

Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.

THE SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT OF SOME
KNIGHTLY CHARACTERS IN THE
ROMAN COURTOIS.

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in French at
Massey University.

Patricia Mary Sims

1972

To
my Father

Preface

In 1963, when I was studying Vergil's Aeneid, I became gradually aware that the Trojan leader, so often accused of being a negative plaything of the gods, was a great man and a great religious hero. For being able to see this point of view, I am greatly indebted to an enlightening article by F.A.Sullivan, S.J., who demonstrates how Aeneas, in his quest for a new Troy undergoes a spiritual journey not unlike that experienced by people who truly seek union with God by the sanctity of their lives.

Last year, when I was reading Yvain for the first time, it again became apparent that the hero, in his quest for reconciliation with his wife, could also show some features of a similar tripartite development. Further reading indicated that signs of a deep religious experience could also be found in other heroes, particularly in some of the romances of Chretien de Troyes, who have been studied here from the aspect of their spiritual progression.

Among all those who have in any way helped me to prepare this work, I should like to thank the Sisters of the Congregation to which I belong, the Sisters of Mercy, Wellington, who have given me much encouragement; the staff of the French section of the Modern Languages Department, Massey University, and especially Dr. Glynnis Cropp who has given so readily of her time and scholarly advice; the Library Staff, particularly the Interloan Section of Massey University; and finally, Mrs. Esme Lynch for her capable typing.

March 1972.

Contents

Preface

Introductory chapter -	Some Religious Influences	
	on the Twelfth Century Romance	1
Chapter 2	Enéas - - - - -	7
Chapter 3	Erec - - - - -	23
Chapter 4	Yvain - - - - -	41
Chapter 5	Gauvain and Lancelot - - -	59
Chapter 6	Perceval - - - - -	71
	Conclusion - - - - -	103
	Notes on the Text - - - -	107
	Bibliography	

Chapter I.

Some Religious Influences on the Twelfth Century Romance

The twelfth century in France was undoubtedly an era of spiritual contrasts and spiritual endeavour. On the one hand the Church, finding itself associated with temporal structures, was in danger of becoming trapped in the system of militant service and ownership of property. Prelates and even Popes were too often inclined to come to terms with the powers of the World in exchange for transitory but substantial possessions. Lay powers intervened excessively in spiritual institutions, in ecclesiastical nominations and in the conduct of the affairs of the Church. Violence and immorality seem to have been prevalent not only amongst the laity, but also amongst dignitaries in high ecclesiastical positions.

But it is a profound law of Church history that whenever a crisis arises, a new leaven appears in the Christian dough. Consequently, to counterbalance abuses of the time, members of the laity were often permeated by a deep spirit of Faith, and monasticism in France at this very time underwent several spectacular upheavals. By no means the least amongst these was the reform instigated by a gallant little band of Benedictine monks who, disenchanted by the laxity and the free interpretation of the Rule in their own monasteries, and wanting to live their Rule in the stark splendour of its perfection, founded the first Cistercian monastery. The men who precipitated this reform, namely

St. Robert of Molesmes, St. Alberic and St. Stephen Harding were all prominent members of knightly families. St. Bernard followed, incorporating nature, contemporary needs and chivalric practices into his sermons, his Rule and his prayer, to consolidate a code of Cistercian spirituality. This giant was not only an immediate predecessor of Chrétien de Troyes, some of whose works will be studied in this thesis, but had his principal monastery at Clairvaux, in the plateau between Champagne and Haute-Bourgogne. Thus, the land where Chrétien is said to have lived and worked will have been permeated to a considerable extent by Cistercian spirituality. For these 'Knights of God' were no spineless cowards, using their piety as a means of escaping from the world, but characters of high chivalry and noble stock. So great was their influence that it could be said that the whole World had 'gone Cistercian'. The dedicated service of these 'White Monks' was vowed, not to any feudal lord, but to God, their Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier.

Predominant among the many features of the twelfth century was feudal society, wherein the growing influence of women was discernible, as well as the phenomenon of courtly love, which required the knight to give to his lady-love the kind of allegiance and homage that feudalism required him to pay to his liege-lord. The chivalrous knight tried to conform to this ideal which was peculiar to a relatively short span of civilisation. From men who would practise it, true courtliness exacted a high

standard of moral conduct and outlook, prowess in chivalry, sensitivity of feelings, a good physical appearance which was equalled only by physical strength and courage, generosity, pride in one's ancestry, self-control, a scrupulous loyalty, justice, singleness of purpose, respect for the feelings and actions of others, liberality, self-forgetfulness in the face of a greater good, a sense of quest, sufficient humility to withstand an occasional rigorous self-examination, prudence, faith on both the natural and the supernatural plane, enough hope to persevere in the face of great odds, and love in its various manifestations, including contemplation of the beauty of the beloved and promptness in carrying out her wishes.

It is therefore hardly surprising if we find that, although most of the romances in this discussion can hardly be said to be religious works, there can be seen in varying degrees a parallel between the quest, goal or task of the hero, and the quest for sanctity experienced by the searching soul. Let us therefore look for signs of evidence of a spiritual ascent as we follow the development of the heroes of certain romances. Beginning with Eneas, portrayed from a Stoic rather than from a Christian point of view, we shall study in turn the quests and spiritual development of Erec, Yvain, Lancelot, Gauvain and Perceval. Before studying such a development, it is worth recalling briefly the progress in virtue and in union with God

that an average soul, seeking perfection and stumbling on the way, might hope to make.

Admission or initiation into a society frequently requires ritual. So too, the Christian is initiated into his supernatural life through the ritual of Baptism, those waters which cleanse, purify but which are above all the sign and very cause of new life. With Baptism are infused the Theological Virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity and the moral virtues, in particular, Prudence, Justice, Fortitude and Temperance, those virtues upon which all the others depend. But this is not enough. Dormant virtues survive only with difficulty and sometimes die altogether. Spiritual prowess has been likened to a contest¹ which requires preparation, practice, self-examination, prayer and 'pietas' or 'promptness of the will in the service of God.'²

Thus, there is, dating from Apostolic times, an age-old division of the Spiritual life into three stages - those namely, of beginners, proficient and perfects or, in more technical language, the Purgative Way, the Illuminative Way and the Unitive Way. Accompanying these stages of life there are also three broad divisions of prayer which correspond with developing virtue. However, the soul is a spiritual faculty and therefore intangible. It is not difficult to appreciate that the rate of supernatural growth will vary from person to person, and that evidence of any growth taking place will be found only in external actions. It is obvious, too,

that the divisions between these stages is seldom clearly outlined, but that there will be some overlap.

The Purgative Way or 'state of beginners' consists in the purifying of the soul in view of attaining to intimate union with God. Necessary for such souls is the virtue of humility which begets confidence in God and self-knowledge. In this state, the concentration is more on the eradication of faults by prayer and penance.

Following this stage, but often overlapping with it comes the Illuminative Way. Here less emphasis is spent on the eradication of faults than on the positive acquisition of virtues, in the imitation of Christ. A higher state of prayer is achieved, a more complete dependence on God is sought, passions are mortified and purity of heart is attained. This leads to the Unitive Way, a state in which all things are brought to converge towards intimate union with God through charity. "The soul lives continually in the presence of God: it delights to contemplate Him living in the heart, 'to walk inwardly with God.' In order to live thus, it carefully detaches itself from creatures so as 'to be held by no outward affection.' It is on this account that the soul seeks solitude and silence; it gradually builds in the heart a sanctuary where it finds God and converses with Him heart to heart." ³

Our heroes in this study will, in some way, be set apart by their destiny or by the nature of their quest, just as the Christian soul is "set apart", chosen or called by his Baptism. Their background circumstances all contribute to

both their temporal quests and their spiritual ascent, and in most cases a kind of initiation ceremony is required, again, not unlike that of Baptism. The first part of their adventures generally takes place in the blind groping which is characteristic of the Purgative Way, terminating in a crisis of self-awareness, repentance, reparation and conversion.

When the catharsis is complete, and the hero is led to see his destiny more clearly, he generally enters a state rather like that of the Illuminative Way. Recognising his faults only too well, he makes a positive effort to increase in virtue. He receives extraordinary helps to achieve his goal. The word 'clarté' is frequently used.

For example :- Si oel si grant clarté randoient
 que deus estoiles rassanbloient.
 (Erec, 433-34)

and in the Grail procession :-

Atot le graal quele tint,
 Une si grans clartez i vint.
 (Perceval 3225-26)

Many Liturgical hymns of the twelfth century, following St. John in his writings of the first century A.D. refer to Christ as the Light.

e.g. "That was the true light, which enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world." 4

and

"O lux beata Caelitum,
 Et summa spes mortalium:
 Jesu, o cui domestica
 Arrisit orto caritas. " 5

Finally, having attained a higher level of understanding, and a greater, more positive conformity to the principles of courtliness and chivalry, the hero enters into a kind of Unitive Way. Here he cannot be separated from his God or from his destiny, and in all cases, except the unfinished Perceval, the romance finishes on a promising note, suggesting that the hero will continue to leap from brightness to brightness, as by the Spirit of the Lord. 6,

Chapter II

Enéas ^{1.}

There may be reason to question the inclusion of Enéas in a study of this kind, which will concentrate mainly on works of Chrétien de Troyes. But if we accept the following statement of M. Wilmotte :-

"Cette date de 1160, qu'on assigne à Enéas, est peut-être la plus mémorable, à cet égard, de tout le roman français; avec elle naît et se lève l'aube d'un art nouveau," ^{2.}

or M. Faral's theory ^{3.} that Enéas was written about 1150 or possibly earlier, it can be seen that this romance was in a position to have a strong influence on 12th. century writers, and did, in fact, do so.

That Vergil had considerable influence on medieval writers, including Chrétien de Troyes, can hardly be questioned, and there are many reasons for supposing that Enéas, in spite of its obvious inferiority when compared with Vergil's epic, was one vehicle by which the work of the Roman poet became known to the medieval world. It is very possible, for example, that when writing Erec, Chrétien had in mind the two loves of Enéas. For in Erec there are shown two types of love between the same husband and wife. As will be discussed later on, Erec's crisis is caused by purely sensual indulgence which appears to lead him to forget his knightly duties in his amorous sojourn with Enide, a state of affairs which ultimately promises destruction. He progresses through a series of trials and deadly combats to a higher, more controlled and more perfect love. Thus, in one woman,

Enide, there can be seen the sensual destructive snare of Dido, whereby Enéas is deterred from doing his duty and Dido herself is forced to abandon the building of her city, contrasted with the courtly, ennobling 'bone amor' of Lavinia. For this, Enéas has to fight and demonstrate his prowess against his supreme enemy and rival, Turnus, thus proving by his valour, in true courtly tradition, his right to his lady's love.

This is not the place to discuss whether Enéas is to be considered as an adaptation or translation of the Aeneid, or both. It is, however, evident that the Roman epic has become a 'conte d'aventures et d'amour.' Its whole setting has been transposed from a century where the newly-founded Roman Empire was contemplating its own glory, to a century in which courtly excellence had such a profound influence on ideals. It is therefore inevitable that some alterations must be undergone. The principal motifs of the Aeneid, namely, the glorification of Rome, the achievements and peace of Augustus and the Roman 'virtus' are not, at first glance, obvious. Nor are they intended to be. Nearly twelve centuries will have passed since the founding of the Roman Empire. The principles of the heroic age which could still be found in Vergil had by this time fallen into obscurity. The courtly lady reading this version of the story, would be far more interested in an adaptation which placed, for her benefit, so much more emphasis on the symptoms and progression of courtly love than on the future and

foundation of Rome. For her, the Vergilian exclamation
 'tantae molis erat Romanam condere gentem' yielded to

7967-68 El cors s'en suit la granz, dolcors
 qui tost seinne les maus d'Amors;

Even before the first appearance of the hero, two
 motivating forces are introduced, namely, vengeance and
 love, both of which will colour *Enéas'* actions through
 the course of the romance.

1 - 4 Quant Menelaus ot Troie assise
 onc n'en torna trest qu'il l'ot prise,
 gasta la terre et tot lo regne
 por la venjance de sa fenne.

And this is reiterated :

22-24 Menelaus a venjance prise:
 toz fist les murs aplanoier
 por le tort fait de son moillier.

with such force that *Enéas* is shown at the beginning
 of the work as a rather negative character. He is of
 noble lineage, certainly, for we are told that his mother
 is Venus, the goddess of love:

32-33 Venus la deesse d'amor,
 qui est sa mere, li a noncié etc.

But if we know this, and know that he is a chosen leader,
 it is because the author says so, not because we see him
 in any characteristic action. On the last night of Troy,
 he is shown as fearful and defeated. It is his divinely
 appointed task to guide the remaining Trojans out of their
 city and to found a new Troy in the land of Italy, the
 home of Dardanus, the ancestor of all Trojans. *Enéas*
is scarcely allowed to appear before there is a long
 discourse on the judgment of Paris, the reasons for Juno's

wrath and another treatment of the vengeance motif, this time resulting in the storm which Juno, the enemy of all Trojans and Trojan undertakings, sends to afflict the fugitives, and if possible, to prevent them from arriving at their new land. Thus, for some time, Enéas is merely one of a series of characters connected in some way with Troy.

During the storm, the idea of darkness is strongly emphasised, together with the notion of despair: Enéas' reaction, though human enough, is hardly what should be expected from a good Stoic, whose spiritual armament should be sufficient to make him invulnerable to the slings and arrows of fortune, and imperturbable when confronted by life's adversities. Nor would it seem to be in accord with the fortitude required by contemporary knightly ideals and practice:

210- 13 Danz Enéas formant s'escrie
 "Par deu," fet il, "buer furent né
 cil qui a Troie la cité
 furent detranchié et ocis.

And to match the darkness of the sea and sky, there is the dark blindness in Enéas' own heart:

225- 26 Promise m'ont ne sai quel terre,
 ne sai ou ge la puisse querre;

To make matters worse, he who is the divinely appointed leader of men, and founder of the new Troy, is no help or inspiration to his followers. (231-34)

As the leader is, so are his men :

239- 40 Molt s'esmaient si compaignon
 ne desirrent se la mort non;

It is not until after the apparently miraculous cessation of the storm that Enéas uses his position as leader, and encourages his men, so that the Trojans appear to have a new inspiration. The hope which has been so sorely tried is about to return :

273- 75 Toz rehaite ses compaignons;
 nagent a fort, as avirons;
 tant ont nagie et tant siglé.

With the Trojans' arrival on land comes an estimation of their losses in men, a new self-recognition and the hope of a fresh beginning. (305-10)

Perhaps Enéas' attitude to his divinely appointed task can be fairly accurately summarized in these lines :-

319- 22 Huen qui s'esmuet an altre terre
 por regne et por pais conquerre,
 an grant enor ne puet venir,
 s'il bien et mal ne puet sofrir.

On his arrival at Carthage, Enéas is thus seen as a fundamentally religious man who has experienced defeat at the hands of the Greeks, despair, uncertainty, exile and longing for death. Certainly, he is an 'élu', even if a somewhat reluctant one. His leadership appears to be the result of divine appointment rather than of any natural instinct. As yet, the virtues of Faith and Hope are not properly established, but once he is delivered from his worst fears, Enéas does show pity, consideration and foresight in regard to his men.

The next important phase in Enéas' development is, of course, his love affair with Dido at Carthage, which is the focal point of his sojourn in that city. The French poet had no need to force our imaginations to see

Dido, as he did when he introduced Enéas. The Carthaginian queen is immediately presented as an able and powerful woman.

375- 80 Cartage virent, la cité,
 dont Dido tint la fermeté.
 Dame Dido tint le païs;
 miaux nel tenist quens ne marchis;
 unc ne fu mais par une feme
 mielz maintenu enor ne regne.

Though faithful to the memory of her dead husband, Sycheus, Dido wastes no time in fruitless mourning and self-pity, but devotes her energies towards building that city of which Juno is to be the patron goddess.

520- 21 La deesse Juno voloit
 que Cartage fust chiés del mont,

But although the influence of the gods is far less in this poem than in the Aeneid, the gods themselves were still allowed to exist. Like the heroes themselves, they were bound by the decrees of Fate, and the poet explains exactly why Carthage cannot and never will be the 'chiés del mont'.

524- 27 mais onques n'l pot metre fin;
 tot autrement est destiné
 car li deu orent esgardé
 que a Rome l'estovoit estre.

Li deu here, even though it is plural, will almost certainly refer to Jupiter, the 'most high god' whose will was often synonymous with Fate, and whose will it was in this instance to compensate Venus for the loss of Troy by the building of the new city, Rome.

The author is at great pains to describe the wealth of Carthage and its queen, because it is this very wealth, together with the sense of security that it engenders, that Eneas allows himself, in spite of an obviously strong sense of duty, to be waylaid by the rich and powerful queen who has shown hospitality and pity towards himself and his men. It is suggested that Dido is the more grievously wounded by the shaft of Cupid :

812 mortal poison la dame boit
and again

820- 21 c'est Dido qui plus fole estoit,
 ele i a pris mortal ivrece.

By the recurring use of the word 'mortal', the author suggests that Dido's love-pangs can be assuaged only by death and that her love will be the cause of her death. Eneas, on the other hand has work to do, and in spite of himself and his passion he must do it.

Thus, with the help of Amor, the prospect and need of rest from his wanderings, the pity of the Phoenician queen who longs for love and children, Eneas falls from grace and commits the fault of indulging in sensual pleasure at the expense of a known duty, a grievous fault indeed from a Stoic, Christian or chivalrous point of view. Dido, the temptation to sensuality, is again shown as the more powerfully dramatic figure of the two. Eneas, reminded of his duty to the gods, the Trojans and his future native land, is again brought to an abrupt self-examination. It is worth noting that Eneas' real regrets and fears are not so much for himself as for the woman whom he is about to

hurt, showing a level of charity that would not be unworthy of a Christian;

1635- 39 et molt dote la departie
de la dame, qu'ele ne socie;
crient que li tart a grant contraire,
et nequedan ne set que faire
de ce qu'ont comandé li de

whereas the shame and guilt which he experiences are for himself.

Enéas is therefore a sorely tempted man. He is faced with the choice of hurting and possibly driving to suicide a woman whom he loves, or of disregarding the will of the gods and escaping from his own destiny. There is no real alternative. Once his fault has been proclaimed by the messenger of the gods, there is no question of his not going:

1625- 28 Eneas fu molt esmaie
de ce que cil li a noncie
set qu'il ne puet mes remanoir,
qu'il ne s'en alt par estovoir.

Enéas has endured physical hardships, deprivations, loss of men, loss of equipment and loss of home. Winter is now approaching, a dangerous time for sailing. The Dido affair is simply a moral obstacle which, in spite of temptation, he has to make up his mind to overcome. He still has to learn 'temperentia' or 'mesure'. He has shown evidence of being swayed by the very un-Stoic, but nevertheless very Christian virtue of pity. And this may be the reason that Dido, breaking violently with the tradition of her Vergilian forerunner twice utters words of pardon before her death. e.g:

2067 Gel vos pardoins, sire Eneas,
 whereas Vergil's Dido, from the depths of her agony,
 managed only to pray for an avenger of her humiliation :--

Exoriare aliquis nostris ex ossibus ultor, 5.
 Qui face Dardanios ferroque sequare colonos.

With the sad departure of Eneas from the devastation he
 has wrought at Carthage, his Purgative Way is at an end.

In Sicily, after Eneas has dutifully performed the
 customary rites to his dead father, Anchises, the latter
 appears to him. This apparition will be to encourage
 Eneas, to instruct him, to inform him more surely of his
 destiny, but above all, to tell him of the journey he
 must make to the Underworld. This visit, by its very
 nature, can be seen to be the central point in Eneas'
 development. Anchises, simply by appearing to his son,
 could have easily told him of the great Roman figures who
 were to come, just as he had predicted his arrival in
 Italy. But this is not enough. For Eneas, a hazardous
 journey with its accompanying ritual through the abodes
 of the shades is necessary before he can appear either as
 the founder of Rome, or as the embodiment of chivalric
 virtues :

2279- 81 par lor comant m'estuet aler
 a mon pere an enfer parler,
 h'i puis aler se par vos non, etc.

Much has been written on the significance of the Golden
 Bough, the talisman by which Eneas can prove his right to
 challenge the Stygian waters before his time, but there
 is hardly place for discussion of that here. (2309-12)

It is sufficient to say that, upon finding the bough, Enéas appears to have an increase of hope, joy and confidence at recognising again that he is an 'élu', and that the gods are still with him:

2345- 47 Eneas fu joios et liez,
droit a Seville est repairez,
le ramet d'or li a mostre.

After which his immediate reaction is, in the manner of a man of 'pietas', to offer sacrifice and prayer to the gods of the Underworld :-

2348- 50 Un sacrefice ot apresté,
al deu d'enfer sacrefia
et molt humblement lo pria.

There is question, too, of the crossing of a river. It appears that water, in ancient mythology, was frequently the sign of cleansing and of rebirth. The crossing of a river or an immersion into the depths of the sea could signify a change in status. So it was in pre-Christian religious practices, incorporated later into Christian Baptism. For Enéas, the untimely crossing of the waters of the Styx and his subsequent exit from the Underworld could signify the putting away of the old life and his entrance into the new life in which he is to triumph. As also in some other mythologies the hero who would enter a new world is challenged by a gatekeeper in some form or other, so Enéas, whose golden bough is recognised by Charon, is challenged before being rowed across the gloomy river by that grim ferryman :-

2547- 50 Enéas trait le ramoissel
que il avoit soz son mantel,
Quant cil* lo vit, si s'apaisa, * = Charon
la nacelle li atorna.

Escorted across the river and introduced into the abode of the shades, Enéas experiences remorse when he sees Dido amongst those who have died for love, shame as he sees the shades of great Trojans who were slain, and a crushing pity for them all.

Enéas' time of light and hope comes when his father Anchises, recognising his son's basic 'pietas', in spite of everything, shows him the triumphant destiny of the souls of the just, and will introduce him to the most outstanding of the glorious figures that Rome is about to produce :-

2839- 41 Fiz Eneas, or sai et voi,
 quant venüz estes ci a moi
 que piete venqui paor.

For Enéas then, the cause of encouragement is the prophetic vision in which he sees a procession of great Romans, headed by Lavinia, his destined bride. This is his consolation, and so powerful is it, that Troy is no longer a source of grief to him:

2991- 96 Anz an son cuer an a grant joie,
 oblié a le duel de Troie,
 et nequedan pansis estoit
 des batailles que il avroit,
 des maus que il estuet sofrir
 ainz que viegne a terre tenir.

Enéas has thus passed through the Illuminative Way, and will now lead a life that conforms perfectly to the will of the gods and his destiny. Obedient and receptive to divine commands, and endowed with a higher degree of understanding, Enéas is no longer seen as the hesitant leader, as on the night when Troy finally fell, the terrified despairing fugitive afflicted by the storm at

sea, or the sensual lover, too absorbed in his passion for Dido to keep his mind on his duty.

In King Latinus' first speech to the Trojan envoys, there is a very strong hint that Lavinia, his daughter, is destined not for Turnus, but for someone still unknown to her:

3236- 41 Turnus a non li marchis;
ma moillier vielt qu'il ait mon regne,
et Lavine ma fille a fegne,
mais sorti est et destiné
que uns estranges, hom l'avra
de cui real ligniée istra.

Divine intervention is still seen in favour of the Trojans. For example, Venus, commissions Arachne to weave arms for Enéas. But more spectacular is the new confidence shown in the leader himself, whose absence is lamented so convincingly by Nisus :

4995- 99 Se Enéas fust o nos ci,
quel seüssent nostre enemi,
nos an fusiens molt plus doté,
et si sai bien de verité
que molt nos porrion deffandre

If Enéas were there present with them, they would have no need to fear the enemy, but rather the enemy would have reason to fear them. No longer is Enéas diffident, envying the lot of those who have been slain in battle. His new-found strength enables him to see beyond himself and his fears and to understand his situation in the light of his destiny. At Pallas' funeral rites, for example, Enéas shows grief for his comrades' youth and the friendship he has shared, and regret that his destiny detained him elsewhere when his friend needed him. But his greatest concern springs from an unselfish motive, namely for the parents of Pallas. For the young warrior himself, Enéas sees hope, knowing that he will find happiness in the

Elysian fields among the Blessed. Thus Death also has acquired a surer meaning for him :

6147- 49 "Pallas," fait il, "flor de jovente,
ja mes n'iert jors, ne me repente
que ca venis ansamble moi."

6201 - 04 t'ame n'ait poines ne ahans,
ainz aut es Elisiens chans,
iluec ou li buen home sont,
dela lo grant anfer parfont.

Some short discussion could now be profitably spent on the characters of Lavinia and Turnus, and their function in Enéas' development. Lavinia provides a contrast with Dido. Awakening in love for the first time she is in a very different situation from that of Dido, a mature and desperate woman. And, of course, she offers an excellent opportunity for her author to discourse on the theory, symptoms and awakenings of love, an exposition which had its origins in Ovid, but which will be seen again in medieval writers. Whereas Dido is a destructive force, Lavinia represents creative activity, for it is she who provides Enéas with a reason for his final combat with Turnus, a reason which would appeal to the medieval French public audience far more surely than the dispute over the plains of Latium which prompted the final combat in the Aeneid. In seeking her love, Enéas has an opportunity of atoning for his fateful passion for Dido. And finally, Lavinia is creative in the sense that it is she who will bear the mother of the future kings of Rome, as can be seen in Anchises' disclosure to Enéas in the Underworld :-

2933- 40 Cel damoiseil ki cele lance
 tient an sa main par conoissance,
 cil ira primes de ceus
 al souverain air la desus;
 Lavinia l'avra de toi,
 qui est fille Latin lo roi;
 an une selve cil naistra
 et Silvius a nom avra;

until seventh in Enéas line comes Romulus, to give his
 name and his laws to the new city :-

2950 - 51 Voiz celui la, c'est Romulus,
 cil ert setmes de ta ligniee.

That Turnus is an essentially noble figure is obvious, for Lavinia's mother prefers him to Enéas as a potential husband for her daughter. So well has 'Rumour' done its work in Carthage that it has reached Amata's ears that Enéas is effeminate and incapable of accepting a woman's love. He is shown as princely and proud, a worthy heir, in fact, for the kingdom of Latinus, and a much more striking figure than Enéas. What is it, then, that forces the reader to see, in spite of himself, Enéas as the nobler, more creative figure of the two, and Turnus as another representative of destructive powers? Perhaps the contrast can be seen very clearly in two rather gruesome scenes. The first is when Enéas' envoys, Nisus and Euryalus, have been slain. For Turnus the slaying is not enough. As the author rather grimly states :-

5279- 80 Turnus a fait les testes prendre,
 devant la porte les fet pandre

This can be compared with the action of Enéas, later in the romance, when he has Turnus in his power and at his mercy. The latter yields himself up to Enéas in the presence of his men and, as he begs for his life, renounces

any rights over Lavinia that he might have hoped for.

The terseness of this line says a great deal :

9793 Eneas en ot grant pitie.

And he would, we read, have been moved by this pity, had he not seen Pallas' ring on Turnus' finger. It is only the memory of his slain friend that prompts Enéas to use his sword :

9801- 10 "- Tūm'as crié merci,
 tot mās laissié et tot guerpi,
 cest reigne o la fille lo roi.
 Ge ausse pitié de toi,
 ne perdisse vie ne membre,
 mais par cest anel m'en remembre
 de Pallas que tu oceïs;
 el cuer m'en as molt grant duel mis;
 ne t'ocirra mie Eneas,
 mais de toi se venche Pallas."

This is not the place to discuss the morality of Enéas' action of slaying Turnus in revenge for the death of Pallas. Christianity has always taught unequivocally that private revenge is unlawful. But even though the actions of the pagan gods and their rituals are severely restricted in the French version of the poem, Enéas does not pretend to be a Christian romance, or its principal character a Christian figure. It is obvious from Enéas' hesitation before the slaying of Turnus that the task is repugnant to him. Elsewhere he shows degrees of virtue that would not be unworthy of a Christian. Perhaps his French interpreter, in imitation of Vergil's Aeneas, saw in him a hero relentlessly seeking the Truth by the practice of an upright life. For in the words of the Second Vatican Council in the Constitution on the Church "Nor is God himself far distant from those who in shadows and images seek the unknown God, for it is He who gives to all men life and breath and every other gift, and who as Saviour wills that all men be saved." 6

Chapter III

Erec ^{i.}

Now that we have studied the spiritual progress of Eneas, a predominant forerunner of the characters of Chrétien de Troyes, let us turn to the career of Erec, the first of that master's heroes. In his case, through conflict, lapse, self-examination and self-conquest, there can be seen evidence of progression towards a higher and more perfect chivalry, and a deeper spirituality. It is fitting that the story of Erec's adventures should begin at Easter, that season of awakening, spring, new life, joy, hope and resurrection. Even though the action is to be extended over a long period of time, the scene is admirably set for the introduction of Erec and his quests, for he is to rise from a deathlike swoon, to become a more perfect knight and a better human person.

At his first appearance, Erec is spoken of in terms of high praise :-

87 - 93 et fu tant biax qu'an nule terre
 n'estovoit plus bel de lui guerre.
 Molt estoit biax et preuz et genz
 et n'avoit pas .xxv. anz;
 onques nus hom de son aage
 ne fu de si grant vasselage;
 que diroie de ses bontez?

But with the introduction of the episode of the White Stag, there arise a number of questions concerning Erec and his Character, his status at King Arthur's court, his spiritual qualities and his development in knightly prowess. Why,

for example, does a knight of such exceptional promise not take part in the hunt for the White Stag when the King has obviously expressed his wish that all his knights should take part in the hunt ?

59 - 65

"- Ce sai ge bien;
mes por ce n'an lerai ge rien,
car parole que rois a dite
ne doit puis estre contredite.
Demain matin a grant deduit
irons chacier le blanc cerf tuit
an la forest aventureuse : "

Certainly, Erec appears to be most courteous to Queen Guinevere and attends scrupulously to her commands. Why, then, does Erec need to undergo the later series of adventures at all? A well-constructed and successful romance could have evolved, had the author so wished, from the insult by Yder's dwarf, Erec's revenge, the episode of the Sparrow - hawk, culminating in Erec's marriage. Chrétien, I feel, could have seen Erec's potential, not only as a knightly individual, but also as a spiritual person whose promising qualities were still to be questioned, tested and developed. With his clerical training, Chrétien would surely have been familiar with the following thoughts expressed by St. Peter :-

"What if you have trials of many sorts to sadden your hearts in this brief interval? That must needs happen, so that you may give proof of your faith, a much more precious thing than the gold we test by fire; " 2.

As Erec, therefore, progresses through his series of adventures, there can be seen, on varying levels, evidence of the basic trials, purgations, self-recognition,

darkness, light, atonement and continual striving that is characteristic of a soul seeking union with God. Moreover, from the time of the fateful accusation after his marriage, Erec appears to show traces of a broad tripartite division in his spiritual development.

Erec's initiation can be said, perhaps, to take place at the Sparrow-hawk contest, where he is introduced to that experience in his life which will not only bring about his marriage, but which will eventually pave the way for his other adventures. It is therefore most necessary from the author's point of view that Erec disregard King Arthur's explicit wish and stay away from the hunt for the White Stag. If Erec had a lady to defend, we know nothing of her, but it does seem unlikely that such a promising young knight would be so ungallant as not to be prepared to champion a lady's claims to beauty. He is quite content to stay with the queen, to attend her and to offer manifestations of his courtliness :-

107 - 10 "Dame, fet il, a vos seroie,
s'il vos pleisoit, an ceste voie;
je ne vīng ca por autre afere
fors por vos compaignie fere. "

It is in attending the Queen that Erec has his opportunity of meeting Yder, and the subsequent obligation of fighting for his own and the Queen's honour. Erec is drawn, as it were, to the Sparrow-hawk contest and to Enide, just as, on a higher plane, a person is set apart to perform a lofty task. Yet just as he disregards the King's wishes concerning the White Stag hunt, so Erec

hesitates about going immediately to the aid of the Queen's maiden, when she is struck by the dwarf. He waits for the Queen's explicit command, thus showing, perhaps, a certain amount of indecision and lack of initiative in himself. This is a quite serious fault, for a knight must be prepared to defend all women if he is to prove himself worthy of one. For this fault, and for the pride which kept him away from the hunt for the White Stag, Erec is later to pay heavily in his journey of rehabilitation.

Evident in Erec's behaviour at this stage is also a certain degree of prudence, without which no virtue can be said to be complete. Recognising, for example, when he comes face to face with Yder's dwarf, an antagonism that he cannot contend with, Erec is prudent enough not to try to provoke either the dwarf or Yder while he is still unarmed:

231- 32

Folie n'est pas vasesages;
de ce fist molt Erec que sages:

When given hospitality by the aged vavasour at Laluth, Erec shows great courtesy which develops into concern for the old man's poverty and pity for the situation to which his beautiful daughter has been reduced.

Chrétien's art is such that there can be seen between Erec and Enide not wealth complementing poverty, or authority complementing service, but goodness evoking goodness, courtliness evoking courtliness, beauty confronting beauty, and the dominant masculine sovereignty of Erec confronting the subtle but no less powerful feminine sovereignty of Enide. Earlier, when Erec was

introduced, the author confessed himself to be speechless in the face of Erec's qualities :-

93 - que diroie de ses bontez ?

Similarly, after attempting a description of Enide's beauty, Chretien again admits the futility of words :-

437 que diroie de sa biauté ?

With such a happy omen, it is inevitable that Erec will pass his first initiation satisfactorily, defend Enide's right to the sparrow hawk and will have an 'amie' to take back with him to King Arthur's court, where the climax of the hunt has obviously been deferred in anticipation of his successful return.

Another manifestation of Erec's pride can be seen in his insistence that Enide retain her own tattered garments until she is formally robed by the Queen at King Arthur's court. But an added reason for the problem of Enide's clothes will be Erec's sense of ritual. For Erec's future wife, the companion in his quest, the formal robing by the Queen and her maids is as much of an initiation rite as Erec's subsequent tournament at Tenebrec.

At the close of this episode Erec is seen triumphant, generous, skilled in jousting, and generally faithful to the code of courtly behaviour. Yet there is to be a swift transition between the young Erec searching irresponsibly for chivalry and love, and the Erec of the painful, heart-searching journey and desperate adventures. The couple have everything in their favour - prestige, courtesy and a future glowing with bright promise. But just as too much prosperity frequently breeds self-

indulgence and self-destruction, so Erec indulges in marital bliss at the cost of his knightly reputation and causes Enide such heart-burnings. Thus he is forced to a close and abrupt self-examination in which he appears to blame Enide for being the cause of his un-knightly abandonment to luxury.

In Eneas, 'Rumour' was one of the factors which contributed to the abandonment of the Carthaginian queen, by the Trojan leader. Now it is 'Rumour' again, originating from Erec's companions which so disturbs Enide. And it is precisely because of his great promise and apparently high calling that Erec's companions are so worried about him. No open reproach is made to Erec. He has to learn of the gravity of the accusation not through any tactful companion, but through the tears and admission of the beloved wife who has unwittingly caused his self-indulgence.

Because of his 'desmesure', his lack of 'temperentia' the loss of the prudence which had characterised his earlier actions, but most of all, because of the 'parole' of the being who has caused him to err, Erec must undergo his catharsis. His immediate duty is to prove to Enide, to society and to his conscience, at the cost of his own life, if need be, that he is as capable and as gifted a knight as he first appeared and later, at the initiation tournament proved himself to be. Not only does he have to prove it for his own satisfaction. He also has to become in deed and in essence a better and nobler knight who will not only atone for his fault, but will so purify himself and re-establish his reputation that there can be no possibility of the

fault recurring. A drastic solution immediately leaps to his mind and is put into action. He must begin again. No longer is Erec the hesitant knight absenting himself from the White Stag episode, but the decisive lord of a princely household. Only in the farewell words of Erec to his father is his pity and care for Enide allowed to show :-

2721 - 27 "Mes je vos pri, que qu'il aveigne,
 se ge muir et ele reveigne,
 que vos l'avoiz et tenez chiere,
 por m'amor et por ma proiere,
 et la mitie de vostre terre,
 quite, sanz bataille et sanz guerre,
 li otroiez tote sa vie. "

Just as the soul struggling in the Purgative Way is vulnerable and beset by temptations, so the journey is fraught with all kinds of dangers for Erec and Enide. By undergoing conflicts of increasing danger and difficulty, Erec is to correct his faults and gain the necessary progress in knightly valour, concentrating, above all on the real object of his quest, which is to find a perfect balance between knightly duty and marital happiness. We may justly wonder why Enide has to accompany Erec, for a lady for whom a knight is demonstrating his prowess should stay at home. Enide, too, has committed a fault. She has offended her husband by her 'parole'. Lacking the necessary courage to tell Erec of the rumours before it was too late, she now has to yield to his insistent threats before she hesitantly tells him of the accusation, thus allowing the rumour to circulate more widely. Erec is prompt enough in acknow-

ledging that the accusation is true :-

2572 - 73

" Dame, fet il, droit an eüstes,
et cil qui m'an blasment ont droit."

Enide's journey then, is one of reparation for her spoken word, uttered too late. For this and for distracting Erec from his duties, no doubt, she is harshly forbidden to speak to her husband. It is the very presence of Enide that precipitates some of Erec's most deadly adventures, and it is she too, who, in spite of her injunction to silence, warns Erec on several occasions of approaching danger. Indeed, when Erec is attacked by Guivret le Petit for the second time he is saved only by the swift and forceful interference of Enide, who has now overcome her earlier lack of assurance. Above all, since a balanced attitude is being sought in the marriage, it is a journey which husband and wife must make together.

To give a fuller meaning to this quest, Enide is to wear her most beautiful gown, to make herself worthy of her lord and to heighten, perhaps, that beauty for which Erec fell from grace. Having lost his own prudence, Erec is now dependent upon the feminine intuition, presence and vigilance of Enide which he accepts most grudgingly and usually with reproof. Yet, like a light growing in strength, comes the knowledge that Enide has a greater depth of penetration, steadfastness and nobility of character than she had ever had a chance, as Erec's stable-boy, to show.

During the journey, Erec learns his lessons of humility

by leading a life away from courtly society. Separated from his familiar environment, he is gradually able to understand in its fullness the accusation that was made against him. His fortitude, through being exercised in matters of life and death, receives new strength. Not for him now is the comradely jousting of the courtly tournaments. He has to fight for his life, his wife, and the necessary balance between knightly duty and the passion which had separated Erec and Enide from society. Their love also is to undergo a transformation. Whereas Erec had originally experienced a selfish, excluding, sensual love, in which he gave Enide little choice as to whether she would marry him, he must now learn to love Enide selflessly. Gradually then, their love takes its root in generosity, becoming more mature and more adult, making the couple more conscious of their relationship to society, and giving strength and perspective to their marriage.

There is a twofold progression in Erec's encounters, namely, the severity of his adversaries and the grievousness of his wounds, culminating in his apparent death. And, from the morning of their departure, there runs the theme of the hard-working husband and the vigilant wife, for example :

3093 - 94

cil dormi et cele veillea
onques la nuit ne someilla;

Attracted by the evident wealth of the pair in the forest, the three robbers are the first to show hostility:

2803 - 08 " Ci vient une dame molt bele;
 ne sai s'ele est dame ou pucele,
 mais molt est richemant vestue;
 ses palefroiz et sa sanbue,
 et ses peitrax et ses lorains,
 valent vint mars d'argent au mains."

A more serious attack is that made by the five robbers. Not only is there still evidence of wealth in the clothing and equipment of the couple, but they have also acquired three extra horses. The defeat of the eight robbers is represented by their eight horses which are entrusted to Enide. According to Pythagoras and cited by Macrobius, the number eight signifies justice.

"PYTHAGORICI VERO HUNC NUMERUM IUSTITIAE VOCAVERUNT." 3.

Although she is now at the height of her husband's displeasure, for she has twice disobeyed his injunction to silence, Enide leads by the bridle the eight horses which have been entrusted to her as the symbols of the conquered robbers, just as she had once led Erec's horse to its stable when he was about to be conquered by her beauty. It is symbolical too that the justice concerned refers not only to the relationship between Erec and Enide.

There was a lack of justice in the accusation reported by Enide, for Erec had not entirely forgotten his duty. At least, if he did not attend tournaments in person, he did send men to represent him, and he practised largesse towards his dependants. (2445-54) There was a lack of justice, too, in Erec's treatment of Enide, for she had only tried to do her duty, even if somewhat hesitantly.

In the third adventure there can be seen a more serious and subtle incident in the romance. It is not

any obvious wealth that is sought by the 'comte vaniteux', but rather the honour of Enide. Yet so courtly is the behaviour of the wanderers, that after the initial threats and subsequent encounter, the Count can be brought to reason and repentance. The vigilant wife, yielding verbally to the Count's suggestion, is optimistic enough to hope in the success of her plan to save both Erec and herself, and courageous enough, after a night of fear and perplexity, to warn her husband once more. Reluctant though he is to admit it, the certainty of Enide's loyal love is a source of strength and courage for Erec. This time there is no reproach for her forwardness in speaking out of turn, but a direct command to escape from the situation. Not yet, however, does Erec address Enide as 'ma douce amie' of their carefree irresponsible days, but as 'dame':

3482 - 83

" Dame, fet il, isnelemant
feites noz chevax anseler "

A more formidable antagonist is to be found in Guivret le Petit whose courage, swiftness in action and extraordinary prowess make him an opponent to be feared. Erec is not now to fight for survival against robbers or against a treacherous rival, but he is fighting on equal terms. He is to match his courage against Guivret's courage, his skill against Guivret's skill, his innate nobility against that of Guivret, who is also a worthy descendant of a royal household. The mutual hostility of the two knights turns to generosity and noble sentiments. This

incident could mark the beginning of Erec's Illuminative Way, for from this time his actions become more positive, and a growth in virtue will gradually manifest itself. From here, too, the reader is allowed to know that Erec, in spite of his harsh treatment of her, still loves Enide, and is aware that she loves him. This can be seen very clearly when Enide again disregards Erec's command to keep silence, and warns him of the approach of Guivret le Petit!

3751 - 55 Ele li dit; il la menace;
 mes n'a talant que mal li face,
 qu'il aparcoit et conuist bien
 qu'ele l'ainme sor tote rien,
 et il li tant que plus ne puet.

Like a true knight who is journeying on a quest, Erec has not hitherto provoked combat. All his adversaries have taken the initiative. But now, seeing a maiden in distress on account of her lover, he must now earn his own lady's love by pursuing the giants who have abducted the knight, Cadoc. Erec's new motive for fighting is therefore no longer preservation of himself or his property, as in earlier combats, but pity for the oppressed, and the willingness to endanger his life, if necessary, in the attempt to help. He had fought Guivret on equal terms. Now, aided by the prayers of Enide and the distressed maiden, he must go out to test his skill against that of the giants, an enemy superior in force, in weapons and in evil than any he has encountered hitherto. Although he vanquishes the giants, it is this force which is the cause of his subsequent deathlike swoon, an event which is

If the love between Erec and Enide is as perfect as it promises to be, it holds unlimited possibilities in the spiritual sense. As can be seen in the Constitution on the Church Today where the age-old teaching on the sanctity of marriage is reiterated, the love of married couples is held in very high esteem. It is suggested here, and this is no new doctrine, but a reinforcement of the old, that a husband and wife can find their love even for God through the practice of true and perfect conjugal love. "Authentic married love is caught up into divine love and is governed and enriched by Christ's redeeming power and the saving activity of the Church. Thus this love can lead the spouses to God with powerful effect and can aid and strengthen them in the sublime office of being a father or a mother." 5.

In the second incident with Guivret, Erec no longer needs Enide's warning to prepare him for oncoming danger. He has regained his prudence, and although he is still seriously wounded, is able to anticipate an imminent attack without being warned, and to take the necessary means of precaution against it. No longer does the old theme "cil dormi et cele veille" permeate the work. Instead, it is Erec, now, who counsels Enide to hide behind the hedge. But so altered is the situation that she, like the lion in Yvain, leaps out from safety to her master's defence and appeals to the better feelings of their antagonist.

After they leave Guivret's establishment where Erec

shows courtesy and gratitude to his benefactor's sisters, they set out directly for King Arthur's Court. This is the first time since the beginning of the quest that any specific destination has been mentioned, for their goal was spiritual rather than confined to familiar charted territory. Now, too, they no longer need to journey alone, for Guivret is there to accompany them.

The final part of Erec's development to be discussed at any length will be the 'Joie de la Cort' episode. There can be found in this adventure an air of mystery and an inclusion of supernatural factors which are absent in Erec's other adventures. It seems at first sight that Erec, hearing of the adventure, simply cannot resist an opportunity of demonstrating his own prowess and of making a further effort to display his knightly potential. But this would be out of character with the new, more mature Erec who has lost his prudence and found it again. Such prudence as he has now, would surely lead him to heed the warnings of the townsfolk who have spoken so convincingly about the fate of all the other knights who have sought this 'Joie.' Therefore, his motive for seeking this adventure will be higher than mere curiosity or self-distinction. This episode could also be criticised as being irrelevant to the structure of the work as a whole. Critics could say that the romance would end more satisfactorily with the reconciliation of Erec and Enide or with the coronation of Erec. That would be a failure in understanding the work, especially if it is kept in mind

that the word 'Joie' occurs very frequently in Erec and in a variety of contents. As M. Frappier expresses it :

" Un mot et un thème, qui ne jurent pas avec les renaissances et les oeuvres inspirées par elles, expriment ce qui fait la jeunesse d' Erec et Enide : la joie. La fréquence du mot, les variations du thème ajoutent une seconde conjointure à l'agencement des épisodes. Joies d'amour, douceur des fiançailles, ivresse d'épithalame, joie perdue, joie familiale dans la maison du vavasseur, foules en liesse, joie sauvage des oiseaux de fauconnerie, joies collectives, joie mystérieuse d' Erec devant le château de Brandigan: " Rien ne pourrait me retenir d'aller à la quête de la Joie. " 6.

But for Erec, the new challenge and the 'joie' are not enough in themselves. The very nature of the contest makes it significant for him. Let us look briefly at our hero as he enters the town where he is to meet this unknown antagonist. The townsfolk, seeing this enterprising determined and particularly handsome young knight are fervent in their entreaties to keep him away from the 'Joie de la Cort.'

5453- 60

A mervoilles l'esgardent tuit;
la vile an fremist tote et bruit,
tant an consoillent et parolent;
ne les puceles qui querolent
lor chant an leissent et retardent;
totes ansamble le regardent
et de sa grant biauté se saignent;
a grant mervoille le deplaignent:

Erec, according to the townsfolk, will meet his doom at the hands of his adversary, as have all those who have

dared to seek this adventure. There is only one source of hope :

5476- 77 " demain morras sanz retenue
se Dex ne te garde et desfant."

There is no need here to discuss the Celtic origins of this adventure or the indentification of the strange knight. In the garden of pleasure, cut off from human communication there reclines sensuously a maiden fairer than Lavinia of Laurentum. The antagonist's arms are crimson, and can thus signify passion, while the wall of air could symbolise either the bondage of those who yield themselves up to unbridled lust, or the slavery of those who live, profit and conquer by the sword without understanding the true spirit which governs courtly practices. Thus, the Erec who felt himself attracted towards and destined for this adventure, has to overcome, as a final adversary, the victim representing unbalanced love. True courtly love is distinguished from other forms of sensual love, from mere passion, from 'platonic' love and from conjugal love by its purpose or object, namely the lovers' progress in goodness and worth. Such a love does not exclude the lovers from the rest of society, but should render them more worthy of it, inspiring them to deeds from which society as a whole will profit. Now, embarked upon his Unitive Way, and reconciled with society, Erec derives strength from the knowledge that he will conquer if God helps him (5477) and confidence also in the perfection of his own and Enide's love :

5805- 09 " car bien sachiez seüremant
 s'an moi n'avoit de hardemant,
 fors tant con vostre amors m'an baille,
 ne criembroie je an bataille,
 cors a cors, nul home vivant."

Erec seems incapable, now, of making a mistake, for the forces of good which have been tested and developed in him are stronger than the forces of evil of which Mabonagrain is prisoner. All those with whom he comes in contact seem to derive profit from his influence; by the defeat of Mabonagrain he restores true joy to the court of King Evrain; and now that her love is freed from its tyranny, it seems that Enide's cousin, the girl in the orchard, will, in spite of her distress, know a much surer and more balanced happiness. Finally, it is joy too, which is the theme surrounding Erec's coronation. The pageantry, liberality, devotion and unbounded joy of this event suggest a future for Erec and Enide which surpasses even the bright promise of their marriage.

Chapter IV

Yvain ¹.

Erec is Chrétien's first example of a knight pursuing a quest. Yvain, which is generally accepted as the best constructed and most satisfying of Chrétien de Troyes' romances, provides a hero who falls into sin, feels impelled to make atonement, and in his quest for reinstatement in his lady-love's favour, seems to show evidence of spiritual development along the three traditional levels. Like Erec and Enéas, Yvain undergoes a period of initiation, a series of adventures which lead to a traumatic climax. This in turn brings about a crisis of self-confrontation in which he is in need of extraordinary supernatural strength to atone for his fault and to win his way back to courtly society and to his lady's heart, just as the soul which is in the state of sin needs supernatural help to attain the 'state of grace' once more. Having accepted this help, he can advance to heights of knightly valour and even spiritual prowess, so that he emerges as a hero of a much greater depth than he appeared in the earlier part of the work.

Let us first study the qualities and defects of Yvain as he first appears in the romance. So much trouble and pity does he show on hearing Calogrenant's humiliating tale, and so anxious is he to avenge his cousin's shame that he is an immediate target for Kés's tauntings. This, naturally, provides a second motive for Yvain's wishing to

undertake the fountain adventure, namely, to prove that Ké has judged him wrongly. But his third and principal motive for wishing to undertake the fountain adventure can be seen to be the pride which colours so many of his subsequent actions:

680 - 88 S'an fu dolanz et angoisseus
 Del roi, qui aler i devoit.
 Por ce solemant li grevoit
 Qu'il savoit bien que la bataille
 Avroit mes sire Kes sanz faille
 Ainz que il, - s'il la requeroit,
 Ja veee ne li seroit, -
 Ou mes sire Gauvains meïmes
 Espoir la demanderoit primes.

"The man who envies," says a theologian," sorrows at the good fortune of others because he regards it as a hindrance to his own good."² In this way, Yvain sorrows at the thought that the King is planning an expedition to the Fountain and that Ké and Gauvain are likely to be preferred before him in undertaking battle. His pride is therefore coupled with a tendency to envy (682). Yet he does show enough prudence, at least, on a natural plane, to understand that he must seek the Fountain Adventure promptly and discreetly if he is to attain any degree of success. Thus, when Yvain is ready to leave for the Fountain, he is seen as being prompt in doing courtly service, compassionate towards Calogrenant, and able, superficially at least, to rebuff Kés' remarks in a good-humoured way. His faults of pride and envy are serious, and he will pay heavily for them in the course of his adventures. Much later when Lunete offers him her protection, we are to learn that he is already a

hero of outstanding courtliness, and this in itself suggests that he is endowed with a promising combination of virtues.

Yvain's initiation, like that of Calogrenant, will have two principal stages. The first stage is the meeting with the herdsman, that character who is an anti-type of courtliness. Because of his extraordinary ugliness, his magical power over the bulls and his apparent alliance with strange supernatural forces, he needs to say to those who ask his identity before they set out on their quest :-

330

" Je sui uns hon. "

In him, then, we see a guardian at the gateway to a new life, a formidable figure like the Charon of the Under-world, fear-inspiring in his own domain, but harmless to living mortal men.

Having been directed and, as it were, admitted by the herdsman, Yvain now undertakes the second stage of his initiation, namely, the Fountain adventure. Elements from numerous religious and mythological sources can be found in this episode, but particularly relevant to this study, there can be seen in the extraordinary pouring of water, a reflection of the rite of Christian Baptism.

In the battle with the Knight of the Fountain, Yvain shows that in skill, determination and courage, he is more than equal to his adversary :-

838 - 41 Ainz dui chevalier si angrés
 Ne furent de lor mort haster.
 N'ont cure de lor cos gaster;
 Qu'au miauz qu'il pueent les anploient.

But to this, he adds the fault of 'desmesure', for in his efforts to bring home evidence of his prowess to the taunting Ké, he is content not only with wounding Esclados, but pursues him, defeated and dying right into the palace. This fault also can be seen to stem from his pride.

Because of his outstandingly courteous behaviour to Lunete on a former occasion, Yvain is to be saved by wearing her ring of invisibility. This not only preserves Yvain's life but paves the way for his falling in love with and marrying the defeated knight's widow, Laudine. His is not the easy conquest experienced by Erec over Enide. The physical distance between Yvain and Laudine is considerably greater than that between Erec and Enide, especially since Yvain is invisible while 'Amors' is doing its work. Psychologically the distance seems insurmountable, for after all, widows of slain knights are not in the habit of marrying their husbands' aggressors. However, as this discussion concerns Yvain's spiritual development rather than his spectacular winning of Laudine, this is hardly the occasion for studying the progress of 'Amors', or the brilliant psychological skill with which Chretien handles his characters in this episode. Let it suffice to say that at the time of his marriage, Yvain

appears to have been a most fortunate man. By his prowess and skill, together with the supernatural helps offered by Lunete and the machinations of 'Amors', he has won a lady, property and status which augur a bright future.

But just as Yvain showed 'desmesure' in pursuing the mortally wounded Esclados le Roux, so he gives a further manifestation of this serious fault against courtliness when he outstays the leave granted him by his lady. In this incident, his 'desmesure' springs from a very different reason from that of Erec. For whereas the latter became so absorbed in the delights of love that he was accused of abandoning his knightly duties, Yvain becomes so preoccupied by deeds of prowess, instead of defending widows, orphans and those who cannot defend themselves, that he forgets his duty to his lady and to 'Amors.' Thus, he commits the most fatal of crimes for a lover ever since Theseus, 'immemor', abandoned Ariadne on Naxos, through the most fundamental of sins, pride, by which the first man fell.

To assess the enormity of Yvain's crime, the effect that his negligence is having on Laudine and his lapse from courtly standards of behaviour, it is necessary to study the important transition passage in which a messenger comes to him from his wife. Close attention will be given to the lines 2702- 2782, which will be divided as follows :-

- I 2702-04 Yvain's remorse
- II 2705-22 Arrival, dismounting, greetings of the
maiden.
- III 2723-45 The maiden gives to the bystanders her
account of Yvain's treachery.
- IV 2746-66 The maiden's reproaches are directed
straight at Yvain.
- V 2767-79 Laudine's dismissal of Yvain. He is
forced to surrender the ring.
- VI 2780-82 Yvain's confusion, shame and remorse.

I, 2702-04. The scene is set at Chester where Yvain, Gauvain and other knights have just returned from a successful tournament. The King is with them also, but under circumstances which again emphasise Yvain's pride, for the two companions have remained aloof from the King's court. It is King Arthur who has to go to them rather than they to him. On realising so suddenly that he has outstayed the time set by Laudine for his return, his pride in his chivalric achievements crumbles into a confusion of shame, grief and despair.

2702-04 A grant painne tenoit ses lermes,
 Mes honte li feisoit tenir.

II, 2705-22. A great deal of care has been expended in the portrayal of this messenger. We do not know who she is. Certainly it is not Lunete who would have found some way of protecting her old friend. The maiden approaches 'a droiture,' directly. Then her horse, black with white markings, suggests the clear, the direct, the unequivocal. Without any preamble except the removal of her cloak, she makes her business clear. No timid maiden is this, but one who appears to be perfectly at ease in

the royal company and completely in command of the situation. It is significant, though, that none of the assembled knights makes any attempt to ^{help} her to dismount, remove her cloak or escort her to the King. Yet this was the kind of attention which had once earned Lunete's gratitude for Yvain, a gratitude which resulted in her assisting him in a time of great need. Now, no doubt, he would be too preoccupied with his remorse and shame to worry about the finer details of courtly practice. The speed with which the writer turns from Yvain's melancholy brooding to his sight of the messenger on horseback almost suggests that Yvain's shock of remorse causes the appearance of the girl :-

2704-5 Tant pansa, que il vit venir
 Une dameisele a droiture.

In general, when Yvain's name is mentioned in the work, it is preceded by 'mes sire.' But on line 2718, though there has been mention of 'mon seignor Gauvain' and 'toz les autres' in a respectful third person, Yvain is stripped of any title of courtesy at all: 'fors Yvain.'

To match the messenger's prompt and direct approach on horseback, the terms of her denunciation as laid down, doubtless, by Laudine are direct, unhesitating, unequivocal.

III, 2723-2745. There follows an account, for the sake of the bystanders, of Yvain's disloyalty, treachery and neglect of the wife whom he had appeared to love. Associated with this is a discourse on fidelity and infidelity in love. A man who truly respects his beloved will not take her heart away and disregard it. Rather,

he will take it, cherish it and bring it back enriched. The heart here is symbolic, of course, as it often is, of love. The man who would lightly steal a lady's heart and care nothing for it is to be considered as thief, hypocrite and traitor (2737-38). Through proving himself unworthy of his wife, Yvain, according to the messenger has caused her death (2742). With his love for her apparently dead, life for Laudine has lost its meaning.

IV, 2746-66. The real denunciation is uttered now.

(2746) 'Yvains ! ' No 'mes' or 'mes sire,' nothing except a cry of grief and reproach in the first place for her lady, so forgotten and neglected, but in addition, this maiden appears to feel pity for Yvain. He has been testing his ability in tournaments and in knightly conflicts. Preoccupied as he is with his own success, how could he know how true lovers feel ? How could he understand the torment of lovers who mark off the days until the Beloved returns?

2760-63

" Sez tu come li amant font?
Content le tans et la saison.
N'est pas venue sanz reison
Sa complainte ne devant jor, "

V 2767-2779. The messenger herself has not come to lodge any formal complaint, but merely to state that Yvain has betrayed them all in marrying her. (2767)

'Yvains!' Is this a cry of agony or of reproach? Perhaps it contains something of both, since the girl is the intermediary between the two people concerned. Laudine is renouncing him forever and he is charged to

give up the ring which had made him invulnerable in battle, and which she had given him as a supreme farewell gift in token of her love. And we may well ask, what right had Yvain, with such a ring to help him, to indulge in his fateful 'superbia'?

VI 2780-82. This passage now ends as it began- with expressions of Yvain's remorse. But at the maiden's accusation, Yvain is desolate beyond any hope of comfort. There is nothing that he can see or hear which does not remind him of his grief and augment it. His companions now realize his need for solitude, and in his subsequent loneliness and bewilderment he leaves them. The ensuing loneliness, despair and self-disgust thus prepare the way for the Dark Night of Yvain's madness.

Bereft of full consciousness of his actions and separated from his fellow knights, Yvain begins to lead a completely uncourtly life in which his madness undergoes several stages. This can be seen by the words used to describe his state.

From 2797 - Qu'il crient antre aus issir del san, he progresses to the definite state that his friends feared:-

2805- 06 El chief si granz, que il forsane,
 Lors se descire et se depane

By line 2834 'Il n'avoit mie le san tot;' and undergoes a further progression until in line 2869 'Tant come il fu an cele rage.'

It is significant, too, that, although Yvain's emotional state is portrayed so vividly, his name is mentioned only

once between the lines 2774 and 2906.

Bereft, too, of all human qualities except the capacity to redeem himself, he must begin to atone for his fault and, by living a primitive existence, gradually regain his senses, be reinstated into courtly society and ultimately into his lady's favour. Yvain's fault, we must remember, was caused by excessive pride in his knightly achievements. The first steps of the Purgative Way for him, will therefore be experiences that teach humility. Thus, his knightly weapons will be replaced by the primitive bow and arrow. With these he hunts the venison which, in his demented state, he eats raw. This primitive fare is later replaced by the bread and water offered through the kindness of the hermit. Yvain's knightly armour is replaced by his nakedness, his pride in his achievements by the humiliating recognition of his state.

Yvain's neglect of Laudine was also a failure in charity. In contrast, the kindness and charity of the lady of Noroison and her maids play an important role in Yvain's recovery. And it will be seen that charity has a large part to play in Yvain's later adventures. His new benefactors provide him with clothes, magical healing ointment, identification once more as 'Mes Sire Yvains,' arms, hospitality and above all, the beginnings of a sense of purpose. For once more, Yvain is given an opportunity of demonstrating his valour when he enters into conflict with the Count Alier. The healing charity shown to Yvain by the hermit and the lady of Neroison

is transmitted by Yvain in his turn to the Count, to whom he grants mercy. And in spite of the entreaties of the lady of Noroison to stay with her, he senses that he must be on his way. Not for him is the 'luxuria' that she offers him. He is a knight pursuing a quest, and he must decline unnecessary adventures and self-indulgence if he is to win his way back to his lost lady.

With his departure from the lady's castle, Yvain's Purgative Way is over. Now he is to pass through a stage of Illumination where the positive virtues of faith, hope, charity, courage, 'générosité' and above all, humility are to be gradually increased, tested and proved. Just as his rehabilitation after his madness could not take place without some supernatural help, just as the Christian who strives in virtue cannot succeed without the grace of God, so Yvain cannot pass through his Illuminative Way without some assistance. Chrétien and his medieval audience will have been familiar with the story of Androcles and the lion. Known to them also will have been the significance of the lion in the Bestiary as a type of Christ and the serpent as a type of evil.³ When he hears the cry which sends him to the aid of the distressed, Yvain is swift in going to the source of the cry. Here, in the clearing, Yvain is immediately faced with the choice between good and evil, as represented by the lion and the serpent. And in choosing to slay the representative of evil, Yvain commits himself to the destruction of more specific types of evil, as will be seen in his later adventures. The

lion, as he falls to his knees in gratitude, before his deliverer could be trying to tell Yvain that humility is a fundamental necessity in the life of one who has freely chosen good :

3402- 06 Mes sire Yvains par verité
 Set, que li lions l'an mercie
 Et que devant lui s'umelie
 Por le serpent, qu'il avoit mort,
 Et lui delivré de la mort.

And the lion's function is summed up very forcefully by Mr. Julian Harris:

"Although Yvain's lion is not an exact copy of the one in the Bestiaries, we shall see that he has much in common with the traditional lion. The first night of the compagnonnage between Yvain and the lion, as Yvain slept, the lion kept watch as a good lion should :

3481- 82 li lions ot tant de sans
 qu'il veilla.

Thereafter he is to watch over Yvain always and protect him from all sorts of dangers. He is to strike the deciding blow in various battles. He is to suffer when Yvain suffers. When we remember that the lion's wakefulness was taken as a symbol of Christ who, dead, yet lived, and who by the very act of death was redeeming mankind, we cannot fail to feel the appropriateness of having the symbol of the Redeemer accompanying Yvain on his journey of redemption." 4.

Just as there was a progression in the difficulties encountered by Erec in his Illuminative adventures, so there is progression and significance in those of Yvain.

On his return to the fountain, he is seen in a state of despair and longing for death. Lunete's prayer for his help results in Yvain's making the effort to forget himself in order to protect the maiden who was unjustly condemned to death for saving him from Esclados' avengers. Motivated by pity and gratitude for Lunete, he undertakes the combat with Harpin de la Montagne only on condition that he can be back in time to defend his benefactress the following day.

In encountering Harpin, the representative, perhaps, of lust, Yvain undertakes the first of his battles against more specific evils. His adversary defeated, Yvain refuses to disclose his real identity and to accept praise from the grateful suppliants. Now known as the 'Chevalier au Lion,' Yvain is making a conscious effort to conquer his destructive pride by the positive practice of humility. By the adoption of a new name, he is attributing a share in his success to the help of his faithful companion, thus resisting a further temptation to vainglory.

From the defeat of Harpin, Yvain returns to the scene of Lunete's plight where he is to come face to face with the three seneschals. These adversaries could, perhaps, represent injustice, and thus present a more formidable opposition than did the single giant. This combat is given an added significance by the fact that Yvain comes into the presence of Laudine at the end of it, realises

once more the apparently insurmountable difficulty of his quest, yet by his equivocating words he craftily prepares Laudine's subconscious mind for their future reconciliation. He has, therefore, made considerable progress in regaining the lost virtue of hope.

4624 - 26 "Certes, dame ! je n'oseroie
 Tant que certainement seüsse,
 Que le buen gre ma dame eüsse. "

A further indication of the lion's significance can be seen in a technical problem which occurs after this episode. The wounded lion is cared for by Yvain. But no knight, particularly a severely wounded one, could possibly carry a shield with a full-grown lion on it. The real meaning, therefore, is to be found in the idea of the lion as a companion. Yvain, like any good knight feels bound to take care of his wounded comrade, and feels pity at his distress.

From the Pesme-Adventure episode, Yvain shows traces of a higher spirituality, which could be likened to some aspects of the Unitive Way. A further progression is seen in the difficulty of the demoniac force that is to be overcome. Characteristics of a relentless 'other-world' appear here also. For example, like the 'Joie de la Cort' challenged by Erec, the way to the scene of this combat is easy enough. The real difficulty is to be found in striving to overcome the forces of evil that dwell there, and this is the reason why in both cases the bystanders utter dire warnings. They know that many have sought battle with the 'netuns.' They know also that no

combatant has returned. Like Irec approaching the 'Joie de la Cort' Yvain knows nothing of this evil, nor is he under any obligation to fight it, except the obligation of which he is more and more conscious during the latter half of his adventures, namely, the obligation incumbent upon all Christians to go to the help of a neighbour in need. Again, it is pity which moves Yvain to try his skill for the sake of the girls in captivity, and a vital factor in his subsequent victory will have been the prayer and Mass offered in honour of the Holy Spirit immediately before the battle. The demons who confront him cannot be matched by any human skill, for they represent evil powers. Only with his trust in God, the help of the lion and the Christ whom the lion symbolises can Yvain gain mastery over his demoniac adversaries and deliver the imprisoned maidens. Thus, like the Christian who has attained intimate union with God through charity^{5.} Yvain fights helped by the lion, as if there were but one mind and one heart between them.

These encounters all have several features in common. There is, in the first place, a plea for help from the oppressed. Yvain immediately, without question but with the help of the lion, goes to offer help. In the earlier section of his adventures, he was tempted to err because of his irresponsible heedlessness and preoccupation with his own glory. Now he makes reparation for that by carrying out deeds of chivalry well beyond the line of duty. But except for the final combat with Gauvain, and

the preliminary slaying of the serpent, he undertakes no battle until prayer has been made for the successful outcome of his encounter.

In all cases he is faced with a temptation at the end of his combat. The episode of the Lion and the Serpent offered, as we have seen, the choice between good and evil. The lady of Noroison, when successfully defended, offered him the temptation of 'luxuria.' Great will have been the temptation to accept Laudine's hospitality, but as Yvain has now learnt patience and wisdom, he knows that the time is not yet ripe, for he has to complete the process of earning her love once more. Upon conquering Harpin de la Montagne, Yvain is tempted by pride and self-satisfaction. After the Pesme-Adventure episode he resists the temptation to yield to the charms of a beautiful girl. Thus, by successfully resisting a series of temptations to basic human faults, Yvain gradually grows stronger in virtue and prepares the way for his last encounter and his subsequent reconciliation with Laudine.

It is in the final combat with Gauvain that the fruit of the symbolic unity between Yvain and his lion can be seen. Chrétien deliberately shows a contrast between the two sisters, thus preparing the minds of the audience for the rightness of the younger sister's cause and the lack of justice on the part of the elder. Again, we see why Yvain undertook battle on behalf of a girl who was completely unknown to him :

5983 - 90

" Des et li droiz, que je i ai,
 An cui je me fi et fiai
 Toz tans jusqu'au jor, qui est hui,
 An soit an aie a celui,
 Qui par aumosne et par franchise
 Se porofre de mon servise,
 Si ne set il, qui je me sui,
 Ne ne me conoist ne je lui. "

The lion is deliberately excluded from the trial by battle with Gauvain, and does not appear until after the combat, when he shows his joy as a loyal companion should:

6494- 97

Et li lions ne vint pas lant
 Vers son seignor la, ou il sist.
 Quant devant lui fu, si li fist
 Grant joie come beste mue.

Yvain's adversary because he is so renowned for his perfect chivalry, is thus a more formidable opponent than any encountered hitherto. But no outward manifestation of supernatural help is now needed for Yvain, so perfect a match for Gauvain does he appear to be. Instead of relentlessly pursuing his opponent as he did Esclados le Roux, Yvain makes the supreme gesture of a generous knight and admits that he is defeated, when in reality he is not. Furthermore, such great progress has Yvain now made that instead of envying Gauvain his good fortune and fine reputation, as he did in the prelude to the Fountain episode, he now vies with his rival in owning himself defeated.

Yvain does, as has been suggested, have to win Laudine twice. But his quest has a far more vital purpose than the wooing of a rather colourless, yet exacting lady. He can be accepted by Laudine again, with all the promise of a happy future only when he has

atoned for the pride, neglect of duty and 'desmesure' which caused him to be rejected by her. And thus, the success of the second wooing of Laudine is dependent, to a considerable extent, upon the spiritual ascent of the hero.

Chapter V

Gauvain and Lancelot

Because Gauvain and Lancelot differ in some important respects from the other knights who are being discussed in this study, the space assigned to them will be relatively short. In the case of both these characters, the point to be studied will be not so much their spiritual development, but rather, what hinders these two knights from making any real ascent in virtue. For even though, in their many appearances in the works of Chrétien de Troyes and in the later Queste del Saint Graal, Gauvain and Lancelot differ considerably from each other, they have in common the fact that a tripartite spiritual ascent is not possible for them. We shall now glance briefly at these two characters and endeavour to see why the spiritual development of two knights of such high chivalric qualities is limited.

(1) Gauvain

Throughout the works of Chrétien de Troyes and indeed, in the writings of his contemporaries and imitators, the character of Gauvain is frequently seen and highly praised, yet he seldom appears for any length of time as a central figure. In Yvain, for example, Gauvain appears as a foil to Yvain, but also as a temptation and a challenge. It is he who appears to be a favourite of his uncle, King Arthur, and, as we have already seen, is the object of

Yvain's envy when the Fountain expedition is first discussed. So great is his prestige that he is referred to as the Sun amongst the Knights:

2403- 08 Por mon seignor Gauvain le di;
 Que de lui est tot autressi
 Chevalerie anluminee,
 Con li solauz la matinee
 Oevre ses rais et clarté rant
 Par toz les leus, ou il s'espant.

It is Gauvain who, in his eagerness for knightly renown, suggests to Yvain after his marriage with Laudine that he should go and seek glory in tournaments. Thus, he heedlessly causes his friend to overstay his leave. A contrast is seen between the two knights in the passage preliminary to the episode of the disinherited Younger Sister. Gauvain is not available to fight for her because he has already committed himself to the cause of the elder, and in doing so has undertaken to fight for an unjust cause. Yet to such an extent is he considered to be the embodiment of chivalric virtues, that he appears as the last and therefore the most formidable of Yvain's encounters. The very perfection of his courtliness presents, as we have seen, a more awe-inspiring antagonist than even the demons of Pesme-Aventure.

In Erec, Gauvain is seen but seldom, though his appearances are not without significance. When discussion is made with King Arthur concerning the White Stag adventure, Gauvain appears as the wise counsellor who would prefer to err on the side of caution. He hesitates to revive a custom which could cause lack of harmony among

the people. It is also as a contrast to Ke, that Gauvain can be admired in Erec. His courteous, sensitive welcome is very different from Ké's presumptuous, overbearing invitation when Erec and Enide spend a night at King Arthur's encampment.

Gauvain's unfailing courtliness and good sense are seen again in Lancelot¹ where he acts as a steadying influence on the love-preoccupied knight. It is he, for example, who persuades Lancelot not to jump out of the window when he sees that Guinevere's procession has gone out of sight. (553-74) He represents common sense when he refuses to follow Lancelot's example and ride on the cart. But just as Lancelot's adventures will be seen to follow no fixed pattern or inward quest, so those of Gauvain in this romance show no set progression.

In Le Conte du Graal, a large proportion of the extant work is devoted to Gauvain, who also figures prominently in later Grail romances. But far from being the model for the simple, rustic Perceval, he is destined here, as later in the Queste, to be surpassed by him, and the reason is not hard to find. In spite of his faultless prowess, his scrupulous regard for knightly honour, his elegance and unfailing tact, Gauvain's distinction remains on a superficial, worldly level. There can be found in his career neither any deep attachments to ladies nor any faults in doing courtly service. In those sections of the Conte where Gauvain's adventures are

related, there appear episodes which show the same characteristics as are found in some of Perceval's exploits. For example, the period spent by Gauvain at Tintaguel is reminiscent of the Belrepeire episode where, as will be discussed in the next chapter, Perceval had shown such naiveté in his affair with Blanche-flor. But at Tintaguel Gauvain, by his ready wit and skilled turn of phrase, ably demonstrates his sophistication in dealing with the 'pucelle aux petites manches.' (5352-84). Gauvain's visit to Escavalon can suggest Perceval's visit to the Grail Castle, but on a less significant plane. In Gauvain, however, there is not to be found the latent perception and introversion that will assist Perceval in his spiritual ascent.

Among Chrétien de Troyes' narrative techniques is a tendency to suggest an important point without stating it directly. In Perceval, there is thus a hint shown of the insidious danger attached to chivalry which practised for its own sake remains devoid of any higher motive. Gauvain is repeatedly portrayed by Chrétien as a man of 'sen' or good sense, and this is not a characteristic which is made obvious in the careers of knights like Erec, Yvain, Lancelot and Perceval who have to learn their values the hard way. There is in Perceval a sketch of a man 'de molt sen'. This is the vavasour who gives advice to the king of Escavalon immediately before Gauvain goes away in search of the Bleeding Lance.

6125- 28

"De tot, quanque l'en puet et set,
Doit l'en grever ce que l'en het;
De vostre anemi essillier
Ne vos sai je miex conseillier."

The vavasour almost seems to be saying "hate thy enemy." Of course, such an accusation would hardly be levelled directly at Gauvain who is portrayed wherever he appears as the personification of knightly prowess. Chrétien seems to be suggesting, nevertheless, that behind the qualities of 'sen' and 'courtoisie' there lurks a potential danger, if these qualities are sought for their own sake and detached from Christian charity. There can thus be seen here an indirect warning for Gauvain, especially as he is about to go away to seek the Bleeding Lance, which has been identified by some interpreters as a symbol of chivalry.

In Gauvain, then, this knight who is the embodiment of chivalric virtues, and who is spoken of as 'chevalerie enluminee', there is to be found a noteworthy collection of qualities that would befit any knight. His reputation is second to none. Yet Chrétien de Troyes has hinted, and the author of the Queste has indicated strongly that Gauvain has limitations in spite of his apparent perfections. Gauvain will show little sign of a tripartite spiritual ascent, principally, because his quest is not a spiritual one. He is so preoccupied with the superficial practices of perfect chivalry that something of his humanity, and above all, his real sense of charity have been lost; as can be seen in the Queste. For in

this work, while the hermit is interpreting Gauvain's vision, he condemns him in the following words:

"Chevaliers pleins de povre foi et de male creance, ces troi choses vos faillent, charitez, abstinence, veritez; et por ce ne poez avenir as aventures dou Saint Graal." ⁴.

Can we not, then, see in Gauvain through the accusation of his 'povre foi', a type of Christian who, although he believes in God, fails to commit himself to His service? Because of this discrepancy between his beliefs and his actions, his love of God, his 'charitez' will necessarily be lukewarm, and will be incapable of developing into the fire which Christ came on earth to enkindle.⁵ Lacking in 'abstinence' or 'temperentia', he cannot become a spiritual man, for as he has no power to curb his bodily appetites, his flesh will dominate his spirit. And as he seeks no 'veritez' except chivalric praise, his chances of a spiritual ascent remain slender indeed.

The hermit continues his denunciation:

"Gauvains, mout a long tens que tu fus chevaliers, ne onques puis ne servis ton Creator se petit non. Tu es vielz arbres, so qu'il n'a mes en toi ne fueille ne fruit. Car te porpense tant, se mes non, que Nostre Sires en eüst la moele et l'escorce, puis que li enemis en a eu la flor et le fruit." ⁶.

Thus, the accumulation of Gauvain's failures, his failure to practise what he believes, his failure to love, his failure to practise 'abstinence', his failure to seek the Truth, is clearly denounced as his failure to serve God and to fulfil his religious duties. We are reminded of Christ's symbolism of the vine and the

withered branches, as recorded in St. John's Gospel:

"If a man does not live on in me, he can only be like the branch that is cast off and withers away; such a branch is picked up and thrown into the fire, to burn there." 7. Gauvain has kept the best part of his talents for himself, the world and his own glory, and has left the inferior part for his God.

Amongst the lives of the saints there are noteworthy examples of great sinners who, because of their capacity to love, have become great saints. St. Augustine and St. Mary Magdalene may be cited among the most remarkable of these. In the works studied so far, the predominant knightly characters also show a strong capacity to love, which may even lead them to sin. But like these sinners, who have become saints, their love draws them to seek a higher good, so that sin is atoned for, and perfect reconciliation becomes the object of their search. Because he has not sufficient singleness of purpose to continue in a steady ascent, because he gives himself no opportunity of experiencing Divine Love and Divine Mercy, Gauvain fails to reach the spiritual heights sought by some of his companions.

(11) Lancelot

A pre-requisite for the Christian soul who would seek union with God is that he be free from habitual sin and that he endeavour to detach himself from all inclination to sin. At least, he must be sufficiently conscious of his own shortcomings to have a sincere desire to overcome

them. In his portrayal of Lancelot, Chrétien depicts a knight who, while showing evidence of some extraordinary virtues, is too preoccupied with his love of Queen Guinevere to experience the normal phases of a spiritual development. Early in the work Chrétien mentions that the subject is not his own, but was given to him by "ma dame de Champagne." (Line 1); Godefroi de Leigni was responsible for the completion of the work, though doubtless, he followed the pattern initiated by Chrétien. Critics have suggested that Chrétien did not approve of adultery and that for this reason he found Lancelot a difficult subject to write about. After all, unlike some of his contemporaries, he does uphold marriage as the perfection of courtly love, as can be seen in at least three of his romances.

It is even possible to see in Chrétien's pursuit of a subject which was given to him by Marie de Champagne a reflection of Lancelot as he undergoes vain adventures at the whim of Guinevere.

Lancelot does, nevertheless, possess an outstanding combination of virtues, and if, through an attachment to sin, a tripartite spiritual progression is not discernible in his case, let us at least glance briefly at some of Lancelot's distinguishing qualities and the use to which they must be put.

Lancelot is both knight and courtly lover. As a knight he is endowed with a high degree of prowess and courage, and sufficient wisdom to know far better than

Gauvain does, that prowess does not exist for itself, but is primarily a means of helping those in distress. He frequently appears to rely on God for the success of his quest. When, for example, he arrives at the cemetery, he insists on going into the chapel pray before going any further. And later, when he is about to cross the Sword Bridge, Lancelot again shows that he believes that God is helping him:

3084- 87 mes j'ai tel foi et tel creance
 an Deu qu'il me garra par tot:
 cest pont ne ceste eve ne dot
 ne plus que ceste terre dure

In Lancelot, too, we see an outstanding singleness of purpose, for he will be daunted from his quest by neither the ignominy attached to the cart nor the peril of the Sword Bridge. Those who would deride him see their insults and mockery brought to naught. For example, he sleeps in the extraordinary bed and undergoes the adventure of the flaming lance without being wounded in the slightest (503-34). So impressive is his courtliness before the maiden who offers him hospitality, that when he has delivered her from the hostile knights, he is able to lodge with her on his own terms rather than on hers (1213-61). Lancelot is normally quick to show pardon to his suppliants. The knight who guards the 'gue defendu' is treated with exemplary mercy when he asks for it:

900- 04 Et cil respont: "Se Dex m'amant,
 onques nus tant ne me mesfist
 se por Deu merci requist,
 que por Deu, si com il est droiz,
 merci n'an eüsse une foiz."

When he later defeats the Chevalier Orgueilleux, there

arises a conflict between the 'largesse' he owes to a maiden who asks him for a favour, and the pity he is entitled to show to a defeated suppliant:

2836-40 Et a cesti, et a celui
 viaut feire ce qu'il li demandent:
 largece et pitiez li comandent
 que lor boen face a enbedeus,
 qu'il estoit larges et piteus.

It is here, too, that Lancelot shows a sense of justice to his proud adversary who, has taunted him with his degrading association with the Cart. If after having had a second chance to defend himself he is unwilling to undergo a humiliating experience like Lancelot's there is, according to chivalric principles, no loss to Lancelot's honour when he gives to the young lady the head of this Chevalier Orgueilleux.

Lancelot is also a courtly lover, and as such, has many fine qualities. He is attentive to his lady's every wish, he can please her by his speech and he is infinitely patient with her whims, as a good lover should be. When he is hesitating about riding on the cart, he shows a conflict between Reason and Love. And although Love predominates, he later has to pay dearly for the slight delay that his 'imperfect dedication' manifested. His absorption with the Queen is carried to excess and leads him to 'desmesure' which is shown even in his thoughts. Just as the soul seeking the Truth is led on by its contemplation towards greater actions, so a lover's contemplation should lead him on to greater acts of chivalry and should strengthen and sustain his love.

Lancelot's contemplation of Guinevere, her memory and her comb leave him in a state which shows symptoms of mysticism. Thus, through love he loses his sense of reality to the extent that when he is fighting with Meleagant, Lancelot becomes so absorbed in his contemplation of the Queen that he forgets to fight and has to be sharply reprimanded by a maiden before he comes back to his senses. On the other hand, let us not forget that it is only his love for Guinevere that incites him to fight for the prisoners in Gorre. Lancelot's love also tempts him to suicide (553-74), an action unworthy of a knight and one which is completely forbidden by Divine Law. Perhaps the most flagrant excess in his love is to be seen when he approaches Guinevere's bed:

4652-53 Si l'aore et se li ancline,
car an nul cors saint ne croit tant.

Here there is seen more than a hint of idolatry in his passion, as he thinks of the queen as a being more precious than any holy relic, and this is continued later at the end of the incident:-

4716-18 Au departir a soploie
a la chanbre, et fet autel
con s'il fust devant un autel.

It is Lancelot's valour, inspired by his love for Guinevere that will finally subdue Meleagant, the representative of brutality and anti-type of the courtly spirit. But although he restores joy and peace to King Arthur's court, in Chrétien's romance Lancelot himself cannot make any serious advance in the spiritual life until he has made some endeavour to abandon and repent

of his adultery.

Lancelot is represented by the auther of the Queste del Saint Graal as the repentant sinner whose love for Guinevere has for many years incited him to deeds of high prowess. A sudden inexplicable insight leads him on to see the evil of his ways, and he repents. But long years spent in sin will have weakened his will, so that he is incapable of progressing very far. This will be why his vision of the Grail is limited, because, as he is told, in the accusation at the Grail castle, he 'trusted too much in himself and not enough in God.' 8.

Lancelot, then, does manifest a praiseworthy number of courtly virtues, and even a sense of religious duty, but his preoccupation with the adulterous aspect of courtly love will seriously hinder any advance towards union with God. While Lancelet sins by loving too much in the wrong way, Gauvain's sin is predominatly in his failure to love sufficiently either his fellow man, or his God.

Chapter VI

Perceval

Now that we have examined some of the inner conflicts which led our most distinguished heroes to attain considerable degrees of spiritual development, let us now turn to the career of Perceval, the last of our knightly characters who, like Yvain, Erec, Enéas and Lancelot also shows signs of strife between two chivalric virtues. This time, instead of trying to seek a balance between conjugal love and chivalry, as did Erec and Yvain, or love and duty, as did Enéas, or love and reason, as did Lancelot, Perceval in his inner quest, will try to resolve the conflict between knightly prowess and Christian charity. This great virtue, as we have already seen, was a most important factor in Yvain's phase of recuperation. Now, it will form the principal object of Perceval's quest. And it is in this search that he is to undergo a spectacular spiritual ascent in which, after trial, self-confrontation and repentance, he is directed towards the main sources and strengths of Christian perfection, namely, the Mass, profession of love of God, and deeds of charity towards his neighbour. We shall find that the characteristics of the normal tripartite division of the spiritual life are scarcely discernible in their fullness. The fact that the work is incomplete will be largely responsible for this. There is, never-

theless a fairly clear tripartite division in Perceval's basic education as he prepares for a reconciliation with God and an ascent in virtue. His early education is predominantly on the natural level, whereas his experiences at the Grail Castle leave him with a psychological problem on the moral level, as a result of a more mature awakening of conscience. From this he is led to the third stage of his development one of deep religious awakening.

There is no place in this short study for much discussion about whether or not Perceval is a religious work, or about the many theories and problems associated with Perceval and his quest for the Grail. Rather, we shall look for evidence of Christian faith in the hero himself, and study his spiritual ascent, to which the Grail is an important contributing factor. The real nature of his quest is, I think, outlined in the prologue when Chrétien, recalling the teachings of Christ in St. Matthew's Gospel says:

43- 50 Carité, qui de sa bone oevre
 Pas ne se vante, ancois se coevre,
 Si que ne le set se cil non
 Qui Diex et caritez a non.
 Diex est caritez, et qui vit
 En carité selonc l'escrit,
 Sainz Pols le dist et je le lui,
 Il maint en Dieu, et Diex en lui.

This charity or love, says Chrétien, is none other than God Himself. The man who lives in charity lives in God and God in him. And this is the love which is the object of Perceval's quest. In him, the 'pure fool', there is evidence, even from the beginning of the romance, of elements which make him particularly suited to a high

Christian calling. He is recognised, for example, by the 'pucele' at King Arthur's court as a youth destined for an extraordinary chivalry (1039-44). From his first appearance he manifests, even in natural events, a sense of wonder which will help to equip him for acquiring the kind of contemplation which frequently accompanies the Unitive Way. We may well regret that Chrétien left his great fragment unfinished. Perceval, by the end of it, has not yet attained the full height of his potential either as a knight, or as a Christian seeking union with God. But, as can be seen from the lives and teachings of those who would practise Christian perfection, the love of God is an ever growing, continuing and deepening Process which, far from being perfected on earth, merely prepares the way for complete union with Him in eternity. For Perceval, then, as for all who seek God, the quest is not to be entirely completed in this life, but only prepares the way for the Beatific Vision.

Let us briefly study Perceval as he first appears in the work. Bereft of her two sons, who were killed in combat, and her husband, who died of grief on their account, Perceval's mother, the 'veve feme', endeavours to protect her remaining son from the fate of his brothers. Perceval wonders at the strange knights whom he sees in the forest, likening them at first to devils, then, when the light reflects more favourably on them, to angels. For Perceval, these knightly figures which he mistakes for angels, are in very truth the most beautiful of all created things, for

they are a visible manifestation of the destiny which he carries within him. So preoccupied is he with the sight, sound and memory of the knights, that on his return home he can think of nothing else. He spares no thought for his mother's tears, her tale of her earlier sorrows, and her longing to protect this last one of her offspring. Although it is far beyond his understanding, he has seen a vision which impels him forward, and he must seek to possess it. Regardless of the cost to himself and to his mother, he must find the king who 'makes knights.' It is not for him to care that his mother should pay so dearly for his adventure. In his first speech after the widow has told her tale of sorrow, he shows how irresponsible, self-centred and thoughtless he really is at this time :

489- 95 Li vallés entent molt petit
 A che que sa mere li dist.
 "A mengier, fait il, me donez;
 Ne sai de coi m'araisonnez.
 Molt m'en iroie volentiers
 Au roi qui fait les chevaliers,
 Et j'irai, cui qu'il em poist."

His first care then, is for food, in anticipation, perhaps, of the spiritual 'food' that is to come. While he barely conceals his annoyance that his mother has spoken at such length, he abruptly announces once more, his intention of going to the 'King who makes knights.' Certainly, in his action of spurring his horse when he sees his mother apparently swooning by the bridge, there is a reminiscence of the admonition of Christ as recorded

in St. Luke's Gospel: "No one who looks behind him, when he has once put his hand to the plough, is fitted for the kingdom of God."¹ This action does show evidence of the single-mindedness that will characterise so many of Perceval's enterprises. But what strikes the listener more forcefully, and what will tear at Perceval's conscience through the admonitions of his cousin (3591-95) and his uncle, the hermit, (6392-93) is the unnatural sin of breaking a fundamental commandment, "Honour thy father and thy mother," thus causing his mother's death. Perceval's self-interest and his desire to become a knight can therefore be said to predominate over his charity as a human being.

Yet there is a naïve eagerness about the young Perceval and the way he is portrayed that does designate him as a hero of considerable promise. It is no accident that he leaves home for his adventures in the springtime of youthful hope, warmth and exhilaration. Throughout this romance, as we shall see, Chrétien uses external circumstances to mirror, as it were, the state of his hero's spirits. If Perceval is introduced in spring, it is because there is spring, colour, warmth, life and promise in the lad. Strangely enough, Chrétien, for once, does not mention any specific Liturgical feast as a beginning for Perceval's quest, though the introduction to Lancelot, Erec and Yvain all mention some important festival in the Church's cycle as a starting point for the hero's adventures. This could be a further example of Chrétien's subtlety. His failure to specify such a festival would be

one way of emphasising the extent to which Perceval's faith is truly primitive :

69- 73 Ce fu au tans qu'arbre foillissent,
 Que glai et bois et pre verdissent,
 Et cil oisel en lor latin.
 Cantent doucement au matin
 Et tote riens de joie aflamme,

From the suggestion of trees coming into leaf, the green of grass and meadow, the joy with which everything is aflame, we are meant, I feel, to understand, as the anonymous author of the Queste did later, that the tale is beginning at Pentecost.

Evident in Perceval at this stage is the 'pietas' which has already been discussed in some of our other heroes. Coupled with his naïveté, it produces some alarming results. Traces of this 'promptness of the will' can be seen in his ready, though grievously misunderstood, following of his mother's directions when he comes to the tent of Orgueilleux de la Lande. He has been taught to go into a Church to pray and that he may take a kiss from a maiden and a ring, if she offers it. Ironically, in answer to his prayer for food, he actually does find food and wine in the tent, though he is not to find out the good that God provides until Good Friday. But just as he was heartless in his treatment of his mother so is he heartless, without understanding why, in his treatment of the girl in the tent :

734- 37 Li vallés a son cuer ne met
 Rien nule de che que il ot,
 Mais de che que jeune ot
 Moroit de fain a male fin.

Thus, in carrying out his mother's instructions literally

and without any sense of judgment, Perceval sows the seed of the girl's subsequent misery, just as he has already unwittingly caused his mother's death. A 'pure fool' he is indeed, and we shall see that his folly remains until the end of the extant romance. But, as Chretien would have been very well aware, an element of folly is by no means incompatible with a search for God. Among the many passages to be found in Sacred Scripture referring to the folly of the Cross, the folly of Christ, the folly of Christians, we read in St. Paul: "If any one of you thinks he is wise after the fashion of his fellow-men, he must turn himself into a fool, so as to be truly wise. The world's wisdom, with God, is but folly."²

One incident portrays Perceval as a youth whose destiny is to lead him beyond that of ordinary knights. Let us look at him as he first appears at King Arthur's court when his future prowess is recognised by the girl who has not laughed for more than six years :

1039- 44 "Vallet, se tu vis par eage,
 Ce pens et croi en mon corage
 Qu'en trestot le monde n'avra,
 N'il n'ert ne on ne l'i savra,
 Nul meillor chevalier de toi;
 Ensi le pens et cuit et croi."

The Court fool, who has some soothsaying power, has been accustomed to prophesy that this young lady would not laugh again until she had seen that knight who, in chivalry, surpassed all other knights. And now King Arthur himself also recognises in Perceval, the slayer of the Red Knight, a youth who, in spite of his simplicity would be a worthy asset to the Royal Court, and he regrets that Ké has so

easily dismissed him :

1240- 44 "Ha ! Keu, com avez hui fait mal !
 Par vostre lange, l'enuiouse,
 Qui avra dite mainte oisouse,
 M'avez vos le valet tolu
 Qui molt m'a hui cest jor valu."

Indeed, even before Perceval has accosted the Red Knight, the King is quick to see that Perceval's 'niceté' is not necessarily a deterrent from chivalry :

1012- 13 "Por che, se li vallés est niches,
 S'est il, puet c'estre, gentix hom",

Thus, by a strange prophecy, by his extraordinary deed of prowess in slaying the Red Knight, and by Royal recognition of his qualities, Perceval the 'simple' can be seen as a knight of exceptional destiny.

Let us now consider the two principal sources of Perceval's early education, namely his mother's influence and the instructions of Gornemant de Gorhaut. Until his sojourn with Gornemant, Perceval is very much under the influence of his mother's last instructions, and it is not difficult to see a hint of paradox when we remember that he has exercised such 'pietas' in the prompt carrying out of her precepts even if he has been too impulsive, when he himself has caused the anguish that brought about her death. How indignant he is at the thought of putting on the Red Knight's tunic in exchange for the Welsh clothes which his mother made for him ! How scrupulously he obeys his mother's instructions to take a kiss and a ring from a maiden ! Yet it is not until after he has left Blancheflor that he begins to search for her.

Perceval's education under Gornemant replaces that given

by his mother. Whereas his earlier education consisted in his being instructed, rather superficially, in his duty to God and to those in distress he is now, in addition, to be trained in the practices of chivalry by the man who will eventually knight him. As Gornemant's training becomes more evident, his mother's influence becomes less apparent, but inversely, it is only when Perceval has eventually put off his Welsh clothes, the symbol of his submission to his mother, that he really begins to worry about what might have happened to her.

Gornemant's instructions to Perceval, as do the youth's reactions to them, reflect in many ways those of the mother. Perceval had accepted blindly and simply, and without questioning his mother's word, a primitive outline of the basic truths of the Faith, namely, the definition of a Church, though it is not until Good Friday that the Church is mentioned (6346). In a very short synopsis of Christian Doctrine, Perceval's mother had spoken of the Creation, of the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Christ, the prayers of the liturgy, and the need for private prayer (574-594). Apart from the very simple inquiry, "Mere, que est eglise?" (573) Perceval asked no question, and accepted with excessive docility his mother's advice and instructions, to the extent that he caused positive harm to the girl in the tent who was to be so badly treated by her suspicious 'ami', Orgueilleux. Now, admitted to the 'plus haute ordre' (1635-36), Perceval listens to Gornemant's advice where he learns the necessity of showing mercy to a defeated enemy,

the danger of talking too much, his duty of defending the defenceless and distressed, and the need for prayer for God's protection. And because events in the early part of Perceval so frequently anticipate those in the later part of the romance, let us remember that Perceval's too faithful observance of some of his benefactor's advice will again cause disaster, but this time, in a rather negative way. His failure to ask the unspelling question at the Grail Castle means that the Fisher King will not be healed of his wound, and that Perceval himself will reject an opportunity of learning about the mystery of the Grail.

Chrétien's eloquent subtlety is exemplified in his delicate portrayal of Perceval's behaviour at Belrepeire. It is hardly necessary here to analyse the different views about the night which Perceval spends with Blancheflor. Instead, let us look briefly at the Belrepeire episode itself to see whether this night represents a further manifestation of Perceval's 'niceté', a fall from grace, or an ascent in virtue.

Perceval has already been recognised as a knight destined for deeds of high chivalry. Now, in the company of Blancheflor, he appears once more as a man of destiny, but this time, as a courtly lover. While he is seated beside his hostess, he is silent, not yet in contemplation of her, but in obedience to his tutor's instructions. The on-lookers see in this handsome young knight and the lady beside him a truly promising pair of lovers :

1862- 74 "Diex, fait chascuns, molt me merveil
 Se cil chevaliers est muiaus,
 Grans doels seroit, c'onques si biax
 Chevaliers ne fu nez de fame.
 Molt par siet bien dalez ma dame,
 Et ma dame ausi dalez lui,
 S'il ne fuissent müel andui.
 Tant est cil biax et cele bele
 C'onques chevaliers ne pucele
 Si bien n'avindrent mais ensamble,
 Et de l'un et de l'autre samble
 Que Diex l'un por l'autre feïst
 Por che qu'ansamble les meïst."

As in the case of Erec and Enide, two young lovers are portrayed, distinguished predominantly by their appearance, but also by their lineage, for Blancheflor is Gornemant's niece and Perceval, as we shall see later, is of noble descent. Blancheflor's connection with Gornemant, Perceval's tutor in chivalry, makes her a particularly suitable maiden for the new knight to defend. Blancheflor can also represent temptation for Perceval, for otherwise she would hardly have waited until her hoped for deliverer was in bed asleep before approaching him for help against her oppressor. Although Chrétien speaks of Perceval's untroubled sleep :

1941- 44 Mais il ne savoit nule rien
 D'amor ne de nule autre rien,
 Si s'endormi auques par tens,
 Qu'il n'estoit de rien en empens.

he does not, I feel, intend to convey the suggestion that Perceval is entirely ignorant of love. After all, he has been depicted as comparing the kisses snatched from the reluctant maiden in the tent with those stolen from his mother's maids (725-27). He certainly knows something about it. In this passage Chrétien is simply stating that Perceval, comfortably lodged for the night,

is unaware of what is happening around him, whereas Blancheflor, again like Enide, anxious and fearful about her oppression by Clamadeu, but with the symptoms of 'Amors' gradually becoming evident:

1947- 51 Cil dort a ese, et cele pense,
 qui n'a en li nule desfense
 D'une bataille qui l'asaut.
 Molt se degiete, molt tressalt,
 Molt se torne, molt se demaine.

With a further demonstration of subtlety, the author introduces the word, 'bataille.' This is probably meant to refer to the combat that Perceval will undertake on behalf of Blancheflor. It could, however, suggest that there is raging within her a battle of another kind, and the words 'se degiete,' 'tressalt,' 'se torne,' resemble very closely those used elsewhere to describe a lover's night of tormented longing as, for example in Enéas (8400-43), when Lavinia is afflicted, and in Cligès (530-44) when the symptoms of Soredamor's love are described.

A strong suggestion that the lovers do not trespass beyond the verge of experience is found in Chrétien's use of the words 'dame' and 'pucele.' Let us turn back to the climax of the frank nuptial joy of Erec and Enide :

2052- 54 encois qu'ele se relevast,
 ot perdu le non de pucele;
 au matin fu dame novele. (Erec.)

In this passage, neither word is used lightly, but clearly describes Enide's rise in status as a result of her wedding night. Blancheflor, on the other hand, is on several occasions referred to as 'dame', 'ma dame', for example:

1856 Dalez lor dame et mot ne dist,

but always when she is considered as mistress of the household. A deliberate distinction is made between the two words again when Perceval's comfort is described as he goes to bed :

1938- 40 Fors que solement le deduit
 De pucele, se lui pleüst,
 Et de dame, se il leüst;

But to convince his readers of the chastity of the young lovers after a night when they have slept 'bouche a boche, bras a bras,' our author humbly states :

2070- 72 A l'ajorner s'en retorna
 La pucele en sa chambre arriere;

In his discretion he suggests that Perceval has obeyed his mother's instructions when she said:

547- 48 S'ele le baisier vos consent,
 Le sorplus je vos en desfent,

as well as obeying Gornemant's instructions to assist all those in distress, for he has promised his aid to Blancheflor.

What, then, does this night represent for Perceval? A brief review of his relations with women should clarify the question. His mother, apparently, served to provide him with food, clothing and shelter, and to give him a rudimentary education. When her task was finished, Perceval cruelly and thoughtlessly abandoned her. He showed no care or concern for anyone except himself. Through a misunderstanding of his mother's advice he had caused the maiden in the tent to undergo grave hardships. Again, his concern was for himself, his own pleasure and the appeasement of his hunger, without any regard for the

future of the girl. But now, newly knighted by Gornemant, still under the influence of his tutor's advice, and responding to the love of Blancheflor, Perceval's concern is for his lady-love and the pressure of her enemy, Clamadeu, to whom she is on the point of yielding. His first care now is to comfort a 'dame desconseilliez' :

2058- 62

Et il le baisoit
Et en ses bras le tenoit prise,
Si l'a soz le covertoir mise
Tot soavet et tot a aise;
Et cele soffre qu'il le baise,

rather than to gratify any sensual appetite. Having offered his comfort, he undertakes battle for her on the following day. And unlike the hasty youth who sought the arms of the Red Knight, he grants mercy to Blancheflor's enemies, spontaneously, it may be added, like a truly noble man. Already there are signs of fulfilment of the future predicted for Perceval by the smiling maiden at King Arthur's court. But what is more important for Perceval's immediate future is that through the outward projection of his interests, he is led to a desire to find his mother again, and it is as a result of his prayer for her that he undergoes his experience at the Grail Castle.

Tales have been woven, in various mythologies, about the necessity for some heroes undertaking journeys to the Realms of the Dead. Let us pause briefly in our study of the spiritual development of Perceval to consider the reasons for some of these excursions into a strange world, and to reflect upon some of their relevant characteristics. In the works we have studied so far, glimpses, have been

seen of Other World adventures. The most obvious, of course, is to be found in Eneas who, in imitation of his great Roman predecessor, crossed the dread waters of the Styx in order to visit his father, Anchises, from whom he was to learn about Rome, her future glory and his own destiny. For both Eneas and his Roman counterpart, a journey is necessary. In both cases the hero, even though he knows that war, suffering and deprivation will be confronting him in the immediate future, is strengthened, as he learns of his destiny, by the knowledge that the shades of the Beloved Dead still care for those whom they have left on earth.³ Earlier than Vergil's Aeneid, and also from Classical mythology is an incident which had considerable influence on the Roman poet. This is, of course, the Nekyia of Homer.⁴ Here, no journey is necessary. The shades duly come up through the trench which has been dug for the ritual sacrifice to the gods of the Underworld. From Teiresias, the blind Theban seer, Odysseus is to take strength in learning of his eventual homecoming, and comfort in knowing the manner of his death. His mother will teach him about the condition of his relatives whom he is still seeking, and will tell him of the relentless nature of death, and of the powers and destiny of the soul. And a final, but very different example from Classical antiquity of an excursion to the abodes of the shades, is that of Orpheus and Eurydice.⁵ In Vergil's version a condition is laid upon Orpheus that he is on no account to look back at Eurydice as he brings her back from Hades.

Overcome by his love for his wife Orpheus, seized by a sudden madness, turns around to answer her pleadings and loses forever his chance of welcoming her back to the light of day.

We know, of course, that Chrétien de Troyes' sources for his stories are not in any way restricted to Greek and Roman antiquity. His works abound in legends from many origins. Amongst the tales with which Chrétien would have been familiar, there is the Breton legend of the town of Ys which, like Vergil's version of Orpheus and Eurydice is a kind of 'Résurrection manquée.' Here is a synopsis of the story of the 'cathédrale d' Ys' as recounted by P. Pauphilet in Le Iers du Moyen Age :

"Des marins pêchaient, au mouillage dans une baie. Au moment de partir, l'ancre ne vient pas; l'un d'eux plonge pour la dégager. Or l'ancre était accrochée dans une fenêtre d'église, et l'église, brillamment éclairée, était remplie d'une foule richement vêtue. Devant l'autel un prêtre demandait quelqu'un pour lui servir la messe. Le pêcheur, au retour, va conter cette vision à son curé, qui lui répond: "c'était la cathédrale d' Ys; si tu avais répondu à l'appel du prêtre, tu aurais ressuscité la ville d' Ys tout entière." 6.

It is therefore not difficult to see some connection between the circumstances surrounding Odysseus' strengthening instructions from his mother and Teiresias, Aeneas' illuminating vision and his father's explanation of it, Orpheus' visit to Hades and his failure to fulfil the

condition necessary for bringing back his wife, and the fisherman discovering the sunken cathedral of Ys, but failing to perform the action that would have liberated the inhabitants.

And now, as we follow the spiritual development of Perceval, visiting a strange and apparently enchanted castle, but failing by his sin and his silence to ask the question that would have broken the spell binding the Fisher King and his people, may we not dare to suppose, with M. Pauphilet and Professor David Fowler,⁷ that the stage is set by a master hand for the enactment of another visit to the world of the Dead?

Let us look at the aura of mystery and unreality that surrounds Perceval's approach to the Grail Castle and his subsequent departure from the scene of his strange adventure. After the episode at Belrepeire, Perceval, desiring above all things to find his mother once more, journeys in his quest for her, praying without ceasing that God will allow him to find her again :

2980 - 83 Et il ne finoit de proier
 Damedieu le souverain pere
 Qu'il li donast trover sa mere
 Plaine de vie et de santé,

A very different Perceval is this from the youth who killed his mother by his cruel abandonment of her. It is when he has made his final prayer in which evidence of deep faith can be seen that Perceval sees the boat which bears the two men :

2990- 93 "Ha ! Sire toz puissans,
 Se ceste eve passer poole,
 Dela ma mere trouveroie,
 Mien escient,se ele est vive."

If we remember how in Yvain the appearance of Laudine's messenger appeared to be caused by Yvain's expressions of remorse (2704-05), it will appear as quite natural that Perceval's most articulate prayer seems to cause the appearance of the fishermen. He is directed, though not very specifically, to a house

3034 pres de riviere et pres de bois

and at first, on seeing no sign of any lodging place, Perceval is ready to find serious fault with his new host for having so grievously misled him :

3047- 49 "Peschieres qui ce me deïs,
Trop grant desloiauté feïs,
Se tu le me deïs por mal."

It is only when Perceval, frustrated at not yet seeing his lodging, has addressed the absent Fisher King in these rather petulant terms, that he immediately sees the outlines of the castle to which he has been directed. On the following morning, when Perceval leaves the Grail Castle, he sees no sign of any living person, and he has scarcely enough time to leap off the drawbridge before it is raised. As far as can be ascertained from his cousin, the weeping maiden, his lodging-place has been miraculous indeed, for she is careful to tell him that there is no lodging to be had within a radius of forty leagues, Like the fisherman approaching the submerged town of Ys, Perceval does not see the Castle until he is quite near it. Again, like the fisherman, Perceval is near to solving a mystery, but his hesitation has caused him to

lose forever the secret offered him unless, for any reason, he is given another chance.

Professor David Fowler offers a set of convincing reasons for concluding that Chrétien intended the Fisher King to be identified as Perceval's father.⁸ Included among his arguments are the following:

(i) Before Perceval set out on his quest, for chivalry, his mother had, while speaking of his father, discoursed at length on his wealth and power :

416- 19 "N'ot chevalier de si haut pris,
 Tant redoute ne tant cremu,
 Biax fix, com vostre peres fu
 En toutes les illes de mer."

This is simply an emotional intensification of the weeping maiden's description of the wealth of the 'Riche Roi Pescheor' (3495).

(ii) When Perceval's mother is speaking of her husband she mentions how he was wounded :

436- 37 "Vostre peres, si nel savez,
 Fu parmi la jambe navrez"

A similarity is obvious when his cousin is telling him of the Fisher King's wound.

3512- 13 "Qu'il fu ferus d'un gavelot
 Parmi les quisses ambesdeus"

(iii) The Young Perceval, we know, in the early part of the poem sought his delight in hurling his javelins, as he rode his hunter through the forest. His cousin again explains that the Fisher King, though now unable to hunt and shoot, takes delight in sending out archers and hunters in his stead :

3524- 27 Ne puet chacier ne riverer,
 Mais il a ses rivereors,
 Ses archiers et ses veneors,
 Qui vont en ses fores berser.

Surely, for Perceval, whose religious instruction is far from complete, this is the kind of life after death which, if he thought about it, he would imagine for his father. As Professor Fowler says, "The fisher king's way of 'life' is precisely what we could expect Perceval to imagine as a setting for the memory of his father conjured up by his mother's words."⁹ This will certainly be in accord with the deep psychological insight with which Perceval is consistently portrayed.

If then, we accept from our mythology that conversation with and instruction from the Dead is sometimes a source of a hero's advancement, and if we accept from the internal evidence in the poem that the Fisher King could be Perceval's father, it is time to look at this episode and at the kind of vision that such a father might prepare for a son who is so obviously destined for high chivalry.

This, of course, immediately brings us to the question of the Grail procession, which is the point at which Perceval's education is elevated from the natural to the moral level. He is, as we shall see, faced with a choice, and in hesitating to choose, he fails to perceive the means by which his actions can be raised to the spiritual plane. So many plausible interpretations both Christian and non-Christian, have been offered on the Grail question, that it is tempting to think that Chrétien might have

deliberately used a symbol which could be seen in so many different lights. Let us now examine the qualities of the Grail in the strange procession, and see how it could have helped Perceval's spiritual ascent, had he been willing to learn its message by asking the unspelling question at the right time :

3220- 39 Un graal entre ses deus mains
 Une damoisele tenoit,
 Qui avec les vallées venoit,
 Bele et gente et bien acesmee.
 Quant ele fu laiens entree
 Atot le graal qu'ele tint,
 Une si grans clartez i vint
 Qu'ausi perdirent les chandoiles
 Lor clarté come les estoiles
 Font quant solaus lieve ou la lune.
 Après celi en revint une
 Qui tint un tailleoir d'argant.
 Li graaus, qui aloit devant,
 De fin or esmeré estoit;
 Prescieuses pierres avoit
 El graal de maintes manieres,
 Des plus riches et des plus chieres
 Qui en mer ne en terre soient;
 Totes autres pierres passoient
 Celes del graal sanz dotance.

At first, there seems to be little possibility that the Grail could be a sacred vessel, either the chalice or ciborium, for example, that are used at Mass, for it is borne by a 'damoisele'. Canon Law has always forbidden that the vessels containing the Sacred Species be touched by a woman, and it is only very recently that there has been any slight mitigation of this rule. Medieval art, however, is rich in examples of Crucifixion scenes where a woman who is neither the Mother of Christ nor any of the holy women, is depicted, receiving into a vessel the Sacred Blood from the side of the Crucified Christ. For example, in the cathedral at

Bourges, there is represented a stained-glass image of such a woman who triumphantly portrays the Church springing into birth, as it were, from the side of Christ, ready to distribute the graces won for mankind by the act of Redemption. If, therefore, it is forbidden for a woman to carry the sacred vessels, it would hardly be forbidden to the woman representing the Church, the spouse of Christ, His πληρωμα¹⁰ or complement, to do so.

The precious vessel is introduced by a blaze of light (3218-19). But such is the light that radiates from it, that the flames of the candles are dimmed, like stars which seem to fade before the light of the sun. Brief reference has already been made to the frequent

occasions in Liturgical terminology on which Christ is referred to as the Light. Surely now, in this vessel of gold, studded with the most precious of gems, there is the 'Sol invictus' of the ancients, Christ, the Light and Life of the world, presented under the sacramental veils by His spouse, the Church. The 'tailleoir,' originally a carving dish, need be nothing more than the paten on which the Sacred Host is placed and prepared at Mass.

For Perceval, then, this procession displays perhaps the love of God offered visibly before him in a supreme gift of His charity, namely the grace offered through the Blessed Sacrament and distributed through the Church. The lance which precedes the Grail, though often identified with the lance of Longinus who pierced the side of Christ, could also represent suffering mankind,

slain in strife and violence since the birth of the human race. And perhaps Chrétien has deliberately used a composite symbol here also. As the Grail procession alternates with each course, the young knight seems to be offered a choice between the Grail, the supreme gift of charity, and the lance, which represents chivalry.

His choice extends between food for the body and food for the soul. If we recall the dignified, restrained, yet eloquent poetry with which Chrétien describes the Grail procession (3220-39), and compare it with the deliberate banality with which the courses are served at table, we shall see how Perceval should have made his choice :

3325- 30 Dates, figues et nois muscades
 Et girofle et pomes grenades
 Et laituaies en la fin
 Et gigembras alexandrin,
 Or pleuris et arcoticum
 Resontif et stomaticum.

So preoccupied is Perceval with the constant variety in the procession of bodily foods presented before him that, his tongue 'locked' by his sin of cruelty to his mother, he procrastinates and rejects the proffered grace of knowing what the Grail is and who is served by it. Because he does not ask about the Grail at the right time, or about the anonymous Being in the Inner Room who is sustained by the Grail, Perceval automatically pledges himself to the cause of the Bleeding Lance, and the bloodshed represented by the practice of knightly prowess.

It is not long before Perceval has to exercise all the skills that Gornemant has taught him. For on the following day Perceval, in meeting his cousin, the weeping

maiden, undergoes a stage of transition which serves to bring him back to reality. He learns of his mother's death and is humbled by the knowledge that he has lost forever the secret of the Grail Castle. This episode, however, leads him to a series of adventures which will end in his repentance and, it appears, conversion.

In seeking to avenge his cousin's dead lover, Perceval confronts Orgueilleux de la Lande. An opportunity is thus presented to him of atoning for the harm he did to the girl in the tent. It is a different Perceval now from the callow youth who had broken into the tent. A change in his moral attitude is perceptible. The earlier Perceval had, on arriving at King Arthur's court, attacked and killed the Red Knight, principally for his red armour, but also to restore the king's gold cup to him. His attack was impulsive, savage and uncouth; his reasons for it, childish in the extreme. Now confronted by the maiden of the tent who fears for him as she rightly fears for all men whom Orgueilleux assails, Perceval confounds by his naïve wisdom the formidable Orgueilleux who 'vint ausi come une foldre' (3833) in the fury of his attack. It is Perceval's simplicity which enables him to face his adversary and to confess that he alone is responsible for the relentless search of Orgueilleux and for the girl's shameful misery. In this humble acknowledgement and the outcome of the subsequent encounter, there is an indication, surely, of humility conquering pride and at the climax of its triumph, begetting mercy for the knight who slew

Perceval's cousin's lover :

3937- 42 Li dist: "Chevaliers, par me foi,
 Je n'avrai ja merchi de toi
 Jusque tu l'aies de t'amie;
 Que le mal n'avoit ele mie
 Deservi, ce te puis jurer,
 Que tu li as fait endurer."

Surely such terms deliberately recall the well known conditions on which a Christian may expect mercy :

"Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us." ⁱⁱ. Let us say, then, that at this stage, Perceval's 'niceté' is not just a negative quality, an absence of guile and a lack of awareness, but rather, it is gradually assuming a more positive direction. The girl had not asked him for help but had warned him to keep away from her lover. His cousin had not asked him to avenge her slain 'ami'. In obedience to Gornemant's schooling, but increasingly docile to the promptings of his maturing conscience, he is impelled to help when he sees the need for it, irrespective of the danger to his own life.

His prowess established and his moral conscience awakening, Perceval is now seen in a state of contemplation. A wild goose which has been attacked by a falcon, leaves three drops of blood on the white snow. In musing upon the contrasting red on white, Perceval is reminded of the fair beauty of his lady-love, Blancheflor. Like Lancelot contemplating the Queen, he so forgets himself and his surroundings that through love he loses his sense of reality:

4202 Si pense tant qu'il s'oblíe.

Unlike Lancelot, he appears to be in full command of his

senses when he wards off those who try to disturb him. Several times reference is made to the effect of the red on the white, for example :

4204- 06 Li vermels sor le blanc assis
 Com ces trois gouttes de sanc furent,
 Qui sor le blance noif parurent.

Indirectly, at least, we seem to be reminded of the Bleeding lance at the Grail Castle, for there also, considerable emphasis was placed on the contrast between the whiteness of the lance and the crimson of the blood :

3197- 3201 Le lance blanche et le fer blanc,
 S'issoit une goutte de sanc
 Del fer de la lance en somet,
 Et jusqu' a la main au vallet
 Coloit cele goutte vermeille.

Now Perceval, leaning upon his lance, apparently and symbolically asleep, loses himself in contemplation of the crimson spots on the white, when in reality, he would have been better to see the real meaning of the Bleeding Lance, and by giving help to the distressed, to render himself more worthy of Blancheflor. If the knights find him asleep it is because he is asleep to the real meaning of the red on the white.

In our study of Yvain, reference was made to the herdsman, a being who appeared to be the anti-type of courtliness and who stood at the gateway to a new life. A variation of the herdsman's description is seen in that of the 'damoisele hideuse' who, when all seems joyous and full of promise, arrives on her 'mule fauve' and denounces Perceval in front of the assembled knights for having failed to ask the unspelling question, an omission which

will bring untold ruin upon the kingdom of the Fisher King, and will prevent any hope of relief for his wound. Before leaving the noble company, the damsel speaks of two adventures which would be guaranteed to tempt the bold; that of the Chateau Orgueilleux and that of Montesclaire. The knights are eager to take their oaths and depart. Perceval is seen here at the crossroads between the world of brilliant courtly adventures and the promise of a lofty reputation, and the world of a lonely, impossible search for a vessel whose meaning he does not understand, but whose appearance influenced him so profoundly. In making his choice he again exercises his freedom as a mature individual, although the meaning of the Grail to which he has pledged his search is not to be made clear to him until the hermit instructs him on Good Friday, five years later. In choosing the search for the Grail, he is also choosing a path of intense, personal interior suffering, which will act for his purification and redemption :

4727- 29 Et Perchevax redist tout el:
 Qu'il ne gerra en un hostel
 Deus nuis en trestot son eage;

This, then is Perceval's oath. He will not spend two consecutive nights in any lodging place until he has discovered the mystery of the Grail, to which, as yet, he attaches no religious meaning at all. His two consecutive nights will be spent with his uncle, the hermit, five years later, when he begins to understand the real secret of the sacred vessel and the identification of the

inhabitant of the Inner Room.

For five years Perceval, concentrating his energies on deeds of prowess has neglected his duties towards his God. From the point of view of chivalry practised for its own sake, he has undoubtedly proved himself, for he has sent sixty captives back to King Arthur's court. But it is in these spectacular deeds of prowess that his glory resides, not in defending the defenceless as a knight who bases his prowess on charity should do. We may recall that when Perceval left home to seek adventure, he had, in the abundance of hope and springtime, met some knights who inspired him with the sight, though not necessarily the true ideal, of chivalry, for in his ignorance he identified the knights with his primitive idea of God. Now, paradoxically, he is seen girded with the longed-for armour, with every appearance of a successful knight, yet his chivalric ideals are turned to dust. The desert in Perceval's soul is reflected by the desert of his surroundings. The God whom he thought he recognised through the splendour of the knights in the forest long ago is about to be found in reality through the enlightenment of the pilgrims in penitential garments. Their terse explanation of the basic truths of Christianity is far more realistic than the superficial advice, so easily misinterpreted, which was given by Perceval's mother. Aware of the significance of Good Friday, Perceval with characteristic élan, realises his sin, repents, grieves for it in his heart, confesses to the

hermit, does penance by sharing in the hermit's meagre fare, and shows promise of reforming by persevering in good works. In a short space of time, therefore, Perceval has shown characteristics of all the seven stages which are said to be requisite for complete purification. ¹².

Within this framework is set the final stage of Perceval's education that will elevate him from being a purely moral being to one of deep religious awareness. His interview with his uncle, the hermit, is of vital importance in this romance. He confesses that he omitted to ask about the Bleeding Lance or the Grail when he had an opportunity to do so. Since that time although we may imagine he has been searching for the Grail, he has forgotten God. He is informed that it was through the sin of inflicting grief on his mother that he was unable to ask the question at the right time. It is only through his dead mother's prayers that he has been able to endure in his search as long as he has :

6403- 05 Ne n'eüsses pas tant duré,
 S'ele ne t'eüst comandé
 A Damedieu, ce saches tu.

And in this there is another reference to the care of the Dead for those whom they have left behind.

Now the hermit explains to Perceval the significance of the strange experience at the Grail castle :

6415- 31 "Cil qui l'en 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 gr[a]al servir se fait.
 Mais ne quidiez pas qu'il ait
 Lus ne lamproie ne salmon;

D'une sole oïste le sert on,
 Que l'en en cel graal li porte;
 Sa vie sostient et conforte,
 Tant sainte chose est li graals.
 Et il, qui est esperitax
 Qu'a se vie plus ne covient
 Fors l'oïste qui el graal vient,
 Douze ans i a este issi
 Que for(s) de la chambre n'issi
 Ou le graal veïs entrer. "

Perceval, then, is in a better position to understand his own part in the Grail mystery. Of the King who is served with the Grail, little is told, though much is implied, and especially that he is such a holy man, and that he has no need of earthly food, but is sustained and comforted by a single Host. The Grail itself is such a holy thing and the King whom it serves is so spiritual that he requires no other food. In addition Perceval learns of the strange family connection that is his. The hermit appears to be the brother of the Grail King, and brother also of Perceval's mother (6415-16). Is it not reasonable to suppose, when we remember that the words 'suer', 'sorrow', were frequently used not only for 'sister' but for 'sister-in-law', 'lady-love' as can be seen especially in Erec (4882), that Perceval's mother could be the sister-in-law of the hermit, and 'lady-love', 'wife' of the Grail King?

Professor David Fowler, following along a theory of Mr. Roger Loomis, produces an interesting identification of the Grail King with the Fisher King. "For Chrétien", he says, "both figures represent Perceval's father. The Grail King, the "holy man", is the spiritual (esperitax), the Fisher King, the material, image; the one is soul,

the other is body. The details of the hermit's description bear this out. The soul is fed by the Host, not by pike, lampreys or salmon - - - that is, mortal food, suggestively alluding by contrast to the body as symbolised by the crippled Fisher King."¹³ The one problem in this interpretation appears to be the word 'fix' (6418). However, so many scriptural references mention the 'oneness' of Christ with the Father, the 'unity' between the Father and the Son, that in this context the same kind of 'one-ness' seems to extend between the Grail King and the Fisher King.

Perceval's abandonment of his mother's ideals of charity 'held his eyes' as it were at the Grail castle, so that he could not recognise the spiritual meaning of the procession before him, and 'locked his tongue' so that he could not ask about it. Had he not been so preoccupied with eating and drinking, he would have understood what the revelation meant, namely, that his father had attained Eternal Life, and that the means of his doing so were contained in this 'une sole oïste', and salvation is similarly available to Perceval if he avails himself of it with the right dispositions. "I myself am the living bread that has come down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he shall live for ever. And now, what is ~~this~~ bread which I am to give? It is my flesh, given for the life of the world."¹⁴

Twentieth century terminology speaks at length of the 'Paschal Mystery'. Though such a term did not exist in Chrétien's time, believers would have been very familiar

with what it meant, namely, the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Christ. Perceval, too, following Christian models must, through suffering and repentance die, as it were, to his sin, in order that he might receive worthily the Body of the Risen Lord on Easter Day. This, then, is the secret of his conversion, the mystery which his father offered for his understanding in the Grail castle, in the realms of the Dead. Because of his renunciation of his mother's ideals of charity, because of his excessive docility and lack of judgment, he was not yet ready to understand. Now, as a sign of Faith and Love and deep religious awakening, he receives his Easter Communion 'molt dignement', and thus has availed himself of a second chance to find out the meaning of the Grail and the Love of God which it signifies. And as Perceval, now God-orientated, sets off on what will no doubt, be a spiritual journey, let us recall, when we think of the many different associations that food has had for him in this poem, the words of St. Thomas Aquinas, written in praise of the Sacrament of God's Love :

"O sacrum convivium! in quo Christus sumitur: recolitur memoria passionis eius: mens impletur gratia: et futurae gloriae nobis pignus datur." 15.

In the effects, then of this Sacrament, the means of setting out and achieving the way of Union with God are possible. This will be the way where Perceval's conscience, regardless of his subsequent untold adventures, will lead him.

Conclusion

With Chrétien de Troyes' presentation of Perceval, a spark is fired which will enkindle the imaginations of men for centuries to come, as late, even, as Wagner's portrayal of Parsifal as the 'pure fool,' in the nineteenth century. As in Chrétien's other works, there is revealed a fine subtlety in the depicting of the most delicate emotions and feelings of his hero as he grows in spiritual awareness. A detailed study of la Queste del Saint Graal in the light of Perceval's early development would be interesting, but outside the scope of this work. But it is hardly surprising if we find that the thirteenth century Queste which involves some great Arthurian heroes, is centred around the theme of grace, and that the development of this theme leads to such experiences of high contemplation as are to be found in a soul which, detached from earthly ties, is seeking perfection. Throughout the work it is shown that the ideal way of knowing God is not merely intellectual knowledge, which is nevertheless necessary, but knowledge by love.

The authorship of the Queste is generally attributed to an unknown Cistercian monk. In the portrayal of his heroes, he draws a clear contrast between the life of the knight who is attached to the world and its pleasures, for example, Lancelot and Gauvain, and the ideal life, from the contemporary Cistercian viewpoint, which aims

at union with God. The Grail itself shows properties which closely resemble grace as interpreted in Cistercian theology. Revealed before the assembled knights it seems to cover the table of the hall with delicacies which, as did the manna in the desert long ago, please the taste of all : "Si entra par le grant huis dou pales, et maintenant qu'il i fu entrez fu li pates raempliz de si bones odors come se totes les espices terriennes i fussent espandues. Et il ala par mi le pates tout entor les dois d'une part et d'autre; et tout einsi come il trespassoit par devant les tables, estoient eles maintenant raemplies endroit chascun siege de tel viande come chascuns desirroit."¹

Identical terms can be found in St. Bernard when he speaks of grace :- "Oportet namque pro variis animae desideriiis divinae gustum praesentiae variari, et infusum saporem supernae dulcedinis diversa appetentis animi aliter atque aliter oblectare palatum."²

And thus we may remember as did our medieval instructors, that grace is a share in the very life of God, freely given and received, and which accommodates itself to the individual needs of those who partake of it.

It would be difficult to find a civilization which in its great literature did not include some quest for a distant and difficult goal, for it is in the nature of man to search, even though the object of his quest is seemingly unattainable. We may recall Odysseus' quest for his home, Jason as he left everything to find the Golden Fleece, Aeneas searching for a new land, Io seeking an

end to her wanderings. In like manner great pagan minds sought to know the truth of the world around them; thus did the Israelites quest for their Promised Land, becoming as they learnt many bitter things about themselves and the world around them, and experienced the mercy of the God whom they served, a stronger and better people, and a closer knit community.

Therefore in these works written in this so-called 'Age of Faith,' when mysticism was by no means incompatible with knightly qualities, it is not surprising if, as a result of Enéas' wanderings, trials and conflicts, signs of a tripartite spiritual development are evident, even though on a fairly primitive elementary level. Erec, as has been demonstrated, in his search for a true balance between knightly prowess and married love, gains a much higher level of spiritual growth than he had shown at the beginning of the romance. Yvain, in his quest for reconciliation with his wife, gains a companion who is the symbol of Christ, and he appears thereafter to make a sure ascent in the way of virtue, true charity and union with God. Gauvain and Lancelot, though knights of high esteem, are both impeded by basic faults from making any real advancement in the spiritual life. Although Chrétien's Perceval shows a steep ascent in virtue and a union with God through the Sacrament of Holy Communion, it is not possible to foresee to what extent this union will continue, for the romance is unfinished. Nevertheless, we have seen that in all

cases, except, of course, Lancelot and Gauvain, with the conflict, trial and quest of the hero, a spiritual ascent is inevitable.

Chrétien de Troyes saw the vast wealth of literary treasure to be explored in the works of Vergil and Ovid, the Breton legends and many other sources. Sensitive to the needs and tastes of his own age, he shaped his work accordingly. Similarly, he understood something of contemporary spirituality, and applied it to his writings. Instead of the gods and goddesses of antiquity, noble characters are depicted. The women are gifted with surpassing loveliness and charm; the heroes are knights of extraordinary prowess, and spiritual potential. Chrétien, in writing his romans courtois, found much to explore and teach about the sublimity of man's destiny and the labyrinthine mysteries of the human heart.

Notes

Except for note 4, chapter I, all quotations from the New Testament are taken from the Knox translation, Burns & Oates, 1955.

Chapter I

- 1) St. Paul 1 Corinthians, 9:25
- 2) Walter Farrel, O.P. My Way of Life. An adaptation of St. Thomas Aquinas' Summa. C.P.B. 1952 P.257
- 3) A. Tanqueray, The Spiritual Life. Desclee & Co. 1923. P. 602
- 4) St. John's Gospel, 1:9 Revised Standard Version, 1965
- 5) Hymn for Second Vespers for the Feast of the Holy Family.
- 6) Thomas Merton, The Sign of Jonas. Hollis & Carter 1953. P. 307

Chapter II

- 1) Enéas éd. Salverda de Grave C.F.M.A. Paris Part 1, 1964. Part 2, 1929.
- 2) M. Wilmotte, L'évolution du roman français aux environs de 1150 p.55 Boivin, Paris 1940
Cited by G. Cohen in Chrétien de Troyes et son oeuvre.
- 3) Ed. Faral. Recherches sur les sources latines des contes et romans courtois du Moyen Age. Paris 1913
Suggested by G. Cohen in Chrétien de Troyes et son oeuvre
- 4) Vergil Aeneid Oxford 1900 Book I line 33
- 5) Ibid., Book IV line 625
- 6) Documents of Vatican II Constitution on the Church
Para. 16

Chapter III

- 1) Chretien de Troyes, Erec et Enide éd. Mario Roques C.F.M.A. 1955
- 2) St. Peter 1 Epistle 1: 6-7
- 3) Macrobius Commentarius ex Cicerone, In Somnium Scipionis, 1,5.
Cited by Alfred Adler, Sovereignty in Chrétien's 'Erec' P.M.L.A. LX. 1945

- 4) e.g. St.Paul Romans 6:8
- 5) Documents of Vatican II Constitution on the
Church Today. Para 48.
- 6) J.Frappier. Chrétien de Troyes.
Hatier-Bowin, Paris. P. 105

Chapter IV

- 1) Chrétien de Troyes. Yvain. Text Foerster.
Notes, T.W.B.Reid Manchester University Press.
- 2) W.Farrell, O.P. My Way of Life. P. 280
- 3) T.H.White The Book of Beasts.
Jonathan Cape, 1956 Chapter 1.
- 4) Julian Harris The Role of the Lion in Chrétien
de Troyes' 'Yvain'. P.M.L.A. 1949 Pp. 1148-9
- 5) A.Tanqueray The Spiritual Life. P. 602

Chapter V

- 1) Chrétien de Troyes Le Chevalier de la Charrete
C.F.M.A. Paris 1958
- 2) Chrétien de Troyes Le Roman de Perceval
Droz Paris, 1959
- 3) La Queste del Saint Graal: (ed. Pauphilet)
C.F.M.A. Paris. 1949.
- 4) Ibid., P. 160 lines 24-27.
- 5) St.Luke's Gospel : 12:49
- 6) La Queste del Saint Graal: P. 161 lines 18-22
- 7) St.John's Gospel. 15:6
- 8) La Queste del Saint Graal: P. 253 lines 22-26

Chapter VI

- 1) St.Luke's Gospel. 9:62.
- 2) e.g. 1 Corinthians 3: 18-19
- 3) Vergil Aeneid VI
- 4) Homer Odyssey Book XI
- 5) Vergil Georgic IV, lines 454- 529
- 6) A.Pauphilet Le Legs du Moyen Age P. 174

- 7) David Fowler, Prowess and Charity in the Perceval of Chrétien de Troyes. P.28
- 8) Ibid., P.29
- 9) Ibid., P.30
- 10) St.Paul passim for πληρώματα
e.g. Romans 13:10
- 11) St.Matthew's Gospel 6: 9 - 13
- 12) Exposition of Nicholas, a monk of Clairvaux.
Cited by A.Pauphilet in Etudes sur la Queste del Saint Graal.
- 13) David Fowler, Prowess and Charity in the Perceval of Chrétien de Troyes. P.54
- 14) St.John's Gospel 6: 51-52
- 15) Office for Corpus Christi. Second Vespers
Antiphon for Magnificat.

Notes to Conclusion

- 1) La Queste del Saint Graal. P.15. lines 21-27
- 2) St.Bernard. In Cant. Cant. Sermo XXXI, art 7.
Cited by E.Gilson in La Mystique de la Grâce, P. 325

Bibliography

Texts: -

- Enéas, éd. Salverda de Grave C.F.M.A. Paris
Part 1, 1964. Part 2, 1929.
- Chrétien de Troyes, Erec et Enide éd. Mario Roques
C.F.M.A. Paris 1955.
- Chrétien de Troyes, Le Chevalier de la Charrette
éd. Mario Roques C.F.M.A. Paris 1958.
- Chrétien de Troyes, Yvain, ed. T.B.W.Reid
Manchester University Press 1967.
- Chrétien de Troyes, Perceval éd. W.Roach
Droz, Paris 1959.
- La Queste del Saint Graal, éd. A.Pauphilet,
C.F.M.A. 1949.

Articles :-

- Adler, Alfred Sovereignty in Chrétien's Erec.
P.M.L.A. LX 1945 Pps 917-36
- Adler, Alfred Sovereignty in Chrétien's Yvain
P.M.L.A. XLII 1947 Pps.281-305
- Anitchkof, E. Le Saint Graal et les rites eucharistiques
Romania LV, 1929 Pps. 174-94.
- Denomy, Alexander Courtly Love and Courtliness.
Speculum XXVIII 1953, Pps 44-63.
- Frappier, J. Le Graal et la chevalerie.
Romania LXXV 1954 Pps.165-210.
- Frappier, J. Du Graal Trestot decouvert à la
forme du graal chez Chrétien de Troyes.
Romania LXXIII 1952 Pps. 358-75.
- Frappier, J. Virgile source de Chrétien de Troyes
Romance Philology t.13 1959-60 Pps.50-58.
- Frappier, J. Vues sur les conceptions courtoises dans les
littératures d'oc et d'oïl au XII siècle
Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale, 1959
Pps. 135- 156.
- Gilson, E. La mystique de la Grâce dans la
Quête del Saint Graal.
Romania LI, 1925 Pps. 321-47.

- Harris, Julian The Role of the Lion in Chrétien de Troyes' Yvain
P.M.L.A. 1949 LXIV Pps.1143-63.
- Hatzfield, Helmut A. Esthetic Criticism Applied to Medieval Romance Literature.
Romance Philology 1947-48 Pps.305-27.
- Kelly, D. La forme et le sens de la quête dans l'Erec et Enide de Chrétien de Troyes.
Romania XCII 1971 Pps.326-58.
- Klenke, Sister Amelia Chrétien's Symbolism and Cathedral Art.
P.M.L.A. LXX 1955 Pps.223-43.
- Lot-Borodine, Myrrha Le Conte du Graal de Chrétien de Troyes et sa présentation symbolique.
Romania LXXVII 1956 Pps.235-88.
- Nitze, W.A. The Romance of Erec, son of Lac.
Modern Philology XI April 1914 Pps.1-45.
- Nitze, W.A. Erec and The Joy of the Court.
Speculum XXIX 1954 Pps.691-701.
- Pauphilet, A. Enéas et Enée
Romania LV 1929 Pps. 195-213.
- Pauphilet, A. Au sujet du Graal
Romania LXVI 1940 Part 1 Pps.289-320
Part 2 Pps.481-504
- Roques, Mario Le Graal de Chrétien et la demoiselle au Graal.
Romania LXXVI 1955 Pps.1-27.
- Roques, Mario Pour l'introduction à l'édition du Roman de Perceval de Chrétien de Troyes.
Romania LXXXI 1960 Pps.1-35.
- Sullivan, F.A. The Spiritual Itinerary of Virgil's Aeneas.
American Journal of Philology LXXX 1959.

Books :

- Bezzola, R. Le Sens de l'aventure et de l'amour
Paris, 1947
- Borodine, Myrrha La femme et l'amour au XII siècle d'après
les poèmes de Chrétien de Troyes
Slatkine, Geneve, 1967.
- Cohen, G. Chrétien de Troyes et son oeuvre.
Rodstein, Paris, 1948.
- Colby, A. The Portrait in 12th. Century French
Literature.
Droz, Geneve, 1965.
- Cosman, Madeleine Pelner The Education of the Hero
in the Arthurian Romance,
University of North Carolina Press,
Chapel Hill. 1966.
- Fowler, David C. Prowess and Charity in the Perceval
of Chrétien de Troyes.
University of Washington Press 1959.
- Frappier, J. Chrétien de Troyes.
Hatier-Boivin, Paris, 1957.
- Frappier, J. Le Roman Breton
Centre de Documentation Universitaire
Paris 1953.
- Hofer, Stefan La structure du Conte del Graal
examinée à la lumière de l'oeuvre
de Chrétien de Troyes.
Editions du centre national de la
recherche scientifique. Paris, 1956.
- Holmes, Urban T. and Klenke, Sister Amelia, Chrétien,
Troyes and the Grail.
University of North Carolina Press
Chapel Hill 1959.

- Imbs, Paul L'élément religieux dans le conte del Graal de Chretien de Troyes.
Editions du centre national de la recherche scientifique 1956
- Jackson, W.T.H. The Literature of the Middle Ages.
Columbia University Press,
New York, 1960.
- Kelly, F. Douglas Sens and Conjointure in the Chevalier de la Charrette.
Mouton & Co. 1966
- Loomis, R.S. Arthurian Tradition and Chretien de Troyes.
Columbia University Press, 1949.
- Olschki, L. The Grail Castle and its Mysteries.
Manchester, 1966.
- Owen, D.D.R. The Evolution of the Grail Legend.
Oliver and Boyd. 1968.
- Pauphilet, A. Le legs du Moyen Age.
Melun, 1950.
- Tanqueray, A. The Spiritual Life.
Desclee & Co. 1923
- White, T.H. The Book of Beasts.
Jonathan Cape, 1956.