1129. This is based on an examination of the itinerary of Matthew Cardinal du Remois, the presiding papal legate, and the mention of Stephen of Chartres, Patriarch of Jerusalem, whose predecessor Warmund of Picquigny was still alive in January of that year. For more information, see *The New Knighthood* (14-5), and Hiestand's "Kardinalbischof Matthäus von Albano, das Konzil von Troyes und die Entstehung des Templeorders" (302-11).

contributions to the council. He is specifically mentioned twice. The first time is at the end of the prologue, which reads, “Therefore I, Jean Michel, to whom was entrusted and confided that divine office, by the grace of God served as the humble scribe of the present document by order of the council and of the venerable father Bernard, abbot of Clairvaux” (*The Rule of the Templars* 5). The second is in the section that records attendance, where he is listed as the last of the Churchmen “whose words the aforementioned [prelates] praised liberally.”

As Judith Upton-Ward notes in her introduction to *The Primitive Rule of the Knights Templar*, the Order had “built up its own traditions and customs [in the years] before Hugues de Payens’ appearance at the Council of Troyes. To a considerable extent, then, *The Primitive Rule* is based upon existing practices” (11). The historical significance of *The Primitive Rule* is not so much that it provided the Knights Templar with a way of living. Rather, it proves that many of the leading churchmen of the time were willing to grant canonical approval, and support, to an order whose rule permitted them to bear arms, engage in battle, and spill blood *with a sword*. Until the council, religious orders had been forbidden to do these things by Church authorities, which had, at least canonically, maintained a very firm distinction between those who fight and those who pray. Although the granting of canonical status to the Knights Templar by *The Primitive Rule* serves to bridge this divide, the text itself is clearly a religious rule, rather than a chivalric one. The main section of the document makes no mention of tactics, strategy, or courtly behavior. Instead, it provides instructions on prayer, fasting, humility, and obedience. It begins by informing the Templars that,

> if you promise to despise the deceitful world in perpetual

> love of God, and scorn the temptations of your body, sustained by the food of God and watered and instructed in the commandments of Our Lord, at the end of the divine office, none should fear to go into battle if he henceforth wears the tonsure (*The Rule of the Templars* 9).

By mandating that the Templars pray the divine office, the council fathers ensured, as best they could, that the Templars remain rooted in the foundational concepts of western monasticism, those of *ora et labora* established by the western Church father Benedict of Nursia in his rule for monastic living. The most important part of *The Rule of St. Benedict* is the section, composed of eleven chapters, wherein Benedict highlights the central focus of the monastic life: partaking in the work of God, through a life of work and prayer regulated around the divine office. Benedict summarizes this philosophy most succinctly in Chapter 16, where he writes, "we should praise our Creator for his just judgments at these times: Lauds, Prime, Terce, Sext, None, Vespers and Compline; and let us arise at night to give him praise [vigils]" (Benedict 16). Although the work of the Knights Templar was undoubtedly different from that of any other religious order, the way in which prayer was integrated into their lives would have prevented those who followed the rule faithfully from slipping back into the lifestyle of secular knights. In the same way the wearing of a tonsure would have served as a sign that the Templars were not of the world, but rather consecrated to the service of Christ.

Spirituality and Chivalry

In the introductory letter to his treatise *In Praise of the New Knighthood* (*De Laude Novae Militiae*), Bernard writes, "If I am not mistaken, my dear Hugues, you have asked me not once or twice, but three times to write a few words of exhortation for you and your comrades" (Bernard 127). He goes on to explain that the reason why he took so long to craft his reply is because he did not want to be "blamed for taking it lightly and hastily" (127). Although Bernard only mentions Hugues de Payns's letters as a rhetorical device, in order to emphasize both the seriousness of the task and the "humility" with which he undertook it, the urgency that it appears Hugues expressed was not unwarranted during the Templars' early years. Despite their mandate, the fact remained that the Templars' existence, in practice, presented certain problems for medieval society, which had trouble accepting the concept of holy men carrying and making frequent use of arms in order to carry out the *labora* portion of their religious duties. As Jean LeClercq points out, in addition to this, their use of these weapons led to the questioning of how a group of knights who did not just spill blood, but appeared to be "waging war in the street" could possibly be considered contemplative, or even semi-contemplative, men of God (19). Some of Europe's most prominent theological minds struggled with the concept of the Templar order. Guigo, the fifth prior of La Grande Chartreuse, who was vocally opposed to violence in the name of Christianity, wrote to Hugues in 1129 asking him to remind the Templars that "it is useless indeed for us to attack exterior enemies, if we do not first conquer those of the interior" (qtd. in M. Barber 49). Even those who were more accepting of the Templars' military campaigns diminished their status as churchmen. For example, Barber notes that the Clunaic abbot Peter the Venerable "never seemed to have

regarded them as equal in status to more conventional orders of monks and canons" (41). Faced with problems such as these Hugues turned to Bernard, assuring the abbot that if he was "not permitted to wield the lance, at least, you might direct your pen against the tyrannical foe, and that this moral . . . support . . . will be of no small help" (cf. Bernard 127). Bernard's response not only provides a defense of the Templars, it also represents a turning point in the movement to infuse the spiritual into the secular concept of knighthood.

Following its prologue, *In Praise of the New Knighthood* can be divided into two distinct sections. The first section, which consists of Chapters 1 through 4, contains Bernard's description of the current state of knighthood, his objections to it, and the reforms that he believes this "new knighthood" will bring about. The remaining chapters see a shift in the focus of the treatise, not concentrating on the lifestyle that a Templar should live, but rather providing a series of meditations on the Holy Land. These meditations were designed to remind the Templars that the land they were sworn to protect was not merely to be considered holy since it was the place where Christ had walked. Rather, the land was holy in and of itself, as it serves as an intimate reminder of Christ's incarnation, life, public ministry, passion, and ultimately the "death of innocence . . . [which is] at the same time . . . both just and merciful" (157). For Bernard this allows the land itself to serve as a reflection of these mysteries, drawing those who inhabit it into a deeper understanding of them. As Bernard is widely regarded as one of the greatest of the medieval mystics, the meditations found in the latter half of *In Praise of the New Knighthood* can perhaps be examined in light of his other mystical writings for a deeper spiritual meaning. However, that is not the purpose of this project. It is therefore

sufficient merely to express agreement with two other scholars who have done more focused work in the field of Cistercian studies, in order to explain how these meditations relate to the concept of the new knighthood. R. J. Zwi Werblowsky is quite right in his implication that the inclusion of these meditations, in a treatise discussing knighthood, will create a profitable reading environment for "Christians thinking seriously about the anguishing and ever present problem of the kind of murder that is called warfare" (Werblowsky 122).[3] It is also particularly important to acknowledge Thomas Merton's point that, according to Bernard, prayer and meditation were meant to be key factors in the Templars mission to defend the Holy Land and its Christian population (57).[4] Rather,

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[3] While I agree with Werblowsky that given Bernard's historical circumstances and the political situation in the Holy Land at the time of the composition of *In Praise of the New Knighthood* these mediations must be read in the light of the problem of warfare, I do not think Bernard would have considered all warfare to be murder. Rather I agree with John R. Sommerfeldt's opinion that although Bernard would have considered most warfare in his time to be fought for an unjust purpose, thus rendering the killings done in battle *homicidium* (killing without a good reason) (68) "for Bernard, warfare is sometimes necessary and, thus, can be justified" (67). This makes the killings committed by the party that was thought to be on the side of right not *homicidium*, but rather *malicidium* (the killing of evil) (68), and therefore morally justifiable and not an act of murder. For more information see Chapter Six of Sommerfeldt's *Bernard of Clairvaux On the Spirituality of Relationships*.

[4] Merton does acknowledge that, historically speaking, "[i]t does not seem that they fully appreciated Bernard's program" (57). Although this statement is perhaps not true for each

the majority of this section will focus on the role that *In Praise of the New Knighthood* played in developing the concept of religious chivalry in both medieval literature and society.

As already mentioned, Bernard, most likely for the sake of humility, expresses his opinion to Hugues that the task of defining what the new knighthood entailed "could be better done by a more qualified hand" (127-8); nevertheless it is unlikely that any of Bernard's contemporaries would have doubted his ability to provide a theological interpretation of this topic. As H. Daniel-Rops notes, "his contemporaries recognized [that] beneath the Cistercian cowl [he wore] the invisible armour of a knight" (Daniel-Rops 110*)*. Merton, too, in his study of "Saint Bernard's Family," observes:

> [t]he portrait left to us by the historians of the Lord of Fontaines, Tescelin le Saure, and his wife, and the entire household in which Saint Bernard grew up, shows us that medieval Christian knighthood was not an empty ideal[;] . . . [while] there [were] many medieval noblemen who were little better than bandits, there were also many who were indeed noble and holy men, who made their knighthood something almost sacramental, and lived up to it with an intense and charitable fervor which made them real defenders of justice and protectors of the poor, although not the sententious rescuers of maidens in distress that we are

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individual Templar, it could probably be applied to the order as a whole, especially following the Second Crusade.

> sometimes forced to read about, under threat of severe penances,
>
> in our high school days. (29)

Merton explains to his readers how Bernard, while growing up at Fontaines, would have been exposed to a model of knighthood that was based in traditions of loyalty, statesmanship, "honest[y] and uprightness [that] were so deep and solid that justice seemed part of his [the knight's] very nature" (30).

The idea of a knight as the co-worker of Christ is the first point that Bernard makes within the main text of the treatise. He begins by stating, "[i]t seems that a new knighthood has recently appeared on the earth, and precisely in that part of it which the Orient[5] from on high [Jesus] visited in the flesh" (Bernard 115). Bernard goes on to define the factors that will distinguish worldly knights from those who have embraced the new knighthood. Whereas worldly knighthood encourages "frivolous fighting" (128), such as "knightly tournaments which [Bernard] unconditionally condemns as one of the most objectionable manifestations of chivalry" (Werblowsky 119), the new knighthood

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[5] Bernard's use of the phrase "Orient from on high" (*oriens ex alto*) would have had twofold significance for his Templar audience. Not only is he echoing the words of Zechariah in the *Benedictus*, "per viscera misericordiae Dei nostri, in quibus visitabit nos *oriens ex alto*" (Luke 1:78 [Through the bowels of the mercy of our God, in which *the Orient from on high* hath visited us (DRV, emphasis added)]), signifying the importance of Jerusalem as the place of the Incarnation, but he is also alluding to the Last Judgment, which Bernard and the Templars would have accepted as beginning with the second coming of Jesus from the east. (See Matthew 24:27, DRV "For as lightning cometh out of the east, and appeareth even into the west: so shall the coming of the Son of man be").

"wages a twofold war both against the flesh and blood and against a spiritual army of evil in the heavens" (Bernard 129).

The expanded description of the worldly knight found in the second chapter of the treatise is far from flattering. Bernard states in no uncertain terms that this earthly knighthood has "no purpose, except death and sin" (133), and that the battles fought by such knights are rooted in "unreasonable flashes of anger, [and] the thirst for empty glory" (133), which will lead only to "the mortal sin of the victor, and the eternal death of the vanquished" (132). Bernard not only attacks the sinfulness of the knight's soul, but also the vanity that, he perceives, earthly knights present both to the public and to their enemies. Bernard tells his imagined worldly knight, "[y]ou cover your horses with silk, and plume your armour with I know not what sort of rags . . . and then in all this glory you rush to your ruin with fearful wrath and fearless folly," before inquiring of him, "[a]re these the trappings of a warrior or are they rather the trinkets of a woman? Do you think the swords of your foes will be turned back by your gold, spare your jewels or be unable to pierce your silks?" (133). Bernard's attacks on the supposed vanities of earthly knights are not without cause. He lists three qualities of combat that are key, as he would have known being the son of a knight. A knight "must guard his person with strength, shrewdness, and care; he must be free in his movements, and he must be quick to draw his sword" (132). None of these tasks would be possible for one who dresses in the style of clothing mentioned in Bernard's description. This causes him to ask, "[t]hen why do you blind yourselves with effeminate locks and trip yourselves up with long and full tunics, burying your tender, delicate hands in big cumbersome sleeves?" suggesting that many knights of the time dressed this way. Bernard ends his description of the worldly

knight by questioning why these knights even bother to wear armour if they are unwilling to undertake the dangerous business that should come hand in hand with knighthood.

As expected, Bernard's praise of the new knighthood is much more laudatory. "The Knights of Christ," he tells his readers "may safely fight the battles of their Lord fearing neither sin if they smite the enemy, nor danger at their own death" (134). According to Bernard, one does not need to fear going into battle if one is a knight of Christ who "inflicts death" not for his own glory but for "Christs [sic] profit" (134). The majority of the chapter, however, is not a description of the new knighthood. Rather, in answer to Hugues's request, Bernard provides a justification for the concept of one who spills blood in Christ's name. It is only at the beginning of the fourth chapter that the reader gets a true description of the new knighthood. In this chapter Bernard highlights the Knights Templar as a "model, or at least for the shame of those knights of ours who are fighting for the devil" (138). While certain aspects of the Templar's life, such as living in community, are clearly not meant to be applicable to secular knights, Bernard presents the new knighthood in a way that theoretically could be lived by any devout Christian knight. According to Bernard, good knights of Christ must "never sit in idleness or wander about aimlessly"; they must "rival one another in mutual consideration," and "carry one another's burdens, thus fulfilling the laws of Christ" (139). A truly religious knight in the same sense should "foreswear dice and chess, abhor the chase[,] . . . take no delight in falconry," and "despise and reject" vanities such as "jesters, magicians, bards, troubadours and jousters" (139). In sharp contrast to his almost satirical portrayal of the appearance of the worldly knight, Bernard's comments on the appearance of the Knights Templar are much more positive. He tells readers,

> Their hair is worn short, in conformity with the Apostle's saying that it is shameful for a man to cultivate flowing locks.[6] Indeed they seldom wash and never set their hair—content to appear tousled and dusty, bearing the marks of the sun and their armor.[7] (139)

With regard to their prowess in combat, he notes how the new knights, through trust in the Lord, show a great ferocity in combat while meeting the definition of meekness within friendly society. Bernard considers this an example of the imitation of Christ who was "gentler than lambs, yet fiercer than lions" (140). Upon comparing these descriptions, a reader mindful of the historical times will realize that the concept of the new knighthood, however noble it may seem, is in fact a lofty ideal. Ultimately Bernard presents a binary notion that insists that all true "Christian knights" must either reach this ideal holiness, or be counted among the ranks of "those knights of ours who are fighting for the devil." As history shows us this notion proves unreachable, translating much more easily to the pages of Arthurian romances than it did to the quarters of the temple.

Despite this, one idea presented in *In Praise of the New Knighthood* clearly resonated with both Bernard's contemporary readers and the generations to follow. When

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[6] "Doth not even nature itself teach you, that a man indeed, if he nourish his hair, it is a shame unto him" (1Cor 11:14 DRV)

[7] As Werblowsky notes in his footnotes to *In Praise of the New Knighthood*, this statement reflects the association of the Templar rule with the Cistercian order and its obedience to The Rule of St. Benedict, in this particular case Chapter Thirty-Six Paragraph 8 (139 n23)

Bernard impressed upon his readers the idea that "the knight of Christ . . . [does not] bear the sword in vain, for he is God's minister" (134), he created the idea of knighthood as a spiritual vocation. Although the treatise was originally meant for the Knights Templar (Watkin Williams even goes as far as to refer to Bernard as the order's "first novice master" (qtd. in Werblowsky 119)), it is clear that Bernard considers the practice of Christian knighthood to be something more than a profession: it is a calling. Werblowsky reminds readers that *miles*, which is the word used in the original Latin text, has two meanings, "soldier" and "knight," and it is important to remember that the two are "not quite the same" (119). Whereas the soldier is driven by his own desire for personal glory, and perhaps a desire for pleasure, so that he can engage in the frivolities that categorize the *miles secularis,* the *miles Christi* is representative of Bernard's concept of true knighthood, in that it is not merely a profession or a status. "Bernard does not doubt that there are Christian soldiers [*milites Christi*] so destined by God" and that "they are permitted to wield the sword" (119). This call to knighthood is something that is offered by God and then "voluntarily chosen" (119), much like the monastic life that Bernard chose for himself. It is clear that Bernard sees life within the Temple as the purest form of Christian knighthood, just as Benedict sees the coenobitic life as the crown jewel of monasticism. However, it is also clear that just as Benedict acknowledges that one outside a monastery can live a life devoted to religion, so too can one see in Bernard's post-crusade writings his belief that those who lived outside of the Temple could be called to, and live out aspects of, the vocation of knighthood.[8] An example of this can be

[8] See *The Rule* Chapter 1, "On the Kinds of Monks," Chapter 60, "Of Priests Who May Wish to Live in the Monastery," and Chapter 62 "Of the Priests of the Monastery," and *II*

found in Bernard's post-crusade letter to Suger, the Abbot of St. Denis, in which he expressed dismay over the intentions of Henri le Liberal and Robert de Dreux to hold a tournament upon their return from the Second Crusade. He asks Suger, "[w]ith what sort of dispositions must they have taken the road to Jerusalem when they return in this frame of mind?" (qtd. in Werblowsky 120). Bernard's expectation that these two men were to practice the same style of knighthood as the Templars shows that he considered all who took up the Cross to be part of the group of "faithful defenders" (120) who had responded to God's call to embrace the truest form of knighthood. In the same way that readers of *The Rule* may perceive Benedict's sorrow upon the failure of a monk to function within the community,[9] readers of Bernard's letters can see his regret when those he believes were called to serve Christ in the order of knighthood proved not to be "*Christian* enough" (119, Werblowsky's emphasis).

For the West, the Second Crusade was a failure. The losses haunted Bernard throughout the rest of his life despite the fact that he continued to justify the crusade as God's will, and its failure as man's error in the practice of the new knighthood. The "impulsive and generous" monk who "entertained higher hopes of humanity than it deserved . . . consequently came to grief" (119), even going as far as to write an *Apologia* for his actions and including it in *De Consideratione Libri Quinque*. Despite the (most likely deserved) societal bitterness towards Bernard in the West, due to the setbacks suffered by both the Church and the State because of his preaching, in the East the fruits

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Dialogues XXII.5-6 and XXXII.4-XXXIV.2 in which Gregory the Great mentions Benedict's interaction with nuns.

[9] See *The Rule* Chapters 42-45.

of his writings were quite noticeable. Before the beginning of the Second Crusade, the Knights Templar had seen little action in terms of combat; however, as Richard Barber notes, this soon changed. The offensive campaigns of the Knights Templar provided a rallying point for the squabbling Christian forces, whose defenses were being overrun. Soon both Crusaders and Saracens came to identify the black and white battle standard and its accompanying war cry "*beauséant*" with a force to be reckoned with (*The Knight and Chivalry* 271). By 1150 this order of "warrior-religious," which had been the subject of great controversy only a few decades earlier, had been given the duty of guarding the great fortresses of the kingdom of Jerusalem, and was widely accepted as one of the only "stable forces in the eminently unstable kingdom" (271). This soon led to imitation. By the end of the Second Crusade the Brethren of the Hospital of St. John the Baptist (The Knights Hospitallers) had began to recruit lay brothers to bear arms on the Order's behalf. This was done, according to Gilbert d'Assilly, so that they could engage in "mingling religious and military duties in defence of the Holy Land" (273). Following the end of the Second Crusade, the focus of all of the Hospitallers' actions began to shift from "charity to the sword" (272). In 1206, sixty years after Hugues de Payns and his eight companions founded the Order of the Temple, the Statutes of Marget officially allowed the Hospitallers to provide for military brethren, something they had been doing (and that the Church had been allowing them to do) since the Second Crusade (273-4). The success of these military orders, as well as the need to re-establish some of the credibility and control over society that it had lost following the Second Crusade, caused the Church to turn its attention from the concept of warfare as a whole to that of the individual warrior (29).

The Church's involvement with the individual warrior began in the eighth century when the Church began to participate in the consecration of rulers who were by virtue of their office "the leaders of armies" (29). By the time of the Carolingian emperors, the centre of this ritual was the symbolic girding of the ruler with a sword and/or sword belt. This custom was most likely inspired by the earlier Germanic custom of equipping a young man with arms before he was publically allowed to engage in battle (29). Although this did allow the Church to intervene in war, it did little to encourage its relationship with individual lords and their knights, who, unlike the Templars or the Hospitallers, were not subject to its hierarchy. In order to ensure that it, not a monarch, exercised supreme authority in the terrestrial world in the mid-tenth century, the Church created the position of the *advocatus* (28-29).

This *advocatus* was "a lay lord who undertook [the duty] to defend a monastery or church from secular enemies" (30). According to the *Pontifical of Saint Alban of Mainz*, this simple ritual took place during mass, between the chanting of the epistle and the chanting of the gospel, and consisted of a priest (most likely the abbot or the prior) blessing the *advocatus*'s sword with the following formula:

> Hearken, we beseech Thee, O Lord, to our prayers,
> and deign to bless with the right hand of thy majesty
> this sword with which Thy servant desires to be girded,
> that it may be a defence of churches, widows, orphans,
> and all Thy servants against the scourge of the pagans,
> that it may be the terror and dread of other evildoers, and
> that it may be just both in attack and defense. (qtd. in

R. Barber *The Knight and Chivalry* 30)

Although the institution of an *advocatus* created a relationship between the knight and the monastery, it did not in and of itself set the knight apart in the eyes of the church. Like everything else, the sword, in the opinion of the medieval church, was designed to be used for God's glory and was therefore suitable to receive a blessing. The Church also had blessings for things like fishing nets and corn seed (R. Barber *The Reign of Chivalry* 95). As the Church began to look increasingly seriously at the ethics of knighthood, the text of the prayers recited during accolade was changed (R. Barber *The Knight and Chivalry* 30). The prayer for the blessing of a knight's sword found in later pontificals reads,

> O Lord who established three degrees of mankind
> after the Fall in the whole world, that thy faithful people
> might dwell in peace and secure from all onslaughts of
> evil, hear our prayers and grant that thy servant may use
> this sword, which by thy grace we bless and give him and
> gird on him, to repel the hosts who besiege God's church
> and to defend himself with thy protection against all his foes.
> (qtd. in R. Barber *The Reign of Chivalry* 96)

This prayer sets the knight apart from the rest of the laity, thereby reflecting the desire of the Church beginning in the eleventh century to turn the order of knighthood into a "quasi-religious structure" (R. Barber *The Knight and Chivalry* 30), with knights as the Church's secular arm (R. Barber *The Reign of Chivalry* 95). By the middle of the thirteenth century, the granting of knighthood had changed from a simple recognition of a

nobleman's right to bear arms into an almost sacramental process. It had become "of similar status to that of clerks in minor orders," according to Richard Barber. Just as a candidate for holy orders was required to advance through the minor orders, the sub-diaconate, and finally the diaconate before being ordained a priest, so too was a man required to serve as a page and then a squire before entering the order of knighthood. In the same way, just as the laying of hands became central to the making of a priest, so too did the *colée*, a blow given to the knight during the accolade, become essential to the making of a knight. Although the formula of knighting never became standardized (in fact, Richard Barber suggests that the majority of accolades took place on the battlefield, and consisted of a blow and the words "Be thou a knight" (35)), certain ceremonies became very elaborate. Most required the knight to wear symbolic clothing (usually scarlet to represent the willingness to spill blood for Christ and in protection of the innocent, or white for purity), make confession, receive communion, and spend the night before the ceremony in a vigil that was equally focused on the duties of a knight to his lord and to the Church. The next day the knight-to-be would bathe and change into a second symbolic outfit before receiving the kiss of peace from his fellow knights, and the *colée* from a knight of higher standing (R. Barber *The Reign of Chivalry* 95-7). The fact that bishops or abbots were usually present at these ceremonies (R. Barber *The Knight and Chivalry* 95) to perform the prayers of blessing over the newly made knight, and, as the 1295 *Pontifical of Guillame Durand* reveals, in some cases even administered the *colée,* adds to the quasi-sacramental nature of the accolade, and the analogous relationship of knighthood and priesthood. Sir Gilbert Hay makes this relationship explicit in one of his additions to Ramon Lull's *The Book of the Order of Chivalry* (which

will be discussed further below), where he writes,

> For suppose the office be gretare, the ordre is ylyke
> ane in kingis and in knychtis, as prestehede is ylkye
> of degree, bathe in pape, cardynale, and patriarche,
> alsmekle is it in a symple preste. (Hay 67)

This quotation serves a dual purpose in helping the reader to understand the concept of knighthood. First, it shows that, like Bernard before them, the authors of chivalric manuals saw knighthood as a calling from God, which upon being received allowed one to exercise certain offices for the betterment of society. Secondly, it shows the rising importance of the concept of the order of knighthood. Just as one must be ordained to the order of priesthood, in order to serve in an office such as bishop, cardinal, or pope, so, too, must one be initiated into the order of knighthood in order to possess the office of king. Beverly Kennedy suggests that this analogy is based on the difference between the concepts of order and office in medieval ecclesiology. Just as one must be a member of the major orders of clergy in order to exercise the offices of teaching, preaching, and sanctifying, so to must one be a member of the order of knighthood in order to exercise the office of the administration of justice (Kennedy 21). By the twelfth century, the idea of knights as the maintainers of justice became the main way by which knighthood was connected to the church outside of the walls of the Hospital and the Temple. Just as the Church acknowledged that the order of knighthood was, in principle, a separate estate from the rest of the laity, knights, in turn, had to acknowledge that, although the Church did not control the concept of knighthood, like everything else knighthood got its authority from the Church. Therefore, knights were able to exercise their authority

because God, and the Church, allowed them to do so. This led to the belief that the "existence of [their] military power was permitted by God only if it was used to defend the weak and sustain society at large" (R. Barber *The Knight and Chivalry* 30). The Christian concepts of justice and defence of the faith began to merge with the secular concepts of honour, duty, and loyalty. This gave rise to the idea of chivalry.

Courtly Literature and Chivalric Manuals

The concept of what we now understand to be chivalry originated in the courts of medieval France. As Maurice Keen observes, the medieval court was "a meeting ground for men drawn from different levels of aristocratic society, and the center of a secular literary culture" (31). Being at court allowed knights both to observe and to be observed, and to learn the basics of courtly behavior from one another, as well as from the elaborate *chansons de geste*s. As Keen points out, these *chansons* were composed not for men of violence but for an extremely sophisticated audience, those who understood and appreciated learning. It is not surprising, then, that many great lords soon began to employ the secular clerics who wrote these *chansons* to begin recording their family histories (30-2). These histories did not take the form of monastic chronicles; rather they were similar to *chansons*, connecting particular noble families to "the heroic past of which the *chansons* told," and providing "an emotive link" (32) to these chivalric topics, thereby encouraging contemporary knights to practice a civilized *courtoisie*. This *courtoisie* was especially required of knights within a court society that was becoming increasingly refined (33). It was no longer enough for a knight to be a good fighter, but he was now required to be a courtier; accordingly, he must possess the valour of Roland

on the battlefield, and the sophistication of Chrétien's Gawain within the castle walls. It was within these castle walls that the knight, or at least the knight of literature, was meant to experience courtly love. Soon courtly love was seen to be a necessity for a young knight. An infatuation with a lady of great estate, such as his lord's wife, and acceptance into her service, would ensure that the young knight had access to the courtly world (30). This, in turn, would allow the young knight an opportunity to begin to practice the art of chivalry within noble society.

As French knights, by campaign, crusade, and conquest, began to spread throughout Europe, they brought with them the basic concept of chivalry. Knights throughout the Christian world soon began to attempt to live up to the ideal picture of knighthood, as presented in romances, and to be champions of prowess, loyalty, courtesy, and generosity (43). This caused the concept of chivalry to be shaped by several different cultures. Treatises now called chivalric manuals began to be developed in order to help knights master these virtues. It was within these manuals that the "religious and Christian" idea of knighthood as a vocation became "inextricably interwoven" (44) with the secular aspects of chivalry.

The most popular chivalric manual was Ramón Lull's *The Book of the Order of Chivalry*. Originally written in Catalan between 1275 and 1276, Lull's treatise was translated into several languages and "exists in numerous French manuscripts, in two Scottish versions [including Hay's], and in an English translation by William Caxton published in 1484, the year before his famous edition of Malory" (R. Barber *The Reign of Chivalry* 92). The life of Ramón Lull itself could very well have been the plot of a chivalric romance. Lull was brought up in the court of James I of Aragon, and as a young

knight "rejected the bride that King James I, the Conqueror, had selected for him, since he preferred to sow his wild oats" (Disalvo 200). In addition to his chivalric accomplishments, Lull was a highly educated man, and soon became both a troubadour and the tutor to James's son (Keen 8). Lull married Bianca Picany, a relative of King James II, in 1257. He became James's seneschal upon the marriage, a position he maintained despite the fact that he was rarely faithful to his wife (Bonner 10). In 1265 Lull's life was changed by profound religious conversion. As he described in his *Vita Coaetanea*,

> Ramón, while still a young man and Seneschal to the King of Majorca, was very given to composing worthless songs and poems and to doing other licentious things. One night he was sitting beside his bed, about to compose and write in his vulgar tongue a song to a lady whom he loved with a foolish love; and as he began to write this song, he looked to his right and saw our Lord Jesus Christ on the Cross, as if suspended in mid-air. (qtd. in Lull 11)

Despite this vision, Lull soon returned to his worldly ways. According to his *vita,* it took four more mystical experiences before Lull "began to turn over in his mind what service would be most pleasing to God" (11-12). Lull joined the Brothers and Sisters of Penance, the tertiary branch of the Franciscan order, and spent "the rest of his life in God's service and his own endeavors to convert the Moors. . . . As a result of this evangelical zeal[,] . . . he was stoned by a mob and died as a consequence of this around 1315" (Disalvo 198-9). During the time between Lull's conversion and his martyrdom, he strove to "carry out the

spiritualization of knighthood along with that of the courtly tradition of love. He transformed the former into both a messianic as well as a mystical Christian militancy" (199).

The framing narrative of *The Book of the Order of Chivalry* reflects the path of Lull's own life. A former knight, who "longe had mayntended the ordre of chyualrye[,] . . . by cours of nature nyghe vnto his ende chaas to hym a heremtyage" (Lull 2-3) heads to a fountain to say his daily prayers, and finds a squire asleep in his saddle. When the squire awakens, the two begin to speak with each other, and the hermit discovers that the squire is about to be knighted. At this point, the hermit shifts into a contemplative state. This causes the squire to demand of him "whereof he was so pensyf," to which the hermit responds, "[m]y thought is of the ordre of knyghthode or Chyualrye" (12-3). The hermit then presents the squire with copies of a little book of chivalry, which he asks the squire to give to the king and those who will be knighted. The remainder of the text is the content of the book. It begins by telling the story of how, after the fall, God selected the most virtuous men and set them apart to be knights, and charges any man entering the order of knighthood to "thynke on the noble beginning of chyvalrye" (16). Lull also cautions would-be knights against taking the order of knighthood before they properly understand it. Just as clerics must first "studyen in doctryne & scyence" so that they may "gyue doctryne to the peple laye & bestiall by good ensamples to knowe / loue / serue & do honoure god our glorious lord" (20) so too must knights study and train in "the scyence and the scole of the ordre of Chyualrye" (20-1).

Like Bernard before him, Lull sees the office of knighthood as a higher calling from God, and distinguishes between two types of knights. The first is the "very knyght"

who accepts that the primary purpose of the office of knighthood is "to mayntene and deffende the holy feyth catholyque." The second is the knight who does not accept the vocational duty of his office, and who is "more vyle than the smythe or the carpenter" (24). Because of the office given to them, the "very knyght" is essential, for Lull, in ensuring both the present and future of the Church. Lull describes this duty thus:

> Th[enne] in lyke wyse as our lord god hath chosen the clerks for to mayntene þ[e] holy feith catholike with scripture & resons ay[gen]st the mescrea[un]tes & not bileuyng / In lyke wise god of glory hath chosen knyȝtes / by cause þ[at] by force of armes they vaynquysshe the mescrea[un]tes whice daily laboure to destroye holy chirche (25).

In order to do this a knight must have a blameless character, and accept the order of feudal society; working alongside the clerics of the Church, defending his lord, and ensuring justice for those under him. Lull reiterates the standards set by the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215, which called for knowledge of the Ten Commandments and the basic articles of the Catholic faith, and a basic understanding of the seven sacraments by which "we hope al to be saued" (72). It is for this reason that Lull suggests that a squire should be examined before his accolade in order to make sure that that the order of knighthood is not given to a man who is "a Robbour / wycked & traitour" (48). Rather, Lull informs readers that knighthood should be reserved for selfless men who will "loue and drede god" (48). Lull spends the third chapter of his treatise outlining the duties of the office of knighthood. In the marginalia to his edition of Lull's text, Caxton, helpfully,

divides the duties of the office of knighthood into ten. The first, and most important, duty, for Lull, is the knight's duty as a defender of the faith (24). The second is the knight's obligation to respect the degrees of hierarchy from the emperor to the knight (27-8). The third is that a knight must provide deference to his lord and maintain justice. The fourth point is that "[a] knight must hunt and exercise himself in arms, but he must not neglect the virtues that embellish the soul" (31). This point identifies a clear distinction between Lull's definition of the vocation of knighthood and Bernard's concept of chivalry. Bernard presents a type of religious chivalry wherein a knight must be encouraged to "[w]atch ye therefore because ye know not what hour your Lord will come" (Matt 24:42b). Lull, by contrast, sees the knight as someone who is "not of the world" (cf John 17:16), but has been "sent into the world" (cf John 17:18) in order to protect it. Lull's definition of religious chivalry allows, and even encourages, knights to "take coursers to juste & to go to tornoyes [and to] hūte at hertes bores / & other wyld bestes" (31), things Bernard implicitly prohibited, as long as they remember the virtues of the order. The acceptance of these actions by Lull, who wrote almost a century after Bernard, suggests that chivalric commentators had realized that these actions, which Bernard condemned as frivolous, could serve a purpose if they were to be used to further the glory of God. The fifth duty of a knight is to oversee his peasants' works (35). This ties into the knight's eighth duty, to protect peasants with his horse and his castle (41). The seventh duty of a knight is to defend the poor, the weak, and the helpless (38). The ninth is to punish robbers and the wicked (42). The tenth duty of the knight is to carry himself with a humble and pure demeanor (43).

In the final section of his treatise, Lull describes both the knighting ritual and the

"sygnefyaunce of the armes of a knyght" (76). Like a cleric's vestments, each part of a knight's armour has a spiritual meaning, which signifies a certain virtue or duty of the office of knighthood that a knight is bound to remember. The most important of these pieces of armour are the habergeon, which represents the constant defence a knight must put up against the vices and faults that tempt him, and the shield, which serves as the symbol of the office of knighthood. Even more important than a knight's armour, however, is the sword, which represents the vanquishing of sin by Christ on the cross, and which reminds

> a knyght [of his] oweth to vanynquysshe and destroye
> the enemyes of the crosse by the swerd / For chyualrye
> is to mayntene Iustyce / And therefore is the swerd made
> cuttynge on bothe sydes to sygnefye that the knyght ought
> with the swerd to mayntene chyualrye and Iustyce. (77)

This is perhaps the best definition of Lull's concept of the office of knighthood: the duty, brought about by chivalric virtue, to defend those who cannot defend themselves. This virtue in turn is a reflection of the death of Christ who "vanyquysshed in the Crosse the dethe of humayn lygnage/ to the whiche he was Iuged for the synne of our fyrste fader Adam" (76).

Knighthood, for Lull, is not a religious institution, as it is for Bernard, nor is it secular in and of itself. Rather, it is a particular way by which some Christians are called to holiness. By the fifteenth century, there were many concepts of what a knightly vocation should look like. These ideas were interwoven not just into the chivalric manuals of the present, but also into the stories of the imagined past. It was from this

imagined past that the "[k]nyght [p]resoner" Sir Thomas Malory drew out into English "The hoole booke of kyng Arthur & of his noble knyghtes of the rounde table," wherein he presented his own vision of what a vocation to the order of knighthood had the potential to be. As I will argue in the next two chapters, this vision corresponds with, and even builds upon, the concept, proposed by Bernard and expanded upon by Lull, of the order of knighthood as a vocation.

Chapter Two: "Take Unto You the Helmet of Salvation, and the Sword of the Spirit": The Vocation of Chivalry in Malory

Malory's Chivalry

Although religion itself does not become the dominant theme in *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory* until *The Tale of the Sankgreal*, religious motifs are present throughout the text. Events such as King Arthur's coronation as "Emperoure by the Poopys hondis" (Malory 245), Queen Guinevere's order to Sir Pedivere to bring the woman he has killed "on horseback unto the Pope of Rome, and of hym resseyve youre penaunce" (286), and Sir Gareth's frequent attendance at Mass, while on his quest to rescue Lynette from the Red Knight, confirm that religion is an integral part of the society Malory has created. Although Malory presents chivalry "*primarily* [as] a secular institution, . . . a fellowship bound by a common loyalty to Arthur, and oaths of friendship and mutual support" (Barber 31, emphasis added), it would be naïve to assume that his concept of chivalry is intended to be completely secular. This is especially true due to the fact that in fifteenth-century Europe "everything in God's creation had not only a physical function, but also a spiritual meaning . . . provided by God to convey a moral message to mankind" (24). The knight himself was supposed to serve such a function, acting as a symbol for chivalry and justice within medieval society. As Hay's additions to Lull remind knights, "nocht anerly the chesing and electioun to the ordre, na the noble hors, na armouris, na governaunce, na lordschip, thame thocht nocht anerly, was sufficiand to the worthynes of that noble and worschipfull ordre" (15). A knight must "manetene, governe and defend the small peple in all justice and equitee, in lufe" and "throu lufe have contynuale charitee" (16). Hay furthers this analogy later on in the text, telling his reader,

> For as horse butt fete may nocht bere grete
> chargis, sa may nocht knychthyde, but cheritee:
> the quhilk cheritee makis hevy birding lycht to
> bere, and great charge soft, bathe for the uphald of
> honour of knychthede, and meryt of the saule
> behufe. (54)

It is this conception of chivalry, combined with a strong sense of personal virtue and an extraordinary commitment to charity and Christian morality, that Malory presents as the ideal form of knighthood, and which Arthur attempts to institute within his kingdom, beginning at his coronation.

As Kenneth Hodges notes in *Forging Chivalric Communities,* Arthur does not inherit a stable kingdom. Since Uther Pendragon was "primarily a warlord," the newly enthroned Arthur does not have the opportunity to establish his kingdom through the art of diplomacy. Rather he must rely on "rapid and violent changes" in the political climate" (35). This means that he "must prove himself first in battle" (35) before he is able to command loyalty. The first change in chivalry occurs upon the appearance of the Sword in the Stone, in the courtyard of a great London church (according to Malory "whether it were Powlis or not the Frensshe book maketh no mencyon" (Malory 12)). Prior to the appearance of the sword, Malory establishes that "stood the reame in grete jeopardy long whyle, for every lord that was myghty of men made hym stronge. And many wende to have ben kyng" (12). The instability that occurs is due to the dominance of what T.H. White would later present as "might makes right" chivalry is temporarily stabilized by the appearance of this Sword in the Stone, and, more importantly, by the

declaration borne upon the sword that "WHOSO PULLETH OUTE THIS SWERD OF THIS STONE AND ANVYLD IS RIGHTWYS KYNGE BORNE OF ALL EN<G>LOND" (12). However, when Arthur claims the sword the political climate begins to shift again.

Some characters such as King Leodegrance, King Pellinor, and Sir Ulfius decide to accept the boy as king. This shows their willingness to accept the gift-loyalty system of chivalry, which Hodges proposes succeeds the "might makes right" system (44-5). These characters accept Arthur's claim to the throne on the implied condition that he continues to endorse the titles and offices granted to them during his father's reign, which he does. In contrast, the eleven rebel kings choose to continue to exercise an understanding of a violence-based chivalry, believing that they can beat Arthur by force. Ultimately it is a mixture of might and gift-giving that determines the victory in the battle against the rebel kings. Arthur uses the symbolic (and spiritual) kingship represented by the sword to recruit the might of the French kings Ban and Bors to his side, upon the condition that following the unification of England he will provide his own might in order to help them defeat King Claudius, a third French king who is invading their lands.

Following his description of Arthur's victory, Malory describes how:

> Merlion toke hys leve of kynge Arthure and of the two kyngis, for to gose hys mayster Bloyse that dwelled in Northhumbirlonde. . . . And all the batayles that were done in Arthurs dayes, Merlion dudhys mayster Bloyse wryte them. Also he dud wryte all the batayles that every worthy knyghte ded of Arthurs courte. (37-8)

This brief passage is the only time when the character of Blaise is mentioned in any of Malory's works. However, critical readers will recognize the implied backstory

represented in this passage. The priest Blaise is a major character in Robert de Boron's *Merlin*, a poem that influenced both Malory and his French sources. In Robert's text, Blaise serves both Merlin and his mother as a confessor and spiritual guide, before the former sends him to Northumberland in order to record the events of Arthur's reign from a safe distance. While Malory does not describe any part of Merlin's past prior to his role in Uther Pendragon's siege of Tintagel, the mention of Blaise suggests that his conception of Merlin is based upon the French tradition. In this tradition Merlin is a half-demon, half-human child who is given a total knowledge of the past by the Devil, at his conception, and a total knowledge of the future by God, when he is baptized immediately after his birth. According to Robert, Merlin is given this gift so that he may serve God as a force of good, instead of becoming the agent of destruction that the Devil wished for him to be. This interpretation gains more credibility when it is read alongside two earlier passages that emphasize Merlin's deep belief in the Christian God, and his extra-ordinary knowledge of God's desires. The first passage is found during the battle with the rebel kings. After stopping Arthur's men from slaughtering their defeated enemies, Merlin rebukes the king stating, "[t]hou hast never done. Hast thou nat done inow? Of three score thousand thys day hast thou leffte on lyve but fyftene thousand! Therefore hit ys tyme to sey 'Who' for *God ys wroth with the* for thou wolt never have done" (36, emphasis added). The second passage occurs after stability has been established in the realm. Arthur comes upon Merlin being attacked by a group of thieves and chases them away. He then mockingly ridicules Merlin boasting, "A, Merlion[,] . . . here haddist thou be slayne for all thy crafftis, had nat I bene" (49). Merlin simply responds, "Nay . . . nat so, for I cowed a saved myselffe and I wolde. But thou arte more nere thy deth than I am,

for thou goste to thy dethe warde and God be nat thy frende" (49). When Arthur ignores the sorcerer's council, this rashness soon occurs. Arthur engages in a battle with Pellinor, during which he breaks his sword. This causes him to endanger himself to a point that requires Merlin to magically intervene, in order to protect him.

Following this duel Merlin brings the young king to the Lady of the Lake who offers Arthur the "fayre sworde" Excalibur with the understanding that, when he is given it, the Lady of the Lake will, in exchange, "aske my gyffte whan I se my tyme" (53). This exchange of gifts ensures Arthur's understanding of gift-loyalty chivalry (53-4). It also presents Merlin with the chance to attempt to teach Arthur a lesson about the importance of deceptive appearances. Merlin asks Arthur, "Whethir lyke ye bettir the swerde other the scawberde?" to which Arthur responds, "I lyke bettir the swerde." Merlin proceeds to inform him, "Ye are the more unwyse . . . for whyles ye have the scawberde uppon you ye shall lose no blood, be ye never so sore wounded" (54). Merlin's advice about placing too much trust in appearances foreshadows both Arthur's sexual tryst with his, then unbeknownst to him, half-sister Morgause, and the extended trust that Arthur immediately places in his half-sister Morgan le Fay. It is this extended trust in Morgan, in "Arthur and Accolon," that results in his imprisonment, a battle that almost leads to his death, and most importantly the loss of his magic scabbard. Morgan's theft and destruction of the scabbard are instrumental in understanding Malory's concept of chivalry. The destruction of the scabbard does not merely represent the end of the period of blood-loyalty chivalry (Hodges 49); it also functions as a metaphor for the role that religious beliefs play in the foundation of the Arthurian chivalric code.

Without his magic scabbard, Arthur is not functionally immortal, and can no longer afford to remain in a state where "God be nat [his] frende." He must instead become God's friend. He does this by creating the Fellowship of the Round Table. As readers will soon see, the Fellowship is required to conform to a chivalric code that is based upon faith, ethics, and morality instead of personal chivalric law based on trust, allegiance, and gift giving. The standards of the fellowship represent a religious system of knightly behavior, which is based upon the manifestation of internal virtues in the public sphere, thereby not only allowing but also encouraging public devotion alongside knightly action (Hodges 109-112).[10] Arthur reestablishes knighthood, making it less of an occupation, undertaken by those of the noble class, and more of a spiritual vocation. Under this new system, chivalry must now be taken seriously by all who hold the high order of knighthood, but especially by those whom Arthur has chosen to represent this new form of knightly conduct *par excellence*: the members of the Fellowship of the Round Table.

The Round Table

The Round Table originated in Wace's twelfth century Anglo-Norman poem *Roman de Brut*; Arthur has it specifically made for his knights in order to emphasize the

[10] As Hodges notes this fusion between public religious identity and knightly behaviour was attempted during Malory's lifetime by Henry VI. Amongst other things, Henry attempted to have lords and knights remove their swords before entering consecrated ground. While Henry was considered to be a failure as a ruler he was celebrated, following his death, for his individual piety (Hodges 109).

principles of companionship and equality. This tradition continues in Layamon's *Brut* and in other English Arthurian legends, which were written before Malory. The French Arthurian tradition presents an extremely different history. "The table, according to Robert de Boron, was made . . . to symbolize the Holy Trinity, for it was a replica of the table of the Grail fashioned by Joseph of Arimathea which in turn is a replica of the table of the Last Supper" (Loomis 128). Unlike Malory, both the authors of the *Vulgate* and *Post-Vulgate* cycle include a separate history of the Holy Grail within their texts, which describes Joseph's life. Neither author keeps the overtly symbolic Round Table of thirteen seats, which Uther constructs at Merlin's behest in Robert's version of the tale. Rather, both authors choose to have Leodegrance give the table to Arthur as a dowry. Vinaver suggests that the authors chose to remove the table to which Lancelot is sworn from Arthur's hereditary birthright, making it instead a possession that depends on Arthur's relationship with the queen in order "to emphasize Lancelot's allegiance to Guinevere" (Malory 1324, n98, 8-9).

Malory combines aspects of each of these three traditions in order to create a Round Table that represents loyalty, spirituality, and companionship. Like the *Vulgate / Post-Vulgate* authors, Malory introduces the Round Table shortly before the wedding of Arthur and Guinevere, having Leodegrance present it to Arthur as a dowry. However, unlike these sources, Malory follows Robert in emphasizing that the table once belonged to Uther. Upon hearing of Arthur's plan to marry his daughter, Leodegrance states, "he [Arthur] hath londis inow, he nedith none. But I shall send hym a gyffte that shall please hym muche more, for I shall gyffe hym the Table Rounde whych Uther, hys fadir, gaff me" (Malory 98). Malory thereby maintains the association of Guinevere with the Round

Table, while at the same time establishing Arthur's hereditary rights to command the table and to sit at the Fellowship's head.

Malory's conception of Arthur as the head of the fellowship is a clear contrast to the principles of equality represented in Wace and Layamon. As Vinaver notes, "Malory obviously thinks of Arthur's household in terms of a fifteenth century royal court" (Malory 1325, n99, 2-3). While it is true that Malory does not place the same emphasis on equality as Wace and Layamon, he does focus heavily on the importance of the Round Table as a fellowship. This can be seen, in both simple and elaborate ways, throughout *The Works*. An example of one of the simple ways is the knights' constant desire to keep company with other members of the Round Table. An example of one of the more elaborate ways follows the appearance of the Sankgraeal when Arthur muses, "I am sure . . . nevyr shall I se you agayne holé togydirs. . . . Therefore I woll se you all . . . juste and turney, that aftir youre dethe men may speke of hit that such good knyghtes were here" (864). The value that Malory places on the chivalric fellowship of the Round Table is most encapsulated in Arthur's lament upon the public discovery of Guinevere's affair with Lancelot. Arthur tells his nephews, "Me sore repentith that ever sir Launcelot should be ayenste me for now I am sure the noble felyshp of the Rounde Table ys brokyn for ever, for wyth hym woll many a noble knyght holde. And now hit is fallen so" (1174), and later observes that "such a felyship of good knyghtes shall never be togydirs in no company [again]" (1184).

The final tradition that Malory incorporates into his conception of the Round Table is the importance of the sieges, which, above all else, connects the spiritual aspect of the Table's fellowship with that of a knightly vocation. Malory places the institution of

the Round Table within the context of a liturgical ritual stating: "[t]han the Bysshop of Caunturbiry was [f]ette, and he blyssed the segis with grete royalté and devocion, and there sette the eyght and twenty knyghtes in her segis" (Malory 99).

As was already mentioned, anything from seed crops to fishing nets could be blessed in the Middle Ages, in order for it to be used for God's greater glory. Therefore, the idea that Arthur would have the table blessed is nothing extraordinary. What makes the blessing significant is the fact that the archbishop blesses each siege individually, emphasizing the fact that each knight is called specifically to promote the chivalric ideals of the Round Table both as a duty to King Arthur and for the greater glory of God.

Although Malory chose not to follow Robert's tradition of explicitly identifying the Round Table as a replica of the Table of the Last Supper, a careful reader cannot help but notice the gospel allegory that is present in the way in which Merlin selects those he deems worthy to join the Round Table. Like the first apostles in John's gospel, these knights encounter a prophetic figure that in turn points them to a king. Merlin informs the twenty-eight chosen knights "ye must all aryse and com to kynge Arthure for to do hym omage" (Malory 99) echoing the first chapter of John in which John the Baptist instructs his disciples to "[b]ehold the Lamb of God" (John 1:36b). In the same way just as the author of John requires Peter to acknowledge the heavenly authority given to Jesus by his statement of faith "We have believed and have known, that thou art the Christ [meaning anointed one], the Son of God" (John 6:70) before the calling of the twelve apostles, so too does Malory state that each of the chosen knights "arose and dud their omage" (99) to Arthur before Merlin discovered "in every sege lettirs of golde that told the knyghtes namys that had sitte[n] there" (Malory 99). This Johannine echo is strengthened by the

fact that neither the apostles nor the knights make the choice on their own. They are called. During John's account of the Last Supper, Jesus tells his apostles "[y]ou have not chosen me: but I have chosen you; and have appointed you, that you should go, and bring forth fruit and your fruit remain . . . I have chosen you out of the world" (John 15:16a; 19c). Much like the author of John's gospel who presents the apostles as ordinary men chosen out of the world due to their obvious potential to possess extraordinary faith, Malory establishes that those who are to become Knights of the Round Table are chosen for their potential to possess an extraordinary chivalric character.[11]

There are several instances within *The Works* where Malory informs his readers that a particular knight (or group of knights) has become a member of the Round Table (usually at the end of each book). However, the process by which new members are chosen is described only five times. The decision to allow a new member to join the Round Table's fellowship takes place in one of two ways. It is either the choice of the king and/or his designate, or the choice of the table. The choice of the king is described three times within *The Works*. This method of choosing serves a dual purpose. It both allows Malory to announce new members of the Round Table to the readers, and shows

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[11] Specific examples of the apostles' extraordinary potential include John 1:41: "He [Andrew] findeth first his brother Simon and saith to him: We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted the Christ," and John 1:49: "Nathanael answered him, and said: Rabbi, thou are the Son of God, thou are the King of Israel." For a more detailed example of the characteristics that constitute the knights' extraordinary chivalric potential see Chapter 2 of Hodges *Forging Chivalric Communities* "Swords and Sorceresses: Creating a Chivalric Community" particularly pages 48-51.

them some of the ways in which Arthur's concept of kingship changes as the story progresses.

The first selection is done completely by a designate (Merlin), implying to the reader that Arthur is not yet comfortable in his role as king. The second selection, although involving Arthur himself, is done in consultation with Pellinor. In the context of this selection, Malory presents an Arthur who is at the height of his kingship. He is comfortable enough in his role to realize that he has not yet mastered the art of being a king, and must still rely on the advice of more experienced advisors when making major decisions. Here Malory makes a minor, but significant, change to his French source text in order to emphasize Arthur's kingly prowess. In the source text Pellinor is deputized by Arthur to choose new members of the Round Table, out of the knights at court, due to his experience in such matters (Malory 1341, n131, 19-33). Malory instead has Arthur make a final decision on the worthiness of each knight based on Pellinor's counsel. This shift is most clearly seen when Pellinor asks Arthur to choose who should be given the final seat without consultation. Whereas the French text has Pellinor simply pick his son Sir Tor over Prince Bagdemagus, Malory's Pellinor presents Arthur with the choice between "sir Bagdemagus and sir Tor, my son" (131). By having Arthur make the final decision Malory is showing that, despite their understanding that a good king must take counsel from his vassals, Arthur and his knights are aware that as God's anointed representative in governance Arthur is the source from which their fellowship comes, consequently strengthening the argument for the vocational character of the Round Table. The third selection is done solely by the king. This shows that the problem of worldly instability, which clearly emerges in the second half of *Tristram*, has already begun to enter into the

Fellowship by *The First Book of Sir Tristram de Lyoness*. On this occasion, Arthur himself requests that Tristram join that Round Table. Arthur goes to "every sege whych were voyde and lacked knyghtes" (572) and discovers "in the syege of sir Marhalt lettyrs that seyde: This IS THE SYEGE OF THE NOBLE KNYGHT SIR TRYSTRAMYS" (572). There is nothing wrong with Arthur's choice not to consult his vassals, in and of itself. Nevertheless, the fact that he does not have a vassal whom he feels he can trust to advise him on a decision as important as recruiting a hostile king's knight to the Round Table Fellowship shows that instability is beginning to take hold of Camelot.

The choice of the king is spiritual only inasmuch as Arthur's authority to govern would have been understood to have come from God. The choice of the table, however, involves a more distinct spiritual aspect, due to the prophetic nature of the sieges that are to be filled by this choice. The choice of the table refers to the filling of the two seats that were left empty during the Round Table's formation, the siege of the worthiest knight in the land, and the Siege Perilous. Merlin makes it clear, from the onset of the Round Table, that these sieges' occupants are not to be chosen by Arthur; rather, those who are meant to fill them will fill them. Soon after the Round Table's foundation Merlin reveals to the fellowship that Pellinor is meant to sit in the siege of the worthiest knight in the land, stating: "Thys [is] your place for beste ar ye worthy to sitte therein of ony that here ys" (102). However, the Siege Perilous is left empty. Merlin warns the fellowship that "there shall nevir man sitte but one, and yf there be ony so hardy to do hit he shall be destroyed, and he that shall sitte therein shall have no felowe" (102), maintaining the tradition of the Siege Perilous that Robert began in his Grail story.

As Barber emphasizes in *The Holy Grail: Imagination and Belief*, Robert's Grail quest varies significantly from the one portrayed in Chrétien's *Perceval, le Conte du Graal* and its continuations. Robert's story focuses on the Holy Grail itself rather than the individual knights (40). It begins, therefore, not in England, but rather in Jerusalem, describing a post-resurrection appearance of Christ to Joseph of Arimathea. In the initial vision, Christ both gives Joseph the Grail and instructs him on how to properly celebrate the Mass. Joseph's visions continue until Christ orders him to create a table like the one used at the Last Supper and to place the covered Grail upon it, in order to undo the damage caused by the sins of Joseph's followers. He also bids Joseph to leave one of the seats empty as "a reminder of Judas – who lost his seat when I said he would betray me", informing him "that it will remain empty until one of Bron's lineage [comes] to fill it" (Robert 38). Joseph proceeds to gather his Grail Company around the table, until just before his death when he passes this task to his brother Bron. This same Bron will eventually become Robert's Fisher King. At the end of "Joseph of Arimathea" both the Grail and the idea of a Grail table disappear from the forefront of Robert's plot so that he may instead focus on the personal history of Merlin, and the rise of Aurelius Pendragon's dynasty. It is only after Aurelius's death that Robert connects the two stories. Merlin convinces King Uther, Aurelius's brother, to build "the third of the three tables of the Grail to which Christ referred in his command to Joseph of Arimathea." Merlin informs him that this "Round Table will have one seat left vacant," and that "the one who will fill the empty seat needs to have been in the presence of the Grail" (43), a prophecy that is fulfilled when Sir Percival takes his place at table, sitting upon the Grail seat.

This tradition of associating the Siege Perilous with the premier Grail knight continues in both the *Vulgate* and *Post-Vulgate* cycles. It is in these cycles that the character of Percival is replaced with Sir Galahad, the son of Lancelot and Elaine of Corbenic, for the first time. In both stories, Galahad arrives at Camelot on the feast of Pentecost, taking his place in the Siege Perilous and completing the Round Table's fellowship. Malory's changes to the French texts may not appear especially significant, when observed in the context of the individual story, yet this changes when they are read through Brewer's lens of connectedness. When read alongside the changes that Malory has already made to his Arthuriad, specifically those already mentioned in this chapter, one can see that the arrival of Malory's Galahad serves not only as the initiating action of the Grail Quest, but also as the climax of the chivalric renewal that Arthur began at the Round Table's foundation. Galahad is, as Barber puts it, "physically and spiritually perfect" (*The Holy Grail* 56); he therefore serves as the perfection of Malory's chivalry, and the model of what the vocation of knighthood can and should be. It is for this reason that his call to the Round Table's fellowship cannot come from Arthur, who despite his best efforts to remain a just and chivalrous king continually proves himself to be flawed. Rather, it must come from the Round Table itself. The Round Table is for Malory the symbol and mark of the fellowship's higher calling. This higher calling is firmly established in the Pentecostal oath, which Vinaver describes as "the most complete and authentic record of Malory's conception of chivalry" (Malory 1335, n120, 11-28, original emphasis). This oath, which "all knyghtis sworne of the Table Rounde, both old and yonge, and every yere so were the[y] sworne at the hyghe feste of Pentecoste" (120), clearly establishes a code of chivalry that is in line both with Lull's vision of the knight's

vocation as *the* maintainer of chivalry and justice, and Bernard's desire for this vocation to be clearly rooted in Christian spirituality. The oath charges the Knights of the Round Table:

> never to do outerage nothir mourthir, and allways to fle
> treson, and to gyff mercy unto hym that askith mercy,
> uppon payne of forfiture [of their] worship and lordship
> of kynge Arthure for evirmore; and allways to do ladyes,
> damesels, and jantilwomen and wydows [socour:] strengthe
> hem in hir ryghtes, and never to enforce them, uppon payne
> of dethe. Also, that no man take no batayles in a wrongefull
> quarell for no love ne for no worldis goodis. (120)

The Pentecostal Oath

Although the insertion of the Pentecostal oath is perhaps one of the most significant changes that Malory makes to *The Works* overall (it is perhaps the most significant after the insertion of *The Tale of Sir Gareth*), the concept of a chivalric oath associated with the Round Table originates in the Vulgate *Lancelot* (Norris 21). The author of the Vulgate Cycle describes the following:

> That day King Bademagu was seated at the Round Table
> by common accord of all those there and swore the same
> oath as all the others: always to come to the aid of widows,
> maidens and impoverished and disinherited noblemen,
> if ever he was summoned to do so or there was need.

(trans. William W. Kibler, qtd. in Norris 21)

While this passage must have influenced Malory's idea of including a chivalric oath specific to the Round Table Fellowship, several scholars, including Barber and Norris, have argued that the text of Malory's oath seems to be more heavily based on the charges read to initiate Knights of the Bath:

> I as a knyght declare un to you certeyne poyntis that longith un to this hye worshipfull order of knyghthode: ye schall love God above all thinge and be stedfaste in the feythe and sustene the chirche, and ye schall be trewe un to yowre sovereyne lorde and trewe of yowre worde and promys and sekirtee in that oughyte to be kepte. Also ye schall sustene wydowes in ther right at every tyme they wol requere yow and maydenys in ther virginite and helpe hem and socoure hem with yowre good that for lak of good they by not mysgovernyd. Also ye schall sitte in noo plase where that eny iugement schulde be gevyn wrongefully ayens eny body to yowre knowleche. Also ye schall not suffir noo murdreis nor extorcioners of the kyngis pepill with in the Contre there ye dwelle but with yowre power ye schall lete doo take them and put them in to the handis of Justice and that they be punysshid as the kyngis lawe woll. (qtd. in Norris 20)

Within all three of the aforementioned oaths a reader finds that "the conduct prescribed and the concern for justice, loyalty and mercy, and defence of the weak are very similar" (20). The oaths draw on traditions found within knightly rituals such as the blessing of an

advocatus, and manuals such as *The Book of the Ordre of Chyualry*. Given the similarity between the Pentecostal oath and these sources, which are well rooted in the spiritual aspects of knighthood, it is clear that Malory is not opposed to the concept of knighthood as a vocation. Rather, he encourages the enforcement of a standard of behavior that a knight must follow in order to fulfill his duties to be "true to the church and their sovereign . . . [which] surely would . . . have formed part of the Arthurian ethos" (21). Despite this, the question must be raised, as Norris acknowledges, as to why Malory, if he were in fact copying from the charges of the Knights of the Bath, would omit the part of the charges that instructs the knights on their duties of love of God and loyalty to the sovereign. Norris expands on Barber's theory that "Malory has rephrased the oath more vigorously" by arguing two possibilities. The first is that, while rephrasing the oath to make it more literary, Malory simply forgot the first part of the charge, due to the fact that he was attempting to remember words that he knew "from personal experience and [had] never [seen] written" (21). The second is that Malory may have removed the explicit Christian references from the oath in order to downplay the religious aspect of chivalry, and to emphasize the knights' dedication to Arthur (21). The first argument, although interesting, proves problematic due to the fact that there is no way to conclusively prove the theory that Malory had ever heard this charge, whether at his own accolade or at another, nor is there any way to disprove it. As for the second argument made by Norris, I disagree. It is clear that Malory's minimizing much of the religious imagery of his sources is in order to highlight the human aspects of knighthood, particularly the dedication to the sovereign; however, the omission of something equivalent to the first charge of the Bath from the Pentecostal oath is not enough to

render it secular. Instead, I contend that, although Malory's primary intention was to provide a description of the Round Table fellowship, both the text of the oath and the conditions under which it is sworn prove that the oath is, or is at least meant to be, implicitly spiritual.

In order to understand this claim one must first look at the relationship between the process by which one becomes a knight (which would have been common knowledge to Malory's intended audience), and the process by which one becomes a Knight of the Round Table. The men who are called to join the Round Table are already knights, unlike those who would be read the charge of the Bath at an accolade. Thus, one cannot read the Pentecostal oath as an example of the kind of charge that would be read to a squire before his accolade. Rather if knighthood is, as Hay suggests, the secular equivalent of the priesthood, it is possible to analogize the fellowship of the Round Table with the College of Cardinals, and the Pentecostal oath with a cardinal's oath of fidelity. A cleric who is created a cardinal gains greater recognition and privilege within the church without having the actual dignity of his clerical office increase. In the same way a seat at the Round Table give a knight more prestige and responsibility in Arthur's kingdom, without actually making him any more of a knight. Despite this, a seat at the table does provide knights, such as Lancelot or Tristram, whose lineage is from other lands an explicit link to both Camelot and Arthur, in the same way that membership in the College of Cardinals provides a churchman with a distinct tie to the See of Rome and thereby to the Pope. When viewed in this light the lack of the charges in the Pentecostal oath regarding the love of God and loyalty to the king are much less surprising. As Arthur tells Torre, after he is knighted, the members of the Round Table are "good knyght(es) . . . of proues and

worthyness" (Malory 100). Therefore, it must be assumed that they possess basic chivalric values such as love of God, and loyalty to the sovereign.

As Karen Cherewatuk observes, "Malory never describes a full knighting ritual" (44). Instead, he chooses to have the accolades he does describe take the form of a simple colée (he even goes so far as to rework the brief, yet descriptive, passage found in the *Queste del Saint Graal* describing Galahad's accolade into a brief colée performed by Lancelot). It is therefore impossible for scholars to compare the Pentecostal oath to the charges that members of the Fellowship would have been read during their accolades. If one accepts Cherewatuk's theory that Malory's readers would have, most likely, been of the noble, knightly, and upper classes, one can then assume that his intended readership would have been familiar with the charges given at an accolade, and would have assumed that, as knights, the members of the Fellowship were bound by them. More importantly, Malory's readers would have been able to notice the extra responsibilities contained in the Pentecostal oath, which Arthur requires the members of the Fellowship to fulfill, in addition to those already expected of them by virtue of holding the "high order of knighthood."

The first, and perhaps the most spiritual, of the charges is Arthur's requirement that the Knights of the Round Table are "never to do outerage nothir mourthir, and allways to fle treson, and to gyff mercy unto hym that askith mercy." Although words such as murder and treason clearly stand out within the context of this charge, the most important segment of this particular clause is the word *never*. Malory was not writing in the so-called "golden age" of chivalry that, if it ever did exist, existed in the High Middle Ages. Malory's Late Medieval audience would have had a rather different view of

chivalry. High Medieval authors expected knights to behave with honour both at court and on the battlefield. By the mid-fourteenth century, however, the requirement to be chivalrous on the battlefield had largely been abandoned as a societal expectation. Edward, the Black Prince, for instance, was considered a paragon of both chivalric virtue and knightly piety, despite the fact that his scorched earth tactics were quite unchivalrous. Nevertheless, for Malory this kind of behaviour was still unacceptable. Through his inclusion of the word *never* in this clause, Malory establishes that a knight of the Round Table has the obligation to rise above doing merely what is expected of him by society. Instead, he must set out to practice chivalry in its truest form. This includes meeting his enemies in proper knightly combat as opposed to participating in treacherous plots, whether on the battlefield or within courtly society. In the same way, the second clause of the charge, "allways to fle treson," requires the knights to avoid association with those who would do such things.

The first and second clauses of this charge may serve to hold the Knights of the Round Table to a higher moral standard, but it is the third clause that makes the standard implicitly virtuous. Both Lull's description of a knight's office and the charge of the Bath define the concept of justice, and emphasize that a knight must exercise it with full authority. Malory, however, revolutionizes this concept by introducing the duty of a Knight of the Round Table to be merciful to *any person* who asks for mercy. This simple expansion solidifies the placement of Arthurian chivalric values within the realm of a God-based ethical chivalry. The Round Table's concept of justice, the cornerstone of spiritual knighthood, becomes entrenched within the spirituality outlined by Christ in his Sermon on the Mount. It is particularly reflective of the fifth beatitude: "[b]lessed are the

merciful: for they shall obtain mercy" (Matt 5:7), as well as Jesus's latter instruction, "[l]ove your enemies: do good to them that hate you: and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you" (Matt 6:44). In addition to redefining the concept of chivalric justice, this clause also creates a practical way for Malory to show the effects that occur when members of the Fellowship put this part of the Pentecostal oath into practice. Throughout both *The Noble Tale of Sir Lancelot du Lake*, and *The Tale of Sir Gareth of Orkney That Was Called Bewmaynes*, Malory employs a trope in which a vanquished knight pleads for mercy, and is given it. The knight is then ordered by Lancelot or Gareth to go to court, and to present himself before Arthur (in the case of Gareth) or Guinevere (in the case of Lancelot). Upon their presentation at court, these knights are either given a task that leads to their sanctification (such as Sir Pedivere who becomes a holy man and a hermit), or choose to adopt the practices of the Round Table's chivalric system (such as Sir Persuant and Sir Ironside). Those who do adopt this system inevitably become members of the fellowship themselves. Both of these endings demonstrate Malory's belief that, through mercy, even the most tyrannical knight can be inspired to embrace the spirit of a chivalric vocation. The third charge of the Pentecostal oath also serves to expand the concept of justice. It orders a knight of the Round Table to "take no batayles in a wrongefull quarell for no love ne for no worldis goodis" (Malory 120), thus removing a knight's temptation to engage in a non-righteous quarrel to gain monetary reparation, or satisfying a personal need for revenge. Through the first and third charges, Malory's Arthur attempts to make sure that the enforcement of justice remains a knight's solemn duty, and that it does not become something which can be bought.

To ensure this, Malory has Arthur create a punitive system of cause and effect based around these two charges. Should the knights break either of these parts of the Pentecostal oath they will lose their worship, and be dismissed both from Arthur's vassalage and the fellowship of the Round Table. Although Arthur is never seen to exercise this particular system of punishment—in some cases he even makes a conscious choice not to do so—it theoretically serves a dual purpose. Firstly, it encourages the members of the Round Table to abide by the Oath's charges so that they may remain members of the fellowship. Secondly, it provides Arthur with an efficient and uncontestable way to remove knights who are unable to maintain the Fellowship's standards from both the Round Table and his retinue.

The second charge of the Pentecostal oath is distinct from the others as it deals with the duty of courtesy instead of the concept of justice. Like justice, this concept itself is not revolutionary. The idea that it was a knight's responsibility to come to the aid of widows and maidens is something that had clearly been established by Malory's time, being commonplace within chivalric manuals and literature (Norris 22). The Knights of the Round Table, however, are to extend this courtesy to ladies and gentlewomen. This puts all upper-class women, not just those who are husbandless, into the category of those whom the knights are required to aid, and whose rights they must protect, thereby "making the obligation of knights to defend women . . . greater than in analogous chivalric oaths" (Saunders 243).[12]

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[12] Although not explicitly stated, the fact that Gawain is required to make a further vow that he will not oppose a lady or gentlewomen unless he is fighting for one lady's honour, and his opponent for another (see Malory 109) seems to imply that Knights of the Round

The second part of the section regarding women orders knights not to "enforce them [women] uppon payne of dethe." While the idea of rape as a capital offence may not be difficult for modern readers to imagine, it must be understood that legal practices in fifteenth-century England were remarkably different. The legal definitions of rape and abduction began to blur following the Norman Conquest, until this legal blurring was "made explicit in the first statue of Westminster." Issued in 1275, during the reign of Edward I, this statute classifies both rape and abduction "under the legal term *raptus*" (Saunders 59). In addition to this it instructs judges that *raptus* "is not to be treated as a felony but as a trespass, a lesser crime for which the punishment is not dismemberment or loss of life, but two years imprisonment followed by a fine, to be extended if that fine cannot be paid" (Saunders 60). In 1285, the second statute of Westminster reinstated *raptus* as a felony offence, stating "*qe si homme ravise femme espose, damousele, ou autre femme*" he shall have judgment "*de vie e de membre*" (qtd in Saunders 60). However, as Corinne Saunders notes, the use of the term *ravise* in the statute instead of a word more clearly indicating rape or abduction, and the emphasis placed on the action of abduction as opposed to the action of rape shows that the classification of *raptus* as a felony punishable "*de vie e de membre*" seemed to be "a legal afterthought" (60-61). Saunders goes on to mention that there appears to be only one recorded case of *raptus*, brought before the courts in 1305, that resulted in a sentence of "*de vie e de membre*," and that even this sentence was later mitigated to a fine. By the middle of the fourteenth century *raptus* had become primarily a trespassing crime, which was committed by the

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Table are allowed to oppose ladies and gentlewomen if the need is just, e.g. Tristram's opposing of Morgan le Fay.

aggressor against the victim's male relatives. This was formalized in 1382, when a new statute allowed the family of the victim to request the right of reprisal (62). This creates what Saunders refers to as legal complications, which result from the "low value placed on [a woman's] life" and "by contrast the high value placed on property" (63). Given her detailed analysis of rape in medieval England, and her observation that the clause regarding rape is the most striking of the Pentecostal oath (242), it is surprising that, in the same monograph, Saunders underplays the significance of Arthur's choice to make the punishment for forced sexual interaction death. She states that Malory brings a clear example of the English legal system into his primarily French understanding of law by engaging with the legal understanding that "the potential punishment for rape was death, although this was a potential . . . that was not realized" (243). This leaves her readers with the impression that Arthur is simply mandating the harshest possible punishment for cases of *raptus*. But more is going on. By creating a separate clause that specifically identifies individual women (and not their families) as the victims of rape, Malory, as Saunders suggests before her downplaying of Arthur's actions, makes rape "the gravest way of dishonouring a woman" (242). This dishonour can only be atoned for through the death of the offender. This death both strengthens the woman's rights, as is required by the Pentecostal oath, and makes sure that rapists, much like traitors and dishonorable knights, do not sit at the Round Table.

Some scholars, such as Catherine Batt, argue that the portion of the oath regarding women merely serves to appropriate the female body as a tool to evaluate "male chivalric integrity" (Batt 69); however, I would argue that they are relying too heavily on a modern feminist criticism, which should not be applied to a fifteenth-century text. These critics

are either forgetting, or choosing to ignore, two basic facts. Firstly, the laws of chivalry require a knight to protect the helpless regardless of gender (see both "Arthur and Accolon," and *The Noble Tale of Sir Lancelot Du Lake* in which Arthur and Lancelot, respectively, use force of arms to protect male characters). Secondly, it is an historical truth that, in those times, women were not accorded the same privileges, opportunities, or rights that men were including, in many cases, the right to defend themselves. Because of this, the protection of women's rights would not have been seen as a misogynistic act by Malory's contemporaries. Rather, it would have been seen as a standard part of chivalric behavior, and a way of honouring women.

As P.E. Tucker observes in "Chivalry in the *Morte*," Malory's intention, in creating the Round Table, is to show an organization where the concepts of "prowess and worship" are, or at least have the potential to be, both held in the highest esteem and practiced with the greatest intensity (Tucker 66). This "remarkable fervor behind Malory's belief in chivalry" (66) is the driving force behind the Pentecostal oath, which in turn is the ultimate fusion between the highest aspects of justice and fellowship found in the first and third sections of the oath and the most worshipful aspects of courtesy found in the second section. In this fusion, the elements become a "sentiment that has the strength and fervor of belief" (67); moreover, it is this strength that gives the ideals represented by the Pentecostal Oath their initial transformative nature. However—much like the expectations outlined for the Knights of Christ within *In Praise of the New Knighthood*—the added responsibilities given to members of the Round Table, though admirable, soon prove to be more difficult to put into practice than they seemed at first. The majority of the knights discussed in detail by Malory (with the notable exception of

Sir Galahad, who will be discussed in the next chapter) fail in upholding their Pentecostal oaths on at least one occasion, and ofttimes many. While certain members of the fellowship, such as Prince Mordred, Sir Agarvaine, or Prince Maleagant, seem, through their actions, to show an outright rejection of the Pentecostal oath, the majority of the Fellowship seems to be presented in a way that is similar to Martin B. Shichtman's description of Malory's Gawain:

> a character of tremendous potential . . . a man of good intentions and noble ambitions . . . destined for chivalric greatness. But Malory's Gawain is only a man and not a very remarkable one at that; he is only notable in his aspirations and his frailties . . . but he is far from the worst of the knights in Camelot. His ironic failures are simply exaggerations of the shortcomings of virtually every knight in the kingdom and of the Round Table itself. Like most of his colleagues, Gawain dreams of chivalric perfection, only to fall short of achieving it. He should not be faulted too severely for his hopes or his failures. He is a character who, with limited abilities, has done his best. (71)

In this case I would simply expand Shichtman's description by adding that the thing that Gawain and the other Knights of the Round Table have done their best at was to use their limited abilities to attempt to fulfill the rather difficult vocation of being a Knight of the Round Table.

Pentecost and the Spirituality of the Knightly Vocation

It is not surprising that Malory chose the feast of Pentecost as the date for the Round Table's foundation as, historically speaking, men who did not receive battlefield accolades were usually knighted at high feasts. Pentecost was especially popular as it served as the culmination of Eastertide, which was the most important time in the medieval liturgical year (Hernández 72-3). Nevertheless, Malory did not choose Pentecost solely for this reason. On the contrary, Malory's choice of Pentecost serves three inter-related purposes: it strengthens the fellowship aspect of the Round Table, it confirms the spiritual aspect of this fellowship, and it expands the unique bond between Arthur and Galahad to include the rest of the Fellowship's knights.

The aspect of strengthening the fellowship would have been extremely obvious to medieval audiences. They would have seen a feast dedicated to the remembrance of the Holy Ghost descending upon the disciples as "synonymous . . . with notions of the ideal Christian community, . . . and the gifts of the Holy Spirit . . . which empowered human beings to carry out the work of God for the people of God and which propelled all things towards potential fullness" (72). Being sworn together annually on the feast of Christian community emphasizes Malory's desire to present the fellowship as the ideal, chivalric, community throughout the text. In the same way, the fact that Pentecost is regarded as the birthday of the Church serves to highlight the Fellowship's vocational aspect. Just as the apostles, following the confirmation given to them by the descent of the Holy Ghost, were sent forth to baptize and preach the gospel, so too are the Knights of the Round Table publically commissioned and sent forth upon their swearing the Pentecostal oath. This ceremony, then, honours the relationship between the Holy Ghost

and chivalry. Albert Hernández associates it with a "giving and fullness . . . akin to *imitatio Christi* in the ideals of knighthood" (73). The total giving of oneself to the Table and to Arthur's kingdom, upon taking the Pentecostal oath, can be read as something akin to the total commitment to the Church that the Apostles make, in *imitatio Christi*, at the beginning of the Book of Acts (1174).[13] Malory emphasizes the unprecedented nature of this fellowship, as the worthiest knights in the world, when he writes, "there was never Crystyn kynge that ever hylde such a felyshyp togydyrs" (1184) before Arthur called the knights together at Pentecost.

The annual re-swearing of the oath primarily serves to remind the knights of their commitment to the fellowship; however, it also serves to confirm the seriousness with which each knight must approach his vocation before becoming a Knight of the Round Table. Oaths in the Middle Ages were considered to be sacred, binding upon the swearer until they had been fulfilled, the period of the oath had run out, or they were lawfully dispensed from the oath. The swearing of an oath was, therefore, a serious matter, and oaths sworn on a high feast were considered particularly solemn. The

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[13] "And all they that believed, were together, and had all things common. Their possessions and goods they sold, and divided them to all, according as every one had need. And continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they took their meat with gladness and simplicity of heart; Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord increased daily together such as should be saved." (Acts 2:44-7, DRV)

breaking of such an oath without the gravest of causes and/or a proper dispensation was thus considered a great profanation. In addition to this, breaking an oath sworn on Pentecost, without lawful dispensation or due cause, was considered to be "an offense against the Holy Spirit and the Theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity" (73). The Pentecostal oath then has a specifically sacred quality that, as Hernández argues, should serve to restrain the "feudal violence and political instability" found in the early days of Arthur's kingdom. Although this does not happen, the fact remains that, despite being a secular fellowship, the Knights of the Round Table are clearly regarded (at least institutionally) as the truest knights in Malory's *Works*. They are publically set apart from the other knights by a particular bond of fellowship, and a solemn spiritual oath.

The final purpose of placing the oath at Pentecost is to expand the special bond that exists between Arthur and Galahad, in the French texts, to include the rest of the knights. In the French texts, Arthur's first encounter with Galahad marks the beginning of his end, and Galahad's first encounter with Arthur marks the end of his beginning. As Anne Berthelot so eloquently summarizes, within the French cycles, "Arthur's glory is to die"; however, he can only experience this glory once Merlin's prophecies have been fulfilled. In order for Arthur to receive his greatest glory, then, Galahad must first fulfill the prophecies made during the Round Table's foundation. Galahad must draw the sword from the stone in the lake, sit in the Siege Perilous, find the Holy Grail, and heal the Fisher King in order to achieve the glories of the best knight in the world. In order for these events to occur Galahad must first come to Arthur's court, leaving behind his previous life and accepting his knightly vocation. By embracing his true purpose, Galahad brings to fruition events that began years before his birth. These events occurred

as a direct result of Arthur, like Galahad, leaving behind his own youth on the feast of Pentecost after drawing a sword from a stone. By removing the prophecy of Galahad from Merlin's mouth and transforming the chivalric charge into a re-swearable oath, Malory redefines Arthur, changing him from a king who has his best knights sit with him as fellows at the Round Table to the king *and* the head of a fellowship bound together in unity by the Pentecostal oath. Arthur's glories become the Round Table's glories, and the glories of the Round Table become those of Arthur. It is for this reason that, although Arthur's first encounter with Galahad marks the end of the young knight's beginnings, as it does in the French books, Galahad's own arrival does not mark the beginning of the end for Arthur; rather, the arrival of Galahad marks the ending *and* the beginning of the Fellowship of the Round Table.

Following Galahad's drawing of the sword of Balin from the stone, Lancelot is approached by a lady on a white palfrey who tells him "ye were thys day in the morne the best knyght of the worlde. But who sholde sey so now, he sholde be a lyer" (863). This encounter clearly marks the end of the age of knight-errantry, for the fellowship of the Round Table, and the beginning of the age of the focused spiritual quest. The stories told in *The Tale of the Sankgrael* differ tremendously from those that Malory has told in the three preceding books. Gareth's exterior battles for Lyonesse are replaced by Percival's interior battles for purity. The knights who praise Tristram for his glory are replaced by the hermits who chastise Gawain for his sins. Most importantly the mantle of the best knight in the world passes from the father, Lancelot, to the son, Galahad. Lancelot's knightly behaviour, which is focused on maintaining justice and peace through achievements in prowess and courtesy, is replaced by something greater. Galahad

exemplifies a type of chivalric conduct that expands the duties of knighthood, in order to emphasize it as a vocation that comes from God. Galahad represents a chivalry based in love and peace, and a justice based in mercy. This chivalry will require the Knights of the Round Table to close their eyes to the world of spectacle, and open them to the world of mystery; to cease looking at the world with the eyes of adventure, and to begin to look with the eyes of faith.

"I Will Take The Chalice of Salvation" The Best Knight(s) in the World

A Shift in The Story

In 1976 Chase Horton, the executor of John Steinbeck's literary estate, oversaw the posthumous publication of Steinbeck's unfinished final work *The Acts of King Arthur and His Noble Knights*. This project, which Steinbeck had hoped to be his magnum opus, was the author's attempt to represent the legend of King Arthur in the same way that he believed Malory had, "[in] the clear and common speech of his time and country" (Steinbeck 358). Steinbeck assured both his agent Elizabeth Otis and Horton that Malory "simply wrote [the stories] for his time, and his time understood them" (358). As his letters to Otis and Horton show, Steinbeck had hoped to translate *The Works* in its entirety before his death at the age of sixty-six in 1968. This hope was not achieved. Moreover, these letters (which Horton finally published as an appendix to the project in 2007, following the death of Elaine Steinbeck) show the years of careful thought and dedicated research that Steinbeck engaged in before beginning to craft his adaptation. In these letters Steinbeck offers several insights into Malory's writings. One of Steinbeck's most noteworthy insights is his analysis of Malory's adaptation of the relationship between Lancelot and Galahad, particularly his question "why did Lancelot fail in his quest and why did Galahad succeed?" (326). Steinbeck posits that the attempts scholars have made to answer these questions are inadequate, as they do not take into account what Malory really was. As Steinbeck informs Otis and Horton, "Malory has been studied as a translator, as a soldier, as a rebel, as a religious, as an expert in courtesy, as nearly everything you think of except one, and that is what he was—a novelist" (326).

Steinbeck's use of the word "novelist" is anachronistic, as the genre that scholars now classify as the novel did not appear until the eighteenth century. His point, however, that a reader of *The Works* must remember that Malory was a storyteller in his own right is worth contemplating. This is especially true in regards to *The Tale of the Sankgreal* wherein Malory follows his source text with a "greater fidelity than that of any other of the eight tales" (Norris 114). Scholarship on the fidelity with which Malory approached this particular section of *The Works* has tended, in the past, to focus on the changes that Malory made to his primary source text, the Vulgate *Queste de Sainte Graal*. Scholars, such as Norris, have argued that these changes mostly serve to harmonize the *Sankgreal*'s narrative with those of Malory's early tales, and have "nothing to do with the plot" (118). Although this conclusion seems reasonable when analyzing Malory as a translator, or as an adapter of earlier texts, it presents a significant problem when analyzing him as a storyteller. The changes made to the text of the *Queste* may not drastically alter the plot of the *Sankgreal*; nevertheless, they significantly alter the story's overall tenor, both explicitly connecting it with Malory's other tales and shifting its focus. Malory changes the quest from a story centered on the mysteries of the Grail to an exemplar of the vocation of knighthood, which is personified in Galahad. This version of the quest is not the story of a man who appears to be the perfect knight because he is analogous to Christ (Ihle 118), but rather the story of a man who serves as imitation of Christ in the world because he is the "worthyest knyght of the worlde" (Malory 877).

The introduction of Galahad to the Round Table court, in both *The Queste* and *The Works*, is clearly designed to portray the young knight as a Christ figure. Galahad arrives on the feast of Pentecost in a manner that is highly reminiscent of John's initial

post-resurrection appearance of Jesus.[14] He appears suddenly in a room, which remains miraculously well lit despite having the doors and windows shut, and greets those assembled with the phrase "peace be with you" (Malory 859; *Queste* 37), the same phrase Jesus uses in John's gospel (see John 20:21a). This entrance emphasizes the analogous relationship between the promises made by Merlin at Arthur's wedding, that the Siege Perilous will be filled by the best knight in the world, and the fulfillment of the promise made by Jesus at the Last Supper, to send the Holy Spirit, which both Malory and the *Queste* author rely on to set the tone of their stories.

Following this introduction Malory makes the first of his "seemingly insignificant changes" (Norris 114), which serve to help shift the focus of his story. The ancient's introduction of Galahad is transformed from the *Queste*'s "I bring you the Desired Knight, he who stems from the noble house of King David, and the lineage of Joseph of Arimathea" (37) to the simpler "I brynge you here a yonge knyght the whych ys of kynges lynage and of the kynrede of Joseph of Aramathy" (859). By removing both the allusion to the theophanic passage from the book of Haggai[15] (*Queste* 37n) and the

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[14] "Now when it was late that same day, the first of the week, and *the doors were shut*, where the disciples were gathered together, for fear of the Jews [read Jewish authorities], Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them: Peace be to you. And when he had said this, he shewed them his hands and his side. The disciples therefore were glad, when they saw the Lord." (John 20:19-20, DRV, emphasis added).

[15] "And I will move all nations: *and the desired of all nations shall come*: and I will fill this house with glory: saith the Lord of hosts." (Hg 2.8 DRV, emphasis added [nb: Many modern biblical translations number this passage as Haggai 2:7]).

emphasis on Galahad's kinship with Jesus Christ and Solomon, Malory allows the text to focus instead on the potential that is to be found within Galahad's knighthood. With these changes Malory begins the systematic elimination of "narrative that takes attention away from his major interest: how earthly knights, with the Christian vocation that knighthood implies ought to act to be worthy of seeing the Eucharist unveiled in the world" (Ihle 113). As Sandra Ness Ihle notes, Malory's concern with "historical chivalry rather than doctrinal allegory" causes him to shorten both the counsel given to Percival by his aunt and the Legend of the Tree of Life (114-7). These edits remove the explicit identification of the Round Table with Galahad as "master and shepherd" (*Queste* 100) with the table of the Last Supper where "Jesus Christ presided as master and shepherd" (100). It also removes references to the anagogical relationship between Christ, Galahad, and Abel, which is based upon "underpinnings found throughout sacred history" (Ihle 118). Malory instead presents a Galahad who, despite being "the worthiest of knights foretold by God," has "no typological connection" to Abel or Christ (118). Malory instead creates his own typological connection between Galahad and Sir Balin le Savage. This connection is made clear when Galahad, upon drawing the sword from the stone in the river, states, "[n]ow have I the swerde that somtyme was the good knyghtes Balyns le Saveaige" (Malory 863). Malory's portrayal of Galahad follows his portrayal of Balin who had once been "the best knight in the world."

The deliberate choice to insert references both to Balin and the "dolorous stroke that Balyn gaff unto kynge Pelles, the whych ys nat yett hole, nor naught shall be tyll that I hele hym" (863) cannot be read as one of Malory's attempts to harmonize his current story with the changes he made to earlier portions of *The Works*. In fact this insertion

makes the story more confusing. Unlike the *Post-Vulgate* author who removes the *Queste*'s description of the dolorous stroke, as a result of Parlan drawing the Sword of Strange Hangings, in an attempt to harmonize his plot with the changes that he made to Post-Vulgate *Merlin*, Malory includes references both to Parlan's maiming and the dolorous stroke delivered by Balin (Norris 115-6). As a result, *The Works* presents two contradictory accounts of the wounding of the Maimed King. This creates a confusion for the reader, which is heightened by the fact that Malory removes all of the French texts' references to the character of the "Fisher King." Malory instead presents the wounded King Pellas as mobile, while introducing another bed-ridden "Maimed King," whom Galahad heals at the end of the *Sankgreal*. If Malory had properly distinguished between Pellam (his spelling of Pellehan) and Pelles, as the author of the *Queste* does, he would have managed to have made the story of the Wounded King(s) "even more coherent than the *Post-Vulgate*" (Norris 115-6), given his removal of the passage from *L'estoire del Saint Graal* in which Pellehan is maimed in a battle against Rome. Malory initially avoids the *Post-Vulgate* author's mistake only to create it for himself, and then further complicate it by introducing the Maimed King. While these conflations may seem, at first, to be an example of Malory's authorial carelessness, a careful reading of the changes made by Malory to both "The Knight with Two Swords" and *The Tale of the Sankgreal* show that this is not the case. The—attempted—conflation of Pellam, Pelles and Parlan—a conflation that was perhaps even intended to be extended to the nameless Maimed King—was an intentional choice. The—attempted—conflation of these characters highlights Galahad's role as the ideal Christian knight. It gives him the opportunity to correct the mistakes of his predecessor, Balin, through his own knightly

actions, in the same way that Jesus was able to rectify the faults of Adam, during his earthly life.

Malory's Ideal Knights

As Hodges observes prior to the foundation of the Round Table, and the creation of "the new chivalry with its dependence on [Christian] ethics" (49), Malory's England was held together by a code of chivalry based upon "personal loyalty" (46). This more primitive type of chivalry allows, as Elizabeth Pochoda points out, knights to be both extremely loyal to Arthur and not expected to extend this loyalty "to the community of [Arthur's] court, or to [his] realm as a whole" (qtd. in Hodges 46). The Tale of "Balin le Sauvage or the Knight with Two Swords" must be read with this understanding of chivalry, in order to understand its overall significance to *The Works.*

Following the example of the *Post-Vulgate Cycle*, Malory introduces the character of Sir Balin le Savage near the beginning of the whole text, soon after Arthur's ascension to the throne. Malory's Balin, as Pochoda stresses, "has a strong *personal* loyalty to Arthur, [a fact that is] emphasized in two sourceless passages" (qtd. in Hodges 46). Unfortunately this loyalty does not extend to those who are not Arthur himself. This point is further emphasized by Malory's introduction of Balin, which deviates from his source text. Balin is introduced to the reader as "a poore knyght with kynge Arthur that had bene presonere with hym half a yere and more for sleyng of a knyght which was cosyne unto kynge Arthur" (62). Balin is removed from prison on the advice of Arthur's barons, as none of them are able to draw the sword of the best knight in the world from

its scabbard. The damsel bearing the sword mocks Balin upon his arrival, for his poor dress. He responds:

> worthynes and good tacchis and also good dedis is nat only in araymente, but manhode and worship [ys hyd] within a mannes person; and many a worshipfull knyght ys nat knowyn unto all peple. And therefore worship and hardynesse ys nat in araymente. (Malory 63)

It is now clear to the reader that despite his external faults Balin is extremely loyal both to his family and to his king: the two requirements necessary to be a paragon of chivalry during this stage of Arthur's reign. It is these loyalties that enable Balin to draw the sword from the scabbard, thereby identifying himself to the damsel, Arthur, and the court, in the damsel's words, as "the beste [knight] that ever y founde" (64). It also justifies his immediate decapitation of the Lady of the Lake, who killed his mother. According to Hodges, by killing her Balin has "been faithful to his kin, as a good knight should" (46). Unlike modern scholars, Arthur does not approve of the sudden decapitation of one of his closest allies by a knight whose murder sentence he has just commuted. Arthur's noticeable disappointment in Balin's action causes the ever-loyal knight to vow to either capture or slay Arthur's greatest enemy, King Rion of Ireland. Misfortune continues to follow. During his attempt to capture King Rion, Balin slays Sir Launceor, causing Launceor's brokenhearted paramour Columbe to take her own life. Balin does eventually capture Rion; however, this initiates Arthur's war with King Lot. It is during this war that Lot is slain by Pellinor, an action that causes Gawain to become obsessed with protecting his family and its honour no matter what the cost. As readers of

Malory are no doubt aware this obsession becomes very dangerous in the latter parts of *The Works*. Among other things this obsession eventually leads to Gawain slaying Pellinor, the murder of Lamerok by the Orkney brothers, sans Gareth, and perhaps most significantly it contributes to the action which proves to be the catalyst for the downfall of the Round Table; Gawain's desire for vengeance against Lancelot following the murderers of Gareth and Gaheris. Following the battle, the redeemed Balin is given the task of locating Sir Harleus le Berbeus, and escorting him to Arthur's pavilion. Balin succeeds in finding Harleus, only to witness his death at the hands of the invisible knight Garlon. Balin decides to bring this killer to justice, and follows Garlon to his brother Pellam's castle. Upon arriving at the castle, Balin kills Garlon with the same truncheon that Garlon used to kill Harleus. This leads to a conflict in the current chivalric system. Just as Balin was required to slay Garlon out of loyalty to Arthur, Pellam is now required to avenge his brother by killing Balin. Pellam quickly disarms Balin, which causes the knight to run from room to room until he finds "a mervaylous spere strangely wrought" (85). Balin takes the spear and stabs Pellam in the thigh, inadvertently delivering the dolorous stroke. The force of the stroke kills most of the inhabitants of the castle, and sends both Balin and Pellam into a three-day coma. During this time Merlin arrives to remove Balin from the castle. He informs the young knight, upon the latter's awakening, that the maiden he was travelling with has died. Following Merlin's exposition, Malory diverges from *The Post-Vulgate Cycle* by inserting the following original passage:

> And kynge Pellam lay so many yerys sore wounded, and
> myght never be hole tylle Galaad the Hawte Prynce
> heled hym in the queste of the Sankgreall. For in that

> place was parte of the bloode of Oure Lorde Jesu Cryste,
> which Joseph of Aramathy brought into thys londe. And
> there hymselff [lay] in that ryche bedde. And that was the
> spere whych Longeus smote Our Lorde with to the herte.
> And kynge Pellam was nyghe of Joseph his kynne, and that
> was the moste worshipfulist man on lyve in tho dayes,
> and grete pité hit was of hys hurte. (*Works* 85)

Malory then concludes the story of Balin's life of woe by having him die from wounds that he, unknowingly, suffers at the hands of his brother Sir Balan. Balan in turn dies from wounds suffered at Balin's hands.

The answer to the question of why Balin, the best knight in the world before the foundation of the Round Table, must suffer such a miserable ending to such a tragic life is inherently tied to the role that Malory's additions play in defining the greater story. As Hodges notes, the best knight in the world's obvious failure at knightly prowess is "not just [a] personal failure," but "also a stark warning of flaws in the whole system of prevailing ethics" (48). Balin's second sword, the symbol of the best knight in the world, becomes a symbol of failure. It will remain so, as Malory makes clear in his insertion, until the damage he has caused is healed by "Galaad the Hawt Prynce . . . in the queste of the Sankgreall." The qualifier "the haut prince," while appropriate for any prince in Malory's time, is not used again until the writing on the back of the Siege Perilous switches, just prior to Galahad's arrival at Pentecost, to read "THYS YS THE SYEGE OF SIR

GALAHAD THE HAWTE PRYNCE" (Malory 860).[16] Almost immediately following the use of this phrase Malory describes Galahad's removal of the sword of the best knight in the world from the stone in the lake. By solidifying this typological connection between Galahad and Balin, Malory creates a chivalric mythos for his version of Arthurian Britain that is extremely similar to Christian salvation history. The intricate links between the fall of man in the Old Testament and the redemption of mankind in the New Testament are mirrored in the plot points that connect stories found before Galahad's arrival at court and those within *The Tale of the Sankgreal*.

Malory shortens the pre-Solomonic portion of the *Queste*'s "The Legend of the Tree of Life," which is itself based upon the legend "Of The Invention of the Holy Cross, and First of This World Invention" found in Jacopo de Voragine's *The Golden Legend*. However, he makes it clear that, in his version of salvation history, Eve brought a branch from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil with her when she was exiled from Eden. Eve planted this branch and "by the wylle of Oure Lorde the braunche grew to a grete tre within a litill whyle" (990). It is under that tree, according to Malory, that "Cayme slew Abell" (991). Following the mention of Cain and Abel, Malory omits much of the explicatory narrative of the *Queste*. He merely informs his readers that the tree remains untouched until the Holy Ghost shows Solomon the coming of the Virgin Mary, through his lineage, and how through her shall come "a greater joy to a man an hondred

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[16] Although the qualifier "the haute prince" is appropriate for any prince it is most likely assigned to Galahad more out of confusion with *Vulgate* character of Sir Galahaut the Haut Prince, who appears briefly in Malory's *Tristam*, than of any desire to give Galahad a greater title.

times than thys hevynesse gyvith sorow" (991). Solomon proceeds to consult his wife who prophesies the coming of a knight who shall pass "all knyghtes of chevalry which hath been tofore him and shall come afftir hym" (992). She then convinces Solomon to place the re-pommelled and re-sheathed sword of David within the bedchamber on a newly built ship. She then takes four sections of wood from The Tree of Life. She fashions three into spindles, placing them in the ship's bedchamber, and inserts one into the Sword of David's new scabbard.

Given that Malory's version of the legend is designed to emphasize Galahad's lineage and prophesied status as the greatest of all knights, Solomon's revelation of the coming of Jesus may seem out of place. On the contrary, it is necessary in order to establish the parallels between the story of salvation and the evolution of Malory's history. The references to the great joy won by Jesus's passion, death, and resurrection would have been particularly striking to Malory's intended readership who, through constant exposure to mystery cycles and other devotionals, would have had a keen understanding of the allegorical imagery associated with the climax of salvation history. These allegories are perhaps best represented in the apocryphal gospels. *The Gospel of Nicodemus*, for instance, makes several references to the role of the relationships between Adam and Christ, and the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Cross in salvation history. The most notable of these references occurs at the end of the harrowing of Hell. Christ bids Adam and the righteous, "Come with me all you who experienced death through the tree that this one touched; for now see, I am raising all of you up through the tree of the cross" (*The Gospel of Nicodemus* 24:1b), thus confirming the redemptive effect of the resurrection, and undoing the damage done to mankind by the fall.

Malory's overarching theme of the best knight in the world begins along the same lines as his interpretation of salvation history, and seems to run parallel to it. Just as Adam is warned of the consequences of eating of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, so too does the damsel warn Balin that using the sword of the best knight in the world will lead to his ruin. Much like Adam who ignores this warning and eats the fruit, thereby setting into motion the events that lead to the fall of man, Balin fails to heed the warning of the damsel. As I have already explained this sets into motion the chain of events that leads to the dolorous stroke. The parallels continue at the end of this tale. The branch planted by Eve in order to grow into the Tree of Life, under which Adam is buried, finds a parallel in the perron created by Merlin to mark the spot where Balin kills Launceor. The comparison between the episode of Cain's murder of Abel and its mirror during Arthur's time, although present within Malory's text, proves more difficult to distinguish. The equivalent to Abel's murder does not occur within *The Tale of King Arthur*, but rather within *Tristram*. This may seem surprising at first given that Balin, like Cain, is responsible for the death of his brother; nevertheless, a close comparison of these texts shows that this analogy does not stand up to scrutiny. The one portion from the *Queste's* section on Cain and Abel that Malory made sure to include in his story is the fact that Abel is *specifically* murdered under the Tree of Life, and that, following his murder, his blood soaked into the ground. Balin and Balan, on the other hand, do not fight at the perron, nor is their blood described as soaking into the earth. Rather, the murder of Abel corresponds to the duel between Lancelot and Tristram where the ground around the perron is soaked, not by the blood of the murdered son of the first man but rather, by the battle wounds of the supposed successors of the best knight in the world.

Malory's direct telling of salvation history ends with the revelation to Solomon that Jesus, the son of Mary, will come from his line. It is at this point that the story of Solomon shifts from being a part of salvation history, and becomes the pre-history of the tale of the best knight in the world. Following his sources, Malory establishes that Solomon's contribution to the quest is the building of a ship furnished with parts "made . . . from the Tree of Life" (R. Barber *The Holy Grail* 69), and the placing the Sword of the Strange Girdle within the ship. Thus Malory, like *The Vulgate* author, emphasizes the obvious connections between the quest for the Grail and salvation history. Because of Malory's changes to the story the purposes of the ship and the sword are transformed. They shift from the arena and symbol by which Galahad is firmly placed in the line of Christ to the place and thing by which he is re-confirmed as the best knight in the world. Upon the discovery of the sword in *The Queste*, Percival's sister informs the knights "the name of the scabbard is Memory of Blood. For no man of understanding will be able to look at that part of the scabbard which was made from the Tree of Life without recalling to mind the blood of Abel" (*Queste* 237). This passage emphasizes the fact that the sword's bearer will be associated with the Abel / Christ tradition. Malory instead renders the phrase "the s[h]eeth, Mevear of Blood. For no man that hath blood in hym ne shall never see that one party of the sheth whych was made of the tree of lyff" (995). As Vinaver notes, this rendering results from "a misreading of the French *sans* meaning sense" (Malory 1515, n995, 16-18); nevertheless, this does not matter as the "sentence is meaningless as it stands because Malory has omitted the most important part of the corresponding sentence in French" (n995, 16-18). Although Vinaver is correct in stating that the removal of the Abel clause renders this sentence nonsensical, he fails to observe

the intention behind Malory's removal of said clause. By removing the symbolic meaning of the scabbard, Malory allows his readers to focus on the fact that Galahad is now the bearer of two swords, thus continuing the analogous relationship between salvation and chivalric history. Just as Jesus, "the last Adam" (cf. 1 Cor 15:45), reconciles the world on the Cross, undoing the consequences of the first Adam's fault, and creating a sense of fulfillment within salvation history, so too does Galahad's entry into the Grail Castle, as the Knight with Two Swords, in order to heal the maimed king and undo the damage done by the first Knight with Two Swords, create a sense of completion within the text's chivalric history. As Mann observes, "the wound opened up by Balin is healed by Galahad . . . who brings the unfinished narrative to fulfillment" (211-2). Of course this fulfillment would have been made all the more poignant if Malory had been able to harmonize the back-stories of the wounded kings and the dolorous stroke(s).

Through his use of textual mirroring, Malory creates an association between the inherited religious imagery found in the *Sankgreal* and the overall meaning of the actions of his characters throughout his text. The Christian qualities of the perfect man must now be reflected within the qualities of the perfect knight. This change results in Galahad shifting from an anagogical to a tropological Christ figure, due to his exemplarily knightly character. This transformation allows Malory to make two important changes to the text. Firstly, as there is no longer a need to create a direct anagogical link between the characters of Galahad and God, Malory can present his religious imagery in a much more "immediate and personal dialogue . . . not unlike that of the contemporary English mystics, such as Richard Rolle and Nicholas Love," thereby allowing his text to be more in line with the "devotional practices and beliefs of English laymen in the mid-fifteenth

century," as opposed to those of the thirteenth century French priests who wrote the *Vulgate* (218). Secondly, the Grail is not achieved by Galahad in *The Works* solely because he is the best knight in the world, and therefore destined to achieve it. Rather his actions "as judged by conventional Christian morality" (Ihle 127) represent the highest form of chivalry. This makes him the exemplar of the knightly vocation defined for members of the Round Table by Arthur in the Pentecostal oath, which in turn makes him worthy to receive the Grail.

Lancelot and the Vocation of Chivalry

The primary difference between Malory and his predecessors "is the qualities by which the knights succeed or fail in their search of the Grail[;] . . . for Malory, earthly fame is not without its merits" (R. Barber *The Holy Grail* 218). Despite the fact that the spiritual nature of the quest causes a knight's ability to achieve the Grail completely to be governed by the way in which he lives out the Christian values to which he is committed by the Pentecostal oath, with those whose virtue is above reproach ultimately succeeding, Malory does not completely disregard worldly merit. This allows even the "erthely knyghtes" (Malory 933), whom he describes as blackened by "their synne and their wyckednesse" (946), to partake in some share of the glory which the author of *The Queste* reserves for those men Malory describes as the "verry knyght[s] and the servaunte[s] of Jesu Cryste" (968). Most notably, and quite unsurprisingly, Malory is much kinder in his treatment of Lancelot than *The Queste*'s author, lessening the knight's humiliation by editing and abbreviating the spiritual direction given to him by the first hermit he encounters (Ihle 146). Malory even has one hermit emphasize Lancelot "as a

paragon of earthly chivalry" (147). This is a far cry from the *Queste* hermits who expound "the perfection of Galahad" (147) calling him, among other things, "the true knight who shall transcend in chivalry and virtue his fellows past and present" (*Queste* 134), while implying that Lancelot, like all the others, is merely an ordinary knight caught in mortal sin. Although Malory does not ignore Lancelot's sinfulness—he even acknowledges the ongoing nature of Lancelot's sinful state during the Grail quest—he changes the root cause of the sin from pride to instability.

In her analysis of Lancelot's Grail adventure, Ihle posits that the most striking alteration of Lancelot's sinfulness is perhaps the change that Malory makes during the mêlée between the black and white knights. While Malory's Lancelot engages the white knights out of a desire to protect the losing black knights, only to later discover what his actions truly meant, the *Queste*'s Lancelot is drawn to help the black knights because "he is a sinner as they are" (qtd. in Ihle 131). In both versions of the story, this incident represents the root cause of Lancelot's sinfulness. For the *Queste* author Lancelot's sin lies in the state of his soul—he is unable to perceive the concept of truth—whereas for Malory it is merely the earthly flaw of not being able to distinguish between right and wrong (131). While these sins may seem similar, there is a profound difference of intent on a moral-theological level. The *Queste*'s Lancelot is ontologically broken, and in this brokenness he has developed a sense of pride that has caused him to close off his soul to receiving the truth—albeit a harsh truth—that the hermits offer; that in his attempt to gain eternal glory in this life he has damned himself in the next. Malory's Lancelot, on the other hand, merely allows his foolish pride to influence his decisions, thereby making himself unstable. As Steinbeck observes, Lancelot "knows his failings, his shortcomings,

and particularly his memories of sins," and yet, despite his best attempts to the contrary, he "cannot balance his vices and errors, his stupidities" (325) in a way that will allow him to achieve the worthiness required to complete the Grail Quest. This difference in characterization is most notable in the manner in which Lancelot reacts to the penitential hair shirt given to him by a hermit. In Malory's text he finds it, as one would expect, to be extremely uncomfortable; on the other hand, in the *Queste* Lancelot does not understand the hair shirt's purpose. He simply ignores the feeling of the hairs prickling against him at first, and then eventually he begins to find the feeling pleasurable. The symbolism represented by the hair shirt does not end after Lancelot's encounter with the hermit. It appears again at the end of Lancelot's quest.

Just as in the *Queste*, Malory's Lancelot manages to make it inside of the walls of Castle Corbenic. He is able to achieve this feat due to his choice to practice the acts of penance assigned to him, unlike the other sinful knights who remain staunchly unrepentant throughout the quest (Ihle 153). As Malory's Gawain is told by a hermit, Lancelot "hath no felow of none erthely synfull man lyvyng" (Malory 948). Despite Lancelot's attempts to "forsake synne," his instability prevents him from "hold[ing] steadfastly to the spiritual path like Galahad" (Ihle 153). This proves to be most true when Lancelot, who is barred from entering the Grail's presence, rushes into the Grail chapel during the consecration of the Host, as he is afraid that the Mass's celebrant will collapse under the weight of the figure he appears to be holding. Although Malory shifts the intent behind the sin from Lancelot's clear ignorance of the sacredness of the Canon to a rash moment of weakness wherein he, as usual, creates a problem in his imagination that only he can solve—in this case preventing the priest from the perceived threat of

falling—the consequences remain the same. Lancelot is struck down by God, and falls into a coma that lasts for twenty-four days, one day for each year of his adulterous relationship with Guinevere, before awakening. It is at this point that Malory departs from his relatively faithful description of his French source's account of Lancelot's adventure within the Grail castle. Whereas the *Queste*'s Lancelot is told by one of the castle's maidens that he need no longer wear his hair shirt as his "quest is ended; there is no use your striving any longer to see to seek the Holy Grail; for you should know that you will not see more of it than you have seen. May God now bring us those who are to see that more" (*Queste* 265), emphasizing his obvious failure on the quest, Malory simply has her tell him that "never shall ye se of Sankgreall more than ye have sene" (Malory 1018). Lancelot replies, "[n]ow I thanke God, . . . for Hys grete mercy of that I have sene, for this suffisith me. For, as I suppose, no man in thys world have lyved bettir than I have done to enchyeve that I have done" (1018). By removing the reference to Lancelot's failure, Malory reworks the story to emphasize Lancelot's "relative success rather than his complete rejection at the last and crucial moment" (R. Barber *The Holy Grail* 218). In addition to this, he transforms Lancelot's choice of continuing to wear the hair shirt from an act of ignorance to a self-imposed act of piety. Malory confirms this change in focus, at the end of the *Sankgreal*, by removing all references to the fact that the Grail quest was ultimately a failure. He also omits the *Queste* author's implication that the subsequent shame of this failure will follow the returning quest knights, save Bors, for the rest of their lives. He chooses instead to focus on the temporal failures of the quest, namely the death of more than half of the fellowship (Ihle 157). By emphasizing the secular results of the quest, Malory introduces chivalric themes into an otherwise doctrinally focused

ending, making it possible for Lancelot to describe his experience within the walls of Castle Corbenic in a way that he cannot within the *Queste*. The statement that "sir Launcelot tolde the adventures of the Sangreall that he had sene" (qtd. in Ihle 158) strongly implies to the reader that Lancelot's experience of the Grail is something "worthy of record." This shows the reader that Malory's portrayal of the events following Lancelot's return to Camelot does "not in any way imply that either Lancelot or those present believe that he is relating a failure." Instead Lancelot's portrayal serves to bind "together the Arthurian and the Grail worlds" allowing the knights to observe, at some level, "the possibilities for excellence within the standards of Round Table chivalry" (Ihle 158). Lancelot's excellence is confirmed by Bors upon his return to Camelot, when the latter identifies the sinful Lancelot as one of the Grail knights (see *Works* 1036) due to the chivalric prowess with which he conducted himself on quest. This identification, which would not be possible in the French text, foreshadows the upcoming tension that Lancelot will undergo in the final two books of Malory's Arthuriad, as he struggles to justify his romantic attachment to Guinevere in light of the deeper understanding of the vocation of knighthood, which he has gained on the Grail quest.

Knighthood and Spiritual Prowess

Given that Malory's Grail quest is primarily a story of adventure and chivalry it has become tempting for critics to ignore the importance that religion plays within the text, and to read the *Sankgreal* as being, as Richard Barber puts it, simply "one more marvel of Arthur's time, even if it does lead to a wholly spiritual conclusion" (*The Holy Grail* 218). Barber's statement is technically accurate: the Grail quest is one of the many

marvels that occur during Arthur's reign, and the end of the Grail quest, wherein Galahad's soul is taken into heaven by multitudes of angels, is very spiritual. However, his phrasing suggests that the religious conclusion of the story occurs *in spite* of it being a chivalric adventure. Although one can see how Barber arrived at this conclusion—due to the fact that his project is not an analysis of chivalry, but rather an overview of the history of the Grail legend—the conclusion itself is still flawed. It implies that Malory views adventure and religion as two separate themes, not as two distinct yet interrelated aspects of chivalry. Barber may have a clear understanding of the Eucharistic nature of Malory's Grail, emphasizing the significance of the Holy Blood contained within the vessel over that of the vessel itself (216-7), but he seems to lack an understanding of the parallels that Malory draws between the Holy Blood and the Holy Grail, and the chivalric experience. He fails to see how, to use the words of Jill Mann, "the mystery of the Eucharist [could be] the goal and climax of a knightly endeavor" (Mann 209). Mann suggests that Malory's parallels to this mystery can be found within "the central element of this religious mystery, the body and blood," which, she observes, are both symbols of "Christ's redemptive suffering," and "the central elements of the knightly experience" (208). Mann analogizes the spilling of Christ's blood on the Cross, for spiritual redemption, to the spilling of a knight's blood in order to prove his chivalric worth (208). Just as it is for the authors of the Gospels, blood, for Malory, is *the* life giving force. It is because of his lifeblood that a knight has the ability to perform deeds of chivalric worth. Because of this, Mann concludes that, "[t]he knight's body is represented in quasi-stylized form as a vessel containing blood, and in this it resembles the Grail itself. What the knight sees in the Grail vision is thus the apotheosis of his own existence" (208-9). If

the Grail is a reflection of each particular knight, then the Grail, and the knight's quest to achieve it, must also be a reflection of his chivalric value. Examples of these reflections can clearly be seen when a reader looks closely at the differentiations in the chivalric characters of the six knights who feature most prominently in the Grail quest.

By the beginning of the *Sankgreal* Malory's readers are already familiar with Gawain's faults, and his inability to recognize "his own limitations" (Shichtman 167). Gawain is not the best knight in the world, as he himself tells Arthur before failing to draw Balin's sword from the stone, and yet he is still the first knight to pledge himself to the Grail Quest. Although Gawain, as Barbara Bartholomew suggests, is smart enough to include "an 'all too human escape clause' in his oath, when he claims 'and iff I may nat spede I shall return agayne as he that may nat be ayenst the wylle of God' " (qtd. in Shichtman 167), he does not seem to do this out of any deep sense of piety. As Shichtman observes, spirituality seems to bore Gawain. In fact the knight is so set in his "old ways" that, "even under the inspiration of the Grail," (qtd. in Shichtman 168) he is unable to perceive the wisdom in Arthur's warning, or the hermit's suggestions. Throughout the quest, Gawain refuses to repent for his sins and chivalric crimes. He seems to be unconcerned with his two great violations of the Pentecostal oath, the murder of Pellinor and his orchestration of the fatal ambush of Lamorak, which have branded him as an "untrew knight and a grete murtherar" (Malory 948) within Malory's text. Gawain's refusal to repent of these crimes results in the hermit comparing his knighthood (and therefore his chivalric prowess) to a tree that can bear no fruit for good "sith the fende hath the levis and the fruyte" (Malory 949). This analogy both condemns Gawain's spiritual prowess, by implicitly comparing him to the cursed fig tree of the Gospels', and

his worldly prowess, by noting that the fruits of his Grail quest, the accidental murders of his cousin Sir Ywain and King Bademagus, offer nothing pleasing to the God of goodness. Gawain's utter failure to embody any aspect of chivalry not only prevents him from seeing the Grail, it ensures the opposite. Gawain's Grail quest ends when Galahad strikes him over the head during a mêlée, fulfilling the prophecy that the sword of the best knight in the world will wound Gawain. Gawain's one purpose on the Grail quest is, therefore, to be one of the opponents Mann refers to whose blood is shed by a truly chivalric knight, in this case Galahad, in order to prove the latter knight's spiritual worth.

Like Gawain, Sir Ector de Maris cannot be admitted into the presence of the Grail due to his sinful nature. Unlike Gawain, though, who represents the worst in chivalry, Ector represents the chivalric standard of the Round Table Fellowship. Like Gawain, he has failed, and blackened by his failure he is unable to become an image of the Grail, or to be admitted into its presence. Unlike Gawain, however, Ector is able to realize why he is unable to achieve the Grail by the end of his quest. When he arrives at the gates of Corbenic, Ector realizes that what the hermit has said is true. Lancelot's attempts to integrate a spiritual characteristic into his knighthood have made his practice of the vocation of chivalry fuller than Ector's, thereby allowing him to enter the Grail castle. Ector notices, and confirms to the reader, that his inability even to enter the Grail castle is due to his unwillingness both to humble himself and to focus on the spiritual aspects of the knightly vocation. He tells Pellas, "now dowblith my sorow and shame! Full truly seyde the good man of the hylle unto sir Gawayne and to me of oure dremys" (1019). Ector returns to Arthur's court with, it is implied, at least some understanding that the

way in which he approaches knighthood must change in order for him to gain true worthiness.

Lancelot, as I have already established, differs from the other sinful knights, insomuch as both on, and immediately after, the quest he makes at least some effort to lead a spiritual life. Still, as Malory makes abundantly clear, Lancelot's turn towards spirituality during the quest is not enough to help him achieve the Grail. Spirituality, like everything else in Malory, becomes, as Mann observes, a way to judge a knight's chivalric prowess. When compared to the other three Grail knights, Lancelot's spirituality proves to be severely lacking. His unstable character consistently prevents him from fully accepting the virtue of chastity, which is required of him due to his chivalric duty to God, and his duty to honour women, which is bound upon him by the Pentecostal oath. Lancelot freely admits that he would totally disregard the Pentecostal oath for Guinevere's sake, stating "for hir sake wolde I do batayle were it ryght other wronge" (Malory 897). Even the hermit who hears his confession acknowledges this instability. As Cherewatuk observes, when he orders Lancelot to "no more come into the quenys felyship *as much as ye may bear*" (qtd. in Cherewatuk 99, original emphasis), he gives him an escape clause, similar to the one Gawain gives himself, rather than providing counsel that he knows will ultimately fail, thereby leading to the knight's damnation. It is this same hermit who orders Lancelot to take on the hair shirt representing "the abstinence of the Grail Quest" (Cherewatuk 97), in order to purify himself spiritually, so that he may truly repent and gain a true understanding of the knightly vocation. During the quest, Lancelot's understanding of spirituality is entirely dependent on others, much as Arthur's was at the beginning of *The Works*. Lancelot is aware of the existence of a

greater form of chivalry, and he aspires to it, but he is unable to practice it on his own. He requires a guide to support him, much like Arthur did with Merlin, and like Arthur his spiritual successes are gained not because he makes the right choices due to a "pre-existing worth" (Mann 210), but rather because a spiritual father has prepared him to make said choices. The analogy made by Cherewatuk comparing Lancelot to a squire paying homage to a knight, when he encounters Galahad on the shore and kneels to ask for his blessing (Cherewatuk 98), proves to be an extremely appropriate one. A squire has begun to follow the code of chivalry, but still needs a knight to instruct him until he proves his worth. In the same way, Lancelot has begun to embrace the spiritual side to his knightly vocation, but he has not yet reached an internal state that allows him to integrate his true understanding of knighthood and "his [newfound] religious self into the sexualized world of the Round Table" (99). During the Grail quest, Lancelot may strive for spiritual perfection, yet, despite his sincerest efforts, his truest desire remains, as Cherewatuk suggests, in line with Augustine of Hippo's infamous prayer, "[g]rant me chastity and self-control, but please not yet" (qtd. in Cherewatuk 99).

Percival and Bors also make use of spiritual mentors throughout the quest; however, unlike Lancelot, they do not rely completely on them for guidance. By the time that they encounter the hermits, both Percival and Bors have already made the appropriate choice. They merely rely on the hermits to explain to them the full spiritual significance of the deed they have just accomplished.

Percival's understanding of the spirituality of chivalry is made clear when he is tempted to commit sins of the flesh by a lady, who is later revealed to be a demon. The nakedness found in this passage represents Percival's fragile nature (R. Barber *The Holy*

Grail 154), and the fact that, despite his worldly prowess, the knight can still be placed in danger by spiritual temptation (Mann 215). Percival is saved, in the end, by his understanding of his chivalric vocation. Malory describes the following happening to Percival, as he lies naked with this woman about to consummate their relationship:

> by adventure and grace he saw hys swerde ly on the erthe nake[d], where in the pomell was a rede cross and the sygne of the crucifixe [ther]in, and bethought hym on hys knyghthode and hys promyse made unto the good man tofornehande, and than he made a sygne of the crosse in his forehed. And therewith the pavylon turned up-so-downe and than hit changed unto a smooke and blak clowde. (Malory 919)

Although it is tempting to read the insertion of the phrase "adventure and grace" as a confirmation of the salvific power of Percival's spiritual understanding of chivalry this is not possible. As Mann carefully observes, "The linking of [the] word 'grace' with 'adventure' fixes its meaning as 'good fortune' (*MED* 3c) rather than 'God's grace' (*MED* 1a); it is chance rather than God's will that is the operative force" (Mann 215). Based on this lexicographical evidence Mann concludes that Percival's actions occurred by chance, rather than being an act of God designed to help shape his chivalric destiny (215). Putting aside the fact that an argument can be made that, during Malory's time, all grace, even good fortune, was believed to have come from God, it must be emphasized that, regardless of how he came about seeing his sword, *it is the significance of what the sword means to Percival* that causes him to react the way he does. It is this reaction, and not the circumstances that lead to it, that is significant. Percival sees the crucified Christ,

a symbol of his faith, surmounted on his sword, a symbol of the chivalry and justice required of him as a knight, and immediately remembers his knightly vocation and the vows associated with it, both his public vows as a knight, and as a member of the Round Table, and his personal vow of chastity. It is his remembrance of this vocation, and the higher standard of ethical living that comes with it, that moves Percival to avoid temptation, and gives him the desire to punish himself for his sin. The manner in which Percival punishes himself is key to understanding how Malory believes a knight ought to perceive the relationship between religion and knighthood. Percival acknowledges his deadly sin against God, and realizes that he must make recompense for it, something Lancelot is not capable of doing. His immediate response, however, is not to confess it or to seek spiritual punishment, although he does do this soon after upon encountering a priest; rather, he inflicts a martial punishment on himself for violating the God-bound duties of his chivalric oaths. Percival may punish himself, in order to make recompense to Jesus for his failures in chastity, but he does so as a knight.

Bors too faces his spiritual challenges in a noticeably knightly manner. Due to his commitment to the Pentecostal oath, he abandons his brother Sir Lionel in order to rescue a defenceless virgin. He maintains this decision despite the fact that it clearly pains him to do so, as he believes that it has resulted in his brother's death. Bors later discovers that this is false; Lionel not only survives but also provides Bors with another, greater, test of chivalry. He demands that Bors fight him in a chivalric duel to rectify what he sees as a sin against fraternal charity. As a blackened earthly knight, Lionel neither understands the concept of spiritual chivalry, nor Bors's reasons for rescuing the maiden instead of him. Their duel results in the death of Sir Colgrevance, another Knight of the Round Table,

who initially champions Bors. The conflict appears to have the potential to become a repetition of the fight between Balin and Balan, until God himself intervenes. God descends in a pillar of fire, and orders Bors to "go hens and beare felyship no lenger with thy brothir" (974). He instructs Bors to keep company with Percival instead, so that the next stage of the Grail quest may be set into motion.

In both of these cases, Percival and Bors meet with spiritual guides only after overcoming temptation by their own merits. This shows the reader that although, as knights, they do not have the knowledge of God that is possessed by holy men, they represent the kind of all encompassing chivalry that will eventually allow them to be admitted into the Grail's presence. Unlike Lancelot, they have been able to maintain their religious selves in the sexualized court of Camelot, staying true to the chivalric obligations bound upon them by their vocation to knighthood, and the promises that they made to Arthur, at the re-swearing of the Pentecostal oath, prior to the quest. Their fidelity to these promises helps them to avoid the temptations placed before them during the Quest, temptations that, as readers have already seen, some of the most prominent Knights of the Round Table are, more often than not, prone to give into.

Although Malory opts not to repeat the intense praise given to Galahad in the *Queste*, it is apparent that, out of all the Quest knights, Galahad has the most spiritual worth. As Cherewatuk observes, Galahad's total commitment to his knightly vocation puts him on a "higher ethical plane" than his brother knights (Cherewatuk 98). Whereas Percival and Bors prove their chivalric prowess by avoiding temptation, Galahad's "is manifested in the fact that he is simply, not tempted" (Mann 211). Galahad, like any man, is capable of falling into sin (Malory does not make this fact as explicitly clear as the

Queste author, but he does not explicitly deny it either). However, he has the spiritual strength and temporal honour to avoid situations that would lead him to do so. Malory makes the extent of Galahad's honour clear, even in situations that could potentially prove risky to his virtue. A prime example of this is found at the Castle of Maidens when Malory has Galahad show mercy to the seven knights who hold the maidens' castle even though they *do not* ask it of him. This confirms to the reader that Galahad's personal commitment to chivalry passes even that of the Pentecostal oath.

This total avoidance of temptation is not the only way in which Malory acquaints the reader with Galahad's spiritual prowess. Malory's Galahad serves as a spiritual father to Lancelot for half a year during the quest, during which time both Lancelot and Galahad refer to, and address, each other as "sir." As Cherewatuk observes this is unusual as, historically speaking, correspondence from this time period has shown that, between fathers and sons, normally only the sons would make use of the assigned titles (98). I am not convinced, however, by Cherewatuk's suggestion that Malory has both Lancelot and Galahad make use of the title "sir" to indicate the emotional distance between them although they are father and son. Rather, I believe, that it is a reflection of both Lancelot's desire to enter into the more spiritual aspect of knighthood and Galahad's perfection of chivalry. Lancelot identifies Galahad as his chivalric superior, and addresses him as such. Galahad accepts this courtesy, yet still maintains the proper chivalric standard of the time giving Lancelot the respect that he is required to show "the begynner of [him] in thys worlde" (*Work* 1012).

Galahad is able to serve as Lancelot's spiritual mentor because he is the opposite of his father. The stability of his knightly vocation is so unshakable that Dhira B.

Mahoney compares it to the vows *de stabilitate sua perseverantia* that Benedictine novices swear upon their acceptance into monastic life. This unshakable chivalric character drives him, Mahoney concludes, to persevere in "the pursuit of holiness" (Mahoney 121-2). Galahad may not be analogous to Christ in *The Works*, but through his total commitment to imitate Christ, within the context of his knightly vocation, he achieves a heretofore unseen level of Christ-like holiness.

Malory's Galahad

A key difference between the Vulgate *Queste* and Malory's *Sankgreal* is the influence of Cistercian theology in the formation of the texts. The *Queste*'s author clearly relies on the dichotomy between *chevalerie terriene*, which displays the characteristics of the worldly knighthood described by Bernard, and *chevalerie celestiel*, which corresponds to the new knighthood (Mahoney 110), and which is intended to invalidate and supersede *chevalerie terriene* (123). Like Bernard, the *Queste* author stresses that a knight must abandon the sinful ways of the *chevalerie terriene* if he is to fully partake in his chivalric vocation, in this case the Grail quest. The hermits the knights encounter, who both condemn the *chevalerie terriene* and praise the *chevalerie celestiel*, repeat this call to abandonment throughout the text, and Galahad upon his arrival at court assumes a role analogous to that of the Knights Templar in *In Praise of the New Knighthood*. He is the exemplar par excellence of *chevalerie celestiel*. As the hermit explaining the Castle of Maidens tells Gawain, "when the heavenly Father saw the corruption of all that He made, He sent His Son to earth to ransom . . . the souls of the just. And even as He sent His Son, who was with Him before the beginning of the world, even so did He send Galahad, His

chosen knight and servant" (*Queste* 79). Even Galahad's name reflects the nature of his calling. The French spelling of Galahad's name, *Galaad*, is taken from a description of the bride found in the *Song of Songs* (4:1). By suggesting an analogy between Galahad and the bride, the author is placing him within the Cistercian tradition of the marriage of the soul, which is marked by "a sense of unworthiness of the soul," and "a necessity for spiritual ascent . . . to a hoped-for mystical consummation of the world to come" (Matter 133). The *Queste* must end with Galahad's death, so that the author may "sustain that vision" (Mahoney 123) of God that Galahad experienced. Although Galahad's death, in the French text, leaves the reader with a sense of accomplishment, it does not provide any sense of continuity. Galahad achieves chivalric perfection in the *Queste* by achieving the Grail and healing the wounds caused by the dolorous stroke. He highlights the triumphs of the celestial chivalry only to die, and have the focus of the story switch back to the sinful earthly knights, who remain seated at the Round Table, in *La Mort le Roi Artu.* This disconnect is not possible within *The Works*. For Malory earthly and spiritual knighthood are not a dichotomy, as they are in Bernard, nor are they, as Mahoney argues "separate pursuit[s] of equal validity" (123); rather, they are two stages on the journey to chivalric perfection, which Malory has Arthur define in the words of the Pentecostal Oath. It is for this reason that Malory's quest must end, not with the death of the perfect knight, but rather with the acknowledgment that Lancelot (and Bors) have advanced to a new stage in their quests for chivalric perfection.

Although I disagree with Mahoney's categorization of spiritual chivalry as an alternate path to earthly chivalry, I agree with her conclusion that spiritual and earthly pursuits of perfection are complementary in *The Works*. It is, as Mahoney notes, the

digression from the politics of Arthur's court provided by the Grail quest, which allows the members of the court to realize the complementary nature of these two pursuits (123), and begin to follow this path. Mahoney is ultimately unable to harmonize these two types of chivalry due to the fact that she still reads Galahad as the Round Table's spiritual juggernaut, as opposed to reading him, in the way that Malory intended, as a guide, meant to lead the Knights of the Round Table to the fulfillment of their own vocations. The ultimate purpose of Malory's Galahad is to show the Knights of the Round Table the type of chivalric behavior that is required of them to totally embrace their knightly vocations. Achieving the Grail and healing the damage done by Balin are merely parts of this greater whole.

In order to make this point abundantly clear, by the story's conclusion, Malory makes three more small changes to his source text, which serve to alter the meaning of the story by confirming Galahad as the Round Table's chivalric role model. The first change occurs when a priest is explaining to Melias the allegorical meaning of the road that he failed, and Galahad succeeded, to travel. As in the *Queste* Malory states that the road is meant for those knights who follow Jesus Christ; however, he has the priest add that it is also the "way of a good trew lyver" (Malory 886). Malory's assertion that Galahad is the example of how to live well, in all aspects of knighthood, is confirmed by Galahad's promise to be Percival's sister's knight in Malory's text. Given the removal of Galahad from the anagogical line of Christ, which in turn necessitates the removal of Percival's sister from the anagogical line of Mary, the promise would be nothing more than a chivalric compliment in Malory had Galahad not been identified as a "trew lyver," necessitating his placement in a courtly love scenario. By emphasizing the chaste

relationship of Galahad and Percival's sister, Malory is expressing his belief that courtly love can exist chastely, within the confines of the Pentecostal oath's duty to women, and that when done so it serves to increase both the knight's chivalric prowess, and the faith and holiness of all those involved. The perfect knight is able to practice courtly love without falling into the carnal temptations associated with it, which the reader has seen leads to the earthly and spiritual ruin of knights such as Lancelot and Tristram, who are widely regarded to be "the trewyst lovers" (Malory 71) amongst earthly knights.

The second change that has yet to be discussed occurs immediately after Galahad achieves the Grail. The changes made by Malory to Galahad's vision are most likely, as Barber concludes, done out of pious respect for the Eucharist by a layman (R. Barber *The Holy Grail* 221) who did not wish to offer his own direct interpretation of the mysteries of the Sacrament. Still the fact that Galahad does not describe these mysteries to others can, and I would suggest should, also allow them to be read in another way. By omitting Galahad's description, Malory leaves open an unknown in the readers' minds. Attached to this unknown is the possibility that future knights, who at this point in the text still have the potential to achieve what Galahad has achieved, may experience the mystery for themselves.

The final change to be mentioned is the last and the most significant of the changes that Malory makes to the Grail story. This change, which occurs during Galahad's final moments, truly allows the *Sankgreal* to be transformed from a stand-alone insertion into a bridge between the first and second parts of Malory's story, and also a bridge between the roles that the vocation of knighthood plays in each part. Galahad's death, as portrayed in *The Works*, is perhaps the one situation in which

Malory's Galahad appears to be a closer analogy for Christ than the Galahad of the *Queste*. Galahad's final moments are not composed of a personal treatment between himself and God as they are in the French text. Instead, Galahad commissions Bors and Percival, telling Bors, who plans to return to Camelot, "[m]y fayre lorde, salew me unto my lorde sir Lancelot, my fadir, and as sone as ye se hym bydde hym remembir of this worlde unstable" (Malory 1035). This corresponds with Jesus' final action, before his ascension, in The Gospel of Matthew, when he tells his apostles "Go therefore, teach ye all nations; baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matt 28:19 DRV). Galahad ends his life expressing his desire that Lancelot, and those other knights who look to him as the exemplar of chivalry, will remember the unstable nature of the world, and avoid the things that lead to instability. By doing this, the knights may engage in a stable pursuit of both spiritual and martial prowess, so that they may fulfill the duties prescribed to them by the Pentecostal oath, and the high order of knighthood. This in turn will allow them to be known as true knights, who have lived their knightly vocation well.

Mahoney concludes "Malory's Transformation of The *Queste*" by noting that "the Tale of the Sankgreal does not negate the heroic-chivalric value of the *Morte Darthur*" as a whole, but rather serves to put it into perspective (124). The actions of the Grail knights show that true chivalry, comprising both martial and spiritual prowess, is not some obscure higher calling. Rather, it is the source and summit of the knightly vocation. This new perspective, properly understood, should create two significant changes to the reader's interpretation of Malory's main character. Firstly, by comparing Lancelot to Galahad, Malory shows his readers just how unstable, how broken, and how human even

the great Sir Lancelot can be. Lancelot is removed from the pedestal that he has been placed on since *The Nobel Tale of Sir Lancelot du Luc*, and is turned into a character with whom the reader can both sympathize and relate. Secondly, the emphasis on Lancelot's successes, as opposed to his failures, provides readers with hope for the future. Despite his failures on the quest, readers see Lancelot emerge at the end of the *Sankgreal* willing to listen to Galahad's warnings, and eager to continue his attempts to achieve the perfection of the chivalric virtue that he began to achieve on the quest. Malory ends the *Sankgreal* with Lancelot serving as both a representation of Round Table Fellowship and as a self-character with whom the reader can identify. By making Lancelot the first, Malory is able to leave readers of *The Works* with hope that the standard of chivalry that Arthur has been trying to create since the beginning of the text will soon become the normal practice. By making him the second, Malory is perhaps suggesting to his own knightly contemporaries, currently locked in a vicious war with each other, that they too, no matter what they have done, can rediscover a part of the true meaning of chivalry, and the true purpose of the high order of knighthood, through proper chivalric practices.

The Impact of the Grail Quest

As *The Tale of the Sankgreal* shows, the primary virtues needed to fully master the vocation of knighthood are openness and stability: the openness to realize and accept the role that spiritual prowess plays in developing one's knightly vocation, and the stability to practice the vocation in a way that increases one's worth in both martial and spiritual spheres. Yet, even Jesus Christ notes that, within society as a whole, the virtue

of stability is hard to achieve. In the tenth chapter of The Gospel of Matthew, Jesus makes a rather surprising statement during his commissioning of the Twelve Apostles:

> Do not think that I came to send peace upon earth: I came not to send peace, but the sword. For I came to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's enemies shall be they of his own household. (Matt 10:34-5, DRV).

Neither this passage, nor the analogous version which appears in the twelfth chapter of The Gospel of Luke, can be understood, according to Daniel J. Harrington, "as a call for (eschatological) warfare" in light of Jesus's call for both peace and love of enemies during the Sermon on the Mount (150). Rather, the sword must be read, in both passages, as a divisive agent that separates those who are attentive to the Gospel's call of conversion, and those who are openly against the Gospel's message (150). Harrington also notes that the metaphorical language which Jesus uses in this passage, that of a family member against a family member, is "an apocalyptic commonplace . . . [and] a sign of the end-time" (145). Although it is highly unlikely that Malory had this particular passage in mind when he altered the text of the *Queste* to include Galahad's warning of the "worlde unstable" (Malory 1035), these words seem to be indicative of the state of Arthur's court following the Grail quest. Malory ends the *Sankgreal* by describing Lancelot's newfound openness and trust in God, only to have him fall immediately back into sin, as the hermits predicted, at the beginning of *The Book of Sir Lancelot and Queen Guinevere*. Despite his reversion to the ways of the world, now that his mind has been

opened to a greater understanding of the knightly vocation, Lancelot soon realizes that his relationship with the Queen may cause him, and the court, more harm than good. Lancelot informs the queen that for her sake he will take his leave from court, and, after being chastised by Guinevere, informs Bors that he is planning to return to France. Bors convinces him instead to seek council from Sir Brastias, a former vassal of Gorlois and Arthur, who has become a hermit. The true instability of the Round Table is revealed following Lancelot's departure. In an attempt to gain revenge for Lamorak's death, Sir Pynell attempts to assassinate Gawain, using a poisoned apple, at a banquet thrown for the knights by Guinevere. Sir Patrise eats the apple by mistake, and Guinevere is accused of murder. Sir Mador challenges her to trial by combat, and the King requests that Bors champion Guinevere. He reluctantly agrees to do this, for Arthur's sake. However, before the battle can begin Lancelot replaces Bors. This replacement is found in the French sources, yet it is much more significant in Malory's text due to the fact that Bors, as Charles Moorman notes, serves as Lancelot's foil in *The Works*. Readers of both texts will have already noticed that Malory alters the *Queste* hermit's initial perception of Bors by adding one word, "stable," thus placing him in direct "contrast to the unstable Lancelot" (Moorman 199). The last minute arrival of the disguised Lancelot, to replace Bors during Guinevere's trial by combat, serves as a metaphor for the Round Table's fall. The stability of the Grail quest, represented by Bors, must give way to the greater instability, represented by Lancelot, as the end of Arthur's dream becomes a reality.

Despite the warnings of characters such as Bors and the knight-turned hermit, Sir Baldwin, Lancelot continues his unstable behavior. Malory emphasizes this increasing instability through his re-ordering of the first half of the French *Mort*. Whereas the

French author presents the aforementioned "Tale of the Poisoned Apple," alongside the story of Lancelot's tragic relationship with the maiden of Escalot, his wounding, and his healing at the hermitage, Malory splits each of these stories up, presenting them in a particular order which highlights the increasing danger and instability of Lancelot's relationship with Guinevere. Malory follows "The Poisoned Apple" with "The Fair Maid of Ascolat" in which Lancelot's unstable relationship with Guinevere inadvertently contributes to the death of Elaine of Ascolat, who dies of grief when Lancelot is unable to return her love. Despite the urging of Bors, Lancelot is "unable to forget Guenevere" (Lumiansky "The Tale of Lancelot and Guenevere" 221) who, as Malory specifically mentions, forces him to wear her favour at the next tournament. By making Lancelot do this, Malory is providing his readers with a sign that Lancelot is beginning to reassume the "completely subservient role" (223) that he held in Guinevere's life before the Grail quest. His instability finally reaches the point of recklessness when he arrives at Melegant's castle in order to rescue the kidnapped queen. Upon his arrival in Guinevere's chamber, Lancelot sleeps with the queen, for the first time since the Grail Quest. This action not only puts Lancelot's already unstable spiritual self in the gravest of dangers, it also puts the queen's life in peril. Melegant notices the bloodstains from Lancelot's wounded hands, on Guinevere's bed, and accuses her of committing adultery, the consequence of which is death by burning (225). Although Lancelot is able to defend Guinevere in trial by combat, the reader, at this point, should be less concerned with Guinevere's survival and more concerned with the fact that Lancelot has, despite his son's warnings and guidance, once again rejected the path of true knighthood, having fallen victim to the temptations of the "world unstable." This complete rejection of the

lessons of the Grail quest makes the final section of *Lancelot and Guinevere*, "The Healing of Sir Urry," interesting, both to critics and readers alike.

"The Healing of Sir Urry" is Malory's last completely original addition to *The Works*. The story focuses on Sir Urry, a knight whose tournament wounds are cursed to remain unhealed until the best knight in the world touches them. It is not surprising then that Urry is brought to Arthur's court. What is surprising is what happens there. Malory presents a catalogue of 110 knights, each of whom fails to heal Urry with his touch. Finally Lancelot, who at this point has been reduced to what he had been before the Grail Quest, approaches. Lancelot protests telling Arthur, "Jesu defende me . . . whyle so many noble kyngis and knyghtes have fayled, that I shuld presume upon me to enchyve that all ye my lordis, myght nat enchyve" to which Arthur responds "Ye shall nat chose, . . . for I commaunde you to do as we all have done" (Malory 1151). Lancelot silently prays to God, begging him to use him despite his unworthiness, and to his surprise, and the court's joy, God answers. Urry's wounds are healed by Lancelot's touch, which causes Lancelot to weep, "as he had bene a chylde that had bene beatyn!" (1152). Stephen C. B. Atkinson provides a catalogue of scholarly opinions as to why Lancelot weeps in his essay "Malory's 'Healing of Sir Urry': Lancelot, the Earthly Fellowship and the World of the Grail." These opinions range from the simple, such as R. M. Lumiansky's theory that Lancelot weeps due to the relief that his sinfulness has not been revealed, to the complicated, such as Mark Lambert and Larry D. Benson's suggestion that the tears are actually Malory weeping for the impending fall of Camelot (Atkinson 348). The most likely reason for the tears, however, is the one that is given by Malory himself. Lancelot has once again failed, despite all of the chances that have been given to him, and God has

beaten him, not with punishment but through the use of mercy. As Atkinson observes, "God's mercy, both to Urry and to [Lancelot] himself . . . brings home to Lancelot the supreme benevolence of the power he has rebelled against" (349). Lancelot is shown by God what he, and indeed what all of the Knights of the Round Table, had the potential to be, if they had followed the example of knightly vocation provided by Galahad, and heeded his advice about the world's instability. Under the proper circumstances, the healing of Urry, by Lancelot, could have been the crowning glory of a fulfilled Round Table, which had learned to walk the path to chivalric perfection with stability and holiness. Instead, it serves as a foreshadowing of the end that is to come. With the healing of Urry, Malory is telling his readers that Lancelot is once again the best knight in the world. He makes it clear, however, that Lancelot does not achieve this honour in the way that his son had hoped he would; rather, the socio-spiritual climate of the Fellowship has reverted to a state which allows Lancelot to achieve this honour by practicing knighthood the way that he did before the Grail Quest. On the surface, Camelot may appear to be entering a time of triumph and new beginnings; unfortunately this is not the case. "[T]he ominous sentence which presages the Round Table's imminent end: 'But every nyght and day sir Aggravayne, sir Gawaynes brother, awayted quene Gwenyver and sir Launcelot to put hem both to a rebuke and a shame'" (Atkinson 352) shows that the divisions predicted by Galahad have already began to take shape, and that the sword of instability will soon divide the fellowship against itself.

By the end of *The Works*, the Round Table society has become, as Wilfred L. Guerin observes, "a magnificent failure" (Guerin 271), the consequence of Arthur's attempt to create an idealistic state of heaven on earth. Arthur may be able to offer a

society that gives knights the opportunity to advance in spiritual worthiness alongside earthly prowess, but in the end the acceptance of this societal code is an individual matter (269-71), and society must be able to account for human error. Not every knight has the virtues of openness or stability that will allow him to embrace his vocation to knighthood, and his duties to God and the king, with a fidelity as unshakable as Galahad's. As Steinbeck observed, Malory is aware of the flaws that are present within humanity, and he incorporates these flaws into his all too human characters. These characters may achieve some of the harmony that Galahad represents "in the final pages of 'The Death of Arthur' " (270), but it is both too little and too late. Gawain's newfound openness, following his wounding at Dover, may allow him to pass to the next life, once again, on good terms with Lancelot, but it does not save him, nor does it prevent Arthur's death. Even Lancelot's conversion to religious life, following the "Day of Destiny," seem to be more of an act of penitence than it does a sincere spiritual conversion. Whereas Guinevere, upon entering the convent at Amesbury, lives in "fastynge, prayers, and almes-dedis, [so] that all manner of people mervayled how vertuously she was chaunged" (Malory 1243), Lancelot, as Virginia Blatnon observes, "only puts on a monastic habit because Guinevere refuses him" (Blanton 53). This theory is supported by Vinaver who notes that, while Lancelot buries her as a priest he mourns her as a lover "not as a Christian; . . . he repents, not of the sins he has committed against God, but of the grief he has caused his lady and King Arthur" (qtd. in Guerin 272). Lancelot may, perhaps inadvertently, achieve a holy death by the end of *The Works*, due to his priesthood, but even Malory does not vindicate his hero completely. Although he does have Ector praise Lancelot's greatness, in a eulogy that has no corresponding passage within the French

text, he also makes it clear that Lancelot was a sinful knight. By stating that Lancelot was "never matched of erthely knyghtes," Malory makes it very clear that he is not Galahad. Lancelot, like all of the earthly knights, tried his best, but that was not enough. Lancelot's knighthood may have prepared him for a successful priesthood, but it is through this vocation to the ascetic life, not through true achievement of the vocation of knighthood, that Lancelot is eventually redeemed.

Malory appropriately ends *The Works* by making one final change. He informs the readers that a selection of the remaining knights honour Lancelot's final wish by travelling to the Holy Land, in order to fight Turks. Once there "they <dyed> upon a Good Fryday for Goddes sake" (Malory 1260). Malory modifies the original French ending which has the knights take up the cross and go on Crusade, which, for all its faults, was still considered a form of Holy War, sanctioned by the Church, at the time the *Mort* was written. Through this final change, Malory is showing his reader that even after everything that has happened, the remaining knights, including Lancelot, still do not understand the concept of spiritual stability. Unlike Galahad who, due to his devotions to both God and the order of knighthood, only spills blood when necessary, these knights travel to the Holy Land for the specific purpose of spilling blood in God's name. This rash and unstable decision does lead to their sanctification; however, this sanctification comes not through knightly actions, but rather by dying what medieval readers would have understood to be martyrs' deaths.

Prowess and stability in this world, and in the next, can be achieved in Arthur's kingdom through the vocation of knighthood—Galahad makes this much clear—but it is extremely difficult given the human failings which most of the knights struggle to

overcome. These human failings, which are present in Malory's society "from its inception," make it difficult to hold to the type of Christian ethic needed to fulfill the moral-spiritual requirements of the Pentecostal oath (Guerin 274). Although some knights, such as Galahad, may find this higher chivalric calling to be the "triumphant path to salvation" (274), for most knights the requirements of the Round Table prove to be too much. Their Pentecostal oaths remain unfulfilled, the objectives of their knightly vocations remain unachieved, and the vision that is represented by the Round Table, the dream that is Camelot, remains just out of reach.

Conclusion

The final pages of *The Works* show the reader the consequences that the sin of instability creates within Arthurian society. Malory does not give his readers the fairytale ending, which Merton equates with the chivalric tales of one's high school days, wherein Arthur and Guinevere reconcile and live happily ever after. Nor does he allow Lancelot's banners to storm the field just in time to defeat Mordred's host in the kind of Tolkienesque eucatastrophe that would allow Arthur both to experience the glory of the final battle, and to survive to reap its rewards. Lancelot does not appear on time, and the great glory achieved by Arthur's death quickly becomes empty when measured against the cost by which it was obtained. Arthur's death may restore his martial prowess, but it does so at the cost of his spiritual stability.

The pinnacle of tragedy within *The Works* is not Arthur's death, but rather the event that immediately precedes it. Whereas the author of the *Mort* has Arthur send Sir Griflet away so that he [Arthur] may die alone, Malory has Sir Bedivere stay with Arthur asking him, "what shall becom of me" (Malory 1240). Arthur's reply, "Comforte thyselff, . . . and do as well as thou mayste, for in me ys no truste for to truste in" (1240) speaks volumes. Malory has Arthur identify, to the last remaining fellow of the Round Table, that he, the source from which the Round Table's worship comes, is no longer worthy of trust. This confirms to the readers what they have already seen, that the ideals that made up the Round Table's fellowship are no more. Arthur, scarred by a war and a chaos for which he holds himself responsible, loses the one thing that has been consistent throughout *The Works*, his faith in the vocation of knighthood as practiced by the Round Table. When Arthur dismisses Bedivere to "do as thou mayste," instead of instructing

him on how to keep the practice of the knightly vocation alive, as Galahad did before his death, he is confirming that the golden age of Camelot has ended. The Round Table has been broken, and the physical death of the king is preceded by something much more significant, the death of the dreamer. The majority of the remaining characters go on, as I previously mentioned in the conclusion to chapter three, to find salvation through acts of penitence, which are unrelated to knighthood. Those who do strive to gain a full understanding of the vocation of knighthood, like Lancelot and Arthur, ultimately fail. Malory may have begun his *Works* by attempting to portray his knights as great chivalric heroes, similar to those found in the legends of Henry V, but he ends them much more bleakly, describing knights who, like the historical Henry V, are keenly aware of their failures.

By the end of *The Works* it is clear that Malory does not believe that the Knights of the Round Table, as a whole, will ever be worthy of the descriptor with which Barber described the Knights Templar, following the Second Crusade; the one "stable force in [an] eminently unstable kingdom" (R. Barber *The Knight and Chivalry* 271). The idea of the fellowship being able to rise, together, to the highest levels of martial prowess and spiritual stability is, clearly, not something that Malory believes can be achieved. Rather, it seems that the individual instability of key members constantly leads the Fellowship down the path of chaos. It is this path that leads Lancelot, after the war, Arthur's death, and the collapse of the Round Table after the Day of Destiny, from the shores of Dover, to the tomb of Sir Gawain, and finally to the convent at Almsbury.

It is in the setting of this convent that Malory describes the final meeting of Lancelot and Guinevere. It is at this meeting that Lancelot mentions a Lancelot mentions

a character whose name the reader has not encountered for some time, "*sir Galahad* my sone" (1253, emphasis added). Although Lancelot's mention of Galahad is done in a context that serves to confirm his (Lancelot's) own prowess, it is worth noting as he equates the name with "perfeccion" (1253). Malory clearly shows his readers during this section of the text that although Lancelot understands that Galahad was the perfect knight, he does not understand what knightly perfection entails. Lancelot still looks at it through the lens of instability, and, like Bernard of Clairvaux, is unable to see past the perceived dichotomy between spiritual worthiness and worldly prowess, which does not exist in Malory's conception of chivalry. It is due to the fact that he cannot see past this that Lancelot ends up renouncing his own knighthood when he is told by the now stable Guinevere to "forsake my company" (1252). Lancelot knows he cannot become a "new knight" as he is, as the reader is now well away, unable to completely forsake Guinevere. In the same way he is no longer able to live contently as an earthly knight, since Guinevere, the reason that he reveled in his earthly prowess has forsaken him. Unable to fit into his perceived dichotomy, Lancelot rejects the vocation he has spent *The Works* trying to prefect, thereby betraying the now dead Arthur one final time.

This rejection of the knightly vocation and final betrayal of Arthur may be bleak, yet despite all this Malory does not leave his readers without hope, albeit hope of a different kind. By using the name of Galahad, Malory is reminding his readers of the knight who fulfilled the Pentecostal Oath and mastered the chivalric vocation by combining spiritual belief with worldly prowess so that he could fairly and fully maintain the chivalry and justice praised by chroniclers such as Lull, in light of the Pentecostal oath. In addition to this by associating the name with perfection, Malory is recalling the

typological connection that he has created between Galahad and Balin. I believe that Malory evokes the memory of this typological connection in order to remind readers that Arthur, like Balin, is not meant to be perfect. Just as Balin could not be perfect because there would eventually be a greater knight, neither can Arthur be perfect, as, for the medieval reader, there would always be a greater king. Arthur may have attempted to maintain a stable order within society, through the foundation of the Round Table and the institution of the Pentecostal oath; however, his attempts ultimately failed due to the world's instability. Guinevere's adverse reaction to Lancelot's mention of Galahad and the Round Table clearly shows that the days of the Round Table are now memories. Arthur's concept of knighthood is something that people may recall, but that they are no longer able to experience first hand. It no longer exists. For Malory, the death of King Arthur, is as Alan Jay Lerner and Frederick Lowe put in in their 1960 musical *Camelot*, "the sundown of a dream" ("Guenevere"), the dream of a better world in this life. Still, despite Malory's clear belief that there will never again be something as glorious as the fellowship of the Round Table in this world, *The Works* does not end without hope. Malory makes it clear to his readers that although the vocation of knighthood may no longer be achievable in this unstable world, the day will come, as Guinevere tells Lancelot, when one "may have a syght of Cryste Jesu, and on Doomesday [be able] to sytte on Hys ryght syde; [fo]r [people] as synfull as ever I was, now are seyntes in hevyn" (Malory 1252). Guinevere makes it clear to Lancelot that she has come to realize that this "worlde unstable" is merely a stage of life, and that, following a godly death, it too will become no more than a memory (1035). Through Guinevere, Malory reminds his readers that the true purpose of the knightly vocation is not to gain glory in this world. Rather,

like any well-lived life in the Middle Ages, its intended purpose was to honour God through one's actions. This would allow God, as Merlin would put it, to become "thy frende" (49), grant one a good death, and allow one to enter into a kingdom greater than Arthur's. Malory's intended readers believed that when they arrived in this kingdom, Jesus Christ, a king much greater than Arthur, would "wipe away all tears from their eyes: and death [would] be no more, nor mourning, nor crying, nor sorrow, . . . for the former things [would have] passed away. And he that sat on the throne [would say to them]: Behold, I make all things new" (Rev 21:24-5a, DRV).

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