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THE HERMIT IN FRENCH ARTHURIAN ROMANCE (c.1170-1530)

A thesis submitted for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

at

The University of Glasgow

by

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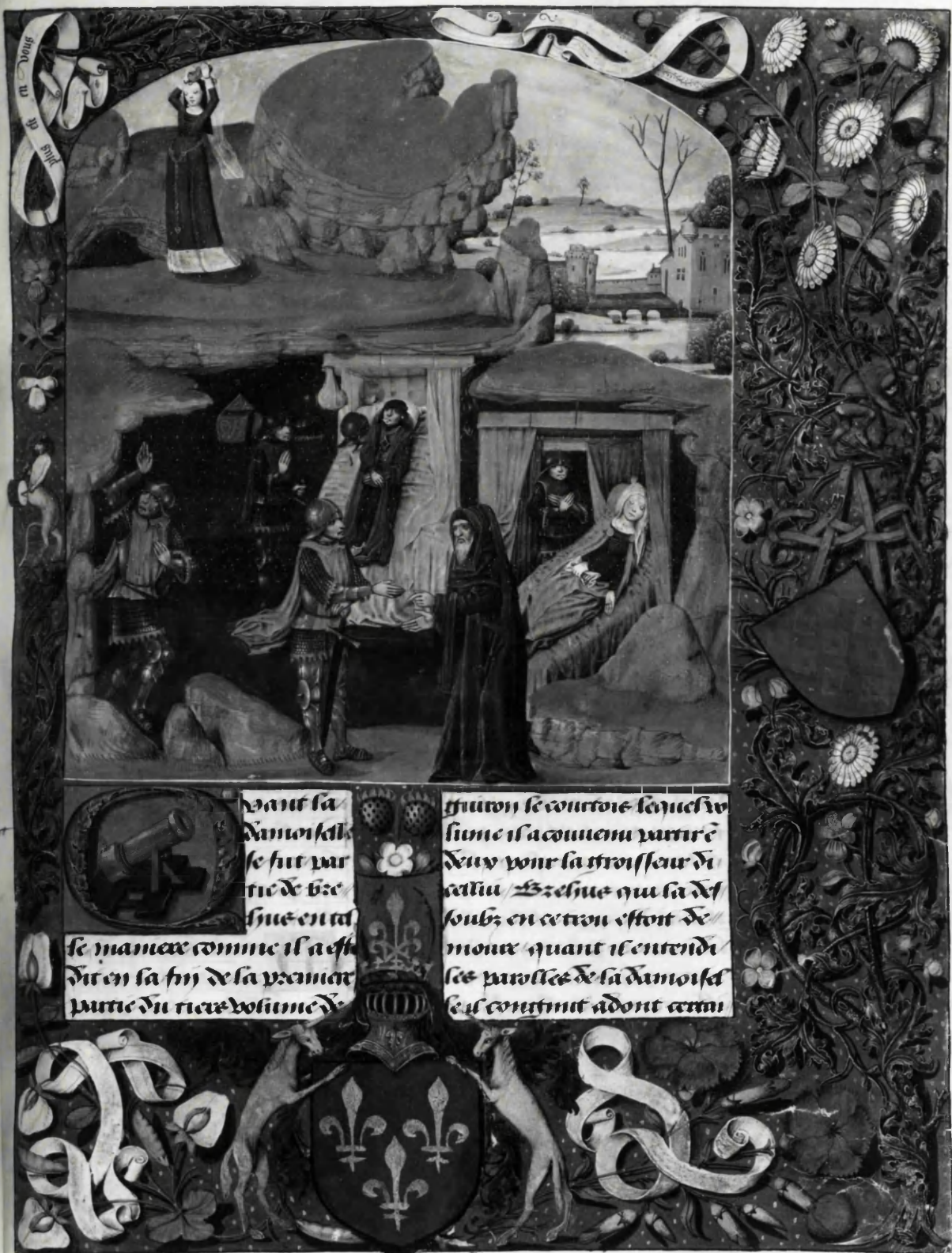
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Frontispiece

Brehus in Febus' Cavern (B.N. ms. fr. 362 f<sup>o</sup> I.)

A hermit relates to Brehus the tragic story of Febus' love for the Princess of Norhomberlande. The lovers' bodies, miraculously preserved, still lie buried in the hermitage. With its strange, uncanny atmosphere and the memories of adventure and love which still linger there, Febus' Cavern is one of the most "Arthurianised" hermitages in romance. See within pp. 99-101, 160, 169-170.

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#### Bibliography

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## List of Abbreviations

BLVS	Bibliothek des literarischen Vereins in Stuttgart.
B.M.	British Museum.
B.N. fr.	Bibliothèque Nationale, fonds français.
CFMA	Classiques français du Moyen Age.
<u>Didot-Perceval</u>	ed. by W. Roach, Philadelphia (Univ. of Pennsylvania Press), 1941.
<u>First Continuation</u>	<u>The Continuations of the Old French Perceval of Chrétien de Troyes.</u> Vol. I (TVD) ed. W. Roach, Philadelphia (Univ. of Pennsylvania Press), 1949. Vol. II (EMQU) ed. W. Roach and P. H. Ivy jr. Philadelphia (University of Pennsylvania Press), 1950. Vol. III Part I (ALPRS) ed. W. Roach, Philadelphia (American Philosophical Society), 1952.
<u>Gerbert</u>	<u>La Continuation de Perceval</u> éd. par M. Williams, Paris (Champion), 2 vols. 1922 and 1925 (CFMA 28,50).
GRL	Gesellschaft für romanische Literatur.
<u>Loeseth</u>	<u>Le Roman en prose de Tristan, le roman de Palamede et la Compilation de Rusticien de Pise. Analyse critique d'après les mss de Paris.</u> Paris (Bouillon), 1891 (Bibliothèque de L'Ecole des Hautes Etudes 82).
P.L.	<u>Patrologiae cursus completus, series Latina</u> , ed. J. P. Migne.
<u>Perceforest</u>	Paris (Galliot du Pré), 1528, B.N.Rés. Y <sup>c</sup> 28-33.
<u>Perceval le Galois</u>	publié par Ch. Potvin, Mons, 1866-71, 6 vols. (Société des Bibliophiles Belges 21).
<u>Perlesvaus</u>	<u>Le Haut Livre du Graal</u> ed. by W. A. Nitze, T.A. Jenkins and collaborators, Chicago (Univ. of Chicago Press), 1932-7, 2 vols, Modern Philology Monographs.

SATF	Société des Anciens Textes Français.
TLF	Textes Littéraires Français.
<u>Queste</u>	<u>La Queste del Saint Graal</u> éd. par A. Pauphilet, Paris (Champion), 1949 (CFMA 76).
<u>Vulgate Version</u>	<u>Vulgate Version of the Arthurian Romances</u> ed. by H. O. Sommer, 1908-1916 (Carnegie Institute of Washington Publications 74). Vol. I <u>L'Estoire del Saint Graal</u> Vol. II <u>L'Estoire de Merlin</u> Vols. III-V <u>Le Livre de Lancelot del Lac</u> Vol. VI <u>Les Aventures ou la Queste</u> <u>del Saint Graal</u> and <u>La Mort</u> <u>Artu</u> Vol. VII      Supplement: <u>Le Livre d'Artus</u> Vol. VIII     Index of Names and Places.

CHAPTER ONE

THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE EREMITICAL LIFE

## Chapter One

### The Historical Development of the Eremitical Life

The Hermit-Saint is one of the most characteristic, popular and omnipresent figures in mediaeval French literature. All the main genres - the saints' lives, the drama, the national epic and courtly romance - amply testify to the vitality of his literary role. Indeed, the figure of the Hermit-Saint, turning his back on society to seek after a way of life as anti-natural as possible, seems to have known a vogue of popularity in literature no less extensive, and no less important, than that later enjoyed by the contrasting figure of the Noble Savage, adhering to the simplicity and spontaneity of Nature, and personifying, for the eighteenth century, virtue truth and happiness. This wide-ranging popularity immediately prompts a number of questions: why this preoccupation in mediaeval literature with hermits and eremitical ideals? - why this fascination with the ascetic, other-worldly figure of the Hermit-Saint at a time when society was also glorifying, in the songs of the troubadours and the romances of "fin' Amors", an ideal of human happiness firmly anchored in the joys of the world and the flesh? The short answer must

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surely be that the Hermit-Saint embodies some of the great aspirations of mediaeval Christian spirituality, that the Hermit's vogue in literature reflects, or rather projects, a contemporary current of fervent piety, strict asceticism and contempt for the world. But why the ideal of asceticism and solitude at all? And in what forms did this ideal find expression in the European Middle Ages in particular? The answer to these questions demands at least a brief outline of the nature, origins, and historical development of the eremitical vocation itself.

### Origins and Development of the Eremitical Life

The flowering of the eremitical life in the Middle Ages has its origins in the deserts of Egypt, Syria and Palestine, of the third and fourth centuries of the Christian era. It may at first sight seem paradoxical, even misleading, to begin discussing the eremitical ideal by relating it to a particular time, place and religion. After all, a taste for solitude is probably as old as mankind itself, and the solitary life reflects a form of idealism that is not restricted to any one particular age. Furthermore, neither the quest of solitude, nor the belief

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that man can aspire to spiritual perfection only in so far as he emancipates himself from the ties of the world and the flesh, is exclusively Christian: both are common to all ages, all places, all religions. Nonetheless, after due allowance has been made for this general consideration, it is to the Christian faith in particular that one must relate the rapid expansion of the eremitical life in the Middle Ages and its beginnings in the Eastern world in the first few centuries of our era.

What inspired men and women to cut themselves off from the world and withdraw to the desert was, in the first place, the desire to execute to the letter the teaching and example of Christ. Christ himself had fasted for forty days in the wilderness (Luke 4, 1-2), had withdrawn to pray to a solitary place (Mark 1, 35), and had summoned all who would be His followers to leave everything for His sake and follow Him (Mark 10, 21). Like Saint Hilarion<sup>1</sup>, many of the first hermits were above all mindful of Christ's words "whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my

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1. P.L. t. 23, col. 31.

disciple," (Luke 14,33), or like Saint Antony<sup>1</sup> were fired by the desire to follow Christ's counsel to the rich man (Matthew 19,21): "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me." It is clear therefore, that the spirit of renunciation and the spread of the solitary life can be directly related to certain aspects of Christ's teaching.

In the second place, flight to the desert was inspired by the widespread belief, again encouraged by Christ's teaching<sup>2</sup>, in the imminent end of Time. Belief in the proximity of the Second Coming and the Last Judgement could not but strengthen the desire to follow Christ's teaching to the letter. It certainly explains the fervour with which men and women turned their backs on the present world, to await in solitude the establishment of His Kingdom. And for the first Christians, the ever-increasing corruption of the Roman empire and the violent persecutions of a Nero, a Trajan

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1. P.L. t. 73, col. 127.

2. Matthew 24, 28-31. Mark 13, 24-27. Luke 21, 25-28.  
See also Jacques Lacarrière, The God-possessed  
(translated by Roy Monkcom), London (Allen and Unwin),  
1963, pp. 21-32.

or a Decius could only confirm that the existing world-order was in its death-throes, that the tribulations which would precede the Second Advent had assuredly begun. It is perfectly true, of course, that such religious fervour can also be partly understood by reference to the social and political realities of the time. For the first Christians, the desert was above all a place of refuge, a means of evading the pressures constantly exerted upon them by Rome, whether in the form of severe taxation or violent persecution. According to Jerome, for example, it was during the persecution of Decius c.250 that Paul the First Hermit withdrew to the desert... "ad montium deserta confugiens, dum persecutionis finem praestolaretur, necessitatem in voluntatem vertit."<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, it remains true that the principal inspiration behind the quest of solitude was a religious one, and it is noteworthy in this respect that neither the end of the persecutions nor the proscription of paganism within the Empire was in any way to halt the exodus to the desert.

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1. P.L. t 23, col. 21.

The development of the eremitical life in the East.

Saint Paul of Thebes fled into the desert during the persecution of Decius, c. 250; about twenty years later, Saint Antony too was to take up the solitary life. Their example was contagious. By the close of the fourth century, according to a traveller passing through Egypt and Palestine<sup>1</sup>, there were almost as many solitaries in the desert as there were inhabitants in the towns, consecrating their lives to extremes of asceticism and mortification. Complete isolation became increasingly difficult, and had to be earnestly fought for by those who still cherished the austere ideal of absolute solitude. Saint Antony's retreat at Pispir, for example, attracted so many disciples that he himself felt compelled to withdraw even farther into the desert. He was to settle eventually on Mount Colzim, not far from the Red Sea<sup>2</sup>.

In addition to hermits living in complete solitude, therefore, there developed quite naturally semi-eremitical communities, grouped round some eminent saint whose reputation had attracted a great number of followers.

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1. Helen Waddell The Desert Fathers, (The Fontana Library. Theology and Philosophy), 1962, p.15.

2. P.L. t 73, col. 148.



In Palestine, for example, Saint Hilarion attracted hosts of disciples, who were to be grouped in semi-eremitical communities, known as "lauras". In the East, these were to be given a coherent material and spiritual organisation by Pachomius and Saint Basil of Caesarea. About 320, Pachomius established a community of solitaires at Tabennisi, whose foundation marks the beginnings of cenobitism or monasticism, while Saint Basil's Rule (c.370) was further to discourage the idea of total solitude. In this way, there grew up in the East, two forms of the eremitical life: on the one hand, there were solitaires who had chosen to live in absolute seclusion, completely cut off from their fellow-men; on the other, there developed semi-eremitical communities, groups of solitaires living according to a common rule.

#### The eremitical life in the West.

Either in its original or attenuated form, the eremitical life spread rapidly, not only to Syria, Palestine, Asia Minor, Mesopotamia and Persia, but also westwards, constantly accompanying the expansion of Christianity itself. The renown of the great Oriental ascetics was made known by pilgrims, soldiers, missionaries and other travellers of the time, as well

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as by numerous writings on the lives of the most eminent solitaires, above all the Vita Antonii, written in Greek by Saint Athanasius and translated into Latin by Evagrius of Antioch, the Vitae of Paul, Malchus and Hilarion by Saint Jerome, Palladius' Historia Lausiaca, Rufinus of Aquileia's Historia Monachorum in Aegypto and John Cassian's Institutæ Coenobiorum and Collationes Patrum. Through the teaching and example of Saint Athanasius, Saint Eusebius of Vercelli and Saint Benedict in Italy, John Cassian in Provence and Saint Martin of Tours, the solitary life spread over Europe, to play an increasingly important part in the religious life of the West.

#### Different Forms of the eremitical life in the West.

A detailed and comprehensive treatment of the historical development of the solitary life will not be attempted here.<sup>1</sup> Instead, the following paragraphs will give an outline of the different forms the eremitical life could and did take in the Middle Ages. Wherever

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1. As far as France is concerned, an enquiry into the solitary life in France, directed by l'abbé Jean Sainsaulieu, was opened in 1950, under the auspices of the Bibliothèque d'Histoire des Religions (Sorbonne).

possible, these forms have been illustrated by representative examples, chosen from a wide-ranging period of time.

(a) Independent solitaries

The development of the eremitical life in the West in no way involved the disappearance of the independent solitary - far from it. In his outline of L'érémisme en Occident jusqu'à l'an mil, Jean Leclercq makes the following observation: "Il faut, en effet, distinguer deux catégories très générales d'ermites au moyen âge: ceux dont on parle et ceux dont on ne parle pas. Ces derniers constituent les cas normaux, ceux qui furent les plus fréquents: il s'agit d'hommes dont on ne sait rien, ou presque rien, parce qu'ils n'ont rien 'fait'; ils se sont contentés 'd'être' en présence de Dieu. Tout au plus, parfois, le nom d'un lieu-dit, ou bien l'attestation d'un culte ancien, sont les seules traces qu'a laissées un personnage dont on ne connaît pas les dates.<sup>1</sup>"

A great number of solitaries, therefore, have no history,

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1. L'Eremitismo in Occidente nei Secoli XI e XII (Atti della seconda Settimana internazionale di studio Mendola, 30 agosto- 6 settembre 1962), Miscellanea del Centro di Studi Medioevali IV, Pubblicazioni dell' 'Università' Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Contributi-serie terza, varia 4, Milan, (Vita e Pensiero), 1965, p.28.

and must remain virtually unknown. There is enough evidence, however, to suggest the continued vitality of the independent, solitary life.

As well as hermits who withdrew to island, cave or forest<sup>1</sup>, there were many who seemed to have roamed from place to place, mixing and talking with the common people. Indeed, Gougoud points out that it was the hermit who represented the ascetic life to the majority of people. He remained accessible to all, not cut off from the world like the monk within the walls of the monastery: "C'est que l'ermite était pour les séculiers une figure familière, dont les moeurs ascétiques et la vie singulière piquaient davantage la curiosité du populaire. Les gens du voisinage, les passants avaient pu l'observer, ils conservaient le souvenir des services rendus par lui ainsi que de l'édification qu'il leur avait donnée. Le moine, au contraire, était beaucoup plus mystérieux; son individualité n'avait guère l'occasion de s'accuser; il menait dans son cloître une existence fondue dans la communauté, cachée au public. On connaissait la silhouette du moutier, mais la personnalité du cénobite échappait à l'observation

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1. R. M. Clay The Hermits and Anchorites of England, London (Methuen), 1914, pp. 1-48.

commune. L'homme vivant saintement en ermitage devint donc le vrai type de l'ascète pour le populaire.<sup>1</sup>"

There existed, therefore, in the Middle Ages independent solitaries, some living in total or permanent solitude, others moving about from place to place, mixing with the everyday world.

(b) Congregations of hermits and semi-eremitical communities.

From the eleventh century onwards solitaries were progressively absorbed by a profusion of monastic and semi-eremitical communities or congregations - a development which clearly parallels the evolution of the solitary life in the East, whereby the renown of a particular ascetic attracted hosts of followers and made total isolation almost impossible. Already, for example, the renown of Saint Benedict in the sixth century, and Saint Nilus in the tenth had led to the foundation of eremitical communities; and by 1012 Saint Romuald had established a community of hermits at Camaldoli<sup>2</sup>. During the eleventh century this movement

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1. Louis Gougaud Ermites et Reclus, études sur d'anciennes formes de vie religieuse, Abbaye Saint-Martin de Ligugé, 1928, pp. 51-2. Cp J. von Walter, Die ersten Wanderprediger Frankreichs, 2 vols. Leipzig (Dieterich), 1903 and 1906.

2. Fliche et Martin Histoire de L'église Paris (Bloud et Gay), 1934: vol. 4, p.593, vol. 7, p.337-p.339. Peter Anson The Call of the Desert, London (S.P.C.K.), 1964, chaps. 7-9.



was given a rapid acceleration. The foundation of the Order of Grandmont by Etienne de Muret in 1074, the Fondation de La Sauve-Majeure (1079), Saint Bruno's community at the Grande Chartreuse (1084), the Cistercian Order, founded by Robert de Molesme in 1098 all reflect this important development<sup>1</sup>. The rapid expansion of the eremitical life in the west of France in the eleventh and early twelfth centuries was to lead, in the same way, to the establishment of monastic or semi-eremitical communities, Robert d'Arbrissel, Raoul de la Fustaye, Bernard de Tiron and Vital de Mortain were all to establish communities of solitaires at Fontevrault (1099), the abbey of Nid-de-Merle (1100), Tiron (1107/1109) and Savigny (1112), respectively<sup>2</sup>. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the movement continued to flourish and hosts of new orders were established.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Fliche et Martin op. cit. vol. 8, p.446, 447, 448.

2. L. Raison et R. Niderst Le Mouvement Erémétique dans l'ouest de la France, à la fin du XIe et au début du XIIe siècle. Annales de Bretagne, t. LV, 1948, pp.1-46.

3. M. Heimbucher Die Orden und Kongregationen der katolischen Kirche, Paderborn (Schöningh) 1907-8. P. Anson The Call of the Desert, London (S.P.C.K.), 1964, pp. 99-160.

In 1215, the Fourth Lateran Council, in an unsuccessful attempt to control the growth of these ever-increasing new orders, decreed that no new religious communities were to be founded.<sup>1</sup> It is clear, therefore, that the word "hermit", from the eleventh century onwards, can designate not only the independent solitary but also a person living within a community or congregation of solitaries.

(c) The eremitical life as an extension of the cenobitic life.

In its spread to the West, the Eremitical life was to shed some of the austerities and extremes of asceticism practised by the Oriental solitaries. Immediate total isolation, for example, was regarded by many as over-fraught with dangers for a man or woman who wished to embark on the eremitical life. Both John Cassian and Saint Benedict insist on this point.

Porro eremum perfectos, omnique vitio  
purgatos oportet expetere, et excoctis  
ad purum in congregatione fratrum  
vitiis, non pusillanimitatis profugio,  
sed divinae contemplationis obtentu,

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1. Peter Anson op. cit. p. 112.

et desiderio intuitus sublimioris intrare,  
 qui non nisi in solitudine a perfectis  
 solummodo poterit apprehendi.<sup>1</sup>

For Saint Benedict, hermits are persons  
 qui non conversationis fervore novicio sed  
 monasterii probatione diuturna, qui  
 didicerunt contra diabolum multorum  
 solacio jam docti pugnare; et bene exstructi  
 fraterna ex acie ad singularem pugnam  
 heremi, securi jam sine consolatione  
 alterius, sola manu vel brachio contra vitia  
 carnis vel cogitationum Deo auxiliante  
 pugnare sufficiunt.<sup>2</sup>

It is in rather similar terms that Peter Damian, in the eleventh century, reviews the nature and merits of the eremitical life. Aware of the dangers of immediate total isolation, Damian, like Cassian, regards monasticism as a kind of noviciate in which candidates could prepare for a higher goal, the solitude and austerity of the hermitage:

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1. P.L. t 49 col. 345.

2. The Rule of Saint Benedict ed. by Justin McCann, London (Burns Oates), 1960, page 14.

Fratres itaque in monasterio immobiliter permanentes, tolerandi sunt; ad eremum vero fervido spiritu transmigrantes plausibus ac praeconiis efferendi. Illi siquidem sub divinae protectionis clypeo delitescunt; isti vero in campum certaminis prodeuntes victoriae titulis decorantur. Illi defendunt sua; isti referunt spolia. Illi Deo protegente sunt insuperabiles; isti quotidie satagunt hostium suorum calcare cervices. Illi contra moenia constituti obsidentes, ne ingrediantur obsistunt; isti minaces hostium cuneos procul de suis finibus terga cedentes expellunt. Et quid plura dicam? Illi scilicet a saeculo sunt remoti; isti Deo jam confabulantur intima illi charitate conjuncti. Illi altare aereum custodiunt; isti jam ingrediuntur Sancta Sanctorum.<sup>1</sup>

In view of this, it is not surprising to find that certain hermitages were grouped close to an abbey or

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1. P.L. t.144, col. 395. See also Owen Blum Saint Peter Damian His Teaching on the Spiritual Life. The Catholic Univ. of America, Studies in Mediaeval History, New Series, vol. X, Washington D.C., 1947, p. 126.

monastery. Jean Leclercq makes this point in his article L'Erémisme en Occident jusqu'à l'an mil: "Un travailleur honnête et impartial comme M. J. Trévillers n'a point reculé, récemment, devant l'évidence qu'imposent les sites archéologiques et les documents écrits: 'En s'éloignant de leurs monastères, les religieux autorisés à vivre érémitiquement n'en restaient pas moins sous l'étroite dépendance de leur abbé. Aussi n'est-ce pas par hasard que l'on recontre, à proximité de nos anciennes abbayes et dans leurs dépendances, un certain nombre d'ermitages qui, aux périodes de ferveur, ne cessèrent d'être occupés par des religieux épris d'une plus grande perfection.<sup>1</sup> De fait, en bien des chartes, on voit tels ou tels privilèges garantis à telle abbaye 'avec ses ermitages', cum eremitoriis suis.<sup>2</sup>"

The eremitical life, therefore, as well as including independent solitaries and congregations of hermits, was also an extension of the cenobitic life, reserved for those who had already proved themselves within a community

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1. Sequania monastica, Vesoul, s.d. (1955) t. II, p. 101.

2. L'Eremitismo in Occidente nei secoli XI e XII (Atti della seconda Settimana internazionale di studio Mendola, 30 agosto- 6 settembre 1962), Miscellanea del Centro di Studi Medioevali IV, Pubblicazioni dell' Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Contributi-serie terza, varia 4, Milan (Vita e Pensiero), 1965, pp. 31-2.

of solitaires.

From this outline, then at least something of the nature, variety and vitality of the eremitical life in the Middle Ages should have been made clear. It scarcely seems an exaggeration to say that the eremitical vocation represents just as important and as characteristic a feature of mediaeval society as the great institutions of monasticism and chivalry. For Peter Damian, indeed, writing in his De Ordine Eremitarum, the solitary life represents nothing less than the summit of Christian perfection: "Many are the ways by which one comes to God; diverse are the orders in the society of the faithful; but among them all there is no way so straight, so sure, so unimpeded, so free from obstacles which trip one's feet, as this holy life."<sup>1</sup> Against this background, therefore, it is easy to see why the Hermit should have become such a popular, even stereotyped figure in mediaeval literature. Rather surprisingly, however, the prominence of the Hermit's literary role has not attracted a great deal of attention on the part of critics. There are of course hosts of scattered references to his presence in mediaeval

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1. H. O. Taylor The Mediaeval Mind A History of the Development of Thought and Emotion in the Middle Ages, London (MacMillan), 1911, vol. 1, p. 372, and P.L.145, col. 337.

literature, but, to my knowledge, only A. Müssener's thesis Der Eremit in der Altfranzösischen Nationalen und Höfischen Epik,<sup>1</sup> P. Sage's preliminary chapter in "Le Bon Prêtre" dans la Littérature Française,<sup>2</sup> J. Frappier's article Le Graal et la Chevalerie,<sup>3</sup> A. M. Finoli's La Figura dell' Eremita nella Letteratura Antico-Francese<sup>4</sup> and Pierre Jonin's Des Premiers Ermites à ceux de la Queste del Saint Graal<sup>5</sup>, begin to acknowledge the importance of the Hermit's role. The chapters that follow will try to fill at least part of this gap by exploring the part which the Hermit is given to play in one of the most important narrative genres, namely, French Arthurian Romance, from about 1170 down to the beginnings of the sixteenth century.

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1. Rostock (Beckmann), 1930.

2. Genève (Droz) et Lille (Giard), 1951.

3. Romania 75, 1954, pp. 165-210.

4. L'Eremitismo in Occidente nei Secoli XI e XII (Atti della seconda Settimana internazionale di studio Mendola 30 agosto- 6 settembre 1962), Miscellanea del Centro di Studi Medioevali IV, Pubblicazioni dell'Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Contributi-serie terza, varia 4, Milan (Vita e Pensiero), 1965, pp. 581-91.

5. Annales de la Faculté des Lettres d'Aix, tome XLIV, pp. 293-350. My thesis was already complete when I received an off-print of this important article from Professor Jonin. Unfortunately, therefore, I have not been able to make use of Professor Jonin's findings.

CHAPTER TWO

THE HERMIT'S FORTUNES IN FRENCH ARTHURIAN ROMANCE  
(c. 1170-1530)



Chapter TwoTHE HERMIT'S FORTUNES IN FRENCH ARTHURIAN ROMANCE  
(c. 1170-1530)(1) The Hermit in Arthurian Verse Fiction, Excluding  
Grail Romances.

Arthurian verse fiction, excluding romances of the Grail, is represented by some twenty-five romances, of very varied length and value, and ranging in time from Chrétien's Erec et Enide (c. 1170) to Froissart's Meliador, written some two hundred years later. The hermit appears in twelve of these romances, usually in a rather marginal capacity. The potential spiritual dimensions of his role, though not entirely overlooked, are never accorded very great importance.

(1a) The Hermit in Chrétien's Romances.

The hermit begins his career in French Arthurian literature in Chrétien's romances, Erec et Enide<sup>1</sup>, Yvain<sup>2</sup>, and Le Chevalier de la Charrete<sup>3</sup>. In the first of these,

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1. Erec et Enide éd. par Mario Roques, Paris (Champion, CFMA 80) 1953, ll. 700-706.

2. Yvain éd. by T.B.W. Reid, Manchester (University Press) 1961, ll. 2827-2887.

3. Le Chevalier de la Charrete éd. par Mario Roques, Paris (Champion, CFMA 86), 1958, ll. 1837-1980.

Erec and the heroine's father go to a church just before the Fête de l'Epervier to hear a mass of the Holy Spirit sung by a hermit. In Yvain, the hero loses his senses after he is denounced as unfaithful, and resorts to the forest. There he is aided by a hermit who is terrified by the appearance of the unfortunate Yvain, but does not hesitate to show his charity by placing some bread and water for him on the window-ledge every day. In return for this kindness Yvain lays at the door of the hermitage all the wild game he hunts every day. In Le Chevalier de la Charrete, a solitary unveils to Lancelot the significance of his adventure at the "cimetière futur", which designates him as the predestined liberator of the captives of Gorre.

In these romances, then, the hermit is awarded either simply a passing reference or at the most the role of a benevolent utility-figure, introduced solely for the necessities of the plot. In Yvain, the hermit-episode gives a rational explanation for Yvain's survival during the period of his madness, and gives us a glimpse, en passant, of the kindness and true charity of the man of God. In Le Chevalier de la Charrete, the adventure of the "cimetière futur" - like all other episodes of the Charrete - is designed to elaborate the portrait of the

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perfect lover, according to the precepts and idealism of "fin' amors". It illustrates, on the one hand, Lancelot's incomparable prowess, and, on the other, clearly indicates that the courtly hero does not in any way despise the Church (see e.g. lines 1840-42: "Ne fist que vilains ne que fos/ li chevaliers qui el mostier/ entra a pié por Deu proier"). Chrétien's observation is in line with Andreas' comment on the courtly lover in his treatise The Art of Courtly Love. "He should not utter harmful or shameful or mocking words against God's clergy or monks or any person connected with a religious house, but he should always and everywhere render them due honor with all his strength and with all his mind, for the sake of Him whose service they perform."<sup>1</sup> But in neither Yvain nor Le Chevalier de la Charrete nor in Erec et Enide is any importance given to the hermit as such or to the eremitical life in itself. Indeed the hermit's spiritual capacity is hardly mentioned at all: it is touched on in passing in Erec et Enide, but in Yvain it is the hero's material needs which the solitary provides for, and in Le Chevalier de la Charrete it is

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1. Andreas Capellanus, The Art of Courtly Love (translated by John J. Parry), New York (Frederick Ungar Publishing Co.) 1959, p. 61.

the terrestrial significance of the hero's adventures which is disclosed.

(1b) Ogrin in Béroul's Tristran.

It is in Béroul's Tristran, a romance on the periphery of Arthurian literature proper, that the hermit's role as a spiritual guide is first evident. On two occasions<sup>1</sup>, Tristran and Yseut arrive at the cell of the hermit Ogrin. On the first of these, Ogrin reminds the two victims of the fatal love-potion of the Christian law and gospel and summons them to repentance. He does so, however, only to learn that repentance is beyond them, simply because they are victims of a magic spell. Their second visit to the hermitage takes place after the strength of the potion abates. By then they have become conscious of their wretchedness and are ready to confide in Ogrin, and entrust him with the task of reconciling them with Marc. Ogrin writes out a letter to Marc urging reconciliation, skilfully covering up the fact that Tristran and Yseut have been lovers, and suggesting an innocent explanation of their continuing exile in the forest: Tristran had been forced to flee with Yseut to defend her against Marc's unjustified threats and accusations. When it is clear

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1. The Romance of Tristran ed. by A. Ewert, Oxford (Blackwell), 1958, ll. 1362-1423, 2263-2770.

that his suggestions have met with success, Ogrin devotes all his energies to purchasing fine clothes for the Queen at Saint Michael's Mount, in preparation for her reinstatement at court.

Ogrin's interventions, then, have an important part to play in Bérout's story. The first scene at the hermitage is clearly designed to illustrate the lovers' degree of infatuation with each other, and to make clear that the love-potion has absolved them of any personal responsibility for their conduct, that the spell has made them exempt from moral censure, and as indifferent to it as they are to physical hardship. The second scene makes it equally clear that true repentance ("la bone repentance") as preached by Ogrin is not the lovers' main concern. They are simply no longer prepared to sacrifice position and self to love, or to go on living as outlaws, far from the court where by birth and rank they belong. Ogrin's main role in this part is simply to negotiate the reconciliation.

It would be misleading, therefore, to attach too much importance to the spiritual significance of Ogrin's role. His exhortations and spiritual counsels are surely introduced to make clear to the reader the unique status of the lovers as victims of the fatal love-drink and later, when its effects have somewhat abated, to

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negotiate the reconciliation with Marc. What is indeed most striking about Ogrin is the worldliness of this man of God. His role, indeed, would suggest that Bérout is making a special plea, on behalf of the two lovers, for the reader's sympathy and understanding. Ogrin makes no investigation of the lovers' motives, it is enough in his eyes that they wish to regain their position in society and be reinstated at court. He is content, in other words, to improve them as members of the world, and shows no desire whatsoever to make of Tristran and Yseut two candidates for sainthood. He is even prepared to compromise himself, in his attempt to secure their reconciliation with Marc: "Por honte oster et mal covrir/ Doit on un poi par bel mentir."<sup>1</sup> Ogrin, then, appears less in the role of moral counsellor as in that of a sympathetic friend and accomplice, ready if need be to put charity before truth.

(1c) The Hermit in Verse Romances of the 13th and 14th Centuries.

The hermit plays a rather minor part in the verse romances of the 13th and 14th centuries. A few

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1. The Romance of Tristran, ed. cit. ll. 2353-4. ✓

romances, it is true, make some mention<sup>1</sup> of the hermit's spiritual function within the world of knight-errantry. At the conclusion of Escanor<sup>2</sup>, for example, the hero withdraws to a hermitage after the death of his "amie" and ends his life in an atmosphere of austere sanctity. In Jaufré,<sup>3</sup> a hermit helps the hero to overcome the Chevalier Noir, who turns out to be none other than a demon from hell. In the Chevaliers as Deus Espees<sup>4</sup>, the author highlights the dilemma of a hermit-knight momentarily torn between loyalty to his family and loyalty to his God. Gauvain is given shelter by a hermit who proves to be the uncle of one of his enemies. After Gauvain has revealed his identity to his host, the latter - with the assistance of a "vallet" - prepares to

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1. Passing reference is sometimes made to the fact that a knight may hear mass during his visit to the hermitage, e.g. L'Atre Périlleux, roman de la Table Ronde, éd. par Brian Woledge, Paris (Champion, CFMA 76), 1936, ll. 4904-4905.
  2. Escanor, hgg. von H. Michelant, Tübingen (Laupp) 1886, pp. 650-682.
  3. Jaufré, hgg. von Hermann Breuer. Göttingen (Niemeyer), 1925, ll. 5270-5661.
  4. Li Chevaliers as Deus Espees, hgg. von W. Foerster, Halle (Niemeyer), 1877, pp. 114-124, ll. 3707-3955.

kill his guest as he lies asleep:

Et il uienent por mal baillir  
 Mon seigneur Gauvain entr'aus deus.  
 Et li uilains ki fu hideus  
 Empuigna mout fort la quignie,  
 Si l'a, au plus k'il puet, haucie.  
 Si fet li hermites son pel,  
 Ki li ot fait si biel ostel,  
 Et amaine le cop aual.  
 Lors se porpense k'il fait mal,  
 Si retient son cop et dist: 'Fui!  
 Ne fai mie au preudomme anui,  
 Ki se dort; et ie sui rendus,  
 Si seroie a tous iors perdus,  
 S'a mal faire recommenchoie.'<sup>1</sup>

The conscience-stricken hermit, then, checks himself at the last moment and Gauvain is saved.

These three episodes, however, are the exceptions which prove the rule, and the role which the hermit does play is usually limited to supplying the material needs of knight-errantry.

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1. Li Chevaliers as deus Espees ed. cit. p. 120.



In the majority of verse romances of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries the hermit simply offers his hospitality to the knights,<sup>1</sup> heals their wounds,<sup>2</sup> informs them of the dangers they risk encountering on their journeys,<sup>3</sup> clears up misunderstandings and reconciles adversaries,<sup>4</sup> helps the knights to achieve the object of their quests.<sup>5</sup>

A closer analysis of one or two particular episodes, however, will best demonstrate the general character of these scenes. In Durmart le Galois,<sup>6</sup> the hero goes in quest of his "amie" the Queen of Ireland, and decides to seek news of her at Glastonbury, where Arthur's court is assembled. On the way there he arrives at a hermitage.

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1. Durmart le Galois, hgg. E. Stengel, Tübingen (Laupp), 1873, ll. 5127-30. Floriant et Florete, ed. by H. F. Williams, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1947, (Univ. of Mich. Publ. Lang and Lit. 23), ll. 6881-6944. Les Merveilles de Rigomer, hgg. von W. Foerster und H. Breuer, Dresden, 1908-1915, 2 vols. ll. 285-326. Claris et Laris, hgg. von Johann Alton, Tübingen (Laupp), 1884, ll. 2497-2502.
  2. Escanor, hgg. von H. Michelant, Tübingen (Laupp), 1886, ll. 12602-06.
  3. Durmart le Galois, ed. cit. ll. 5400-5474. Floriant et Florete, ed. cit. ll. 6881-6944.
  4. Claris et Laris, ed. cit. ll. 17732-17908.
  5. Les Merveilles de Rigomer, ed. cit. ll. 285-326. Claris et Laris, ed. cit. ll. 7090-7115.
  6. Durmart le Galois, ed. cit. pp. 151-153.

'Beaz doz sire', fait li Galois,  
 'Se Glandingesbieres saves  
 La voie, se le me mostres.'  
 Li sains hermites lors respont:  
 'Sire, ces II voies i vont,  
 Mais la plus longe est par decha  
 Et la plus corte par dela.  
 Chevacies le longe, beaz sire;  
 Car la plus corte, c'est la pire,  
 Eschiver le roi mainte gent,  
 Decha ires plus savement.  
 L'autre voie n'est pas commune;  
 Car al chastel de Roche-Brune  
 Avoit L chevaliers,  
 N'a mie encor VIII jors entiers.  
 Plus d'un an i ont converse,  
 Maint gentil home ont destorbe...  
  
 Molt doit bien tez gens eschiver  
 Cil qui n'a force d'eaz grever.'  
 'Certes, sire,' fait li Galois,  
 'Or me consaut Dex li grans rois;  
 Quar la plus droite voie irai,  
 Ja por eaz ne m'esquiverai.<sup>1</sup>'

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1. Durmart le Galois, ed. cit. ll. 5414-5430, 5453-5458.

At the hermitage, then, Durmart is advised to take the longer but safer route to his destination, in order to avoid encountering the robber-knights of Rochebrune. Despite this warning Durmart leaves the hermitage and elects the more adventurous route.

A rather similar episode occurs in Floriant et Florete.<sup>1</sup> Floriant is directed on his way to Rome by a hermit who points out that the lovers should not go by the more direct route.

'Le droit chemin n'irez vous mie  
 Quar une beste malëu  
 I a c'on apele dragon  
 Qui tant est fiere de façon  
 Que nus hom ne l'ose esgarder  
 Ne par cest chemin trespasser.  
 Or vous dirai que vous ferois:  
 I petit sentier en irois  
 Que je vous irai enseigner,  
 Par iluec porrez esloingnier  
 La beste, ja ne le verrez;  
 Bien ferez, se vous m'en creez.'

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1. Floriant et Florete, ed. cit. pp. 211-213.

Quant le Biau Salvage l'entent  
 Si li respondi doucement:  
 'Biaus sire, bon grez en aiez  
 De ce que vous nos avoiez  
 Mes, foi que je doi Saint Martin  
 Ja ne lairai mon droit chemin  
 Pour beste a nul jor de ma vie<sup>1</sup>...'

Floriant, then, like Durmart, ignores the warning and elects the more adventurous route.

Clearly these two episodes are minor adventures, designed - as was the adventure of the "Cimetière futur" in Chrétien's Le Chevalier de la Charrete - to underline the valour of the respective heroes of these romances. The hermit himself remains a rather shadowy background figure, who plays a role of only minor importance.

The reasons for the rather marginal status of the hermit in the verse romances are easily discernible. Divine love is simply not the romancers' main concern, and accordingly its spokesmen - among them the hermit - are relegated to the background. The verse romances, indeed, continue lay traditions and lay ideals, and it is the divinity of Love, not Divine love, which animates

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1. Floriant et Florete ed. cit. ll. 6919-37.

them, inspires the hero's adventures and rewards his prowess. Human, not divine love is the object of his endless quests. Indeed, the entire Kingdom of Logres, as we see it in these romances, upholds only the religion of Love, the source of every joy and virtue. In the profane, aristocratic and courtly world of the verse romances, with its ideals firmly anchored in the present, it is scarcely surprising that hermits, and eremitical ideals, should be given very little attention.

(2) The Hermit in Grail Romances in Verse and Prose (1181-1235).

With the introduction of the Grail theme into French literature and its progressive Christianisation, the hermit's function becomes more and more important in romance. In the Grail texts, where stress is increasingly laid on Divine love and the Christian ethos, the hermit's interventions become not only more numerous but also crucial to a proper understanding of each romance.

The main texts to be discussed in this respect are Chrétien's unfinished Conte du Graal, the earliest extant French story of the Graal, written c. 1181, at the behest

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of Philip, Count of Flanders, the four long Continuations of Chrétien's work, Robert de Boron's verse romance Le Roman de l'Estoire dou Graal, the prose Didot-Perceval, the Perlesvaus and the Vulgate Cycle. All of these were composed within the period c.1181 - c.1235.

(2a) Perceval's Hermit-Uncle in Chrétien's Conte du Graal.

Chrétien's Conte du Graal<sup>1</sup> includes one important hermit-episode, Perceval's encounter on Good Friday with his Hermit-Uncle. Though Chrétien's romance is unfinished, it is clear that Perceval's conversion on Good Friday marks a turning-point in the hero's career. For the first time in his life he is made to think seriously about God and his duties as a knight, he is initiated into the mysteries of the Grail adventure, an explanation is given of his previous failure to ask the requisite questions at the Grail castle. For all of these reasons the hermit-scene is of crucial importance.

The episode takes place after Perceval's chance encounter with a group of knights and ladies, all clad in penitent's dress. Perceval himself has been wandering vainly for five years in search of the Grail castle (where he had previously failed to ask about the Grail.

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1. Le Roman de Perceval ou le Conte du Graal, éd. par William Roach, Genève (Droz) et Lille (Giard), 1956 (TLF 71), ll. 6217-6518.

and the Lance), accomplishing many adventures but remaining quite unmindful of God. The penitents rebuke him for riding fully armed (it is Good Friday though he himself did not know it), reminding him of Christ's birth, crucifixion and death. Moved to tears of repentance and remorse, Perceval asks to be directed to the hermit's cell, where they themselves have just made confession of their sins. Perceval reaches the chapel and confesses to the hermit that it was the grief which overwhelmed him on his failure at the Grail castle that had made him quite unmindful of God. The conversation which follows touches on three important points.

Firstly, the hermit explains (ll. 6392-6402) that the cause of Perceval's silence at the Grail castle was the sin he had committed in heartlessly deserting his mother, who had since died of grief. He adds, moreover, that if Perceval had survived the adventures he had undertaken, it was thanks to his mother's prayers to God on his behalf. (ll. 6403-6408).

Secondly, the hermit goes on to give a partial revelation of the mysteries of the Grail castle. Perceval learns that the Grail is a sacred object ("tant sainte chose est li graals" l. 6425), that the "sainz hom" whom the Grail serves is the father of the Fisher King, has been an invalid for fifteen years and is of so pure a

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spirit that a single mass wafer, brought to him in the Grail, suffices to keep him alive. The hermit further reveals that he himself is the brother of Perceval's mother and the "sainz hom" whom the Grail serves. Perceval is therefore revealed to be the nephew of the hermit and the cousin of the Fisher King.

Thirdly, in terms rather similar to those used by Gornemans and Perceval's mother, the hermit exhorts Perceval to Christian duty. Perceval, himself, however, is no longer the person he was when he first listened to Gornemans and his mother: he has behind him a bitter awareness of his fall from grace and a personal experience of sin, which must give added point to the hermit's exhortations. These are summed up in the hermit's appeal; "Dieu aime, Dieu croi, Dieu aeure," (l. 6459). As further proof of his penance, Perceval accepts to stay two more days at the hermitage, sharing in the hardships of the solitary life.

The hermit of the Conte du Graal, then, like the solitary of the Chevalier de la Charrete, reveals to the hero the significance of his chivalrous adventures. The significance, however, revealed by the hermit of the Grail story is no longer a terrestrial one, as was the case in the Charrete, where Lancelot was revealed to be a knight

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of incomparable prowess and worth. The hermit's reference to the Grail ("tant sainte chose est li graals"), and his affirmation that it was sin (Perceval's desertion of his mother) which caused Perceval's failure at the Grail castle, his exhortations to confession and Christian duty, Perceval's repentance and moral recovery on Good Friday accord to the poem an atmosphere of Christian spirituality lacking in the verse romances which have been discussed. Despite the fact that only partial revelations are offered by the hermit concerning the Grail, and none at all concerning the Lance, it seems clear that the Grail adventure has a religious basis, and that its achievements depend not on prowess alone but on moral and spiritual purity. Through the hermit's intervention, religion has been reintroduced as an important element in chivalric ideals.

The hermit's role, then, in Chrétien's Conte du Graal marks not only an important turning-point in Perceval's career. It also represents an important turning-point in the hermit's fortunes in Arthurian romance. The role accorded to him in the Good Friday episode puts him, for the first time, on the forefront of the stage in French

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Arthurian romance.<sup>1</sup>

(2b) Hermits in the Four Continuations of Chrétien's Conte du Graal.

The unfinished state of Chrétien's Conte du Graal was to challenge other authors to complete the story. Four Continuations have been distinguished. Two of these are anonymous, the First (or Gauvain Continuation), which according to Roach's recent edition, has survived in a short, a long and a mixed redaction; the Second (or Perceval Continuation), which exists in a long and a short redaction. In the case of the other two Continuations the authors' names are known: Manessier and Gerbert. According to Wrede<sup>2</sup>, probable dating of these Continuations

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1. I have not touched on the important question of the authorship of the Good Friday episode, as it does not affect my argument. Whether it is by Chrétien or not, its presence in "Perceval le Viel" (see Roach ed. of Conte du Graal p. 303, note on line 9234) introduces for the first time in the Grail legend an atmosphere of Christian spirituality. For a discussion of authorship see Leo Pollmann, Chrétien de Troyes und der Conte du Graal, Tübingen (Niemeyer) 1965 and Owen (D.D.R.) The Evolution of the Grail Legend, Edinburgh (Oliver and Boyd) 1968, St. Andrews Univ. Publications LVIII.
  2. Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages, ed. by R. S. Loomis p. 217, Oxford (Clarendon Press), 1959, p. 217.

is as follows: the first two Continuations (in their shorter redaction) before 1200, i.e. they were written soon after Chrétien and without knowledge of other Grail romances; Manessier's work between 1214-1227, Gerbert's after 1225 and the longer redaction of the first two Continuations after the completion of Manessier's version.

### First Continuation.

In the First Continuation, which concentrates on the secular, courtly world of Gauvain and his adventures, hermits play the same rather marginal role as that of their counterparts in other verse romances of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Gauvain makes a brief sojourn at two hermitages<sup>1</sup>, while Arthur and his knights are hospitably received at the "vergier des sepoutures".<sup>2</sup> Only in the Carados section, a series of adventures which stands apart from the rest of the romance and which probably existed once as an independent story,<sup>3</sup> is the hermit given a slightly more prominent role. This section of the work<sup>4</sup>, (Section III, episodes 12, 13, 14)

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1. First Continuation, Vol. 2, ll. 4834-37, Vol. 3 Appendix II, ll. 33-44.
  2. First Continuation, Vol. I, ll. 9503-24, Vol. 2, ll. 13284-13312, Vol. 3, ll. 3915-3932, ASPU ll. 4127-4141.
  3. Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages, ed. by R. S. Loomis, p. 212, Oxford (Clarendon Press), 1959.
  4. First Continuation, Vol. 1, pp. 176-223, Vol. 2, pp. 304-360, Vol. 3, pp. 167-181.

recounts the visit of Carados to a hermitage and the penance he does for his brutal treatment of his mother's lover, Eliavrés; at a second hermitage, a mixture of pagan magic and Christian prayer secures his release from an enchanted serpent which Eliavrés and his mother had fastened to his arm. Even here, however, the hermit is given no more than a purely incidental role.

### Second Continuation

In the Second Continuation, which reinstates Perceval as the chief character, the hermit's role is mostly restricted to that of a benevolent utility-figure, who does no more than offer hospitality or shelter to knights errant.<sup>1</sup> There is, however, one important episode, clearly inspired by the Good Friday scene in Chrétien's Conte du Graal, which describes the visit of Perceval and his sister to the hermitage of their uncle. While introducing new elements (Perceval has a sister, the hermit is a brother of Perceval's father, Perceval's mother lies buried at the hermitage), the episode does nothing whatsoever to advance Perceval's quest for the Grail. It does, however, provide an interesting example of how later romancers felt tempted to take up a theme

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1. Perceval le Galois, vol. 4, ll. 23092-23105, ll. 29245-29261, vol. 5, ll. 31536-31565.

inherited from the Conte du Graal, and adapt it for their own purposes. Just before his arrival at the hermitage, Perceval had killed a knight who had threatened his sister. A discussion of this adventure at the hermitage provides the author with the chance to introduce, through the hermit's admonishments, his own comment on unnecessary violence:

'Mais moult vos deveroit desplaire  
 D'omes hocire en tel manière.'  
 Moult le castie par proière  
 Li sains hermites, li preudom,  
 Qui ert de grant religion,  
 Que de s'arme li souvenist  
 Et de celui ki tous nous fist  
 Et ki trestous nous desfera.<sup>1</sup>

What is of interest here, then, is the way in which the author of the Second Continuation has used the episode to introduce didactic comments of his own, in this case his condemnation of violence and indiscriminate killing.

### Manessier

Manessier's Continuation was probably written at a

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1. Perceval le Galois, vol. 4, p. 202, ll. 26232-39.

time when the first two Continuations, Robert de Boron's Roman de L'Estoire dou Graal, the Didot-Perceval and the Vulgate Version were already in existence. Not surprisingly, therefore, many of the hermit-episodes in Manessier are derivative in character.

Perceval's adventure at the Chapelle de la Main Noire and the hermit's revelation of its significance (Perceval le Galois vol. 5, pp. 313-25) is the elaboration of an episode first alluded to in connection with Gauvain in the First Continuation (vol. 1, ll. 13021-68). The explanation which Perceval receives from a hermit regarding the adventures of the "noir cheval" and the damsel who reminds him of Blanchefleur (Perceval le Galois, vol. 6, pp. 11-17) derive from the Queste (pp. 92-115). The combat between Lionel and Bohort, which Calogrenant vainly tries to halt and which results in his death and burial at a hermitage (Perceval le Galois, vol. 6, pp. 98-100) is a modification of an episode in the Queste (pp. 190-3), where a hermit is killed while trying to intercede. The combat between Hector and Perceval (Perceval le Galois, vol. 6, p. 117) and Hector's subsequent request for a hermit to be brought to him to hear his confession is drawn from the Lancelot Proper (Vulgate Version, vol. 5, p. 392, ll. 1-7), while Perceval's death

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as a hermit is doubtless inspired by the account of his death in the Queste. Occasionally, Manessier develops an episode, in order to underline some specific point. He includes, for example, within the adventure of the Chapelle de la Main Noire, a condemnation both of Perceval's search for worldly glory and of indiscriminate killing (Perceval le Galois, vol. 5, ll. 40362-66, 40379-82). It should be noted, however, that these hermit-episodes, derived for the most part from the Queste in no way accord to Manessier's Continuation the sustained other-worldliness and ascetic spirit of the Queste. Manessier is an extensive borrower, and the Queste episodes which he includes constitute only a small section of his Continuation, which, despite the fact that it is complete, is no less a rambling, diffuse romance of adventure than the incomplete Second Continuation. The hermit-episodes simply coexist side by side with other borrowed episodes and do not seem to have been introduced within the context of any general design on the part of the author.

### Gerbert

Like Manessier's, Gerbert's Continuation has a number of hermit-episodes borrowed from previous romances. The visit of Perceval and his sister to their uncle's

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hermitage, where their mother lies buried, (ll. 2705-803) is inspired by the Second Continuation (Perceval le Galois, pp. 193-206), while Perceval's visit to the Hermit-King and his desire to learn from him the significance of two adventures he had witnessed, the first concerning two hermits, one of whom beats and scourges a cross, while the other worships it, the second concerning the Questing Beast (ll. 8420-8905) can be paralleled with similar episodes in the Perlesvaus (Branch IX).<sup>1</sup>

What is more interesting, however, is the way in which Gerbert adapts these episodes to suit his own didactic intentions. The visit of Perceval and his sister to their uncle's hermitage, for example, is the occasion for a reminder of the true aims of chivalry. The true knight, the hermit points out, is the wielder of a two-edged sword, which should be used only to protect Holy Church and uphold social justice ("por garder la gent crestiene /et por tenir droite justiche/ sans trichier et sans convoitise" ll. 2770-72). Irresponsible killing, a common occurrence in the eyes of the author, is to be condemned and deplored as unworthy of true chivalry (ll. 2776-8).

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1. The Old French Grail Romance Perlesvaus A study of its principal sources, by W. A. Nitze, Baltimore (John Murphy) 1902, p. 90. Also Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie 56, 1936, pp. 409-418.



By contrast, the Hermit-King's explanation of the Questing Beast deals with a very specific point of Christian behaviour. Perceval is told that the beast he had seen signifies the Church, while the whelps that emerge from within her and destroy her and each other are the people who disturb the sacred service by talking and complaining of hunger. Where the author of the Perlesvaus presented an allegory of fairly broad and general significance (the Beast is the Creator, the hounds the twelve tribes of Israel), Gerbert narrows its scope, in order to criticise a specific form of behaviour to which he objects. These episodes, together with two further visits<sup>1</sup> by Perceval to hermitages before the end of his long Odyssey (one of which, it is interesting to note, condemns irresponsible killing in terms similar to those used in the sermon on the "espee as deus taillans") make it clear that Gerbert was not only prepared to adopt material from elsewhere, but was also ready to adapt, invent and develop it himself, to suit his own didactic intentions.

In the Four Continuations, then, some of the episodes in which the hermit appears are undoubtedly

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1. B.N. ms. fr. 12576, ff. 208d-209d, ff. 215a-215d.

minor or derivative in character, but others provide interesting examples of authors adapting inherited material for their own purposes. While retaining the broad outlines of Chrétien's Good Friday scene, they have felt free to adapt the content of the hermit's admonitions to voice their own comments on particular issues, as, for example, their plea for less violence and killing and a more humane treatment of one's enemies. What is curious, however, and perhaps undermines the importance of these didactic episodes within each romance is that they coexist with hosts of other episodes devoted to the martial adventures of the hero or the complexities of his amorous affairs. The didactic element is, therefore, rarely sustained, and the hermit's intervention does not - as it does in Chrétien's Conte du Graal and in the Queste - reveal an overall theme which would give shape and meaning to the rest of the work.

(2c) The Hermit-Uncle in the Didot-Perceval.

The Didot-Perceval was composed in the first decade of the thirteenth century as a continuation of Robert de Boron's Le Roman de L'Estoire dou Graal and Merlin.

There are two hermit-episodes in the Didot-Perceval, respectively designated as episodes F and N in Roach's

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edition.

Episode F is borrowed in its main outlines from the Second Continuation (Perceval le Galois, vol. 4, ll. 25745-26470), but it also includes elements which derive from Robert. In the Didot-Perceval, however, the sequence of events is changed. Just before his visit to the Hermit-Uncle in the Second Continuation, Perceval is obliged to kill a knight who wished to abduct his sister; in the Didot-Perceval this episode takes place after the hermitage scene. This change introduced by the redactor of the Didot-Perceval is clearly not an improvement:<sup>1</sup> whereas this episode serves in the Second Continuation as the occasion for the hermit's admonishment ("mais moult vos deveroit desplaire/ D'omes hocire en tel manière" ll. 26232-3), in the prose text the hermit has no immediate reason for exhorting him to refrain from killing knights.

The content of episode F is briefly as follows: Perceval arrives one day at his home in the Gaste Forest, having sought in vain for the house of the Fisher-King. He learns from his sister that his mother had died of sorrow on his departure for Arthur's court. Perceval's sister conducts him to their Hermit-Uncle, in order that

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1. See Didot-Perceval p. 56.

he may confess to him. She explains that she had learned from the hermit that the latter came originally from Jerusalem, that he is a brother of Alain le Gros, their father, and that he has related to her the story of Joseph and his sister Enigeus, the wife of Bron. The hermit has also told her that Bron, the Fisher-King, and their own grand-father, has the Grail ("le vaissel u li sans nostre Segnor fu recuellois"), and that God has revealed that ultimately it is to come into the possession of Perceval, who must continue to search for it. At the hermitage, their uncle further explains that he had been with the Grail company at Joseph's Table, when the Holy Ghost had commanded them to go "en alienes terres vers Occidant", announcing that Alain's heir would be the predestined Grail winner, and that the Fisher-King would not die until Alain's son had come to him. He exhorts Perceval to refrain from killing knights and to avoid sin, pointing out that Perceval is of a lineage that God has loved much and to whom He has given His blood to guard. They spend the night at the hermitage and depart next morning after mass.

Episode N, which relates Perceval's second visit to his uncle, is a direct borrowing from Chrétien, with one or two additions (Perceval's two-month stay at the

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hermitage, his sister's death and burial, probably modelled on the account in the Second Continuation of the death of Perceval's mother and her burial at the hermitage).

In the Didot-Perceval, then, the hermit is accorded an important role, which is rather similar to that played by his counterpart in Chrétien's Conte du Graal. He acts as the spiritual guide of the predestined Grail winner, encouraging him to continue his present search, confessing him, praying for him, exhorting him to virtue. As a member of the original Grail company which sat at Joseph's Table (Roach indeed is inclined to identify the Hermit-Uncle with Petrus, who appears in the Roman de L'Estoire dou Graal<sup>1</sup>), he constitutes an important link between the early history of the Grail and its history in Arthur's kingdom. He is thereby in a privileged position to reveal to Perceval the mysteries and significance of the Grail adventure. Despite the fact that many of Perceval's adventures in the Didot-Perceval remain secular in character, the two hermit-episodes make it clear that the Grail adventure is ultimately a spiritual quest, not to be achieved by prowess alone but by prowess combined with spiritual endeavour.. The

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1. Didot-Perceval pp. 58-66.

Grail itself is identified in the hermit-episodes, as it had been in the Roman de L'Estoire dou Graal, with the precious relic of the Last Supper and the Passion, i.e. the vessel in which Christ made his Sacrament and which was to collect His blood at the Crucifixion. Furthermore, something of Perceval's moral progress is indeed suggested by the second episode: Perceval's second visit to the hermitage is not prompted by his sister, as the first one was, but by God's grace, while his penance of two months and the tears he sheds on learning of his sister's death show that his heart has truly opened to genuine compassion and repentance. This moral progress, subsequently reinforced by further proofs of Perceval's prowess as a knight, leads eventually to Perceval's fulfilment of the Grail quest and the end of the enchantments of Britain. Despite the fact, therefore, that the two hermit-episodes are in part borrowed from previous romances, they nonetheless have an important place in the structure of the Didot-Perceval, and the trilogy to which it belongs. The Hermit's interventions, which reinforce the Christianisation of the Grail adventure, represent yet another attempt to put forward the Christian faith as the all-important element in chivalric ideals.

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(2d) Hermits in the Perlesvaus.

Like the Didot-Perceval, the Perlesvaus (composed between 1191 and 1212) is a Christian interpretation of the Grail adventure. The Grail itself is the sacred vessel in which the Messiah's blood was collected at the Crucifixion, while the goal of the adventure is at once the quest for spiritual perfection and the spread of the Christian faith (the "New Law"). In this work, as in Chrétien's Conte du Graal and the Didot-Perceval, the hermit is once again given an important part to play as the spiritual guide of knight-errantry: the romance opens with a hermit-episode which serves as a prologue to the work as a whole, while the respective Grail quests of Gauvain, Lancelot and Perlesvaus include sojourns at various hermitages where they are charitably received and given enlightenment, or partial revelations about the Grail adventure.

The author's desire to interpret Arthurian romance in terms of the Christian faith is shown in the prologue in two ways. On the one hand, like the author of the Estoire del Saint Graal, he asserts that his work was divinely inspired. He claims as his authority a Latin original, written by Josephus, "le bon clerc et le bon hermite", who himself wrote under the inspiration of the

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Holy Spirit. On the other, the romance opens with a pilgrimage undertaken by Arthur to a hermit's chapel in Wales.

As a consequence of Perlesvaus' failure to ask the Grail questions ("de coi ce servoit, ne cui on en servoit"), distress and evil have overtaken Arthur's kingdom. Arthur himself has lost his desire to win honour, his court is almost deserted and adventures no longer take place. On Ascension Day, however, Guinevere persuades him to redeem himself by undertaking a pilgrimage to Saint Austin's Chapel, a hermitage in Wales. On his way there, Arthur has an adventure at the hermitage of Calixtes, a former robber who had withdrawn to the hermitage to atone for his past life. When Arthur arrives, Calixtes is on the point of death, angels and devils are disputing for possession of his soul. The Virgin intervenes, rebukes the devils and declares that sincere penitance, no matter how late it may be, can outweigh a whole life-time of crime:

'Alez hors de ceenz, car vos n'avez droit en  
l'ame du preudome, que q'il ait fet arriere;  
il est pris au service mon fill e le mien,  
e fesoit sa penitance en cest hermitage des  
pechiez qu'il avoit fet...' Li deable s'en

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vont tot desconfit e tot dolent, e la doce  
 Mere Dieu prent l'ame de l'ermite, qi  
 estoit partie du cors, si la commande as  
 angles, qu'il en facent present son chier  
 fill en Paradis; e li angle la prennent, si  
 commencent a chanter de joie. (ll. 240-251).

This miracle at Calixtes' hermitage is clearly designed by the author to stress the importance of true repentance and its rich rewards. As far as Arthur is concerned, the miracle cannot but strengthen him in his desire to redeem his past life.

On his arrival at Saint Austin's Chapel, which he is unable to enter because of his sinful past, Arthur witnesses a hermit celebrating mass, assisted by the Christ Child and the Virgin. As the service proceeds, he sees the Child become the bleeding Christ of the Crucifixion ".i. home, sanglant o costé, e sanglant es paumes e es piez, e coroné d'espines." After the mass, Arthur is permitted to enter the chapel, where he is admonished by the hermit to mend his ways and help further the cause of the "New Law". The hermit goes on to explain that the distress which had overtaken Arthur's kingdom was caused by Perlesvaus' failure at the Grail castle. The time has come, therefore, for the

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Grail to be reconquered and for Arthur's court to set an example once again to mankind. Arthur leaves the hermitage resolved to recover the lost prestige of his court.

This adventure which opens the romance sets the tone for all the branches that are to follow. The miracle at Calixtes' hermitage, proving to Arthur the importance of true penitance, Arthur's vision at Saint Austin's Chapel of Christ as Saviour and the subsequent admonitions of the hermit all reflect the author's desire to make of the Grail story a spiritual adventure. In particular, the hermit's militant appeal for active service of Holy Church ("edier e essaucier la Loi qui est renovelee par la mort du Saint Prophete") suggests that the Quest itself will be a kind of Crusade, waged on behalf of the Christian faith.

As far as Gauvain and Lancelot are concerned, the hermits' interventions are designed to show up their inadequacies as participators in the quest. Despite partial revelations and admonitions from hermits,<sup>1</sup> they both remain quite unworthy of achieving the Grail

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1. Perlesvaus pp. 60-3, 86-9, 102, 112-3, 167-9, 175, 187-8, 193-5, 207-11.

adventure, Gauvain's worldliness and Lancelot's love for Guinevere disqualify them in advance of any chance of success. In stressing the failure of Lancelot and Gauvain as Grail questers, the author clearly uses these two episodes to suggest that the achievement of the quest must depend on moral and spiritual excellence.

The successful quest of the chaste knight Perlesvaus, "li buens chevaliers", includes a number of marginal hermit-scenes,<sup>1</sup> and two key-episodes - his sojourn at the hermitage of his uncle, the Hermit-King Pelles, and the taking of the Grail Castle, aided by a company of hermits.

In the first of these, the Hermit-King gives Perlesvaus a complete revelation of the meaning of his recent adventures.<sup>2</sup> Through the hermit's discourse, in other words, the author glosses the adventures which he has just narrated, with a view to underlining their

1. After his failure at the Grail Castle, he recovers at the hermitage of Pelles (pp. 89-90, p. 139), at a hermitage he learns of Keu's treacherous murder of Loholt (pp. 215-17), he is warned by the Hermit-King that the King of Castle Mortal has captured the Grail Castle (p. 235), a hermit named Denise baptises the thirteen unbelievers who remain alive after Perlesvaus' capture of the Copper Bull - they themselves take up the eremitical life to atone for the errors of their past beliefs (pp. 256-7).

2. pp. 257-62.

religious significance. A full discussion of these glosses will be given in Chapter Four - it is enough to say at this point that each adventure is interpreted as a victory for the New Law over the Old, i.e. as a victory for the Christian faith.

In the second adventure,<sup>1</sup> the conquest of the Grail Castle, the only soldiers to aid Perlesvaus are hermits who have fled before the King of Castle Mortal. It is not only by their prayers alone, however, that they assist the Grail winner - they all approve Joseus' demand to intervene directly in the struggle:

Joseus... dist as autres hermites qu'il  
li iroit volentiers aidier s'il n'i  
avoit pechié, e il li distrent que de  
cel pechié n'ait il garde. Il oste sa  
chape grise si demora en sa gone, e  
prent .i. de ceaus qui a Perlesvaus  
contendoient, e le carce sor son col,  
puis le jete en la riviére; e Perlesvaus  
ocist les autres .ll.<sup>2</sup>

Joseus later bears the banner as Perlesvaus and his companions triumphantly capture the Grail Castle. The

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1. Perlesvaus pp. 261-9.

2. *ibid.* p. 264, ll. 6139-44.

Grail reappears, the New Law is reestablished, Joseus remains at the Grail Castle, while the other hermits return to the forest. It is clear from this episode, then, that the hermits of the Perlesvaus are not content to give counsels and explanations alone - they are prepared if necessary to wage war against their enemies to ensure the advancement of the New Law.

This brings one to the important similarities and differences between the hermits of the Perlesvaus and their counterparts in the Grail romances so far discussed. They have in common their role as spiritual counsellors and guides of knight-errantry - they are there to explain the spiritual significance of chivalrous exploits, to condemn the unworthy and encourage the elect. On the other hand, the hermits of the Perlesvaus have a moral physionomy all of their own. They are characterised by their militant and crusading spirit, expressed both in word and in deed. Most characteristic in this respect is the young hermit Joseus, who not only actively participates in the capture of the Grail Castle but also, earlier in the romance,<sup>1</sup> ably defends himself against the attack of four robbers and raises no objection to Lancelot's decision to hang them. At one

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1. Perlesvaus pp. 164-66.

point, indeed, Joseus' "vallet" points out that there's not a braver man in the whole Kingdom of Logres: "Sire fet li vallez vos dites vrai, que je ne cuit si fort ne si hardi en tot li roiaume de Logres com il est" (ll. 3951-2).

The other hermits too display the same kind of militancy. Concerned only with the advancement of the New Law, they never upbraid Perlesvaus for the violence with which he destroys its opponents, they are simply interested in the fact of conversion, rather than the moral problems this may raise. Their war-like spirit is further reflected in their acceptance without comment of certain barbarous customs (e.g. the carrying about of heads of slain knights p. 60, their hair-shirts are sometimes made from the beards of knights p. 131). Clearly, then, the hermits' religion in the Perlesvaus is one of militant action rather than contemplation. They serve God and chivalry not by devotion alone, but by devotion combined with active service in His cause. Their religion is one of belligerent and crusading Christianity, and it is this more than anything else that distinguishes them from their counterparts in the romances which have already been discussed.

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(2e) Hermits in the Vulgate Cycle and the Livre d'Artus, (1215-1235).

In the vast composition which forms the Vulgate Cycle, (the Estoire del Saint Graal, the Estoire de Merlin, the Livre de Lancelot, the Queste del Saint Graal and the Mort Artu), the hermit's fortunes vary according to the wide diversity of interest, intentions and ideals which the corpus presents. Where the Grail theme is of less importance (as it is in the Estoire de Merlin, the Mort Artu and the Livre d'Artus, published by Sommer as a supplement to the Vulgate Cycle), the hermit plays only a marginal role. By contrast, where the Grail theme is announced, taken up and developed (as in the Estoire del Saint Graal, the Livre de Lancelot and the Queste), a more important place is given to the hermit, and to the spiritual significance of his role vis-à-vis the knights of Logres.

Hermits in the Estoire de Merlin, Mort Artu, Livre d'Artus.

Since much of the Estoire de Merlin is devoted to accounts of wars waged between Arthur and his rebellious vassals, or between the Christian Britons, led by Arthur, and the heathen Saxons, there is little place for hermits or eremitical ideals. No more than passing reference is made to the few that are present. Charitable hermits

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offer hospitality to Lot and his sons (Vulgate Version II p. 339, pp. 359-63), and to Sagremor and his companions (p. 457, ll. 4-11), it is a hermit who witnesses the murder of Loholt, the only treacherous deed ever perpetrated by Keu (p. 316, ll. 29-33); there is an allusion to the fact that Nascien was later to become a hermit (pp. 221, l. 27-222, l.9): the only hermit given a role of any importance is Blaise, who in his retreat in the forest of Northumberland records for posterity all the adventures dictated to him by Merlin.

In the Mort Artu<sup>1</sup>, which relates the final downfall of Arthur's kingdom, hermits again play a role of only minor importance. Lancelot hears mass at a hermitage before the tournament at Winchester (par. 16, ll. 26-32), recovers at another hermitage from a wound accidentally caused by a hunter's arrow (par. 64-65, par. 75, ll. 3-14); during the combat between Lancelot and Gauvain the author explains why Gauvain's strength redoubles at mid-day: this special gift had been granted to him as a result of a hermit's prayer at his baptism, requesting God to bestow a special favour on the child (par. 154); after the battle of Salesbieres Arthur spends the night

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1. All references are to J. Frappier's second edition, Paris (Droz), 1956.



in prayer at a hermitage (par. 191, ll. 27-42); and Girflet passes two days with a hermit "qui moult estoit acointes de lui" (par. 194): finally, it is a hermit who announces to Bohort Lancelot's imminent death and directs him to the Joyeuse Garde (par. 203, ll. 21-27).

Girflet, Lancelot, Hector and Bohort, it is true, end their lives in a hermitage. Yet a close examination of the reasons which prompt this decision make it clear that even this conclusion can in no way compare with the austere piety which is the mark of the Queste. After Arthur's death, for example, Girflet decides to remain at the Noire Chapelle - simply because he can no longer face life now that Arthur has gone: "si dist, puis que ses sires est partiz de cest siecle, il n'i demorra plus; si prie tant l'ermite qu'il le recoit en sa compaignie" (par. 194, ll. 35-37). When Lancelot finds the Archbishop of Canterbury and his cousin Bleobleeris at a hermitage where they had withdrawn after the battle of Salesbieres, he explains his reasons for wishing to remain there with them: "Je vos dirai, fet il, que je ferai; vos avez esté mi compaignon en cest leu et en cest vie, ne jamés tant com ge vive ne me mouvrai de ci; et se vos ne me recueilliez, ge le ferai ailleurs" (par. 200, ll. 39-44). It is in rather similar terms

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that Hector later expresses his wish to remain there too: "Sire, puis que ge vos ai ici trouvé en si haut servise comme el servise Jhesucrist, et ge voi que li demorers vos i plect, ge sui cil qui jamés ne s'en partira a son vivant, einz vos i ferai compaignie touz les jorz de ma vie" (par. 201, ll. 36-41). After the deaths of Hector and Lancelot, Bohort too arrives and declares his intention of ending his days in the manner of his comrades: "Sire, puis qu'il a esté avec vos jusqu'en la fin, je sui cil qui en leu de lui vos ferai compaignie tant com ge vivrai; car ge m'en irai avec vos et userai le remenant de ma vie en l'ermitage" (par. 203, ll. 32-36). There is little in these decisions that would entitle one to speak here of "eremitical vocation". The four companions withdraw from the world only after all their ties with it have disappeared - indeed the downfall of Arthur's world seems to leave them with no other alternative. Withdrawal from the world, in the Mort Artu, does not mean as it does in the Queste - austere renunciation of the bonds of human affection and comradeship. After the disappearance of Arthur and the downfall of the Table Round, withdrawal to the hermitage seems to offer those who survive their only possibility of continuing their

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"compagnonnage" or remaining faithful to the memory of the comrades they have lost. The picture that emerges from the Mort Artu of the eremitical life is all in all one that is less austere, less ascetic, less other-worldly than that evoked by many other Arthurian texts.

Hermits have only a minor part to play too in the Livre d'Artus, designed like the Estoire de Merlin as a sequel to the prose version of Robert de Boron's Merlin. Its author was clearly familiar with the rest of the Vulgate Cycle as well, and a number of hermit-episodes of the Livre d'Artus refer to or are taken from the Lancelot-Graal section. The hermit Blaise (Vulgate Version VII, p. 121, l. 41) is a figure already made familiar by the Estoire de Merlin, the episode in which a "preudomme" discovers the sin committed in a church (VII, pp. 136-7) and Alier's withdrawal from the world (VII, p. 204) are taken from the Prose Lancelot (Vulgate Version IV, p. 108, III, pp. 163-171). With one exception, the remainder of the hermit-episodes involves no more than a passing reference: Gauvain (VII, pp. 93-4, 106, 114, 280, 294), Kalogrenanz (pp. 126, 130), Arthur (pp. 213-15, 225, ll. 24-27, 27-29) and Agloval (p. 172, p. 236) are all given shelter by saintly hermits. The exception is an extensive episode (pp. 246-261) concerning

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Nascien's visit to a hermit who persuades the latter to renounce worldly glory and take up the eremitical life himself. The whole episode, however, is no more than an excuse for the author to include a translation into French of the Gospel of Nicodemus, which has little or no connection with the rest of the Livre d'Artus.

### Hermits in the Estoire del Saint Graal.

Though dealing with the history of the Grail in the period prior to the adventures of the Queste, the Etoire del Saint Graal is probably a retrospective sequel, written c.1230, when the Queste was already in existence.<sup>1</sup> Its author, probably familiar also with Robert de Boron's Roman de L'Etoire dou Graal, seems to have been attracted to the task of filling in the history of the period between the time of Joseph of Arimathia and that of King Arthur, with a view to shedding light on the antecedent history of the sacred vessel, the spread of Christianity, and in particular the conversion of Britain. The work is clearly inspired by a crusading zeal to convert the heathen and confirm or encourage the believer, and the role which hermits play in it is for the most part related to this

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1. The hermit Saluste's interpretation of Mordrain's vision (Vulgate Version I, pp. 106-7) is undoubtedly inspired by the Queste (pp. 132-140).

general framework and design.

The author, himself a hermit, claims that the Estoire is the faithful transcript of a little book written by Christ himself. The sensationalism and piety which characterises this prologue is maintained in the subsequent episodes. Like all God's spokesmen in the romance, the hermits are mainly concerned with the conversion of the heathen and confirming the faith of the converted. Hermits baptise Evalac's wife, Sarracinte, and her mother (Vulgate Version I, pp. 67-72), King Label (pp. 154-8), and his sister (p. 154), King Orcan and his subjects (p. 279), churches are established in honour of two celebrated hermits, Salustes and Hermoine (pp. 78-9), a "preudomme hermite de sainte vie" (p. 219), fortifies Celidoine in the faith, the spirits of Salustes and Hermoine are later sent by God to encourage and inspire Nascien and Mordrain (p. 193, p. 106), who later takes up the eremitical life himself, (pp. 243-44). A hermit who accompanies Mordrain on his journey to Great Britain reveals to the king that in a vision he had seen the devil, in the form of Nascien's wife, deceive the Castellan of Colombe, who had long been in love with the latter. The "exemple" of the Castellan is made known to the others, to induce them to abstain from sin (p. 235).

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When one looks closely, however, at certain of these episodes, it becomes clear that the author is much more interested in the fact of conversion and continuing belief, rather than the motives which inspire them. Like the author of the Perlesvaus, he is satisfied when a new believer has been won. Sarracinte's mother, for example, is prepared to be converted - on condition that the hermit cure her of an apparently incurable illness: "Sire s'il me dounast sante iou querroie en lui" (p. 67, l. 29). This the hermit is prepared to do, and her mother arranges not only for her own baptism but her daughter's as well. It is a hermit's convincing interpretation of a dream that confirms Label in his desire to be baptised: "et bien sai ore tout certainement que il nest autres diex fors celui que vous aoures" (p. 157). Orcan is converted as a result of a promise he had made to grant any boon he was asked. Peter requests his baptism, and Orcan is converted (p. 279). Through the hermit-episodes in the Estoire, then, the author attempts - albeit in a rather sensationalist manner - to encourage belief in the essentials of the Christian faith.

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Hermits in the Prose Lancelot

In the Prose Lancelot, which is concerned for the most part with a frank glorification of "fin' amors", emphasis is placed above all on the hermit's role as a benevolent person who performs a wide variety of material services and tasks for Arthurian Chivalry. He is above all a charitable figure who offers his hospitality to the knights,<sup>1</sup> heals their wounds,<sup>2</sup> acts as an effective and trustworthy guide, directing the knights to the object of their quests, warning them in advance of the dangers they risk encountering en route,<sup>3</sup> explaining to them the adventures they come up against in the forest.<sup>4</sup> With regard to this latter task, what is of sole importance is the "terrestrial" explanation of the adventures concerned, not their possible spiritual interpretation. They are in this respect reminiscent of the hermits in the

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1. Vulgate Version III, pp. 309-10, 398, IV, 110, 232, 255, 273, 296, 328, V, 50, 305, 312.

2. III, pp. 186, IV, 147, 358, III p. 358 (which recounts how Lancelot is looked after by a hermit during his madness) is reminiscent of the hermit-scene in Chrétien's Yvain.

3. III, pp. 163-171, 182, 358-361, 395, V, 121-22.

4. III, 329, V, 129-33, 250.

Chevalier de la Charette, Durmart le Galois and Floriant et Florete, who were introduced to call attention to the incomparable valour and worth of the knights, not to upbraid them for their spiritual shortcomings.

Certain other hermit-episodes in the Prose Lancelot, however, prepare and anticipate the religious themes of the Queste del Saint Graal itself. Some of them it is true, offer no more than hints of what is to come, but others are quite explicitly concerned to prepare and introduce the Grail theme. To-gether they suggest a new orientation of interest and intention within the Prose Lancelot, which emerges gradually to assume its full significance later in the Queste.

(i) Vulgate Version III, p. 174. After the adventure of the Doloreuse Garde, Lancelot is thrown from his horse, when its foot slips into a crevice. A hermit explains the real cause of the accident to Lancelot, pointing out that no good knight ought to ride after nones on a Saturday, if he could at all avoid it.

(ii) IV, p. 30. A hermit-episode from the Vie des pères is related to Galehaut, in order to impress upon him the necessity of firm belief in God. Galehaut asks Arthur for his wisest clerks to reveal to him the meaning of his dreams. The "sages clerics" arrive in Sorelois

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and give a partial explanation. Of the ten clerks, only Hélié de Toulouse can provide a complete interpretation: Galehaut will be dead in less than four years. Convinced, however, that it is always dangerous to reveal to anyone the hour of his death, Hélié is reluctant to disclose the truth to Galehaut. It is at this moment that he recounts to Galehaut an "exemple", drawn from the Vitae Patrum, of a rich lady in Tuscany. When the lady concerned learned the hour of her death, she was so disturbed that she completely disregarded "le sauement de same pour le paour du cors car ele forsena de feblesce de desesperance". She is sustained, however, by the prayers and counsels of a hermit, who helps her to recover her faith and to face her death in tranquillity. This story from the Vitae is clearly recounted by Hélié to demonstrate to Galehaut the importance of faith.

(iii) IV, pp. 75-82. The hermit Amustans denounces Arthur's continuing infatuation with the false Guinevere which has aroused wide-spread concern. When she and her champion Bertholai are suddenly struck by a mysterious illness, Gauvain seizes his opportunity to reproach Arthur. They arrive one day at the hermitage of Amustans, Arthur's former chaplain. Just when the hermit begins mass, Amustans reproaches Arthur for his

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past conduct and refuses to give him the sacrament until he confesses his sins:

Et apres ce la communia du vrai cors dieu  
ihesu crist Et il ne demora gaires apres  
che quil ot receu son salueur quil alegia  
moult de son mal et que il fist moult  
boin samblant et bel dauoir guerison.<sup>1</sup>

Arthur is persuaded by Amustans to return to the Queen, the false Guinevere and Bertholai eventually confess their sins to Amustans as well, who reminds them that even the greatest sinner could obtain forgiveness by true repentance:

Et nus ne puet estre en si vil pechie  
quil nait pardon quant il est vrais  
repentans... Et sachies que nus nest  
tant pechieres ne tant hardis de faire  
pechiet que diex ne soit plus dous et  
plus deboinaires et plus larges du  
pardonner...<sup>2</sup>

In accordance with this principle, Amustans prevents Arthur's barons from punishing the false Guinevere and Bertholai by death:

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1. Vulgate Version IV, p. 77, ll. 14-16. See Appendix Fig. 4.

2. *ibid.* p. 79, ll. 6-7, 12-14.

mais frere amustans ne si acorde mie ains  
 dist con ne les ocirra mie. Car nul  
 greignor torment ne porroient il soffrir  
 que il sueffrent orendroit de lor maladie...  
 par le conseil frere amustant les fist li  
 roys porter en un vies hospital dehors  
 bedyingran.<sup>1</sup>

Amustans is concerned, therefore, in this episode to stress, on the one hand, the possibility of divine pardon for the truly repentant, and, on the other, to encourage the humane treatment of those who have done wrong to others.

(iv) IV, p. 148. A hermit warns Gauvain "por lamor de le mere deu" not to ride after nones on a Saturday, unless it was totally unavoidable (cp. (i) above).

(v) IV, pp. 348-349. A hermit reveals to Gauvain the partial explanation of his visit to Corbenic (IV, pp. 343-7). He points out that Gauvain had in fact seen the Holy Grail without knowing it, and that it was because he lacked humility and simplicity that he received none of the delicious food with which it covered the tables of the Grail palace. The hermit interprets a vision which

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1. *ibid.* p. 81, ll. 9-12, 16-17.

Gauvain had witnessed at the Grail castle as a pointer to Arthur's wars against Mordred and the eventual destruction of Arthur's chivalry. The hermit explains too that just as Gauvain had been temporarily blinded during part of his vision, so will his prowess be extinguished. He refuses, however, to give any other details to Gauvain about his adventures at the Grail castle (concerning, for example, the maimed King, and his knights, the maiden and the Grail, the dove which flew through the palace hall with a censer in its beak). What is clearly implied by this episode is that Gauvain, lacking as he is in certain moral qualities, is simply not entitled to penetrate deeper into the mysteries of the Grail.

(vi) V, pp. 244-248. This episode concerns a hermit's interpretation of Lancelot's adventures at his grandfather's tomb in the Perilous Forest. Close to a hermit's chapel and a spring, Lancelot's grand-father had been treacherously murdered by his cousin. The head had fallen into the water, which suddenly became scalding hot, so preventing the murderer from removing it from the spring. The body had been buried close-by, in a tomb that was subsequently to be guarded by two lions. Each day the tomb bled at the hour at which the murder had

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been committed. Lancelot kills the lions, succeeds in lifting the head from the boiling water and opens the tomb; but the spring itself continues to boil. The hermit explains to Lancelot that his sins had prevented him from completing the adventure:

'or poes vous bien sauoir que iou vous  
di voir de ce que iou vous ai dit que  
vous esties luxurieux Et que vns  
chevaliers trop miex entechies de vous  
uendra & sera sa uenue a nostre tamps.  
quar se vos fuissies chieus par qui lez  
hautes auentures du saint Graal doiuent  
estre menees a fin. la calours de la  
fontaine estainsist. mais puis que li  
fus de luxure nest en vous estains. ia  
pour toute la boine cheualerie qui est  
en vous ceste fontaine nestaindra. Si  
vous en poes aler de ci quant il vous  
plaira. quar bien aues achieue lez  
auentures que cheualiers enfers puet faire.  
Mais se vous fuissiez si entiers que li  
cheualiers dont ie vous conte. a la  
boine cheualerie qui est en uous sai iou  
bien que ceste auenture & lez autres  
fuissent achieuees. mais vous y aues  
failli pour lez grans pechies dont vous

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estes souspris.<sup>1</sup>

As well as castigating Lancelot's sins, therefore, the hermit indicates that a better knight will come who will surpass even Lancelot and achieve the adventures of the Grail. What will characterise this knight, and make him superior to Lancelot and all his comrades-in-arms will be his chastity:

'mais li cheualiers qui apres uous uendra  
sera mieldres cheualiers que vous ne  
soies quar il sera uirges & nes & castes  
tous les iours de sa uie. mais teuls  
nestes vous pas ains estes uieix & ors &  
luxurieux & aues use uostre iouenece en  
caitiuite et en ordure tous les iors de  
uostre uie.'<sup>2</sup>

(vii) V, pp. 279-281. In the Perilous Forest, Lancelot witnesses four lions accompanying a white stag. A hermit explains to Lancelot that only the Grail winner would be able to understand the meaning of this miracle.

(viii) V, p. 334. Hermits proclaim that only Lancelot's son will achieve the adventures of the Holy Grail.

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1. Vulgate Version V, p. 248, ll. 17-28.

2. *ibid.* p. 247, ll. 7-11.

(ix) V, p. 408. It is to a hermit that God reveals His will concerning Galaad. He is urged by the hermit to enter the order of chivalry pure and chaste. Arthur arrives at the hermitage and is told that the knight who would sit in the Perilous Seat and achieve the Grail adventures would arrive at court at Whitsuntide.

(x) One final point, related not to one but to a number of episodes also deserves mention here. It is frequently pointed out that many of the hermits are themselves former knights, some of them of Arthur's court (III, p. 358-61, p. 154, 163-171, IV, 129-33, 110, V. 142-45). It is not surprising in these circumstances that the arrival of a knight at a hermitage is often an excuse for its occupant to look back on his past life as a knight (III, pp. 163-171, 358-61, IV, 129-33, V, pp. 142-45). The repeated mention of this point, however, gradually suggests the idea that perhaps one day even the heroes of the romance will end their lives in the manner of their comrades, in the quiet retreat of a hermitage.

Viewed together, these episodes suggest a new orientation of interest at work within the Prose Lancelot itself. Certain of the themes they introduce - the importance of faith (ii), obedience to the prescriptions

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of Holy Church (i, iv), the condemnation of carnality<sup>1</sup> and the possibility of forgiveness for the truly repentant (iii, vi), the plea for a more humane treatment of wrong-doers (iii), the recurring figure of the hermit-knight (x) - will all be taken up and given a more ample treatment in the Queste. They are no more than suggested in the Prose Lancelot, but they are there nonetheless, and can be seen as a direct preparation for what is to come. In addition, certain episodes are explicitly related to the Grail theme (v, vi, vii, viii, ix). As the Prose Lancelot nears its conclusion, therefore, it is the Grail theme and no longer Lancelot's love for the Queen that occupies the foreground of the romance.

More important, one can trace in these hermit-episodes the gradual emergence of a new pattern within the hierarchy of Arthur's knights. Lancelot and Gauvain

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1. Cp. IV, p. 108, ll. 26-29, the adventure of Escalon li Tenebreux. A hermit discovers a lord and lady making love in the Church. The darkness which covered over the castle and the church was the direct consequence of their sin. One has the impression too that the hermit's refusal to divulge to Gauvain all the details of his Grail adventure (IV, pp. 348-9) is not unrelated to the fact that Gauvain lacks purity of heart as well as humility and simplicity. At the Grail castle, Gauvain had been impressed only by the physical beauty of the Grail maiden and had failed to bow in reverence as the sacred vessel was carried past.



are still treated with respect as the most distinguished representatives of earthly chivalry, but episodes v, vi, vii and viii make it clear that they will both be surpassed by a greater and purer knight, Lancelot's son Galaad, who alone will achieve the adventures of the Grail. And this new hierarchy is clearly to be based not on valour and physical prowess but on the principle of chastity and moral strength. By the end of the Prose Lancelot, the sacred vessel and the figure of Galaad already enjoy a kind of invisible presence.

Hermits in the Queste del Saint Graal.

"Dès la première lecture, le caractère singulier de la Queste paraît avec évidence. C'est un roman de chevalerie, mais qui a quelque chose d'une vie de saint, ou même d'un évangile apocryphe. On y retrouve les personnages des romans de la Table Ronde, mais dans des aventures qui semblent dirigées selon des intentions que ni un Chrétien de Troyes ni même un Robert de Borron n'eurent jamais."<sup>1</sup> The "caractère singulier" of which Pauphilet speaks derives undoubtedly from the author's intention not only to please, but to instruct and edify

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1. A. Pauphilet, Etudes sur la Queste del Saint Graal, Paris (Champion), 1921, p. 13.

his readers, in the light of a mystical and ascetic vision of the world. The Grail itself, represented as the dish (escuele) from which Christ ate the Paschal lamb at the Last Supper and as a vessel containing the host, is unambiguously presented as a symbol of God's grace:

"Fontaine si est de tel maniere que len  
ne la puet espuisier, ja tant n'en savra len  
oster: ce est li Sainz Graax, ce est la  
grace del Saint Esperit. La fontaine est  
la douce pluie, la douce parole de  
l'Evangile, ou li cuers del verai repentant  
troeve la grant douçor, que de tant come il  
plus l'asovore, de tant en est il plus  
desirranz; ce est la grace del Saint Graal.  
Car de tant come ele est plus large et plus  
plenteureuse, d'itant en remaint il plus."<sup>1</sup>

The adventures of the Grail are therefore firmly placed within a context of moral and spiritual values, diametrically opposed to the ideals of worldly chivalry. The total "renversement des valeurs" referred to by Pauphilet (Etudes, p. 17) is reflected above all in the

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1. Queste pp. 158-9.

importance which the Queste accords to hermits and eremitical ideals. It is hermits who are placed by Providence in the path of the knight, to reprove, encourage or enlighten according to his individual requirements; the eremitical ideals of chastity, austerity, self-denial and detachment from the claims of the present world are put forward as the only ideals worthy of Arthurian chivalry. In the following paragraphs, three representative hermit-episodes will be analysed in detail.<sup>1</sup>

(1) Two episodes, which concern Gauvain, illustrate not only the austere spirit of the Queste, but also something of the author's characteristic method as well. His desire to edify as well as please his readers involves frequent recourse to a technique which Pauphilet describes as "une alternance du conte et de la glose,"<sup>2</sup> i.e. the author narrates each adventure first of all without commentary, but then adds almost immediately an explanatory gloss which elucidates its significance. "Régulièrement, après avoir donné à sa narration le tour le plus merveilleux possible, il s'applique à en dégager

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1. A full discussion of the hermit's role in the Queste is given in Chapter 4.

2. Etudes sur la Queste del Saint Graal, Paris (Champion), 1921, p. 173.

la plus claire leçon: il met à dissiper les obscurités de sa fiction autant de soin qu'à les assembler. Il analyse les événements, interprète chaque circonstance, explique chaque symbole. C'est une véritable glose du roman, tout à fait analogue à celle que le Moyen Age écrivit en marge des Livres saints."<sup>1</sup> In other words, narration is immediately followed by explanation. As the Grail adventure takes place for the most part deep in the forest, this gloss naturally enough often takes the form of a conversation between the knight and a hermit, who acts as the author's spokesman. This didactic spirit is sustained throughout the Queste, and it would indeed be difficult, as Gilson points out, "d'y découvrir dix lignes de suite écrites pour le simple plaisir de conter."<sup>2</sup>

Gauvain's sojourn at the first hermitage (Queste, pp. 53-55) takes place immediately after Galaad's deliverance of the Château des Pucelles, and his victory over the seven brothers who upheld its evil customs. Galaad's exploit, it is made clear, is limited to the destruction of the latter, and the restoration of order. It does not involve the death of the evil knights them-

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1. *ibid*, p. 171.

2. Les Idées et Les Lettres, Paris (VRIN), 1932, pp. 59ff.

selves. As the latter flee, however, they were massacred by Gauvain, Gaheriet and Yvain. Gauvain was subsequently condemned at an abbey as unworthy of Galaad's company: "Car vos estes serjanz mauvés et desloiax, et il est chevaliers tiex com il doit estre" (Queste p. 52). Almost immediately after, Gauvain takes shelter with a hermit who gives him the full explanation of his adventure and his subsequent condemnation.

The hermit explains first of all Gauvain's condemnation:

'Sire, a droit fustes apelez mauvés serjanz et desloiax. Car quant vos fustes mis en l'ordre de chevalerie, len ne vos i mist mie por ce que vos fussiez des lors en avant serjanz a l'anemi, mes por ce que vos servissiez a nostre criator et deffendissiez Sainte Eglise et rendissiez a Dieu le tresor que il vos bailla a garder, ce est l'ame de vos. Et por ceste chose vos fist len chevalier, et vos avez mauvesement chevalerie emploiee. Car vos en avez dou tout esté serjanz a l'anemi, et lessié vostre creator, et menee la plus orde vie et la plus mauvese que onques chevaliers menast.

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Et ce poez vos bien veoir, que cil vos  
connoissoit bien, qui vos apela mauvés  
serjant et desloial.' (Queste p. 54).

Gauvain has therefore failed to observe true chivalry and obedience to God's will. His loyalty has been transferred, consciously or unconsciously, to the devil. It is indeed Gauvain's sinfulness (in particular his neglect of confession) which explains also his share in the murder of the seven brothers:

'Et certes, se vos ne fussiez si pechierres  
come vos estes, ja li set frere ne fussent  
ocis par vos ne par vostre aide, ainz  
feissent encore lor penitance de la  
mauvese costume que il avoient tant  
maintenue ou Chastel as Puceles, et  
s'acordassent a Dieu. Et ainsi n'exploita  
mie Galaad, li Bons Chevaliers, cil que vos  
alez querant: car il les conquist sanz  
ocirre.' (Queste p. 54).

This contrast, which the hermit is at pains to make between Gauvain and Galaad, is further elaborated in the symbolical interpretation (of the same adventure) which he then proceeds to give. The Château des Pucelles, he explains, is a symbol of Hell, the maidens who are held

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captive there are "les bones ames qui a tort i estoient enserrees devant la Passion Jhesucrist" (p. 55), while the seven brothers represent the Seven Deadly Sins. Galaad's conquest of the castle is, therefore, clearly presented as a symbol of Christ's redemption of mankind. This interpretation confirms the contrast already suggested between the destructive nature of Gauvain's exploits and the redemptive power of Galaad's mission. In spite of the hermit's final appeal to Gauvain and his reminder that no sinner is ever completely out of reach of God's mercy, Gauvain remains unmoved. "Et il dist que de penitance fere ne porroit il la peine soffrir. Et li preudome le let a tant, que plus ne li dit, car il voit bien que ses amonestemenz seroit peine perdue." (Queste p. 55). Through the hermit, then, Gauvain's worldly chivalry has been judged and found wanting.

(ii) The condemnation of Gauvain made in this first episode is confirmed in a later one, when he is given an interpretation of his subsequent adventures at a second hermitage (pp.154-162). Gauvain and Hector arrive at a ruined chapel, where they fall asleep. Gauvain dreams he is in a meadow, where one hundred and fifty bulls are feeding from a rack. Apart from three of them, all the bulls are described as "orgueillex et tuit vairié". Of

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the three, two are "si blanc et si bel qu'il ne pooient plus estre" while one is "ne bien tachiez ne bien sanz tache; ainz i avoit signe de tache". The three are fastened by the neck by a "jox forz et tenanz". The bulls set out to seek better pasture, and of the bulls "sanz tache" only one returns. The spotted bulls come back "si megre et si las qu'a peines se pooient il tenir en estant", and when they return to the rack there arises "un tel estrif que la viande lor failloit et les convenoit departir li un ça et li autre la".

On waking up, Gauvain and Hector witness the appearance of a "main qui aparoit jusque vers le coute, et estoit coverte d'un vermeil samit. A cele main si pendoit un frain ne mie trop riche, et tenoit en son poign un gros cierge qui mout ardoit cler". A voice is heard accusing them of lacking the three things they have just seen.

The explanation of Gauvain's vision and the appearance of the mysterious hand is furnished by the hermit Nascien, to whom Gauvain and Hector turn for advice. The "rastelier", explains Nascien, is the Table Round, while the "pré" on which it is founded represents "humilité" and "patience". The bulls are the companions of the quest, the two white ones representing Galaad and

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Perceval; the bull with the "signe de tache" is Bohort, who has sinned once but who has since endeavoured to make amends for his single lapse; the yoke which binds the three together is the yoke of chastity. Gauvain is therefore firmly placed within the category of sinful knights. The departure of the bulls in search of a better pasture represents the departure of the knights on the quest, while the description of their failure, return and final separation indicates the unsuccessful conclusion of the quest and the final destruction of the Table Round. Just as only three of the bulls are successful in their search, so only Galaad, Perceval and Bohort will succeed in the quest for the Grail. Of these, only Bohort will return to court to announce the "bone pasture que cil ont perdue qui sont en pechié mortel" (p. 157). The hermit then goes on to explain the significance of the mysterious hand "coverte d'un vermeil samit", the "frain" and the "cierge qui mout ardoit cler", as well as the accusation which Gauvain and Hector heard pronounced in the ruined chapel. The objects signify respectively charity, abstinence and truth-qualities which Gauvain and Hector are accused of lacking. The hermit concludes his exposition by pointing out why it is that Gauvain has been so

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singularly unsuccessful in the Grail quest:

'Je vos diré, fet li preudons, coment il  
est. Les aventures qui ore avienent  
sont les senefiances et les demostrances  
dou Saint Graal, ne li signe dou Saint  
Graal n'aparront ja a pecheor ne a home  
envelopé de pechié. Dont il ne vos  
aparront ja; car vos estes trop desloial  
pecheor. Si ne devez mie cuidier que  
ces aventures qui ore avienent soient  
d'omes tuer ne de chevaliers ocirre;  
ainz sont des choses esperituex, qui  
sont graindres et mielz vaillanz assez'.  
(Queste pp. 160-1).

These words clearly recall the condemnation with  
which Gauvain was confronted at the first hermitage.  
Judged through the eyes of the world, Gauvain is still a  
valorous knight; judged before God he stands convicted  
of disloyalty and sin. He is like a tree, the hermit  
points out, which bears neither flower nor fruit.  
Gauvain's adventures, then, and their interpretation by  
the hermits are clearly introduced by the author to  
ensure the condemnation of the type of earth-bound  
chivalry which Gauvain represents.

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Gauvain is of course not the only representative of earthly chivalry whom the author reproves. The hearts of Lyonel, Hector, Yvain and Gaheriet remain equally firmly closed to the action of God's ever-present grace. Lyonel indeed is responsible for the pitiless murder of a hermit, one of God's own spokesmen (p. 192), while Hector is warned in a dream (explained by a hermit) that he is quite unworthy of the quest (pp. 149-59). It is, however, above all through the presentation of Gauvain that the author records his condemnation of worldly chivalry. Nothing could better illustrate the "renversement des valeurs" already referred to than this reversal of Gauvain's fortunes in Arthurian romance.

(iii) Quite different is the destiny of Galaad. If Gauvain is representative of earthly chivalry permanently closed to the grace of God, Galaad is the chaste incarnation of perfect sainthood, untroubled by temptation. The solitaires of Logres have no need to offer him either reproach, encouragement or enlightenment. His coming is something which they have long forecast and ardently desired:

'Et tout ainsi com li prophete qui avoient  
esté grant tens devant la venue Jhesucrist  
avoient anonciee la venue Jhesucrist et dit

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qu'il delivrerait le pueple des liens  
d'enfer, tout einsint ont anonciee li  
hermite et li saint home vostre venue  
plus a de vint anz. Et disoient bien  
tuit que ja les aventures dou roiaume  
de Logres ne faudroient devant que  
vos fussiez venuz. Si vos avons tant  
atendu, Dieu merci, que ore vos avons.'  
(Queste p. 38).

The hermit's role, therefore, in relation to Galaad is restricted to proclaiming either his coming or the redemptive power of his mission (cp. the hermit's interpretation of the Château des Pucelles adventure Queste p. 55).

These episodes, then, involving Gauvain and Galaad, give some idea of the prominent role which the Queste accords to hermits. The latter are never casually introduced, as were their counterparts in some other Arthurian romances, to voice the author's approval or disapproval of some specific point; the hermits' presence in the Queste is clearly crucial to the author's desire to impart to the reader his own rigorous ideals of chivalric conduct. As is evident from the Gauvain-

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episode, they are there to elucidate the significance of each adventure, to analyse it in detail for the knight and to make him fully aware of its spiritual implications. This sustained moralising intention which characterises the hermits' interventions in the Queste is indeed enough in itself to distinguish them from their less eloquent counterparts in other Grail romances. What really gives the hermits of the Queste their unique status, however, is the fact that they do not just lay before knight-errantry the basic truths of the catechism as the essential element in the chivalric ideal: they call upon all of Arthur's chivalry to imitate the piety and austerity of the eremitical life itself; it is their own way of life, in other words, that they put forward as the only model worthy of being pursued by knight-errantry. Through their interventions, worldly chivalry stands condemned and a code of chivalric conduct put forward that is based unequivocally on the rigorous eremitical ideals of chastity, piety and austerity.

(3) Hermits in Post Vulgate thirteenth century prose romances.

In the Prose Tristan, Palamede, the Compilation de Rusticien de Pise and the Prophécies de Merlin, all

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thirteenth-century prose romances written after the Vulgate Cycle, the hermit is for the most part simply given the role of a benevolent utility-figure; on occasion he appears as the spiritual guide of knight-errantry, but with none of the sustained seriousness which characterised his role in the Queste.

Two versions of the Prose Tristan have been distinguished, the First, written between 1225-35, and an expanded Second version which belongs to the second half of the thirteenth century. Despite its impressive length, the Prose Tristan contributes very little that is new to the hermit's fortunes in romance. Though this work is in essentials an elaboration of the French Vulgate Cycle, it has little or nothing of the broad structural unity which characterises the latter, and the role the hermit does play seems divorced from any overall plan or theme.

In most cases, the hermit appears simply as a hospitable host or charitable guide. Sador, Lancelot, Hector, Tristan, Gauvain, Kahedin and Brunor are all hospitably received by saintly hermits;<sup>1</sup> knights turn to the hermitage for confession and mass,<sup>2</sup> for the healing

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1. Loeseth pars. 3, 71a, 124, 286a, 398a, 483.

2. 192, 294a, 492a, 510, 554.

of their wounds,<sup>1</sup> and for guidance in their quests.<sup>2</sup> On occasion, they play a more active role: two hermits, Ranier l'Ermite and Gautier le Brun, leave their cells to fight and conquer two knights who had been unjustly jealous.<sup>3</sup>

There are, however, a number of more extensive hermit-episodes which have been taken over from other romances. Lancelot's madness and the aid he receives from a charitable hermit<sup>4</sup> is taken from the Prose Lancelot (Vulgate Version V, 398-9), while a similar episode involving Tristan (Loeseth 101) is doubtless modelled on the latter as well as being reminiscent of

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1. 286a, 314, 382.

2. 71a, 299a.

3. 293a.

4. 285a. A recent book by Dr. F. Bogdanow, The Romance of the Grail, a study of the structure and genesis of a 13th century Arthurian prose romance, Manchester, (University Press), 1966, would ascribe this and other episodes to a Post Vulgate Roman du Graal. Parts of this romance which have been published include: F. Bogdanow, La Folie Lancelot (Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie 109, 1965); G. Paris et J. Ulrich Merlin en Prose, Paris, SATF, 1886; C. E. Pickford Erec roman arthurien en prose, Genève (Droz) Paris (Minard) 1959. In these the hermit simply plays the characteristic role of hospitable host e.g. Merlin en prose vol I, p. 196, 250-51, vol. II, 8-12, 31, 107-8. Folie Lancelot 9, 43-4, 59. Erec en prose 83, 92-3, 158. An edition of the Post Vulgate Queste is being prepared by Dr. Bogdanow.

the hermit-scene in Chrétien's Yvain. Perceval's stay and conversation with a hermit (Loeseth 282a) who had been told by Merlin that he would not die till the son of King Pellinor came to his hermitage occurs in the Prophécies de Merlin (see Loeseth p. 485 note on 188-9). The old man sent by the hermit Nascien forbidding the knights to take their ladies with them on the Grail quest (Loeseth 394c, Queste p. 19), Galaad's encounter with Lancelot and Perceval outside a recluse's chapel (Loeseth 496, Queste p. 56), Lancelot's stay at various hermitages where he is urged to repent (Loeseth 497, 500, Queste pp. 62-71, 115-6, 118-29, 132-140), Perceval's conversation with the recluse (Loeseth 498 Queste pp. 71-81), Bohort's sojourn at a hermitage (Loeseth 501, Queste p. 165, 188) and the withdrawal of the companions from the world (Loeseth 567, 575, Queste p. 279) are to be found in redactions of the Prose Tristan which include the Grail quest. These episodes, however, so crucial in the Queste del Saint Graal are given no more and no less importance than any other episode recounted in the Prose Tristan. They simply coexist alongside the innumerable love-affairs, joustings and worldly adventures which characterise the

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romance. As a result of this, the hermit's role, however prominent in any one given episode, seems diminished in importance when seen in the context of the romance as a whole.

The Palamede, written after the First Version of the Prose Tristan, is a confused and elaborate patchwork of adventures, with no unifying framework or theme to hold the episodes together. It was later incorporated into Rusticien's Compilation, of which it forms the greater part. The few hermits appearing in this work concern themselves for the most part with the knight's material needs (Loeseth 630a) or explain the forest adventures with which they are familiar (Loeseth 637). One episode, however, deserves particular mention. This is Brehus' visit to the cavern of Febus (Loeseth 636) where he meets three hermits, Guiron's cousin, father and grand-father.

The latter reveal to Brehus Guiron's distinguished lineage: on his mother's side, Guiron belongs to the Grail family, since she was a descendant of Helain le Gros, the nephew of Joseph of Arimathia. On his father's side, he is a descendant of Clovis, King of Gaul, through the celebrated warrior Febus. The cavern

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itself is made up of a number of chambers, all richly decorated. In the first chamber, as splendid as the finest in Kamaalot, lies the dead warrior Febus, holding a letter in his hand which tells of his unhappy love for the princess of Norhomerlande. In the second chamber, "tout entour ouuree a or et a pierres precieuses si merueilleusement que ung bien riches home fust tous encombres de faire une telle chambre"<sup>1</sup> lies the princess herself "sur ung lit assez plus riche que celui de la premiere chambre".<sup>2</sup> At each corner of the bed stands a tree in whose branches are perched birds of silver and gold. As soon as the bed is touched, the birds begin to sing and thus prolong the princess's lament for the death of Febus. In another chamber lie the bodies of Febus' four sons.

The aim of the whole episode is clear enough, i.e. to enhance Guiron's prestige by the revelation of the distinguished lineage to which he belongs. Yet what strikes the reader most are surely the marvels which the cavern reveals. Brehus himself is quite overcome by "cest grant merueille car il la tenoit a la plus

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1. Bib. Nat. ms.fr.362, f.<sup>o</sup>3a-b.

2. ibid. f.<sup>o</sup>3b.

grant merueille quil eust oncques veue".<sup>1</sup> The richness of the décor, the miraculous preservation of the bodies, the birds which mysteriously prolong the princess's grief make of Febus' cavern one of the most remarkable hermitages in Arthurian romance. The cavern scene indeed offers a good example of the way in which romance, with its taste for the marvellous and the supernatural, can transform even the traditional austerity and sobriety of the eremitical life.

The Prophécies de Merlin,<sup>2</sup> composed by a Venetian between 1272 and 1279, is a mixture of Arthurian adventures, predictions and didactic episodes. It occupies a unique position in French Arthurian romance in so far as the events with which it deals refer mainly to social and religious life in thirteenth century Italy.<sup>3</sup> Though the illustration of Merlin's power was one of its main attractions, its central purpose was reform: the

1. Bib. Nat. ms. fr. 362 f.<sup>o</sup> 3d.

2. ed. by L. A. Paton, New York (Heath) and London (Oxford) 1926-7, 2 vols.

3. See C. E. Pickford's Chapter Miscellaneous French Prose Romances in Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages, ed. by R. S. Loomis, Oxford (Clarendon Press), 1959, pp. 348-357.

author of the Prophécies attacks social injustices and ecclesiastical corruption on the one hand, and upholds obedience to the Church and basic moral principles on the other. These are the themes developed in the main hermit-episodes of the Prophécies (Dinadan's visit to a hermitage, sections 223-4, and the anecdotes recounted by the hermit Helias to Perceval, sections 225-267).

The Dinadan-episode is a good example of the way in which Arthurian material is used by the author to suit his own didactic purposes. A hermit explains to Dinadan his adventure at the burial-ground of Pandragon, where he had seen various inscriptions on the tombs and a hand pouring money into the open mouth of a judge's head. The figure of Dinadan himself, the cemetery of Pandragon, together with some prophecies explained by the hermit concerning Tristan, Lancelot and Galehot give the episode a general Arthurian colouring; the heart of the episode, however, is the author's didactic purpose. The head, explains the hermit, signifies "les mauves juges terriens", the hand represents "les fausseurs des viandes et des autres marchandises" while the money stands for "les faus jugemens que l'en donne au siecle par les roetes que l'en donne".<sup>1</sup>

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1. Les Prophécies de Merlin ed. by L. A. Paton, New York (Heath), London (Oxford), 1926, p. 263.

The author, then, has used a general Arthurian background to comment on the life of his own time, to castigate the social evils of double-dealing and corruption which he sees undermining commerce and the course of justice.

The Helias-episode follows a rather similar pattern. Once again the general Arthurian setting is simply an excuse to comment on the evils and corruptions of life in thirteenth-century Italy. Perceval arrives at the hermitage of Helias, who had been told by Merlın that he would not die until King Pellinor's son (i.e. Perceval) came to his hermitage. In addition, Helias has received from Merlin a book of prophecies which he was to hand over to Perceval. Between the onset of his illness and his eventual death, Helias recounts to Perceval anecdotes which condemn corruption while inculcating obedience to the Church.

Four of these anecdotes concern double-dealing at various levels of social life. Section 229 relates how a physician extorted money from patients by promising to cure them, though he knew for certain that they would shortly die. Sections 234-7 concern the hypocrite Argistres who keeps for himself the money he'd been collecting to give away to the poor. Section 238 tells

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how a woman's love of fine clothes makes her husband resort to the sin of usury in order to satisfy her extravagant taste. Sections 241-2 relate how Merlin convicted fraudulent money-changers who had cheated a merchant from Heraclea, a new-comer to their town. Together these episodes constitute an appeal for more honesty and decency both in personal and in social living.

A second group of anecdotes has a more specific target in view, ecclesiastical corruption. They include the account Helias gives Perceval of a gluttonous bishop and chaplain (226-7), a licentious priest (244-6), the excessive wealth of the orders (227), the simony of the cardinals (244-6) and a prediction that evil will eventually and inevitably befall the papal curia (243). Though at pains to indict clerical vices Helias is equally concerned to stress obedience to the Church. He emphasises Merlin's orthodoxy (e.g. 225, which illustrates his belief in the sacraments, 227, the Trinity) and his concern that evil be overcome (Merlin helps to rid a forest of evil spirits and to ensure the baptism of the children who had been forced to remain there, 249-51). The obvious implication of Helias' depiction of Merlin and the sins he detects is that he

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is anxious to uphold orthodoxy, while condemning ecclesiastical corruption.

The hermits of the Prophécies, then, are no more than the spokesmen for the author's didactic purposes. They are given little or no individuality of their own, and are simply one of a number of "voices" introduced by the author to illustrate Merlin's wisdom and uphold orthodox beliefs and practices.

(4) Hermits in prose romance of the 14th, 15th and 16th centuries.

The decline in the hermit's fortunes suggested by the Post Vulgate thirteenth century texts is confirmed in the Arthurian prose romances of the fourteenth, fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. With the important exception of the hermit-scenes in the Perceforest, most of the episodes involving solitaires are either of marginal importance or modelled on previous Arthurian texts.

In Isaie le Triste, (c.1350) a hermit called Sarban brings up Ysaye with the help of four fairy damsels, teaches him the elements of chivalry and eventually dubs him knight.<sup>1</sup> The Chevalier au Papegau (14th century)

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1. Paris (Bonfons), s.d. B. N. Rés. Y<sup>2</sup> 563, Chaps. 2-11.

contains no more than a passing reference to a solitary - it is the sound of a hermitage bell that brings Arthur's vision of a tourney to a sudden end.<sup>1</sup> One episode in a fourteenth century prose Yvain, in which five hermits try to kill Gauvain, is inspired by the hermit-scene in the Chevaliers as Deus Espees.<sup>2</sup> The passing reference to a hermit in Chrétien's Erec is omitted in the 1454 prose version; while in the prose Cligés a rather clumsy episode has been added to motivate Cligés' return to Fénice: he comes upon a damsel who has withdrawn to a hermitage after the disappearance of her lover, her grief pricks Cligés' conscience and he feels compelled to return at once to Fénice.<sup>3</sup> Two immense fifteenth century compilations, one by Jehan Vaillant<sup>4</sup> (based on the Palamede, the Prophécies de Merlin, and parts of the Prose Lancelot and Tristan), the other by Michel Gonnot<sup>5</sup> (which includes the Prose Lancelot parts of the Suite du

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1. hgg. von F. Heuckenkamp, Halle (Niemeyer), 1896, p.67, ll. 16-22.

2. See Lynette Muir, A Reappraisal of the Prose Yvain (National Library of Wales Ms. 444-D), Romania 85, 1964, p. 358.

3. Cligés hgg. von W. Foerster, Halle (Niemeyer), 1884, pp. 321-23.

4. B.N. ms. fr. 358-63.

5. B.N. ms. fr. 112. On this ms., see C.E. Pickford, L'Evolution du roman arthurien en prose Paris (Nizet), 1960.



Merlin and the prose Tristan), contain the main hermit-episodes already dealt with, sometimes in a rather abridged form. Giglan (early sixteenth century) combines the romance of Jaufré with that of Le Bel Inconnu and includes the episode in Jaufré in which the hero is assisted by a hermit in his combat with the "chevalier noir".<sup>1</sup> Giglan has two further scenes which recall a familiar type of episode, designed to underline the hero's valour: in these, hermits unsuccessfully warn the hero to desist from his quest because of the dangers involved.<sup>2</sup> Pierre Sala's Yvain, a verse "remaniement" of Chrétien's romance, includes the forest scene where Yvain is cared for by a hermit during his madness.<sup>3</sup> Though one can detect something of the new spirit of the Renaissance in the same author's Tristan, Sala's hermits are still quite clearly those of the thirteenth century.<sup>4</sup> Indeed the editor of Sala's Tristan speaks of "une certaine

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1. Giglan Lyon (Nourry) s.d. B.N. Rés. Y<sup>2</sup>568, hiii<sup>r</sup>-hiv<sup>r</sup>.

2. Giglan ed. cit. cii, eiii<sup>v</sup>-eiv<sup>r</sup>.

3. B.N. ms. fr. 1638, ff. 63-4.

4. Tristan éd. par L. Muir, Genève (Droz) Paris (Minard), 1958, pp. 52-55, 87.

incohérence dans le sentiment religieux du roman...

Les ermites selon Sala sont tous bons chrétiens; ses abbés et ses moines sont bons vivants. Les premiers sont du XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, de la Queste du Saint Graal; les seconds sont du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle, de Rabelais, de la Rome de Léon X."<sup>1</sup> Finally, the Histoire de Perceval le Gallois of 1530,<sup>2</sup> a prosification of Chrétien's Conte du Graal and three of the Continuations, the First, the Second and Manessier's, reproduces, with some inaccuracies,<sup>3</sup> the hermit-episodes of each of those romances.

The one Post Vulgate text which does give an important place to hermits is the Perceforest, written probably between 1314 and 1323.<sup>4</sup> Its author set himself the ambitious task of tracing the trials and progress of civilisation from the time of Alexander the Great up to that of King Arthur. As Lods points out, "il veut joindre en une vaste épopée - une portion, si l'on veut,

1. Tristan ed. cit. p. 23.

2. Paris (Jehan Longis, Jehan Saint Denis, Galliot du Pré) 1530, B.N. Rés. Y<sup>c</sup> 74.

3. See J. Frappier Sur le Perceval en Prose de 1530 in Mélanges de philologie française offerts à Robert Guiette, Anvers (De Nederlandsche Boekhandel) 1961, p. 241.

4. Jeanne Lods, Le Roman de Perceforest, Genève (Droz) et Lille (Giard), 1951, p. 279.

de Légende des Siècles, - la matière de Bretagne au cycle d'Alexandre."<sup>1</sup> One of the elements which give this vast composition its unity and coherence is the author's desire to trace the gradual process by which humanity is prepared to receive the Christian gospel. In Lods' words, "le sujet même du roman est religieux, puisqu'il est l'histoire des étapes successives par lesquelles la Grande Bretagne, païenne à l'origine, se prépare à recevoir la "bonne nouvelle" de la venue du Christ. Le récit, qui a son point de départ dans les romans d'Alexandre et son aboutissement dans ceux de la Table Ronde, s'avance en même temps de la mythologie païenne au christianisme."<sup>2</sup> The central figure in the author's account of this process is the hermit Dardanon, whose discoveries and insights prepare Britain to receive the mysteries of the Christian gospel.

The starting point of Britain's preparation for the coming of the "bonne nouvelle" is Dardanon's renunciation of polytheism and his establishment of the Temple Inconnu in honour of the one true God, the Dieu Souverain, Creator and sustainer of the Universe (I, chap. 68-9).<sup>3</sup>

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1. op. cit. p. 37.

2. op. cit. p. 246.

3. All references are to Perceforest B.N. Rés. Y<sup>2</sup> 28-33 Paris (Galliot du Pré) 1528.

Dardanon had come from Troy with Priam's daughter, the enchantress Cassandra. Her death, seen by Dardanon as divine punishment for the use she had made of her magical powers, not only leads him to see the errors of paganism, but inspires him also to believe in one God, the Dieu Souverain. On the Mont de la Merveille, in a clearing surrounded by thick bushes and thorns, he founds the Temple Inconnu. To anyone entering the temple for the first time floor and vault seem "tout pourplante de glaives." (the illusion is explained by the fact that the floor has a mirror-like surface which reflects the image of the swords suspended from the vault). Inside the sanctuary there is an altar with an "aumaire" and, attached to a nail, a lamp with three flames, one white, one crimson, one the colour of "feu materiel". Near the temple itself is a round chamber with a central pillar, from which hangs a shield which only Perceforest will be able to remove.

The details which the author gives concerning the Temple Inconnu seem designed to stress at least two things. Firstly, the Temple Inconnu is a sanctuary that is difficult of access. The thick bushes and thorns which surround the temple, the illusion of the swords bristling on the floor, the test of the shield on

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the pillar, are clearly designed to prevent the unworthy from entering or comprehending its mysteries (Alexandre, Claudius and Estonné, for example, are all rebuked and told to depart - I, chap. 42-3). What the author suggests is that any understanding of Dardanon's God must depend on personal initiative and individual effort. Secondly, the Temple Inconnu is exclusively devoted to the worship of the one true God, represented symbolically by the lamp attached to the nail "en lhonneur de celluy qui est soustenement et lumiere de tout le monde". Dardanon's cult is one of simplicity and inner piety, based entirely on prayer, meditation and adoration.

Dardanon's insights, then, have brought him a long way from the superstitions of paganism - indeed, the three flames of the lamp would already suggest that he has at least a tentative notion of the Trinity, while his prayer in II, chap. 37, suggests that the Dieu Souverain is similar in some ways to the Christian God. His discoveries however, for long remain his own personal property. Not till Perceforest visits his hermitage do they begin to reach and influence the outside world.

Perceforest's visits to Dardanon's hermitage are described in three main episodes (a) I, chapters 68-9,

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(b) II, 37-9, and (c) IV, 25-6. Though parts of these episodes are devoted to matters of immediate and practical importance, they are for the most part concerned with Perceforest's conversion to monotheism and the further discoveries of Dardanon concerning the Dieu Souverain.

(a) I, 68-9. Of all the knights, Perceforest is the only one to dare enter the temple and make his way to the altar. As soon as he invokes the pagan Gods, however, he is immediately pinned to the ground by a sword. This miracle marks the beginning of Perceforest's conversion: as he lies on the ground helpless, unable to speak or see, he hears Dardanon's prayer to the Dieu Souverain. What strikes him most of all is Dardanon's reference to the sin incurred by those people who worship several Gods:

Dont pensa en son cuer come celluy qui  
parler ne pouoit que iamais nadorerait  
plusieurs dieux car bien luy estoit  
aduis que pour cele cause luy estoit  
aduenue sa meschansete.

Perceforest prays for mercy, addresses Dardanon for help and is released on promising to believe in one God, the Dieu Souverain. This episode, then, is no more than the beginning of Perceforest's initiation into the beliefs of monotheism.

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(b) II, 37-9. Perceforest's belief in the Dieu Souverain is fortified by a second visit to Dardanon's hermitage, where he is cured of the apathy which took hold of him after Alexandre's death. The practical result of the visit is ultimately the foundation by Perceforest of the Temple du Dieu Souverain, the true God being represented in it symbolically by a reliquary containing the four elements. Through Perceforest, therefore, Dardanon's insights reach and influence the whole Kingdom of Britain, present and future, since Dardanon's teaching will be transmitted from one generation to the next.

(c) IV, 25-6. After his abdication in favour of his son, Perceforest visits the hermitage for a third time.

Present also on this occasion is Lydoire, the Reine-Fee, who has come to consult Dardanon about certain signs she has recently witnessed in the heavens. Her arrival at the temple is followed almost immediately by her conversion to monotheism - a hymn sung by Dardanon leads her to regret her past beliefs and to acknowledge the one true God. Together they discuss the signs, in particular one which their reason fails completely to comprehend. Their incomprehension, however, leads not to dejection but to increased wonder at its creator:

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'Beau tresdoulx sire dieu de qui la  
 puissance est sans nombre vous soyez loue  
 et benist en toutes vos œuures Car quant  
 sens naturel nous fault et nous sommes  
 sur le desesperer si auons nos nostre  
 recours a vous car la ou sens humain na  
 pouoir nous vous trouuons trespuissant ce  
 que la ou nature ne peult ouurer vostre  
 pouoir florist et oeuvre. Dont il mest  
 aduis se nous voyons aucune chose aduenir  
 soit au ciel ou en terre ou nostre sens  
 ne se peult estandre ne scauoir dont ce  
 vient et comment ce peult estre par  
 raison naturelle louer en debuons celluy  
 qui tel pouoir a donne a ses creatures  
 humaines et se la chose est telle que  
 nature ny ayt pouoir et que raison ne  
 sens humain ne le puissent comprendre:  
 rendre graces en debuons au souverain  
 createur.' (IV, f<sup>o</sup> 74c).

Though both anti-rational and anti-natural, the sign is  
 nevertheless interpreted by them as something which will  
 be beneficial to humanity; During the night Dardanon  
 and the Reine-Fee predict the Incarnation and the

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Redemptive power of Love ("de vierge char naistra la lueur qui nos enluminera... Amour de son sang lavera ce que Eve nostre premiere mere ordoya"), though in terms which they themselves only half-understand. Though still perplexed they conclude that the Dieu Souverain will visit his people:

Il determinerent pleinement que le  
Souverain Dieu visiteroit son pueple  
dune visitation moult esmerveilleuse.

They are afterwards transported by the Reine-Fee to the Isle de Vie, where they are kept alive till the coming of the "bonne nouvelle", announced to them by Arfasen and the priest Nathaniel. Dardanon and his companions rejoice in the news, and, handing themselves over to God's mercy, they die as soon as they reach Great Britain. Dardanon's knowledge of God, aquired in part through the insights of his reason, is thus confirmed and completed by God's self-disclosure, by the news of the Incarnation and the redemptive power of Love.

When compared with Dardanon, most of the other hermits in the Perceforest seem only marginal figures. The only one to stand out from the others is the hermit Pergamon, whose plea for chivalrous exploits based on

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individual prowess has its part to play in the revival of chivalry in Britain after the defeat of the "mauvais lignage". The "Lai de Pergamon"<sup>1</sup> which tells of the exploits of the Chevaliers aux douze voeux is recited before each important festival or celebration. Even after Pergamon's death, therefore, it acts as a kind of recurring admonition to knightly deeds of prowess. The other hermits perform a host of material services - they offer shelter,<sup>2</sup> warn the knights of dangers which lie ahead,<sup>3</sup> direct them to tourneys of particular importance.<sup>4</sup> In all of these episodes the hermit appears in his characteristic role of a charitable utility-figure. Nonetheless, these episodes, when viewed together, testify, it will be seen, to an important transformation of the eremitical life which strengthens the central theme of the Perceforest, Britain's preparation for the "bonne nouvelle".

Up to Book III, there are a number of allusions to a pagan form of the eremitical life. The hermit Pergamon himself invokes Mars to help the knights fulfil

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1. Perceforest II, ff. 131-34.

2. *ibid.* III, chaps. 3, 14, 34, 53.

3. *ibid.* VI, chap. 1.

4. *ibid.* III, chap. 3.

their twelve vows: "or doint Mars le dieu des batailles force et sauoir a tous les compaignons d'achever a leur honneur et a la recomandation et a l'exaulcement de toute cheualerie".<sup>1</sup> The hermit Tristan has been Pergamon's "serviteur".<sup>2</sup> Talef's hermitage has been built not far from a temple consecrated to Venus.<sup>3</sup> As Dardanon's teaching begins to spread, however, hermits serving the Dieu Souverain become more numerous: the hermitage where Perotte dies is inhabited by a hermit who is a disciple of Dardanon's,<sup>4</sup> there are hermits at the Temple du Souverain Dieu,<sup>5</sup> Gadifer and Nestor arrive at a hermitage "si trouuerent quil y demouroit ung ancien preudhomme hermite pour le dieu souuerain seruir selon sa loy".<sup>6</sup> Book VI indicates the final stage of this transformation: the hermit Ambrosius, who lives in a forest near the city of Caermedin, is a believer in the "nouvelle loy qui regnoit alors au pays" and preaches "la loy du crucefix".<sup>7</sup> These episodes, then,

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1. III, chap. 145.

2. III, chap. 3.

3. III, chap. 34.

4. III, chap. 30.

5. III, chap. 45.

6. IV, chap. 21.

7. VI, chap. 56.

in themselves only of minor importance, contribute collectively to the author's account of the coming of the Christian gospel. They thus reflect and reinforce one of the central themes of the Perceforest.

#### Conclusion of Analysis.

From this analysis of the hermit's fortunes in French Arthurian romance from c.1170 to 1530, it is clear that the hermit is in general given a two-fold role to play. On the one hand, he plays the part of a minor utility-figure, who performs a whole variety of services for knight-errantry. This is above all the part he is given to play in the verse romances and in the long sections of the prose romances devoted to adventure, joustings and love. This role, it was seen, is not always unimportant and (as in Chrétien's Yvain and Lancelot, Durmart le Galois and Floriant et Florete) is sometimes made to contribute something to the structure and spirit of the romance as a whole. On the other hand, and more important by far, the hermit plays a prominent part as the spiritual guide of the knights, acting as the spokesman for the author's didactic purposes and commenting on a wide variety of topics,

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which range from Gerbert's concern to instil an appropriate attitude of respect and decorum in all worshippers, to the questions of social corruption and injustice dealt with by the author of the Prophécies de Merlin. By far the most interesting aspect, however, of the hermit's didactic role, is the way in which it is used to put forward the true aims of ideal chivalry. It is when the hermit is given this part to play, as he is in the Grail texts composed over the period 1181-1235 and in the fourteenth century Perceforest, that his fortunes reach their high-point in French Arthurian romance. In these texts the hermit's persistent attempt to inspire chivalry with specifically Christian ideals and objectives makes his role of interest not only to the Arthurian specialist but also to anyone studying the ideals and aspirations of mediaeval chivalry. The romances, therefore, where the hermit has a role of crucial importance to play are Chrétien's Conte du Graal, parts of the Continuations, the Didot-Perceval, Perlesvaus, the Vulgate Cycle (particularly the Queste) and the Perceforest. The hermit's role as a didactic figure in these romances clearly deserves further examination, and will form the subject of a later chapter.<sup>1</sup>

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1. See below, Chapter 4.

### CHAPTER THREE

LITERARY PRESENTATION: The "Arthurianisation" of a  
Stock Character

CHAPTER THREELiterary Presentation: The "Arthurianisation" of a Stock Character.

The literary portrait of the solitary in romance is a composite one, and is made up of a number of different elements which include stock-motifs, realistic observation, invention and fantasy. How much do authors owe to the traditional portrait of the solitary, as represented for example in the Vitae Patrum? - How far were they concerned to give a realistic account of the eremitical life as conceived by the Middle Ages? - What allowance must be made for the elements of fantasy and imagination, the taste for the mysterious and the supernatural so characteristic of Arthurian romance as a whole? - these are the questions with which the present chapter will be concerned.

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(i) The Influence of the Patristic Tradition.

The Vitae Patrum were to remain widely known throughout the Middle Ages. Not only verse and prose translations,<sup>1</sup> the Legenda Aurea of Jacobus de Voragine and the Gesta Romanorum, but also pictorial representations of certain episodes in art and architecture<sup>2</sup> bear witness to their continuing popularity throughout Mediaeval Christendom; and from the pulpit, it should be remembered, many of the Vitae were made familiar to the humblest of people. Before making his appearance in vernacular literature, the solitary is therefore, to some extent, a stereotyped character, endowed with specific attributes and characteristics. The image of the solitary and the

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1. Paul Meyer, Légendes Hagiographiques en français in Histoire Littéraire de la France, t. 33, pp. 328-458.
  2. For France: Emile Mâle, l'Art Religieux du XIIe siècle en France, 3e éd., revue et corrigée, Paris (Armand Colin), 1928, p. 237 fig. 162, pp. 238-241 figs. 163-166, p. 242 fig. 167. Emile Mâle, l'Art Religieux du XIIIe siècle en France, 3e éd. revue et augmentée, Paris (Armand Colin), 1910, chap. 4, Les Saints et la Légende Dorée. Joan Evans, Art in Mediaeval France, London (Oxford University Press), 1948, p. 57, p. 106, p. 207 note 3, p. 198. Sacred and Legendary Art by Mrs. Jameson, London (Longmans, Green), ed. of 1896, 2 vols., is a more general survey.



solitary life projected by the Vitae has to some extent determined the presentation of the solitary in romance. It is the purpose of the following paragraphs to mention briefly some of these traditional characteristics and motifs deriving from the Vitae, or from the conceptions of the solitary life which their wide circulation and popularity inspired.

(a) Physical portrayal: "venerabilis senex".

The physical portrayal of the solitary in the Vitae is restricted for the most part to a few rather general details - the flowing white beard and hair, the aged and emaciated frame, feebly supported sometimes by a wooden staff. In Jerome's Vita Pauli Primi Eremitae,<sup>1</sup> for example, Saint Antony is a "venerabilis senex infirmos artus baculo regente sustenans... putridis senectute membris".

Apart from Joseus in the Perlesvaus ("li hermites, qui jenes estoit, sanz barbe et sanz guernon"<sup>2</sup>), the hermit with whom Gauvain lodges in the Chevaliers as Deus Espees ("il estoit grans et furnis/ et kenus, s'ot plaies ou uis"<sup>3</sup>), and Pergamon in the Perceforest ("ung

1. P.L. t. 23, col. 22, col. 25.

2. Perlesvaus, vol. I, 1.3560.

3. Li Chevaliers as Deus Espees, hgg. von W. Foerster, Halle (Niemeyer) 1877, p. 117.

homme grant et corporu"<sup>1</sup>), the hermits of romance are presented in much the same way as their counterparts in the Vitae. "Vieux", "chenu", "ancien", "de grant viellece", "de grant age", "de tres grant foiblesce", "enpalis", "trestot crollant", - these are the epithets which most frequently recur in the physical portrayal of the solitary. The following lines from Manessier's Continuation are representative of the physical portrayal of the hermit throughout Arthurian romance:

Li preudons fu vius et kenus  
 Et avoit par boine aventure  
 La barbe jusqu'à la painteure,  
 Si li batoit jusqu'as talons,  
 Si par estoit vius li preudons  
 Et la car ot vielle et velue.<sup>2</sup>

Only occasionally does one find a departure from this standardised presentation. A case in point is the following portrait of Dardanon, from the Perceforest. Although the author relies here entirely on the traditional motifs already mentioned, he renews them to some extent by emphasising them deliberately: the

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1. Perceforest, I, chap. 143.

2. Perceval le Galois, vol. 5, p. 313, ll. 40068-73.

deliberate repetition of "White...whiteness", underlining the radiance which seems to emanate from Dardanon, suggests not only his saintliness, but also the "illumination" which his insights provide:

Et quant ce vint entour la minuyt il voit  
venir ung ancien homme vestu de vesture  
blanche et auoit la barbe si longue quelle  
luy venoit iusques au haterel et estoit si  
large quelle luy couuroit tout par deuant  
et si estoit aussi blanche que neige et  
les cheueulx luy venoient sur les espaulles  
derriere et estoient si longs quilz luy  
venoient iusques aux talons. Et en auoit  
tant quilz luy couuroient tout le dos de  
lung coste a lautre si que les cheueulx se  
racordoient a la barbe deuant et si estoient  
les cheueulx aussi blancs comme neige et  
estoient si nectz et si desmeslez quil  
sembloit quon peust bien les cheueulx  
compter. Et si estoient si clers de  
blancheur quilz fourmoient tous ou le  
preudhome alloit.<sup>1</sup>

Such deliberate emphasis is rare. In most cases,

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1. Perceforest I, chap. 68.

authors are concerned only to endow the hermit with a few distinctive physical characteristics, which at the same time are the guarantee of his wisdom and authority.

(b) Hermits as Guides and Counsellors.

Though living in solitude, the saints and hermits of the Vitae still exert an important influence on the world they have forsaken. Their reputation for sanctity, their wisdom, born of experience and meditation, naturally attracted to their cells all those in need of counsel and advice. To those who sought him out, the hermit was above all the servant of God, the interpreter of His will, a mediator therefore between man and God. Hosts of people flocked, for example, to Saint Antony's retreat, in search of spiritual guidance and counsel,<sup>1</sup> while the fame of John of Lycopolis was such that he was twice consulted by the emperor Theodosius I.<sup>2</sup>

In like manner, Arthurian romancers often laid considerable stress on the hermit's role as guide and counsellor. The hermit's vocation as teacher naturally offered them a convenient opportunity to impart their own interests and preoccupations to their readers. The

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1. P.L. t. 73, col. 134, cap. 13.

2. P.L. t. 73, col. 1141, cap. 43.

Hermit-Uncle in Chrétien's Conte du Graal, the Second Continuation, and the Didot-Perceval, the Hermit-King in Gerbert, all of the hermits in the Perlesvaus and the Queste del Saint Graal, Dardanon in the Perceforest are all hermit-counsellors to whom the knights turn for guidance and advice. At the hermitage the "senefiance" of his adventures, or on occasion the explanation of his dreams and visions<sup>1</sup> are revealed by the hermit to the knight. The hermit's vocation as guide and counsellor is, therefore, one of the most characteristic aspects of his role in Arthurian romance.

(c) Special Gifts: prophecy.

Saintliness has its own rewards, not least among them the gift of prophecy. The Christian literature of the desert is full of accounts of saints rewarded for their spiritual endeavours by the gift of prophecy. John of Lycopolis was renowned as the "Prophet of the Thebaid", on account of his powers as a seer.<sup>2</sup> Saint Antony, according to his biographer, knew in advance the reasons which prompted certain men and women to visit him.

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1. Vulgate Version I, pp. 116-117, 154-158. Queste, pp. 132-140, 142-145, 154-161. Perceforest II, Chaps. 37-39.

2. P.L. t. 73, col. 1141, cap. 43.

"Saepe etiam ad se venientium turbarum, ante dies et menses, et causas praedixit et tempora".<sup>1</sup>

The hermits of Logres are equally well endowed with prophetic insight. In the Estoire del Saint Graal, a hermit predicts the death of Sarracinte's brother. The fulfilment of the prophecy fills Sarracinte with reverence for the saint and for the faith to which he has just introduced her. "Ensi aperchumes nous ma meire et moi que li hermites estoit sains hom"<sup>2</sup>

In the Mort Artu, when asked how he had arrived just in time for Lancelot's burial, Boort replies: "Certes, fet li rois Boorz, uns hermites religieux, qui est herbergiez el roialme de Gaunes, me dist que, se ge estoie a ce jor d'ui en cest chastel, que ge i trouveroie Lancelot ou mort ou vif; et il m'est tout ainsi venu comme il me dist".<sup>3</sup> In the Huth-Merlin, a hermit predicts that fifty of the best knights in the world will eventually sit at the Table Round.<sup>4</sup> In the Vulgate Version, and the Prose Tristan, hermits predict

1. P.L. t. 73, col. 154, cap. 34.

2. Vulgate Version I, p. 69, ll. 27-28.

3. La Mort le Roi Artu, éd. par Jean Frappier, Paris, (Droz), 2e éd. 1956, p. 263, par. 203, ll. 23-27.

4. Merlin éd. par Gaston Paris et Jacob Ulrich, Paris (Firmin-Didot), 1885, vol. 2, p. 162.

the coming of Galaad, just as before them the Old Testament prophets foretold the coming of Christ.<sup>1</sup>

'Et tout einsi com li prophete qui avoient esté grant tens devant la venue Jhesucrist avoient anonciee la venue Jhesucrist et dit qu'il delivreroit le pueple des liens d'enfer, tout einsint ont anonciee li hermite et li saint home vostre venue plus a de vint anz. Et disoient bien tuit que ja les aventures dou roiaume de Logres ne faudroient devant que vos fussiez venuz. Si vos avons tant attendu, Dieu merci, que or vos avons.' <sup>2</sup>

Perhaps the most distinguished prophet of all is the hermit Dardanon in the Perceforest, who predicts the Advent of the Christ Child. "Alors prophetisa le saint preudhomme et commenca a dire, De vierge chere naistra la lueur qui nous enluminera lors ce temps."<sup>3</sup> Although Dardanon's utterances are only half-understood, even by himself, they nonetheless play an all-important part in

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1. Vulgate Version I, p. 261, V. p. 247. Loeseth par. 344.

2. Queste, p. 38, ll. 21-29.

3. Perceforest IV, chap. 26, f. 75a.

preparing Britain for the coming of the "bonne nouvelle", the Christian gospel.

(d) Special Gifts: healing.

The repeated mention in the Vitae of the healing powers of the desert saint testifies not only to the undoubted medical skills of certain anchorites, but also to the authors' desire to illustrate the privileges which are reserved for the righteous man. In chapter 13 of the Historia Lausiaca, Palladius gives the following details concerning an ascetic of Nitria:

In hoc monte Nitrae fuit vir admirabilis, qui vocabatur Benjamin, qui recte et ex virtute vitam egit annis octoginta. Qui cum summe virtutem exercuisset, dignatus fuit gratia curationum, adeo ut cuicunque manus imposuisset, aut quod benedixerat oleum dedisset, qui laborabat liberaretur ab omni aegritudine.<sup>1</sup>

There is an echo of this particular tradition, which sees the gift of healing as a reward for saintliness, in the Mort Artu. The hermit who baptizes Gauvain is a "preudons de si seinte vie que Nostres Sires fesoit tote

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1. P.L. t.73, col. 1104, cap. 13.



jor por lui miracles de torz redrecier et d'avugles fere  
veoir, et meint autre miracle fesoit Nostre Sires por  
l'amor de cel preudome".<sup>1</sup>

The hermit's healing skills are amply attested  
throughout romance. In Escanor, Dynadan arrives at a  
hermitage "ou il ot i preudome sage/qui sa plaie li  
atorna".<sup>2</sup> In the First Continuation, Carados and  
Guignier are cured at a hermitage by "Un preudome.../  
Qui de medicine savoit/ Qui tel emplastre li lia/ Par  
coi tost garie li a./ Et del bras le bon Carados/ Ra tout  
jecté le venin hors/ Que la wivre i ot expandu,/ Car molt  
i a bien entendu".<sup>3</sup> In the Estoire del Saint Graal,  
Sarracinte's mother, suffering from an incurable disease,  
is healed miraculously at a hermitage:

Et li preudons li dist. par foi se tu crois  
celui dieu tu gariras ore endroit. Car  
nule cose nest greueuse a celui qui le croit  
de boin cuer. sire fait ele iou lotroi et  
bien le croi quil est poissans de moi

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1. La Mort le Roi Artu, éd. par Jean Frappier, Paris  
(Droz), 2e éd., 1956, p. 198, par. 154, ll. 7-11.
  2. Escanor hgg. von H. Michelant, Tübingen (Laupp),  
1886, ll. 12602-6.
  3. The First Continuation (TVD), ll. 7975-7982.

deliurer de ceste enfermete. et li preudons  
 prist .j. liure et commencha a lire sor la teste  
 a la dame la sainte ewangille ou ihesu crist  
 gari la feme qui ot este malade. xviiij . ans  
 de cele misme enfermete. et maintenant quil  
 lot leue si dist. lieue sus el non du peire et  
 du fil et du saint esprit. et tantost senti  
 ma dame quele estoit autresi saine comme ele  
 auoit onques mais este a nul iour de sa vie.  
 et ot maintenant recouree la force de tous ses  
 menbres.<sup>1</sup>

In the Prose Lancelot,<sup>2</sup> Gauvain and Yvain are cured by  
 hermits while Lancelot is cured by a hermit's companion  
 "qui moult savoit de plaies garir".<sup>3</sup> In the Livre  
d'Artus, Agloval arrives severely wounded at a hermitage:  
 "et les plaies Agloual furent ce soir regardees et  
 atornees si li oint li hermites dun molt bon oignement  
 que il auoit tant que molt en aleia."<sup>4</sup> In the  
Perlesvaus, the hero of the romance is looked after by

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1. Vulgate Version I, p. 67, l. 30- p. 68, l.1.

2. Vulgate Version IV, pp. 147-148, pp. 357-8.

3. Vulgate Version V, p. 398.

4. Vulgate Version VII, p. 172, ll. 3-5.

the Hermit-King until he has completely recovered.<sup>1</sup> In the Huth-Merlin, Merlin guides Arthur to a hermitage where he is healed by a hermit "moult preudom et de sainte vie... et savoit assés de plaies garir".<sup>2</sup> There are further examples of the hermit's healing powers in the Prose Tristan,<sup>3</sup> and the Perceforest.<sup>4</sup>

(e) Solitaries and the Animal World.

The relationship between solitaries and the animal world involves a two-fold tradition in the Vitae. On the one hand, there are numerous accounts of mutual charities between saints and animals.<sup>5</sup> The solitaries of the Vitae indeed seem to have regained something of the harmony and fellowship which once united man and beast in the Garden of Eden.<sup>6</sup> Typical in this respect is the figure of Theon, evoked by Rufinus in the Historia Monachorum:

1. Perlesvaus, p. 90, pp. 139-140.
2. Merlin, éd. par Gaston Paris et Jacob Ulrich, Paris (Firmin-Didot), 1885, vol I, p. 196.
3. Loeseth, 285a, 276 note 5.
4. Perceforest III, chap. 34, V, chap. 12.
5. See Helen Waddell, Beasts and Saints, London (Constable), 1942.
6. Jacques Lacarrière, The God-Possessed (Translation by Roy Monkcom), London (Allen & Unwin), 1963, pp. 193-197.

"Dicebant autem, quod et noctibus ad eremum progrediens, comitatu uteretur plurimo eremi bestiarum. Ipse vero hauriens aquam de puteo suo, et praebens eis pocula, obsequii earum remunerabat laborem."<sup>1</sup> John Moschus, in his Pratum Spirituale, speaks of an old man in Sapsas "tantae virtutis, ut leones secum in eadem spelunca susciperet, atque cibum eis in suo sinu praeberet, adeo divina gratia plenus erat vir Dei".<sup>2</sup>

There are several examples in romance of the theme of obedient animals. In the Estoire del Saint Graal,<sup>3</sup> a marvellous beast guides the hermit-author in his search for the book of the Grail. In the Perlesvaus,<sup>4</sup> a white lion assists the band of hermits, led by Joseus and Perlesvaus, as they storm the Grail castle. In Escanor, hermits live unharmed in the presence of "bestes crueuses tant fieres... tant perilleuses".<sup>5</sup>

The second tradition concerning saints and animals is of a quite different nature. Side by side with the

1. P.L. t. 21, col. 410, cap. 6.

2. P.L. t. 74, col. 123, cap. 2.

3. Vulgate Version I, pp. 9-10.

4. Perlesvaus, l. 6088.

5. Escanor, hgg. von H. Michelant, Tübingen (Laupp), 1886, ll. 24973-4.

theme of obedient animals runs that of the subjection and destruction of noxious beasts at the approach of saintliness. Confronted by a dragon in the Syrian desert Saint Marcian makes the sign of the cross and "the breath that came from the saint's mouth was as a flame that scorched up the dragon so that it fell to pieces as a reed would have done if consumed by flames".<sup>1</sup> In the Vita Antonii, Saint Athanasius relates how Antony discovered the place where he was to live, a deserted fort on the banks of a river: "... ad montem usque perrexit, ibique flumine transvadato, invenit castellum desertum, plenum (ob tempus et solitudinem) venenatorum animalium, in quo se constituens novus hospes habitavit. Statim ad ejus adventum ingens turba serpentium, quasi persecutorem passa, profugit".<sup>2</sup>

In almost identical terms, the author of the Estoire del Saint Graal describes how the forest of Maube was cleared of serpents on the arrival of hermits:

En cele forest soloit auoir et habiter trop  
merueilleusement de serpens qui ochioent lez

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1. Quoted by Jacques Lacarrière The God Possessed, London (Allen & Unwin), 1963, p. 197.

2. P.L. t.73, col. 133, cap. XI.

gens. mais pus v ans nen fu nuls ueus, et  
 ses tu quant elle fu uuidie de la uermine.  
 ie te di que ce fu par la uenue des prodomes  
 qui a celui iour se vindrent herbergier en  
 la forest".<sup>1</sup>

In the First Continuation, Carados immediately thinks of seeking a hermit's help when a serpent is made to cling to his arm:

'Je sai chi pres une chapele  
 D'un hermite qui Dieu apele,  
 Qui molt par est de sainte vie.  
 D'aler a lui me prent envie,  
 Aler i veil encore anuit.  
 Por Dieu te proi que ne t'anuit,  
 Car je croi que par s'oroison  
 Ne fera plus demoroison  
 Cist quivers serpens sor mon cors;  
 Bien croi qu'il s'en isteroit fors.'<sup>2</sup>

At another hermitage, the hermits' prayers play their part in eventually ridding him of his affliction. The serpent

1. Vulgate Version I, p. 154, ll. 28-31.

2. The First Continuation, vol. 1, ll. 6815-24.

is to be removed by placing Carados in a tub of vinegar, with Guignier closeby in a tub of milk. As soon as the serpent leaps from one tub to the other, Cador will kill it with his sword.

Et d'autre part tot li hermite  
 Ont chanté de Saint Esperite  
 La messe par devotion,  
 Et sivirent porcession  
 Et sont tot entour la pucele.  
 Chascuns d'ax Jhesucrist apele,  
 Et font molt devolte oroison  
 Que Diex sanz grant demoroison  
 Le felon serpent si destruisse  
 Que a l'un ne l'autre ne nuise.<sup>1</sup>

Their prayers are successful, and Carados is cured.

(f) God and His Angels.

For the Anchorite of the Vitae, as for Moses and Elijah before him, solitude is a place of encounter with God. If the solitary voluntarily loses the society of his fellow-men, his saintliness gains for him the company of God and His angels, who reveal themselves to him in a

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1. The First Continuation, ll. 7919-28.

visible tangible form.<sup>1</sup> Angels, points out Lacarrière,<sup>2</sup>  
 "... continually intervened in the life of the ascetic,  
 to keep watch over him, to record his progress and his  
 set-backs, to protect him from the demon and acquaint him  
 with messages and instructions from the Lord."

In Arthurian romance as well, we find hermits  
 enjoying the company of God and his angels. In the  
Estoire del Saint Graal, Christ appears in person to the  
 hermit-author:

Atant mesueillai si vi si grant clarte que  
 onques mais si grant ne vi. Et puis si  
 vi deuant moi le plus bel home qui onques  
 fust. Et quant iou le vi si en fui tous  
 esbahis & ne soi que dire ne que faire.<sup>3</sup>

The same hermit enjoys a vision of the Trinity, when an  
 angel raises his soul to the third heaven and higher:

Lors me prinst & m'enporta encore en .j.  
 autre estage qui estoit a .C. double plus  
 clers que voire. si estoit plus coleres  
 que nus cuers ne poroit penser. Et

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1. e.g. Pachomius' encounter with the angel. Historia Lausiaca, P.L. t. 73, col. 1137, cap. 38.
  2. Jacques Lacarrière The God-possessed, London (Allen & Unwin), 1963, p. 189.
  3. Vulgate Version I, p. 4, ll. 14-16.



illueques me monstra il la force de la  
 trinite apertement. Car iou i vi deuiseement  
 le pere & le fil & le saint esperit. Et si  
 vi que ces iij. persones repairoient a vne  
 deite & a vne poissance.<sup>1</sup>

In the Second Continuation, the Perlesvaus, and the Livre d'Artus hermits enjoy the help and company of angels as they celebrate mass:

Li preudom, del Saint Esperitte,  
 A la messe dite et cantée;  
 Perchevaus l'a bien escoutée;  
 Si vit que l'angles li aida,  
 Que Diex del ciel li envoia.<sup>2</sup>

(Arthur) ot, la o li sainz hermites chante  
 la messe, le respons des angles...Qant la  
 messe fu chantee, la voiz d'un saint angle  
 dist: Ite missa est.<sup>3</sup>

Qvant uint au matin si fist li hermites le  
 seruise de nostre segnor si come il auoit  
 a us & a costume chascun ior. & endementres

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1. Vulgate Version, I, p. 7, ll. 14-19.

2. Perceval le Galois, vol. 4, ll. 26116-20.

3. Perlesvaus, p. 36, ll. 305-6, 321-2.

que il faisoit le saint sacrement si uoit Nasciens  
 une mein toute blanche desus lauter en lair qui  
 seruoit a lauter le saint hermite de toutes  
 iceles choses que clers doit servir prouoire  
 quant il chante, si sen merueille molt Nasciens  
 & pensa bien dedenz son cuer que molt estoit  
 preudom li hermites quant si le seruoit li  
 esperiz nostre seignor.<sup>1</sup>

For the particularly virtuous ascetic, God's presence may declare itself as it had done for Elijah (Kings I, 17, 3-7) or Saint Paul and Saint Antony in the Vita Pauli<sup>2</sup> - even in the material organisation of the hermit's life. In the Second Continuation, a hermit is kept alive on food brought to him each day by an angel:

Blanc pain et crapes de raisin  
 Lor a douné à cel matin,  
 Com cil ki moult ciers les avoit;  
 L'angles aporté li avoit,  
 Par le comant Nostre Signor;  
 Ensi le faisoit cascun jor,  
 Car ne vivoit, tant ert preudom,  
 Se de la gloire de Dieu non.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Vulgate Version VII, p. 247, ll. 10-15.

2. P.L. t. 23, col. 25.

3. Perceval le Galois, vol. 4, ll. 26269-76.

The hermits of romance, then, like their counterparts in the Vitae, live dissociated from the world, but in the nearer presence of God and his angels.

(g) Spiritual Life.

Haec igitur destinatio solitarii, haec debet esse omnis intentio, ut imaginem futurae beatitudinis in hoc corpore possidere mereatur, et quodammodo arrham coelestis illius conversationis et gloriae incipiat in hoc vasculo praegustare. Hic, inquam, finis totius perfectionis est, ut eo usque extenuata mens ab omni situ carnali ad spiritalia quotidie sublimetur, donec omnis ejus conversatio, omnis volutatio cordis, una et jugis efficiatur oratio.<sup>1</sup>

These words, with which Cassian ends his chapter on the solitary's true aim and perfect bliss, could well be applied to the great majority of hermits in romance. Like the saints of the Vitae, they too are intent on gaining, as Cassian puts it, "an image of future bliss", "a foretaste of the celestial life and glory".

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1. P.L. t. 49, col. 828, cap. vii.

The means whereby the hermits of romance try to accede to this perfection are above all almost continuous worship and adoration, and mortification of the flesh. As far as worship is concerned, the texts mention prayer, sacred reading (gospel or psalter) and the observation of the canonical hours of the breviary. Not all the hermits are priests, but for those who are, the most important office is the celebration of mass. With regard to mortifications, Gerbert de Montreuil evokes a general picture of the austerities of the hermit's life, pointing out how complete emancipation from the flesh is to be won:

'Mescreans est et ypocrites  
 Cil qui quide par vaine gloire  
 Avoir l'amour Dieu et sa gloire.  
 Nenil! mais par afflictions,  
 Par jeünes, par oroisons,  
 Et avoir vraie repentance,  
 Par vestir haire en penitance...'<sup>1</sup>

As well as the wearing of the "haire", which Gerbert mentions, other texts refer to a practice known as the "prière à nus genoux",<sup>2</sup> while others indicate that some

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1. Gerbert, ll. 2752-58.

2. Vulgate Version IV, p. 147, l. 37. This practice is discussed in L. Gougaud, Ermites et Reclus, Abbaye Saint-Martin de Ligugé, 1928, p.32.

hermits were bound by a rule of partial silence. When Perceval and his sister arrive at their uncle's hermitage, in the Second Continuation, they are greeted in the following way:

Singne lor fait ki senefie  
 Qu'il entrent ens, herbegié sont;  
 Mais, pour trestout l'or de cest mont,  
 Ne parlast il en nul endroit,  
 Puis ke la nuis venue estoit  
 Et ke solaus ert esconsés.<sup>1</sup>

At the hermitage of the Hermit-King, in Gerbert, the rule of silence likewise applies on specific occasions:

Et si vous di, par saint Lievin,  
 Qu'al mengier ne parolent point,  
 Fors li rois, mais a chascun point  
 Que gens vienent puet il parler,  
 Et al venir et al aler.<sup>2</sup>

Another form of mortification particularly stressed is excessive fasting and privation. Most hermits in romance allow themselves only the minimum amount of nourishment necessary for survival. On a very few occasions (as in Chrétien's Yvain ll. 2844-51, and Gerbert ll. 7405-10), a touch of sympathetic humour or

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1. Perceval le Galois 4, 26078-83.

2. Gerbert ll. 8536-40.

realistic observation can make the description of these austerities and the hermit's frugal repasts come alive. In most cases, however, the descriptions are extremely brief, and follow a routine, stereotyped pattern.

(ii) Realism.

The portrait of the solitary in romance is thus clearly a stereotyped one, modelled to a large extent on the traditions of the Vitae. The literary presentation of hermits in Arthurian literature involves more, however, than the survival of certain traditional characteristics and motifs. The texts reflect or project, at least to some extent, an image of the eremitical life as conceived by the Middle Ages. It is interesting to note that in his study Ermites et Reclus, Dom Louis Gougaud has indeed based a large part of his documentation on texts of a literary nature, rather than on historical chronicles, liturgical sources and charters. "...Nous avons mis résolument à contribution les anciens textes français, anglais, allemands, irlandais... Cette 'littérature de grand air', comme on l'a appelée, nous offre des peintures souvent aussi exactes et presque toujours plus vivantes des moeurs du temps que les textes rédigés en

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latin."<sup>1</sup> This observation is certainly true, and there is much in Arthurian romance that would give a more picturesque evocation of the eremitical life than the mere mention of a name, or site, in a charter could ever do. As far as real documentary evidence is concerned, however, the harvest in Arthurian romance is small, as Müssener's thesis Der Eremit in der altfranzösischen nationalen und höfischen Epik has shown<sup>2</sup> perhaps not surprisingly, since the hermit himself is not the hero of the romances, but simply a figure who lives and has his being only in his relationship to the Knights of Logres. The eremitical life itself is simply not the object of special attention on the part of the writers of romance. With regard to the material organisation of the hermit's life, for example, the texts rarely go beyond what one could expect - hermit-chapels situated in the most inaccessible of places (forests, valleys, mountains), often beside a small stream or river, material requirements kept at a minimum level by the hermit's frugal diet and self-imposed austerities. Nonetheless, there are instances where Arthurian romance does touch on contemporary

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1. Abbaye Saint-Martin de Ligugé, 1928, p. 2.

2. Rostock (Beckmann), 1930, chap. 2.

reality in a more interesting way, in some cases even confirming points that are less well-known. Three of these will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

(a) Social origins of hermits.

The Arthurian romances suggest, as do other non-literary sources,<sup>1</sup> that a great number of those who abandoned the world for the solitary life were of aristocratic birth. The majority of hermits in romance, particularly in the prose texts, either are former knights or belong by birth to the chivalric class. The figure of the hermit-knight recurs frequently in the Vulgate Cycle,<sup>2</sup> Perlesvaus,<sup>3</sup> Huth-Merlin,<sup>4</sup> the Prose Tristan,<sup>5</sup> Palamede,<sup>6</sup> Perceforest,<sup>7</sup> Giglan,<sup>8</sup>

1. Montalembert, Les Moines d'Occident vol. 6, Paris et Lyon (Lecoffre), 1877, pp. 8-9, 42-117. Leopold Génicot, in L'Eremitismo in Occidente nei secoli XI e XII, Milan (Vita e Pensiero), 1965, pp. 57-58.
2. Vulgate Version II, pp. 221-2, III, pp. 41, 154, 163, 359, IV, pp. 130, 143, VII, p. 204. Queste, p. 120.
3. Perlesvaus ll. 897-8, 940, 1640, 4386-92, 7235-6.
4. Merlin éd. par G. Paris et J. Ulrich, Paris (Firmindidot) 1885, vol. I, p. 196.
5. Loeseth 124, 293a.
6. Loeseth 632, 637. B.N. ms. fr. 359, f. 286b-c.
7. Perceforest I, chap. 143.
8. Giglan Lyon s.d. B.N. Rés. Y<sup>2</sup>568, eiii verso.



and Pierre Sala's Tristan.<sup>1</sup> With regard to the verse romances, one could mention the Hermit-King in Gerbert,<sup>2</sup> and the hermit in the Chevaliers as deus Espees, whose physical appearance recalls his more war-like past ("il estoit grans et furnis/et kenus, s'ot plaies ou uis").<sup>3</sup> In addition, both verse and prose romances offer a host of examples of knights actually deciding to withdraw from the world to end their days as hermits. The hero of Escanor,<sup>4</sup> Perceval in Manessier,<sup>5</sup> and the Queste,<sup>6</sup> thirteen knights and two "bachelier" in the Perlesvaus,<sup>7</sup> King Mordrain, Nascien, King Urien, Girflet, Bohort, Lancelot and Hector in the Vulgate Cycle,<sup>8</sup> Guiron and his

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1. Tristan éd. par L. Muir, Genève (Droz) et Paris (Minard) 1958, par. 285.
  2. Gerbert ll. 8552-8835.
  3. Chevaliers as deus Espees hgg. W. Foerster, Halle (Niemeyer), 1877, pp. 116-124.
  4. Escanor hgg. von H. Michelant, Tübingen (Laupp), 1886, pp. 650-82.
  5. Perceval le Galois vol. 6, pp. 153-4.
  6. Queste p. 279, ll. 14-15.
  7. Perlesvaus p. 256, p. 409.
  8. Vulgate Version I, 243-4, ll. 221-2, IV, 40. Mort Artu (éd. Frappier, 1956), par. 195, 200, 201, 203.

forbears in the Palamede,<sup>1</sup> and Pergamon in the Perceforest<sup>2</sup> all withdraw from the world to take up the solitary life. The texts mention as well a number of hermits (and recluses) who by birth belong to the chivalric class.<sup>3</sup> Many knights, indeed, like Pergamon, regard the eremitical life as a continuation of the chivalric life, as a kind of "celestial" chivalry, whose sole aim is the life of the spirit and the glorification of God: "Lors sapensa quil auoit moult fait de prouesses et de cheualeries pour lhonneur du corps et moult trauaille et tant quil ne pouoit plus. Or estoit necessite et besoing quil trauaillast et se fist cheualier en prouesse pour lame en seruant dieu le remanant de sa vie."<sup>4</sup>

(b) Motivation

Like their counterparts in the Vitae, all solitaries

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1. B.N. ms. fr. 362 ff. 1-44b, ms. fr. 363 ff. 365a-370b, 392c-393b.
  2. Perceforest I, chap. 143.
  3. Chrétien, Conte du Graal éd. W. Roach, Genève (Droz) et Lille (Giard), 1956, ll. 6436-38. Perceval le Galois vol. 4, pp. 193-206, 300. Gerbert, ll. 10118-10184. Didot-Perceval, pp. 180-3, 219-222. Perlesvaus ll. 1581, 1606, 9253-4. Vulgate Version III, p. 361, ll. 7-8. Queste p. 71, l. 16, p. 73, ll. 21-30, pp. 142-6. Prophécies de Merlin éd. L. Paton, New York (Heath) London (Oxford), 1926-7, vol. 1, p. 428. Perceforest III, chap. 34.
  4. Perceforest I, chap. 143.

in romance have in common the desire to serve God - "Dameledieu de cuer servir". Whether it be purely and simply a desire for the mystical, contemplative life, or else the wish to atone for a particular sin or crime,<sup>1</sup> the religious motivation is clear. The texts suggest, however, that there were other reasons that could prompt a man or woman to renounce the world.

Aliers in the Prose Lancelot and the Livre d'Artus<sup>2</sup> withdraws to solitude because of the grief he feels at the loss of his twelve sons; he is simply unable to face up to life now that they have gone:

et il <sup>sen</sup> ala u plus parfont en la forest entre  
Norgales et Sorelois et laissa le siecle et  
deuint renduz et fist un hermitage ou il  
usa son tens et son aage car tant estoit  
acorez de ses enfanz quil vit occire tot  
deuant luy que onques puis un tot sol ior  
au siecle ne uolst demorer.<sup>3</sup>

Rather similar circumstances explain why another knight, in the Prose Tristan, had taken up the solitary life:

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1. Calixtes and Joseus in the Perlesvaus (p. 33, 88-9) and a hermit in the Prose Tristan éd. par R. Curtis, München (Max Hueber Verlag), 1963, tome I, p. 50, par. 29 all do penance for past sins.

2. Vulgate Version, III, p. 163, VII, p. 204.

3. Vulgate Version, VII, p. 204, ll. 30-33.

Quant lancelet se fust departy de pallamedes  
 quil auoit abatu si trouua une belle fontaine  
 pres dung hermitage ou il demouroit ung  
 preudhome qui iadis auoit este cheualier mais  
 pour le courroux quil auoit eu de six enfans  
 qui luy estoit mors cestoit mis en lhermitage  
 et herbergeoit illec les cheualiers errans.<sup>1</sup>

After the death of their respective lovers, the hero in Escanor<sup>2</sup> and Claire in Gerbert<sup>3</sup> withdraw from the world while in the Prose Cligés<sup>4</sup> a lady seeks out a "lieu sollitaire" when her lover fails to return. In the Queste, Perceval's aunt flees to a "sauvage leu" after the death of her lord, fearing that her husband's killer may threaten her life as well:

si li demande Perceval par quele achaison ele  
 s'ert mise en si sauvage leu et avoit lessiee  
 sa terre. 'Par Dieu, fait ele, ce fu par  
 poor de mort que je m'en foi ça. Car vos  
 savez bien que, quant vos alastes a cort, que

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1. Tristan (Vérard) c.1506, B.N. Rés. Y<sup>2</sup> 60-1. f.161c.  
 (wrongly numbered 141). Loeseth par. 124.

2. hgg. H. Michelant, Tübingen (Laupp), 1886, ll.24469-73.

3. Gerbert ll. 10124-5.

4. Cligés éd. Foerster, Halle (Niemeyer), 1884, pp.321-3.

mes sires li rois avoit guerre contre le roi  
 Libran; dont il avint, si tost come mes  
 sires fu morz, que je, qui ere fame et  
 poorose, oi poor qu'il ne m'oceist s'il me  
 poist prendre. Si pris maintenant grant  
 partie de mon avoir et m'en afoi en si  
 sauvage leu, por ce que je ne fusse trovee  
 maintenant; et fis fere cest reclus et ceste  
 meson tele come vos la veez, et i mis o moi  
 mon chapelain et ma mesniee, et entrai en  
 cest reclus'... (Queste pp.80-1).

What these examples suggest is that on occasion it was not so much the desire to serve God that prompted men and women to withdraw to solitude, but the desire to escape from the harshness and cruelty of the everyday world.

Arthurian romance, then, casts an interesting side-light on both the positive and negative aspects of the eremitical life in the Middle Ages. On the one hand, a man or woman could be led to abandon the world by a desire for the contemplative life; nothing indeed is more characteristic of religious fervour in the Middle Ages than this "contemptus mundi", the desire to liberate oneself from the ties of the world and the flesh. On the

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other hand, however, the eremitical life could also represent, not something positive in itself, but (as it had also done in the East)<sup>1</sup> an escape from the brutalities of contemporary life. The picture which the Arthurian romances evoke of men and women caught up in the calamities of war and brigandage, turning their backs on the world and withdrawing to a hermitage as the only haven of security and consolation, provides an interesting commentary on the violent tenor of mediaeval life.

(c) Degree of Solitude: Individual Hermits, "Orders" of Hermits.

The majority of hermits in Arthurian romance live by themselves, in complete solitude. A hermit in the Second Continuation<sup>2</sup> is in this respect typical of a great many: "serjant ne garçon ne portier/n'avoit avec lui li preudom/ ne créature se Dieu non". There are indications, however, that some did choose to have a companion or two, living with them or near them. The hermit of the Good Friday episode in Chrétien's Conte du Graal, for example, has with him "un provoire/ et un

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1. See above, Chapter I.

2. Perceval le Galois vol. 4, p. 197, ll. 26068-70.

clerçon".<sup>1</sup> Some of the hermits of the Queste and the Perlesvaus<sup>2</sup> have with them a "clerc" or a "vallet", while in the Livre d'Artus<sup>3</sup>, Gerbert's Continuation and the Prose Tristan a number of hermits live together in the same hermitage:

Treize hermites molt enpalis/trova dedens une  
maison.<sup>4</sup>

... il cheuaucha tant quil vint gesir  
en une (Sic) hermitage laquelle estoit  
dessus une moult haulte montaigne Il  
y auoit leans plusieurs hermites lesquels  
si seruoient a nostre seigneur iesu-christ.<sup>5</sup>

Escanor, Manessier's Continuation and the Perlesvaus suggest that sometimes the cells of individual hermits were grouped fairly close to each other:

Cil dui hermite qui la vindrent  
.II. autres hermitages tindrent  
assez prez de cele maison,

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1. Le Roman de Perceval ou le Conte du Graal éd. par W. Roach, Genève (Droz) et Lille (Giard), 1956, ll. 6343-4.

2. Queste, p. 133, l. 17, p. 165, l. 23. Perlesvaus ll. 1622, 1658, 3598.

3. Vulgate Version VII, p. 280, ll. 23-4.

4. Gerbert ll. 8430-1.

5. Tristan (Vérard) B.N. Rés. Y<sup>2</sup> 60-61, f. 79b.

liquel sovent en la saison,  
 quant il ert liex et il pooient,  
 mult volentiers s'entreveoient...<sup>1</sup>

Elsewhere, there are suggestions, however, of much larger groupings, of "orders" or "congregations" of hermits.<sup>2</sup> In the First Continuation, a company of knights lodge at the "vergier des aventures":

Deus jors oirrent puis sanz mengier,  
 Car ainc ne porent lieu trover  
 Ou il preissent un disner  
 N'ou il peüssent hebergier,  
 Ains lor covint a chevalchier  
 Trusqu'au vergier des aventures  
 Ou l'en les trovoit sovent dures.  
 La mengierent od les renclus,  
 Dont il avoit cent et plus.<sup>3</sup>

The Prose Lancelot<sup>4</sup> refers to hermits belonging to the

1. Escanor hgg. von H. Michelant, Tübingen (Laupp), 1886, ll. 24963-68. cp. Perceval le Galois vol. 5, 40134-5. Perlesvaus p. 317, p. 396.
2. See above, chap. I, for a discussion of congregations of hermits.
3. First Continuation vol. I, ll. 9498-9505.
4. Vulgate Version III p. 41, ll. 26-9. IV, p. 108, ll. 26-9.



"ordre de Saint Augustin", while the doctrine preached by the hermits of the Queste del Saint Graal and their distinctive "robe blanche" clearly connect them with the Cistercian Order.<sup>1</sup>

Furthermore, the texts suggest that on occasion an individual hermitage could itself become the starting-point of a much larger (and less austere?) foundation. In the First Continuation, after Carados' cure at a hermitage, the latter is richly endowed and transformed into a rich and powerful abbey:

Mais sachiez quant d'iluec tornerent,  
 L'ermitage tel atornerent  
 Qu'ens el païs ne remest mie  
 A cel tans plus riche abeïe,  
 Car pour l'amour de Carador  
 I laissa tant d'argent et d'or  
 Li rois, et tenemens et fiez,  
 Qu'el mont n'ot gens plus aesiez.<sup>2</sup>

In the Estoire del Saint Graal, King Mordrain ends his days in a hermitage, which he transforms into an abbey

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1. A. Pauphilet, Etudes sur la Queste del Saint Graal. Paris (Champion), 1921, and E. Gilson La Mystique de la Grâce dans la Queste del Saint Graal pp. 59-91 of Les Idées et les Lettres Paris (Vrin), 1932.

2. First Continuation vol. I, ll. 8031-38.

of "blans moignes".

& essaucha si le lieu quil i ot fait vne  
abeie grant et bele anchois que li ans  
fust passes & fu cele religion de blans  
moignes. Car tot maintenant que li  
rois i fu entres si rendirent vne partie  
des plus haus hommes. Ensi fu establee  
cele abeie par le roy mordrain.<sup>1</sup>

In the Prose Lancelot, Adragain transforms his hermitage  
into a much larger foundation, following the rule of  
Saint Augustine:

Mais la terriene cheualerie auoit il  
toute laisie grant pieche auoit. & si  
estoit rendus en vn ermitage ou il auoit  
tant fait que ia i auoit couent de  
rendus auoeques lui. qui tenoient le  
rieule et letablissement de saint augustin...<sup>2</sup>

The monastery "Li Bienfais", where Gauvain lodges in the  
Prose Lancelot, had formerly been a small hermitage:

la nuit le mena auenture a vne maison de  
moignes qui seoit sor vne petite reuiere  
en loriere dunes petites breches de fores.

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1. Vulgate Version I p. 244, ll. 2-6.

2. Vulgate Version III, p. 41, ll. 26-9.

si estoit la maisons apelee li bienfais.  
 chele maisons auoit este .j. hermitage  
 moult anchien. si lauoit li dus escans  
 de cambenync tant creue et amendee que  
 ore i auoit couent de rendus en abit  
 regular.<sup>1</sup>

The Arthurian texts, therefore, reflect the kind of transformation mentioned in Chapter One, whereby the cell of an individual hermit could become the foundation-stone of a much larger, communal establishment, enjoying great wealth and power. To judge by the episode referred to above, from the First Continuation, this important development could well undermine the austerity and otherworldliness of the eremitical life. Once again, therefore, as in the case of the social origins of the hermit and the motivation behind his retreat to solitude, the picture which the romances evoke of the solitary life is not wholly a traditional one, but includes certain elements that can be related, at least in outline if not in every detail, to contemporary reality.

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1. Vulgate Version III, p. 309<sup>1</sup>. 38 - p. 310, l. 8.  
 See Appendix Fig. 3.

(iii) "Arthurian" elements.

Realistic observation, then, modifies the traditional portrait of the solitary, but only to a limited degree. What transforms it completely is the presence of certain elements that could appropriately be called "Arthurian". The first of these concerns the influence of the courtly ideal on the presentation of hermits in romance.

(a) Influence of the courtly ideal.

Many of the hermits in Arthur's kingdom share with his knights the same polish and distinction of manners. Something of the courtly etiquette is apparent, for example, in the way in which the hermit welcomes and takes leave of the knight; on a number of occasions, indeed, such behaviour is actually described in terms which link it unmistakably with "courtoisie":

li preudom li dit, orendroit  
 qu'il le choisi, conme enseingniez  
 'Biauz tres douz sire, bien veingniez...' <sup>1</sup>  
  
 ist fors et de par le haut mestre  
moult gentement le salu  
 et Pierchevaus rendi li a  
 son salu moult courtoisement. <sup>2</sup>

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1. Escanor hgg. von H. Michelant, Tübingen(Laupp), 1886, p. 56.
  2. Perceval le Galois vol. 6, ll. 40798-801.

Après mengier Perchevaus s'arme

Puis monte, si a congie pris.

Li prestres, come bien apris

Le comande a Dieu... <sup>1</sup>

Et il est mout liez; si le salu, et cil

li rent son salu bel et cortoisement.<sup>2</sup>

Furthermore, the knight's custom of leading in his guests by the hand is reflected in the way in which the hermit welcomes his guest at the hermitage:

Pierchevaus en la maison entre

Et li preudom ki le menoit

Qui parmi la main le tenoit

Desarmé l'a isnelement. <sup>3</sup>

Li hermites prent Monseigneur Gauvain

par la main et la damoisele et les

mainne en la chapele.<sup>4</sup>

Li hermites fet son cheval establir a

un vallet puis prent Monseigneur

Gauvain par la main...<sup>5</sup>

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1. Gerbert ll. 2488-91.

2. Queste p. 133.

3. Perceval le Galois vol. 5, ll. 40298-301.

4. Perlesvaus ll. 902-3.

5. *ibid.* ll. 1569-71.

And with regard to the hermit's hospitality itself, Pergamon's generous treatment of his guests, in the Perceforest,<sup>1</sup> would suggest that on occasion it has as much to do with the courtly virtue of "largesse" as the Christian ideal of charity. The hermits of Logres, then, are "gentilshommes", and still practise the virtues and etiquette of the civilised society to which many of them once belonged.

This courtly background is further reflected in the topics touched upon by the hermits in the course of their conversations with the knights. Much of the time, it is true, the hermit is mainly concerned with the spiritual direction and encouragement of his guest; on some occasions, however, the knight's presence provides the hermit with a welcome opportunity to reminisce aloud over his own life at court, or voice his enthusiasm for deeds of prowess and chivalry. A hermit with whom Yvain stays, in the Prose Lancelot, is anxious to know whether customs have changed since the time when he himself had been a knight at Uterpandragon's court:

Mais or me dites se cil de la table roonde

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1. Perceforest I, chap. 143.

sont en tel maniere comme il estoient  
 jadis. et mesire Yvain li demande comment  
 il estoient adont. Par foy fait il ce  
 vous dirai iou bien.<sup>1</sup>

The hermit then goes on to give a lengthy account of conditions in his time. Another hermit gives an account to Bohort of a duel fought between the latter's father and Cerses.<sup>2</sup> In the Palamede, Brehus' visit to the hermit's cavern is concerned mainly with the tale of the knight Febus and the princess for whom he died.<sup>3</sup> In the Perceforest, the main interest of Pergamon's life is tales of prowess and chivalrous deeds: "car il nest riens au monde que iayme tant que preudhommie en cheualerie et ay toute ma vie aymee." Of the knights he says: "tres volentiers les voy et oys parler de leurs beaulx faitz en cheualerie."<sup>4</sup>

Sometimes this enthusiasm is translated into action. In the Queste, a hermit leaves his cell in order to help his nephew Agaran in his war against the Quens du Val:

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1. Vulgate Version V, pp. 129-33.

2. *ibid.* pp. 142-5.

3. Loeseth 636.

4. Perceforest I, chap. 144.

(l'ermite) s'en ala o lui por maintenir  
 la guerre contre le conte. Si revint a  
 ce qu'il suelt jadis fere, ce est armes  
 porter. Et quant il fu assemblez a ses  
 parenz, si le fist si bien de toute  
 chevalerie que li quens fu pris a la  
 tierce jornee qu'il assemblerent: et  
 lors firent pes entre le conte et  
 Agaran, et dona le quens bone seurté que  
 ja mes nel guerroyeroit.<sup>1</sup>

The Prose Lancelot recounts a rather similar story  
 concerning the knight Aliers, who leaves his hermitage to  
 fight on behalf of his son.<sup>2</sup> In the Perceforest, the  
 hermit Pergamon makes elaborate preparations to ensure a  
 good seat at a forthcoming tourney:

'si vueil bien que vous sachez que iay  
 envoie ouuriers pour moy faire une  
 fueillie en la maniere que ie vous dirai:  
 car iay commande que on m'y boute une  
 forte estache en terre en la moyenne de  
 la place ou le tournoy doit estre et  
 dessus une roe fueillie affin que ie

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1. Queste p. 120.

2. Vulgate Version III, p. 359.



puisse a la noble iournee veoir les nobles  
 faitz darmes...car selonc ce que ie pense  
 en mon cueur et que on men recorde ie croy  
 que cest une des nobles iournees qui fust  
 puis la destruction de Troyes.' <sup>1</sup>

The evident relish with which Pergamon watches the tournament proves that he has lost nothing of his enthusiasm for knightly deeds: "car la ou il veoit ung cheualier faire aucune prouesse le cueurluy tressailloit tout de ioye dedans le ventre."

One last example is perhaps the most telling of all. In the Prose Tristan,<sup>2</sup> Ranier l'Ermite du Bois and another hermit Gautier le Brun leave their cells, on the advice of "le maistre hermite, li bons hermite Guilielme", to defend the honour of two ladies against the accusations of their suspicious husbands. The two latter, Usantier and Guincel, are killed in single combat by the hermits who "avoient esté devant chevaliers de grant proecce." The exploit is worthy of Gauvain or Lancelot, worldly chivalry's most distinguished representatives! It is possible, therefore, to detect in these hermit-scenes, something of the same enthusiasm

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1. Perceforest I, chap. 143

2. Loeseth 293a.

for individual feats of arms and prowess which characterises the majority of knights in courtly romance.

(b) The Hermit as a denizen of the enchanted world of Logres.

What gives the hermits of Arthurian romance a certain individuality of their own is not limited, however, to the fact that they share with Arthur's chivalry the same distinction of behaviour and the same enthusiasm for chivalrous deeds. They are also fully at home amidst all the enchantments, adventures and wonders of Arthur's kingdom. The hermit's role in the Grail adventure and its more curious ramifications (e.g. the Questing Beast episode in Perlesvaus and Gerbert) is an obvious example which has already been discussed. The following paragraphs will discuss two further points relevant in this respect: firstly, the presence of Arthurian supernatural beings in the hermit-scenes and secondly, the part which the hermit is given to play as a utility-figure, who explains all the forest adventures which the knights encounter. Out of the host of minor episodes which could all adequately illustrate this second point, Arthurian tomb adventures have been chosen, partly because they constitute a fairly unified series of adventures, and

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partly because they clearly illustrate how the taste for the sensational and the supernatural, so characteristic of Arthurian romance, can transform even the traditional austerity of the hermitage scenes.

(i) The presence of supernatural beings.

The world in which the hermit lives includes all the supernatural beings so characteristic of Arthurian romance - giants, dragons, fairies, good and evil spirits. In the Prose Lancelot,<sup>1</sup> it is a hermit who explains Yvain's adventure concerning the giant Mauduit's helmet, sword and shield. The hermit in Floriant et Florete<sup>2</sup> warns the hero and heroine about a dragon, the "beste malëu", which threatens the whole surrounding countryside. In the Prophécies de Merlin,<sup>3</sup> a dragon strikes terror into the heart of a saintly hermit with whom Segurant is lodged. In Jaufré,<sup>4</sup> a hermit helps to overcome the "chevalier noir" who turns out to be an evil spirit, conjured up by the "necromancie" of a giant's mother,

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1. Vulgate Version V, pp. 129-33.

2. ed. by H. F. Williams, Ann Arbor (University of Michigan Press), 1947, 6918-24.

3. éd. par L. Paton, New York (Heath), London (Oxford), 1926-7, vol. 1, 441.

4. hgg. von Hermann Breuer, Göttingen (Niemeyer), 1925, 5270-5661.

while in the Perceforest,<sup>1</sup> a hermit chooses to remain at a particular spot to warn passing knights against the evil spirits which haunt Darnant's tomb. In Isaie le Triste, the hermit Sarban is helped by four good fairies to bring up the young Isaie:

"cele nuyt faisoit bel et cler: et luysoit  
la lune resplendemment. Si aduint que le  
preudhomme ouyt si bien chanter en la  
forest que cestoit merueilles...vit que  
lune alloit par la forest querant et apportant  
boys, la seconde alluma le feu et la tierce  
chauffoit eau et la quatriesme laua lenfant!"<sup>2</sup>

Each night they perform these tasks, and when Isaie has grown up, it is they who provide him with his horse, sword, shield and helmet.

(ii) Tomb Adventures.

The hermit, in addition, is particularly familiar with a type of adventure extremely common in Arthur's kingdom. The hermitages of Logres are frequently situated in or near a cemetery, where a particular adventure has been prepared to test the valour of passing

1. Perceforest VI, chap. I

2. B.N. Rés. Y<sup>2</sup>563, chap. III.

knights. There are examples of this in Chrétien's Chevalier de la Charrete, the First and Third Continuations, the Prose Lancelot, the Prose Tristan and the Perceforest.

In Chrétien's Chevalier de la Charrete,<sup>1</sup> Lancelot arrives at a cemetery which contains the tombs, not of dead knights, but of knights who will eventually be buried there. A hermit explains to Lancelot that whoever can lift the slab of the most impressive tomb of all, will set free the captives in the land "don n'ist ne clers ne gentilx hom/ des lore qu'il i est entrez." Lancelot raises the slab and thus reveals himself to be the predestined deliverer of the captives of Gorre.

Though no details are given, one can assume some similar form of test awaits the knights in the "vergier des aventures" mentioned in the First Continuation:

Ains lor covint a chevalchier  
 Trusqu'au vergier des aventures  
 Ou l'en les trovoit sovent dures.  
 La mengierent od les renclus,  
 Dont il i avoit cent et plus.  
 Ne me loist or pas chi a dire  
 Les merveilles del chimentire,

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1. éd. M. Roques, Paris (Champion), 1958, ll. 1837-1980.

Car si sont diverses et grans  
 Qu'il n'est hom terriens vivans  
 Qui poïst pas quidier ne croire  
 Que ce fust onques chose voire  
 Por qu'il ert fais ne establis.<sup>1</sup>

In Manessier's Continuation, a hermit explains to Perceval the significance of the magnificent tombs in a cemetery adjoining his chapel. The tombs had mysteriously appeared after the death of each successive victim of the Main Noire:

Il ne passa onques puis jour...  
 Que uns sarcus à la devise  
 A celui ki estoit finés  
 Ne fust desous l'arbre trovés  
 U il gésir le couvenoit;  
 Ensi cascun jor avenoit  
 Et a desour cascun escrit  
 Foi que je doi à Jhesucrist  
 De celui ki mors est li noms.<sup>2</sup>

Perceval's valour brings this adventure to a successful conclusion, and the Main Noire is vanquished.

1. First Continuation vol. I, ll. 9502-13.

2. Perceval le Galois vol. 5, ll. 40242-51.

In the Prose Lancelot,<sup>1</sup> Lancelot is less successful in the adventure which awaits him at his grandfather's tomb (for details, see Chapter Two, sub. Hermits in the Prose Lancelot). The hermit who explains it to him points out that he had only achieved part of the adventure, and that a better knight will come to complete it. In the Prose Tristan,<sup>2</sup> Galaad proves his valour by completing a tomb adventure, revealed to him by a hermit. He succeeds in raising the slab of a marble tomb, from which a knight emerges who has previously conquered the bravest of Arthur's men. The knight submits to Galaad without striking a blow and is immediately baptised. In the Perceforest,<sup>3</sup> a hermit has set up his cell near Darnant's tomb, to warn passing knights of the spirits which haunt the place and threaten the enemies of Darnant's lineage.

Mention might also be made of certain other tomb adventures, which do not, however, involve the testing of the knight's prowess, e.g. the opening of Josephus' tomb in the Perlesvaus (p. 263), which is recognised by hermits as a sign that the Good Knight has come; the

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1. Vulgate Version V, p. 244-p. 248.

2. Loeseth 288a.

3. Perceforest VI, chap. I.

mysterious death of Balaain's companion at a hermitage and the equally mysterious appearance of a tomb bearing an inscription which predicts the death of King Pellinor;<sup>1</sup> Dynadan's visit to a cemetery and a hermit's subsequent interpretation of what he had witnessed there.<sup>2</sup> The most impressive tomb adventure of all, however, concerns Febus' Cavern, in the Palamede,<sup>3</sup> which contains the tombs of Febus and the princess for whom he died, and the birds of silver and gold which prolong the princess's lament. R. Lathuillère draws attention to the eerie, uncanny aspects of this scene: "Ainsi, en quelques pages, l'écrivain offre aux yeux de Brehus ébloui les plus singuliers sujets d'admiration: architecture, tombeaux, arbres de métal, lits exceptionnels, oiseaux mécaniques. Les descriptions sont courtes mais précises, moins fouillées peut-être que celles de tel ou tel roman antérieur, moins surchargées aussi; elles sont surtout frappantes par l'intensité qu'elles gagnent à leur réunion. Le cadre de la caverne, le caractère insolite de l'aventure de

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1. Merlin éd. par G. Paris et J. Ulrich, Paris (SATF), 1886, vol. 2, pp. 8-12.

2. Prophécies de Merlin ed. by L. Paton, New York (Heath), London (Oxford), 1926-7, sections 223-4.

3. Loeseth 636.



Brehus, le silence sépulcral des lieux, le recueillement des ermites créent une atmosphère étrange qui concourt à leur donner un caractère plus insolite encore." <sup>1</sup> With its strange, uncanny atmosphere and the memories of adventure and love which still linger there, Febus' Cavern is indeed the most "Arthurianised" hermitage of all.

It is clear, then, that the literary presentation of the hermit involves more than the survival of traditional characteristics and motifs and a few elements of realistic observation; it includes also the same degree of fantasy, invention and imagination as pervades the whole of Arthurian romance. A stock-character has been completely "Arthurianised". It is indeed this mysterious, sensational atmosphere of many of the hermitage scenes that distinguishes the portrait of the Arthurian solitary, and would, in the context of a more general study on the hermit in mediaeval literature as a whole, endow him with a certain identity and individuality of his own.

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1. Roger Lathuillère Guiron le Courtois Genève (Droz), 1966, pp. 140-1.

## CHAPTER FOUR

LITERARY ROLE: THE HERMIT AS A DIDACTIC FIGURE

CHAPTER FOURLiterary Role: The Hermit as a Didactic Figure.

In common with most literary "genres" destined for the aristocracy of the Middle Ages, Arthurian romance reflects more than a desire to please and entertain. Some texts, for example the specifically courtly romances of Chrétien de Troyes, extol an ideal of worldly chivalry and aim at civilising the feudal warrior on a purely worldly level. These works are essentially non-christian in spirit, even though they may insist on respect for the Church and her clergy. Other romances, however, mirror the persistent efforts of clergy and laity alike to christianise the warrior-class, or rather to reintroduce the Christian faith as the essential element of the chivalric ideal. But whatever the objectives of each particular writer, to insert propaganda within the framework of the enormously popular Arthurian cycle was clearly one of the most effective ways of reaching the knights of the twelfth and thirteenth century in a language and form they could understand; it was certainly a method that was liable to have more practical results than, for example, John of

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Salisbury's scholarly treatise Policraticus (c.1159) or even the more homely, more picturesque Livre des Manières (c.1174-8) of Etienne de Fougères.<sup>1</sup> As far as specifically Christian propaganda is concerned, in Arthurian literature it is most frequently the Hermit-Saint who acts as the spokesman for each author's didactic purposes - perhaps inevitably so, since he was clearly the man of God most likely to be encountered by the knights in the course of their forest adventures. As was shown in Chapter Two, this is indeed the important role which the hermit is given to play in Chrétien's Conte du Graal, parts of the Continuations, the Didot-Perceval, the Perlesvaus, the Queste del Saint Graal and the Perceforest. In each of these works, the hermit plays the role of a didactic figure conveying to the audience each author's own conception of the proper ideals of knight-errantry. Broadly speaking, one can say that the hermit's interventions in these romances have two points in common: on the one hand, they condemn certain aspects of worldly chivalry and, on the other, they seek to inspire chivalry with specifically Christian

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1. S. Painter French Chivalry, Chivalric Ideas and Practices in Mediaeval France, Baltimore (John Hopkins), 1940, pp. 68-73.

aims and objectives. With regard to the first point, the two most important topics singled out for comment and discussion are, on the one hand, the question of indiscriminate violence, which is raised in parts of the Continuations, the Didot-Perceval and the Queste del Saint Graal, and, on the other, the sin of carnality ("luxure"), which is dealt with in the Queste and the Perlesvaus, and, to a lesser extent, in the Didot-Perceval.

#### I (a) Indiscriminate violence.

In order to put the question of indiscriminate violence into proper focus and perspective, it is important to stress, at the very outset of this discussion, that the desire to curb brutality was by no means exclusive to those who were anxious to uphold a specifically Christian ideal of knighthood. A similar concern can be seen in works of purely courtly, secular inspiration as e.g. Chrétien's Erec et Enide and Yvain. In Erec et Enide, Arthur's conception of himself as a king whose first duty is to maintain law and order,<sup>1</sup> the clear contrast drawn between the tactful, chivalrous behaviour of Gauvain and the churlish insolence of Keu, who is

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1. Erec et Enide éd. par Mario Roques, Paris (Champion), 1953, ll. 1749-58.

prepared to resort to arms at the slightest excuse, even without provocation,<sup>1</sup> Chrétien's condemnation, in the Noire Espine adventure in Yvain, of the elder daughter's attempts to assert her will by force and so reject even the King's efforts to intervene amicably<sup>2</sup> - all of this constitutes a scarcely-veiled plea for less violence and a more civilised, more humane treatment of one's fellow-men. What is new in the Hermit's interventions is, on the one hand, the condemnation of needless brutality not just as uncourtly but as unchristian as well, and on the other, the attempt to channel the use of force into the defence of Holy Church. With regard to this latter point, the ideal proposed by the hermits can indeed be paralleled, at least to some extent, with the ethos of the Chanson de Roland, where a similar identification is made between the warrior cause and that of the Cross.

The question of indiscriminate violence and brutality was already touched upon in Chapter Three, with reference to Perceval's visit to the Hermit-Uncle in the Second Continuation<sup>3</sup> and a hermit's interpretation

1. Erec et Enide éd. cit. ll. 3937-4137.

2. Yvain ed. by T.B.W. Reid, Manchester (University Press), 1961, ll. 4703-5106, 5840-6446.

3. Perceval le Galois, vol. 4, p. 202, ll. 26232-39.

of one of Gauvain's adventures in the Queste del Saint Graal.<sup>1</sup> Both episodes, it was shown, unambiguously

condemn needless homicide as unworthy of chivalry and plead for a more humane treatment of the vanquished.

In the Didot-Perceval, Perceval is given a rather similar, though briefer, warning to refrain from killing knights: "Or gardés que vous soiés preudom et vous proi que de cevalier ocire ne vos calle, mais deportés les et souffrés en maintes manieres por l'ame a la vostre mere."<sup>2</sup>

In his Continuation, Manessier inserts within the adventure of the Chapelle de la Main Noire a violent condemnation both of the search for worldly glory and the indiscriminate killing this involves. Perceval explains first of all the motives that inspire all his adventures:

'Uns chevaliers sui, sire,  
Compains de la réonde table,  
Foi ke doi Diu l'esperitable,  
Et vois errant parmi la terre  
Por pris et por honor conquerre.'  
'Honor conquerre!' - 'Voire, sire.'  
'Coment?' - 'Ce vos sai-je bien dire,

1. Queste p. 54.

2. Didot-Perceval p. 182, ll. 737-9.

Fait Pierchevaus, se Dex me voie;  
 Quant je vois ceminant ma voie  
 Por rencontrer les aventures  
 Dont je truis tel eure, et de dures,  
 A maint chevalier me combas,  
 Maint en ocis, maint en abas,  
 Et maint en ai retenu pris,  
 Ensi vois accroissant mon pris.' <sup>1</sup>

Like the hermit of the Second Continuation and the Didot-Perceval, the hermit in Manessier urges Perceval to renounce this endless round of violence and killing:

'Biaus dous amis, fait li hermites,  
 Merveilles me contés et dites,  
 Que dites ke vous aquerés,  
 En chevaliers que conquerés,  
 Honor et pris, se Dex m'ament;  
 Ains i aquerés dannement  
 A vostre arme, trestout apert,  
 Et cil ki ensi l'arme pert  
 Est, ce m'est avis, tous perdus.'  
 Moult fu Pierchevaus esperdus  
 Quant il ot oï le preudome.  
 'Sire, par saint Pière de Rome,

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1. Perceval le Galois, vol. 5, ll. 40332-46.



Fait Pierchevaus, coment ferai  
 M'arme sauver?' - 'Jel vous dirai,  
 Fait li preudom, sans plus atendre,  
 S'à vous sauver volés entendre,  
 Et ces oirres et ces venues  
 K'avés si longues maintenues,  
 Vos couvient guerpir et laissier  
 Et vostre orguel plus abaissier...  
 Cil ki la gent hocist et tue  
 Et en mal faire s'esvertue,  
 Icil conquiert, c'est cose aperte,  
 Son duel, son damage et sa perte.' <sup>1</sup>

Just before Perceval leaves, the hermit repeats this latter warning:

Et li boins preudoms, sans doutance,  
 Li encarga sa pénitance  
 Que de çou s'alast bien gardant,  
 Se ce n'est sor lui desfendant,  
 Que j'à mais home n'ocesist  
 Ne si grant pécié fesist. <sup>2</sup>

This important qualification ("se ce n'est sor lui desfendant") makes it clear that violence itself and the

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1. Perceval le Galois vol. 5, ll. 40347-66, 40379-82.

2. *ibid.* ll. 40405-10.

use of arms are not ruled out completely - it is needless brutality alone that is outrightly condemned.

This distinction between permissible and reprehensible violence is made even clearer in Gerbert's Continuation, particularly in the Hermit-Uncle's outline of the proper code of conduct for the knight-errant. According to him, it is the knight's task to defend Holy Church and uphold justice, if need be by force of arms.

'Il a l'espee as deus taillans;  
 Savez por coi? On doit entendre  
 Que l'uns taillans est por desfendre  
 Sainte Eglise, sachiez de voir;  
 En l'autre taillant doit avoir  
 Droite justice terriene  
 Por garder la gent crestiene  
 Et por tenir droite justiche  
 Sans trichier et sans covoitise.  
 Mais li taillans est depechiez  
 De Sainte Eglise, ce sachiez,  
 Et li trenchans terriens taille.  
 Chascuns chevaliers taut et taille  
 Les povres homes et raient  
 Sans che qu'il ne lor mesfont nient.

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De cele part est trop trichans  
 L'espee et cil est Dieu trichans  
 Qui tele espee avec lui porte.  
 De Paradis li est la porte  
 Fermee, s'il ne s'en amende.  
 Biaux dols amis, Dieus vous desfende,  
 Dist l'ermites, de tele espee  
 Dont vostre ame soit encorpee.'<sup>1</sup>

At another hermitage a solitary makes the same point:

'Dix ne fist mie chevalier  
 Por gent tuer ne grevoier  
 Mais por tenir droite iustise  
 Et por deffendre Sainte Eglise.'<sup>2</sup>

A practical example of this aspect of the knight's role is given in an earlier episode (Gerbert vol. 2, pp.7-18) in which a hermit is quite prepared to assist Perceval arm for combat (l. 7265) against Dragoniaus li Cruels, who had tried to force a girl to marry him against her will. Once again the use of arms to protect what is right is clearly seen to be perfectly legitimate; once again what is roundly condemned as unworthy of true chivalry is the needless violence to which the Arthurian

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1. Gerbert ll. 2764-2786.

2. B.N. ms. fr. 12576, f<sup>o</sup> 215e.

heroes sometimes resort.

All of these examples, then, reflect a persistent effort to denounce homicide and the horrors of indiscriminate brutality. The hermit's role in these episodes is clearly designed to direct the martial energies of the warrior class into acceptable channels, such as self-defence, the protection of Holy Church and the maintenance of social justice. To judge by these episodes, however, the fact that the hermit intervenes so frequently to urge knights to refrain from needless killing would suggest that violence was not always contained within these bounds, but was still deeply-rooted in the social structure and the whole mentality of the age. Despite the "Peace" and the "Truce of God", something of the turbulent spirit of Raoul de Cambrai seems to have been very much alive in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, constituting a formidable and ever-present problem for all who would civilise the bellicose tendencies of the mediaeval baron.

#### I (b) The sin of carnality ("luxure").

The second most important topic singled out for

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criticism is the sin of carnality ("luxure"). The persistent denunciation of this particular sin in the literature of the Grail can be related partly to the prestige of the semi-monastic military Orders, which were vowed to celibacy, such as the Templars and the Hospitallers, and partly, in the case of the Queste, to the specific influence of the Cistercian Order; but, more importantly, it should be seen as part of the inevitable reaction which took place against the cult of courtly love ("fin' amors"). It is on this point, on the question of sexual love, that the wide divergence between courtly and Christian chivalry is seen at its clearest. For the courtly, physical love and the worship of woman is the highest joy mortal man can hope to experience; for the hermits of romance, however, this claim is seen as blasphemy and for them at least one point seems perfectly clear; as far as "luxure" is concerned no compromise is possible. On the question of violence the hermits had been prepared to compromise, even to the point of justifying the use of arms under certain conditions. With regard to "luxure" they adopt a more intransigent attitude which makes compromise impossible. The hermits of the Didot-Perceval, the Perlesvaus and the Queste are all

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unanimous in their denunciations. In the Didot-Perceval the topic is only touched upon in passing: Ms D includes a warning against "Luxure", as well as the hermit's admonition to avoid killing: "Mes je vos coment que de chevalier ocire ne vos chaille, ne de gesir avec fame quar c'est un peché luxurios" (ll. 713-4). In the Perlesvaus and the Queste, by contrast, the authors go out of their way to insist that only the chaste knight will be deemed worthy of achieving the Grail adventure.

In the Perlesvaus, it is above all in the hermit-scenes involving Lancelot that carnality is condemned. One of the best knights of the Table Round but hopelessly caught up in his adulterous love for Queen Guinevere, Lancelot was clearly an obvious choice for any discussion of the sins of the flesh. The two most important hermit-episodes in which he is involved are to be found immediately before and after his visit to the Grail Castle.<sup>1</sup>

As he approaches the Fisher King's Castle Lancelot decides to confess his sins at a hermitage:

Il descendi et se confessa au prodome et  
jehi toz ses pechiez, et li dist que de toz

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1. Perlesvaus pp. 167-9, p. 175.

estoit repentanz fors que d'un. Li hermites li demanda  
 quel pechié ce estoit dont il ne se voloit repentir.

'Sire, fait Lanceloz, ce me senble estre li plus dous  
 pechiez et li plus beaus que je onques feïsse. - Beau  
 sire, fait li hermites, li pechié sunt douz a faire,  
 mais li guerredons est molt amers, ne nul pechiez n'est  
 beax ne cortois, mais li uns pechiez est plus orible de  
 l'autre. - Sire, fait Lanceloz, icel pechié vos jehirai  
 je hors de la boche dont je ne puis estre repentanz el  
 cuer. Je aim bien ma dame, qui roïne est, plus que  
 nulle rien qui vive, et si l'a .i. des meillors rois  
 del mont a fame. La volenté me senble si bone et si  
 haute que je ne la puis lessier, et si m'est enracinee  
 el cuer qu'el ne s'en puet partir. La gregnor valor  
 qui est en moi si me vient par la volenté. - Ha!  
 pechierres mortex, fet li hermites, c'avez vos dit?  
 Nule valor ne puet venir de tel luxore qui ne li soit  
 vendue molt chiere. Vos estes traïtres a vostre segnor  
 terrien et omecides au Sauveor. Vos avez des .vii.  
 pechiez criminex l'un des gregnors enchargié; li  
 deduiz en est molt faux, si le conperrez molt chier se  
 vos n'en estes repentanz hastivement. - Sire, fet  
 Lanceloz, onques mes ne la voil gehir a nul home terrien.  
 - Tant vaut pis, fet li hermites. Vos le deüssiez

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avoir gehi pieça et tantost lessié, car tant com vos le maintenez serez vos enemis au Sauveor. - Ha! sire, fet Lanceloz, il a tant de beauté en lui et valor et sens et cortoisie que nus que ele vousist amer ne le devroit lessier. - Que plus a en lui beauté et que plus vaut, fet li hermites, tant fet ele plus a blasmer et vos autresi, car chose ou il a poi de valor n'est ce pas si granz damages comme de celui qui doit assez valoir, et ceste est roïne benoete et sacree, si fu voee en son commencement a Deu. Or s'est donee au deable por vostre amor et vos por lui. Sire chiers amis, lessiez ceste folie que vos avez emprise, si soiez repentanz de cel pechié, et je proierai au Sauveor por vos chascun jor, que si veralement com il pardona sa mort a celui qui le feri de la lance ou costé, vos perdonst icel pechié que vos avez maintenu, se vos estes repentanz et verais confés; si en prendré la penitance sor moi. - Sire fet Lanceloz, granz merciz de deu. Je ne sui mie entalentez de guerpier le, ne je ne vos voil dire chose a coi li cuers ne s'acort... Ha! beax douz amis, fet li hermites, nule rien ne vos vaurroit ce que je diroie, et Damedeu li doinst tel volenté et a vos autresi que vos puissiez fere le plesir au Sauveor et les ames sauver; mes itant vos di

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je bien, se vos gesiez en l'ostel au riche  
 Roi Pescheor, que del Graal ne verriez vos  
 mie, por le mortel pechié qui vos gist ou  
 cuer.' <sup>1</sup>

Lancelot's spirited defense of his love, then, is met by an equally eloquent denunciation on the part of the hermit, and an assurance that this mortal sin will prevent him from achieving the Grail adventure. Lancelot remains unrepentant, and after his inevitable failure at the Grail Castle (the Grail itself fails to appear) the Hermit-King confirms that it was his attachment to Guinevere that brought him to grief in the Grail quest:

'Se vos fussiez en si grant desierier  
 longuement de voer le Graal conme vos  
 estes de la roïne, vos l'eüssiez veü.' <sup>2</sup>

Through the hermit's interventions, then, Lancelot's adulterous relationship with Guinevere is severely and firmly denounced. Though he himself is still treated with respect as one of the greatest of Arthur's knights, his mortal sin, together with his persistent refusal to repent, disqualify him in advance of any hope of success

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1. Perlesvaus ll. 3649-3684, 3688-93.

2. *ibid.* ll. 3861-64.

in the Grail adventure. As the Hermit-King points out in a later episode, when explaining to Perceval why Lancelot and Gauvain had failed to enter the Turning Castle, chastity is the all-important virtue: "Beau niés, se il fuserent ausi chaste com vos estes, il i fuserent entrez, car il sont li mellor chevalier dou monde, s'il ne fuserent luxurios." <sup>1</sup>

In the Queste del Saint Graal, the hermits' denunciation of the sin of carnality is apparent not only in their treatment of Lancelot, but also in the prologue which opens the romance. The author's particular conception of the Grail adventure is made perfectly clear in the opening pages. From the start, chivalry has for its guide the ascetic figure of the hermit-saint. Just before Arthur's knights set out on the Grail quest, "uns preudom vielz" arrives and delivers to the assembled court a message from the hermit Nascien, a mysterious personage about whom no details are given, but whose injunctions the court feel compelled to obey:

'Oiez, seignor chevalier de la Table Reonde  
qui avez juree La Queste del Saint Graal!  
Ce vos mande par moi Nascienz li hermites  
que nus en ceste Queste ne maint dame ne

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1. Perlesvaus ll. 6046-48.

damoisele qu'il ne chiee en pechié mortel;  
 ne nus n'i entre qui ne soit confés ou qui  
 n'aille a confesse, car en si haut servise  
 ne doit entrer devant qu'il soit netoiez  
 et espurgiez de totes vilanies et de toz  
 pechiés mortex. Car ceste Queste n'est  
 mie queste de terriennes choses, ainz doit  
 estre li encerchemenz des grans secrez et  
 des privetez Nostre Seignor et des grans  
 repostailles que li Hauz Mestres mostrera  
 apertement au boneuré chevalier qu'il a  
 esleu a son serjant entre les autres  
 chevaliers terriens, a qui il mostrera les  
 granz merveilles dou Saint Graal, et fera  
 veoir ce que cuers mortex ne porroit  
 penser ne langue d'ome terrien deviser.<sup>1</sup>  
 Par ceste parole remest que nus ne mena o  
 soi ne sa fame ne s'amie. <sup>1</sup>

As well as clearly establishing the general spiritual  
 basis of the Queste, Nascien's message suggests more  
 particularly a certain hierarchy of moral values which,  
 it is clear, are in direct contrast to those put forward  
 by the romances of courtly love. Nascien's specific

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1. Queste p. 19.

injunction ("que nus en ceste Queste ne maint dame ne damoisele qu'il ne chiee en pechié mortel") to a large extent equates moral goodness with chastity and evil with "luxure", sexual love. "C'est dès le début du récit", as Pauphilet points out, "comme un renversement des valeurs, comme un bouleversement du monde romanesque."<sup>1</sup> Nascien's message of austerity and self-denial, calling on chivalry itself to imitate the ideals of the eremitical life, serves, therefore, as an important explanatory prelude to the Queste as a whole. It is of further interest to note that Nascien's message is addressed to all of Arthur's assembled knights. No longer is the Quest for the Grail to be reserved for one particular hero. Chivalry as a whole is being called upon to avoid "luxure" and embark on a collective pilgrimage of piety and self-denial. The "renversement des valeurs" of which Pauphilet speaks is to affect the entire kingdom of Logres.

As was the case in the Perlesvaus, it is inevitably to Lancelot that the hermits address all their reproaches during the Quest itself. In contrast to his role in the Perlesvaus, however, Lancelot is presented

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1. Pauphilet Etudes sur la Queste del Saint Graal, Paris (Champion) 1921, p. 17.

in the Queste as a repentant sinner, put forward by the author not just as a warning but as an encouragement to the reader.<sup>1</sup> Where the hermits of the Perlesvaus simply denounce "luxure", the hermits of the Queste express their abhorrence of sexual love but are more eloquent in their attempt to secure Lancelot's repentance; indeed the whole question of "luxure" is treated in a much more extensive and thorough-going way. Each of Lancelot's sojourns at three separate hermitages (pp. 62-71, 115-7, 118-129, 132-140) and his visit to a recluse's chapel (pp. 142-5) indicates indeed a separate stage of Lancelot's journey from sin through conversion and penitance to moral restoration.

Lancelot's visit to the first hermitage comes immediately after his humiliation in a chapel, where he witnesses the healing of a knight by the Holy Grail but sleeps through the miracle and is unable to move. In the chapel Lancelot hears a voice accusing him of being harder than stone, more bitter than wood, and barer than the fig-tree. The voice then commands Lancelot to depart, as his presence was a desecration of this holy

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1. For this interpretation of Lancelot's role, see F. Whitehead Lancelot's Redemption in Mélanges Delbouille Gembloux (Editions J. Duculot), 1964, vol. 2, pp. 729-39.

place. This humiliation, however, marks the beginning of Lancelot's restoration; for it forces upon him an awareness of his sinfulness:

Et lors comence un duel grant et merueilleux,  
et se clame chaitif dolent et dit: 'Ha! Diex,  
or i pert mes pechiez et ma mauvese vie. Or  
voi je bien que ma chetivetez m'a confondu  
plus que nule autre chose. Car quant je me  
deusse amender, lors me destruit li anemis,  
qui m'a si tolue la veue que je ne pui veoir  
chose qui de par Dieu soit. Et ce n'est mie  
de merveille se je ne puis veoir cler: car  
des lors que je fui primes chevaliers ne fu  
il hore que je ne fusse coverz de teniebres  
de pechié mortel, car tout adés ai habité en  
luxure, et en la vilté de cest monde plus que  
nus autres.' <sup>1</sup>

To the first hermit is due the merit of overcoming Lancelot's final hesitations and leading him to a full confession of his sins.

The hermit's exposition of God's severity (he repeats to Lancelot the parable of the talents) is followed by a

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1. Queste pp. 61-62.

reminder of God's mercy as shown in the Crucified Christ, and an assurance that no sinner can ever cut himself off completely from God's grace. Lancelot is at last brought to confessing his relationship with Guinevere:

'Sire, fet Lancelot, il est einsi que je  
sui morz de pechié d'une moie dame que je  
ai amee toute ma vie, et ce est la reine  
Guenievre, la fame le roi Artus. Ce est  
cele qui a plenté m'a doné l'or et  
l'argent et les riches dons que je ai  
aucune foiz donez as povres chevaliers.  
Ce est cele qui m'a mis ou grant boban et  
en la grant hautece ou je sui. Ce est  
cele por qui amor j'ai faites les granz  
proeces dont toz li mondes parole. Ce est  
cele qui m'a fet venir de povreté en  
richece et de mesaise a toutes les  
terriannes beneurtez. Mes je sai bien  
que par cest pechié de li s'est Nostre  
Sires si durement corociez a moi qu'il le  
m'a bien montré puis ersoir.' <sup>1</sup>

Lancelot follows up this confession with an assurance to the hermit that he will renounce his love for the Queen,

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1. Queste p. 66.

and avoid any relationship with women:

'Dont vos requier je, fet li preudons, que  
vos me creantez que ja mes ne mefferoiz a  
vostre creator en fesant pechié mortel de  
la reine ne d'autre dame ne d'autre chose  
dont vos le doiez corrocier.'

Et il li creante come loiaux chevaliers.<sup>1</sup>

Partly in the light of scripture (reference is made to the rock from which Moses drew water in the wilderness, - Exodus 17, 1-6, the parable of the talents - St. Matthew 25, 14-31, and Christ's curse of the fig-tree - Mark 11, 20-22, Matthew 21, 19) the hermit goes on to expound the significance of the accusation Lancelot had heard in the chapel. Its implications are clear: up till now Lancelot has led the life of a hardened sinner, his heart empty of pity, goodness and truth. It is made clear by the hermit, therefore, that there is a direct, causal relationship between Lancelot's adulterous love for the Queen and his failure in the Quest. Lancelot is now fully resolved to renounce his former way of life:

'Mes por ce que vos m'avez dit que je  
n'ai mie encore tant alé que je ne  
puisse retorner, se je me vueil garder  
de renchaoir en pechié mortel, creant je

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1. *ibid.* p. 67.



premierement a Dieu et a vos après que ja  
mes a la vie que je ai menee si longuement  
ne retornerai, ainz tendrai chastée et  
garderai mon cors au plus netement que je  
porrai.' <sup>1</sup>

As proof of his penitance, Lancelot agrees to stay some time at the hermitage, and share in the austerities of the hermit's life. Before he leaves, he (and the reader) are once again reminded - in terms rather similar to those used by Nascien in the prologue - of the purely spiritual nature of the Quest and of the necessity of avoiding sin:

'Car cist servises ou vos estes entrez  
n'apartient de riens as terrianes choses,  
mes as celestiex; dont vos poez veoir que,  
qui i velt entrer et venir a perfection  
d'aucune chose, il li covient avant  
espurgier et netoier de totes ordures  
terrianes, si que li anemis ne parte en  
lui de nule chose. En tel maniere, quant  
il avra dou tout renoié l'anemi et il sera  
netoiez et mondez de toz pechiez mortielx,  
lors porra il seurement entrer en cest

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1. Queste pp. 70-71.

haute Queste et en cest haut servise.' <sup>1</sup>

Unlike Lancelot in the Perlesvaus, the Lancelot of the Queste has clearly shown his willingness to heed these admonitions.

Lancelot's visit to the second hermitage confirms and strengthens the resolution which he had expressed in the first. He listens patiently as the hermit contrasts his present condition with his life before he met Guinevere, and shows how his adulterous passion had caused all his former virtues (virginity, humility, long-suffering, justice and charity) to be replaced by their contrary vices:

'Quant tu veïsqu'ele te resgarda, si i pensas; et maintenant te feri li anemis d'un de ses darz a descovert, si durement qu'il te fist chanceler. Chanceler te fist il, si qu'il te fist guenchir fors de droite voie et entrer en cele que tu n'avoies onques coneue: ce fu en la voie de luxure, ce fu en la voie qui gaste cors et ame si merveilleusement que nus nel puet tres bien savoir qui essaié ne

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1. Queste p. 116.

l'a. Des lors te toli li anemis la veue.  
 Car si tost come tu eus tes eulz eschaufez  
 de l'ardor de luxure, maintenant enchaças  
 humilité et atresis orgueil et vousis aler  
 teste levee ausi fierement come un lyon,  
 et deis en ton cuer que tu ne devoies  
 riens prisier ne ne priserioies ja mes, se  
 tu n'avoies ta volenté de cele que tu  
 veoies si bele. Quant li anemis, qui ot  
 toutes les paroles si tost come la langue  
 les ot dites, conut que tu pechoies  
 mortelment en pensee et en volenté, si  
 entra lors toz dedenz toi, et en fist aler  
 celui que tu avoies si longuement ostelé.'

(pp. 125-6.)

There follows an admonition to good works, presented in an exposition of the parable of the wedding-feast (Matthew 23, 1-14), the good knights who will sit at the Grail Table being compared to those with wedding-garments, the sinners with the man who was cast out into darkness. As proof of his continuing endeavour, Lancelot shares in the austere life of the hermitage (p. 128, ll. 1-3), promises to forego meat and wine for the duration of the

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Quest, and to confess every week; more important, he accepts to wear next to his skin a hair-shirt which had formerly belonged to a hermit martyred by his enemies: "Puis prent la haire, qui mout estoit aspre et poignant, et la met en son dos et vest sa robe par dessus." (p.129). Nothing could better answer Nascien's original call to austerity and self-denial than this outward sign of Lancelot's inner restoration.

This regeneration is continued in Lancelot's encounter with the third hermit. Though Lancelot has seen himself rejected by God in a vision which the hermit explains to him, he refuses to give himself over to despair (pp. 132-140). Significantly too, the hermit does not feel it necessary to follow up his explanation with words of reproof or condemnation: he restricts himself to words of comfort and reassurance. Lancelot's continuing moral restoration is further reflected in the fact that he no longer desires worldly ease: he now finds spiritual satisfaction in the austerities of the hermitage:

Et quant il orent mengié, li preudons fist  
Lancelot couchier sus l'erbe, come cil qui  
autre lit n'avoit apareillié. Et il se  
dormi assez bien, come cil qui las estoit

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et traveilliez, et ne baoit pas tant a la  
 grant aise del monde come il soloit. Car  
 s'il i baast, il n'i dormist ja mes, por  
 la terre qui trop ert dure et por la  
 haire qui ert aspre et poignant emprés sa  
 char. Mes il est ore a ce menez que  
 ceste mesese et ceste durté li plest tant  
 et embelist qu'il n'essaia onques mes  
 riens qui tant li pleust. Et por ce ne  
 li grieve riens qu'il face. (p. 139).

The final episode which is relevant here, Lancelot's visit to the recluse, brings him to a full knowledge of himself and of his sinful past. This episode is preceded by a symbolic tournament, in which Lancelot intervenes on the side of the knights in black armour against those in white. Lancelot is captured and can only be released by doing the will of his conquerors, he laments his defeat and attributes it to his own sinfulness (p. 141, ll. 21-24). He is subsequently warned in a vision that he is now in spiritual danger of falling into the "parfont puis dont nus ne retorne". The significance of both the tournament and the vision are then explained to Lancelot by a recluse. The tournament symbolises the Quest, undertaken by both pure and impure

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knights, while the vision proved that Lancelot had displeased God by the lack of trust he had shown when he lamented his defeat. He had simply failed to see in the latter the hand of Providence at work. The recluse therefore warns him that, if he falls from grace in this way again, his life will end "en pardurable peine, ce est en enfer". Having learnt the necessity of complete surrender to God, Lancelot can now persevere in his journey of spiritual recovery.

These four episode, then, though they do not exhaust the author's elaboration of Lancelot's moral regeneration, are clearly crucial to it. This restoration, it is true, remains incomplete, as a later episode will make clear (pp. 253-261): Lancelot will be granted only a partial and fleeting vision of the Grail mysteries. It is equally true, however, that this vision - incomplete and imperfect as it is - is also the consecration of the hermits' spiritual admonitions and Lancelot's undoubted moral progress. It is clear that at the Grail Castle he enjoys a spiritual privilege to which the Lancelot of the Perlesvaus could never hope to aspire. The part which the hermit has to play in this pilgrimage from sin to imperfect sainthood could be summed up in the

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words of the recluse of the last episode:

'Mes maintenant te pristrent li preudome,  
li hermite, les religieuses persones qui  
te mistrent en la voie Nostre Seignor,  
qui est pleine de vie et de verdor ausi  
come la forest estoit. Si te conseillarent  
ce qui t'estoit profitable a l'ame.' (p. 145).<sup>1</sup>

And what is put forward to Lancelot (and to the reader) as "profitable a l'ame" is above all the avoidance of "luxure", by which the author clearly understands not only adultery, but sexual love as a whole.

## 2. Christian Chivalry.

If some of the romances are at one in condemning certain aspects of worldly chivalry, they show considerable variation as to the actual positive content of the ideals of conduct which they propose to knight-errantry. It is true, of course, that they all attempt to promote a fusion of religion and chivalry, but this fusion can take many forms, and each romance gives a different emphasis, a different weight to this or that aspect of the Christian faith. Because of this, it is of prime importance that the main romances be considered individually and on their own terms. Only in this way can one hope to ascertain

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1. See Appendix Fig. 2a and Fig. 6.

the exact spirit of each work, and measure the differences of outlook between one romance and another.

The point of departure is the hermit's admonitions to Perceval in the Good Friday episode of Chrétien's Conte du Graal. After Perceval's confession and the explanation of his failure at the Grail Castle, the hermit goes on to exhort Perceval to Christian duty:

'Vairs est, biax nierz, mais or entent:

Se de t'ame pitié te prent,

Si aies vraie repentance,

Et va en non de penitance

Al mostier ainz qu'en autre leu .

Chascun main, si i avras preu;

Ja nel laissier tu por nul plait.

Se tu iez en liu ou il ait

Mostier, chapele ne parroche,

Va i quant sonera la closche

Ou ançois, se tu iez levez;

Ja de che ne seras grevez,

Ainz en iert molt t'ame avanchie.

Et se la messe est comenchie,

Tant i fera il meillor estre,

Tant i demeure que li prestre

Avra tot dit et tot chanté.

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Se che te vient a volenté,  
 Encor porras monter en pris,  
 S'avras honor et paradis.  
 Dieu aime, Dieu croi, Dieu aeure,  
 Preudome et preudefeme honeure,  
 Contre les provoires te lieve;  
 C'est uns services qui peu grieve,  
 Et Diex l'aime par verité  
 Por che qu'il vient d'umelité.  
 Se pucele aide te quiert,  
 Aiue li, que miex t'en iert,  
 Ou veve dame ou orfenine.  
 Icestes almosne est enterine,  
 Aiue lor, si feras bien;  
 Garde ja nel laissier por rien.  
 Ce weil que por tes pechiez faces,  
 Se ravoit veus totes tes graces  
 Issi com tu avoir les seus.  
 Or me di se faire le vels.'  
 -'Oïl, sire, molt volentiers.' <sup>1</sup>

The hermit's counsels in these lines - daily attendance  
 at mass, the importance of not leaving the church till

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1. Le Roman de Perceval ou le Conte du Graal éd. par  
 W. Roach Genève (Droz) et Lille (Giard), 1956,  
 ll. 6439-6475.

divine service is over, his appeal to Perceval to love God, to honour men and women, to show respect towards priests, to help maidens, widows or orphans in distress - suggest the kind of fusion of religion and chivalry envisaged by Chrétien. The religious counsels are of a fairly elementary kind, and are designed to impress on Perceval no more than the basic truths of the catechism. Perceval's uncle never once suggests that he should permanently take up his own way of life - he suggests later that Perceval should simply stay with him two more days, to give further proof of his conversion. In other words, the ideals of conduct put forward by the hermit in no way involve renunciation of the world. As Frappier points out,<sup>1</sup> "la règle morale et religieuse qui est recommandée à Perceval est simplement celle d'une chevalerie très pieuse vivant dans le siècle."

In the Perlesvaus, by contrast, one can trace the emergence of a more austere, more ascetic and more militant note. The episode which opens this romance, Arthur's pilgrimage to a hermit's chapel in Wales, is designed to stress the importance of true repentance,

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1. Perceval ou le Conte du Graal Cours de Sorbonne, 2e éd. 1961, pp. 79-80.

while throughout the Quest the hermits are at pains to draw constant contrasts between Perceval's chastity and the worldliness of his comrades-in-arms. Chastity, they proclaim, is the only criterion which will ensure success in the Grail adventure. More important, however, than the author's concern to stress the need for individual spiritual perfection is his militant appeal for collective service in the cause of Holy Church. It is to this second topic, the spreading of the Christian faith, that the author devotes most of his attention throughout the romance, and particularly in the hermit-episodes involving Arthur and Perlesvaus.

The author's militant spirit is evident from the very outset of the romance, in the admonishments which the hermit addresses to Arthur in Saint Austin's Chapel. The hermit accuses Arthur of having allowed his court to fall into disrepute, and urges him to redeem himself - but with a specific purpose in mind:

'Car vos estes li plus riches rois du  
mont e li plus poissanz e li plus  
aventurex, si devroit a vos toz li  
mondes prendre essamples de bien fere  
e de largesse e d'oneur: e vos estes

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li essanples de vilenie fere a toz les  
riches homes qui ore sont. Si vos en  
mescharra molt durement, se vos ne  
remetez vostre afere o point o vos  
l'aviez commencié; car vostre corz  
estoit la souverainne de totes les corz,  
e la plus aventureuse; or est la pis  
vaillanz... Dex vos lest vostre vie  
amender en bien, dist li sainz hermites,  
ainsi que vos puissiez edier e essaucier  
la Loi qui est renovelee par la mort du  
Saint Prophete.' (p. 37).

The hermit, then, urges Arthur to mend his ways, so that he may better qualify himself for the spreading of the Christian faith: his words indeed suggest that the Quest of the Grail will be a kind of Holy War, waged in the service of Christianity.

But against whom? Perlesvaus' sojourn at the hermitage of his uncle, Pelles the Hermit-King, is one of a number of episodes which clarify this point for the reader. During his stay at the hermitage, the Hermit-King gives Perlesvaus a full explanation of his recent adventures, with a view to underlining their spiritual

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significance. The hermit explains, first of all, the adventure of the Questing Beast, torn to pieces near a cross by twelve hounds within her. The Beast, reveals the hermit, signifies Our Lord, while the twelve hounds represent the Jews of the "Old Law", who were responsible for His Crucifixion and Death:

'La beste qui simple e debonaire estoit,  
 en qui li .xii. chien glatisoient, senefie  
 Nostre Seignor, e li .xii. chien les Juïs  
 de la Viex Loi, que Dex cria e fist a sa  
 samblance, e quant il les ot crïez il vout  
 savoir combien il l'amoient...  
 Beau nies, li .xii. chien ce sont li Juïs  
 que Dex a norriz, e qui nasquirent en la  
 loi qu'il establi, ne onques ne le voudrent  
 croire ne amer; ainz le crucefierent e  
 depechierent son cors au plus vilainement  
 qu'il porent...Li chien qui s'en fuïrent e  
 devinrent sauvage quant il orent la beste  
 depechie, ce sont li Juïs, qui sauvage sunt  
 e ierent d'ore en avant. - Beaus oncles,  
 fait Perlesvaus, il est bien droiz que il  
 aient mal guerredon, puis que il crucefierent

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celui qui les avoit faiz. (ll. 5984-7,  
5999-6002, 6004-8).

It is against the Jews, then, that Perlesvaus must direct all his energies as a Christian knight.

A rather broader interpretation is given of Perlesvaus' victory over the Knight of the Burning Dragon, his adventure at the Turning Castle and his impending conquest of the Grail Castle: the hermit's gloss is designed to uphold the supremacy of the New Law, not only with regard to the Jews, but with regard to heretics and unbelievers as well. All of these adventures, the hermit points out, are to be seen as victories for the Christian faith: "'Beau niés, vos avez, eu tans de vostre chevalerie, mout avanchie la loi au Sauveor, car vos avez destruis la plus fause creance qui fust ou monde'" (ll. 6048-10).

In addition to these two main episodes, Arthur's Pilgrimage to Saint Austin's Chapel and the Hermit-King's interpretation of Perlesvaus' adventures, a host of minor hermit-episodes betray the same zeal to see the spread of Christianity. A hermit named Denise baptises the unbelievers who survive Perlesvaus' capture of the Copper Bull (pp. 256-7), Perlesvaus' victory over the Black

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Hermit (pp. 401-3) and the taking of his castle is likened to the Harrowing of Hell,<sup>1</sup> the hermits of the forest sing mass at the Grail chapel and Arthur is initiated by them in the use of the chalice and bell in Christian worship (p. 305), a hermit baptises the mistress of Chastel Enragié (p. 373), the heathen Queen, Jandree, is converted, given the appropriate name of Salubre, and ends her days in a hermitage (p. 379), hermits are called upon to guard the relics of the Grail chapel after Perlesvaus' departure for the Other World (p. 407).

Throughout the romance, then, the hermits of the Perlesvaus are concerned first and foremost to impress the fundamentals of Christian belief on unbelievers, heretics and Jews of the "Old Law". Whether one prefers, with Helen Adolf,<sup>2</sup> to relate the author's militancy to the Albigensian Crusade or, with Margaret Schlauch,<sup>3</sup> to the elaborate disputations between

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1. J. Neale Carman The Symbolism of the Perlesvaus, Publications of the Modern Language Association of America 61 1946, pp. 42-3.
  2. Studies in the Perlesvaus, the historical background, Studies in Philology, 42, 1945, pp. 723-40.
  3. The Allegory of Church and Synagogue Speculum, 14, 1939, pp. 448-64.

Synagogue and Church in the Middle Ages, there can be little doubt that the Perlesvaus reflects contemporary crusading ardour. The Grail quest itself is seen as a ruthless war of extermination in which the hero's career as Jessie Weston points out, "is marked by hecatombs of slaughtered pagans",<sup>1</sup> Each of the hermit's interventions amounts to no less than a summons to the active Christian life and a militant glorification of the "New Law".

Quite different is the spirit of the Queste del Saint Graal. Fired by a crusading zeal, the hermits of the Perlesvaus urged militant action against the enemies of Christendom. For the hermits of the Queste, by contrast, the real area of conflict lies not on the field of battle, but within the soul of each individual man. It is there, a hermit points out to Bohort, that the universal struggle between Good and Evil, between God and Satan really takes place: "car ce que (l'homme) fet de bien li vient de la grace et del conseil dou Saint Esperit, et ce qu'il fet de mal li vient de l'enticement a l'anemi." (p. 165). As Nascien's

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1. Quest of the Holy Grail London, (Bell and Sons), 1913, p.22.



injunctions and the hermits' treatment of Lancelot have already made clear, "l'enticeement a l'anemi" means primarily the spirit of "luxure". Correspondingly, the virtue that the hermits relentlessly extol is chastity, the one prerequisite for success in the Grail adventure. It is no accident, therefore, that in the hierarchy of virtues which a hermit draws up for Lancelot, chastity comes first of all:

'Car devant ce que tu fusses chevaliers  
avoies tu en toi herbergiees toutes les  
bones vertuz si naturelment que je ne  
sai juene home qui polst estre tes pareuz.  
Car tout premierement avoies tu virginité  
herbergiee en toi si naturelment qu'  
onques ne l'avoies enfrainte ne en volenté  
ne en oevre. Solement en volenté ne  
l'avoies tu pas enfrainte; car maintes  
foiz avint que quant tu pensoies a la  
viuté de la colpe charnel en quoi  
virginitez est corrompue, tu escopissoies  
en despit et disoies que ja en ceste  
maleurté ne charroies.' (p. 123).

The recluse's exhortations to Perceval are inspired

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by the same spirit of renunciation and self-denial:

'Biax niés, il est einsi que vos vos estes  
gardez jusque a cest terme en tel maniere  
que vostre virginitez ne fu maumise ne  
empoiriee, ne onques ne seustes de voir  
quex chose est chars ne assemblemenz. Et  
il vos en est bien mestiers; car se tant  
vos fust avenu que vostre chars fust  
violee par corruption de pechié, a estre  
principaus compains des compaignons de la  
Queste eussiez vos failli, ausi come a fet  
Lancelot del Lac qui, par eschaufement de  
char et par sa mauvese luxure, a perdu a  
mener a fin, grant tens a, ce dont tuit li  
autre sont ores en peine. Et por ce vos  
pri je que vos gardez vostre cors si net  
come Nostre Sires vos mist en chevalerie,  
si que vos puissiez venir virges et nez  
devant le Saint Graal et sans tache de  
luxure. Et certes ce sera une des plus  
beles proeces que onques chevaliers feist...'  
Tout le jor demora laienz Perceval et mout  
le chastia sa tante et amonesta de bien fere.

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Mes sor toutes choses li pria ele que il  
 gardast sa char si netement come il le  
 devoit fere, et il li creanta que si  
 feroit il. (p. 80).<sup>1</sup>

A similar glorification of chastity is implied too in one of the final hermit-episodes of the romance. The three elect knights, Galaad, Perceval and Bohort, follow a stag and four lions into a hermitage and witness their transformation respectively into a man, an eagle, a lion and an ox, all of which are winged. The hermit explains to them that by the transformation of the stag is signified Christ's death, while the four lions symbolise the four evangelists. What is more important, however, is that the miracle which the three are privileged to witness is a sign of the consecration of the three elect of the Quest:

'Or sai je bien, a ce que vos me dites,  
 que vos estes des preudomes, des vrais  
 chevaliers qui la Queste dou Saint Graal  
 menront a fin, et qui soffreroiz les  
 granz peines et les granz travaux. Car  
 vos estes cil a qui Nostre Sires a  
 mostrez ses secrez et ses repostailles.' (p. 235).

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1. See Appendix Fig. 1b and Fig. 5.

The knights' visit to this hermitage is clearly not an occasion for reproof or condemnation, but for a vision which is a reward for their endeavour and a prelude to the ecstatic visions to come. Perseverance in chastity, the episode suggests, will reap its own rewards.

The Queste, then, firmly equates moral goodness and purification with chastity alone. All the other virtues that are extolled (humility, long-suffering, justice, charity, and the tolerant treatment of the vanquished) are important but secondary to it. As Pauphilet points out, these virtues "complètent la perfection des âmes, elles ne la déterminent pas."<sup>1</sup> This conception of the chivalric ideal, which sees the knight as the soldier of Christ, dedicated to rigorous mortification of the flesh and caught up in endless battles, not against the heretic or the unbeliever, but against the enemies which war against the soul, is clearly one that is more austere, more ascetic, more uncompromising than any put forward by the previous Grail romances. In the Queste, indeed, the ideals of

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1. Etudes sur la Queste del Saint Graal, Paris (Champion), 1921, p. 41.

the eremitical and of the chivalric life are constantly seen to overlap: it is in complete solitude that each companion of the Quest faces his separate trials and temptations, Lancelot accepts to wear a hair-shirt next to his skin, Bohort wears a "cote blanche" as a "signes de penitance...et un chastement a la char" (p. 166), for the duration of the Quest they both practise strict abstinence from meat and wine, "qui l'ome meinent a luxure et a pechié mortel". (p. 165), Galaad himself is the complete incarnation of perfect chastity. This sustained ascetic spirit forces one indeed to regard the Queste not just as a point by point refutation of the courtly ideal of "fin' amors" (in particular, its frank glorification of adultery), but also as an attempt to put forward an alternative code of conduct, based unequivocally on rigorous chastity and self-denial - for there is "nule si haute chevalerie come d'estre virges et d'eschiver luxure et garder son cors netement." (p. 123).

In the Perceforest, the hermit Dardanon proposes a religious conception of chivalry that is altogether more rational, less mystical, less ascetic than the doctrinaire spirit of the Queste. The author voices his own comments on religion in general and worship in

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particular, within his account of the historical process whereby Britain is prepared for the coming of Christianity.

Though most of the Perceforest falls within the reign of the Dieu Souverain, a kind of twilight zone between paganism and Christianity, it would nonetheless be misleading to see its author as an exponent of Natural Religion. The existence and attributes of the Dieu Souverain, it is true, are partly accessible to man's reason and understanding. Yet these attributes, as revealed for example in Dardanon's long prayer in Book II, presuppose in many respects a knowledge of the Christian God: Creator of all things, author of man's moral sense, omnipotent and all-merciful, "vray ouvrier de vray amour, grande misericorde, grant charite et fiable amour". As P. Sage has pointed out in a short note on La Religion de Perceforest,<sup>1</sup> "la religion de Perceforest, on peut bien l'appeler une religion naturelle, mais à condition d'ajouter qu'elle est non une reconstitution historique, mais la construction d'un esprit éclairé et pénétré de christianisme". And since Dardanon's knowledge of God is ultimately completed by

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1. Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et de Renaissance, vol. 13, 1951, pp. 393-4.

God's self-disclosure, it is not natural religion that the author would recommend, but the firm alliance of reason and Christian revelation. As was shown earlier, in the episodes concerning the signs which neither Dardanon nor the Reine-Fee could understand, there are times when natural reason must abdicate, must approve its own disqualification as an instrument of final truth, and await God's own revelation of himself.

With regard to worship, the cult of the Dieu Souverain is one of simplicity and piety, based not on formal ceremonies but on personal adoration and prayer. Both the Temple Inconnu and the Temple du Dieu Souverain are lacking in any ornament save the image of the Sovereign God. They are both designed to promote a sober atmosphere of meditation and prayer. In giving special weight to these aspects, particularly to the idea of simplicity, the author of the Perceforest seems in fact to be deploring their absence in his own times. As Lods points out,<sup>1</sup> "il est permis de croire que dans cette religion primitive qu'il imagine il replace les valeurs qu'il tient pour essentielles et qui se sont un peu perdues au cours des âges."

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1. Le Roman de Perceforest Genève (Droz) et Lille (Giard), 1951, p. 258.

Despite, however, these important reservations which the author seems to have held about the over-elaborate ceremonies of his time, it is nonetheless quite clearly the Christian faith that is put forward as the essential element of the chivalric ideal. In Lod's words, "le sommet de l'idéal chevaleresque est atteint lorsqu'à la prouesse et à la courtoisie viennent s'ajouter la pureté intime et la foi du chrétien; toutes les aventures du roman tirent leur sens et leur raison d'être de la contribution qu'elles apportent au progrès des hommes vers cet idéal."<sup>1</sup>

It is clear, then, that the fusion of religion and chivalry which the hermits are at pains to encourage varies greatly from romance to romance, ranging from the basic Christian duties taught by the hermit in Chrétien's Conte du Graal, to the mystical, ascetic doctrines of the Queste and the more rational, less doctrinaire spirit of the Perceforest, from the condemnation of needless violence in the Continuations and the Didot-Perceval to the militant glorification of crusading chivalry in the Perlesvaus. Religious chivalry is seen

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1. Le Roman de Perceforest Genève (Droz) et Lille (Giard), 1951, p. 273.



indeed not to be a completely uniform concept, but one that is subject to constant variations, modifications and shifts of emphasis. What emerges, therefore, as one of the most interesting aspects of the hermit's role is the light it casts on the differing aspirations that went into the making of the chivalric ethos in the course of the Middle Ages. Equally important, however, is the fact that the unity, as well as the diversity, of the religious ideal is made apparent too. Despite the variations of the hermit's teaching from text to text, his role as a didactic figure testifies to the consistent effort being made to christianise the chivalric class, to woo the knight away from the world of senseless killing and amorous intrigue, in order to make of him a soldier of Christ, and to transform the whole institution of chivalry into "armed force in the service of unarmed truth."<sup>1</sup>

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1. Léon Gautier Chivalry (edited by Jacques Levron, trans. by D. C. Dunning), London (Phoenix House), 1965, p. 15.

CHAPTER FIVE

CHRISTIAN CHIVALRY - OR CHIVALRIC CHRISTIANITY?

Chapter FiveChristian Chivalry - or Chivalric Christianity?

If the hermit's role in romance amply illustrates the attempt being made to christianise the life of the professional warrior, it also casts interesting light on the fusion of religion and chivalry which results. It is indeed possible to detect in the hermit-scenes, not only the attempt to preach and illustrate the Christian faith, but also the persistence of a caste-spirit, an enthusiasm for the chivalric class which betrays itself at every turn. In an important article entitled Le Graal et la Chevalerie<sup>1</sup> Professor Frappier was first to analyse fully this interaction, this interpenetration of the religious and the chivalric spirit which is to be found in the Grail texts. This chapter will be, in part, a development of some of Professor Frappier's comments in this article, in particular those which relate to the hermit's role in romance.

The first point that strikes one is that the knight's choice of spiritual mentor is not the secular

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1. Romania 75, 1954, pp. 165-210.

clergy, but the hermit - a person with whom the knight feels himself to have much in common. The secular clergy, of course, appears in romance but, as the preceding chapters have shown, the person the knights turn to for guidance and advice is more often than not the hermit. This can partly be explained, it is true, by the general setting of most Arthurian romances - it is the forest that constitutes their principal décor and it is there, rather than at Arthur's court, that the really important adventures take place. On the other hand, there are important psychological ties between hermit and knight, which perhaps better explain the latter's choice of spiritual mentor.

Both the hermit and the knight are men with a vocation, and devote much of their lives, for the most part on the outskirts of society, to the pursuit of an ideal.<sup>1</sup> To the hermit's quest for spiritual perfection correspond the varying quests undertaken by the knight to prove his worth and valour. And in their respective quests, both show a very marked preference for complete solitude and individual enterprise. Just as the hermit turns his back on his fellow-men to devote all his energies to his spiritual quest, so the knight prefers

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1. Frappier art. cit. p. 201.

to undertake his adventures completely alone, renouncing the help of his comrades-in-arms. Perhaps the most eloquent presentation of this individualism, as far as the knight is concerned, occurs in Durmart le Galois. Just before setting out on his quest for the Queen of Ireland, Durmart categorically affirms that no-one will accompany him; he goes on to explain why:

'Mais ja valles, ne chevaliers  
 Ne venra en ma compagnie.  
 Quar je ne vuel pas, que l'en die  
 Se je truis alcune aventure  
 Qui soit perillouse, ne dure,  
 Que li uevre soit achievee  
 Fors par moi, et par ma pensee;  
 Quar se je chevaliers menoeie  
 Et je adventures trovoie  
 Ou j'ocezisse x gaans,  
 Ja n'en seroit mes pris plus grans;  
 Ains diroit on communalement  
 Que ce seroit fait par ma gent.' <sup>1</sup>

What these lines make abundantly clear is the importance, for the knight, of accomplishing his adventures single-

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1. hgg. von E. Stengel, Tübingen (Laupp), 1873,  
 ll. 1318-1330.

handed. For him it is personal prowess and personal enterprise that counts. In Clariss et Laris do not the two heroes of the romance incur the reproaches of a "vallet" as soon as the latter notices that they are travelling together?

'Encor i pert au dire voir,  
Quant chascuns seuls chevauchier n'ose,  
(Certes c'est bien provee chose),  
Que coardise vous conduit...' <sup>1</sup>

In the prose romances too the authors seem to go out of their way to underline the individual nature of the adventures undertaken by the Arthurian heroes:

si s'en aloient tout .iiij. si cheualcierent  
tant qu'il trouerent .iiij. chemins qui  
departir les fist si ala chascuns par soi  
si comme aventure le mena...' <sup>2</sup>

et lors dist mesire Gauane a sez compaignons  
quil se departissent et alast cascuns sa  
uoie quar il uoldroit aler tous seuls. Si  
se departirent en tel maniere et tint  
cascuns sa uoie. <sup>3</sup>

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1. hgg. von Johann Alton, Tübingen (Laupp), 1884,  
ll. 12828-31.

2. Vulgate Version II, p. 374, l.39 - p. 375, l.1.

3. *ibid.* p. 458, ll. 37-39.

ensi se departirent li compaignon et  
 entrerent en lor queste non mie troi  
 ensemble ne quatre mais chascuns par soi. <sup>1</sup>

il chevauchoit tout seul sanz compaignie  
 et sanz escuier. <sup>2</sup>

et se departirent maintenant, et s'en  
 alerent, les ungs ça et les autres la,  
 car se ilz alassent ensemble en une  
 queste, l'en leur atornast a honte et a  
 coardise. Si allarent ainsi par divers  
 chemins...<sup>3</sup>

Lors dist Bennucq. Sire cousin voy ci  
 ung chemin qui se part en deux: il me  
 semble que se trop longuement nous sommes  
 ensemble que nos deux exploitz ne  
 seroient que ung: et pour ce adieu vos  
 commant. <sup>4</sup>

1. *ibid.* VII, p. 165, ll. 35-7.

2. Erec, roman arthurien en prose éd. par C.E. Pickford,  
 Genève (Droz) et Paris (Minard) 1959, p. 57, l. 9.

3. *ibid.* p. 54, ll. 42-5.

4. Perceforest IV, chap. 38, f<sup>o</sup>. 122.

'En nom Dieu, sire, dit Tristan, il m'est  
 advis qu'il vauldroit mieulx pour ne  
 faillir a nostre queste de prandre chascun  
 son chemin, car si l'ung fault de son  
 costé l'autre peult estre ne fauldra pas,  
 ainsi ne perdrons nostre peine.' <sup>1</sup>

In the Prose Tristan, the individual quest is presented  
 as one of the customs of the Kingdom of Logres:

Sire fait il vecy deux chemins il nous  
 convient departir se nous voulons tenir  
 la coustume des chevaliers errans... <sup>2</sup>

ien feray ce que vous voudrez et non  
 pourtant la coustume du royaulme de Logres  
 est telle que puis que cheualiers vont  
 ensemble et ils trouuent deuz ou trois  
 chemins qui se fourchent que les  
 cheualiers se departent et doit tenir  
 chascun sa voye pourquoy ie diz que nous  
 sommes venuz a departir. <sup>3</sup>

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1. Tristan publié par L. Muir, Genève (Droz) et Paris  
 (Minard) 1958, p. 57, par. 54.

2. B.N. Rés. Y<sup>2</sup> 60-1 f<sup>o</sup>. 108d.

3. *ibid.* f<sup>o</sup>. 116d.



Sire selon la coustume des cheualiers  
erranz nous nous deuons cy departir...<sup>1</sup>

What emerges from these examples is once again the knight's concern to prove his worth in an adventure which he undertakes alone. Furthermore, even when the quest is of a collective nature (as it is in some of the examples quoted above) the authors betray their interest in the individual exploits of each knight in the manner of their story-telling: instead of narrating the collective adventure as a whole, they prefer to concentrate on each knight in turn and illustrate his particular contribution to the general quest. What is of prime importance, then, in Arthurian romance is the solitary, individual enterprise of each knight.

These remarks, therefore, clearly establish a form of kinship between hermit and knight - and it is of interest to note that this kinship does not go undetected by the knights themselves. In the Perceforest, Lyonel sees a parallel between the austerities of the hermit's life and the hardships he himself must endure as a knight-errant in quest of his lady:

'Car cest si grant chose que de la ioye  
et de la beaulte de paradis que lame ny

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1. *ibid.* vol. 2 f<sup>o</sup>. 3d.

peult venir se le corps ne lachapte par  
 penitence...car tout en telle maniere  
 que la beaulte de paradis ne peult estre  
 veue son ne lachapte en telle maniere la  
 grande beaulte qui est en la pucelle que  
 ie quiers a veoir ne doit estre veue de  
 moy si ie ne lachapte par peine et par  
 tourment. <sup>1</sup>

Is it not therefore possible to detect in the knight's preference for the hermit as his spiritual guide something of his own high regard for personal enterprise and individual endeavour? It would certainly seem significant in this respect that it is only to a person with whom the knight feels himself to have much in common that he is willing to entrust the direction of his soul.

This suggestion is amply confirmed by a second consideration, the social origins of the hermit. The majority of hermits who act as the spiritual guides of the knights belong themselves to the chivalric class. The person therefore to whom the knights turn for

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1. Perceforest II, chap. 37, f<sup>o</sup>. 35d.

advice is one of their own, a member of the same distinguished lineage and class.

In Chrétien's Conte du Graal, the hermit is at once the brother of Perceval's mother and the "saint homme", father of the Fisher King. The hermit thus belongs to the Grail family, is of noble birth and comes from a lineage renowned for its chivalrous exploits - see, for example, Perceval's mother's comment in ll. 423-6:

'Que je sui de chevaliers nee,  
Des meillors de ceste contree.  
Es illes de mer n'ot lignage  
Meillor del mien en mon eage...'

In the Good Friday episode particular stress is laid on the ties which unite the hermit and Perceval within the Grail family:

'Cil qui l'en sert est mes frere,  
Ma suer et soe fu ta mere;  
Et del riche Pescheor croi  
Qu'il est fix a icelui roi  
Qu'en cel graal servir se fait.' (ll. 6415-19).

'Biax oncles...

Fait Perchevax, molt de bon cuer.

Quant ma mere fu vostre suer,

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Bien me devez neveu clamer

Et je vos oncle et miex amer.'

- 'Vairs est, biax niez...' (ll. 6434-39).

In the Second Continuation and Gerbert the same kind of pattern can be observed, though in these two texts the hermits are too numerous for all of them to be related to the Grail hero. In these two Continuations the counterpart of Chrétien's hermit is the brother, not of Perceval's mother, but of his father.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, in Gerbert, Elyas Anaïs, the hermit who explains to Perceval the adventure of the Questing Beast, is another uncle of Perceval's and was once himself a great king.<sup>2</sup> Despite, therefore, the genealogical variations which these texts reveal, the idea of close blood-ties uniting hermit and knight remains unchanged.

In the Didot-Perceval the hermit's links with the chivalric class are extended backwards in time to the era of Christ himself. He is the brother of Alein le Gros, Perceval's father, and one of the twelve sons of Bron, the Fisher King. Through his mother Enigeus, the sister of Joseph of Arimathia, the hermit is a nephew of

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1. Perceval le Galois 4, l. 26143. Gerbert ll. 2705-2803.

2. Gerbert ll. 8759, 8834-5.

the latter, qualified in the Roman de L'Estoire dou Graal as a "Soudoier/preudomme et mout boen chevalier".<sup>1</sup> The hermit thus belongs to a lineage of knights who have been given the unique privilege of guarding the sacred vessel. In the following lines, the hermit reminds Perceval of this important responsibility:

'Or si vos proi que il vous en soviegne et  
soiés curieus de vos garder de pecier ne  
de faire vilainne ouevre, car vous estes  
d'une ligniee qui molt a nostre Segnor amé,  
et il les a tant essauciés que il lor a  
done sa car et son sanc a garder.'<sup>2</sup>

The Grail story, therefore, as well as being a spiritual adventure, is also the chronicle of a privileged lineage whom God has personally exalted.

Even more elaborate are the genealogical details provided by the Perlesvaus.<sup>3</sup> The two most distinguished hermits of the Perlesvaus, King Pelles and Joseus his son,

1. éd. par W.A. Nitze, Paris (Champion), 1927, ll. 1351-2.

2. Didot-Perceval ll. 741-4.

3. See Nitze's dissertation for a genealogical table of the Grail family - Perlesvaus Baltimore (Murphy), 1902, p. 110.

are of noble birth and are directly related to Perlesvaus and the Grail family:

'J'é non Joseus, e sui du lignage Joseph  
 d'Arimacie. Li rois Pelles est mes peres,  
 qi hermites est en ceste forest, e li Rois  
 Peschierres mes oncles e li Rois de  
 Chastel Mortel, e la Veve Dame de Kamaalot  
 m'ante, e li buens chevaliers Par-lui-fez  
 est del lignage ausi prochains com ge.' (1644-7).

Joseus' successful combat against the four robbers and his role in the taking of the Grail Castle show that his chosen way of life has in no way stifled the chivalric valour in his blood.

As for the other hermits of the Perlesvaus, they either belong by birth to the chivalric class or are themselves former knights who now act as counsellors of their old companions-in-arms. The hermit who tells Gauvain that only God can direct his path to the Grail Castle had been "entor le roi Uter vallez e chevaliers .xl. anz" (ll. 898-9 cp. 940 "Dex garisse le roi Artu car ses peres me fist chevalier"). Another hermit with whom Gauvain stays is the uncle of Meliot de Logres (l.1606) and "de molt haut lignage" (l. 1582). At a third hermitage Gauvain converses with Josimas, who had once

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been a "chevalier de grant pris et de grant valor, mes il guerpi tot por l'amor Deu, et vout metre son cors a essil por lui" (ll. 4389-90). The hermit who brings the bell to the Grail Castle is a former king who has been converted to Christianity: "Sire, fait il a Monseignor Gauvain, je sui li rois por qui vos ocelistes le jaiant de coi vos eüstes l'espee donc Saint Jehan fu decolez...Je me fiz bautisier devant vos...puis m'en alai en .i. hermitage desor la mer loig de gent, ou j'ai esté grant pieche.'" (ll. 7235-39).

The aristocratic origins of the hermit can be seen too in the Queste del Saint Graal. A hermit who confesses Lancelot has a brother who is a knight (p. 71, l. 16), the recluse who counsels Perceval is the latter's aunt and former Queen of the Terre Gaste (p. 73 l. 26), the recluse who counsels Lancelot is "une des meillors dames dou pays" (p. 142, l. 16), a hermit martyred by his enemies (p. 120) had been a "gentilx hons et de haut lignage" (p. 120, l. 11).

The kinship, then, between hermit and knight goes much deeper than the psychological ties which were mentioned earlier. It is really to his own family, to

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a member of his own lineage that the knight turns for guidance and encouragement; and what is evident in the hermit-scenes is not just the fact of kinship, but the awareness, shared by both hermit and knight, that they both belong to a privileged lineage which carries with it unique responsibilities. "Dans la personne de semblables ermites", observes Professor Frappier, "la chevalerie est tirée vers la religion, mais la religion est tirée elle aussi vers la chevalerie. On sent de nouveau la tendance à les enfermer l'un et l'autre dans un système clos, ou très peu ouvert."<sup>1</sup> Once again we are given the impression that the Grail stories glorify the chivalric class at the same time as they exalt the Christian faith.

This class consciousness or caste-spirit also betrays itself in the way in which a number of texts, notably the Lancelot-Graal, describes the welcome received by the knight-errant at the different hermitages where he sojourns. The following are examples drawn from the Lancelot-Graal cycle.

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1. Art. cit. p. 204.



A tel compaignie sen va mesire gauvain de  
carlyon et chele nuit iurent chis .j.

ermite qui auoit este de la maison le roi  
artu quant il fu rois nouelement. si lor  
fist moult bel ostel por che que de la  
maison le roi artus estoient. <sup>1</sup>

si hurte al huis et li hermites li oeure  
Et quant il voit le chevalier si li fait  
moult grant ioie et le mainne dedans sa  
maison. <sup>2</sup>

Et lors sont venu a vn hermitage et li  
hermites auoit este cheualiers et estoit  
oncles a la damoisele. si les rechut  
moult liement Et demande a sa niece qui  
sont li cheualier Et elle li nomme et  
dist quil sont de la meson le roy artu.  
Et li hermites lez aaisa de tout son pooir. <sup>3</sup>

si lenmaine en sa maison qui grans  
estoit et bele pour les cheualiers errans  
hebergier qui par illuec passoient. si

1. Vulgate Version III, p. 154.

2. ibid. p. 359.

3. ibid., IV, p. 110.

estoit li lieus apeles li hermitages  
as errans.<sup>1</sup>

Qui estes vous fait li hermites. Iou sui  
 fait il vns cheualiers errans de la maison  
 le roy artus. ha. fait li hermites vous  
 estes dez cheualiers auentureus qui vont  
 par lez estranges tieres querant lez  
 meruelleuses aentures. Sire fait il vous  
 dites uoir. Or poes vous dont descendre  
fait li preudoms quar iou vous aaiserai  
au miex que iou porrai.<sup>2</sup>

si colcha l'en bohort en vne cambre qui  
 laiens estoit faite pour hebergier lez  
cheualiers trespasans.<sup>3</sup>

si hurtent et apelent tant que li hermites  
 vint si lor ouuri la porte. et lor  
 demande qui il sont Et il dient quil sont  
cheualier errant si voloient herbergier.

1. ibid. V, p. 129.

2. ibid. p. 142.

3. ibid. p. 145.

et il dist quil les herbergera au miex  
quil porra.<sup>1</sup>

et lancelet dist quil est vns chevaliers  
errans qui mestier auroit de herbergier.  
Et il dist quil le herbergera uolentierz  
puis quil est cheualiers errans.<sup>2</sup>

Et quant cil de laienz le voient armé,  
si pensent lues quil est chevaliers  
erranz: si le font desarmer et le recoivent  
a mout bele chiere.<sup>3</sup>

la recluse...apela Lancelot por ce que  
chevaliers erranz li sembloit et mestier  
avoit de conseil.<sup>4</sup>

si descent et apele a l'uis l'ermite, tant  
qu'il li ovri. Mes quant li hermites voit  
qu'il est chevaliers erranz, si li dist que  
bien soit il venuz.<sup>5</sup>

1. ibid. p. 279.

2. ibid. p. 305.

3. Queste p. 81.

4. ibid. p. 142.

5. ibid. p. 198.

l'ermite qui tant de bien li fist com il  
 pot por ce que cheualiers errans estoit.<sup>1</sup>

No doubt the religious nature of many of their adventures explains the enthusiastic welcome received by the knights at each hermitage. Indeed, the lines immediately following those quoted from the Livre d'Artus make this quite explicit: knights are welcome because they defend what is right:

car des icel ior que cheualier errant  
 comencierent a errer estoient molt ame  
 sor toz autres cil de la Table Roonde  
 por ce quil abatoient les mauueses  
 costumes e deliuroient les maus pas a  
 lor pooirs e destruy - oient les maus  
 faisanz qui roboient les chemins.<sup>2</sup>

Nonetheless, it is also clear that the mere title of "knight errant" or "knight of King Arthur's court" is enough in itself to guarantee a warm and hospitable welcome, irrespective of the object of each particular quest. Reserved for chivalry alone, this enthusiastic welcome reflects nothing less than enthusiasm for the

1. Vulgate Version VII, p. 107.

2. *ibid.* p. 107.

institution of chivalry itself.

There is clearly something more, therefore, in the hermit-scenes of romance than the effort to put forward the Christian faith as the essential element of the chivalric ideal. The knight's willingness to entrust his spiritual direction to a person with whom he has strong psychological and social ties, the unfolding of the Grail mysteries by someone who is often himself a former knight, the marked concern to stress the distinction of the lineage to which they both belong, the enthusiastic welcome reserved at each hermitage for knight-errantry in particular - all betray the persistence of a caste-spirit and a feeling that a sort of moral and social supremacy attaches to the function of the professional warrior. What clearly emerges from this study of the hermit-scenes is that the Grail romances glorify and exalt the warrior class at the same time as they attempt to preach the Christian faith. In Frappier's words "dans les romans du Graal, même dans ceux qu'anime le plus l'élan mystique, ceux-là

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surtout peut-etre, la religion n'a guère cessé d'être exaltée en fonction de la classe des chevaliers, et dans l'intention précise d'exalter cette classe elle-meme." <sup>1</sup>

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1. art. cit. p. 165.

APPENDIX

Appendix

Fig. 1a: Recluse ministers to wounded knights.

Ib: Sir Perceval visits a cell.

Fig: 2a: Hermit exhorts Sir Lancelot

2b: The Burial of Sir Galahad.

Figs. 1a, 1b, 2a, 2b are in B.M. 14 E.III, f.<sup>o</sup> 98b, 101b, 109 and 138b respectively, and are reproduced from Rotha M. Clay, The Hermits and Anchorites of England London (Methuen), 1914, The Antiquary's Books, Plates XXXIII and XXXIV, facing pages 133 and 147.



## PLATE XXXIII



RECLUSE MINISTERS TO WOUNDED KNIGHTS

SIR PERCEVAL VISITS A CELL.  
THE RECLUSE IN ROMANCE

0011376



HERMIT EXHORTS SIR LANCELOT



THE BURIAL OF SIR GALAHAD  
THE HERMIT AND THE KNIGHTS

0011376



autres choses muurent p' tex g  
rens dont puis furent maint  
mal fait. mais ore nen pole pl'  
li cotes daus. Ains retourne a mo  
seignoz. S. dont s'unt pieche sest  
teus Ensi q' Gauvain cheuauche .j. vs. j.  
hermitage q' seoit haut sor. j. tier



**Q**uandzort no' racote  
lestoire & dist. q' q'nt  
mesires. S. fu partil  
del lieu ou il fust he  
lain chz. si eera toute Joz sans  
auenture trouver q' a raconter  
fache. la nuit le mena auenture  
a vne maison de moines qui se  
oit sor vne petite reuiere en lo  
riere dunes petites breches de

Figure 3

Ensi que Gauvain cheuauche vers .j. hermitage qui seoit  
haut sor .j. tertre. B.M. Ms. Add. 10293 fol. 92 col. b.

mandemens aues ce pib. et  
 aues souffert les q'mement  
 que cest muelie q'ment vo  
 oles la gent ueon. Ensi come  
 li rois artu se fist confes  
 dun hermite en son hermu tage



**E**ant dist mesires  
 Gau. au roy artus  
 son onde quil li ce  
 ante a faire outre  
 ement toute sa volente et tot  
 ce quil li loera. si en a me sire  
 Gau. mit grant ioie. Car il le bee  
 tout ensi aa molier petit et  
 petit. Et ne li velt mie trop  
 corre sus a vne fois quil ne  
 le meust a males vne. et lee  
 tant a attendre que cele soit.

Figure 4

Ensi com li rois artu se fist confesser dun hermite  
 en son hermitage. B.M. Ms. Add. 10293 fol. 153 col.a.



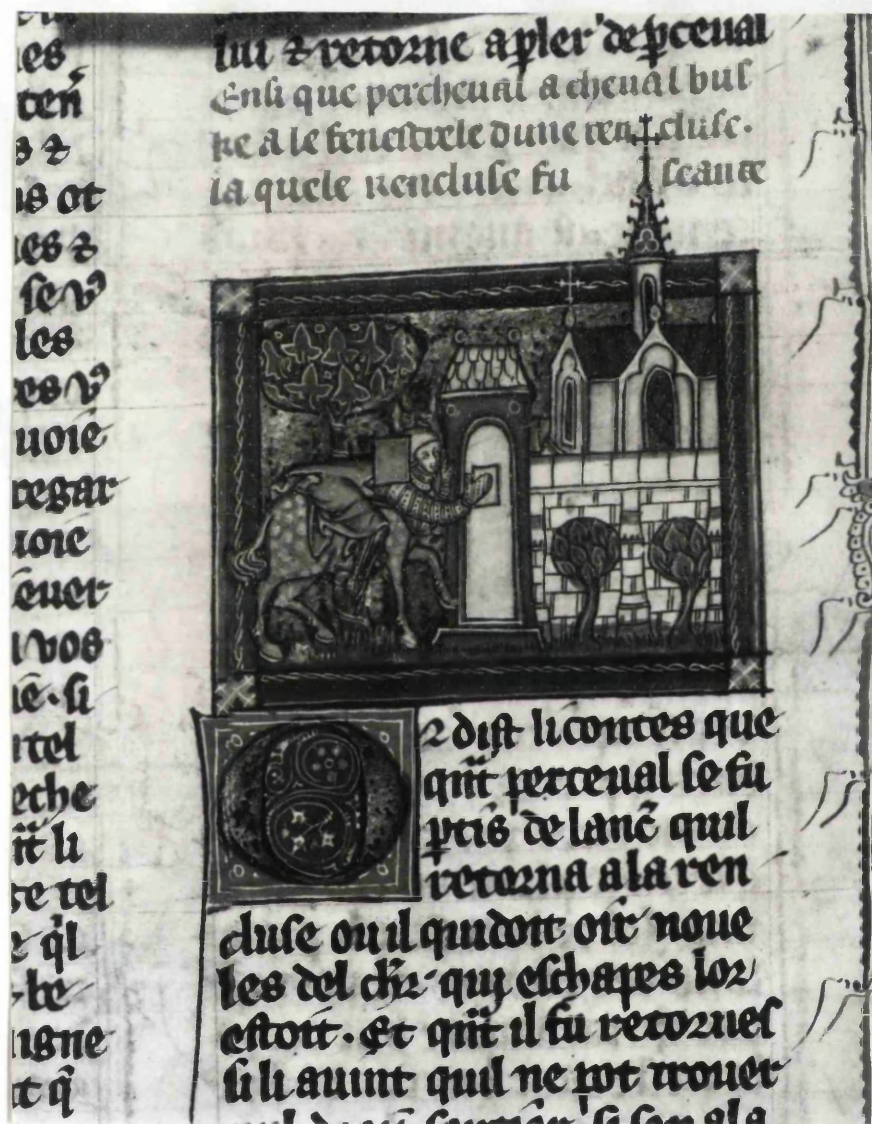


Figure 5

Ensi que percheual a cheual buske a le fenestrele dune  
 rencluse. laquele rencluse fu se ante. B.M. Ms.  
 Add. 10294 fol. 14 col. e.

poles que la vois li auort di  
te en la chapele. Ensi que lanc  
del lac parole a .j. hermite de  
vant son hermitage et li her  
mites li castoie



**E**n dist li contes q. m.  
ors fist lanc demo  
rer auoecq. lui &  
chascun ior le ser  
mouna & amonestia mlt de  
bn faire & li dist ces poles lac  
por noiant estes entres en cel  
te qste se vne vrees are  
traire de tos pechies mortex  
& tenir vne cuer des pensees  
terrienes & des delis del monde.  
Car bn sacies q vne cheuale  
rie ne v puet riens valoir

Figure 6

Ensi que lancelet del lac parole a .j. hermite deuant  
son hermitage et li hermites li castoie. B.M. Ms.  
Add. 10294 fol. 23 col. b.



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A. Manuscripts.

B. Historical Development of eremitical life:

(i) Vitae Patrum                      (ii) Critical Works.

C. Arthurian Literature:

(i) Bibliographies              (ii) Arthurian romances  
(iii) Critical Works.

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Bretaigne, fundateur du Franc Palais et du Temple  
du Souverain Dieu, en laquelle le lecteur pourra  
veoir la source et decoration de toute chevalerie

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PERCEFOREST (cont)

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# The Hermit in French Arthurian Romance (c.1170-1530)

## SUMMARY

Angus J. Kennedy

The enormous vogue of popularity enjoyed by the Hermit-Saint in mediaeval literature has not attracted a great deal of attention on the part of critics. It is the purpose of this thesis to explore the Hermit's role in one of the main narrative genres, French Arthurian Romance, from about 1170 down to the sixteenth century.

The Hermit's popularity in literature immediately prompts one important question: why this fascination in literature with hermits and eremitical ideals at a time when society was also glorifying, in the songs of the troubadours and the romances of courtly love, an ideal of happiness firmly based on the joys of the world? By tracing the development of the eremitical ideal, from its beginnings in the East in the first few centuries of our era to its flowering in the Middle Ages, Chapter One shows how the Hermit's vogue in literature embodies some of the great aspirations of mediaeval Christian spirituality, and illustrates in particular a contemporary current of fervent piety, strict asceticism and contempt for the world, which is

no less characteristic of the Middle Ages than the more widely-known ideals of courtly love.

Chapter Two gives a comprehensive and detailed account of the Hermit's role in French Arthurian literature. It is shown that in general the Hermit is given a two-fold role to play. On the one hand, he plays the part of a minor utility-figure, who performs a whole variety of services for knight-errantry. This is above all the part he is given to play in the verse romances and in the long sections of the prose romances devoted to adventure, jousting and love. This role is not always unimportant, and is sometimes made to contribute something to the structure and spirit of each romance. On the other hand, and more important by far, the Hermit plays a prominent part as the spiritual guide of the knights, acting as the spokesman for the author's didactic purposes, and commenting on a wide variety of topics. Here the most interesting point is the way in which the Hermit's role is used to put forward the true aims of ideal chivalry. It is when the Hermit is given this part to play - as he is in the Grail texts and the Perceforest - that his fortunes reach their high-point in French Arthurian romance. In these texts the Hermit's persistent



attempt to christianise the warrior-class makes his role of interest not only to the Arthurian specialist but also to anyone studying the aspirations of mediaeval chivalry.

Chapter Three examines in detail the literary portrait of the solitary. It is shown to include (a) traditional elements deriving from the Vitae Patrum (portrayal of the Hermit as a "venerabilis senex", Hermits as guides, counsellors, prophets and healers, their relationship with the animal world, with the supernatural, their spiritual life); (b) a number of elements that reflect contemporary reality (social origins of hermits, motivation behind their retreat to solitude, the development of "congregations" of hermits); (c) "Arthurian" elements (influence of the courtly ideal, the Hermit as a denizen of the enchanted world of Logres). The portrait is thus a blending of tradition, realism and fantasy.

Chapter Four returns to the Hermit's role as a didactic figure in Chrétien's Conte du Graal, parts of the Continuations, the Didot-Perceval, the Perlesvaus, the Queste and the Perceforest. Broadly speaking, one can say that the Hermit's interventions in these texts have two points in common: on the one hand, they

condemn certain aspects of worldly chivalry, and on the other, seek to inspire chivalry with specifically Christian objectives. The two main points singled out for condemnation are indiscriminate violence and the sin of carnality ("luxure"); the positive ideals put forward vary from romance to romance, ranging from the basic Christian duties taught by the Hermit in Chrétien's Conte du Graal to the mystical, ascetic doctrines of the Queste, and the more rational, less doctrinaire spirit of the Perceforest, from the condemnation of needless brutality in the Continuations and the Didot-Perceval to the militant glorification of crusading chivalry in the Perlesvaus. "Religious" Chivalry is thus shown not to be a completely uniform concept, but one that is subject to constant variations, modifications and shifts of emphasis.

Chapter Five examines this same fusion of religion and chivalry, but from a different point of view. It is possible to detect in the hermit-scenes, not only the attempt to preach the Christian faith, but also the persistence of a caste-spirit that betrays itself at every turn. The knight's willingness to entrust his spiritual direction to the Hermit (a person with whom he has strong psychological and social ties), the

unfolding of the Grail mysteries by the Hermit-Knight, the marked concern to stress the distinction of the lineage to which both knight and Hermit belong, the enthusiastic welcome reserved at each hermitage for knight-errantry in particular all betray the feeling that a kind of moral and social supremacy attaches to the function of the professional warrior. What clearly emerges from this study of the Hermit's role is that much of Arthurian romance glorifies and exalts the chivalric class as well as the basic truths of the Christian faith.