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THE COIN OF REDEMPTION: REDEMPTION IN MEDIEVAL LITERATURE

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THE COIN OF REDEMPTION:

REDEMPTION IN MEDIEVAL LITERATURE

by

JOHANNA C. PRINS

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Comparative Literature in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York.

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Abstract

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Johanna C. Prins

Adviser: Professor Frederick Goldin

From the earliest times of Judaeo-Christian writings the concept of Redemption has dealt with religious transactions and relationships in economic or commercial terms. In the Old Testament God redeems the people of Israel from bondage, and the people fulfill their obligations by specific sacrifices, which may be redeemed (substituted for) by others. These transactions between God and His people are mirrored in transactions and obligations between the people mutually: the redeeming of impoverished relatives, the protecting of those in need.

In the New Testament God redeems His people by sacrificing His only son; Christ redeems the debt of sinful man by the sacrifice of his body. In Christ's teachings the obligations of man to God and of man to man are expressed more particularly in the command to give and the command to love. The continuing use of the language of exchange becomes increasingly ironic as the disparity between God's grace and man's failure continues. The very paradoxicality of the terminology points to the meaning of Redemption, which can-

not be explained rationally. Medieval commentators relished the paradox, and developed the language of commerce as an instrument of tradition and a source of meaning.

The use of this language in talking about Christ's Redemption and his commands to man are explored in a few medieval vernacular narrative works. In the Old-English *Dream of the Rood* and *Christ III* the biblical language interacts with traditional Anglo-Saxon poetics. In Chrétien de Troyes' *Conte du Graal* misuse of the language of commerce points to the morality of the characters, especially in relation to the command for charity. In Wolfram's *Willehalm* the command to love one's fellow-man is confronted with the conventions of the crusade epic in a further revelation of the miracle of Redemption.

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The Coin of Redemption

How do men and women talk about God, about their love for him, and his love in return, about transactions between God and mankind? This has been a human dilemma throughout history, which became especially acute with the beginning of monotheism. As E.A. Speiser notes in his introduction to the Anchor *Genesis*: "... to conceive of such an ideal initially, without any known precedent in the experience of mankind, called for greater resources than those of logic alone" (xlviii). Thus, after his eloquent chapter on the Trinity, Augustine says: "Diximusne aliquid et sonuimus aliquid dignum deo? Immo uero nihil me aliud quam dicere uoluisse sentio; si autem dixi, non hoc est quod dicere uolui" (*DDC*, I,vi). Similarly, in speaking about Mary, Anselm exclaims: "Sed quid dicam? Lingua mihi deficit, quia mens non sufficit" (Or. 7). Even Christ seems to suggest this when he tells six parables about the Kingdom of Heaven in Mt. 13, as if to say that it is all these things and more, always more.

One way of studying the relationships between man and his God or gods has been explored by Marcel Mauss in his *Essai sur le don*. In this work Mauss analyzes the meanings and implications of gift-giving as an essential component in the economic and social system of several more or less primitive societies. Gift-giving may be a means to exchange economic resources, an assertion of power or social prestige, or a pledge or agreement (*wadium*). Often more than one of these aspects is present, and the whole complex applies to the relationship

of man to man as well as that of man to God or gods. The relationship between God and the people of Israel has often been expressed or defined in terms of giving, buying or paying. In the struggle with language to define this extraordinary relationship the words, and the ideas, seem to have acquired a fluidity in which giving becomes buying, gratitude becomes purchase, and love is payment.

From the earliest times of Judaeo-Christian writings, for instance, the concept of Redemption has dealt with religious transactions or relationships in economic or commercial or legal terms.

In the Old Testament God redeems (*redemit, eruit*) the people of Israel from the bondage in Egypt, while the people fulfill their obligations to God by specified sacrifices, which may be redeemed (*redimere, mutare*) by others. These transactions between God and his people are mirrored in transactions and obligations between people mutually: the redeeming (*redimere*) of impoverished relatives, the protecting of those in need. The languages which transmit the Old Testament use the same words for these different actions, implying or suggesting connections in their meaning, and uniting them as part of the special relationship between God and the people of Israel called the Covenant. This special relationship between one God and one people represented a completely new idea in the history of Western thought, for which new words had to be found in groping efforts.

Thus God says to Moses: "Ideo dic filiis Israel: Ego Dominus qui educam vos de ergastulo Aegyptiorum, et eruam de servitute: ac redimam in brachio excelso, et iudiciis magnis."(Ex.6:6) For the people this results in specific obligations towards God:

> "Num, cum induratus esset Pharao et nollet nos

> dimittere, occidit Dominus omne primogenitum in terra Aegypti, a primogenito hominis usque ad primogenitum iumentorum: idcirco immolo Domino omne quod aperit vulvam masculini sexus, et omnia primogenita filiorum meorum redimo. Erit igitur quasi signum in manu tua, et quasi appensum quid, ob recordationem, inter oculos tuos: eo quod in manu forti eduxit nos Dominus de Aegypto."(Ex.13:15-16)

The command and its foundation are spelled out in Exodus, but already before the Exodus Cain and Abel perform similar sacrifices. The *Glossa Ordinaria* does not see these two passages as related, and views them mainly as figures. Abel and Cain are figures for the Jews and the Christians, but in the introduction to the commentary to Exodus it is noted:

> "In Pentateucho excellit Exodus, in quo pene omnia sacramenta quibus Ecclesia instruitur, figuraliter exprimuntur ... Per typici agni immolationem Hebraeorum liberationem, veri Agni passio et nostra redemptio [signatur]."

Different aspects of the contract-relationship between man and God are indicated in Gen.8: 21 after the flood, when Noah burns offerings to the Lord: "Odoratusque est Dominus odorem suavitatis et ait: Nequaquam ultra maledicam terrae propter homines." Some of the traditional aspects of sacrifice are brought together here: Noah offers to the Lord to demonstrate his gratitude that the flood is over. The Lord is pleased with Noah's sacrifice and promises not to cause another flood. Shortly thereafter God establishes his covenant with Noah and his descendants (Gen.9:8-17). When God makes his covenant with Abraham this is prefaced by God's command to Abraham to prepare a sacrifice (Gen.15:9- 21). Man gives offerings, then, to give thanks, or God may respond to offerings with a vow of favor; of-

ferings also accompany (and presumably solemnify) the making of a covenant, the establishing of a special kind of relationship, usually between two unequal parties: God and man.

The concept of the Old Testament Redemption is closely connected with the covenant and sacrifices, and many passages clearly identify Redemption as an exchange, and the covenant as an exchange agreement. In Moses' words: "Sed quia dilexit vos Dominus, et custodivit iuramentum, quod iuravit patribus vestris: eduxitque vos in manu forti, et redemit de domo servitutis, de manu Pharaonis regis Aegypti" (Deut.7:8). God has redeemed the people of Israel from servitude because he loved them, and by redeeming them he has made them more closely his own people:

> Quae est autem, ut populus tuus Israel, gens in terra, propter quam ibit Deus, ut redimeret eam sibi in populum, et poneret sibi nomen, faceretque eis magnalia, et horribilia super terram, a facie populi tui, quem redimisti tibi ex Aegypto, gentem et deum eius. Firmasti enim tibi populum tuum Israel in populum sempiternum: et tu, Domine Deus, factus es eis in Deum (2Sam.7:23-24).

Several times it is said that God owns (*possedisti, acquisivit*) the people of Israel. Conversely, the people of Israel carry God's name and derive power from this: "Suscitabit te Dominus sibi in populum sanctum, sicut iuravit tibi: si custodieris mandata Domini Dei tui et ambulaveris in viis eius. Videbuntque omnes terrarum populi quod nomen Domini invocatum sit super te et timebunt te." (Deut. 28: 9-10). And again in Isaiah 48: 9-11 "Propter nomen meum longe faciam furorem meum et laude mea infrenabo te, ne intereas. Ecce excoxi te, sed non quasi argentum; elegi te in camino paupertatis. Propter

me, propter me faciam, ut non blasphemer, et gloriam meam alteri non dabo."

The Bible seems to leave open whether, in redeeming Israel from servitude, God resolved this debt by a substitution (ransom, *propitiatio, placatio*) or not. In Isaias 43:3-4 we read: "Quia ego Dominus Deus tuus, sanctus Israel salvator tuus, dedi propitiationem tuam Aegyptum, Aethiopiam et Saba pro te. Ex quo honorabilis factus es in oculis meis et gloriosus, ego dilexi te, et dabo homines pro te, et populos pro anima tua." But later in the same book it is said: "Quia haec dicit Dominus: Gratis venundati estis et sine argento redimemini. Quia haec dicit Dominus Deus: In Aegyptum descendit populus meus in principio, ut colonus essit ibi, et Assur absque ulla causa calumniatus est eum. Et nunc quid mihi est hic, dicit Dominus, quoniam ablatus est populus meus gratis?"(Isa.52:3-5). However this must be thought of, man's inability to fulfill his side of the bargain is clear:

> Frater non redimit, redimet homo:
> non dabit Deo placationem suam
> et pretium redemptionis animae suae.
> (Ps.48:8-9)[1]

These transactions between God and his people are mirrored in transactions between people mutually: the redeeming of impoverished relatives, the protecting of those in need. Justice must be maintained toward those without protection, and gleanings of the harvest left for the poor; in short, man must be merciful, because God is merciful: "Memento quod servieris in Aegypto et eruerit te Dominus Deus tuus inde. Idcirco praecipio tibi ut facias hanc rem."(Deut. 24:18 and 22). In Exodus 22:21 it is said: "Advenam non contristabis,

neque adfliges eum: advenae enim et ipsi fuistis in terra Aegypti," and later "si clamaverit ad me, exaudiam eum, quia misericors sum" (Ex. 22:27). And just as God redeemed the people of Israel to make himself a name ("et poneret sibi nomen," 2Sam. 7:23), so a man should act towards his brother in case of his death, taking in his widow and providing him with a son, "ut non deleatur nomen eius ex Israel"(Deut. 25:6). In full richness of the commercial language, Proverbs 19: 17 says: "Faeneratur Domino qui miseretur pauperis, et vicissitudinem suam reddet ei." *Faeneratur* implies a return with interest, as opposed to *mutuum* for a borrowing paid back exactly as received (Benveniste, 149).

In the New Testament the Covenant takes on new meanings. God redeems his people by sacrificing his only son. Christ redeems the debt of sinful man by the sacrifice of his body and his blood. But because man continues to sin, man continually needs to re-enact Christ's redemptive sacrifice. The traditional sacrifices to God are still present, but with diminished importance. In Luke 2:23-24 the required offerings for the male child are made for Jesus. Similarly, after healing the leper, Christ orders him to make the cleansing offering required by Moses (Mt. 8:4 and Lu. 5:14).

In the Epistle to the Ephesians Christ's death is equated with the sacrifice to God: "Estote ergo imitatores Dei, sicut filii carissimi; et ambulate in dilectione, sicut et Christus dilexit nos et tradidit semetipsum pro nobis oblationem et hostiam Deo in odorem suavitatis"(Eph. 5:1-2). In Heb. 9 the old law and the old sacrifices are declared obsolete: "Quae parabola est temporis instantis, iuxta quam munera et hostiae offerentur, quae non possunt iuxta

conscientiam perfectum facere servientem, solummodo in cibis, et in potibus, et variis baptismatibus, et iustitiis carnis usque ad tempus correctionis impositis"(Heb. 9:9-10). In its stead has come Christ's sacrifice: "si enim sanguis hircorum et taurorum, et cinis vitulae aspersus inquinatos sanctificat ad emundationem carnis: quanto magis sanguis Christi, qui per Spiritum sanctum semetipsum obtulit immaculatum Deo, emundabit conscientiam nostram ab operibus mortuis ad serviendum Deo viventi?"(Heb. 9:13-14).

In Christ's teachings the obligations of man to God and of man to man are expressed more particularly in the command to give and the command to love. Although charity and mercy are recommended in the Old Testament too, there are differences. In the New Testament giving is defined not in terms of the recipient of the obligation or of its size, but by its meaning to the giver and his state of mind. Man gives because he wants to give, without regard to the magnitude or appropriateness of the gift or to the merits and identity of the recipient. The importance of the love and intention of the giver are stressed when Christ rejects the apostles' criticism that the gift of precious oil should have been sold to benefit the poor rather than used to anoint Christ (Mt. 26:7-11, also Mk. 14:3-7, John 12:3-8), and in the comments on the widow's mites (Mk. 12: 43-4 and Lu. 21: 3-4). Most clearly the spirit of giving is expressed in Christ's words "Qui petit a te, da ei: et volenti mutuari a te, ne avertaris"(Mt. 5:42) and "Te autem faciente eleemosynam, nesciat sinistra tua quid faciat dextera tua: ut sit eleemosyna tua in abscondito, et Pater tuus, qui videt in abscondito, reddet tibi"(Mt. 6:3-4). In Acts 10: 4 alms giving is presented as a characteristically Christian virtue,

which qualifies a gentile--the centurion Cornelius--as worthy to be converted.

These precepts contrast with ideas on charity in contemporary Rome, as in Cicero's *De Officiis* 1, 14:

> Deinceps, ut erat propositum, de beneficentia ac de liberalitate dicatur, qua quidem nihil est naturae hominis accommodatius, *sed habet multas cautiones*. Videndum est enim, primum ne obsit benignitas et iis ipsis, quibus benigne videbitur fieri et ceteris, deinde ne maior benignitas sit quam facultates, tum ut pro dignitate cuique tribuatur; id enim est iustitiae fundamentum, ad quam haec referenda sunt omnia.

Seneca, in his *De Beneficiis*, shows different reservations. Noting that, in every transaction, the manner in which it is done is important, as in throwing a javelin, he says: "Ita idem est, quod datur, sed interest, quomodo detur. Quam dulce, quam pretiosum est, si gratias sibi agi non est passus, qui dedit, si dedisse, dum dat, oblitus est!"(2, 6). Commenting on this passage Claude Luttrell has noted that "*De Beneficiis* has in fact much in common with the principles of Christian charity"(10).[2] Yet clearly Seneca's call for anonymous giving flows as much from regard for the position of the *clientes* as from concern for the disposition of the giver.

The New Testament command to love is equally comprehensive. Man must love his fellow-man, all fellow- man. The command to love occurs in Mk.12: 28-31, Mt.22: 34- 40 and Lu. 10: 25-28. In all of them, the command to love God from Deut. 6: 5 is connected with the command to love one's neighbor from Lev. 19: 18. In his commentary on Lu. 10: 25-28 Joseph A. Fitzmyer raises the question whether these commands were already joined in pre-christian Judaism, concluding:

> Whether one can establish the preexistence of the

> double command in prior Jewish tradition or not, it stands here so formulated, and what is significant is that it is presented as a 'reading' of the 'Law.' In effect, the Lucan Jesus finds the basic counsel of Christian life in the words of Scripture itself, 'Do this and you shall live,' or in this you shall find life eternal. The different forms which the love-command takes in the gospel tradition suggests finally that Jesus himself was the catalyst for the development of the double command in the Christian tradition (879).

In the same passage Fitzmyer notes that the episode immediately following (the parable of the Samaritan) "will attempt to define who the 'neighbor' is. But it must be recalled that the Lucan Jesus, in his sermon on the plain, has already insisted on the love of one's enemies (6: 27-35" (878). Caesarius of Arles sees the command to give and that to forgive as one and the same: "duo sunt elemosynarum genera: unum bonum, aliud melius: unum ut pauperibus bucellam porriges, alterum ut peccanti in te fratri tuo cito indulgeas" (CCSL 103, 108). Man must forgive and love his enemy, because God forgives man. "Diligite inimicos vestros, benefacite qui oderunt vos" (Lu. 6: 27) and "Estote ergo misericordes, sicut et Pater vester misericors est. Nolite iudicare et non iudicabimini, nolite condemnare et non condemnabimini. Dimitte et dimittemini ... eadem mensura, qua mensi fueritis, remetietur vobis" (Lu.6: 36-38). The new law is expressed in the terminology of the old law, expanding the meaning of the vocabulary.

This forgiveness by God of man is a forgiveness which transcends laws, to be distinguished from lenience or amnesty, which move within the law. Roman law knew the possibility of clemency, "temperantia animi in potestate ulciscendi vel lenitas superioris adversus inferiorem in constituendis poenis," as Seneca defines it.[3] But the mean-

ing of God's mercy is entirely different from this in that it recognizes man's guilt, and even the impossibility of expiating this guilt within the law, and then freely and lovingly grants forgiveness through the incarnation and death of Christ. The paradoxical quality of God's mercy, and its connection with love, are pointed out in the parable of the moneylender and the two debtors (Lu.7: 41-43 and 47).

Christ himself asks forgiveness for those who killed him in Luke 23: 34: "Pater, dimitte illis: non enim sciunt quid faciunt." The message of grace in these words is pointed out by Anselm:

> "Dulcis et benigne domine IESU Christi, ... qui nihil debebas morti, et tamen piam animam tuam pro servis et peccatoribus tuis posuisti, et pro ipsis interfectoribus tuis orasti, ... tu domine qui tantam caritatem fecisti inimicis tuis, *tu ipse caritatem praecepisti amicis tuis*. (Oratio 18, 3-8)

In contrast to God's frequent reminders in the Old Testament that he has redeemed his people, Christ only rarely speaks about his incarnation and death as a Redemption, the only example being: "sicut Filius hominis non venit ministrari, sed ministrare et dare animam suam redemptionem pro multis" (Mt. 20: 28 and Mk.10: 45), but this concept appears in many of the Epistles (Ro. 3: 24, 1Cor. 6: 20, 7: 23, Eph. 1: 7, 14, Heb. 9: 12, 15, 1Pe. 1: 18). In Acts 20: 28 Paul speaks of "ecclesiam Dei, quam *adquisivit* sanguine suo, in which clearly "God" means "Christ." If man is bought free by Christ (with his blood) the question occurs: bought free from whom, and to whom did he pay? In *De Trinitate* Augustine comments on Acts 26: 17-18: "In hac redemptione tanquam pretium pro nobis datus est sanguis Christi, quo accepto diabolus non ditatus est, sed ligatus" (13, 15). Modern theology discourages the view of sin as a debt towards God, to

be paid back by retribution, but it would be hard to overestimate the influence of the two concepts on early Christian thinking.[4]

These Biblical concepts take on variations as they pass through time and as they are translated into different languages. Already in the Old Testament the struggle for expression of the unique relationship between God and his people led to ambiguity and paradox. The tension between firm rules and ineffable grace is sharpened by the use of legal terminology and the language of commerce. An example is the book of Isaiah, where, as we saw earlier, God alternately says that, to free Israel, he will give any price, and great treasures to Cyrus (43: 3-4 and 45: 3) and that the liberation of Israel will be free "non in pretio neque in muneribus" and "gratis" (45: 13 and 52: 3-5).

In first Corinthians Paul retrieves these words and adds to them: "Empti enim estis pretio magno. Glorificate et portate Deum in corpore vestro" (6: 20) and again "Pretio empti estis, nolite fieri servi hominum" (7: 23). This is reiterated in 1 Pe. 1: 18-19 "Scientes quod non corruptibilibus auro vel argento redempti estis de vana vestra conversatione paternae traditionis: sed pretioso sanguine quasi agni immaculati Christi et incontaminati."

There is an irony to the language of commerce as it is used in a world where little commerce (in the modern sense) occurs, or as it is misunderstood from one era to the next.It should be noted, however, that *commercium* does not imply money, but is derived from *merx* 'merchandise,' so that *commercium* in medieval Latin means 'merchandise, what is given in exchange, profit, return' (Niermeyer). Thus Caesarius of Arles, commenting on Mt. 25: 34-5, can say: "Tunc vobis

respondebit pater, dominus et amicus, cum quo fecistis caeleste commercium: quamdiu fecisti uni ex minimis meis, mihi fecistis" (CCSL, 103, 132).

We have to wonder, for instance, what the translator meant by *usuria* in "Ex usuris et iniquitate redimet animas eorum /Et honorabile nomen eorum coram illo" (Ps. 71: 14). The Old Testament has frequent comments about lending against interest, whether in money or in victuals (Ex. 22: 25, Le. 25: 36-7, Dt. 23: 19-20). These texts indicate that, in the agricultural society of the time, loans were a form of relief, and therefore no interest should be charged within the community. Indirectly, of course, the frequent injunctions indicate that the practice existed anyway, as in Ps. 14: 5, where the psalmist asks:

> Qui pecuniam suam non dedit ad usuram,
> et munera super innocentem non accepit:
> qui facit haec non movebitur in aeternum.[5]

Circumstances were different at the time of the New Testament. In the parable of the man going on a journey and entrusting his money to his servant the master's reproach (on the literal level) is straightforward: "oportuit ergo te committere pecuniam meam nummulariis et veniens ego recepissem utique quod meum est cum usura" (Mt. 25: 27, similar to Lu. 19: 23). The commentators of the *Glossa Ordinaria* do not for a moment take this literally: "*Nummulariis*. Vel caeteris doctoribus, ut apostolis et episcopis. Vel cunctis credentibus qui possent pecuniam duplicare" (ad Mt. 25:27). Perhaps there is a hidden pun in *credentibus*, 'believers' and 'lenders.' The commentary to Lu. 19: 12-26 is even more emphatic in its allegorical reading:

the first servant's one pound stands for one God, one faith, one baptism; for *pecuniam* we read "Qui verbi pecuniam a doctore emit credendo, necesse est ut cum usuris solvat operando. Vel, de accepto verbi fenore usuras solvit, qui ex eo quod audit, etiam alia studet intelligere." Here the language of commerce is used in all its ambiguity. Whoever buys the coin of the word from a teacher or apostle, *credendo*, by believing, giving credit at the same time as incurring a debt, it is necessary that he pay with interest in deed (action). He pays his debt with interest when, from what he hears he tries to understand more.

The debt to be paid recalls Christ's words in Mt. 6: 12 "et dimitte nobis debita nostra, sicut et nos dimittimus debitoribus nostris." *Debita* translates the Greek *opheilemata*, 'Schuld=das Geschuldete' (Bauer), used also in Dt. 24: 10 for a debt. But the parallel passage in Luke has *hamartias*, although he uses *opheilonti* for 'debtors.' Sin is equated with 'debt' also in the Parable of the king taking account of his servants in Mt. 18: 23-5. Other words used for sin are *adikia* 'Unrecht, Ungerechtigkeit, Rechtlosigkeit,' for which the Vulgate uses *iniquitas, iniuria* or *iniustitia;* anomia, 'Gesetzlosigkeit, gesetzwidrige Tat,' Vulgate *iniquitas*, and *hamartia*.

Initially, the Old Testament Redemption was a political deliverance (and the Redemption of the people in Elizabeth's prophesy in Lu. 1: 68 is undoubtedly still political), but later, especially in the writings of the prophets, the people were seen as imprisoned in sin. The terminology does not change much over time: *lutroo* 'durch Lösegeld freimachen, loskaufen,' or the compound *apolutro-*

sis 'Loskaufung e. Gefangenen oder Sklaven ... durch Erlegung des Lösegeldes;' *agorazo* 'kaufen' (from *agora* 'marketplace') and *exagorazo* 'kaufen, aufkaufen, loskaufen, die Ansprüche des Geschä digten ablösen' (Bauer); *apoluo* 'loslassene. Gefangene, e. Schulder losgeben,' and *aphiemi,* 'fortlassen, wegschicken, erlassen,' for which the Vulgate uses *dimittere*. The idea of ransom (*lutron, redemptio*) is rejected in modern theology because "no one could have such power over a creature of His that His own rights would have to be purchased" (Cath. Encycl. 12, 137), but the image of payment is in accordance with the image of the people of Israel as a special possession of God.

The commentators apparently were comfortable with this terminology, as we see in Ambrose commenting on 1Pe. 1: 18- 19.

> Nam si redempti sumus non corruptibilibus argento et auro, sed pretioso sanguine Domini nostri Jesu Christi, quo utique vendente, nisi eo qui nostrum jam peccatricis successionis aere quaesitum servitium possidebat: sine dubio ipse flagitabat pretium, ut servitio exueret, quos tenebat obstrictos. Pretium autem nostrae liberationis erat sanguis Domini Jesu, quod necessarius solvendum erat ei cui peccatis nostri venditi eramus (PL 16, 1299).

Similarly, in a sermon on the passion, Leo Magnus says: "Venerat enim in hunc mundum dives atque misericors negotiator e caelis, et commutatione mirabili inierat commercium salutare nostra accipiens, et sua tribuens, pro contumeliis honorem, pro doloribus salutem, pro morte dans vitam" (SC 74, 33).

In his article "Pride goes before Avarice" Lester Little points out that the strong anti-commercial morality prevailing until the "commercial revolution" which took place between 1000 and 1350,

> had been formulated either in the early Christian

> period, when Christians did not benefit from the flourishing urban-commercial society in which they lived; or in the patristic era, when that urban-commercial society was crumbling and theologians were investing intellectual and emotional capital in an unworldly city; or, finally, in the feudal era, when commerce and city life were moribund (30).

By the same token, much of the commentary on biblical language of commerce was written by people who were unacquainted with the commerce of the later Middle Ages. This may explain the ease with which the commentators use the language of commerce for religious concepts. Thus, in the quotations from Ambrose and Leo Magnus, the vehicle of the metaphor (commerce) has probably lost most of its meaning, and the language of commerce lost much of its force as a metaphor.

Later, as actual commerce returns, the language of commerce becomes reinvested with meaning. This is not happening yet in the works discussed in the next three chapters, even though commerce itself is beginning to appear. Even in the *Willehalm* the insistent use of commercial and feudal terminology primarily conveys a pervasive sense of human trade, of back-and-forth, but the morality of the language is largely unexamined. Occasionally, as when Wolfram calls Gyburc Willehalm's *pfant* (162, 13 and 19) this is a fresh and vivid image defining their relationship.

We can see a clear difference between the period in this study and that of Dante, as discussed by Shoaf in *Dante, Chaucer, and the Currency of the Word*. Dante is very much surrounded by commercial activity, and aware of the moral perils. As Shoaf demonstrates, Dante's imagery is rooted in commerce itself rather than in the language of commerce, even when he transcends the evils of commerce in the *Par-*

adiso (67-72). Much later, the *Pearl* poet completely resurrects the metaphor of the language of commerce (but without reference to actual commerce) to exploit its paradoxes. The dreamer in *Pearl* thinks of fair trade and equivalence, but the maiden confronts him with the inadequacy of this language for the miracle of grace.

Even in the weaker metaphor of the earlier period, however, there always remains an awareness of the connotations of trade and exchange, of paying debts, and of the absolute insufficiency of human action in this respect. On the one hand, God's gift is just that, a gift of grace, which man can never deserve. Thus Augustine comments on the parable of the workers in the vineyard (Mt. 20: 1-16):

> Et ait paterfamilias, justissimum responsum reddens uni eorum: sodalis, non tibi feci injuriam; hoc est, non te fraudavi; quod placui reddidi tibi. Fraudem tibi non feci, quia quod pactus sum reddidi. *Huic non volo reddere, sed donare*. Non licet mihi facere quod volo de meo? (PL 38, 532).

On the other hand, man will never be able to repay this debt, as Anselm says: "Quid ergo retribuam creatori et recreatori meo? ... Quid ergo mendicus et pauper, ego vermis et cinis, quid retribuam deo meo, nisi ut ex corde oboediam praecepto eius?" (Or. 18, 12-5).

In this system of commercial language certain key terms become repositories of meaning, and where these meanings contrast ambiguities develop. An example of this is in the terms for rich and poor. Already in the Old Testament the riches of this world are contrasted with those not of this world, as in:

> Ne timueris cum dives factus fuerit homo,
> et cum multiplicata fuerit gloria domus eius:
> quoniam, cum interierit, non sumet omnia,
> neque descendet cum eo gloria eius.

(Ps. 48: 17-18)

Often *rich* seems to be identified with *unjust* and *poor* with *just*, as in the opening lines of the same Psalm:

> Audite haec, omnes gentes,
> auribus percipite, omnes qui habitatis orbem;
> quique terrigenae et filii hominum,
> simul in unum *dives et pauper*.
> (Ps. 48: 2-3)[6]

In the New Testament Christ counsels the rich man to sell his possessions and give to the poor, noting "quia *dives* difficile intrabit in regnum caelorum" (Mt. 19: 23, also Mk. 10: 21-5). In the "beatitudes" the poor are blessed because theirs will be the kingdom of God, and the rich are warned that they have their *consolationem* now (though the *Glossa Ordinaria* notes: "Nec tam divitiae quam amor divitiarum in culpa est" ad Lu. 6: 24). Further contrasts are set up in Lu. 12: 21 "Sic est qui *thesaurizat* et non est in Deum *dives*" and in " ... nonne Deus elegit *pauperes* in hoc mundi *divites* in fide et heredes regni, quod repromisit Deus diligentibus se?" (Js. 2: 5).

In 2Cor. 6: 10, in a series of contrasts, the followers of Christ are characterized "sicut *egentes* multos autem *locupletante*: tanquam *nihil habentes* et omnia *possidentes*." Shortly after this Paul urges the Corinthians to share their abundance with those in want, saying: "scitis enim gratiam Domini nostri Iesu Christi, quoniam propter vos *egenus* factus est, cum esset *dives*, ut illius *inopia* vos *divites* essetis" (2Cor. 8: 9). The commentary notes:

> *Egenus factus est*. Non ait, pauper factus est, cum dives fuisset: sed *cum dives esset*. Paupertatem enim assumpsit, et divitias non amisit; intus dives, foris pauper; latens Deus in divitiis, apparens homo in paupertate ... non ergo expavescas cum tua mendicitate ad

> illum accedere qui indutus nostra paupertate, ubi se pauperavit, nos ditavit (*Glossa ordinaria* ad 2Cor. 8: 9).

Here poverty is seen as the essential condition of man, which Christ took on in becoming man, by his poverty enriching man. The two kinds of riches are contrasted again in 1Tim. 6:

> Nam qui volunt *divites* fieri, incidunt in tentationem et in laqueum diaboli, et desideria multa inutilia et nociva, quae mergunt homines in interitum et perditionem. Radix enim omnium malorum est cupiditas (9-10) ... *Divitibus* huius saeculi praecipe non sublime sapere, neque sperare in incerto *divitiarum*, sed in Deo vivo (qui praestat nobis omnia abunde ad fruendum) bene agere, *divites* fieri in bonis operibus, facile tribuere, communicare, *thesaurizare* sibi fundamentum bonum in futurum, ut apprehendant veram vitam" (17-19).

Although the concepts are distinguished, the same words are used: "sic est qui *thesaurizat* et non est in Deum *dives*" (Lu. 12: 21) in contrast to "bene agere, *divites* fieri in bonis operibus ... *thesaurizare* sibi fundamentum bonum in futurum" (1Tim. 6: 18-9).

Curiously, both New Testament Greek and Latin have only one word for '*rich*' in all these senses (*plousios* and *dives*), although the different senses of 'poor' are more clearly distinguished, so that *penes* ('arm, bedürftig') and *ptochos* ('bettelnd, bettelarm') contrast with *eleenos* ('bemitleidenswert' Bauer). In 2Cor. 8: 9 Christ is said to have become poor (*egenus*, Gr. *ptochos*). In 2Cor. 6: 10 we are "sicut *egentes* multos autem locupletantes" (hos ptochoi pollous de ploutizontes). The Vulgate uses *inops* 'without resources, helpless, weak' (Lewis and Short), *pauper*, etymologically 'producing little,' thence 'poor, i.e. not wealthy, of small means' (L. and S.) *egenus*, and *miser*, 'wretched, unfortunate, miserable' (L. and

S.). Illusory riches and real poverty are emphatically contrasted in Rev. 3: 17: "quia dicis: Quod *dives* sum et *locupletatus* et nullius *egeo*, et nescis quia tu es *miser* et *miserabilis* et *pauper* et *caecus* et *nudus*." Yet immediately following this John urges: "Suadeo tibi *emere* a me aurum ignitum probatum, ut *locuples* fias, et vestimentis albis induaris, et non appareat confusio nuditatis tuae, et collyrio inunge oculos tuos ut videas" (Rev. 3: 18).

In Middle-High German *arm* covers both *miser* and *pauper* (Grimm). *Misericordia*, 'mercifulness (of God)' or a ruler's 'benevolence, grace' (Niermeyer) seems to denote the consciousness of man's condition as *miser*. Although the etymology of German *erbarmen* has been debated, it seems most likely a calque of Latin *misericordia* (Grimm). On the other hand, German *reich* and French *riche* are related to Latin *rex* and *regere*, so that "*reich* als stehende beiwort zu Gott, fürsten, vornehmen in sinne von grosz, mächtig, gewaltig gesetzt ist" (Grimm). Thus Terramer's words are richly ambiguous:

> ach ich vreuden arm man,
> daz ich sölh kint ie gewan,
> sprach Terramer der riche
> (*Willehalm, 217, 9-11*)
> ("o how poor in joy I am
> that I ever had such a child,"
> said rich Terramer)

On one level they are a paradox: Terramer's wealth and power cannot buy him happiness. On another level they reflect a deeper truth: Terramer's wealth and power are of this world, and therefore useless, while Gyburc's poverty is not merely material and the result of her abandonment of Tybalt for Willehalm, but proof of her consciousness of the essential human condition. Similarly, in the Old-English

Christ, earm is contrasted with *eadig* (blessed, 1496). French *pauvre* is derived from *pauper*, and the connection with a word like *misericordia* has disappeared. Quite in contrast, the word *merci*, the equivalent of 'Erbarmen, Gnade' is actually derived from latin *merces*, and therefore also means 'Lohn, Busze, Entschädigung' (Tobler-Lommatzsch). The ambiguity of these meanings is fully exploited by the trouveres in the love poetry. The use of commercial and feudal terminology is extremely frequent in love poetry, as Dragonetti shows with many illustrations (64-113).

Similarly, the language of exchange is frequently used for elements and relationships within the feudal system. These transferences of the language of commerce to the sphere of love lyric or of feudalism has been widely discussed. This study will not look at the love poetry, but at the use of this language for religious concepts[7] in narrative literature. For the language of commerce, with its accompanying ambiguity, also occurs in narrative poetry, with varying implications. At any time the language of the biblical tradition can be drawn on, and revitalized by its interaction with different historical or fictional contexts.

Moving across Europe Christianity confronted not only the challenges of translation into the vernacular languages, but also those of different cultures. In the early Germanic culture of the *comitatus* certain aspects easily fitted Christian precepts (gift-giving, hospitality, loyalty), others did not, such as forgiving one's enemy. Tacitus describes the loyal, generous relationship between the lord and his thanes:

> exigunt enim a principis sui liberalitate illum

> bellatorum equum, illam cruentam victricemque frameam; nam epulae et quamquam incompti, largi tamen apparatus pro stipendo cedunt. materia munificentiae per bella et raptus ... (14) and: gaudent muneribus, sed nec data imputant nec acceptis obligantur (*Germania*, 21).

This description was undoubtedly colored by Tacitus' own background in Roman contractual society, and the striking contrast with the patron-client relationship in Rome as exposed in its hateful obligations to both sides by Juvenal (Satire 6). But in several literary works (*Beowulf, The Battle of Maldon, The Wanderer*) the relationship between leader and follower is described in terms of love, devotion and shared experience. The gifts are freely given, although they are also an essential part of the social structure. Loyalty is freely given, although it is also repaid by shared booty.

This double aspect of the lord-thane relationship often expresses itself in ambiguous language. The ambiguity of Anglo-Saxon poetry is extremely pervasive, as we shall see in chapter 2. It is an ambiguity that is inherent in the poetics: the alliteration with its paratactic, asyndetic, unexplained connections; the characteristic litotes. This is not the witty, ironic ambiguity of Chrétien de Troyes, which questions our assumptions and traditional reading of romances, but a more solemn, serious ambiguity, rooted in a solid value system; not questioning that system but demonstrating its richness and multiplicity. In this pervasive ambiguity connections and meanings are to be sensed and interpreted by a reader or listener who is part of its world; they are not to be expressed explicitly in words. If the *Maldon* poet can speak about traitors with mild irony,

it must be because there is no doubt about the ideal values of love and loyalty.

The generosity of the ideal hero in early Germanic poetry is quite different from the alms-giving to the poor in Christ's teaching because it is part of the (small) heroic warrior-society, but there is a similarity too. As Irving notes to Hrothgar's speech in *Beowulf*: "... avarice is always something more serious than mere stinginess in Germanic heroic poetry; it represents the immoral violation of a personal relationship that happens to be symbolized by the exchange of material wealth"(5). The similarity with the Christian precepts is not in the circumstances, which are very different, but in the moral significance of the exchanges.

Repeatedly, Germanic (pre-Christian) elements are fused with Christian elements into great literary moments, testifying to a fundamental understanding, an acceptance of one in the terms of the other. The spirit of the *comitatus* and Christian sensibility come together in the Old-English *Wanderer*, and later feudal conditions are colored with Christian caritas in the Rüdiger's shield episode of the *Nibelungenlied*, as Wapnewski has shown.

The feudal commendatio was accompanied by an oath "which itself involved not merely an appeal to God but physical contact with some *res sacrae*--a relic, a Gospel book or some similar object" (Ganshof, 28). Thus, implicitly God became the guarantor of the legal order, as he (Christ) already was the guarantor of man's salvation:

> Mains jointes li fais de mon cuer lijance,
> Ame et vie et cuer vuil de li tenir
> Et puis que dou tout i ai m'esperance,
> Bien me doit tenser de toute grevance

Et encontre touz son fief garantir

as an anonymous French poem has it.[8] Feudalism is sanctified by God's involvement, and at the same time the terminology of feudalism becomes available for another expression of man's relationship to God. In Wolfram's *Willehalm* terms like *dienst, lon, sold,* and *pfant* find their uses in warfare, love and religion, and the *triuwe* of the family and feudal loyalty is used for God's love for man, reinforcing the vision of all men as God's children.

The works discussed in chapter 2 illustrate the points of contact between Germanic culture and early Christianity. In the *Battle of Maldon* we have an ideal view of *comitatus* love and loyalty expressed in characteristic Anglo-Saxon poetics. In the *Dream of the Rood* this same poetics of ambiguity, enumeration and variation lends itself quite naturally to an early Christian meditation on Christ's redemptive act and its meaning for man. In the *Christ III* these same characteristics are present in an extended sermon on the Day of Judgement.

With the *communicatio idiomatum* the poetry easily assimilates the paradoxes of Christianity, stressing the mystery of Redemption with all poetic means, illuminating that mystery by the paradoxes and the failures of human reason. The alliterative system, with its two half-lines which may be linked in contrast, lends itself to a vivid expression of man's dual nature: "of lame ic þe leoþo gesette, geaf ic ðe *lifgende* gæst" (Christ 1381).

Chrétien de Troyes' *Conte du Graal* is situated in a different world. As Lester Little has noted, in the eleventh century the com-

mercial revolution necessitated a rethinking of the longstanding anti-commercial morality of the church, when a Christian society started to become urban and commercial. "The gap between the social realities and the old morality fostered disorienting anxieties" (30-31). We can perhaps discern some of this disorientation in the contrast between Biaurepaire and the town of Escavalon. In the former, the complete halt of commercial activity indicates the disastruous results of the siege (ne rien nule qui fust a vendre, 1769), which is relieved by the providential arrival of merchants with food. In the latter, the thriving activity of the busy town soon becomes a threat to Gavain, which he can only barely hold off with un- chivalrous means. Urban commerce necessarily entails "the substitution of money for certain personal relationships," affecting the social fabric (Little, 29). This would make the theme of charity, which is the major theme of the *Conte du Graal*, extremely relevant. It is clear that this charity is quite different from the liberality in the early Germanic society.

Because this world is larger and less personal, the individual acquires a more separate importance. The charity in the *Conte du Graal* is a personal, individual charity (in the wider sense of *caritas*), rooted in a personal and individual devotion. Through the treatment in the Prologue it is linked with Christ's call for charity as the foundation of Christianity. Yet in this call for individual and personal charity, the individual does not have a "face," an identity yet, nor does the writer. Chrétien's voice reveals itself only discreetly, in his tone; this is in important contrast to Wolfram.

Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Willehalm*, the subject of chapter 4, is

a translation of the French epic *Aliscans*. Traditionally, the epic is characterized by parallelism. In the *Chanson de Roland* each of the Christian heroes fights a pagan hero, and later Charlemagne fights the highest ruler of the pagans, Baligant. Throughout we know that "Paien unt tort et chrestiens unt dreit" (1015). The pagans have no character of their own, except sometimes in their monstrosity; they exist only as a foil for the Christians, all black against their whiteness. In the *Aliscans* this contrast is the same:

> Puis que li hom n'aimme crestienté,
> et qu'il het deu et despit carité,
> n'a droit en vie, je le di par verté
> et ki l'ocist, s'a destruit un malfé.
> Deu ai vengi, si m'en set molt bon gre.
> Tuit estes chien par droiture apelés,
> car vos n'avés ne foi ne leauté. (1058ff.)

The world around, however, has become more confused. It is more difficult to discern the hand of Providence in the battle and its outcome. In the German *Ruolantslied* the black-and-white contrast between the combatants has softened. The pagans are no longer monsters; they resemble the Christians more closely in their humanity and nobility. In showing their potential equality the author finally emphasizes their crucial difference, religion. Wolfram consciously builds on this traditional parallelism. Like the Christians, the pagans are motivated in battle by *minne*, and like the Christians they have faith, but, tragically, it is not the true faith, and their gods cannot protect them. Religion is still the cause of the war, but it is also, in a completely new way, the inspiration of the poet.

The personal tone and devotion of the Prologue are a completely new phenomenon in medieval literature. But the importance of these

135 lines is especially structural. Elements of the Prologue, whether individual lines or important themes, reach out into the whole work. The most important themes are those of *gotes hantgetat*, of the divine order of the cosmos, and of God's mercy. The poet is God's child and all men are God's children. This belief reverberates throughout. God's divine order of the cosmos and His mercy, first evoked in the Prologue, are the major points in Gyburc's debate with her father and of her Toleranzrede.

For the first time Christ's second command, to love one's enemy, emerges in a literary work, and it does so in a panorama of cosmic conflict and upheaval. The human cost of this conflict, caused by Gyburc's conversion, is spelled out on every occasion, not the least in Gyburc's own overwhelming sorrow. The respect for the pagans goes very far, in that Willehalm allows the victims to be buried "nach ir e" (465, 19). We will not know how Wolfram would have ended this work, but he has shown us the disorder of the human world and the pain of war in stark detail.

Each of these works has been examined, discussed and interpreted, and my debt to the criticism cannot always be adequately acknowledged by mere references. This study does not aim at new interpretations, but it takes a close look at one of the ways the meanings were made, that is, the language. The language of commerce, as we saw, connects medieval narrative with a biblical tradition, evoking associations and ambiguities. Even if external circumstances changed, the connection with the biblical language remained, and remained vital. As in the Gospels, the Epistles, and the commmentaries, this language could be used to evoke Christ's redemption and to remind of hu-

man failure. We are not, then, primarily talking about a climate of opinion, about historical circumstances or fictional invention, but about a tradition of language. Although the language of this tradition necessarily changed in meaning as it moved from the times of the Old Testament to the early thirteenth century, and from Hebrew, Greek and Latin to the vernacular languages, there is, I think, a continuity which was drawn on.

In the works discussed in the next three chapters, and most clearly in the *Willehalm*, the question is raised: how can we live a Christian life in a troubled world, and the answers are quite different, and differently presented. In an ever widening perspective, it is shown that human love and divine love can and must work together for the Redemption of men and women and their world.

Notes

[1] Anchor Psalms has a variant text, translated as "no man can redeem himself" (295 and 298).

[2] I am grateful to Professor Tony Hunt for pointing out this reference to me.

[3] *De Clementia* 2, 3, as quoted in Sehrt, 13.

[4] On this see Lyonnet and Sabourin, especially p. 26.

[5] cf. *Dictionary of the Bible*, s.v. Usury.

[6] "The Targum identifies these with the 'unjust' and the 'just' respectively, an interpretation warranted by several biblical passages," cf. 1.7, Isa. 53: 9, Job 24: 6 and Prov. 11: 7 (*Anchor Psalms*, 295).

[7] See also Kellog's article "Ganelon: The Poetics of Guile and Greed," (165).

[8] Järnström, p. 25.

The *Dream of the Rood* and *Christ III*

The prolonged debate on the Christian elements in *Beowulf*, and parallel discussions of the pagan elements in Old English Christian poetry, tell us, indirectly, much about the difficulty of imagining the effect of conversion on an established, mature culture.[1] It seems clear that a comprehensive religious and ethical system (Christianity) will influence all aspects of life and culture of the converted population. But it seems equally clear, though not as frequently noted, that the religious system will be shaped and modified by the receiving culture, filtered by its pre- existing perceptions and ideology. In his History of the Church of England Bede reports on Pope Gregory's instructions to the missionaries in England to maintain some respect for the existing (pagan) temples and sacrifices, "Nam duris mentibus simul omnia abscidere impossibile esse non dubium est, gradibus vel passibus non autem saltibus elevatur" (HE, 1, 30).[2]

Among sources on Germanic culture before Christianisation Tacitus' *Germania* is pre-eminent.[3] Tacitus' description of the openhandedness of Germanic chiefs, and of the fierce loyalty of the members of the *comitatus*, was undoubtedly colored by his own background in Roman contractual society. Far from the seemingly irrational pleasure in generosity that Tacitus describes, gift-giving was an essential and inalienable part of the Germanic system of social connections. As Grönbech emphasizes: "A gift without return, without

obligation, is inconceivable to the Germanic mind ... The obligation incurred by acceptance was more of an ideal than of a commercial nature, it went too deep to be measured in material values."(1:9)

These values are expressed vividly in the words of Byrhtnoth's retainers in *The Battle of Maldon*:[4]

> gylpwordum spræc
> þæt he nolde fleogan fotmæl landes,
> ofer bæc bugan, þa his betera leg.
> He bræc þone bordweall and wiþ þa beornas feaht,
> oðþæt he his sincgyfan on þam s æmannum
> wurðlice wrec, ðær he on w æle læge
> (274-79)

> he spoke his boast
> that he would not flee a footlength of land,
> turn backward, now that his lord lay.
> He broke the shieldwall and fought against the men
> until he had nobly avenged his treasuregiver
> on the men of the sea, until he lay among the slain.

Or again in the words of the old retainer:

> Hige sceal þe heardra, heorte þe cenre,
> mod sceal þe mare, þe ure mægen lytlað.
> Her liþ ure ealdor eall forheawen,
> god on greote. A mæg gnornian
> se ðe nu fram þis wigplegan wendan þenceð.
> Ic eom frod feores; fram ic ne wille,
> ac ic me healfe minum hlaforde,
> be swa leofan men, licgan þence. (312-19)

> Our courage shall be the stronger, our heart the keener,
> the spirit shall be mightier as our strength wanes.
> Here lies our lord all cut down,
> the good man on the ground. He must grieve forever
> who now considers turning from this warplay.
> I am old in life; I do not want to go
> but I intend to lay me down
> by the side of my lord, that dear man.

These words make clear that the relationship between lord and retainer was very different from the Roman patron-client relationship. The giving of treasure is only one aspect in a relationship

of mutual love and allegiance. The specifics of this relationship--beyond ring-giving and willingness to lay down one's life--are not spelled out. They seem understood and accepted by all. The followers are not mercenaries paid for their fighting. Not only was this a pre-monetary society, but what payment there was, was not "just" payment. It could never be isolated from the whole relationship. In this it is very similar to the relationship between God and His people in the Old Testament.

The giving of treasure is an expression of love, *and* provision of necessities (armor), *and* payment for service. What Tacitus pragmatically describes as the arming of the fighter by the chief, is represented in the poems as a symbolic action, passing on the qualities of the previous owner and the traditions of the community. Similarly, fighting-to-death for one's lord is an expression of love *and* service for payment. These different aspects could not be separated from each other. The elasticity of such concepts is illustrated by the fact that *giefan* and *sellan* are virtually indistinguishable in Old English.

No doubt, the *comitatus* was a model for understanding the teaching about Christ, who gave his life for mankind, and his followers, who suffered martyrdom for his sake. The New Testament precepts on alms and care for the poor, on openhanded giving rather than clearly defined obligations, were compatible with Germanic traditions of hospitality and care within the community.

In this chapter I will discuss three Old English poems. *The Battle of Maldon*, though clearly originating in a Christian environment, is primarily a celebration of the traditional values of the *comita-*

tus. This Germanic (i.e. pre-Christian) ideology is expressed in a characteristic diction and poetics. These characteristics are more developed in *The Dream of the Rood*, a quintessentially Christian, mystical vision. And in the very different context of a sermon on the Last Judgement, many of these characteristics are still found in the poem that is traditionally called *Christ III*. This discussion will show how the traditional Old English (pre- Christian) diction and poetics created a rich medium for Christian beliefs and poetry.

Old English poetry has several unique characterizing features. It is, first of all, alliterative poetry, that is, poetry with lines made up of two half-lines connected by alliteration. "Alliteration is used to unite the two half- lines into the longer rhythmic unit of the complete line," according to Bright (277). It should be stressed that, usually, the alliteration is the only (formal) unifying device, and that the half-lines generally are paratactic and asyndetic. Anglo-Saxon poetry is a poetry of "enumeration and variation," (Bright, 266) a compounding poetry from a time when English was still a compounding language.

The two half-lines may be parallel in meaning or contrasting, but in either case they are connected by alliteration. If the meanings are parallel, the alliteration will have a cumulative effect, but if they are contrasting, the effect of the alliteration is more ambiguous. Alliterating two contrasting half-lines across the cæsura may emphasize the opposition and contrast, or it may suggest a connection at the heart of the opposition.

Some examples from *The Battle of Maldon* may illustrate this point:

stodon fæste

wigan on gewinne wigend cruncon
wundum werige wæl feol on eorþan

(301b-303)

warriors
stood fast in the battle warriers fell
weary of wounds the slain fell to earth

The text does not indicate the nature of the connection between these elements. There may be a progression in time-- men stood fast, men fell--presented as simultaneous to stress the press of time, the confusion of battle, in which men seem to stand fast and fall in one and the same moment. Or it may be that a contrast is implied; some men stood fast, but others, weary of wounds, fell. But even if a contrast is presented, the contrasting elements are united by alliteration.

In another instance:

he ful yrre wod
feaht fæstlice, fleam he forhogode (253b-4)

he advanced full of anger
fought resolutely, and scorned flight

the two half-lines of 254 are contrasted by the rhetorical device of *contrarium* (he fought steadfastly, despised flight), yet connected by the alliteration and in their meaning (both fighting steadfastly and refusing to flee are proper warrior conduct). A similar connection is made in line 117-18:

Gehyrde ic þæt Eadweard anne sloge
swiðe mid his swurde, swenges ne wyrnde

I heard that Eadweard slew one
fiercely with his sword, was not sparing of blows

Here again, the cumulation is varied by the use of *contrarium*, but united by alliteration. But in lines 100-101

þær ongean gramum gearowe stodon

Byrhtnoð mid beornum

There against the angry ones they stood ready,
Byrhtnoth with his men

the delayed appearance of the (grammatical) subject creates an ambiguity within line 100. We do not know who the *gramum* are, and who are standing *gearowe*, but the two parties are opposed (*ongean*), although also linked by alliteration. Similar ambiguities turn up in another passage:

swa stemnetton stiðhicgende
hysas æt hilde hogodon georne
hwa þær mid orde ærost miht
on fægan men feorh gewinnan
wigan mid wæpnum; wæl feol on eorðan (122-26)

Thus they stood firm, resolute
the young men in battle, they strove earnestly
who there might first with his spear
win life by fighting against fated men
warriors with weapons; the slain fell to earth

The first three lines give a straightforward progression, although the identity of the subject *hysas* is to be inferred only from the favorable presentation. But lines 125-6 are highly ambiguous. "To win life by fighting against fated men" contrasts *fægan* and *feorh*, although the two concepts are also intimately connected (men are *fægan* exactly because their *feorh* can be wrested away by others). The idea of *fighting* away a life from doomed men is ambiguous in itself, and even more so since *wigan mid wæpnum* may be either a Dative singular (corresponding to *men* in 125), or a Nominative plural, corresponding to *hysas*. As a result, it is impossible to determine whether 126b offers a contrast between the winning *hysas* and those who fall, or two parallel statements on the victims.

Even stronger is this "confusion" in lines 134-42:

Sende ða se særinc suþerne gar
þæt gewundod wearð wigena hlaford
he sceaf þa mid ðam scylde þæt se sceaft tob æfst
and þæt spere sprengde þæt hit sprang ongean
Gegremod wearð se guðrinc he mid gare stange
wlacne wicing þe him þa wunde forgeaf
Frod wæs se fyrdrinc he let his francan wadan
purh ðæs hysses hals hand wisode
þæt he on þam fæfsceaðan feorh ger æhte

the sea-warrior sent his southern spear
so that the lord of the warriors was wounded
he then thrust with his shield so that the shaft shattered
and made the spear spring so that it sprang back again
enraged was the warrior, he struck with his spear
the valiant viking who had given him the wound.
wise was the warrior, he sent his spear forward
through the young man's neck, directed his hand
so that he caught the life of the sudden attacker

In these nine lines we have a rapid exchange of blows: a *særinc* injures another warrior with his spear. The injured man maneuvers his shield with the effect that the spear springs back out of the wound. The warrior then throws his spear at the man who wounded him. He pierces his foe's neck and kills him. Although the actions are described with vivid detail (note how the alliterating *sprengde--sprang* in line 137 reflect the quick movement forward and back of the spear), the actors are hardly identified. *Særinc, wigena hlaford, guðrinc, fyrdrinc, hysse* are all different words for warrior, none of them carrying any particular value judgment. We must conclude from the context that the *særinc* who makes the first attack is a viking. This is confirmed when the *guðrinc* hits the *wicing, þe him þa wunde forgeaf*. Who then is the *fyrdrinc* of the next line? He is, apparently, the same warrior, in the same action, which is here made more specific (a hit through the neck). Another contrast (but not in value) is made between the *fyrdrinc* who is *frod* ('old and wise')

and the hyssa ('young man') whom he kills. Only in the ninth line of this episode does the poet express a value judgement: the original attacker is called a *færsceaða*, and a *sceaða* is a 'wicked man, foe, fiend.' (In line 180 Byrhtnoth fears that *helsceaðan* will overcome his soul). Alliteration, then, functions to unite the half-lines, the buildingblocks of the poetry. But the connection it creates is often ambiguous and blurs the contrasts.

Another striking characteristic of Old English poetry is the frequent use of litotes, "a figure employing deliberate understatement for purposes of intensification, or affirmation by the negative of the contrary, usually to secure emphasis or irony," according to the *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*. Thus in line 113:

Wund wærð Wulfmær, wælræste geceas

'Wulfmær was wounded, chose the bed of slaughter.' This seems ironic, because Wulfmær can hardly be said to "choose" to be injured and die, yet at the same time it resonates with meaning. This is not a passive submission to fate, it is an active choosing, an advance to the edge of endurance, and beyond. The concept is repeated several times, as in line 287, "and ðær Gaddes *mæg grund gesohte*", and in line 300, "ær *him* Wigelines bearn on *þam wæle læge*."

In the same spirit, the combatants are exhorted to "wæpna neotan" ('make use' of their weapons, as in German *benutzen*). It seems that this neutral *neotan* suffices, since everyone knows what the right use of weapons is. At times, the irony borders on sarcasm. Thus, to the enemy's outrageous proposal that Byrhtnoth and his followers surrender even before the battle has started, and buy peace with tribute, Byrhtnoth answers without hesitation:

Gehyrst þu sælida, hwæt pis folc segeð?
Hi willað eow to gafole garas syllan,
ættrynne ord and ealde swurd,
þa heregeatu þe eow æt hilde ne deah (45-48)

Do you hear, seafarers, what these people say?
they want to give you spears for tribute
poisonous spearpoints and ancient swords
the war-gear that will not avail you in battle

The rejection is the sharper because he turns their own words against them: 'you ask for gold and treasure, we will give you gold and treasure, in the form of the time-honored weapons, and you will not like them.' The thought is repeated in line 116, when a viking has struck down Wulfmær and is given *wiþerlean*, 'recompense.' If one can 'pay' love, in the form of treasure, 'paying' revenge with weapons is only the next step.

Curiously, the litotes is even used for the desertion of Godric and his brothers. In the charged atmosphere of boasts and exhortations, the description of the betrayal is surprisingly low-key:

Hi bugon pa fram beaduwe *þe þær beon noldon* (185) 'Those who did not want to be there, departed from the battle,' but "hit riht ne wæs."

The litotes, then, creates an amibiguity, an inversion of meaning, in which men are not killed but choose to die, in which traitors are those "who don't want to be here." In the litotes which negates a contrary, part of the power lies in the fact that two things are said at the same time, i.e. what is negated and its negation. Alliteration, as we saw, also creates ambiguity, uniting elements that are contrasted. Alliterative poetry is system of separate building-blocks, seemingly (or formally) unconnected events, in which con-

trasts are washed out by ambiguities, and things mean the opposite of what they seem to mean. Connections and meanings are to be sensed and interpreted by one who is part of it, not to be expressed in words.

The pervasive ambiguity in the diction of this poem suggests several characteristics of the culture in which it originated. It must have been a cohesive culture, allowing the listener to the poem to make the connections and interpretations not formally provided by the syntax. Litotes could be used in writing about cowardice and treason, because the prevailing values of loyalty and bravery were generally understood and accepted. That friend and foe could be equally called *guðrinc*, perhaps indicates that they behaved similarly, but even more that, ultimatley, there was no doubt on which side each was. Although Wulfstan's *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos* eloquently shows that, in effect, Anglo-Saxon society at the time of *The Battle of Maldon* was falling apart, and betrayal and demoralisation prevailed, the values of the *ideal* portrayed in *Maldon* must have been generally understood.

Accepted and clearly understood as these values were, they also seem to have had a quality that--for lack of a better word--I will call spaciousness, a capacity to contain different elements that might seem contradictory to others. In contrast to the relationship between patron and client in Rome, described in terms of obligations often hateful to both sides (Juvenal's Satire 6 leaves little doubt about this), the relationship between leader and follower in the *comitatus* is described in terms of love, devotion and shared experience. Military, economic and social interdepence coëxist with love and friendship. The different aspects of the relationship were so

completely interwoven that each part partook of the whole and evoked the whole.

The same spaciousness and flexibility exists in the language. Most words had literal and figurative meanings, and could be fixed in either field of meaning by compounding. Brodeur comments on the "violent or far-fetched manner" in which religious poets adapted traditional terms for new purposes, giving as an example the use of *goldhord* to denote Christ on the cross. But Brodeur's criticism of the extremes risks obscuring the fact that the wealth of specific neologisms in *Beowulf* and the far-fetched neologisms in some Christian poems both point to an elasticity in the language older and more fundamental than both kinds of poetry.

Similarly, in his essay on "Diction and Imagery in Anglo- Saxon Poetry," H.C. Wyld notes a peculiarity of variation: "the poet does not merely feel that things are *like* something else, his mind bridges the gulf, and he sees the two things as identical. We have seen several instances of the intermingling of the symbol and the thing symbolized." (Wyld, 1925:83). The poet who used *goldhord* for Christ may well have felt that it translated *thesauros*, frequently used in Latin, whether or not he kept the connotation of the treasure of gold as a medium of transferring love from the war poems.

To the ambiguity created by alliteration and litotes as we saw it in *The Battle of Maldon, The Dream of the Rood* adds even more ambiguity by its use of the *communicatio idiomatum* and its very personal and striking use of the terminology and imagery of heroism.[8] Both the cumulative and the contrasting alliteration are illustrated in lines 13-17:

Syllic wæs se sigebeam, ond ic synnum fah,
forwunded mid wommum. Geseah ic wuldres treow,
wædum geweorðode, wynnum scinan,
gegyred mid golde, gimmas hæfdon
bewrigene weorðlice wealdendes treow

glorious was the victory-tree and I stained with sins
wounded with stains I saw the tree of glory
adorned with garments shine beautifully
adorned with gold, and gems had
splendidly covered the tree of the lord

Line 16 shows the alliteration of two half-lines which do not contrast, and it does have cumulative effect, as if piling on the decoration of the cross. Lines 13 and 14 offer strong contrasts, and the contrast is emphasized by the alliteration, stressing *synnum* in the second half-line with *syllic* and *sigebeam* in the first. The victorytree was glorious, the speaker stained with sins. In terms of the syntax, line 13 does have a conjunction, but one that does not carry any meaning, conveys no contrast. The meaning is generally not conveyed by syntactical means. Since the punctuation is the choice of the editor, and not provided by the manuscript, we might note that omitting the period in line 14 (or shifting it to the end of line 13) makes equally good sense: Forwunded mid wommum geseah ic wuldres treow, 'wounded with stains I saw the tree of glory,' perhaps implying 'even though wounded with stains I saw the tree of glory.' Grammatically speaking, *forwunded mid wommum* could even be taken with *treow*, forshadowing the dual vision of the cross in lines 18-23.

Lines 14-15 alliterate on *w* over two lines, unusual for this poem, and probably suggesting a close connection between the two lines. The tree is adorned with garments or coverings, and shines *wynnum*, usually translated as 'beautifully,' but in form, of course, a Da-

tive/Instrumental like *wædum*, and linking the two words: the garments are the source of beauty. We may even see a connection---in contrast this time---between *wommum* in line 14 and *wynnum* in line 15, both Datives, and similar in sound. This would strengthen the contrast between the speaker, covered with stains, and the cross shining with beauty.

The effect of the alliteration is complex also in lines 21- 25:

> Forht ic wæs for þære fægran gesyhðe. Geseah ic
> þæt fuse beacen
> wendan wædum ond bleom; hwilum hit wæs mid wætan bestemed
> beswyled mid swates gange, hwilum mid synce gegyrwed.
> Hwæðre ic þær licgende lange hwile
> beheold hreowcearig hælendes treow,
> oððæt ic gehyrde þæt it hleoðrode
>
> Afraid I was at the beautiful sight,
> I saw that shining beacon
> change garment and color
> one moment it was suffused with moisture
> drenched with the flow of blood,
> then adorned with treasure.
> Yet lying there, for a long time,
> sorrowfully, I beheld the tree of the savior
> until I heard that it spoke

In line 21, *forht for þære fægran gesyhðe*, there is a strong contrast between the alliterating words *forht* and *fægran*, the paradox warning us that the vision is awe-inspiring. The tree changes its garment and color; one moment it is suffused in wetness, drenched in blood (or sweat), then adorned with treasure. The visions of the suffering, bloodied cross and the treasured relic overlap and merge into each other before the dreamer's eyes. But perhaps more is suggested by the alliteration: in line 22 *wædum* alliterates with *wætan* in line 23 *swates* with *since*. The linking of *swates* and *since* is strengthened further by the echo of *beswylded* in *gegyrwed*, and by the chiasmus in

the two half-lines. The blood of Christ covers the cross like a garment, it is the very thing that make the cross unique, that causes men to make reliquary crosses. But Christ's blood is also a treasure in itself. The instrument of torture becomes a relic exactly because the evidence of the torture is the evidence of Christ's redemptive sacrifice. This is what Saint Andrew expresses when he addresses the cross, saying that it is adorned with Christ's limbs as with pearls.[6] The alliteration creates the connections which the syntax leaves out. But because the syntax leaves them out (or open), the connections are often ambiguous.

The figure of litotes does not appear in *The Dream of the Rood* as frequently as in most Old-English poetry, but after describing the bejewelled cross, the poet says:

> Beheolden pær engel dryhtnes ealle
> fægere purh forögesceaft. Ne wæs öær
> huru fracodes gealga
>
> (9-10)
>
> many bands of angels looked on
> fair through eternity. That was certainly not a
> criminal's gallows

The alliteration shows that *fracodes* has the stress, 'that was certainly not a criminal's gallows.' Again, the denial evokes that which is denied. This is not an ordinary criminal's gallows, but at the same time it *is*. The mystery and the miracle of the crucifixion lie in the paradox of Christ's dying the death of an ordinary criminal on the cross. The poem itself stresses this repeatedly. In line 31 the cross says that the fiends " ... heton me heora wergas hebban," and in line 87 the cross reminds the dreamer:

> iu ic wæs geworden wita hardost
> leodum laoost, ærpan ic him lifes weg

rihtne gerymde, reordberendum (87-89)

of old I had become the bitterest punishment
most hated for men, before I cleared for them
the right way of life, for speech-bearing men.

Of old it was the hardest punishment. In line 88 *leodum laðost* alliterates with *lifes*---the instrument of punishment most hateful to mankind is now the sign of life, that eternal life, redemption.

The Dream of the Rood adds to these ambiguities by the frequent use of the *communicatio idiomatum*, the figure that assigns divine properties to Christ the man, and human properties to God, as in Mary's title *Theotokos*, 'mother of God.'[7] As a theological concept, the *communicatio idiomatum* was discussed by churchfathers as early as Origen and Athanasius. In her article "Doctrinal Influences on *The Dream of the Rood*," Rosemary Woolf points out that the concept takes on particular importance at a time when the dual nature of Christ is a subject of lively controversy, and when theologians take care to put equal stress on Christ's divinity (against the Nestorian heresy) and his humanity (against the Monophysites).

It is easy to see that *communicatio idiomatum* is also a rhetorical technique in which, as Woolf says, "The unity of Christ's person was ... emphasized in a manner which from a literary point of view produced a startlingly paradoxical effect." (140). *The Dream of the Rood* uses this technique frequently, especially in the passage on the crucifixion:

Geseah ic frean mancynnes
efstan elne mycle þæt he me wolde on gestigan.
þær ic þa ne dorste ofer dryhtnes word
bugan oððe berstan, þa ic bifian geseah
eorðan sceatas. Ealle ic mihte
feondas gefyllan, hwæðre ic f æste stod.

On gyrede hine þa geong hæleð, (þæt wæs god ælmihtig)
strang ond stiðmod. Gestah he on gealgan heanne,
modig on manigra gesyhðe, þa he wolde mancyn lysan.
Bifode ic þa me se beorn ymbeclypte. Ne dorste ic
hwæðre bugan to eorðan,
feallan to foldan sceatum, ac ic sceolde fæste standan.
Rod wæs ic aræred. Ahof ic ricne cyning,
heofona hlaford, hyldan me ne dorste.
þurhdrifan hi me mid deorcan næglum. On me
syndon þa dolg gesiene,
opene inwidhlemmas. Ne dorste ic hira nænigum sceððan.
Bysmeredon hie unc butu ætg ædere. Eall ic wæs mid
blode bestemed,
begoten of þæs guman sidan, siððan he
hæfde his gast onsended.
Feala ic on þam beorge gebiden hæbbe
wraðra wyrda. Geseah ic weruda god
þearle þenian. þystro hæfdon
bewrigen mid wolcnum wealdendes hræw,
scirne sciman, sceadu forðeode,
wann under wolcnum. Weop eal gesceaft,
cwiðdon cyninges fyll. Crist wæs on rode.
Hwæðere þær fuse feorran cwoman
to þam æðelinge. Ic þæt eall beheold.
Sare ic wæs mid sorgum gedrefed, hnag ic
hwæðre pam secgum to handa,
eaðmod elne mycle. Genamon hie þær ælmihtigne god,
ahofan hine of ðam hefian wite. Forleton me þa hilderincas
standan steame bedrifenne; eall ic wæs mid strælum forwunded.
Aledon hie ðær limwerigne, gestodon him æt his lices hæfdum.
beheoldon hie ðær heofones dryhten, ond he
hine ðær hwile reste,
meðe æfter ðam miclan gewinne. Ongunnon
him þa moldern wyrcan
beornas on banan gesyhðe; curfon hie ðæt
of beorhtan stane
gesetton hie ðæron sigora wealdend.
Ongunnon him þa sorhleoð galan
earme on þa æfentide, þa hie woldon eft siðian
meðe fram þam mæran þeodne. Reste he ðær mæte weorode.
(33-69)

then I saw the lord of mankind
hasten with great zeal, that he would climb on me.
There I did not dare, against God's word
bow or break as I saw
the earth's surface tremble. Entirely I could have
felled the foes, but I stood fast
The young hero disrobed (that was almighty God)

strong and resolute. He climbed on the high gallows
bold in the sight of many, as he would redeem mankind.
I trembled when the man embraced me, but I dared not bow to
the earth
fall to the ground, but I must stand fast.
I, the cross, was raised up. I lifted up the mighty king,
lord of the heavens, did not dare bow.
they drove dark nails through me; the wounds are visible
on me,
open wounds of malice, nor did I dare harm any of them.
They mocked the two of us together. I was all drenched
with blood
running from the man's side, until he yielded up his life.
much have I experienced there on the hill,
cruel events. I saw the God of the host
sorely wracked. Darkness held
the corpse of the lord covered with clouds,
his bright radiance, shadow went forth
dark under the clouds. All creation wept,
lamented the king's death. Christ was on the cross.
But there came from afar men hastening
to the prince. I beheld all that.
Sorely I was troubled with sorrow, but I bowed down to
the men's hands
humbly with great zeal. They took there almighty God,
lifted him from the heavy torment; the warriors left me
standing sprinkled with blood; I was all pierced by
arrows.
They lay down the limb-weary one, and stood at the head
of the corpse;
they beheld there the lord of heavens, and he rested
there a while
tired after the great battle. They began to make him a
sepulchre
in my sight; they carved it of bright stone,
set therein their lord of victories. They started to
sing a dirge
wretched in the evening, as they wanted to journey back,
weary, away from the glorious prince. He stayed there
with a small band.

The instances of *communicatio idiomatum* are in 33-34 (geseah ic frean mancynnes / efstan elne mycle), in 44 (Ahof ic ricne cyning, heafona hlaford), in 51 (Geseah ic weruda god / þearle þenian), in 53 (wealdendes hræw), in 56 (cwiðdon cyninges fyll), in 60 (Genamon hie

þær ælmihtigne god), in 63-4 (Aledon hie þær limwerigne, ... / beheoldon hie ðær heofones dryhten), and 67 (gesetton hie ðæron sigora wealdend). It cannot be stressed enough that the *communicatio idiomatum* does not explain anything, it merely emphasizes the paradox, the incomprehensible facts of the incarnation and death of Christ.

Another source of ambiguity lies in the poet's use of the terminology and imagery of heroism. The portrayal of Christ as a valiant warrior has been frequently noted. A different kind of heroism is attributed to the cross in its role in the crucifixion. In contrast to the active heroism of Christ, the cross emphasizes its passivity: "þær ic ne dorste ofer dryhtnes word / bugan oððe berstan" (35-6), "Ealle ic mihte / feondas gefyllan, hwæðre ic fæste stod" (37-8), "Ne dorste ic hwæðre bugan to eorðan,/ feallan to foldan sceatum, ac ic sceolde fæste standan,"(42-3), and in 47 "Ne dorste ic hira nænigum sceððan." The cross does not dare bend down; it could have felled the enemy, but it stood fast. The irony in 38, repeated in 42-3, is particularly strong, since 'standing fast' is a common term in heroic conduct, as common as *feondas gefyllan*, yet here the two are irreconcilable. The cross must heroically stand fast and *refrain* from striking down the enemy. Any suggestion that the cross is not behaving heroically here seems to me totally misguided. Although it may not bend down while the earth trembles, the cross later does tremble when Christ ascends it, as it also bends down during the deposition. In the face of Christ's valiant heroism, the cross stands fast in heroic passivity, at once powerless to prevent Christ's suffering and sharing in that suffering by receiving the same wounds.

While the *communicatio idiomatum* is rooted in the paradox of God

and man in Christ, the poem, in its use of the different kinds of heroism, adds further connections. In trembling, the cross identifies itself with the world, with mankind as it witnesses the crucifixion; in its heroic passivity it identifies itself with Christ. The passive heroism culminates in lines 59-60 when the cross finally does bow, *eadmod elne mycle*, an oxymoron very similar to those in the *communicatio idiomatum*. The use of elne mycle connects the cross with Christ, who hastend to ascend the cross *elne mycle* in line 34.

The Dream of the Rood, then, is a poem full of ambiguity, originating in traditional Old English poetics on the one hand, in Christian doctrine and a highly personal combination of the two traditions on the other. The effect of this concentration is twofold. In the first place it stresses the mystery of the poem's subject, Redemption. Redemption is a mystery, it is life in death, triumph in suffering. The accumulation of ambiguity in the poem uses the paradoxes and the failures of reason as means for illuminating the mystery.

In the second place, especially the frequent use of the *communicatio idiomatum* and the heroic imagery blurs the boundaries between Christ, the cross and mankind. What is suffered by Christ is also suffered by the cross, and must be suffered by man. What Christ has done will redeem man only if man will follow Christ and redeem himself.

Christ III, with its evocations of the crucifixion, is related to *The Dream of the Rood* in subject matter.[8] But while *The Dream of the Rood* is a concentrated, powerful lyric, *Christ III* is a rambling, 800-line *sermo*, a general address on the subject of the Judgement Day and man's condition of sin, using an alternation of narrative, de-

scription and exhortation. Sermons or homilies on Judgement Day are, by their very nature, penitential. The final judgement and the contrasting fates of the doomed and the blessed are invoked in order to induce the hearer to introspection and repentance. Time is conflated and the judgement presented as imminent to press the need for reform. The meaning of Christ's redemptive sacrifice is held up as an example and incentive for man.

The poem does all these things with a very personal emphasis, dwelling on the terrors of damnation, returning to them repeatedly, while touching the joys of the blessed only lightly, almost in passing. The introductory eight lines set the pace: the words of the first Epistle to the Thessalonians "dies Domini, sicut fur in nocte, ita veniet" are presented in eight lines, with several variations:

> Đonne mid fere foldbuende
> se micla dæg meahtan dryhtnes
> æt midre niht mægne behlæmeð,
> scire gesceafte, swa oft sceaða fæcne,
> þeof þristlice, þe on þystre fareð,
> on sweartre niht, sorglease hæleð
> semninga forfehð slæpe gebundne,
> eorlas ungearwe yfles genægeð. (867-74)

> Then, suddenly, the great day
> of might God shall fall upon the earthdwellers
> in the middle of the night, mightyly,
> on bright creation, as often a wily robber,
> a thief, boldly, who goes in darkness
> in black night, suddenly takes by surprise
> careless men, bound in sleep,
> assaults with evil unprepared men.

Very soon, we hear the angels blow the trumpets, waking the dead, and Christ appears, surrounded by angels, gracious and loving to the good, fearful and grim to the sinners. The portents and upheavals

accumulate over two hundred lines without any apparent plan or organization: in 934-40 the sun turns black and blood-colored, the moon and stars fall and disappear, in 967-8 fire consumes a heaven bright with stars, in 1042-44 again, heaven is set on fire, the stars fall down, the flames ravage widely. Three times the arrival of Christ is interrupted by descriptions of the cosmic upheaval. Fire is obsessively present (eleven times in the thirty lines from 965-95) Often, these descriptions are powerfully effective, as in:

> ond on seofan healfa swogað windas,
> blawað brecende bearhtma mæste,
> weccað and woniað woruld mid storme,
> fyllað mid fere foldan gesceafte.
> Ðonne heard gebrec, hlud unmæte,
> swar on swiðlic, swegdynna mæst
> ældum egeslic, eawed weorþeð (949-55)
>
> and on seven sides winds shall howl
> blow roaring greatest tumult,
> summon and blast the world with storm,
> filling with fear the creatures of the earth.
> Then a hard crash, loud, stupendous,
> heavy and violent, greatest of noises
> dreadful to men will be heard.

where the billowing, rolling rhythm of 949-52, with its descending meter and repetition of *w* (*swogað windas, blawað, weccað woniað woruld*) is halted by the two brusque ascending lines 953-4 with their *heard gebrec*, hlud, *swar*. But the length of the passage and its repetetive events defuse the impact. Then the cross appears.

In *Christ III*, as in *The Dream of the Rood*, there is a vision of a wondrous cross in the sky. Both visions have been compared to Constantine's vision of the cross as described by Eusebius, and although there are some striking similarities, the differences are, I think, more significant. The cross appears to Constantine on the eve of bat-

tle, accompanied by the words *Hac vince*. It leads to victory in the battle and to Constantine's conversion, both victories in the sign of the cross. (PL8, 9-92)

In *The Dream of the Rood* the cross is also a sign (*beacen*, 6) and a sign of victory (*sigebeam*, 13), but, as we have seen, of a victory full of ambiguity, in which gold becomes blood, in which the *rice cyning* suffers and dies. This ambiguity is determined by the position of the dreamer in a time between the crucifixion and the last judgement, and in an awareness that Christ's death means both sorrow and hope, because only by his death at the hand of man could Christ restore the possibility of life for man.

The vision of the cross in *Christ III*, however, appears on Judgement Day, and this completely changes the perspective of those who see it and of the poet. Only at its first appearance is the cross described with some ambiguity:

> ne bið him to are þæt þær fore ellþeodum
> usses dryhtnes rod ondweard stondeð,
> beacna beorhtast, blode bistemed,
> heofoncyninges hlutran dreore,
> biseon mid swate þæt ofer side gesceaft
> scire scineð. Sceadu beoð bidyrned
> þær se leohta beam leodum byrhteð. (1083-89)
>
> Nor is it an honor to them that there before all people
> our lord's cross stands present
> brightest beacon, drenched with blood,
> the bright blood of the king of heavens
> moistened with wetness, shining brightly
> over wide creation. Shadows are dispelled
> when the tree of lights shall shine on men.

The alliteration links *beacna beorhtast* with *blode*, showing the link underlying the contrast between the high beacon and the blood. In line 1086 *heofoncyninges* alliterates with *hlutran*, suggesting

that the gore (*dreore*) is bright because it comes from the king of heaven, reiterating the connection indicated in the previous line. The ambiguity is further sharpened by the *communicatio idiomatum* in that same line. Alliteration on *s* links the next two lines. The cross is moistened with blood and shines brightly over the wide creation; shadow is dispelled. The blood is linked with the shining brightness, but also with the shadow dispelled by this brightness, it is both darkness and light, sorrow and joy. The passage concludes with a line of transverse alliteration linking all four stressed syllables in an *ab ab* pattern, linking the light-giving cross with the people who are brightened by it. This transverse alliteration is used fairly regularly in this poem (also in 1126, 1158, 1320, 1331, 1336 and 1404, for instance), always lending special emphasis to the line.

Immediately after this close-up, however, the poet shifts to a different perspective:

> þæt þeah to teonum geteod weorpeð,
> þeodum to þrea, þam þe þonc gode
> womwyrcende wita ne cuþun, (1090-92)
>
> that shall be a calamity, however,
> a punishment to men, workers of iniquity
> who did not show gratitude to God.

Even if *weorped* is taken as a future tense, *pam pe ponc gode ... wita ne cupun* states unambiguously (*cupun* is indicative) that mankind does not, and did not show gratitude to Christ for his sacrifice. This sacrifice is further described in the next eight lines:

> þær he leoflice lifes ceapode
> þeoden moncynne, on þam dæge,
> mid þy weorðe, þe no wom dyde
> his lichoma leahtra firena,
> mid þy usic alysde. þæs he eftlean wile

þurh eorneste ealles gemonian,
ðonne sio reade rod ofer ealle
swegle scineð on þære sunnan gyld. (1095-1102)

where he lovingly purchased life
for the race of man on that day
with that ransom, he who did no wrong
with his body delivered us
from the outrages of sin. Therefore he will exact
recompense for all, rigorously,
when the red cross shall shine
brilliantly over all, in the place of the sun.

The passage uses the word *ceapode* (*negotiari, emere, comparare,* BT) *eornest, weorðe, alysede,* all words which are used both for commercial transactions and for God's redeeming grace. For his redemptive act Christ will demand recompense (*eftlean*) at the time when the red cross will shine *on þære sunnan gyld.* This use of *gyld,* 'payment of money, tribute, compensation, retribution, substitute' (BT) demonstrates the wide range of meanings, and the resulting capacity for ambiguity, inherent in much of Anglo-Saxon vocabulary, perhaps escpecially in the vocabulary of commercial or financial transactions. It would be impossible to estimate to what extent this range of meanings is rooted in a barter economy in which actual money is rarely used, or in an awareness that no gift is ever really "free." But this vocabulary, and its use for religious concepts, fits in the tradition established in the Biblical texts and commentaries.

As sinful man looks at the cross, his failure becomes clear:

On þa forhtlice firenum fordone,
swearta synwyrcend, sorgum wlitað,
geseoð him to bealwe þæt him betst bicwom,
þær he hit to gode ongietan woldan. (1103-06)

Fearfully, undone by sin,
black evil-doers gaze at it in sorrow;
they see to their misery what happened best

when they could perceive (have perceived) it to their good.

After two lines of cumulative alliteration, linking *forhtlice* and *firenum, swearta synwyrcend and sorgum,* line 1105 sharpens the contrast between *to bealwe* and *betst* by the difference in verb tenses: they see (now) to their misery what happened (in the past) best, when they could perceive it to their good, or perhaps, as Cook paraphrases: "[the cross] which, had they regarded it as a means of salvation, would have conducted to their greatest weal, is now the token of their condemnation." (194)

The vision of the suffering Christ is evoked with great detail and emphasis, and without ambiguity:

> swa him mid næglum þurhdrifan niðhycgende
> þa hwitan honda ond þa halgan fet (1109-10)
>
> how the plotters of enmity drove nails
> through his white hands and his blessed feet

linking *næglum* with *niðhycgende,* and in the next line *hwitan honda* with *halgan fet.* Only in line 1118, "magun leoda bearn leohte oncnawan," an ambiguity suggests itself. The children of man can discern their falseness *leohte,* 'lightly' or 'with light, brightly,' linking *leoda* with the obviousness of their fault and contrasting it with the brightness of the vision.

Although *þa ealdan wunde* in line 1107 still seemed to indicate an evoked memory, the next several lines depict all the indignities inflicted on Christ as they take place, with the alliteration hammering them in:

> Magun leoda bearn leohte oncnawan
> hu hine lygnedon lease on geþoncum,
> hysptun hearmcwidum, ond on his hleor somod

hyra spatl speowdon. Sprǽcon him edwit,
ond on þone eadgan ondwlitan swa some
helfuse men hondum slogun,
folmum areahtum ond fystum eac,
ond ymb his heafod heardne gebigdon
beag þyrnenne, blinde on geþoncum,
dysge ond gedwealde. Gesegun þa dumban gesceaft
(1118-27)

the children of man may clearly recognize
how they denied him, false in their thoughts,
mocked him with insults, and on his face also
spat their spittle. They spoke abuse to him
and on that blessed countenance also
hell-bound men struck with their hands,
and around his head they twined
a crown of thorns, blind in their thoughts,
foolish, led astray; dumb creation looked on

Alliteration on *l* over two lines strengthens the syntactical connection between the children of man and *lyngnedon* and *lease*. Double alliteration gives extra emphasis in line 1120 and especially in 1121, with the strong repetition of *sp*. The next three lines link *eadgan* and *ondwlita, helfuse* and *hondum, folmum* and *fystum* without ambiguity, then *heafod* and *heardne*, though they are in contrast. Line 1126 is another example of transverse alliteration (ab ab) with *beag byrnene* and *blinde on geþoncum*.

There is an irony in the linking of *dysge, gedwealde* and *dumban*, introducing an extended irony over the next five lines. Dumb creation is here contrasted with foolish and straying men. This creation, encompassing the green earth and heaven above, feels with fear the suffering of its lord, and though dumb (*mutus, e-linguis*, BT) and not alive (*deade gesceafte, þeah hi cwice nǽron*), it bewails with sorrow his passion. Dumb creation speaks, while men, so often iden-

tified by their capacity for speech (*reordberend*, 1024, 1368) lie even in their thoughts (*lease in geþoncum*, 1119).

This thought is repeated in lines 1176-79:

> þæt asecgen ne magun
> foldbuende þurh frod gewit,
> hu fela þa onfundon þa gefelan ne magun
> dryhtnes þrowinga, deade gesceafte.
>
> earth-dwellers may not
> in wise understanding tell
> how many there perceived God's suffering
> though they could not feel, lifeless creation

and again in:

> þa þe æþelast sind eorðan gecynda,
> ond heofones eac heahgetimbro,
> eall for þam anum unrot geweardð
> forhtafongen. þeah hi ferðgewit
> of hyra æþelum ænigne ne cuþen
> wendon swa þeah wundrum, þa hyra waldend for
> of lichoman. Leode ne cuþon,
> modblinde men meotud oncnawan,
> flintum heardran, þæt hi frea nerede
> fram hellcwale halgum meahtum, (1180-119)
>
> Then the noblest of the race on earth
> and also heaven's lofty edifice
> have become sad for him alone
> struck with awe; though they have
> by their nature no understanding,
> they perceive, however, miraculously when their lord
> ascended from his body. People could not,
> undiscerning men, recognize the lord,
> hardened as stone, that the lord saved them
> from the torment of hell with his holy powers.

The alliteration continually plays with connections and contrasts: *foldbuende* with *frod gewit*, where *frod* is qualified by its very connection with the earthdwellers, and shown to be inferior to the 'many who could not feel and yet perceived' (*hu fela þa unfundon þa gefelan ne magun*), to the lifeless creation which yet, in its perception, shows itself intimately connected to its lord. Again

in lines 1186-89, *leode* is linked with *lichoman*, the body which is Christ's humanity, *modblinde men* are contrasted with *meotud, flintum* (qualifying men) with *frea, hellcwale* with *halgum*.

At the point of climax, the appearance of the cross, the work begins to falter. The diction is often as effective as that of *The Dream of the Rood*, but the thought rambles. The poem proceeds in bursts of energy and inspiration, repeats itself, and jumps from one thought to the next without apparent connection. These qualities are more characteristic of a sermon than of a narrative poem, and here also the narrative turns into exhortation, culminating in the direct outburst of:

> Hwæs weneð se þe mid gewitte nyle
> gemunan þa mildan meotudes lare,
> ond eal ða earfeðu þe he fore ældum adreag,
> forþon þe he wolde þæt we wuldres eard
> in ecnesse agan mosten? (1199-1203)
>
> What is he thinking of, who with his wits
> will not be mindful of the mild lord's teaching
> and of all the misery that he endured for men
> because he wished that we should possess
> the abode of glory into eternity?

The alliteration of *weneð* with *gewitte* points out the connection between failing human intellect and flawed expectations. Human intellect is unwilling to be mindful of the teaching of its mild maker and of all that he endured for man. The alliteration straightforwardly links *mildan* and *meotudes*, and *eal, earfeðu* and *ældum*. Increasingly, attention is concentrated on the sinful who are, once again, briefly confronted with Christ's wounds:

> Swa þam bið grorne on þam grimman dæge
> domes þæm miclan, þam þa dryhtnes sceal,
> deaðfirenum forden, dolg sceawian,

wunde und wite. On werigum sefan
geseoð sorge mæste, hu se sylfa cyning
mid sine lichoman lysde of firenum
þurh milde mode, þæt hy moston manweorca
tome lifgan, ond tires blæd
ecne agan. Hy þæs eðles þonc
hyra waldende wita ne cuþon (1204-13)

Thus it shall be sad to them on the grim day
of the great judgement, when they shall behold
the wounds of the lord, the wounds and the torment,
and they undone by sin. With sad hearts
they see the greatest sorrow, how the king himself
with his body redeemed them from their sins
through his mildness, that they would live
free from transgressions, and possess forever
the blessedness of glory. For this heritage
they did not show gratitude to their lord.

Although these repeat what has been said in lines 1082 ff., the phrasing is different, less elaborate, generally less emphatic. But double alliteration links *dæðfirenum, forden* and *dolg* in 1206. In line 1210 even more alliteration links *milde mod* with *mostun manweorca*, contrasting the lord's mildness with man's sins and his last chance to be free of sin. The enjambment of 1210-11 stretches the close grammatical connection between *manweorca* and *tome* over two lines, as if to demonstrate by poetic means too that it is impossible for man to be free from sin. But man knows no thanks. The theme of man's ungratefulness punctuates the poem, in 1090-2, 1212-13, 1383-5, 1472-73 and 1497-98. Each of these statements is composed with great care. In the first one:

þæt þeah to teonum geteod weorþeð
þeodum to þrea þam þe þonc gode
womwyrcende wita ne cuþun (1090-92)

that shall be a calamity, however,
a punishment to men, workers of iniquity
who did not show gratitude to God.

line 1091 links *teonum* with *geteoð*, line 1091 *þeodum, þrea* and *þonc*, the gratitude of which man is incapable becomes a punishment. But *þeodum* also echoes *teonum* in the previous line, with cumulative effect. *Womwyrcende*, apposite to *þam þe*, is a variation on *þeodum*, and this variation, which makes 'people' more specific into 'workers of evil,' is even more emphatic in its place at the beginning of the line. The next passage is in lines 1210-13:

> ond tires blæd
> ecne agan. Hy pæs eðles þonc
> hyra waldende wita ne cuþon
>
> and possess forever
> the blessedness of glory. For this heritage
> they did not show gratitude to their lord.

Here *eðles* is linked with *ecne blæd agan*, the eternal possession of bliss, which is the heritage for which man knows no gratitude. The next three messages are in direct address, part of Christ's words to the sinners:

> mægwlite me gelicne. Geaf ic þe eac meahta sped,
> welan ofer widlonda gehwylc, nysses þu wean ænigne d æl
> ðystra þæt þu þolian sceolde. þu þæs þonc ne wisses
> (1383-85)
>
> an appearance in my likeness. I granted you abundance
> of power,
> wealth over all the wide lands; you knew no grief,
> darkness that you should suffer. But you knew no
> gratitude for this.

At his creation, man was given great power (intimately connected with his being created in God's image), rule over all wide lands, he knew nothing of grief, suffered no darkness. *Wean* alliterates with *welan* and *widlonda*, in an apparent contrast that is negated by *nysses*. Yet *nysses* also is connected to ne wisses in the next line,

both in sound and meaning. Though man knew no trouble, he also knew no thanks. In both lines the alliteration links contrasting half-lines, stressing human blindness in the face of God's great gifts. In

> Wurde þu þæs gewitleas þæt þu waldende
> þinre alysnesse þonc ne wisses? (1472-73)
>
> were you so foolish that you knew no gratitude
> to your lord for your deliverance?

alliteration on *w* links *wurde, gewitleas* and *waldende,* and spills over to *wisses* in the next line. But repetition of sound also links *gewitleas, alysnesse* and *wisses,* pointing, again, at the failure of human intellect to recognize its redemption. This refusal to acknowledge the savior is expressed again in the linking of *nergende* and *nysses* in:

> þa ðu þæs ealles ænigne þonc
> þinum nergende nysses on mode (1497-98)
>
> Then you did not know any gratitude
> for all that to your savior

Five times this thought has been repeated, each time in its own effective diction. But this very variation prevents the appearance of a refrain, which would have imposed a certain unity on this part of the poem. This is in contrast to the exact repetition of *Eall ge þæt me dydon* in Christ's speeches to the elect and the damned in lines 1358 and 1512.

As the judging Christ separates the elect from the damned the focus of the work becomes more explicit. The *clæne folc,* elect of Christ, who always gladly performed his commands, are assembled at his right hand. This is stated in four lines:

Ðonne beoð gesomnad on þa swiþran hond
þa clænan folc, Criste sylfum
gecorene bi cystum þa ær sinne cwide georne
lustum læstun on hyra lifdagum (1221-24)

Then are assembled, at his right hand,
the clean folk, by Christ himself
chosen by election, who eagerly performed
his commands, longingly, in the days of their lives.

The special qualities of the elect are emphasized by the alliteration on *C*, the letter of Christ's name. The sinners are assembled on the left:

ond þær womsceaþan on þone wyrsan dæl
fore scyppende scyrede weorpað,
hateð him gewitan on þa winstran hond,
sigora soðcyning, synfulra weorud.
þær hy arasade reotað ond beofiað
fore frean forhte, swa fule swa gæt,
unsyfre folc, arna ne wenað (1225-31)

to the evil-doers is a harder lot
determined, before their creator;
he commands them to go to his left hand,
the true king of victory, to the sinful band.
There exposed, they lament and tremble
for fear of their lord, as foul as goats,
the unclean folk, and they hope not for mercy.

This takes up seven lines -- the extra lines dwelling on their misery, with variation: *hy arasade, fore frean forhte, unsyfre folc,* and *reotað ond beofiað, arna ne wenað,* further qualified by *swa fule swa gæt*. The three signs to be seen on the blessed and the sinners are described in similar proportions, 29 lines for the blessed, 50 for the sinners. Earlier in the work, in 910-20, these proportions were still inversed: 8 lines for the good, 3 for the bad.

In an abrupt change of voice the poet exclaims, in the first person plural:

Eala, þær we nu magon wraþe firene

geseon on ussum sawlum, synna wunde,
mid lichoman leahtra gehygdu,
eagum unclæne ingeþoncas, (1312-15)

Alas, if only we might now see in our souls
the horrible crimes, the scars of sin,
the contemplating of vice in our bodies,
(see) the unclean thoughts with our eyes

urging his audience, himself included, to prepare for the day of Judgement, stepping back to a time when reform is still possible. In a return to narrative, the enthroned Christ addresses the blessed and the damned, first in paraphrase, then in direct speech. His words to the elect parallel those to the condemned very closely, although the latter are introduced by an indictment of 115 lines based on a Latin sermon of Cæsarius of Arles. The two speeches are very carefully crafted, mirroring each other in numerous instances, their contrasts sharpened by the almost-repetition of *oonne hy him purh minne noman* (1351) in *peah hy him purh minne noman* (1506), and the literal repetition of *Eall ge pæt me dydon* in 1358 and 1512. The words to the blessed are as follows:

Onfoð nu mid freondum mines fæder rice
þæt eow wæs ær woruldum wynlice gearo,
blæd mid blissum, beorht eðles wlite,
hwonne ge þa lifwelan mid þam leofstum,
swase swegldreamas, geseon mosten.
Ge þæs earnedon þa ge earme men,
woruld þearfende, willum onfengun
on mildum sefan. Ðonne hy him þurh minne noman
eaðmode to eow arna bædun,
þonne he hyra hulpon ond him hleoð gefon,
hingrendum hlaf ond hrægl nacedum;
ond þa þe on sare seoce lagun,
æfdon unsofte, adle gebundne,
to þam ge holdlice hyge staþeladon
mid modes myne. Eall ge þæt me dydon,
ðonne ge hy mid sibbum sohtun, ond hyra sefan trymedon
forð on frorfre. þæs ge f ægre sceolon

lean mid leofum lange brucan. (1344-1361)

Receive now, with friends, the realm of my father
that was delightfully prepared for you before mankind;
life in bliss, the bright splendor of the land,
when you may see the riches of life eternal,
the sweet joys of heaven, together with the dearest.
You earned this when you joyfully
received the poor, needy of earthly things
in kind dispositions. When, in my name,
they humbly beseeched your mercy,
then you helped them and gave them shelter,
to the hungry bread, raiment to the naked,
and those who lay sick in distress
who suffered harshly, trapped in disease,
them you kindly strengthened their courage
with the love of your soul. All that you did to me.
When you sought them out in love and cheered their hearts
onwards in consolation. Therefore you shall
long, gloriously, enjoy reward with the dear ones.

The linking of *earnedon* with *earme* is ironic: they 'earned' bliss not by the traditional means of earning, as a reward for or yield of labor (*to earn* is a cognate of Old Germanic words for field-laborer, harvest worker), but by turning to the poor, those in need, and by opening their hearts to them. When the poor invoked Christ's name (linking the possessive *minne* with *mildum* emphasizes an obvious connection), and humbly begged for mercy, the blessed gave help and shelter, bread to the hungry and raiment to the naked. The chiasmus in line 1354 is strengthened by the alliterating *hlaf* and *hrægl* in the center and the rhyming Dative Plurals *hingrendum* and *nacedum* surrounding them. They comforted the suffering with their love. Whatever was done to the poor was done to Christ himself (the *me* in 1358b emphasized by the alliteration with *modes myne* in 1358a, identifying Christ with the spirit of love). Because they comforted them *forð on frofre*, they themselves shall *fægre* enjoy the reward with the other

loved ones. The use of *lean* 'reward, recompense,' in this last line, together with *earnedon* in the beginning frames the enumeration of the works of the righteous with the terms of their reward, phrased in the recurring economic vocabulary. The speech to the sinful, which parallels this, starts with two lines of antithesis:

> Ic wæs on worulde wædla þæt ou wurde welig in heofonum,
> earm ic wæs on eðle þinum þæt þu wurde eadig on minum.
> þa ðu þæs ealles ænigne þonc
> þinum nergende nysses on mode.
> Bibead ic eow þæt ge broþor mine
> in woruldrice wel aretten
> of þam æhtum þe ic eow on eorðan geaf,
> earma hulpen. Earge ge þæt l æstun,
> þearfum forwyrndon þæt hi under eowrum þæce mosten
> in gebugan, ond him æghwæs oftugon,
> þurh heardne hyge, hrægles nacedum
> moses meteleasum. þeah hy him purh minne noman
> werge, wonhale, wætan b ædan,
> drynces gedreahte, duguþa lease,
> purste geþegede, ge him þriste oftugon.
> Sarge ge ne sohton, ne him swæslic word
> frofre gespræcon, þæt hy þy freoran hyge
> mode gefengen. Eall ge þæt me dydan,
> to hynþum heofoncyninge. þæs ge sceolon hearde adreogan
> wite to widan ealdre, wræc mid deoflum geþolian.
>
> (1495-1514)

> In this world I was poor that you would be rich in heaven
> wretched I was in your land that you would be blessed
> in mine.
> Then for all that you would not know in your heart
> any gratitude towards your savior.
> I commanded you that you should
> cherish my brother in this world,
> with the wealth that I gave you on earth
> help the poor. Ill did you fulfill that.
> To the needy you refused entry under your roof
> and you denied them everything
> in hardness of heart, raiment to the naked,
> bread to those without food. Though they, in my name,
> weary, ailing, begged you for water,
> distressed for drink, deprived of abundance,
> parched with thirst, yet you denied them insolently.
> You did not seek out the sorrowful, nor kindly word
> spoke to them in comfort, that they thereby might have

a more joyful mood. All that you did to me
in scorn of the king of heaven. For that you shall endure
punishment forever, suffer misery with the devils.

The chiastic contrast in 1495 'in the world was I a poor man, that you might be rich in heaven' is rephrased in 1496, which links *earm, eðle* and *eadig*, putting special emphasis on *earm*, the first word of the line, the condition that connects Christ with the poor whom man should help (line 1502 also has *earm* as the first word). Line 1496 adds rhyme between the two half-lines. But in contrast to the enumeration of Christ's favors in the two long lines, the next two repeating man's ingratitude are short. Christ had commanded them to cherish his brothers-in-poverty. *Earmra hulpon* (1502) echoes earme men in 1349, but here it alliterates with *earge*, which is thus contrasted with *earnedon*. *þearfum forwyrnedon* is the inversion of *woruld þearfende willum onfengun* (1350), *þæt hi under eowum þæce mosten / in gebugan of ond him hleoð gefon* (1353). Their *þurh heardne hyge* contrasts with the *on mildum sefan* of the blessed, *hrægles nacedum* is virtually repeated, *moses meteleasum* is a variation of *hingrendum hlaf*. To these too, the poor prayed in Christ's name, but without result. They did not seek out the sorrowful (*Sarge ge ne sohton*, cf. *ond þa þe on sare seoce lagun* 1355) nor spoke to them kindly words of comfort. *Eall ge þæt me dydon*. Just as the *caritas* of the merciful is an expression of his love for Christ, just so the sinner's cruelty to his brother is cruelty towards Christ, and the 'rewards' are equivalent:

þæs ge fægre sceolon
lean mid leofum lange brucan (1360-61)

parallels

þæs ge sceolon hearde adreogan
wite to widan ealdre wræc mid deoflum geþolian
(1513-14)

The comparison of these two speeches shows how carefully they are composed in conjunction with each other, creating an effective contrast and complement. But the effect of this parallelism is somewhat undercut by the interpolation of 115 lines of indictment to the sinners. As Cook has shown, this passage is based on a sermon *De Judicio extremo* by Cæsarius of Arles (Cook, 120). A comparison of the two texts shows something about the technique of the Old English poet, and some of his weaknesses.[10]

It would be expected that the English would be longer, since Latin prose allows a more pregnant expression than Old English (alliterative) poetry. Yet the first few lines show that close translation is possible with hardly any expansion:

Ego te, O homo, de limo manibus meis feci,
ego terrenis artubus infudi spiritum, ego tibi
imaginem nostram similitudinemque conferre dignatus
sum,
(CCSL 103: 242)

Hwæt ic þec mon minum hondum
ærest geworhte ond þe ondgiet sealde
of lame ic þe leoþo gesette, geaf ic ðe lifgende
gæst,
arode þe ofer ealle gesceafte, gedyde ic þ æt þu onsyn
hæfdest,
mægwlite me gelicne. (1379-84)

See! I have made you with my hands,
in the beginning, given you understanding;
of clay I made you limbs, I gave you a living soul
honored you over all creation, gave you a face,
an appearance in my likeness

Two additions in the Old English can be attributed to the demands of alliteration: *ond þe ondgiet sealde*, which, however, adds an as-

pect of man's condition well suited to the context, and *arode þe ofer ealle gesceafte,* which is perhaps added to include an equivalent to *dignatus sum*. In a few places the translation is equally close, but more often the English adds considerable elaboration by variation, and ends up bulky and ponderous. An extreme example of this is the translation of:

> irridentium palmas et sputa suscepi, acetum cum
> felle bibi: flagellis cæsus, vepribus coronatus,
> cruci affixus, vulnere perfossus, ut tu eriperis
> morti animam in tormentis dimissi.

> Ond fore monna lufan min þrowade
> heafod hearmslege; hleor geþolade,
> oft ondlata, arleasra spatl,
> of muðe onfeng, manfremmendra.
> Swylce hi me geblendon bittre tosomne
> unswetne drync ecedes ond geallan.
> Ðonne ic fore folce onfeng feonda geniðlan,
> fylgdon me mid firenum, fæhþe ne rohtun,
> ond mid sweopum slogun. Ic þæt sar for ðe
> þurh eaðmedu eall geþolade,
> hosp ond heardcwide. þa hi hwæsne beag
> ymb min heafod heardne gebygdon,
> þream biþrycton, se wæs of þornum geworht.
> Ða ic wæs ahongen on heanne beam,
> rode gefæstnad, ða hi ricene mid spere
> of minre sidan swat ut guton
> dreor to foldan, þæt þu of deofles þurh þæt
> nydgewalde genered wurde.
> Ða ic womma leas, wite þolade,
> yfel earfeþu, oþþæt ic anne ferlet
> of minum lichoman lifgendne gæst. (1433-53)

> And for the love of man my head suffered
> grievous blows, and my face endured them;
> often my countenance was spat on
> by the mouths of the ungodly, workers of iniquity.
> They also mixed me together a foul drink,
> bitter, of vinegar and gall.
> Then before the people I suffered the cruelty of the foes;
> they afflicted me with violence, shrank not from hostility;
> they whipped me with scourges. All that pain
> I suffered humbly for you,
> the scorn and abuse. Then they twined

a sharp crown, hard, around my head,
pressed it on cruelly, it was made of thorns.
Then I was hung on a high tree,
fastened on the cross; then quickly, with a spear
they drew blood from my side,
gore on the ground, so that you through that
would be saved from the devil's tyranny.
Then did I, blameless, suffer punishment,
sore afflictions, until I alone yielded
the living spirit from my body.

Three times before this, the vision of the suffering Christ on the cross has been evoked (1083-88, 1103-27, 1204-7), twice in a few lines with one or two vivid details, once at a length comparable to this passage, although lines 1103-27 shift back and forth from Christ's torment to man's response in observing it. Here, the whole passage is spoken by Christ on his own suffering. The diction of the earlier passages was more effective. Thus, though *mid sweopum slogun* stresses the violence, *helfuse men hondum slogun* (1123) added the significant connection of *helfuse* with *hondum*, especially in contrast with the *eadgan ondwlitan* of the previous line.

Similarly,

ymb min heafod heardne gebygdon
þream beþrycton, se wæs of þornum geworht
(1444-5)

is purely cumulative, while in

ond ymb his heafod heardne gebigdon
beag þyrnenne blinde on geþoncum (1125-6)

the *beag byrnenne* becomes an expression of man's blind mind, emphatic in the ab ab transverse alliteration.

The unrestrained variation and cumulation weigh the later passage down, and the sharp contrast at the end between *yfel earfeþu* and *anne* stresses the latter word. This emphasis on Christ's isolation,

in *weard ic ana geboren* (1420) and *ic anne forlet ... lifgende gæst* (1452-3) creates a heavy pathos, especially as spoken by Christ himself. The mystical union of dreamer, cross and Christ in *The Dream of the Rood* is far removed from this angry indictment by a distant Christ on his *heahsetle* (mentioned three times), culminating in *Hu þær wæs unefen racu unc gemæne*! (1459)

In the next few lines the alliteration stresses heavy contrasts between Christ's goodness and man's failing, between what might have been and what is:

> Ic onfeng þin sar þæt þu moste ges ælig
> mines eþelrices eadig neotan,
> ond þe mine deaðe deore gebohte
> þæt longe lif þæt pu on leohte siþþan
> wlitig, womma leas, wunian mostes.
> Læg min flæschoma in foldan bigrafen,
> niþre gehyded, se ðe nængum scod,
> in byrgenne, þæt þu meahte beorhte uppe
> on roderum wesan, rice mid englum (1460-68)
>
> I took on your suffering that you could happily
> enjoy my native realm in bliss
> and with my death I dearly bought
> for you long life, so that you might henceforth
> gloriously, free from stain, dwell in brightness.
> My body lay buried in the ground
> hidden below, though it injured no one
> in a tomb, so that you might be, radiantly,
> up in heaven, exalted with the angels.

This is close to the antitheses in the Latin, though much more elaborate:

> Suscepi dolores tuos, ut tibi gloriam darem. Suscepi
> mortem tuam, ut in æternam viveres. Conditus jacui
> in sepulchro, ut tu regnares in coelo.

The Latin is extremely concentrated, with the two antitheses stressed by chiasmus, then resolved in the parallels of the last sentence. In the Old English, there is no ambiguity in the alliterating

contrasts, and the dividing lines are sharply drawn. For the next 25 lines the English follows the Latin quite closely, until the final speech (discussed before) parallelling the words to the blessed, neither of which has a counterpart in Cæsarius' sermon.

After Christ has pronounced his doom, the punishment is described, with extensive variation: the eternal fire, the company of the devils, the gnawing of serpents. Then the perspective shifts to the feeling of the damned: the neglect of their soul during this short life, their fear, terror and dismay, their tears and laments when it is too late. Therefore, whoever wants to have eternal life should hasten while he can. Once more the torments of hell are enumerated, never to end. More than 100 lines have detailed these from all perspectives. In a much shorter concluding passage, the elect are shown in heaven in eternal joy, loving and praising God (1634-64), maintaining the proportionality established earlier.

A comparison of *The Dream of the Rood* with *Christ III* was introduced because the subject matter is similar. In many ways the comparison seems unproductive, because the works are so different in quality, in length, in intensity. The vision of *The Dream of the Rood* encompasses the past and the future, the ever-present memory of the crucifixion and the ever- present expectation of the Judgement, as seen from the present of living man. Yet that present of the dreamer is also the present of the *Christ III* poet (and his reader- listener) and our own present. In *Christ III* the poet only rarely speaks from this present, only rarely allows time for repentance, rarely offers hope. The past, too, is absent from this poem. Although the crucifixion is evoked four times, not one of these is a description of the

historical crucifixion, the death of the incarnate son of God. Instead, they are projections of that past event onto the future, reminders of the past at the end of time. Characteristically, they draw as much from Christ's appearances (after the crucifixion) in Luke 24:39-40 and John 20:27 as from the descriptions of the crucifixion itself in the Gospels. The crucifixion is no longer the sign of Christ's redeeming love, it is the token of man's crucial failure.

Although the vision of Christ's death, and Redemption, is very different in the two works, their language and poetics, as we have seen, are often alike. Aspects of this language are discussed by Roberta Frank in her article "Some uses of Paranomasia in Old English scriptural verse." Frank takes paranomasia very widely, covering not just puns but sound echoes and resemblances, including much of what was discussed here for alliteration. She notes that "phonological recurrence, the repetition of similar words linking related things, imparts a ritualistic, almost litany-like quality to the Old-Testament events described and, like the invariable return through alliteration of the second half-line to the first in an Old English verse, manages to convey the sense of an underlying order and purpose in the flux of divine history"(215).

Elsewhere, she remarks (about the *Christ III* poet) that "the Old English poet leaves us with an impression of complete linguistic and theological harmony"(218). Throughout her article, she emphasizes the unifying effect of the paranomasia, perhaps because her discussion focusses on the Old Testament writings. The linking of gold and God in *Daniel* 175-216, the contradiction between verbal echoes and

contrasting meanings, is brought up as an exception, "its rhetorical value must have resided in its shock- potential"(220).

It seems to me that the alliterative poetics of *The Dream of the Rood* and *Christ III* creates as much contradiction and ambiguity as "underlying order" and "linguistic and theological harmony." The contradiction and ambiguity ultimately also lead to a vision of God's great plan, but in more indirect ways. In *The Dream of the Rood* the effect is one of a trembling balance on a crucial moment. The *Christ III* poet has almost completely removed himself from this crucial moment by his overwhelming emphasis on the Judgement day. But the ambiguities in the diction appear almost in spite of this emphasis, as a natural result of the Old English poetics when the subject is man and salvation.

Notes

[1] On the Christian element in *Beowulf* see, for instance, Charles Donahue, "*Beowulf* and Christian Tradition" in Traditio 21 (1965), 55-116 and C. Moorman, "The essential paganism of *Beowulf*" in MLQ 28 (1967), 3-18.

[2] On the conversion of England and its effect on literature see also Opland, *Anglo-Saxon Oral Poetry*, especially chapter 4.

[3] Cum ventum in aciem, turpe principi virtute vinci, turpe comitatui virtutem principis non adæquare. iam vero infame in omnem vitam ac probosum superstituem principi suo ex acie recesisse: illum defendere, tueri, sua quoque fortia facta gloriæ eius adsignare præcipium sacramentum est ... exigunt enim a principi sui liberalitate illum bellatorum equum, illam cruentam victricemque frameam; nam epulae et quamquam encompti, largi tamen apparatus pro stipendo cedunt. materia munificentiae per bella et raptus ... (*Germania*, 14) also: convictibus et hospitiis non alia gens effusius indulget ... gaudent muneribus, sed nec data imputant nec acceptis obligantur (21). On these values and Anglo-Saxon Literature see Rosemary Woolf, "The ideal of men dying with their lord in the *Germania* and *The Battle of Maldon*" in Anglo-Saxon England 5 (1976) 63-81.

[4] Elliott van Kirk Dobbie, ed. *Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems*, ASPR v5, 7-16. All translations are my own.

[5] George Philip Krapp, ed. *The Vercelli Book*, ASPR v2, 61- 65. Translations are my own.

[6] "Salve crux: que in corpore Christi dedicata es: et ex membris ejus tanquam margaritis ornata." this passage is quoted by Patch (253). This is very similar in thought to the Hymn "exilla regis prodeunt" by Venantius Fortunatus:

> arbor decora et fulgida,
> ornata regis purpura,
> electa digno stipite
> tam sancta membra tangere.
>
> (Walpole, 34, 17-20).

[7] *The New Catholic Encyclopedia* s.v. *communicatio idiomatum*.

[8] George Philip Krapp and Elliott van Kirk Dobbie, ed. *The Exeter Book*, ASPR v3, 27-49. Albert S. Cook's *The Christ of Cynewulf* has extensive and useful notes. Translations are my own, but I have consulted Kennedy's prosetranslation at times.

[9] *geteod is not in the manuscript, but it is supplied by most editors.*

[10] The relationship of this speech to Vercelli Homily VIII and Caesarius is discussed by Willard. It is, of course, impossible to establish wheter the *Christ III* poet used Caesarius directly or through an intermediate version, although line 1377 indicates a close connection. But this question, and Willard's discussion do not materially affect my stylistic comparison.

Chrétien de Troyes' *Conte du Graal*

Chrétien de Troyes' *Le Roman de Perceval ou Le Conte du Graal* presents considerable problems of interpretation for several reasons.[1] The first of these is the fact that the work is incomplete. The important adventures are not finished, and the meaning of the Grail and the lance are not adequately explained. The second reason is that the meaning of the adventures is obscured. This is a common characteristic of the genre, as the romance confronts us with apparently incoherent events from which the reader has to abstract meaning as the characters grope for it in their blind searchings. But it is even more so in this particular romance in which Chrétien layers meanings, hides his point of view behind an urbane irony, and forces the reader to examine the events both individually and as part of the structure, and to recognize that this work is different from the previous ones, and yet part of his whole oeuvre. A prime example of the difficulties created by the author is the Prologue, which sets out certain issues only to drop them, as it seems, in the work proper.

Attempts at interpretation seem to fall short in general by failing to recognize the complexity of the work and by underestimating Chrétien's artistic control. Religious interpretations leave little room for the Gavain material, and put too much weight on the *hermitage* episode as the pivot of the romance. Structural interpretations are hindered because Chrétien erects two or three seemingly conflicting structures. Those critics who have looked at parallels

between Perceval's adventures and those of Gavain have run into trouble because of a general reluctance to accept the view of Gavain that Chrétien offers, and because these parallels fail to explain the religious themes. All have, in some measure, failed or been unwilling to integrate the crucial themes of charity and religion, as raised in the Prologue, with the chivalric material.[2]

The Prologue sets out charity as the prime Christian virtue and clothes this theme in several quotations from the Bible. It opens by comparing the writing of the romance to the sowing of the seed in the parable of the sower (Mt. 13:3-8). The romance, in other words, is an expression of the supreme message of the New Testament, for as Christ says: "Vos ergo audite parabolam seminantis. Omnis qui audit *verbum regni* et non intelligit, venit malus et rapit quod seminatum est in corde eius: hic est qui secus viam seminatus est" (Mt. 13:18-9). Thus also Caesarius of Arles admonishes his followers not to waste time on trivialities, but rather " ... et ubicumque fuerimus ... verbum Domini fidelium et infidelium cordibus insuere festinemus; ut de terra bona centesimum et sexagesimum vel tricesimum fructum colligere mereamur" (Sermo 1, 10).

Chrétien, however, knows that he sows "en bon leu" because he writes his romance for Philip of Flanders, who loves Holy Church and practices charity according to the biblical precepts, and thus "maint en Dieu, et Diex en lui"(50). The religious tone and content are a striking departure from the prologues of earlier works. The dedication to Philip of Flanders as a ruler, and an emphatically perfect ruler and knight, indicates that the romance will comment on ideal qualities of chivalry too. The moral condition of the court,

and the moral values of courtliness will be tested and revealed by the treatment of the poet. The theme of charity is introduced in the words of the fourth chapter of the first Epistle of John, a text which specifically identifies charity as the essence and the foundation of Christianity.[3]

More indirectly, Chrétien introduces another element in the Prologue, which will reverberate in the romance as a whole, and that is the use of the language of commerce for writing about moral and ethical concepts and values. In so doing, he sets a certain tone for the rest of the work. He also places it squarely in the biblical tradition of commercial terms and concepts used for conveying a wide range of ideas.[4]

> Ki petit semme petit quelt,
> Et qui auques requeillir velt,
> En tel liu sa semence espande
> Que Diex a cent doubles li rande;
> ...
> Crestiens semme et fait semence
> D'un romans que il encomence,
> Et si le seme en si bon leu
> Qu'il ne puet [estre] sanz grant preu
> Qu'il le fait por le plus preudome
> Qui soit en l'empire de Rome. (1-12)
>
> He who sows little harvests little,
> and he who wants to gather anything
> let him scatter his seed in such a place
> that God gives him a two hundred-fold return
> ...
> Chrétien sows and spreads seed
> of a romance, which he begins
> and he sows it in such a good place
> that he cannot be without a great profit,
> because he does it for the most noble man
> who might be in the Roman empire.

Chrétien is both the sower from the parable, spreading *verbum regni*, and the farmer who wants a good harvest. He wants to be un-

derstood and appreciated, and he wants to make a living. He has no doubt about his profit (*preu* 'Vorteil, Nutze, Gewinn,' in Tobler-Lommatzsch) because of the superior qualities of his patron (le plus *preu*dome). Philip of Flanders "valt mix ne fist Alixandre"--and in case we do not immediately grasp the full range of meaning in *valt*, the poet teases us with an elaboration which just skirts the "grosser" point:

> Mais je proverai que li quens
> *Valt* mix que il ne fist *assez*
> Car cil ot en li *amassez*
> Toz les visces et toz les maus
> Dont li quens est monde et saus (16-20)
>
> But I will prove that the count
> is worth much more than he (Alexander) was
> for he (A) had amassed in himself
> all the vices and all wrongs
> of which the count is pure and unscathed.

The count hates bad-mouthing, he loves justice and loyalty and the Church, he hates villainy, and he is *larges* according to the words of the gospel: "Ne sache ta senestre / Les biens quant les [fera] ta destre" (Let your left hand not know the extent of good that your right hand does, 31-2). Even here giving money is introduced only in the context of Christ's precepts on alms. And because God is love, the gifts of Philip are gifts of love. From this peak of praise, Chrétien descends again to the practical level:

> Ne valt cil mix que ne valut
> Alixandres, cui ne chalut
> De carite ne de nul bien?
> Oil, n'en doutez ja de rien.
> Dont avra bien salve sa paine (57-61)
>
> Is he not worthier than
> Alexander was, who did not care
> for charity or any good?

Yes, do not doubt it at all.
Therefore Chrétien's effort will be safe.

The poet's effort will be safe (*salve, saluta*), perhaps with a hint at *soluta*(paid). The Prologue demonstrates the richness, the ambiguity, the multiplicity of the language of economics.

Another passage full of commercial terminology occurs when Perceval arrives at Arthur's court. We have been prepared for this, because we have seen the seeds of Perceval's misunderstanding as they were sown. The knight in the forest has said that Arthur gave (*dona*, 289) his his arms, and Perceval's mother has affirmed this:

Se le dires qu'armes vos *doinst*.
De contredit n'i ara point,
Qu'il les vos *donra*, bien le sai (513-15)

You will tell him to give you arms.
There will be no refusal at all,
he will give them to you, I know it well.

In the course of her final instructions, his mother has also referred to the gifts of ladies:

Se par amor ou par proiere
Le vos *done*, bon m'ert et bel
Que vos em portes son anel (552-4)

If she gives you her ring,
out of love or at your bidding,
it is fine and well with me that you take it.

and to the gifts of God:

Alez proier nostre Seignor
Qu'en cest siecle vos *doinst* honor
Et si vos last contenir
Qu'a bone fin puissiez venir (569-72)

Go and pray to our Lord
that he give you honor in this world
and that he lets you conduct yourself
in such a way that you may come to a good end.

Biax fix, fait ele, Dix vos maint!

Joie plus qu'il m'en remaint
Voz *doinst* il ou que vos ailliez. (617-9)

Dear son, she says, may God keep you!
May he give you, wherever you go,
more joy than remains to me.

Less than one hundred lines further Perceval shows how he has processed her advice, when he sees the tent which he takes for a church because it is the most beautiful thing he ever saw:

Voir dist ma mere tote voie
Qui me dist que mostiers estoit
La plus bele chose qui soit,
Et me dist que ja ne trovaisse
Mostier qu'aorer n'i alaisse
Le Creator en cui je croi
Je li irai priier par foi
Qu'il me *doinst* anqui a mengier,
Que j'en aroie grant mestier. (658-66)

My mother spoke true, at all events
when she told me that a church was
the most beautiful thing there is,
and told me never to come upon
a church without going in to adore
the creator in whom I believe
Faith! I will go pray to him
to give me something to eat,
because I would have great need of it.

Perceval takes his mother's instructions at their most elemental and base level: to pray to God is to ask him for food. In the same spirit the advice on accepting the gift of a ring becomes this:

Encor me dist, fait il, ma mere
Qu'en vostre doit l'anel *presisse*, (712-3)

My mother also told me, he said,
that I should take the ring from your finger

The irony from this little scene is heightened when Perceval takes the ring by force, saying:

Pucele, bien aiez.

Or m'en irai je bien *paiez*, (723-4)

Maiden, be well,
Now I leave well rewarded.

After he has taken her food and wine, he assures her:

Car ains que je muire de mort,
Le vos guerredonerai gié. (770-1)

For before I die my death
I will recompense you for it.

The fact that Perceval has been raised in complete isolation not only makes him unfit for chivalry (that chivalry cannot exist in isolation from society is the message of both *Erec et Enide* and *Yvain*), it has caused his inability to distinguish between the gift received and the booty taken, his gross misconception about paying and recompense. He does "recompense" her eventually by beating her companion, but not before she has suffered a great deal through his foolishness.

No wonder, then, when Perceval sees a set of armor that pleases him, that his response is simple and direct:

Par foi,
Ces demanderai je le roi;
S'il les me *done*, bel m'en iert,
Et dehais ait qui autres quiert. (874-8)

Faith!
these I will ask from the king;
if he gives them to me, it will be well
whoever else wants them can go to hell.

To the king his words are even simpler:

Donez moi les armes celui
Qui vostre colpe d'or em porte
Que j'encontrai devant la porte. (998-1000)

Give me the armor of him
who takes away your cup
whom I encountered before the gate.

In view of the king's impotence against the Vermax Chevalier, Kex' answer is equally pragmatic:

Amis, vos avez droit.
Alez lui tolir orendroit
Les armes, car eles sont vos.
Ne feïstes mie que sos
Quant vos por che venistes cha. (1003-7)

Friend, you are right,
Go, right away, and take from him
his arms, for they are yours.
You only acted like a fool
when you came here for that.

Kex, of course, is sarcastic, but Perceval, ignorant of the laws of social intercourse, cannot distinguish sarcasm, and he conveys this message in his own fashion:

Metez les jus
Les armes, nes porterez plus,
Que li roi Artus le vos *mande*. (1083-5)

Put them down,
the arms, don't wear them any longer,
because king Arthur commands you so.

After killing the knight he explains to Yvonet that Arthur had given (*donees*, 1135) him the arms, and he repeats this to Gornemont (1378-9, and again in 2849). Perceval speaks exactly the same language as the court, but Perceval is both dead-serious and dead-wrong, while the court is ironic or sarcastic. This courtly play on words intensifies as Yvonet returns, with the king's drinking cup, and Arthur asks:

Aime le tant et prise cil
Qu'il li ait de son gre *rendue*? (1226-7)

Does he so love and esteem him (i.e. Perceval)
that he has returned it to him willingly?

and Yvonet answers:

Ainçois li a si *chier vendue*
Li vallés que il l'a ocis. (1228-9)

Rather, the young man has sold it so dearly

that he has killed him.

When Perceval's promise of vindication is conveyed to the maiden, the fool responds in kind:

> Le cop qu'il me dona del pié,
> Et la buffe ert molt bien *rendue*
> Et *comperee* et *chier vendue*
> Que il dona a la pucele. (1266-9)
>
> The kick that he (Kex) gave me with his foot
> and the slap that he gave to the maiden
> will be returned in good order
> and paid for and dearly sold.

All interaction at court is expressed in terms of economic transactions. This is not always so outside Arthur's court. Neither Gornemont nor the people at Biaurepaire speak this language. Words for buying, selling and paying have literal and figurative uses, and both occur in Chrétien's work. Gornemont's world is shown to us strictly by the conversation and interaction between Perceval and his mentor, with hardly any reference to the physical world around them. Gornemont's language is straightforward and clear in accordance with his advice.

At Biaurepaire we see a different world, where the desolate conditions resulting from the siege are shown in explicit detail. The houses are in ruins, the mill no longer grinds, and there is nothing left to sell (Ne rien nule qui fust a vendre, 1769). Economic activity returns with the propitious arrival of the ships with provisions. The merchants are welcomed and food is traded for gold and silver objects. This unambiguous commerce is both life-giving and part of divine Providence (si com Dieu plot, 2528). The conversation of Perceval and Blancheflor, even when her motives may be in ques-

tion, are straight forward in the sense that they use no figurative language. Only when Perceval asks for her *drüerie* as his *guerredon* just before doing battle with Engygeron, does Blancheflor respond, *par grant cointise*[5] with a speech full of legal terminology:

> Sire, molt m'avez or *requise*
> De povre chose et de petite,
> Mais s'ele vos ert *escondite*,
> Vos le tendriiez a orgueil;
> Por che veer ne le vos weil.
> Et neporoec ne dites mie
> Que je deviegne vostre amie
> *Par itel covent et par tel loi*
> Que vos ailliez morir por moi,
> Que ce seroit trop grans *damages;* (2108-17)
>
> Sire, you have now made a great request of me
> Of a poor and small thing,
> but if it shall be refused
> you would take that for pride
> therefore I do not want to refuse you.
> Do not, however, in any way say
> that I become your beloved
> on such solemn and legal condition
> that you go to your death for me,
> for this would be too great harm.

Each of these words can be used in a neutral, unambiguous way, and is found elsewhere in the romance, but the concentration of solemn words with legal connotations in a few lines is striking. It is not, then, the mere difference between literal and figurative use of the language of commerce (or law) that is noteworthy, but the fact that Chrétien uses it for creating significant patterns: some people are merchants, who buy and sell, others lead courtly lives far removed from the world of commerce. Yet some of these latter "trade" love, esteem or favors. The use of commercial or legal vocabulary is frequent in the Old French love lyrics, where it is voiced by the lover towards his lady. Many instances of this are listed by Dragonetti

(64-113). In the *Conte del Graal* this language is largely confined to the court, as we have seen.

On the other hand, Orguelleus de la Lande uses this vocabulary in explaining his extreme punishment of his lady:

> Ore en a si cortois *loier*
> M'amie come il i apert.
> Qui fait folie, sel *compert*,
> Si qu'il se gart de rencheoir. (3884-7)
>
> Now my friend has such courtly payment for it
> as is apparent.
> Who does something foolish has to pay for it
> to keep himself from falling back.

In these words *comperer* acquires the meaning of 'doing penance,' and this is confirmed when Perceval says "Qu'ele a faite sa penitance"(3902). As such, the word is entirely inappropriate here. The lady, as we know, has not committed the sin she is accused of, she therefore cannot confess it or feel contrition for it, nor can Orguelleus de la Lande impose penance on her. Yet he habitually thinks in such terms, for when Perceval has explained the true course of events, *Orguelleus* says:

> Ore as tu bien mort *deservie*,
> Quant tu en iés verais *confés*. (3914-5)
>
> Now have you well deserved death
> as you have truly confessed it.

The daughter of Tybaut de Tintagueil also uses the language of commerce in imposing her conditions on her lover:

> Ne peut estre en nule maniere,
> Fait la pucele, par ma foi,
> Tant que vos aiez devant moi
> *Tant* d'armes fait et *tant* josté
> Que m'amours vos avra *costé*
> Que les choses c'on a *en bades*

Ne sont si dolces ne si sades
Come celes que l'en *compere*. (4856-63)

It cannot be in any way,
said the maiden, by my faith,
until you have done for me
so many armed deeds and jousted so much
that my love will have cost you.
Because the things that one gets for free
are not as sweet or as delicious
as those that one pays for.

By selling herself to the highest bidder, as it were, she has no qualms about pitting her lover against his foster father (who is her father). Here, love is not represented as an ennobling force, as in other romances, but as a destructive demand, indifferent to its cost to society.

Around Perceval, the language of commerce reappears when he approaches Arthur's court. Kex, with his customary lack of grace, commands Perceval to come with him:

Vassal, vassal, venez au roi.
Vos i venrez ja, par ma foi,
Ou vos le comperrez molt fort. (4295-7)

Sir knight, sir knight, come to the king.
You will come, by my faith,
or you will pay for it heavily.

In fact, it is Kex who here pays for (*comperer*) his brutality to the maiden, as the fool had predicted. The author's comment on this prediction conveys a sense of a world upside- down (and with that an implied satire of that world), where fools are diviners, especially in the last line, where *devinax* is the center point of the line, holding *voirs* and *sot* in balance:

Si com le sot le devisa,
Qui molt sovent deviné l'ot;
Voirs fu li devinax au sot. (4314-6)

Just as the fool had told it
who very often had divined it;
true was the divination of the fool.

The unusual emphasis on the incident, and the rhetorical flourishes all stressing the word *deviner*, suggest a connection with another "divination," when Perceval divines his own name. The two, Perceval and the fool are linked by their common appellation. The fool is unidentified except by the word *sot*, five times in all. The same word *sot* is also applied five times to Perceval, who is recognized as *sot* by the knights in the woods (200), by the lady in the tent (792), by Kex (1006) and by Gornemont (1365), and who insists on wearing the *roube sote* (1423) that his mother gave him.[6] When the sorrowing lady asks Perceval for his name, the text reads:

Et cil qui son non ne savoit
Devine et dist que il avoit
Perchevax li Galois a non,
Ne ne set s'il dist voir ou non;
Mais il dist voir et si nel sot. (3573-77)

And he, who did not know his name
divines and says that he has
the name Perceval the Welshman
and he does not know if he spoke true or not
but he did speak truly, and did not know it.

(Note that the homonym *sot* in line 3577, preterite of *savoir*, emphasizes the association of Perceval with the appellation *sot*) Understandably, the lines have provoked a great deal of commentary. They are usually connected with the advice of Perceval's mother to ask the names of noblemen whom he meets (Par le sornon connoist on l'ome, 562). As Haidu notes, the author's comment on the event (Ne ne set s'il dist voir ou non/ Mais il dist voir et si nel sot, 3576-7) stresses the absurdity of the discovery (*Aest. Dist.* 179). Most

critics have seen it as a recognition, by Perceval, of his true self, especially since it is the revelation of his identity, rather than the events at the Grail castle themselves, which provoke his cousin's outburst. But neither the passage itself nor the events immediately following show any particular insight of Perceval in his identity. *Deviner* should be read as projecting into the future ('etwas voraussagen, weissagen,' as in Tobler-Lommatzsch, though T-L themselves list this line under 'ets. vermuten, als Vermutung aussprechen'). His cousin knows that Perceval's fate and that of the Grail castle are linked, and this causes her bitterness at his failure. The fool's prediction, as foolish as it seems at first, is accepted as "molt bien *devine*" by Arthur later(4570).

While Arthur and his court, in spite of their frequent irritation at Kex' misbehavior, lament his (deserved) punishment by Perceval, Kex continues in style when he reproaches Gavain for his facility with words: "bien savez vos paroles *vendre*"(4384), while Gavian vows to bring back Perceval without having his bones broken, "Car je n'aim mie tel *loier*" ('Miete, Lohn, Belohnung' 4412).

It is different to judge the value of *paroles vendre*. The expression is not in Tobler-Lommatzsch and Grodefron only quotes this instance. As noted before, commerce in its proper context is perfectly acceptable. Thus also, when Gavain is taken for a merchant at Tintagel, to his mortification, it is not that merchants as a category are to be condemend, but the fact that a merchant does not belong in that situation (a joust of knights), and that Gavain appears to be something that he is not, that his identity is unclear. Although Gavain's custom of revealing his identity only when he is asked is

traditional, it should be noted that in this romance it brings him into several awkward situations, culminating in his position at Roche de Canguin, where the possibility of an incestuous relation with his sister is strongly suggested by the author (9047 ff.). To "sell words" however, is an application of the language of commerce to human actions and relationshiops, which is inappropriate and immoral. In the New Testament Christ stresses the double message that commercial transactions, with their suggestion of equivalence, are impossible between man and God, and inappropriate between man and man. The fact that Gavain, and the court in general, speaks this language, is a reflection of their values. The ease with which Perceval adopts this language, and the value system revealed by it, shows that he has no identity or values of his own (yet), and, like a chameleon, allows his surroundings to impose these on him. Gavain's eloquence is, of course, traditional in Arthurian romance, and illustrated immediately after Kex' slur in the courtly dialogue with Perceval.

When Gavain finds Perceval, the latter is still deep in contemplation, though less so than before:

> Et neporoec le soleus ot
> Deus des goutes del sanc remise[s]
> Qui sor le noif erent assise[s],
> Et la tierce aloit remetant;
> Por che n'i pansoit mie tant
> Li chevaliers come il ot fait. (4426-31)
>
> And yet the sun had caused
> two of the drops of blood to disappear
> which were lying on the snow
> and was starting on the third;
> therefore was the knight not
> as lost in thought as he had been.

In this quantifying attitude towards emotions, the depth of his

trance is, apparently, in direct proportion to the physical size of its cause, and one drop of blood is less absorbing than three. Gavain's words to Perceval are exceedingly mellifluous, with several subjunctives, and the striking front vowels of *eüsse* and *seüsse*, more emphatic even because of the enjambment:

> Et dist: "Sire, je vos eüsse
> Salue, s'autretel seüsse
> Vostre cuer com je sai le mien.
> Mais tant ves puis ge dire bien
> Que je sui message le roi,
> Qui vos mande et prie par moi
> Que vos veigniez parler a lui." (4435-41)
>
> And said: Sire, I would have greeted you,
> if I would know your feelings
> as well as I know my own,
> but this much I can tell you
> that I am a messenger of the king
> who summons and requests you through me
> that you may come to talk to him.

The subjunctives color Gavain's discourse with an element of uncertainty. Later actions will show this uncertainty to result in a moral ambiguity. As Foulet notes, in commenting on the difference between the subjunctive in modern French and medieval French: "Le subjonctif est à ce moment un mode bien vivant et qui s'oppose à l'indicatif, nous l'avons dit déjà, comme la *suggestion* ou le *doute* à l'affirmation decidée" (*Syntaxe*, 206). Perceval is immediately drawn in by Gavain's discourse, responding with two similar subjunctives himself:

> ... m'estoit avis
> Que la fresche color del vis
> M'amie la bele veïsse,
> Ne ja partir ne m'en queïsse. (4435-6)
>
> ... it seemed to me
> that I saw the fresh color of the face

of my beloved, the beautiful,
and I would not seek to part from it.

Although the subjunctive is grammatically correct after *m'estoit avis*, the placement at the end of the lines, and the resulting sound effect of *veisse* and *queisse* are the author's emphasis. Within a few lines Perceval has also adopted the court's value system. When Gavain tells him how Kex paid for his rudeness (Mais la joste *tant li costa*, 4472), Perceval responds in kind:

Dont ai je bien, ce quit, *loëe*
La pucele que il feri (4476-7)

Then have I well paid back,
I think, the maiden that he struck.

The conversation is gracious, it is reciprocated in kind, and it results in Perceval's triumphant introduotion into court (performed in another passage full of subjunctives and culminating in the legal-commercial "je le vos *bail*," 4553). Gavain is clearly more effective than Sagremor and Kex. He is also intimately linked with Perceval, sharing with him the special favor of the king and the court. This exalted status lasts for two days (six lines) and is then rudely interrupted, first by the reproaches of the *laide damoisele* to Perceval on his failure of the Grail adventure, then by Guigambresil's accusations to Gavain. In two hundred lines they have moved from their exalted position of honor to departure under a cloud.

Here, of course, Perceval and Gavain part ways. Gavain goes off on his own adventures, which lead him eventually to the enchanted castle of Ygerne. This territory, though clearly a kind of fairy land, also operates by many of the same principles of Arthur's court. The boatmen who ferries Gavain across the water claims Gringolet as his *fief*.

In fact, in the forty lines of dialogue between him and Gavain the word *fief* occurs five times (7379, 7387, 7393, 7400, 7417), with much more legal terminology: *clamer droiture* (7385), *faire tort* (7386), *desloial* (7397), *contredit* (7408), *si serez quite* (do mon fie, 7417), *bien le vos creant et plevis* (7426), *je le te recroi, Sor ton creant et sor ta foi* (7427-8). This magic place, in which human time and mortality seem suspended, is firmly tethered to the ground by feudal arrangements. Yet this unusual accumulation of legal terminology (the word *fief*, as far as we can tell from Foerster, does not occur in any other of Chrétien's romances) has no foundation in reality. The boatman invokes the authority of the *fief*, without knowing the identity of his *sire*. All these formulas are hollow and meaningless, verbiage without any real content. In spite of these seemingly established arrangements, Gavain is declared *Sire* and *droit seignor* of the castle as soon as he has survived the initial trials of entrance. In the courteous conversation with Ygerne a distinct rank-order of excellence is established, in which Gavain modestly places himself neither at the top nor at the bottom. It is entirely in line with this view of the world order that Guinevere is praised for her unfailing discernment of its nuances:

> Ele set bien que chascuns *vaut*
> Et qu'ele doit por chascun faire
> Por coi qu'ele li doie plaire. (8192-4)
>
> She knows well what everyone is worth
> and what she has to do for everyone
> wherefore she should please him.

But the hierachy in Ygerne's castle is not what it seems. Gavain

may be the *Seignor*, but he has to ask permission to leave, and is refused, which causes him to comment:

> Je me tenroie a mal paié
> Del palais, se je n'en issoie (8336-7)
>
> I would hold myself badly paid
> with regard to the palace, if I could not leave it.

Whether at Arthur's court or at Ygerne's, interactions and relationships are expressed in terms of economic transactions, and Gavain is equally at home in either. Perceval uses this vocabulary only while at Arthur's court and, as we saw, mostly inappropriately.

In moral terms, however, the application of the language of commerce to human actions and relationships is wrong and inappropriate. This language, when used in describing God's love and mercy, and man's obligation to God, is traditional. But the divine economy refers only to the Redemption. The parable of the king and his debtors (Mt. 18:23-5) and the one of the workers in the vineyard (Mt. 20:1-16) speak about Redemption while telling stories of human economic transactions. They show that the expectations of human commerce are not applicable to it. Unlike the wages of earthly labor, salvation cannot be *earned*, God's grace cannot be bargained for. By its very inadequacy, its paradoxality, the language of commerce becomes a source of meaning, a recognition of the ineffability of redemptive grace.

In human relationships, as can be seen in the commands on almsgiving and on forgiving one's enemy, "equivalence" is morally wrong and inappropriate. The rewards here on earth are continually contrasted to those in Heaven, as in Mt. 6:2- 4: Cum ergo facis elemosynam, noli tuba canere ante te ...

Amen, dico vobis, receperunt mercedem suam. Te autem faciente elemosynam, nesciat sinistra tua quid faciat dextera tua, ut sit elemosyna tua in abscondito, et Pater tuus qui videt in abscondito reddet tibi (also in Mt. 6:5-6 and 16- 18).

The language of commerce, then, suggests a commentary on the (Christian) morality of those who use it. As we found certain patterns in the use of the language of commerce, it is not surprising that similar patterns are revealed in the references to religion throughout the romance, which are very different in frequency and character.

As we saw, the Prologue linked the commercial terminology with religious concepts, in line with Christian tradition, as they come together in the Christian command of *caritas*, charity and love. In recognition of this character of the Prologue, of the religious atmosphere of the "cortege du Graal," and the religious character of the hermit's comment on it, M. Paul Imbs has meticulously traced the religious vocabulary and ideas ("l'esprit de la religion") of Chrétien. While providing a wealth of material, his study shows incontestably that philology, so emphatically and justly demanded by Frappier, is by itself insufficient for interpreting the ambiguous, complex and ironic world created by Chrétien.[7] In tracing all the occurrences of the word *saint* in Chrétien's romances Imbs refers to a passage in *Cligès*, in which the burial of Fenice is discussed. Jehan has prepared a sepulchre,

> Et Jehan, qui l'avoit ja feite,
> Dit qu'il en a apareillee
> Une molt bele et bien tailliee;
> Mes onques n'ot antencion

Qu'an i meist se cors sainz non (6004-8)

And Jehan, who had made it already,
sais that he has prepared one,
very beautiful and well-carved;
but he always intended
that only a saintly body would be put in it.

Burying Fenice in it, however, is justified if one considers her body as a kind of relic:

Or soit an leu de saintueire
L'empererriz dedanz anclose,
Qu'ele est, de cuit, molt sainte chose. (6010-12)

Now let the empress be enclosed in it
as in a holy place, since she is,
it seems to me, a very saintly thing.

From these lines it is, for Imbs, only a small step to the conclusion that the Grail, also "tres sainte chose," must be a relic (*Les Romans*, 42). Unexamined goes the fact that this saintly object in *Cligès* is the body of a woman pretending to be dead in order to commit adultery. The appellation cannot be anything but ironic.[8]

Similarly simplistic is Imbs' tracing of the progress of Chrétien's religious concerns as expressed in his romances. Traditional formulas pronounced by individual characters are adduced as evidence of Chrétien's own convictions, which are said to become more truly religious in the *Lancelot*. As testimony to this the critic invokes Kex' oath of innocence when accused of adultery with the queen:

Ja Dex, quant de cest siegle irai,
Ne me face pardon a l'ame
Se onques jui avoec ma dame! (Charr. 4860-2)

Truly, when I shall part from this world,
may God not forgive my soul
if I ever lay with my lady.

It is difficult to see in these lines a "formule plus penetree de vraie religiosite et d'un authentique sens de peche,"(45) rather than the protestation of one who is confronted by an accuser of proven superior strength. It is difficult, moreover, to read Kex' words as indicative of Chrétien's piety without remembering the description, only two hundred lines earlier, of Lancelot approaching Guinevere's bed:

> Si l'aore et si li ancline
> Car an nul cors saint ne croit tant (Charr. 46523)
>
> Then he adores her and kneels before her
> for in no relic does he believe as much,

or, again, his departure the next morning:

> Au departir a soploié
> A la chanbre, et fet tot autel
> Con s'il fust devant un autel (4716-8)
>
> At parting he has kneeled
> to the room, acted just as if he
> were in front of an altar.

The use of the word *autel*, 'altar' is even emphasized by the identical rhyme with *autel*, 'just as, in such a way.' Whatever interpretations one may give to these lines and to Lancelot's actions, they surely show that *saint* and other religious terms can be used in a highly ambiguous manner by Chrétien, and that references to religion may be used to comment on characters or actions in a positive or negative sense. With this in mind, a study of references to religion in the *Conte del Graal* should proceed with caution.

Perceval has grown up not only isolated from society, but also from anything but the most elementary form of religion, as we see immediately in his references to angels and devils when he sees the knights (113-54). He does not know what a church or monastery, he

does not know about man's Redemption by Christ. We have no reason to believe that his mother's explanations have touched him any less superficially and any more effectively than her instructions on the treatment of ladies. Therefore, his "Diex vos salt" is no more than a meaningless flourish (767). The pernicious effect of this ignorance is revealed in his first adventure. Yet here too, Chrétien's characterizations are complex rather than simple. Perceval's mother has acted unwisely in keeping him isolated, but her behavior receives some justification from her experiences (and her experiences are confirmed by Gavain's adventures). Moreover, as the hermit later explains, her saintliness has protected Perceval after her death, and she has interceded for him with God (6403-8). Perceval himself does not invoke God's name as frequently and easily as those around him, like Blancheflor:

> Ha! Gentis chevaliers, merchi!
> Por Dieu vos pri et por son fil (1982-3)
>
> Sire, Dex vos doinst hui bon jor (2083)
>
> Ah! noble knight, have mercy!
> I pray you, by God and by his son
>
> Sire, may God give you a good day today.

or in the words of the inhabitants of Biaurepaire:

> Biax sire, icele vraie crois,
> Ou Diex soffri pener son fil,
> Vos gart hui de mortel peril (2154-6)
>
> Good sir, may this true cross
> on which God allowed his son to suffer
> keep you today from mortal peril.

The world around him partakes of the church and its ceremonies. Clamadeus arrives at Arthur's court on Pentecoste, and when Perceval leaves Biaurepaire,

Si ot autel porcession
Com s'il fust jor d'Assention
Ou autel come au diemoine;
Car il i furent tot li moine,
Chapes de pales affublees,
Et toutes les nounains velees. (2939-44)

There was such a procession
as if it were Ascension day,
or such as on a Sunday;
for all the monks were there,
dressed in their brocade copes,
and all the veiled nuns.

To their complaints at his departure Perceval counters with his concern for his mother's spiritual well-being. If she is alive, he will make her a nun, if she has died, he will provide for masses to be sung for her soul:

Car je vos ferai molt grant bien
Por s'ame, se Diex me ramaine. (2970-1)

For I will do very well by you
for her soul, if God bring me back.

Pickens finds the inhabitants of Biaurepaire "crassly materialistic" and Perceval's words sarcastic, but this seems to me unreasonable.[9] The inhabitants of Biaurepaire have every reason to hail Perceval, who freed them from a disastrous siege. His military liberation was accompanied by divine intervention saving them from starvation. It was noted before that the people of the town speak about commerce unabiguously and straightforwardly. For a son to provide money for masses to be sung for his mother's soul is certainly acceptable practice. Rather we should see in Perceval's concern for her the manifestation and influence of his mother's protection. All alone in the wilderness, Perceval prays a truly pious prayer:

Et il ne finoit de proier

Damedieu le soverain pere
Qu'il li donast trover sa mere
Plaine de vie et de santé,
Se il li vient a volenté. (2980-4)

And he did not stop praying
to God the sovereign father
that he grant him to find
his mother alive and in good health
if it was his wish.

This prayer, with its last line echoing Christ's "veruntamen non sicut ego volo, sed sicut tu" is certainly very different from the crude demand for food in his first prayer, and immediately after it the Fisher king appears. Unfortunately, the events at the Fisher king's castle remain as mysterious to the reader as to Perceval. No meaning is suggested either for the lance or for the Grail, not even in the reproaches by Perceval's cousin and the *laide damoiselle*, or in the words of the hermit.

True devotion comes to Perceval very suddenly after his five years without any awareness of God. His encounter with the pilgrims wakes him from this dark night. The story of the Redemption of man through the incarnation and crucifixion of Christ is told as if Perceval had never heard it before, because he never did truly hear it. In its form, in the simple enumeration of the salient facts about Christ, the pilgrims' words sound like the Creed, which is appropriate in adressing one who is finally ready to participate in the solemn rituals of the church. They arouse in him an awareness of his sinfulness, which is the manifestation of God's mercy, and the desire for salvation:

La volroie je bien aler,
Fait Perchevax, se je savoie
Tenir le sentier et la voie. (6318-20)

There would I well like to go
said Perceval, if I knew
how to keep to the path and the way.

The echo of Christ's words (Mt. 7:14, John 14:6) in the use of *sentier* and *voie* symbolizes his entry into the community of Christ.[10] His stay with the hermit, while it does not answer our questions about the Grail and the lance, completes his religious education. Perceval's words:

Sire, fait il, bien a cinc ans
Que je ne soi ou je me fui,
Ne Dieu n'amai ne Dieu ne cui,
N'onques puis ne fis se mal non (6364-7)

Sire, said he, it is now at least five years,
that I have not known where I was
nor did I love God or believe in him
nor did anything but evil,

especially line 6367 seems a complete repudiation of his adventures, but it is not clear whether this is to be seen as a repudiation of traditional knighthood. After all, it was said that

Ne por che ne laissa mie
A requerre chevalerie;
Et les estrange aventures,
Les felenesses et les dures,
Aloit quererant, et s'en trova
Tant que molt bien s'i esprova. (6225-30)

Nevertheless he did not leave off
seeking chivalry; and he went
seeking the wonderful adventures,
the dangerous and hard ones,
and found so many that he proved himself very well.

His words to the hermit might be no more than a repudiation of his actions in so far as they were not informed by an awareness of God. Just so, Perceval's meditation of the three drops of blood as an evocation of his beloved is, in itself "molt cortois et dols," but in the

context of his recent adventures it might have been better if they had reminded him of the bleeding lance. The interlude at the hermit's certainly seems to prepare him for a different kind of life, although even the poet himself is not (at this point) prepared to tell us what that will be:

> Issi Perchevax reconnut
> Que Diex el vendredi rechut
> Mort et si fu crucifiiez.
> A le Pasque communiiez
> Fu Perchevax molt dignement.
> De Percheval plus longuement
> Ne parole li contes chi (6509-15)
>
> Thus Perceval perceived again
> that God on Friday received
> his death and was crucified.
> At Easter Perceval received communion
> with great dignity. Of Perceval
> the story speaks no further here.

It has to be observed that the hermitage scene offers us very little material to interpret it as the nexus of the *Conte du Graal* as a religious Romance. Although Haidu seems unduly harsh in observing that Perceval learns little or nothing (*Aest. Diest.* 224), it would be well to enumerate what happens without overstating its importance. Perceval becomes acquainted with and embraces the basic elements of the creed as presented by the pilgrims. He repents of his sins and confesses them. He receives charity from the hermit, and is taught about charity by him--how he lacked in charity towards his mother, and how this sin caused his failure at the Grail castle. The fact that the crucial question about the Grail is not "what is it," but "who is served from it" connects the Grail with the theme of charity. Although later discussion has, understandably, focussed on questions about the nature of the Grail, the principal concern of the

Romance is elsewhere. From its first appearance the Grail is clearly a marvelous object, beautiful and luminous. At no point is the question raised what the Grail is. From the beginning, it is recognized that it is going somewhere, and this seems to be the essential point. Perceval sees the Grail carried away, and:

> Ne n'osa mie demander
> Del graal cui l'en en servoit (3244-5)
>
> And did not at all dare ask
> about the Grail, whom they served from it.

This question is repeated in 3302, and in 3401 (Et del graal ou l'en le porte), coupled with the question why the lance bleeds. Perceval's cousin also asks where the Grail went, and what was done with it. Again, at court, the *Demoiselle Hideuse* reproaches him for not asking who was served by the Grail. From the hermit we learn the Grail serves a host to the old king, and that nothing but the host has kept him alive for twelve years. What is essential, then, is what the Grail *does*, that it sanctifies the host and the one who receives it in its daily act of charity. Apart from the esoteric secret prayer, there is very little here about the form and the rituals of religion, except for Perceval's communion on Easter Sunday, after his recognition of Christ's redemptive death. Most of all, he is taught about penitence, humility, and especially charity.

Gavain's adventures also contain references to religion. Instead of applying his well-known medecinal talents to a severely wounded knight, he only wakes him from his faint to get information out of him, then dismisses the knight's advice to pursue his own course. The knight then begs him, if he survives the adventure, to come back and see if he is still alive:

Se je sui mors, por charité
Et por la sainte trinité,
De ceste pucele vos pri
Que vos prenez garde de li. (6639-42)

If I am dead, for the sake of charity,
and by the Holy Trinity,
I beg you to take care of this maiden.

Since we do not know anything about the wounded knight at this point, his words, with their solemn appeal for charity, direct our attention to Gavain, to whom they are spoken, and emphasize Gavain's callous disregard for *charite*. On the other hand, when he tries to lead away the horse for the *male pucele*, he is warned:

Et tu en seras malballis,
Fait li grans chevaliers, biax frere,
Que par Dieu le soverain pere,
Cui je volroie l'ame rendre,
Ainc chevaliers ne l'osa prendre
Issi com tu prendre le vels,
Que n'en avenist si grans doels
Que la teste en eust trencie[e] (6804-9)

And you will be ill-used,
said the great knight, dear brother,
as, by God the sovereign Father,
to whom I would like to deliver my soul,
no knight ever dared take it,
as you wish to take it,
but that such great harm came to him
that he had his head cut off for it.

The invocation of God and the soul has absolutely no meaning in the context of the threat, which remains entirely hollow anyway. When Gavain finally ministers to the wounded knight the latter revives enough to ask for an opportunity to confess before dying. Gavain asks a passing squire for his horse, but is refused, then:

Mesire Gavains a *droiture*
Tantost li *paie sa deserte*
Qu'il le fiert de palme overte

A che qu'il ot le bras armé
Et de ferir grant volenté,
Si qu'il verse et la sele wide. (7018-23)

Sir Gavain, rightfully and immediately
pays him his deserts
by striking him with his open hand
which was covered in armor
and he was eager to strike
so that he throws him and empties the saddle.

The contrast of Gavain's behavior in this chain of adventures full of reversals, with the preceding scene of Perceval's visit to the hermit is very striking indeed. It is the contrast of the teaching and practice of charity on the one hand against the complete lack of charity on the other. The contrast culminates in Gavain's remark when the wounded knight has gone off with his horse:

Or oi je, ce respont Gavain,
Un proverbe que l'en retrait,
Que l'en dist: 'de bien fait col frait.' (7098-7100)

Now I perceive, Gavain answers,
a proverb that they draw from this
saying: 'doing good will do you in.'

A more complete rejection of charity in word and deed can hardly be imagined.

In the *au dela* of Ygerne's castle the world partakes of Christianity as Arthur's court did. The banquet on Gavain's first day there lasts as long as a day around the time of Trinity (8249), and he and the queen greet each other as follows:

Cist jors vos soit liez et joieus.
Ce doinst icil glorieus pere
Que de sa fille fist sa mere (8298-8300)

Grant joie, dame, vos doinst cil
Qui en terre tramist son fil
Por essalchier crestiente. (8301-3)

May this day be happy and joyous.
This grant you the glorious father,
who took his daughter as his mother.

May he give you great joy,
who sent his son into the world
in order to exalt Christianity.

The casual references to the mystery of the incarnation and the redemption as part of an elegant, formulaic greeting convey no sense of real religious conviction. They do not, as the instances of the *communicatio idiomatum* in the Old English poems did, offer the shock of confrontation with the ultimate paradox. In Gavain we seem to have Christian rhetoric without content, while with Perceval we had intimations of a religious content with a minimum of rhetoric. At a time when the penitentials and discussions of morality have been changing their emphasis away from purely physical acts towards the intention of the agent, from external motivations to internal ones, from satisfaction to contrition, this contrast between religious content and religious form is certainly significant. [11]

The contrast is important also, because the comparison of Perceval and Gavain throws further light on the meaning of the Romance. Perceval's search for chivalry reaches its climax with his reception at the court at Carlion, an event at which he is intimately connected with Gavain. The abrupt end to this celebration points to a change in direction. It seems hardly necessary or appropriate to attribute this change to a shift in the narrator' perspective, as Pickens does: "It appears, therefore, that the narrator's own perspective shifts as he advances through the *estoire*-- tergiversation that is not, in fact surprising in a narrator who claims not to have complete pos-

session of his *matiere* (3252-53)"(Welsh Knight, 59). The lines on which Pickens bases this remarkable opinon are Chrétien's comment on Perceval's silence at the Grail castle:

> Ou biens l'en viegne ou mals l'en chiee,
> Ne sai le quel, rien n'en demande.
>
> Whether good will come of it or evil to him,
> I do not know which, and do not ask anything about it.

On page 97 Pickens invokes these lines again: "Confronted with the Grail mysteries, the narrator denies knowledge of his *matiere* (3248-53)--denial expresssed in value terms (*biens/mals*), which means that he is unwilling or unable to make overt moral judgements in this context." Chrétien's elaborate profession of ignorance cannot be taken straightforwardly, but must be seen as a marker, a warning to the reader that the significance of the events may not be immediately seen or understood, and that the reader has to make his own moral judgements. Yet this does not mean that Chrétien does not express his own, perhaps not overtly, but recognizably to those who pay attention to his language. The religious "angle" with its climax at the hermitage does not supersede the chivalric structure, but complements it, as does the comparison of Perceval and Gavain.

Chrétien layers his stories into a complex whole, and each layer contributes to the meaning. The early part of Perceval's adventures, though unique in Perceval's peculiar *niceté*, follows a similar pattern to *Erec et Enide* and *Yvain*, as it shows a lone knight, away from court, performing deeds of prowess culminating in a return to and celebration at court. The abrupt ending of this celebration by the words of the *laide demoiselle* does not reject this structure. This part of the Romance is, after all, longer than the comparable first

segments of *Erec et Enide* and *Yvain*, and carefully constructed around the vindication of the maiden slapped by Kex. Perceval needed to become a knight, find out about chivalry, perform acts of prowess. The significance of chivalry has to be established in order to give a critique of it its proper weight. From here on the romance changes direction to include religion and a moral evaluation of chivalry. The importance of religion was clearly indicated in the Prologue, and kept alive in a more indirect way in the language of commerce used at court.

This (improper) use of the language of commerce also provided an indirect commentary on the moral condition of the court as a center of chivalry and courtesy. The episode at the hermit's chapel brings religion to the foreground, and Gavain's adventures show us the meaning and values of traditional chivalry, but neither of these can be separated or seen apart from what preceded. Only when seen together, commenting on each other, and complementing each other, do these parts begin to form a whole.

Parallels between the adventures of Perceval and Gavain have been noted by many critics, although the opinion that Gavain's adventures are a later addition is also still heard. Critics who see a contrast between the two knights vary widely in their interpretation of this contrast. Early views opposed Perceval *le nice* to Gavain as a paragon of chivalry ("grossiereté de Perceval et courtoisie de Gavain, ignorance de l'un et maitrise de l'autre," Delbouille in *Les Romans*, 85). But gradually more and more irony is recognized in the latter's adventures. Most explicit in condemning Gavain is N.J. Lacy (*Sower and his Seed*, 161): "The conflict of two incompatible cultures in

this text [i.e. Gavain's and the one at Ygerne's court] points up the inefficacy of one of them: Gauvain's," and: "In the final romance, Chrétien has left the familiar character of Gauvain intact, but he has, on the other hand, manipulated his context in such a way that the work provides an implied (in fact very nearly explicit) critique of chivalry." Haidu and Pickens are less clear-cut and critical about Gavain.

On the other end of the spectrum, Frappier states:

> Je pense en effet qu'apres la bifurcation causée par les propos de la *Demoiselle Hideuse* le récit, suivant le dessein de son auteur, devait tendre à confronter deux conceptions de la chevalerie, l'une penetrée de l'amour de Dieu et d'humilité chrétienne (Perceval), l'autre, elle aussi généreuse à coup sur, mais encline à ceder aux séductions de la glorie mondaine et de la galanterie (Gauvain)" (Feux divers, 419).

Frappier insists that this is a minor confrontation:

> "il s'agit d'un contrepoint, et non d'un contraste appuyé" (419), and later notes: "Au fond, il n'y a pas de comparaison possible entre ces deux univers separés ou les realités morales et psychologiques, les categoreies de l'espace et du temps (comme le montrent assez chez Perceval les cinq annees de son oubli de Dieu) n'ont ni la meme utilité dramatique ni la meme signification" (420).

Although one respects Frappier's caution in the face of the many radical, and often unfounded, theories proposed, this statement begs the question of why Chrétien put those two universes together in one romance if they are so incomparable.

Frappier resists all attempts to see parallels in Perceval's and Gavain's adventures, and earlier notes: "En effet Gauvain est lui aussi capable d'une chevalerie généreuse (Chrétien a mème été jusqu'à celebrer sa charité, voyez les v.9204-11)" (380). These lines are the words of the crippled and the sick people of Orquenie, bewailing the absence of their benefactor:

Di va! font il, a vos qu'afiert
A parler des conseus le roi?
Vos dessiez estre en effroi
Et esmaié et esperdu,
Quant nous celui avons perdu
Qui toz por Dieu nos sostenoit
Et dont toz li biens nos venoit
Par amour et par charité.
Einsi trestot par la cité
Monseignor Gavain regretoient
Les povres gens qui molt l'amoient. (9204-14)

Listen! they say, what do you care
talking about the king's counsels?
You should be in terror,
dismayed and distracted
now that we have lost him who
sustained us all for the sake of God,
and from whom all good came to us
through love and charity.
Thus, through the whole city,
the poor people bewailed Gavain
for they loved him much.

This is high praise indeed, but not in the author's voice. It is up to the reader, on the basis of what we have seen of Gavain in action, to determine whether the words match the reality. These words recall the description of the perfect knight that Ygerne and her court are waiting for:

Mais ainz ert mers trestote glace
Que l'en un tel chevalier truisse
Qui el palais remanoir puisse,
Qu'il le covenroit a devise
Bet et sage, sanz covoitise,
Preu et hardi, franc et loial,
Sanz vilonie et sanz tot mal.
S'uns teus en i pooit venir,
Cil porroit le chastel tenir;
Cil rendroit as [dames] lor terres
Et feroit pais des morteus guerres,
Les puceles marleroit
Et les vallés adouberoit
Et osteroit sanz nul relais
Les enchantemens del palais. (7590-7604)

But sooner will the sea be all frozen
than that one would find such a knight
who could stay in the palace,
for he would have to be, completely,
good and wise, without covetousness,
wise and bold, frank and loyal,
without villainy and without all evil.
If such a one could come there
he could hold the castle;
he would return their lands to the ladies,
would turn mortal wars into peace
he would marry off the maidens
and knight the young men,
and he would remove, without delay,
the enchantments from the palace.

We are not surprised that Gavain jumps at the challenge, mainly at the chance to see the puceles (7617, 7772). What is surprising is the ease with which he accomplishes the adventure, in fewer lines than it took the host to warn him. Both Gavain and the host invoke God's name at every step, and the latter crowns his warning with these lines:

De vos est il trop grans *damages*,
Qui i lairois la vie *en gages*
Sans *rachat* et sanz *raençon*.
Quant par amor ne par tençon
Ne vos en puis mener de chi,
Diex ait de vostre ame merchi. (7809-14)

It is too great a loss of you
who would forfeit your life in it, as a pledge
without redemption or ransom;
as long as I cannot lead you from here,
for the sake of love or by force,
may God have mercy on your soul.

This is language such as both men have used before, but this concentration of the language of commerce, with the "loaded" terms *rachat* and *raençon* is remarkable, and raises expectations of a significance which are not fulfilled. As terms of warfare, *rachat* and *raençon* are as hollow and meaningless as the host's talk about his

fief, since there is no enemy in sight. The "challenger" is the *Lit de Merveille*, and when Gavain accepts the challenge and sits on the bed, he is first bombarded by magic arrows coming from nowhere, and then attacked by a ferocious lion. On the other hand, *rachat* (and other members of that family, such as *rachatement, rachater, rachateor*) are just as often used for the Redemption and the Redeemer. Godefroy's Dictionary gives many quotes from the psalters and the writings of Saint Bernard, and since the mercy of God is invoked in the same breath, the association would be unavoidable.

Once more, the language of religion is used without meaningful content, inappropriately. Repeatedly, especially in connection with Gavain, the poet reminds us that this world (Ygerne's world, the world of Orquenie) is waiting for a Redeemer. The reader is forced to consider whether Gavain is likely to be that Redeemer and, to this reader the answer is unambiguously negative.

Gavain is hailed by Clarissans and her kneeling maidens as *droit seignor* (7927, 7932), with offers of service (7928, 7929, 7937, 7941), and responds with very human vanity:

> Que molt li plesoit a veoir,
> Auques pro ce que beles sont
> Et plus por che ele[s] font
> De lui lor princhе et lor seignor. (7945-47)
>
> It pleased him much to see them,
> partly because they are pretty,
> But more because they make
> of him their prince and lord.

Within sixty lines his triumph has turned sour when he finds himself a virtual prisoner in this splendor. There is a surprising in-

congruity between the build-up of this adventure and its anticlimactic course.

In the complex game with our expectations which Chrétien plays in the *Conte del Graal*, the language of commerce and its religious implications are a guide to meaning. In the shifting emphases of the plots (the education of Perceval, the conversion of Perceval, the demonstration of Chivalry in Gavain's adventures) the *patterned* use of the language of commerce is the only constant. This language is traditionally associated with Christ's redemption of man:

> Deus *acata* mout richement
> La loi et le baptisement
> Qu'il nos commanda a garder
>
> God bought, very forcefully,
> the law and baptism
> which he commanded us to maintain,

as a typical quote in Tobler-Lommatzsch has it, or "Mort receustes. Nous racastastes de mains a l'anemi" (You received death. And bought us back from the hands of the enemy).[12] Or again:

> Car hui fu cil en crois pendus
> Qui fu trente deniers vendus (6269-70)
>
> For on this day was hung on the cross
> he who was sold for thirty shillings,

as the pilgrims say to Perceval. This use, rooted in the Bible, invoked repeatedly in the Prologue, points up the insufficiency of language to express the miracle of grace, and is therefore morally appropriate when talking about that miracle, emphasizing its magnitude which transcends the power of words. Such language is traditionally, almost mechanically, used in the Biblical commentaries.

The Prologue shows that it is a living language for Chrétien, full of multiplicity and reverberations. The language of commerce is, *par excellence*, the language of charity, as we have seen in the New Testament and the Commentaries. Then, surprisingly, the romance proper uses the language of commerce in a different way. This language, with its religious connotations expressly confirmed by Chrétien in the Prologue, is used by characters who demostrate a shocking indifference to its implications, to the overriding importance of charity, to the meaning of Christ's redemption of man.

Notes:

[1] Ed. William Roach. Genéve: Droz, 1959. All quotations are from this edition. Translations are my own.

[2] Frappier in his "Le Graal et ses feux divergents" reviews six recent books on the *Conte du Graal*, and in passing touches on several others. H.F. Williams (*Sower and his Seed*, 146-54) gives an even more general survey of critical views on the work, although regrettably not more up to date. Haidu (*Aest. Dist.*) certainly recognizes Chrétien's artistic control, but by stressing irony and distance over all other aspects he sometimes cuts down *all* characters and events. Although I agree with Haidu that the reader has to take an active part in evaluating the characters and their actions, Chrétien himself also expresses his judgement, albeit indirectly.

[3] Chrétien, of course, attributes the words to "Sainz Pols" Without going into his reasons for doing so, I would argue that Chrétien did choose his quotation from its context in Chapter 4 of the Epistle of John. Luttrell notes: "These words now being said in the voice of St. Paul, the passage draws upon the fame of his pronouncements on *caritas*, which place it at the summit of the Christian life (1 Cor XIII) (4)

[4] The use of commercial language in the Prologue and one or two other places is also discussed by Shell (*Money*, 25-36) Shell seems to be after more general and abstract ideas than I. He draws these ideas from a composite of Chrétien's *Conte del Graal, La Queste del Saint Graal*, Wolfram's *Parzifal*, and others, without indicating where these works differ. Also, while Shell's analysis of the individual passages from Chrétien is detailed and perceptive, his more general remarks leave some doubt about his control of Old French, and his familiarity with (or interest in) the romance as a whole.

[5] Cointise (Klugheit, List, Eleganz, Aufputz' in Tobler- Lommatzsch) is translated by Foerster, and in the glossaries of Roach's and Lecoy's edition as 'courtliness.' Haidu (*Aest. Dist.*) translates *par grant cointise* as 'cleverly.' I would tend to side with Haidu, but earlier Blancheflor is said to be:

... plus cointe

Et plus acesmee et plus jointe
Que espreviers et papegaus (1795-7)

This seems completely favorable. The word *cointe* is used by Perceval in his conversation with Gavain, and about the clothing style of the Pucele as Mances Petites (4499 and 4987), where ambiguity is not to be excluded either.

[6] Much later, the word *sot* is used twice in relation to Gavain. Greoreas advises Gavain that going to the Male Pucele would be *sot* (6595), which does not stop Gavain from doing it anyway. ONe result of his encounter with Greoreas and the Male Pucele is that Gavain loses his horse and has to mount the *ronchin trotant et sot* (7159), provoking some nasty mockery from the lady.

[7] "Malgre tout, une regle devrait s'imposer: *un minimum indespensable de discipline philologique*" (Feux div.440).

[8] So also Haidu (*Aest. Dist.* 33) who, however notes that Kohler (162 n.2) dismisses the possibility of irony as inconceivable.

[9] *The Welsh Knight*, page 81 and again on p 131. It is also hard to reconcile this view with his later attempt to fit Perceval in his redeemer-model: "For example, Erec liberates Enide, himself, and the prisoners at the Joie de la Cort, and he inherits a kingdom ... At Belrepaire, Perceval saves a besieged city, with God's intervening aid, liberates its inhabitants held prisoner in the Islands, restores religion (sic), is proclaimed lord, and simultaneously becomes a "whole man" by virtue of his amourous attachment to Blanchfleur." (138) Sweeping statements like this do no justice to the subtlety of Chrétien's thought and style.

[10] cf. also "Distulit autem illos Felix, certissime sciens de via hac ... " (Acts 24:22) Even if I am correct in hearing this echo, this is no help in understanding why Li Orguelleus del Passage a l'Estroite Voie has his remarkable name (8645).

[11] On this, see Charles M Radding's article "The Evolution of Medieval Mentalities: A cognitive-Structural Approach" and M.-D. Chenu, *l'Eveil de la Conscience dans la Civilisation Medievale*, especially pp. 14-32, and Colin Morris, *The Discovery of the Individual*.

[12] *Huon* 1538-40, as quoted in Gildea, 198.

Redemption Through Love in Wolfram's *Willehalm*

Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Willehalm* has challenged and moved readers and critics for years, even though perhaps not as much as *Parzival*. Discussion of the meaning of the *Willehalm* is generally connected with the inconclusive ending. Ludwig Wolff's early assurance (in 1934) that a reconciliation of Christians and pagans is near (under Rennewart as a successor of Terramer) seems overly positive now. Bumke has placed Wolfram's conception of sanctity in a historical context and connected it with Hermann von Thüringen's son Ludwig. Bumke is also one of the few critics who considers the poem complete. Kienast analyzes the structure of the *Willehalm*, mainly by analogy with *Parzival*. Lofmark gives a detailed survey of the various opinions on the issue, and himself stresses the unresolved matters, arguing especially from the fate of Rennewart (210-43). Concluding her detailed study of Wolfram's narrative technique Gibbs argues that Wolfram intentionally rejected a neat ending (225-41).

Special emphasis on the Prologue is given by Ohly in "Wolfram's Gebet an den Heiligen Geist im Eingang des Willehalm" and by Ochs in *Wolframs " Willehalm"- Eingang*. Wolfram's radically original, personal approach to religion and to Christian love is, of course, always noted. It is here put into a slightly different relief in the comparison with the Old-English poems and with Chrétien. The language of commerce is connected with Germanic ideas on revenge and *wergild*, and with the obligations of knighthood and *Minnedienst* to

create a vivid sense of back-and-forth, of a human system of debit and credit.[1] This system is confronted with Gyburc's (and the poet's) emphatic assertion of God's all- encompassing love and grace, and with human reality in the great battle between Christians and pagans. The resulting conflict and sorrow are tangible, and it seems legitimate to wonder if a satisfactory ending to the work was ever possible.

The *Willehalm* is based on the Old French *Aliscans*.[2] Wolfram himself is emphatic on the excellence of his French source (diz maere ist war, doch wunderlic, 5, 15), communicated to him by his patron Hermann von Thuringen, and known also to his audience (ir habt ouch e wol vernomen..,7, 23). The relationship of the *Willehalm* to its source or sources has been studied by S.A. Bacon and others after her. The early comparisons focus on agreement between Wolfram and his sources, often claiming that differences between the *Willehalm* and the versions of the *Aliscans* now available show that Wolfram's source must have been different. However true that may be, source study is at least as important to show the differences between the works. While Wolfram frequently invokes his source, and even when he does not materially deviate from it, his work is quite different in spirit, in emphasis, and in artistic consciousness.

Traditionally, the epic is characterized by parallelism. In the *Chanson de Roland* each of the Christian heroes fights a pagan hero, and later Charlemagne fights the highest ruler of the pagans, Baligant. Throughout, we know that "Paien unt tort et chrestiens unt dreit" (1015). In the *Aliscans* this contrast is the same:

Puis que li hom n'aimme crestienté,

et qu'il het deu et despit carité,
n'a droit en vie, je le di par verté
et ki l'ocist, s'a destruit un malfé.
Deu ai vengié, si m'en set molt bon gre.
Tuit estes chien par droiture apelés,
car vos n'avés foi ne leauté. (1058ff.)

In the German *Ruolantslied* the black-and-white contrast between the combatants has softened. The pagans are no longer monsters; they resemble the Christians more closely in their humanity and nobility. In showing their potential equality the author finally emphasizes their crucial difference, religion. Wolfram consciously builds on this traditional parallelism. Like the Christians, the pagans are motivated in battle by *minne*, and like the Christians they have faith, but, tragically, it is not the true faith, and their gods cannot protect them. Religion is still the cause of war, but it is also, in a completely new way, the inspiration of the poet.

The *Aliscans* is an anonymous epic about a series of battles between Christians and pagans. *Willehalm* tells us of the disastrous consequences of the love between Willehalm and Gyburc and of Gyburc's conversion, of the resulting battles between noble men (some Christian, some pagan). The story is narrated in the voice of an intrusive narrator with conscious artistry:

ich Wolfram von Eschenbachch,
swaz ich von Parzival gesprach,
des sin aventiure mich wiste,
etslich man daz priste.
ir was ouch vil, diez smaehten
unde baz ir rede waehten.
gan mir got so vil der tage,
so sag iche minne und ander klage,
der mit triuwen pflac wip und man
sit Jesus in den Jordan
durh toufe wart gestozen. 4, 19-29

I Wolfram von Eschenbach
what I told about Parzival
as his adventures became known to me,
many a man praised it:
there were also many who scorned it
and who made their words more graceful,
If God grant me enough days
I will speak of love and other sorrows
as woman and man have known in faith and loyalty]
since Jesus was baptized
in the Jordan

These lines are close to the end of the 135-line Prologue, which is, in itself, already a most remarkable expression of Wolfram's religious and artistic principles. The Prologue establishes the religious character of the work in a novel way, contrasting with earlier crusade epics. The religious character of the *Chanson de Roland* pervades the work, is fundamental to its world. In the *Chanson de Guillaume* and the *Aliscans* this is much less so. There, the great battle of Christendom and paganism is seen in its purity only in an exceptional character like Vivian, but the rest of the world is shown in startling confusion. The hand of God reveals itself only in the occurrence of the battle and its outcome. In contrast, Wolfram opens his work with an intensely personal invocation of the Trinity.

The personal tone and devotion of the Prologue are a completely new phenomenon in medieval literature. But the importance of these 135 lines is especially structural. Elements of the Prologue, whether individual lines or important themes, reach out into the whole work. The most important themes are those of *gotes hantgetat*, of the divine order of the cosmos, and of God's mercy. The poet is God's child and all men are God's children. This belief reverberates throughout. God's divine order of the cosmos and His mercy, first

evoked in the Prologue, are the major points in Gyburc's debate with her father and of her Toleranzrede.

In Wolfram opening words, the complex and shimmering prayer stresses the strong and personal ties between the poet and his God in His complex unity:

> so bistu vater unt bin ich kint 1, 8
>
> Thus you are father and I am child
>
> du bist Christ, so bin ich kristen 1, 28
>
> you are Christ, hence I am Christian
>
> swaz an den buochen stet geschriben
> des bin ich künstelos beliben
> niht anders ich geleret bin
> wan han ich kunst, die git mir sin.
> diu helfe diner güete
> sende in min gemüete
> unlosen sin so wise, 2, 19, 25
>
> What is written in the books
> I have remained unfamiliar with.
> I have not been educated in anything else
> in so far as I have art, this [i.e. *min sin*]
> gives it to me.
> may the help of your goodness
> send into my consciousness
> such solemn, wise insight,

God's power manifests itself, first of all, through the poet, who is God's child and a Christian in Christ, and who can create only with the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Before we even know how God's hand will reveal itself in the world and its events, we know that it has shaped the poet's consciousness and his art, that it has given Wolfram his personal, individual voice in which he will give shape to the events of his story. In the Prologue Wolfram establishes, at the same time, both his personal devotion and his personal voice, before even telling us his subject, "einen riter der din nie vergaz,"

a knight who, always mindful of the Trinity and by God's merciful directions, expiated his sins by heroic deeds, and who often suffered "durch minne eines wibes,"(3, 6).

The poet, then, means to express his devotion by telling the story of a saint (though not a saint's life), of a devout and courtly knight, with equal emphasis on the devotion and the courtliness. Thus Willehalm urges his troops to fight:

> durh der zweier slahte minne:
> Uf erde hie durh wibe lon
> und ze himele durh der engel don. 16, 30-17, 2
>
> for the sake of the two kinds of love:
> for the reward of women here on earth
> and for the song of angels in heaven

Thus also, Gyburc's conversion is always said to have occurred,

> durch liebes vriundes minne
> und durch minne von der hoehsten hant 9, 18-20
> was kristen leben an ir bekant
>
> for the sake of the love of her dear friend,
> and through the love from the highest hand
> the life of a Christian became evident in her.

This equal emphasis on devotion and courtliness, as well as Wolfram's personal voice and world-view, distinguish the *Willehalm* from its epic source and render it unique. In contrast with the necessitarian course of history in the epic, events here are often attributed to human responsibility. On Heimrich's decision to deny his sons their inheritance, the poet says:

> ouwe daz man den niht liez
> bi sins vater erbe!
> swenn der nu verderbe,
> da lit doch *mer* sünden an
> denne almuosens dort gewan
> an sinem toten Heimrich
> ich waene ez wigt ungelich. 7, 16-22

Alas, that they kept him away
from his father's inheritance!
if he now comes to grief
the sin of it would be greater
than the mercy won by Heimrich
through his godson.
I consider them unequal in weight.

And on the love of Willehalm and Gyburc:

Arabeln Willalm erwarp,
dar umbe unschuldic volc erstarp.
diu minne im leiste und e gehiez,
Gyburc si sich toufen liez.
Waz hers des mit tode *engalt*! 7, 27-8,1

Willehalm won Arabel,
innocent people died for that.
[she] who gave him her love and promised marriage
had herself baptized as Gyburc.
What an army paid for that with death!

Human actions have consequences, not always forseen by the actors. Of course human beings, and the world, are still ruled by God's necessity and providence. But far more than in previous works the characters in *Willehalm* stand out against their epic background by their self awareness. This is epitomized in Gyburc's awareness of the tragic consequences of her conversion as expressed in her Toleranzrede.

The two passages above show that Wolfram describes human actions and their consequences, including acts of penitence, *(almuosen, sünden)* in the language of commerce and exchange (*mer ... denne, gewan, ez wiget ungelich, engalten*). This language is extremely frequent in the *Willehalm*, for all kinds of relationships and interactions:

Ey Heimrich von Narbon,
dines sunes *dienst* jamers *lon*
durh Gyburge minne enphienc.
swaz si genade an im begience,

diu wart *vergolten* tiure,
also daz diu gehiure
ouch wiplicher sorgen pflac. 14, 1-7

Alas, Heimrich of Narbonne,
your son's love-service received
the reward of sorrow through Gyburc's love
the grace she showed him/ received through him
was dearly paid for
in that that lovely one
had many womanly sorrows too.

Speaking of *lon* for *dienst* in love is traditional, also in lyrics. In "Maniger klaget" Wolfram says "Manlich *dienst*, wiplich *lon* gelich ie wac,/ wan an dir, vil saelic wip." (MF, 451). But the love of Willehalm and Gyburc is also intimately linked with religion, as is confirmed by the use of *genade* in 14,4. This line is ambiguous, because *began* can be both 'erreichen' and 'erwerben.' (Lexer) Gyburc showed *genade* ('freude, gunst') to *Willehalm*, and, by her conversion, she derived *genade* ('gnade, Gottes hilfe und erbarmen') through him. This exchange is *vergolten tiure*, exacts a high price from both of them and from their whole world. With justice the author concludes this passage with the exclamation:

ey Gyburc, süeze wip;
mit *schaden erarnet* wart din lip. 14, 29-30

Alas, Gyburc, sweet woman
you have been won at the cost of great losses

Although *din lip* is frequently used with no more meaning than *du* it is often opposed to *sele* in the *Willehalm*, as in "des liben tot, der sele vride." (32,6) also in 69, 15; 110, 27-30 etc. Erarnen, 'mereri, lucrari' is derived from the root ar, 'arare', and has the root meaning 'to reap, gather' (Grimm).

But *dienst* and *lon* are not limited to the sphere of love, as they are invoked by Willehalm before he goes off to court to ask for help:

> min alter vatr von Narbon
> sol dir mit *dienste* geben *lon*,
> swaz er und elliu siniu kint
> von dinem prise geret sint. 95,25-28
>
> my old father from Narbonne
> with his service will reward you
> for the esteem that he and his children
> gained by your high position.

Heimrich's support (*dienst*) will be a reward (*lon*) for Gyburc, whose high rank (*pris*) has honored his whole family. *Pris*, according to Lexer, is both 'lob, ruhm,' and 'wert, preis' (of. French *prix*, Latin pretium). The word occurs hundreds of times in the poem, and Wolfram seems to play with all the meanings, as in:

> ist *werdekeit* von *prise* her
> und ist der *pris* diu *werdekeit*,
> der zweir ist einez wol *so breit*,
> da von gelücke wirdet ganz. 14, 16-19
>
> if worth comes from merit
> and merit is worth
> [even] one of the two is great enough
> that happiness becomes complete

Here *pris* is interchanged with *werdekeit* ('was *wert* und *wurdig* ist), to praise the noble warriors, and the material aspect of those terms is kept present by the measuring words *breit* and *ganz*. *Pris* and *lon* are used and contrasted also by Rennewart during the battle, when he says to Willehalm:

> 'herre, mac min hant da *pris*
> an den Sarrazinen bejagen,
> den *lon* wil ich von iu tragen;
> und einen solt den ich noch hil:
> mir ist halt gedanke dar ze vil.
> nemt ir mich von herzesere

daz mac iu vüegen ere.' 331, 14-20

my lord, if my hand may gain
glory on the Saracens,
I will carry the reward from you;
and payment which I do not mention yet:
indeed, I cannot think of it yet.
If you free me from heartbreak
it may bring you honor.

In what is generally taken for a reference to Alyze, Rennewart expresses his hope that fame acquired in battle will bring him a reward (*lon* and *solt*) from Willehalm, noting that the fulfillment of his heart's desire may bring honor to Willehalm. The words *lon* and *solt* are here used both literally and metaphorically, but without any religious connotation. In a similar way, when the French hostages are freed, it is said

ir hüetaere empfiengen *lon*
Da mit daz er den lip in liez 415, 30-416, 1

Their guards were rewarded
in that he left them alive

The guards are rewarded, presumably for their care for the prisoners, by the fact that Rennewart lets them off alive.

Solt is generally used for the wages of warfare, but even within that context meanings vary. Thus Irmschart announces:

mit richem *solde* wil ich *zins*
von minem frien libe gebn 160, 20-21

with rich payment to soldiers
I will pay the dues for my freedom

These lines are unclear, and have been interpreted variously. It is clear that *sold* refers to the pay and equipment of troops, (later she promises "von silber und von golde / und von anderm richen *solde* / shoeniu ors und wapen lieht" 161. 25-7), but the use of *zins* makes

her intention difficult to understand. Both Kartschoke and Passage consider it an offer in the interest of her freedom, Gibbs notes a contrast: "I shall render tribute in rich payment, even though I am not a vassal." Irmschart's troops earn their money well, as do those of the queen:

> Der roemschen küneginne *solt*
> wart nu mit prise alda geholt
> und die von Paveie Irmenschart
> het *erkoufet* uf die vart
> der neweder von den heiden
> durch vluht wolden scheiden. 323, 1-6

> now the pay of the Roman queen
> was earned there with distinction,
> and of those whose journey
> Irmschart of Pavia had engaged
> neither of them wanted to flee
> from the pagans

But *solt* and *lon* are also used with religious meaning, and have been so used just before this passage:

> ... 'den endelosen prise
> werbent die nu da sin beliben.
> dine werdent nimmer vertriben
> von der durhslagenen zeswen hant
> diu vür diu helleclichen *pfant*
> ame kriuze ir bluot durh uns vergoz.
> die selben hant noch nie verdroz,
> swerz mit einvaltem *dienst* erholt,
> si teilet den endelosen *solt*. 322, 4-12

> ... eternal praise
> is earned by those who remained here.
> they will never be driven away
> by the pierced right hand
> that gave its blood for us on the cross
> to redeem the hostages of hell.
> that same hand never hesitated yet
> to give the eternal reward
> to whoever earned it with pure service

Earlier it has been said:

> die getouften muosen kumber doln

und diu zweir slahte *lon* erholn.
die ir leben dannen brahten,
werdiu wip in *lons* gedachten:
die aber da namen ir ende
die vuoren gein der hende
diu des *soldes* hat gewalt,
der vür allen *solt* is *gezalt*
diu selbe hant ein voget ist
unde ein scherm vur des tievels list. 371, 21-30

the baptized had to suffer grief
and earn two kinds of reward:
to those who got away with their lives
worthy women gave reward
but those who ended their lives there
they went towards the hand
that controls the reward
that is paid above all reward.
that same hand is a protector
and a shield against the devil's tricks

In both passages *solt* or lon are used in conjunction with other words of commerce, with ease though not casually, and without any apparent concern for doctrinal implications. Thus Christ is said to be crucified to redeem *diu pfant* (the pledges) of Hell without the worry about the propriety of payment to Hell or to the devil which concerned Anselm in his *Cur Deus Homo* (Siquidem diabolo nec deus aliquid debebat nisi poenam, nec homo nisi vicem, ut ab illo victus illum revinceret; sed quidquid ab illo exigebatur, hoc deo debebat non diabolo. II, 19).

Pfant is used several times, mostly literally for pledge (368, 2; 380, 2; 116, 26). Twice it is used, as in 322, 8, with religious connotations:

ze beder sit si sazten *phant*
diu nimmer mugen *werden quit*
vor der urteillichen zit 402, 12-14

at both sides they gave pledges
that may never be paid off

until the day of Judgement

swelher im da niht entran,
des leben muoste sin ein *phant* 430, 26-7

whoever could not escape him there
had to leave his life as a pledge

In the second passage the use of *phant* is rather loose, and it is not possible to determine how religious it is. But the word is also applied to Gyburc as Willehalm's beloved:

waz *pfandes* hete er lazen dort! 162, 3

what a pledge had he left there!

and again:

Gyburc was sin liebistez *pfant* 162, 19.

Gyburc was his dearest pledge

He does not leave her as a pledge to the enemy; she is a part of himself left behind, which serves as a pledge for his return. The use of the word *pfant* defines their relationship.

Like *pfant* and *lon, sold* also occurs in the sphere of love:

swer wibe *lon* ze reht erholt,
eteswenne der grozen kumber dolt:
ob denne der minne süeze
sölhen kumber büeze
swa der site wirt begangen,
da ist der minne solt enphangen. 385, 7-12.

he who rightly acquires women's reward
often he suffers great distress:
when then love's sweetness
makes up for such distress,
where that custom is practiced
there love's reward is received

As was noted before, love transactions are often described in terms of *dienst* and *lon*. What is unusual in the *Willehalm* is the stunning frequency of such language, the juxtaposition of these

terms in literal and figurative sense. The figurative sense may refer to *minne-dienst* and to religious situations.

The word *koufen*, used literally to refer to Irmschart's hiring of mercenaries, is used figuratively by Arnalt for the "cost" of Willehalm's love for Gyburc:

> du hast mit *tiurem koufe*
> ir minne etswenne errungen. 120, 12-13
>
> At a high expense have you
> acquired her love

Frequently, the figurative use of a word is sharpened by a second word similarly used, as here *tiure* reinforces *koufe*, or in the following evocation of battle:

> hurta, wie die getouften
> *borgeten* und *verkouften*
> manegen *wehsel* ane tumbrel 373, 21-3
>
> Hey! how the baptized men
> borrowed and sold
> many exchanges without using scales

These lines, on the surface, convey a vivid sense of the back-and-forth, the exchange of battle (and Wolfram elsewhere uses *widerwehsel* (des in nu widerwehsel git, 379, 8), but any more precise meaning for *borgen* and *verkoufen* in these lines would be hard to find. The commercial meaning of the terms has disappeared almost completely. *Borgen* is applied to sexual favors when Willehalm accuses the queen of adultery with Tybalt, and qualifies his abduction of Gyburc as a revenge for the offense to the king:

> Tybalde ich Gyburge nie
> het enpfüeret, wan daz ich rach
> daz unserem künege hie geschach.
> swaz Tybalt hie *geborget* hat,
> Gyburc daz minnen *gelt* mir lat. 153, 26-30.

I would never have taken Gyburc
from Tybalt, were it not that I avenged
what happened to our king here.
what Tybalt borrowed from him
Gyburc pays back to me with the
coin of love

These are strong words, which Wolfram tries to disclaim somewhat. In his anger at the queen Willehalm seems to disown his love for Gyburc, which on all other occasions is one of the two motive forces of his actions. Whatever the significance of the words, the use of *borgen* and *gelt* betrays a view of human behaviour as a constant trading, an enormous system of debit and credit. In contrast to its use in the *Conte del Graal*, in the *Willehalm* the language of commerce does not reflect on the speaker. Most instances are in the narrator's voice, since Wolfram is rather sparing with direct speech by his characters.

Gelt and *gelten* are extremely complex terms, as Grimm notes at the beginning of the lemma *gelten* in his *Wörterbuch*: "ein wort mit reichem und wichtigem hintergrund im alten leben, der sich daraus mit seltenen deutlichkeit erkennen läszt." The words are used in all their complexity in the *Willehalm*, ranging from revenge, favor in love, tribute, other payment to requital. When Willehalm says that Gyburc "daz minnen *gelt* mir lat" (153, 30) the reward of Gyburc's love is also repayment, requital, for the queen's adultery, combining the spheres of love and revenge. The reward of love alone is meant in:

da mac man schouwen wer daz velt
behabt durh der minne *gelt* 110, 17-8.

there one can see who gains the field
for the sake of love's reward

The meaning of revenge occurs frequently in the context of battle:

solt ich se iu alle machen kunt
wer da tot wart gevalt,
wie der ander sinen mac da *galt* 410, 6-8

should I announce them all to you,
who was felled dead
how another avenged his kinsman

also in:

alsus er Milonen *galt* 414, 4

thus he avenged Milo

"holte sich das wergelt für ihm, machte sich gleichsam selbst bezahlt" in Grimm's translation. Probably the same meaning is implied in:

daz selbe *gelt* hin wider bot
Rennewart der unverzagete 444, 22-3.

he was paid back in the same coin
by Renneward the undaunted one

The use here is looser, more ironic than literal. Less clear is:

der getouften tjoste
umbe *gelt* wart von in genomen 362, 12-13.

the joust of the baptized
was taken by them in exchange

Umb gelt may mean simply 'in exchange,' or can imply 'as a revenge,' since Halzebier is said to be mourning Pinel's death. The meaning of 'tribute' is used in:

[z]einem urliuge uf den patriarc
von Agley, der sich niht barc,
er engaebe in strites *übergelt* 241, 1-3

for a war against the patriarch
of Aquilega, who did not shirk
from paying them back doubly in battle

Straightforward payment is denoted in

solt ez ein keiser *gelten*
sölhe soldier vunde er selten 385, 19-20

[even] if an emperor would pay for them
he would rarely find such soldiers

Similarly, in her *Toleranzrede*, Gyburc recalls that her son has offered to pay damages if she would forsake Christianity and return to her family:

do bot Ehmereiz, min sun
den schaden ze *gelten* disem lant:
swa daz gein einem bisant
mit vlüste het enphangen not,
ie da gein Karels *lot*
wolt er wegen bereitez *gelt*. 256, 18-23

then my son Ehmereiz offered
to make up the damages to this land:
where one gold coin's worth
of loss was suffered
according to Charles' weight
he would repay him in ready money

She further elaborates on the offer, which would be guaranteed by Matribleiz (respected by both sides). In a sudden shift in tone Gyburc repeats the answer she gave her son in direct speech:

do sprach ich 'sun, wie stet dir daz?
dir zaeme ein ander rede baz.
wilt du mich *veile* machen
und dinen pris verswachen,
daz man mich *gelte* sam ein rint?
du bist von hoher art min kint:
daz *schadet* dinem *prise*
...
din bieten hat missetan.
zem marhcraven han ich muot:
niemen mac *geleisten* sölh *guot*
daz mich von im gescheide.' 257, 11-29

then I said: "Son, how does that befit you?
Different words would be more suitable.
Do you want to turn me into merchandise
and lower your own worthiness,
when they put a price on me like cattle?
You are my child, of high descent;
that would lower your reputation.

...
You have done wrong with your offer.
I am committed to the margrave:
no one can offer such goods
as would separate me from him

In these words clearly *gelten* is rejected as unseemly, but not as morally wrong. Gyburc does not reject the concept, but its application to someone of her noble status, and its effectiveness against her love for Willehalm.

Requital rather than revenge is the subject of Heimrich's words to Gyburc:

ir habt den totlichen val
unseres künnes wol *vergolten*.
ob wir nu niht gerne wolten
dienen umb iuwer *hulde*,
diu unverkorne *schulde*
solt immer unser sin vor gote 251, 30-252, 5
...
irn habt der minne ir *reht* getan,
daz immer ellenthafte man
iuwers *lones* suln gedenken
und niht ir *dienstes* wenken
ob si werden wibe minne gern 252, 15-19

you have well repaid
the deadly loss of our family.
If we would not now gladly
be in your service
the unforgiven debt
would forever be ours before God.
...
you have been equal to your love
so that courageous men
must always remember your reward
and not shirk from serving them
if they seek the love of worthy women

Gyburc has bravely defended Orange in the siege, but it is not in fighting, but in her *triuwe* and *wipheit* that she has made up for the

great losses suffered by his family, and they owe her *dienst* in return. Once more, human love and loyalty and the appreciation of these values are expressed in terms of formal transactions and obligations (*dienen, hulde, schulde, reht, lon, dienst*).

An unusual concentration of words of the *gelten-gelt* family occurs in the sixth book, when Willehalm joins Gyburc:

> da er und diu küneginne
> pflagen sölher minne,
> daz *vergolten* wart ze beder sit
> daz in uf Alyscanz der strit
> hete getan an magen:
> so *geltic* si lagen. 279, 7-12

> there he and the queen
> made such love
> that on both sides was requited
> what the battle in Aliscans
> had done to their relatives;
> so requiting they lay there.

and again:

> an sinem arm ein swankel ris
> uz der süezen minne erblüete.
> [G]yburc mit kiuscher güete
> so nahe an sine brust sich want,
> daz im nu *gelten* wart bekant:
> allez daz er ie verlos,
> da vür er si ze *gelte* kos.
> ir minne im sölhe helfe tuot,
> daz des marhcraven truric muot
> wart mit vreuden undersniten
> diu sorge im was so verre entriten,
> si möhte erreichen niht ein sper
> Gyburc was siner vreuden *wer* 279, 30-280, 12.

> in his arm a slender twig
> blossomed forth from sweet love.
> In chaste love
> Gyburc turned so closely to his breast
> that he was recompensed:
> for all that he ever lost
> he took her as requital.
> Her love gave him such succor
> that the margrave's sorrow

was mingled with joy.
Cares had gone so far from him
that a lance could not reach them.
Gyburc was the protector of his happiness.

Their lovemaking makes up for the losses both of them suffered in the battle of Aliscans. The loss of relatives is so enormous exactly because the battle found Gyburc's relatives by blood and by (first) marriage against those of Willehalm, also hers by second marriage. The notion of their mutual requital is important enough for Wolfram to make up the word *geltic*, not attested elsewhere. In the second passage, in a rather precious image, Wolfram compares the love growing from their embrace to a tender blooming branch. In this love Willehalm finds requital, he receives Gyburc in exchange for all his losses. Gyburc is *siner freuden wer*, the protector and holder (possessor) of his happiness. In his note Kartschoke also suggests that Wolfram played with several meanings of *wer*.

Between these two passages is a long and tortuous one in which Willehalm's losses are compared to the gains (*aller krone gewinne*) received by Amfortas through the love of Orgeluse and Secundille. The comparison is the more mysterious because Amfortas' fall from happiness is also mentioned. Whatever is the meaning of the passage, it elaborates on the great gifts to Amfortas, and the even greater losses to Willehalm, and this in turn raises the significance of the slender sprout of love blooming from their embrace and requiting him for his sorrows.

Other words of commerce and exchange are used in similarly varied cases: *gewinne, koufen, quit machen or quit werden, schade, zahlen, zins* and *zolle*. All of these are used in literal and figura-

tive senses, the latter referring to love, to feudal relationships, to warfare, to religion.

Too widespread and varied to convey one clear message, even an indirect comment on the speaker as in the *Conte du Graal*, this abundance of words of commerce nevertheless evokes a view of the world as a grand place of exchange, with people trading blows or love tokens, incurring and paying off debts of money, love or revenge, buying a place in heaven or in a woman's esteem. This frenzy of commerce is too general, almost obsessive, to leave room for the "play," the ambiguities and paradoxes found in the New Testament. It also seems at variance with equity and the balance of the divine order of the world as presented in the confessions of faith of the Prologue and Gyburc's debate with her father. For the first time Christ's second command, to love one's enemy, emerges in a literary work, and it does so in a world of cosmic conflict and upheaval. Nothing in the tradition of the crusade epic had prepared for the introduction of the ideal of the brotherhood of man into its world.

Wolfram does give us several clear statements of the religious issues predominating this world. Most important are the Trinity and the concept of man as *gotes hantgetat*, the essential unity of mankind.

And although the whole work is permeated with a deep religious awareness, there are a few passages in which Wolfram expresses his faith and his ideas about religion more explicitly. These are the Prologue, Gyburc's prayer (100, 26-102, 20), Gyburc's debate with her father (215, 10-221, 26) and the "Toleranz-rede" (306, 4-310,

29). The "thematische und funktionelle Verknüpfung" of the Prologue and the rest of the poem are clearly shown by Kienast (103-4).

The Prologue is, first of all, an Invocation, a praise of and a meditation on the Trinity. Although Ochs convincingly shows connections with vernacular commentaries on the Lord's Prayer (35-6), Wolfram's concern is not so much with theology as with devotion. The three persons of the Trinity are at once separate and connected, but not always consistently so. Thus in the Prologue, God the Father is the creator (schepfaere uber alle geschaft 1, 3), but later Gyburc says to her father:

> ... ich han den touf genomen
> durch den der al die creatiure
> geschuof, ... 215, 10-12
>
> ... I had myself baptized
> for the sake of him who created
> all creation

That she means Christ here is clear, and even confirmed in her own words a few lines down:

> solt ich durh Mahmeten Christ
> unt den marcraven verkiesen 215, 16-17
>
> should I give up Christ and the margrave
> for the sake of Mohammed?

Later again she says:

> sin werdeclichez leben bot
> vur die schuldenhaften an den tot
> unser vater Tetragramaton 309, 7-9
>
> Our father Tetragrammaton
> offered his worthy life
> for those deserving death
> (he offered his life to death
> for the guilty ones)

Here God the Father is the Redeemer. To say that God the Father gave up his life to death is, properly speaking, an instance of *communicatio idiomatum*, but Wolfram does not press the paradox. He does not seem to dwell on the mysteriousness of the incarnation, as the Old English poets did, but rather to refer to it as a sign of God's infinite mercy. The exact nature and functions of the three persons are not what concerns him, but the mystery and miracle of the Trinity, the love of God for man as it manifests itself in the Incarnation, and the supreme importance of this event for mankind. The Incarnation, Christ's *mennischeit* has put man in a family relationship (*sippe*) with Christ as child of God. Wolfram's particular belief that all men (Christians and pagans) are *Gottes hantgetat* and God's children, as enunciated by Gyburc, is one of the major themes of the work, and distinguishes the *Willehalm* from all other crusader epics.

Gyburc's prayer after the first battle (100, 26-102, 20) echoes many of the words and phrases used in the Prologue. She expresses her belief that God is "vil staete an allen valschen list" and the Trinity has "vil tugenthafter bermede." (100, 30 and 101, 2). This corresponds to "Ane valsch du reiner" (1, 1) and "ane urhap din staetiu kraft" (1,4). The close conjunction of these terms, as Ochs has noted, points to the different aspects of *staete* (34). God is *staete* 'steadfast' in his rule over creation and in his mercy. To her father she uses the word *wage* (*waage* according to Lexer) to portray God's steadfastness:

> sin wage kan niht triegen,
> diu al daz werc so ebene wac
> daz ez immer *staete* heizen mac
> unt immer unzerganclich. 216, 12-16

his scales cannot deceive
he balanced the whole work so evenly
that it can be called ever steadfast
and always everlasting

God is not only steadfast, but fair, balanced. This evenhandedness shows itself especially in the vision of mankind as one great family and of all men, whether Christian or pagan, as God's children, which is the major theme of the Toleranz-rede.

Right after this confession of faith Gyburc enumerates the losses suffered by Willehalm and herself, saying:

sich mac din gotheit wol schamen,
ob wirs werden niht *ergetzet*,
daz wir nu sin geletzet
aller *wertlicher* wünne 101, 10-13

it would be shameful to your divinity
if we were not requited for the fact
that we have been robbed
of all the joy of this world

It is a measure of her despair that she doubts, if ony for a moment, the end of her suffering. Willehalm consoles her "und jach si wurde wol *erlost*." Both statements continue the use of the language of exchange in talking about religion. Willehalm similarly seems to challenge God's fairness in his complaint for the loss of Rennewart, when he says that he should be spared the tortures of Purgatory because his suffering on earth has been so great (454, 15-30).

In her debate with her father Gyburc stresses the importance of the Creator, for whose sake she has converted. The pagan god Tervigant falls far short of Altissimus, who created the stars and the planets and assigned them their course, who ruled the winds and the water, and gave to the sun its properties. Whatever may occur to her for his sake:

gein dem *schaden* bin ich balt.
der mac michs wol *ergetzen*
unt des libes *armuot* letzen
mit der sele *richeit*. 216, 26-29

that loss I do not fear.
He can well make it up to me
and sweeten the poverty of the body
with the riches of the soul

She contrasts here the poverty of life on earth with the riches of the eternal life, and uses a cluster of monetary terms (*schaden, ergetzen, armuot, richeit*) to argue the transcendent value of her belief. Because of Christianity her poverty will prevail over his riches. Terramer cannot see beyond the material and social poverty of Gyburc's life with Willehalm compared to that with Tybald, as he expresses repeatedly:

waz si durh in hat verlorn,
daz si unser gote hat verkorn,
und ir witiu lant, und ir *richez* lebn
hat umbe *armuot* hie gegeben. (354, 19-22)

what she has lost for his sake
that she gave up our gods,
and her wide lands, and her rich life
to live here in poverty

Gyburc, though, knows that man will always be poor in respect to God, as Wolfram has acknowledged in the Prologue: ich arm und du vil riche (1, 18). As Benecke notes: "arm steht dem riche entgegen, und so wie das letzte nicht nur 'reich' sondern auch 'vornehm, mächtig' bedeutet, so *arm* nicht nur 'arm' sondern auch 'von geringen stande, erbarmen erregend, erbärmlich, elend" (Benecke s.v. *arm*, cf. also Grimm: 'miser, pauper, elend und durftig'). In the Christian terminology, where *riche* is particularly used for God, the word *arm* takes on the full resonance of the human condition. Even here on

earth, riches and poverty are only relative, as Terramer, who is often called *riche* himself demonstrates:

> "ach ich vreuden *arm* men,
> daz ich solh kint ie gewan,"
> sprach Terramer der *riche* (217, 9-11)
>
> "o how poor in joy I am
> that I ever had such a child,"
> said rich Terramer

Without ambiguity, the simple, common words for rich and poor are used to expound basic Christian tenets, and at the same time to illustrate Gyburc's vision and Terramer's blindness.

Reminding her father of the fall of man and his banishment to Hell, she announces the saving work of *diu Trinitat*, without elaborating on the three persons or distinguishing between them. Predictably, Terramer resists the thought of God allowing his son to die at the cross. Anselm also reports on this as a frequent objection of the infidels in *Cur Deus Homo* (I, 3). Gyburc answers him with another traditional paradox: the death of God-as- man won life for mankind.

> innen das unt diu mennischeit erstarp
> diu gotheit ir daz leben erwarp. 219, 29-30.
>
> while his human life died
> his divinity won life for humanity

The theological debate is indicative of the importance of religion in the *Willehalm*, and nothing like this exists in the surviving texts of the *Aliscans*. As Bacon notes, a conversation in the Prose-romance may go back to the lost manuscript posited as Wolfram's source,[3] but it bears no resemblance to the debate here. To Desrames' (Terramer's) offer of a pardon if she returns to Tybalt and abandons her life of poverty with Willehalm, Gyburc answers:

> "Trop envis ce seroit ce que vous dictes, sire," fet elle; "car je suy crestienne et cuide meilleur loy tenir que la voustre la moittie. Mais si mon conseil voulles croire je vous priroye de vos dieux relenquir et croire en cellui Dieu, ou nom du quel je fus baptissee. Si feres le saulvement de voustre ame. Si vous appeleroye lors mon pere; car saichies que jusques alors et autrement ne le feray, ne plus ne vous quier de langaige tenir, se a ce ne vous acordes."

Desrames responds with rage and threats. In the *Willehalm* we have a real debate on points of theology, but, significantly, no attempt from Gyburc to convert her father, except for the one line "nu wirp umb sine hulde" (218, 30). Immediately after the religious debate she invokes Willehalm's great valor as an equal justification for her abandonment of her past wealth and power: "ich diente im und der hoehsten hant" (220, 30).

Gyburc's *Toleranzrede* comes at the end of a war- council on the eve of the battle. Willehalm speaks first and relates the cruelty of the pagans. This is the only place where pagan atrocities are mentioned, and it is in great contrast with the picture of the pagans in the rest of the work. Other speakers pledge help and arouse the assembly to fight. Gyburc's words are set apart from the beginning: "Durh Gyburge al diu not geschach" (306, 1). She appeals to *zuht* and *triuwe*, important qualities both.

In her reading of 4, 25-29 of the Prologue, Ochs connects *triuwe* with the birth of Christianity (invoked in lines 28-29), noting: "Diese *triuwe* ist deshalb für das Christentum charakteristisch und eigentlich nur einem Christen möglich" (98, with several quotes from

Parzival). She quotes Vivianz' *triuwe* in 48, 6, which is closely followed by the characterization of Vivianz' death as a mirror-image of Christ's Redemption:

> wie Vivians der lobes rich
> sich selben *verkouft* umb unseren segen;
> (48, 10-11)
>
> how Vivianz, rich in praise,
> sold himself as a blessing for us

But in 13, 14, also quoted by Ochs here, no specific Christian connotations are present:

> ein teil sines künnes was im komen,
> und ouch die heten genomen
> starkiu dienst von siner hant
> an den er niht wan *triuwe* vant (13, 11-14)
>
> a part of his family had come to him
> and they too had accepted
> hard service from his hand
> and he received only loyalty from them

These lines are about *family* loyalty, as are 122, 23 and Heimrich's words to Gyburc praising her *triuwe* (250, 14, 251, 13 and 251, 25) and pledging the *triuwe* of his family (252, 6). Although this quality is strong in Willehalm's family, and it is enlisted in the defense of Christianity, it is not exclusively a Christian virtue. The pagans are as human as the Christians, and as capable of the same virtues. Terramer possesses it too. When the Baruch and his priests order Terramer to kill his daughter for the sake of the faith she forsook, he puts his family loyalty higher:

> min *triuwe* ich doch so nie verkos,
> ich hete dich zeime kinde. 217, 26-27
>
> I did not give up my loyalty like that,
> that I would not acknowledge you as my child

From her side, Gyburc appeals to his *triuwe* twice, in 221, 5 and 21.

Zuht is translated by Benecke as "die edlere bildung des gemüthes welche ein frucht der erziehung ist." Wolfram confirms and transcends the role of *erziehung* ('upbringing') in applying it to Wimar and Rennewart. When the court scorns Willehalm at his arrival in Laon, he is taken in by the merchant Wimar, whose words and actions are characterized by *zuht*:

> der koufman mit *zühten* sprach 131, 22
>
> the merchant spoke courteously

and

> der wirt vür in mit *zühten* truoc
> nach koufmannes prise
> maneger slahte spise 133, 24-26
>
> the host set before him, courteously
> according to the best custom of merchants
> many different dishes

The juxtaposition in both quotes of *zühten* with *koufman* points to the exceptional qualities of Wimar as opposed to the failure of the court, which should be the *locus* of *zuht* but is not. *Willehalm* responds to Wimar's *zuht* with his own when he refuses to ride his horse since his host lacks one (131, 28-29).

Equally exceptional is Rennewart, nobly born but abandoned by his family and raised as a kitchenboy. When he frees the hostages and spares their unarmed guards,

> sus kund er *zühte* walten,
> daz er der hüetaere keinen sluoc: 415, 24-25
>
> thus did he show his breeding
> that he slew none of the guards

and even stronger:

da mit daz er den lip in liez
von arde ein zuht in daz hiez, 416, 1-3
sit si ane wer da lagen

by the fact that he granted them life:
innate decency told him to do that
because they were unarmed

Zuht, then, is an essential quality of courtliness, and its presence in two persons without a courtly upbringing demonstrates their special value. When Gyburc appeals to these important qualities we can expect her words to have moral import. Nowhere do *zuht* and *triuwe* come together more tragically than in Gyburc, and she refers to this herself:

got weiz wol daz ich jamers hort
so vil inz herze han geleit,
daz in der lip unsamfte treit 306, 6-8

God knows well that I have in my heart
such a store of sorrow
that the body (I) can hardly bear it

si sprach 'der totliche val
der hie ist geschehen ze beder sit,
dar umbe ich der getouften nit
trag und ouch der heiden
daz bezzer got in beiden
an mir, und si ich *schuldic* dran. 306, 12-17

she said: "The deadly loss
that has taken place on both sides,
for that I am hated by the baptized
and also by the pagans
may God make it up to both of them
through me, even if I am to blame for it.

It is the unique quality of Gyburc in Wolfram's creation that there should be no doubt about the rightness of her conversion, but that she feels enormous guilt for the consequences of that conversion. As her character transcends the epic character as we know it, so her words transcend the conflict. She reminds the leaders of their

Christian honor. Let them revenge Vivian against her relatives, but let them also preserve their eternal souls, and that means respecting the souls of the enemy:

> so tuot daz saelekeit wol ste:
> hoeret eines tumben wibes rat,
> schonet der gotes hantgetat. 306, 26-28
>
> preserve your salvation:
> listen to a simple woman's counsel
> spare God's handiwork

Irmschart uses *gotes unverzagtiu hantgetat* referring only to the Christians (her own relatives actually) killed by Terramer, and commending them to God's mercy (166, 21). But Gyburc already uses the word in the wider sense when she says:

> ... der mich von nihte
> ze dirre werlde brahte,
> alze vruo er min gedahte.
> ich schur siner *hantgetat*,
> der bede machet unde hat,
> den kristen und den heiden! 253, 6-11
>
> ... He who brought me into this world
> out of nothingness --
> too soon he thought of me.
> I am a scourge to the handiwork of him
> who makes and holds
> both Christian and pagan

Wolfram himself emphatically confirms Gyburc's use of the word, and her message:

> die nie toufes künde
> enpfiengen, ist daz sünde,
> daz man die sluoc alsam ein vihe?
> grozer sünde ich drumbe gihe:
> ez ist gar *gotes hantgetat*, 450, 15-19
>
> to slay like cattle those
> who never knew about baptism,
> is that not sin?
> I confess it a great sin:

for they are God's handiwork

Even more than in her debate with her father, Gyburc's words here are about religion and theology, albeit the theology of a laywoman (ein tumben wibes rat).

Two important themes from the Prologue recur here: that *all* men, Christian and pagan, are God's children, and that God's mercy and pity (*erbarmekeit*) obliges man to have mercy in his turn. In the earlier epics the pagans might be saved provided they converted (as in *Chanson de Roland*, laisse 266), but here Christians and pagans are all related, all God's children. We are reminded that Elias and Enoch, Noah and the three kings honoring Christ in Bethlehem were all pagans, yet not destined to damnation. And since all are God's children all can be saved:

> dem saeldehaften tuot vil we,
> ob von dem vater siniu kint
> hin zer vlust benennet sint:
> er mac sich *erbarmen* uber sie,
> der rehte *erbarmekeit* truoc ie. 307, 26-30
>
> the blessed is much grieved
> when the father has marked
> his children for perdition:
> he who always had true mercy
> can have mercy on them

Line 26 is a restatement of the appeal in the Prologue: "la diner tugende wesen leit" (1, 10). In what seems to be a digression, Gyburc explains why fallen man did not share the fate of the fallen angels:

> der mennisch wart durch rat verlorn:
> der engel hat sich selb erkorn
> zer ewigen vluste 308, 19-21
>
> mankind fell by someone's counsel
> the angels themselves
> chose eternal perdition

While man was persuaded to sin, the angels chose their own perdition. The use of *erkiesen* is ironic here, making the angels elect their own damnation. The contrasting fates of angels and men serve to emphasize God's infinite mercy towards mankind, which should be man's example:

> Swaz iu die heiden hant getan,
> ir sult si doch geniezen lan
> daz got selbe uf die verkos
> von den er den lip verlos
> ob iu got sigenunft dort git,
> lats iu *erbarmen* ime strit.
> sin *werdeclichez* leben bot
> vür die schuldehaften an den tot
> unser vater Tetragramaton
> sus gap er sinen kinder *lon*
> ir vergezzenlicher sinne 309, 1-11
>
> whatever the pagans have done to you
> you should let them benefit
> from the fact that God himself forgave
> those who made him lose his life.
> If God grant you victory
> you should have compassion in the battle.
> Our father Tetragrammaton
> offered his worthy life to death
> for the guilty ones
> thus he rewarded his children
> for their forgetting of him

Lines 1-4 go back directly to Christ's words in Luke 23: 34 "Pater, dimitte illis: non enim sciunt quid faciunt." The lesson of these words for man is drawn also by Anselm:

> Dulcis et benigne domine IESU Christi, ... qui
> nihil debebas morti, et tamen piam animan tuam
> pro servis et peccatoribus tuis posuisti, et
> pro ipsis interfectoribus tuis orasti, ... tu, domine
> qui tantam caritatem fecisti inimicis tuis,
> tu *ipse caritatem praecepisti amicis tuis.*
> (Oratio 18, 3-8)

Gyburc presents her words in reverse order from Anselm's: the Christian should show mercy to the pagan, because Christ forgave those who killed him. And Christ's death itself is proof of God's mercy in the face of man's forgetting Him. It should be noted that here too, the language of commerce (*werdeclich, lon*) is used in talking about religion. The use of *lon* is particularly ironic because it is not an earned reward, but entirely undeserved. Once more, the commercial and feudal terminology is used exactly because its inadequacy is unmistakable. Man should show mercy (lats iu erbarmen, 309, 6) because of God's merciful love to his children:

> sin *erbarmede richiu* minne
> elliu wunder gar besliuzet,
> des *triuwe* niht verdriuzet
> sine trage die helfecliche hant 309, 12-15
>
> his love rich in compassion
> embraces all miracles
> his loyalty never tires
> of extending the helping hand

The word *erbarmen* echoes through these lines. *Erbarmen* (*misericordia*) is directly connected with *arm*. Thus God's *erbarmede* is predicated on man's condition of *armuot*. Signficantly, the same *triuwe* which connects Willehalm to his relatives, and Terramer to Gyburc, connects God to all his children. Only in the latter part of her speech does Gyburc talk about her own conversion and its role in the conflict. Both sides hate her because they think she started the war for the sake of human love rather than for God. But they overlook what she left behind: the love of her husband and child. And in accordance with her words to the combatants she absolves Tybalt of any blame:

Tybalt von Arabi
ist vor aller untaete vri.
ich trag al eine die schulde, 310, 15-17

Tybalt of Araby
is free from all misdeeds:
I alone bear the blame

With words of sorrow for those fallen in battle she ends her speech.

As we saw in the use of the term *gottes hantgetat* Wolfram emphatically aligns himself with Gyburc on the brotherhood of mankind. The application of this philosophy can be seen in the next three books. On Wolfram's part it is reflected in his organization of these books, his presentation of the events of the battle. The application of Gyburc's words is shown in Willehalm's behaviour to the pagans after the battle.

Book seven is occupied with preliminaries to the battle: Rennewart's forgetting his club, the cowardice of the French troops and their return under Rennewart's direction, the arrangement of Willehalm's troops, the encounter between the two spies, Terramer's words to his army and the pagan battle order. It is noteworthy that Terramer's words and the arrangement of his army receive lengthier treatment than Willehalm and his men. The twenty "Dreisziger" on the French include Rennewart's problems with his club and the flight of the French troops. Each of the Christian armies is identified merely by its commander and battlecry. At this point, the contrast is deliberate, to further the glory of the Christians, and to reveal the encounter as a judicial battle: the outcome can be understood only

as a statement of the will of God for after his short enumeration of their troops Wolfram says:

> wie manic tusent ieslich schar
> het, des wil ich geswigen gar.
> waz touc diu hant vol genant
> gein dem her uz al der heiden lant? 328, 27-30
>
> how many thousands each band
> contains I will not tell you
> what is even a resolute hand-full
> against the army from all the land of the pagans

The pagans, after hearing about the approach of the enemy, have their own war-council, and there the pagan commanders are individually addressed by Terramer, at about thirty lines each; the battle array takes another seventy lines. The effect of all this power and splendor is strong, much stronger than the two short references to the supernatural forces behind the two sides: Terramer briefly laments the Christian's unfair advantage because they have "der zouberaere Jesus" on their side, and the author equally briefly remarks on the pagan gods:

> swen die gote da betrugen,
> die druf waren gemachet,
> des geloube was verswachet. 360, 26-28
>
> those who were bewitched by the gods
> who were put on that (cart)
> their faith was destroyed

The pageant of the pagan forces also has a human dimension, when Terramer expresses his acute distress at Gyburc's betrayal and her apparent indifference to his losses. Tybalt is described in terms of the highest praise:

> si liez ouch Tybalden,
> den *süezen einvalden*.
> den milten unt den richen,

den *claren manlichen,*
der enpfienc nie valscheit nehein.
wie vert sunne durch den edeln stein,
daz er doch scharten gar verbirt?
also wenc hat ie verirt
Tybalden den genenden
swaz man sagt von missewenden. 354, 23-355, 2

she also left Tybalt
the sweet and guileless one,
generous and rich,
in his shining manhood,
who never had any treachery.
How does the sun pass through a gemstone
without shattering it?
Just so little had
brave Tybalt ever been led astray
by whatever misstep one can name

Remarkably many of the same words are also used for Rennewart:

Ei starker lip *clariu* jugent
wil mich din manlichiu tugent
und din *süeziu einvaltekeit,*
... dir niht dienen lazen,
so bin ich der verwazen. 453, 1-6

O you strong man, shining youth
if your manly virtue
and your sweet simplicity
... .
will not let me serve you,
then I am cursed

The image of Tybalt's purity as the clear gemstone allowing the light to pass through without harm is a common image for the immaculate conception by Mary. Terramer compares his sorrowful conflict with his daughter to David's heartbreak at the death of Absalom. Although these innappropriate comparisons show his blindness, they also demonstrate his potential salvation. Once more we are reminded that the pagans are potentially as noble and virtuous as the Christians. The events and the teachings of the Scripture are valid even for those who do not believe.

The battle proper starts with book eight, and its organization is remarkable. Each individual episode starts with a pagan hero:

> Halzebiere was vor jamer we
> umbe Pinels tot von Ahsim.
> des manlich her reit da bi im
> gefloriert mit maneger koste 362, 8-11
>
> Halzebier was grieving
> for the death of Pinel of Ahsim
> whose brave army rode with him
> decked out at great cost
>
> [N]u kom der künic Tybalt von Chler
> mit wol gefloriertem her,
> unt des sun von Todjerne 364, 1-3
>
> Now comes king Tybalt of Cler
> with his well-adorned army
> and his son from Todjerne
>
> do kom Synagun mit schar, 368, 6
>
> There came Synagun with his troops

Similarly also with Gyburc's brothers (372, 6-7), Poydjus (375, 12-15), Josweiz (386, 2-4), Poydwiz (389, 20-21) and Marlanz (393, 26-29), and in a climax:

> owe daz er nu komen sol,
> durh den diu sorclichiu dol
> und daz angestliche liden
> die getouften niht wil miden!
> nu mein ich Terrameren,
> der wol nach herzeseren
> den getouften kunde werben. 399, 7-13
>
> Alas, that now he must come,
> because of whom the baptized cannot escape
> terrible grief
> and fearful suffering
> I am talking about Terramer
> who could well bring heartbreak
> to the baptized men 399, 7-13

The pagan princes are described at length, and their followers enumerated. Then follow a few lines on the Christians who engage

them, or a longer passage of general battle. A few illustrations will demonstrate the curious imbalance. The description of Tybalt takes roughly fifty lines, with a brief insertion on Rennewart moving against him (eight lines). Tybalt's companions take up sixty lines. The resisting French manage to take Ehmereiz prisoner very briefly (eight lines), but his clothes shine so brightly in the sun that his followers notice his capture and free him (five lines).

In slightly different proportions, Aropatin is described in thirty-five lines, then countered by Heimrich. This results in battle between both sides compared by Wolfram to legendary battles from the past, some so hyperbolic that they cannot be taken seriously, such as the hero Witege, who smashes eight thousand helmets as if they were mushrooms (384, 23-26). Heimrich's daring is mentioned again at the end, but the battle, like most in this book, remains unresolved. Immediately hereafter Josweiz is described in all his remarkable splendor and with his noble followers (fifty-five lines). Although he is forcefully opposed by Rennewart and his Frenchman, the perspective returns to Josweiz, who frees Ehmereiz.

Most of the time, the author takes no sides between the two parties. He praises Josweiz as highly as Vivianz. Sometimes he adds a general, distant comment like:

> da wart gegeben und genomen
> donres hurte als diu wolken riz. 389, 18-19
>
> thunderous crashes were given
> and received like a cloudburst

or an ironic one, reminding us of the earlier cowardice of the French:

> Franzoysen wart da kumber kunt.

waerens uber Pitit punt
mit gemache heim gevarn,
sone waeren si mit so manegen scharn
so ungevuoge niht getrett. 389, 5-9

the French got acquainted with trouble there.
If they had gone home comfortably
over Petit Punt
they would not have been
so roughly trampled by so many troops

In talking about an attack on Terramer's sons he even exclaims:

nu sult ir Terramere
danken, daz er e beriet
siniu kint mit wer die niemen schiet
von in mit den swerten. 374, 8-11

now you must be grateful to Terramer
that he earlier equipped his children
with weapons that nobody
got away from with their swords

Most of this book, then, is about the pagans, not as a threatening horde of monsters, but as a valiant, noble army, which almost incidentally happens to be the enemy threatening the Christian world. The reader is drawn right into the middle of the conflict, and does not remain firmly on one side, as in most earlier crusade epics. This reflects Wolfram's view of war as a tragedy equally affecting friend, foe and innocent bystander. Perhaps Wolfram himself is overwhelmed by this tragedy when he ends this book seemingly ready to give up the work:

swer nu lieze niht verderben
dirre aventiure maere
deste holder ich dem waere. 402, 28-30

if someone could take this story
and bring it to a good end
I would be grateful to him

These lines may be a boast by the poet that no other could untangle the complicated situation he had just depicted. This is not the place to enumerate the various interpretations that have been advanced for them, or for the fact that the work seems incomplete. All theories are clearly discussed by Lofmark in his final chapter (210-226). It would have been hard to find a neat solution and reconcile the two conflicting demands that are paramount in the work. The pagans need to be stopped in their threat on the Christian world, but their potential for salvation remains to the end.

Wolfram's importance lies in the question he raised, which is still valid: how can we live a Christian life in a troubled world? The answers in the *Willehalm* are presented in a different way from those in the *Christ* and the *Conte du Graal,* but the question and the concern remain the same. Human love and divine love can and must work together for the Redemption of men and women and their world.

Notes:

[1] Terms of commerce and exchange are also frequently used in the feudal system, and in love poetry. This transference of the language of commerce has been widely discussed, and will not be treated here.

[2] ed. Werner Schröder, Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1978. All quotations are from this edition. Translations are mine, but I have frequently consulted Kartschoke's modern version and the English translations of Charles E. Passage and of Marion Gibbs.

[3] Bacon, 166-69. The passage from the prose romance (kap. 85, 3) is quoted from Reuter, 81-2.

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