

ds swords became progressively more tapered than earlier swords and with of a point. In the sixteenth century skilled swordplay was developed²⁷ and ps the tracing and traversing etc. of Malory's knights may indicate in a general some elementary knowledge of such skill.

e hilt is remarkable only in the Grail's story's wondrous sword. This has a lously made hilt which is written on at some length proclaiming itself Faith elief (17) 992/24, 994/4. Otherwise hilts are unmentioned on and mentioned n a practical way to a total of seven times, plus once of a dagger. The hilt is called 'hondils' (1) 25/53, perhaps because of the difficulty of taking it from and in the lake, or attracted by the similarity of sound between 'hond' and ils'.

e handle or grip is normally called the pommel, mentioned 14 times, though onally the pommel may be the knob at the end of the handle (21) 1239/6. The el as handle has edifying things written upon it in the case of the wondrous el of the Grail story, where it is also of precious stone, and symbolism is all (2) (17) 985/23. More practically, where the blade joins the pommel at the hilt is the cross (4) 143/30, (11) 978/4. The pommel itself may be used as a weapon, an Arthur uses the pommel of the false Excalibur to give Accolon a mighty when the blade fails him (4) 143/29-144/18. This seems to be Malory's inven- ossibly a rare example of extra-literary knowledge or experience. A very full it, liberally illustrated, of medieval swords is in Oakeshot.²⁸

'ON. Malory refers to a 'grymme wepin' (2) 84/27, the word 'wepin' trans- the French 'gran perche de fust'. Malory may not have fully understood the 1 phrase, and so used the general word, 'weapon'. The Old French 'perche' number of meanings centring on that of a 'rod', while 'fust', also with a range ings, basically means a sturdy pillar usually of wood, long enough to stretch oor to ceiling. 'Grant perche de fust' therefore means a 'great wooden club'. be that Malory understood this, but a club whether of wood or iron is not for knightly weapon, though it would indeed be 'grim', so he uses the more l term.

'now I take upon me the adventures to seke of holy thynges':
Lancelot and the Crisis of Arthurian Knighthood

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This chapter explores the changes Malory registers in his characterization of Lancelot in his version of the Grail story, as compared to his French source, La Queste del Saint Graal. Lancelot's worldly 'trappings' become a source of anxiety and questioning, while his personal spiritual understanding of religion is shaped through tests.

The character of Lancelot in *Le Morte Darthur* is made up of different pieces of a puzzle, corresponding to the various sources. Thomas Malory worked from Malory's Lancelot becomes the greatest knight at King Arthur's court – a significant change in the English tradition of Arthurian romance, in which Gawain is prominent. It is also in the *Morte* that Lancelot's failure in the Grail quest is counterbalanced by his success in the episode of 'The Healing of Sir Urry', a development clearly designed to redeem Malory's favourite knight from the stain of adulterous sin and disloyalty to his king, and to restore his position as best knight. The purpose of this chapter is to investigate Malory's shift of focus from the doctrinal aspect of religion present in his French source for the Holy Grail quest to a pragmatic understanding of religious experience, exemplified through Lancelot's performances in the quest and in the Urry episode.

The 'Tale of the Sankgreal' (Tale VI) comes after the tales of Lancelot, Tristram and Gareth, and before the destruction of the Arthurian court. The 'Sankgreal' is at once a story in its own right and a cornerstone for the understanding of the Arthurian cycle as a whole. It marks an irreversible change in the history of the fellowship, since it is the first religious adventure involving most of the knights, also a test which most of them fail. Starting with the 'Sankgreal' the reader is made more aware of Lancelot's role in the rise and fall of the Arthurian court; his relationship with Guenevere is condemned openly and the breakdown of the fellowship is anticipated. To this extent the 'Sankgreal' gives the reader a perspective on the whole history of the Round Table fellowship.

'The Healing of Sir Urry' is a short episode at the end of the larger 'Tale of Lancelot and Guenevere' (Tale VII). By the time the 'Sankgreal' adventure is over, Lancelot has achieved something of the mystery of the Holy Grail, partly because he has repented his love for Guenevere. Yet he has failed, like many of the other knights, because of his sinful nature. When he falls again, by returning to his love

²⁷ *Res. Armour and Weapons*, p. 101.
²⁸ *War Oakeshot, Records of the Medieval Sword* (Rochester, NY, and Woodbridge, UK, 1991).

the relationship becomes public and causes trouble), 'The Healing' takes a moment in which Lancelot is re-established, once again, as the best knight.

The narrative pattern of the 'Sankgreal' is based on comparisons between the knights' adventures and their personal revelations, contrasted to Galahad's, the knight of the perfect Christian knight, and Lancelot's, the best sinful knight. The knights, those who succeed, are presented alongside those who fail; this notion of failure and success gives a vivid and balanced account of how the knights fare in their journey of self-discovery without being aware of its implications. Compared to the 'Sankgreal', 'The Healing' (with no direct source) appears as a modified religious test – also as Malory's attempt at placing emphasis on the knightly Arthur and all his knights perform the required action) as well as on the knight's success (in contrast with the sinful Lancelot of the quest). In my opinion this is a tripartite structure in both the 'Sankgreal' and 'The Healing': collective beginnings, individual knights' attempts, Lancelot vindicated. From this perspective the structure in the 'Healing' resembles a 'triptych': Arthur and the knights on the side panels, and the group picture of the knights in the middle.

Following analyzed religious writings contemporary with Malory's *Morte* and their impact on popular mentality, Felicity Riddy concludes that Malory's cutting down the knights' adventures against [the] too explicit . . . literary mode' of his French source.¹ The message of the French *La Queste del Saint Graal* comes from its didactic detail, be it religious or secular.² Beverly Kennedy argues that Malory's rejection of the Grail story reflects fifteenth-century writers' attempts to reconcile the Grail with their own experience of life.³

In 'The Healing of Sir Ury' episode the knights are presented together in their temptations and failures, in the 'Sankgreal' the adventures are individual and the knights are aware of personal responsibility for sin. In 'The Healing' Malory also shows the resistance of the community to yet another instance when the knights are to take on a risky adventure. From the point of view of individual fame, the knights' real has shown, by this stage, that most knights failed in their personal adventures covered themselves with shame for their sins and some of them even lost their lives in their Grail adventures. Malory's 'Healing', on the other hand, emphasizes the return to community, to social (understood as chivalric) life and its values. This interpretation would have appealed to Malory's fifteenth-century

1 Felicity Riddy, 'The Tale of the Sankgreal', in *Malory's Originality: A Chivalric Context*, ed. Robert M. Lunnansky (Baltimore, 1964), pp. 184–204 (p. 189n).
2 Beverly Kennedy, *Knighthood in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, UK, 1992), pp. 241–2.

3 Felicity Riddy, *Sir Thomas Malory* (Leiden, 1987), pp. 113–14.
4 Felicity Riddy, 'The Tale of the Sankgreal', in *Malory's Originality: A Chivalric Context*, ed. Robert M. Lunnansky (Baltimore, 1964), pp. 184–204 (p. 189n).

5 Felicity Riddy, *Sir Thomas Malory* (Leiden, 1987), pp. 113–14.
6 Felicity Riddy, 'The Tale of the Sankgreal', in *Malory's Originality: A Chivalric Context*, ed. Robert M. Lunnansky (Baltimore, 1964), pp. 184–204 (p. 189n).

readers, for whom the 'Healing' would have appeared as a successful kind of Grail quest.

Achievement in both tales is equated with reputation in typical Malorian fashion. Pride, alongside chivalric 'trappings', seen as markers of the Arthurian knight but also, in the context of the Quest, pointers to sin, is punished in this religious testing of the Arthurian court. Percival and Lancelot are the main characters who identify their sins and achieve the mystery of the Holy Grail partially, while the other knights miserably fail. The knights who have engaged on this Quest seem to be concerned with increasing their fame by winning against unknown opponents rather than striving to find the Holy Grail.

In the initial stages of the Grail Quest, Lancelot deplores his past sins, mainly pride and adultery. When he is rebuked by a divine voice for his sins, he immediately equates the path to salvation with losing his earthly worship: 'And so departed some weyngne and cursed the tyme that he was bore, for than he demed never to have worship more. For the wordis wente to hys herte, tylle that he knew wherefore he was called so' (895.30–3; my italics).⁵

He also refers to his 'old sin' in relation to gaining chivalric worship:

Than sir Lancelot wente to the crosse and founde hys helme, hys swerde, and hys horse away. And than he called hymself a very wrecch and moste unhappy of all knyghtes, and there he seyde, 'My synne and my wykednes hath brought me unto grete dishonour! For than I sought worldly adventures for worldly desyres I ever encheved them and had the bettir in every place, and never was I discomfite in no quarrell, were hit ryght were hit wronge. And now I take uppoun me the adventures to seke of holy thynges, now I se and undyrstande that myne olde synne byndyth me and shamyth me, that I had no power to sture nother speke whan the holy bloode appered before me.' (895.34–896.9; my italics)

In the equivalent passage in the French *Queste* (61.28–62.7), Lancelot's realization of worldly glory is played down, attention being shifted towards God's role in the conversion of the sinner. Mark Lambert singles out 'shame' and 'honour' in Malory, as opposed to the religious emphasis of the French source; according to Lambert, 'God's gifts to Lancelot now call for gratitude rather than investment, and indeed it is difficult to think of worship, now the most prominent of God's gifts, as a talent to be used'.⁶ However, at this point, Lancelot's reference to worldly fame is reminiscent of the content of the Round Table oath, which cautions knights against taking on battles 'in a wrongful quarrell for no love ne for no worldis goodis' (120.23–4). The reader is made aware of Lancelot's sin as the result of disrespect for one of the rules of the oath, and his resolution should be to undertake the adventure of the Holy Grail in the spirit of repentance. Neither his adultery nor his love for Guenevere are mentioned. In the context of the *Morte* this point of conflict between chivalric worship/reputation and religious behaviour signals a crisis, which Malory acknowledges by shifting attention from the failure of earthly Arthurian chivalry (represented by Lancelot) in the Quest, to the success of his favourite knight in the

5 *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory*, ed. E. Vinaver, rev. P. C. Field (Oxford, 1990). All references are to this edition, cited by page and line number.

6 Mark Lambert, *Style and Vision in Le Morte d'Arthur* (New Haven, CT, and London, 1975), pp. 184–5.

ing' – a sign of recognition of the importance of chivalric reputation and social above the demands of religious doctrine. *the Morre* Lancelot initiates his repentance, which marks a contrast with the *Queste*. Hermits are important in both narratives, functioning as guides along in to repentance. In both accounts Lancelot loses his worldly trappings, a of his fame and reputation (his horse and arms) and repents his forgetfulness of God's ways (*Works*, 896.10–16; *Queste*, 62.8–19); Malory's Lancelot is ad for his seeking of 'worldly adventures for worldly desires'. In addition, of's gifts, although praised by a hermit as signs of God's grace, hardly remind der of religious duty; in fact these gifts are a recognition of the chivalric es of the best knight of the fellowship:

seyde the ermye, *ye ought to thanke God more than ony knyght byvyng, for He hath ad you to have more worldly worship than ony knyght that ys now byvyng. And for e presumption to take uppon you in dedely syme for to be in Hys presence, where fleyssh and Hys blood was, which caused you ye myght nat se hyt with youre dely yen, for He woll nat appere where such symere bene but if hit be unto their grete o: other unto their shame. And there is no knyght now byvyng that ought to yelde God ere thanke os ye, for He hath yevyn you *beaute, bowne, semelynes, and grete ghte over all other knyghtes*. And therefore ye at the more beholdyn unto God than other man to love Hym and drede Hym, for youre strengthe and your *manhode woll avoyle you and God be agaynste you!*' (896.29–897.7; my italics)⁷*

mini's guidance in the *Queste* is rendered ancillary in Malory; God's 'chivalric' Lancelot are given precedence, to the detriment of religious penance.⁸ While *este* is moralizing and didactic, leaving little freedom of interpretation, 's paratactic style has the effect of ambiguity and suspense, explanations and conflicts being rarely allowed in the narrative. Malory displays precision of n different places than his source, which points to Lancelot's awareness of e effect of French churchmen's sermons is to make 'our judgement of t [to be] more distanced and less sympathetic';⁹ whereas Malory's Lancelot to the reader and excusable for his human behaviour and frailty.

French Lancelot is humiliated, and has long monologues; in the *Morre* t shows restraint, in typical Malorian fashion.¹⁰ At one point Lancelot of his sin of adultery, yet even then he associates it with the Round Table eyde the good man, 'hyde none olde synne frome me,'
; seyde sir Lancelot, 'that were me full lothe to discover, for thys fourtene yere I ever discoverde one thyng that I have used, and that may I now wyghte my shame y disadventure.'
han he tolde there the good man all hys lyff, and how he had loved a queene urably and oule of mesure longe.

⁷ *Queste* the hermit praises him less, and starts telling the parable of the five talents (63.7–23/87).
⁸ Benson, *Malory's Morre* Dartmouth (Cambridge, MA, and London, 1976), p. 217.
⁹ Iynes-Berry, 'Malory's Translation of Meaning: *The Tale of the Sankgreal*', *Studies in Philology* 77: 243–57 (247).
¹⁰ Benson speech in *Tale I King Arthur* places emphasis on deeds versus words: 'the seyth but lyrt but th much more' (131.28–9), words which may be taken to represent the Malorian knights' reply of life.

'And all my grete dedis of armys that I have done for the moste party was for the queens sake, and for hir sake woude I do batayle were hit ryght other wronge. And never dud I batayle all only [for] Goddis sake, but for to wygne worship and to cause me the bettir to be beloved, and litill or nougth I thanked never God of hit.' (897.10–22; my italics)

The hermit advises him to stop sinning and start a new life in God's service. A controversial difference between the *Queste* and the 'Sankgreal' is that in the former the hermit tells Lancelot never to keep the company of the queen, whereas in the latter he seems to take into account the rigours of chivalric life, recommending that Lancelot should 'no more com in that queens felshyp as much as [he] may forbere'. Dhirna Mahoney is right to identify the error of the French Lancelot in 'thinking the source of his valour was the Queen', while Malory's Lancelot is 'believing that the source of his valour is himself'; Mahoney concludes that 'both Lancelots have to learn that the true source is God' and that Lancelot's wars were wrong 'because of their motivation by personal pride rather than the desire to serve God'.¹¹ This interpretation is in agreement with the prescription of both the Round Table oath and the famous May passage in which Malory recommends that 'firste reserve the honoure to God'.¹²

Lancelot has to return to the source of all his honour, which is the primary rule of the chivalric order, obedience to God. Benson points out that Malory's hermit is less stern than his French original when he 'administers the oath'. Lancelot of the 'Sankgreal' (as opposed to the French one) is less guilty for his return to Guenevere, for he 'does avoid the queen's company as much as he can' but 'his problem is that he cannot forbear it, for love, as Malory explains in "Lancelot and Guenevere", is too powerful to suffer restraint'.¹³ One would need to consider, however, that Lancelot's love is less sternly condemned and the whole emphasis in the 'Sankgreal' is shifted from the sin of lust to the sin of excessive pride in his prowess. In this context, as mentioned at the beginning of this article, religion is once again shown to be a part of the chivalric oath, for Lancelot's promise contains his recognition of the moral side of his chivalric life which he has neglected (having undertaken 'wrongful battles' for 'worldly desires').

The hermit raises the issue of the validity of the promise by pointing out that Lancelot should make sure that his 'harte and mowth accorded', which will be rewarded by even more worship in *this world*: 'I shall ensure you ye shall have the more worship than ever ye had' (897.29–31).¹⁴ Lambert notes how Malory changes the focus from the *Queste*, which is 'the power to accomplish things', to the

¹¹ Dhirna B. Mahoney, 'The Truest and Holiest Tale: Malory's Transformation of *La Queste del Saint Graal*', in *Studies in Malory*, ed. James W. Spisak (Kalamazoo, 1985), pp. 109–28 (p. 120).

¹² The original passage has sparked a lot of critical debate, but the general opinion seems to be that Malory emphasizes chivalric prowess above all other aspects of the Arthurian story. The passage reads: 'that every man of worship floysh hys herte in thys worlde: firste unto God, and nexte unto the joy of them that he promysed hys feythe unto: for there was never worshipful man nor worshipful woman but they loved one bettir than another: and worship in armys may never be foyled. But firste reserve the honoure to God, and secondely thy queneil maner com of thy lady' (1155.24–30; my italics). The italicized part appears as Malory's view of chivalric fellowship and the importance of reputation.

¹³ Benson, *Malory's Morre*, p. 220.

¹⁴ The equivalent passage in the *Queste* contains a promise, but one of God's help, rather than specific worldly fame (71.5–9).

real', where 'the reward for accomplishment [is] worship'.¹⁵ Appropriately, it resolves to start a new life in God's service, yet one which places at its chivalric duty (albeit in a religious perspective): "'Sertes," seyde sir Ioh, "all that ye have seyde ys trew, and frome hensforwarde I caste me, by ye of God, *never to be so wycked as I have bene but as to sew knyghthode and wys of armys*"' (898.36-899.3; my italics).¹⁶

Lancelot's understanding of the religious demand is equivalent to a renewal of his ice to the Round Table oath. Proof for this interpretation is contained in the where he is denied an adventure, and is told by a divine voice that the reason evynous behaviour as a warrior who 'used wronge waris with varyneglory for isure of the worlde', and his forgetfulness of God's ways (928.35-929.2), eless in the 'Sankgreal' chivalry and religion do not clash, as they do in the rather religion is a component of chivalry; a knight who errs in religious reaks his chivalric oath, but still has worth as a knight. A knight should lways remember to give thanks to God for the gifts he has been given and ess in feats of arms: Lancelot is told precisely these words when he meets hermit. The latter explains to him his dream vision of kings and knights, company Lancelot was prophetically forbidden; also that he should thank his talents, 'for of a symer ethely thou [Lancelot] hast no peire as in ode nother never shall have' (930.14-16). Thus Lancelot's testing, which the renewed advice, reminds the reader of the purpose of chivalric adventure: the increase of reputation. When Lancelot thinks 'for to helpe the party in increyng of hys shevalry' (931.24-5), an action which in other is praised by King Arthur,¹⁷ he is taken prisoner and shamed, because he is personal gain and thinks of his reputation. He associates shame with sin: am shamed, and I am sure that I am more synfuller than ever I was' (18), but also needs the explanation given by a recluse in order to understand sin is 'bobbaunce and pryde of the worlde' (933.32). Indeed Lancelot does ay interest in cultivating patience and humility, which are, according to the 'the cornerstones of chivalry',¹⁸ but rather continues to believe that he can date the exigencies of religious testing to the chivalric demands for and reputation.

Lancelot's inexperience in religious ways also makes him feel 'weary' of the ship episode when, before he arrives at the Castle of Corbent, he spends some h his son Galahad. Malory is not so much interested in the saint-like model, even if he describes the adventures at length. Galahad is hardly a blood character; he has an even less earthly body in the *Morte* than in the 'Sankgreal', but to devote his life to prayer, in a monastery, where he s is the only one who is granted the Grail revelation and returns to the court, ry subordinates his position to that of Lancelot, who is given the privilege ling the adventures of the Grail. Thus Malory's preference for Lancelot

appears as a statement about religion within the chivalric order, with emphasis on religion as a component of chivalry rather than governing it.¹⁹

Malory shifts interest from Lancelot's adultery to his instability in keeping to the religious content of the chivalric order. Thus his fault is social rather than moral or spiritual; religion is part of the chivalric rule and a break with it entails a break of the chivalric oath. Within the Arthurian world Malory recreates, the rule of the chivalric order should come before personal interests. Lancelot's fundamental fault and sin is not his disloyalty to his lord through his committing adultery with Guenevere, but his wrong way of undertaking battles for the sake of love, and his never thanking God for his success. Sandra Ihle explains this change in Malory through the different perspective which rules *Morte Darthur*, which focuses on morality within chivalry.²⁰ Peter Field remarks that Malory's 'fundamental concern is to transmit his enthusiasm for knightliness' and 'life in the *Morte Darthur* is a moral matter, judged according to a chivalric code'.²¹ Malory focuses on the Round Table as the moral centre of the knights' lives, and the moral of the fellowship includes the Christian moral.²² Thus the success Lancelot gains in Malory's 'Sankgreal' is a social achievement, a rehabilitation of the concept of worldly chivalry, and a celebration of the utmost glory sinful knights may gain, as a vindication of the rules of the Round Table, which should ensure the knights' excellence in both worldly and religious terms.

Galahad, Perceval, and Bors, who beheld the Grail openly, that is, perfectly, do not speak about their experiences; the first two, because they never return to the court, the last because he does not communicate the meaning of the Grail or the experience in itself, rather he tells of the adventures 'such as befelld hym and hys three felowes'. Yet Bors's account includes Lancelot among the Grail knights. Martin Shichman suggests that the elect Grail knights (excluding Lancelot) 'cannot communicate their experience of the Grail' and they only 'come away from it filled with insight and appreciation', whereas Lancelot is 'reduced to silence after his encounter with the Grail because its meaning(s) is incomprehensible to him'.²³ This silence is however only temporary, since Lancelot remains the privileged narrator of the events of the Grail Quest.

In the *Queste* Lancelot wakes up from a twenty-four day trance, following his partial vision of the Grail, and refers to the spiritual revelation, which he perceives as partial (258.6-13/264). On the other hand, Malory's Lancelot is happy with the revelations he has been given: "'Now I thanke God," seyde sir Launcelot, "for Hys

19 The passage reads: "So when sir Bors had tolde hym [the king] of the hyghte adventures of the Sankgreal, such as had befelle hym and hys three felowes, which were sir Launcelot, Percevale and sir Galahad and byrself, than sir Launcelot tolde the adventures of the Sankgreal that he had seen. And all thys was made in grete booke and put up in almshouses at Salyisbury" (1036.16-22; my italics).

20 Sandra Ness Ihle, *Malory's Grail Quest: Invention and Adaptation in Medieval Prose Romance* (Madison, 1983), p. 145.

21 P.J.C. Field, *Romance and Chronicle* (Bloomington, 1971), p. 157.

22 See also Hynes-Berry, "Malory's Translation", 246.

23 Martin B. Shichman, "Policing the Ineffable: The *Queste del Saint Graal* and Malory's "Table of the Sankgreal"', in *Culture and the King: The Social Implications of the Arthurian Legend*, ed. Martin B.

T. *Style and Vision*, p. 187.

15 *Queste*, the words are more specifically religious (see 70.29-71.3), but's praise of Gareth in a similar situation in Table VIII (1114.16-28). Berry, "Malory's Translation", 249.

tery of that I have sene, for *his suffisith me*. For, as I suppose, no man in thys have lyved bettir than I have done to encheveve that I have done" (1018.3-6; *ics*). Malory emphasizes Lancelot's new understanding of the way he should live, and implies that Lancelot thinks that a good life and his repentance are son for his getting as far as he has. In the 'Sankgreal', as in the *Queste*, or does not behold the Grail in its essence; his impatience and inexperience in as life make him miss the moment of full revelation. However, the revelations experienced are, in the 'Sankgreal', a reward for his undetracting penance in y. The reward is the beginning of the favourable treatment that Lancelot, the knight, receives in Malory's *Morte*, and prepares the way for his full achievement: 'The Healing'.

'Sankgreal' and the *Queste* differ in emphasis on Lancelot's relative success; /er in the former he is called to record the adventures. When he returns to the n spite of the deaths of so many of the knights who had engaged on the Grail ('but many of the knyghtes of the Rounde Table were slayne and destroyed, ran halff'), 'all the courte were passyng glad of sir Lancelot, and the kyngre ym many tydyngis of hys some sir Galahad' (1020.20-1 and 23-5). At this Malory looks favourably at Lancelot's achievement and avoids the negative of the Grail Quest. Lancelot is invested with the authority of the story, as he court 'of hys adventures that befelle hym syne he departed. And also he ym [the king] of the adventures of sir Galahad, sir Percivale, and sir Bors' (26-8). He also knows more than anyone about the end of the adventure of the real: "'Now God wolde," seyde sir Lancelot, "that they were all three here:" shall never be," seyde sir Lancelot, "for two of hem shall ye never se. But them shall com home agayne" (1020.31-4).

Lancelot's return to Camelot marks the end of the story, were it not for the elect adventures still waiting to be told. It is a preliminary reinforcement of his n in the fellowship before the real end of the Grail Quest. Malory stresses the at the only Grail knight who comes back to the court after the Grail Quest, s a good friend of Lancelot, who resumes a subordinate bond of friendship m. Lancelot may share in the glory of this knight as well, in the same way shares in his son's achievement in the Quest. Lancelot is less significant than Galahad in the 'Sankgreal', but he is the only one rd successful in 'The Healing'. He is the key character who gives one of the ts of continuity to Malory's *Morte*; at the same time his status as the 'best knight' is not changed after the 'Sankgreal', only his Christian attitude has ut to the test. He can resume his position after the Grail Quest and Bors's n as friend ensures that religion comes after knightly deeds.

'Sankgreal' ends on a joyful note: despite the failure of so many knights in ill Quest, King Arthur's court is privileged through the return of Lancelot and n partnership between him and the successful Bors. Lancelot's partial success vileged position are supported through the emphasis on the chivalric under- ing of religion – a Malorian interpretation which is given full scope in the e of 'The Healing'.

The story of 'The Healing of Sir Urry' has been generally considered in critical opinion as original with Malory.²⁴ It is the list of knights that makes the average reader as well as critic think that the episode draws on a source; familiar names and stories can be recognized among unknown incidents that are described with apparent precision. Malory's famous 'French book' is mentioned several times, yet the motifs present in the story are common in other narratives and have been identified.²⁵ Malory's invention of a religious episode appears to conform to his desire to show religion as a collective, social experience of the Round Table knights. It also functions, as Terence McCarthy points out, as 'a total vindication of Lancelot', whose 'inner virtue had become somewhat tainted by now – and Lancelot seems none too sure – but Malory obviously does not agree'.²⁶ In fact Lancelot's guilt has been formally stated in the 'Sankgreal' (in the hermit's speeches), but the details of his repentance only mention the pricking shirt he puts on and the promise he would never fight but for good knightly reasons. There is still room for doubt in the reader's mind whether he is the best knight of the fellowship, in God's eyes as well as in people's. One has the impression that Lancelot has failed in the 'Sankgreal'; it is perplexing to find him here as a likely healer. On the other hand Malory deliberately creates the image of a partially successful Lancelot in the 'Sankgreal'; showing the worldly achievement of the best knight. The doubt about Lancelot's status arises out of this dilemma: after a religious story like the 'Sankgreal', is the reader expected to think in religious terms and condemn Lancelot, or does one take Malory's side and conclude that it is perfectly possible for Lancelot to be considered the best knight of the world? Jill Mann observes how in the 'Sankgreal' Lancelot's sinfulness is 'not eliminated from the scene' and notes that the 'greater simplicity of the conversation in Malory's version leaves this sinfulness in starker contrast to the emphasis on Lancelot's peerless nobility'.²⁷ Benson reveals Malory's changes to his source in the 'Sankgreal', which 'considerably soften the effect of Lancelot's failure'.²⁸ By omission of any clear statement on Lancelot's true *inner* repentance Malory casts a veil of mystery over the development of the story and prolongs the suspense until the episode of 'The Healing'.

The test may be seen, also, as a 'possible conflict between the movement toward distinction and the movement toward fellowship in the Round Table society', which comes out as a presentation of 'distinction/fellowship by way of presentation of

²⁴ For a review of criticism see Stephen C. B. Atkinson, 'Malory's "Healing of Sir Urry"', Lancelot, the Earthly Fellowship and the World of the Grail', *Studies in Philology* 79 (1981): 341-52 (341).

²⁵ Robert Kelly discusses the change of focus from compassion to humility in Lancelot when he compares 'The Healing with Lancelot's previous successful healing in "The Noble Tale of Sir Lancelot". See Robert L. Kelly, 'Wounds, Healing, and Knighthood in Malory's Tale of Lancelot and Guinevere', in *Studies in Malory*, ed. James W. Spisak (Kalamazoo, 1985), pp. 173-97. Field mentions the reference to this particular tale and draws attention to the absence of the name Urry from any other Arthurian story (Field, *Commentary, Works*, I, 263, reference to line 2481). Field also shows the main difference between the episodes, the one in Malory and its possible source in the Prose *Lancelot*, which is the mother of the wounded knight, who appears in Malory and nowhere else (Field, p. 263, reference to line 2505).

²⁶ Terence McCarthy, *An Introduction to Malory* (Cambridge, UK, 1992), p. 43.

²⁷ Jill Mann, *The Narrative of Distance: The Distance of Narrative in Malory's Morte D'Arthur* (London, 2505).

²⁸ *Commentary, Works*, I, 263, reference to line 2481.

umility'.²⁹ Lambert contrasts the pride apparent in the casting of the spell *ceress* 'discovered hit in her pryde how she had wrought by enchantment with the knights' humility which reveals 'the antithesis of the enchanter's pride' to be not individual humility alone, but 'individual humility and the group'.³⁰ Indeed humility is the element that brings the knights together as their 'group pride'. In taking this attitude (and their lead from they accept the levelling it implies. What has been done through individual evil spell) can be undone through collective as well as individual humility. There is tension here; in Lambert's words, a conflict between 'the communal healing with humility) and the 'evaluative motif' (testing the knights).³¹ The both keeps the knights together and pulls them apart; it unites them in the failure), but is meant to reveal who is unique. Kennedy has reduced Arthur's at the beginning of the 'Sankgreal' to a rationalistic and pragmatic response makes it impossible for him [Arthur] to see that God's grace might be essential worldly success'.³² This statement is debatable as at this stage Malory's seems to be more concerned with the fate of the fellowship than with personal fame. However, this idea, applied to Arthur's general vision of the 'Sankgreal' for the Round Table fellowship, gives a view of interest, which is worldly glory for his knights rather than spiritual salvation's attitude in 'The Healing' reveals his awareness of the necessity to reinvigorate as part of the chivalric code. Thus 'The Healing' marks a progress in religious understanding of the chivalric code, not merely another test for Lancelot.

The 'Sankgreal' Lancelot shows pride even in his repentance, for, after the explains to him the meaning of his incapacity to behold the Grail openly, he will try to be a better man, but at the same time he never forgets his worship (898.36–899.3). It appears that Lancelot's way of becoming a better man come a better knight. But in 'The Healing' perhaps he tries a different way – being less of a knight, by refusing to try to surpass the others and to stand McCarthy states, 'it is by affirming his allegiance, by following the example of others, that he is able to succeed'.³³ 'The Healing' is the story of a better knight, one who finds favour with God, can perform the miracle and preserve his the key to Lancelot's success at this stage is his humility; it is an attitude encountered in this character up to this moment, especially not in the real', where one would have expected a true penitent in the person of the wounded knight. In the episode with the wounded knight in the 'Sankgreal', the

ret, *Style and Vision*, p. 59.

ret, *Style and Vision*, p. 60.

ret, *Style and Vision*, p. 61. Lambert draws the conclusion that 'this humility is a very Malorian sense of belonging to the fellowship of the Round Table and ultimately to the order of chivalry itself. One acts for and takes pride in the order. I do agree with this statement to a certain extent, but I think that humility is the key to keeping the knights together. However there is a newly found attitude.

2: is no evidence in this episode or elsewhere that it defines Malory's view of knightlyhood. Here it is not only Malory's religious alternative for the salvation of the Round Table. Malory does not seem to be convinced that such an attitude can work more than once; he introduces a comment regarding Malory's malicious intention to show that the harmony at Camelot is doomed.

ret, *Knightlyhood*, n. 330.

reader sees a miserable Lancelot who thinks of his lost worship; in 'The Healing' he experiences an illumination, for he is shown mercy from God when he least expects it. He is given a token of grace and should understand that he must forsake sin forever. He feels deeply moved, is overcome with emotion, but Malory pays no attention to a possible promise from Lancelot not to sin again. W.R.J. Barron looks at the whole episode and questions Lancelot's tears ('and ever sir Lancelote wepte, as he had bene a chylde that had bene beayn'), whether they are 'in relief that he is still what he was or regret for what he might have been'.³⁴ The briefness of the episode and the rehabilitation of chivalric worship leave no room for a straightforward interpretation here; yet the main emphasis of the story is, once again, Lancelot's worldly fame and the earthly glory of the Round Table fellowship.

The two stories reflect, in the context of Malory's *Morte*, a view of religion subordinated to chivalry. Thus Malory's reworking of the Grail Quest's religious testing in his own 'Healing' episode reflects a more pragmatic understanding of religious demands in chivalric life, incorporated in the Round Table oath, an interpretation that cherishes Lancelot as the best earthly knight.

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