



two books were investigations of local mysteries and that the reasons why considerable space was given over to explaining various unrelated topics was to give the local readership a background in this topic. Whether these topics eventually became integrally related to the book's conclusions is irrelevant...

But the slander continued: "The ramblings of Mr Collins should really remain unmentioned other than to disassociate them from the work of writers who have dealt intelligently and honestly with the subjects so successfully rubbished by Mr Collins" says Hugh de Bris. Now this really is below the belt. He suggested, by implication, that my books are unintelligent, dishonest, and rubbish. Let him point out these vices in the books. They were both compiled in good faith following months if not years of intensive and careful research... I am quite open to criticism and then, hopefully, I won't make the same mistakes again. Personal abuse won't make me a better writer, only a very annoyed man.

There was a very nasty streak running through both these reviews... I feel their author is part of this growing community who promote a belief that all paranormal phenomena is either explainable or a hoax; therefore it could not have happened. ... It is about time that so-called serious researchers of landscape mysteries began to realise the growing public interest in the paranormal. Perhaps then they won't get left behind like the academic dinosaurs of other disciplines like archaeology, the Folklore Society and the Society of Psychical Research.

* From Caroline Wise, London:
It was a shame to see space wasted by the reviews (Vol XVII No 4) for The Running Well Mystery and The Knights of Danbury. If the reviewer has valid points to make about inaccuracies that's fine. But in the case of Running Well we got a diatribe of nonsense that told us nothing about the story or any inaccuracies...

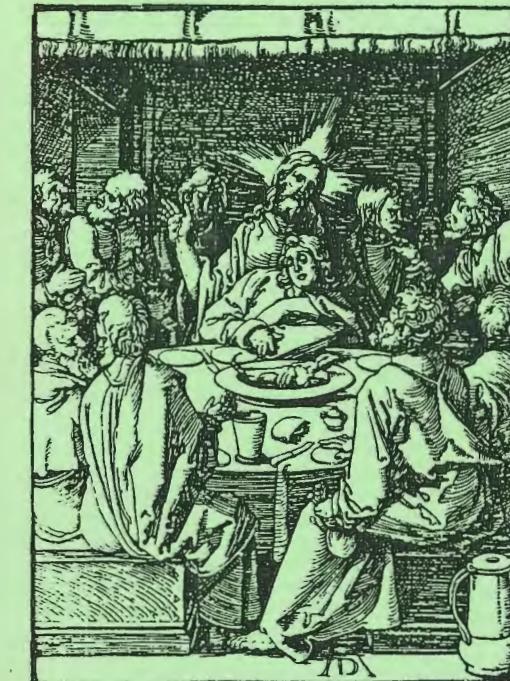
I do not belong to the "sit-tight-and-believe school", nor the "dismissing-all-psychic-phenomena-makes-me-objective" clan. However, the psychic lady involved in the Running Well story has shown herself to be startlingly accurate on many occasions, to me and others...

By spending many hours talking to those involved on these modern-day quests, I have come to the conclusion that while there are areas I strongly criticise, there is a real value in these activities, not least the re-discovery and restoration of lost sacred sites. The Running Well appeared as the only holy well in Essex in the Bords' Sacred Waters. Would Essex be missing from the book if "Earthquest" had stayed indoors discussing the Arthurian Romances? (Or playing Dungeons and Dragons--see Vol XVI No 3!)

...The positive side is that people are getting involved in local Earth Mysteries and thinking about the landscape. This will help preserve ancient sites and promote interest in related areas.

Finally, signing a review with a false name is as pathetic as sending an anonymous letter. It invalidates the review that belongs in the rubbish bin with the other DeBris. I agree with Robert Coon, some people should stick to selling second-hand books!

The nature of the grail ?



Pendragon

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Pendragon investigates Arthurian history and archaeology, and the mystery and mythology of the Matter of Britain. Opinions stated are those of the writer concerned.

"THIS IS THE BOOK of your descent--Here begins the Book of the Holy Grail--Here begin the terrors--Here begin the wonders." According to the Grand Saint Graal in the Vulgate Cycle these were the headings in a book given by Christ himself to an eighth-century British hermit, and they might almost stand for the leitmotifs contained in this issue of Pendragon. I hope patient readers will find that the wait was worthwhile! This is the last magazine under my editorship, an undertaking I have really enjoyed for the last decade but which I willingly hand on to anyone who is fool enough to accept such a commitment! I am most grateful to all contributors, correspondents, confidants and exchange journals for support over the years. A great many have come up with stimulating ideas, finance, offers of help etc and their names have appeared in past magazines. If they are not renamed here it is because I don't wish to offend anybody inadvertently omitted from such a list. Without you, however, I could not have produced a single issue. Two names, though, must be mentioned--Jess Foster and Kate Pollard--to whom my indebtedness is greatest. Thanks, one and all.

CHRIS LOVEGROVE.

Exchange publications etc (enclose sae)

TEMPLE LOCAL HISTORY GROUP (central Bristol history): Julian Lea-Jones, 33 Springfield Grove, Henleaze, Bristol BS6 7XE * RUNESTAFF PUBLICATIONS: Nigel Pennick, 25 Partridge Drive, Bar Hill, Cambridge CB3 8EN * GREEN BRANCH (music, drama, Matter of Britain): Tim Porter, Hans Hill Farm, Sezincote, Moreton in Marsh, Glos GL56 9TB * CAERDROIA (maze research): Jeff and Debbie Saward, 53 Thundersley Grove, Thundersley, Benfleet, Essex SS7 3EB * DRAGON (Dark Age newsletter): Charles Evans-Gunther, 9 Earls Lea, Flint, Clwyd CH6 5BT * FOLKLORE FRONTIERS (urban belief tales): Paul Screeton, 5 Egton Drive, Seaton Carew Hartlepool, Clevedon TS25 2AT * THE LEY HUNTER (alignments, earth mysteries): Paul Devereux, PO Box 13, Welshpool, Powys, Wales * NEWSLETTER (the paranormal etc): Sid Birchby, 40 Parrs Wood Ave, Didsbury, Manchester M20 0ND * EARTH GIANT (Wessex mysteries, antiquities): Jeremy Harte, 35a West Street, Abbotsbury, Weymouth, Dorset DT3 4JT * SOURCE (holy wells): Mark Valentine, 109 Oak Tree Road, Bitterne Park, Southampton, Hants * RILKO (lost knowledge): Elizabeth Leader, 25a Danvers Street, Chelsea, London SW3 * NORTHERN EARTH MYSTERIES Rob Wilson and David Clarke, 103 Derbyshire Lane, Norton Lees, Sheffield S8 9EN

Arthur, Camelot and the Quest for the Holy Grail Special Interest Weekend, Friday 15th May to Sunday 17th May (also 5-7 June) at Dragonara Hotel, Bristol; £85 per person. Lecturer: Dr Danny Williams, Leicester University. Wells, Glastonbury, Cadbury visits. (Info: David Pykitt.)

EDITORIAL

JOURNAL OF THE PENDRAGON SOCIETY ISSN 0143-8379 Vol XVIII No 3 The Grail Easter 1987 (Summer 1985) JPS 71 © Pendragon Society

Subscription Details: the Secretary, 42 Burghley Road, St Andrews, Bristol BS6 5BN

3 REVIEWS

Charles Thomas Exploration of a Drowned Landscape B T Batsford Ltd 1985 £19.95

Professor Thomas has deserved well of all those interested in the Isles of Scilly by writing the first comprehensive account of their history. And Pendragons will warm to his ready but critical acceptance of scientific disciplines, literature, and scraps of information, in his search for the truth. Having recently visited the Scillies I happily read the book from beginning to end, but in this review I can especially recommend Chapter 10, titled "Tennyson, Arthur and Lyonesse". There is a resounding climax on its penultimate page, where "a cluster of tombs suitable for mighty men" on the small island which bears his name, is said possibly to be the resting-place of Arthur and his companions. Pendragons! What are we waiting for? The good ship Scillonian sails daily from Penzance.

Seriously though, the author's theory deserves attention. He writes that the three rocky islets now known as Little, Middle and Great Arthur "contain a wealth of remains", including no less than ten cairns, of which five are chambered; three probably so. He does not say how many have been excavated, but elsewhere in the book he reports a cist in a cairn on Middle Arthur, with a boat-shaped chamber containing a pot from the second millennium BC. In the drawing it looks like a Food Vessel. This is not encouraging, but clearly there is room for further investigation.

The Eastern Islands of the Scillies are not now inhabited, though they were so in former times as is evidenced by stone walls, hut circles and field systems. Professor Thomas argues that in Roman times most of the Scillies constituted one land mass, with an important harbour facing the British mainland just north of Nornour, now an island about a mile away from the three rocky hillocks of "Arthur". A site has been excavated on Nornour yielding several hundred brooches of fibula type, a series of Late Roman copper coins, small female figurines, and other objects all suggesting a votive hoard at the shrine of a Roman British goddess. Here we do have Arthurian possibilities, with the goddess taking the wounded King over the western sea to her magic realm. And Professor Thomas does not neglect the possible equation of the name "Scillies" with the deity "Sulis" worshipped at Bath.

My only disappointment with the book is that the name Arthur as that of the triune islands is not traced back beyond the 16th century. The author reasons that it is likely to be the Celtic personal name; but with Nornour said by him to be derived from "Ar-noer", Old Cornish for "facing the land", surely "Arthur" might also be Old Cornish for something. Readers knowledgeable in Old Cornish might be able to remark on this.

Pendragons will find in Exploration of a Drowned Landscape much food for thought.

STEVEN BANKS

Jeremy Harte Cuckoo Pounds and Singing Barrows Dorset Natural History & Archaeological Society 1986 102 pages Illustrated Soft cover

Subtitled The Folklore of Ancient Sites in Dorset, this is a compact and lively account of the county's barrows, hillforts and earthworks and the stories which have grown up around them. "Folklore," writes Jeremy Harte, "is a kind of knowledge suited to casual curiosity, passed on by word of mouth or through ephemeral publications, and subject always to the gently stereotyping influ-

ence of the popular imagination." Just over half the book is devoted to an inventory of the sites, more than enough to satisfy the general reader and a good basis for further research by local historians and folklorists. Some of the stories are drawn from documentary sources but many are live accounts collected during the past decade. Among the sightings of ghostly lights, I was intrigued to read of the experience of a motor cyclist who witnessed flames and an orange glow over a round barrow at Bincombe. The event may indeed have inspired thoughts of buried treasure and the evil dead, but I have good reason to believe that what she had really seen was a meeting of a group of people from near Weymouth engaged in what is now politely termed natural magic.

At the end of the book is a list of source material and if there are subsequent editions an index would be very welcome. Sites mentioned in the text are specified by an Ordnance Survey grid reference, and in such a potentially useful work one or two maps would not have been out of place.

Beyond listing information the writer also considers the value of folklore and takes a critical look at the notion that the traditions of the rural working classes preserve real memories from prehistory. He also dissects the cherished belief of the christianising of pagan religious sites. The place of current eccentric and unorthodox approaches to an understanding of the past is however given credibility. In all, the book is a pleasing addition to contemporary studies of Dorset and certainly deserves attention from further afield. (Order from DNHAS, Dorset County Museum, High West Street, Dorchester, Dorset DT1 1XA, price £3.95 plus 45p p&p.)

G STUART DEARN

Walter Birks and R A Gilbert The Treasure of Montségur Crucible--The Aquarian Press 1987 £6.99

In the 'sixties a novelty record by the Singing Nun was immensely successful: "Dominique, notre père, combattit les Albigeois" ran one line, and Pendragon has from time to time returned to these Albigensian heretics. This is not from love of a saint who fostered the Holy Inquisition but because the heretics (or Cathars, to use positive discrimination) have been claimed as Guardians of the Holy Grail.

Gilbert is well-known in these pages for his attacks on certain occult "gibberish" writings, and much correspondence has resulted from a recent dia-tribe. In rather less baroque language he charts here the rise of what this work calls "neo-Catharism", and the spectacular edifices raised on the sands of speculation and supposition are placed in their historical context. From a different viewpoint Walter Birks examines the background of the Early Church's formation, development and sacred literature, and then makes a case for Catharism being a survival of an "alternative" Christianity which was closer to popular Judaism than the Hellenic paganism and philosophy that was ultimately to mould the teachings of Jesus into its familiar state. In the final part of the book Birks points to a possible Lebanese survival of this alternative Christian tradition, and suggests that the existence of a Grail-type symbolism in this religion stands for "the doctrine which Christ taught to John the Beloved alone" (154).

The Cathars' Book of John "purports to be a private revelation given by Jesus Christ to the 'beloved disciple' in answer to the questions he asked as he lay on the Lord's breast at the last supper" (80). Perhaps these possible links between the Lebanon and the Languedoc hint that the Cathars really did smuggle the grail out of their last stronghold, and that the true Treasure of Montségur was not a physical relic but the symbol of a simple truth.

CHRIS LOVEGROVE

Trailing the Grail

Paul Smith

Legend has it that when Merlin fell in love with Vivien he gave her so much of his power it enabled her to trap him inside a transparent prison which he could not escape from, while she could move in and out of it freely at will. This is very reminiscent of the rules of the game of Chess, where the King can only move one square at a time whilst the Queen has free access across the whole board. Furthermore, the object of the game is to capture the King using the skill of one's own wits--and wisdom is always associated with the Feminine Principle.

The outline motif of a question being held ultimately responsible for the regaining of a lost and rightful Royal Heritage can be traced ultimately back to the Greek legend of Oedipus and the Sphinx,¹ but the real source emanates from the subconscious, and the perception of reality during Medieval times was often translated into the form of Romance.

According to Helinand, Abbot of Froidmont in Beauvais, writing about 1215, the word "grail" meant a "wide and slightly deep dish in which costly viands are customarily placed for rich people." I have not been able to discover what thoughts Helinand had about the Grail Romances themselves, but I am certain that the Grail of the Romances was not--unlike Colin Bloy's ideas²--a "physical object". There is no doubt in my mind that the Grail represented an abstract concept, equivalent to the well-known Ouroboros archetype held dearly by the Alchemists. Put simply, the Grail Romances revolve not around physical history but around psychological principles wrapped up in fable. That the Grail Romances were written during the period of the Crusades makes them even more significant--and at least one serious scholar has attempted to establish a direct link between the two.³

Left unfinished and supposedly originating from an earlier unknown source provided by Philip d'Alsace, Count of Flanders (1143-1191), Conte del Graal or Roman de Perceval by Chrétien de Troyes is the earliest known Grail Romance. While making a visit to his mother whom he had left to become a knight (but not knowing she was dead), Perceval suddenly bumped into the Fisher King and spent the night in the Grail Castle. Whilst there he witnessed a peculiar procession led by a boy holding a bleeding lance, followed by two boys holding golden candlesticks. The text (chapter VI) continues:

"A girl who came in with the boys, fair and comely and beautifully adorned, was holding a Grail between her hands. When she entered holding the Grail, so brilliant a light appeared that the candles lost their brightness like the stars or the moon when the sun rises. After her came another girl, holding a silver trencher. The Grail, which went ahead, was made of fine, pure gold; and in it were set precious stones of many kinds, the richest and most precious in the earth or the sea: those in the Grail surpassed all other jewels, without a doubt."⁴

Perceval later found out that his failure to ask about the bleeding lance and Grail emanated from the desertion of his mother, who had died from grief. Had he asked the vital questions the Fisher King (his cousin) would have been healed from his wounds, and the Monarchy--held in an everlasting limbo--would presumably have been reinstated.

There was no specific Grail Quest. The Hero only came across the Grail accidentally, circumstantially and incidentally, whilst on a trip to his mother. Various writers have claimed that the original Grail Romance was based upon pagan mythology devoid of any Christian influence, and that it was not until Robert de Borron's *Joseph d'Arimathie* that the Grail was transformed into a Christian symbol (ie, nowhere does Chrétien describe the Grail as "the Holy Grail"). But the Grail in Chrétien's Romance contains a Christian Host (communion bread), and a great deal depends upon Perceval's meeting with a Christian Hermit during Easter--who turns out to be uncle to both the Fisher King and Perceval (chapter XIII).

According to Patricia Johnson's sources,⁵ Hugh de Champagne was the original benefactor of the Order of the Temple, and his capital was Troyes, Chrétien's home (and Chrétien had connections with the House of Champagne). If this is true, the figure of Perceval could have been equated with the ideals of the Knights Templar: the silence in the Grail Castle being equivalent to the Templars' ideal of chastity. Being simultaneously monastic and chivalrous, and dedicated not to the King but to the Pope, the Templars would have respected Perceval's silence, and far from regarding it as a failure, it would have been hailed as a triumph.

The intrinsic connection between Perceval's silence and his mother's death is the key to the meaning of the Grail; that is where the answer is to be found.

A case of not giving too much power away to Vivien...

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REVIEW

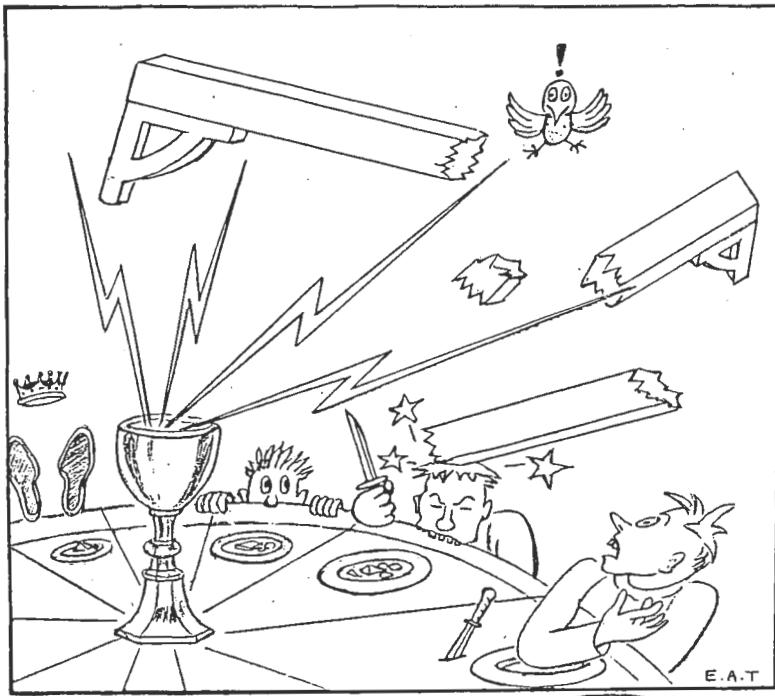
Ingrid M L Nyborg-Fjellander *The Grail Legend: a Universal and Unifying Myth* (Assembly of the World's Religions 1985)

The author, a Pendragon member, has kindly sent us this slim booklet, the text of a paper given at a conference held in New Jersey in 1985. She has spent many years studying and meditating on the significance of the Grail legend and here distills the essence of her beliefs. The Grail Quest is the search of Everyman and Everywoman for the "answer to many of the deepest questions of our time". The story of the quest uses symbols common to many religions and philosophies, both personal and communal, but individuals can also find material results at the end of their quests such as Wellesley Tudor Pole at Glastonbury and Lars Ringbom at Shiz in Iran (both of whom the author mentions). This is a thoughtful essay based on many personal insights and mystic experiences.

CHRIS LOVEGROVE

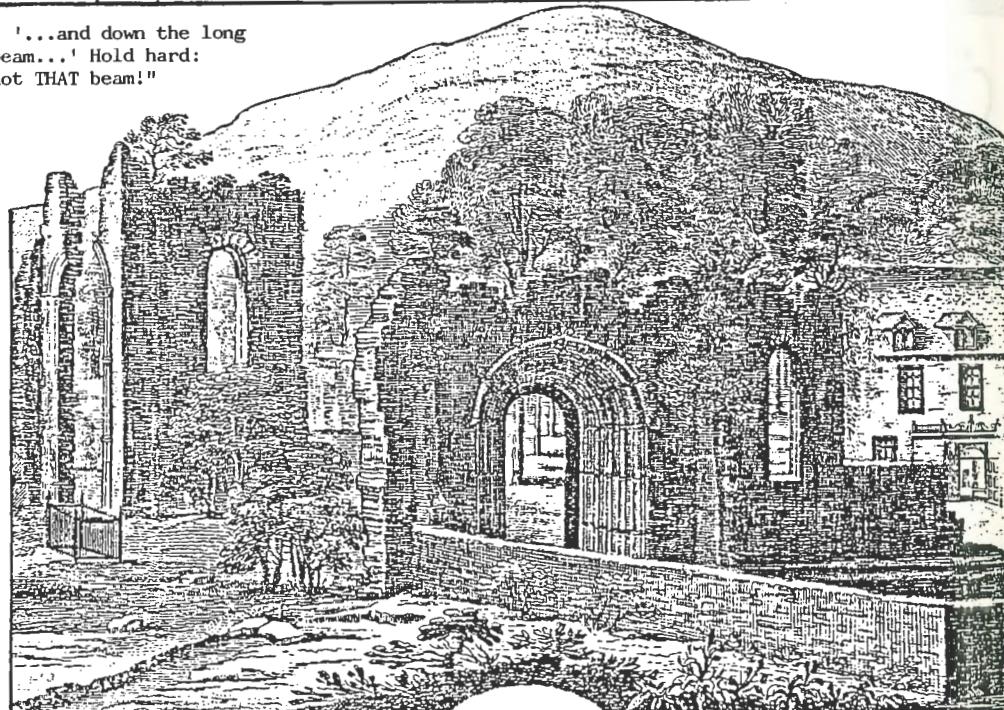


Joseph of Arimathea, the first custodian of the Grail, bearing the Christ-child, the sacred host, from a manuscript in the Biblioteca Nazionale, Florence. Gregory the Great while saying Mass was said in a 9th century legend to have had a vision of Christ rising from the tomb. Both stories may have arisen from literal interpretations of the doctrine of the Real Presence.



"...and down the long beam...! Hold hard: not THAT beam!"

Below Ystrad Eflur
(Strata Florida)
Abbey, Dyfed



FOREWORD

Only one reader of Pendragon Vol XVII No 1--a lady--was astute enough to take seriously my promise at the end of "Einstein's Avalon" to deal with the Grail Effect in the Study of Plate Tectonics. Thank you madam. Get out the sackcloth and ashes, you Philistines! If the Grail came to Camelot it COULD have caused earthquakes. Now read on ...

GRAIL QUEST EDDIE TOOKE



"And down the long beam stole the Holy Grail
All over covered with a luminous cloud,
And none might see who bare it, and it passed..."

Tennyson: The Idylls of the King

Few Britons can resist the allure of our land's spellbinding past, where the thread of history blends into the tapestry of legend. Some legends especially catch the eye; bright motifs against the background weave. Painters and poets have succumbed to their other-world charm; priests have disguised the Pagan warp and weft with an embroidery of Christian symbolism.

The ages pass but the legends remain--haunting presences in the mansions of the mind. By far the most evocative theme is the Quest of the Holy Grail.

Sebastian Evans, in his translation of the anonymous 13th century Grail saga, Perlesvaus, tells of "a secret written in cipher ... things seen as types and symbols of things unseen." Such phrases tease the imagination. We are borne back on a flood-tide of enchantment into an age of myth and mystery, where "the echo of ghostly trumpets mingled with the thin clash of legendary steel" (Lewis Spence); where dragons barred the forest paths and right defeated might.

What was the Grail? King Arthur himself saw it "in five several manners that none ought to tell." Let us try to bring its shimmering outline into sharper focus.

Arthur witnessed all the changes in the Grail, "the last whereof was the change into a chalice." Malory, whose epic Le Morte d'Arthur was one of the first books to be printed in England by Caxton, talks of the Grail providing "such meats and drinks as he" (each knight) "best loved in this world." Additionally, all those present saw each other as "fairer than ever they saw afore."

Grail may be derived from cratella--a small bowl, stressing its suitability for drinks. For meats it might come from graal or gradale--a flat dish. Yet another source-word is gre, meaning pleasure or accord. Such a Grail might well improve everyone's appearance in the eyes of his fellows--a psychological effect probably beyond the most versatile cup or platter. Three names: three diverse uses.

From other passages and other authors we learn that the Grail is an agent for healing the sick. It produces visions like a clairvoyant's crystal ball. It is the vessel of Redemption: the Crucifixion is enacted within it.

It also has the ability to blast into insensibility any unworthy--albeit sincere--person who gets too near it--which is what happened to Lancelot. One sees a parallel to the fate of Uzzah when

he touched the Ark of the Covenant (2 Sam 6:7).

To some medieval romanticists the Grail was the Cup of the Last Supper; others believe it received the blood and sweat of Jesus on the Cross and was subsequently brought to Britain by Joseph of Arimathea who hid it at Glastonbury.

Mystics see the Grail as a jewel struck from Lucifer's crown by St Michael when the "fallen angel" plunged to earth. This jewel, a shining ruby, fell into "the dark seas of the empty, formless earth ... there to be fashioned by the sea-folk into a wondrous cup"--the Chalice of Christ.

The vessel's diversity doesn't end even there. In King Arthur's Avalon Geoffrey Ashe tells us that certain poets identified the Grail with the Virgin Mary. It was also conceived as "the source of a stream of visionary enlightenment..." Yet another authority, Hans Liebstoeckl, asserts: "Jesus Himself is the Grail."

So, despite our efforts to identify it, the Holy Grail remains inscrutable. Into whatever untrdden highways and byways we are led by its unearthly light there seems--to quote Geoffrey Ashe again--"a profounder magic that still escapes us."

In Arthur's days knights errant sought the holy vessel to discover its meaning and purpose; to ask the magic question which would unleash its potent power: "Whom does the Grail serve?" Failure to ask this question condemned mankind to a further spell in the spiritual and material Waste Land--as Gawain and Percival found to their discomfiture.

The Grail, however, was not originally a Christian vessel at all. The characteristics ascribed to it are similar to those of early Pagan cauldrons.

The Dagda--the Celtic "good god"--owned a cauldron which supplied "all manner of meats and drinks". That of the nature-goddess Ceridwen brewed "three blessed drops", the drinking of which conferred grace and inspiration; while the deity Bran possessed yet another Cauldron capable of restoring the dead to life.

Was the Christian Grail, then, just a Pagan vessel in disguise? We appear to have lost it in a labyrinth of tangled interpretations. An entity so evasive, so equivocal, can only be a myth--a fugitive symbol in the "Racial Unconscious". Myths delight but delude. They play no part in our real world of missiles and mortgages. We are the children of Urizen. We are the apostles of Reason.

We are also wrong.

Not long ago the suggestion that myths might have physical potency would have invited ostracism from sane society. The new atmosphere of uncertainty in science, however, discourages hasty judgements.

Was the Grail non-physical? Matter too is non-physical. "Atoms," said Nobel Prizewinner Werner Heisenberg, "are not things." Did the Grail appear and disappear at will? Yes, and so can matter. "Particles," says Prof Fritjof Capra, "can come into being spontaneously out of the void and vanish again into the void." "The field," said Einstein, "is the only reality." Nobel Prizewinner Cyril Hinshelwood, in fact, calls particles "manifestations."

It may be objected that matter-particles, however unreal individually, do, in aggregate, build up into tangible objects--unlike the Grail; the "phantom of a cup that comes and goes." Just as in Tennyson, however, Percivale debated the Grail's substantiality with the monk Ambrosius, so we can debate matter's substantiality. How real is "real"?

The "new physics" teaches us that the truth we observe depends largely upon our viewpoints and beliefs. Consciousness is now believed to lie at the heart of matter--the "hidden variable" which triggers probabilities into actualities. Blake, perhaps, anticipated Einstein's Theory of Relativity and Max Planck's Quantum Theory when he said: "Everything possible to be believed is an image of truth."

In 1972 René Thom, a French mathematician, proposed what he called "catastrophe theory". At certain threshold levels in both nature and human society, cumulative small changes give rise to sudden transitions into other states of being. The last raindrop bursts the dam.

Now many parapsychologists consider that in conditions of emotional instability an abnormal form of PHYSICAL energy may be unleashed--hence poltergeists. A quantum threshold has been reached and breached. In a highly charged emotional climate like that at Camelot--unstable because of the atmosphere of mystical expectancy inspired by Pentecost--the immense occult energies of the Grail could breach the mind/matter interface with shattering effects; causing, perhaps, "a cracking and a riving of the roofs."

PS for pedants: Yes. This energy influx could possibly have caused the cracking and the riving by vibrating the earth's tectonic plates at a Richter magnitude of 5.7. The destabilising effect of unsuspected energies on subterranean equilibrium was discussed by Dr John Gribbin and Prof Stephen Plagemann in their book The Jupiter Effect.

PPS: No, madam, earthquakes are NOT caused by the strummings of the entombed Norse god Loki as the snake venom drips on his head. Seismologists have finally abandoned this theory since learning that Loki was killed by Heimdal at Ragnarok...

The existence of such occult energies might be denied by the mechanistically minded, with their sacrosanct "four known forces of nature", but the EPR paradox in physics and the blood flocculation-index "lead-time" in the Takata reaction do suggest faster-than-light interactions and, therefore, non-physical forces. Recent experiments with the EPR effect conducted by Prof Alain Aspect of Paris lend great weight to the anti-mechanist argument.

Now biologist Dr Lyall Watson discusses in his book, Lifetide, the power of a thought-consensus to materialize the immaterial. Which inspires the question: could the Grail once have been "real" brought across the "catastrophe threshold" between myth and materiality by the consensual energy of primitive beliefs? It seems theoretically possible. (Leading philosopher, Sir Karl Popper, proposes a separate world where all ideas and legends, true or false, have an independent reality.) Such consensual energy could, for example, invoke UFOs, which Carl Jung felt might have an objective existence as "projections from the racial unconscious mind."

This last phrase reminds one of the now well-known theories of Dr

Rupert Sheldrake, the Cambridge biologist. Faced with the unlikelihood of physical mechanisms being able to cause generic diversity, Sheldrake suggested form-creating fields which exist outside space and time; ghostly projections from bygone matter which, by "morphic resonance", shape matter's future. Such fields, he believes, also store thoughts and memories when they have reached a certain degree of intensity (catastrophe theory again!) and could influence minds yet to come.

Let us now collate all these diverse items and see what they imply:

1. Critical thresholds occur everywhere in nature.
2. Consciousness is creative.
3. Invisible fields exist, affected by mind and controlling matter.
4. "Manifestation" is no longer a dirty word.

A consensus of positive belief, then, could energise the form-creating fields of Rupert Sheldrake until they reach a flash-point at which myths materialize. "A firm and strong belief," said Cornelius Agrippa, the 16th century magician, "doth work wonderful things."

Our theory receives additional corroboration from Jung, who believed in "archetypes"--universal symbols which stem from unseen realms of the collective unconscious (the world soul) and influence men's minds.

Now there is no operation known to science where one element may affect another without being, in its turn, affected by it. (Hence the observational difficulties in atomic research which give rise to Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle). This suggests that if a clairvoyantly-given symbol can influence people's thinking, so a consensus of belief in that symbol might, by feedback, increase its power. Itzhak Bentov corroborates this in *Stalking the Wild Pendulum*, a book on the implications of the new physics written in consultation with physicists at Stanford and elsewhere.

The process of interaction snowballs until the threshold is breached. Materialization may then occur. As Dr Lyall Watson conjectures: "Reality is actually created by the mind ... we can change it simply by changing our minds."

This is strong stuff and not easy to accept. It seems to defy commonsense--yet it is the message apparently given us by the quantum theory--the most powerful tool science possesses.

We have discussed the past, but what of the present? Modern conditions may well suit the manifestation of myths--precisely because of the changed outlook of science. Scientists are now finding it difficult to avoid acknowledging the influence of the mind in "collapsing the probability waveform" into actuality. If it is objected that the subatomic eccentricity of quantum physics does not apply in the large-scale world of everyday life, then one needs only refer to Bell's Theorem which, according to Prof Henry Stapp, "puts the dilemma posed by quantum phenomena clearly into the realm of macrocosmic phenomena ... Our ordinary ideas about the world are somehow profoundly deficient."

Can the Grail, then, return in our times? The answer--at least tentatively--is yes.

A word of warning, however. Symbols are nothing more than shadows

of a sublime truth beyond our capacity to understand or our language to describe. By "morphic resonance" (the Law of Sympathy) they can attract the truth. Symbols serve as a focal point for the creative imagination which, by consensus, can invoke the formative powers of the universe.

Bligh Bond, excavator of the Abbey at Glastonbury, traditional home of the Grail, puts its clearly in his book *The Company of Avalon*: "The central mystery is ... the Holy Grail. Its symbol is the Cup, or Chalice, and men have been prone, in their ignorance and folly, to idolise the actual vessel which was never more than the symbol of a deep truth..."

Physicist Dr Evan Harris Walker postulates great conscious entities responsible for controlling the universe. They would hardly endorse man's herculean efforts to destroy himself and it. The clairvoyant sighting of the Grail-symbol would be a token of their benign presence and concern. Every focussed individual thought adds to the consensus that could bring the Grail's powers to earth. Its light could shine again in the halls of men.

In what form might it appear? "As the new symbols become visible," says premier mythologist Joseph Campbell in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, "they will not be identical in the various parts of the Globe ... through various symbols the same redemption is revealed."

Because of its deep roots in our magical past, however, in Britain the Chalice would seem most appropriate. By invoking it in meditation we may invoke the redemptive virtue of the Life Essence which is itself beyond description or visualisation.

The Grail links us with a higher plane--Prof David Bohm's world of "wholeness" which sustains the fragmented universe of our physical awareness. It is, in Ashe's words: "a medium through which the senses could apprehend a deeper reality." It can bring HARMONY --to counter the disruptive war-archetype which has been attracted and energised by hawkish mentalities in all countries. It can make our spiritual Waste Land blossom.

The question was asked in Arthurian times; "Whom does the Grail serve?" Fifteen hundred years later the answer may surely be: "The Grail serves mankind."

Given the formative forces of the mind implied by quantum physics the quest could still succeed--but not, as Wolfram von Eschenbach appreciated, with weapons in the hand. The Cup may not NECESSARILY have a physical counterpart--though, with Bell's Theorem and Lyall Watson's notions, we might be unwise to rule even this out.

So we can try--as the knights of our legendary past did--to achieve the Holy Grail, but perhaps by creative and concentrated THOUGHT rather than by physical action. NOW might be a good time to start trying...

BOOKS

Moyna Caldecott *The Tower and the Emerald* (Arrow Books £2.50): a novel of Britain in the Dark Ages, inspired by the legend of Lucifer's lost emerald and the Tree of Life (from "Mysteries", 9/11 Monmouth St, London WC2H 9DA). Also A J Young *The Swords of the Britons*: a "military strategic study of Arthur" (from the author, Meadow Hill, Bamford, Sheffield S30 2BE; £9.00 incl p & p).

The Magic Cauldron

David Pykitt

The original magic cauldron is disclosed to have been the Stone Bowl of the Chaldean serpent-worshippers, who so violently opposed the establishment of the higher civilisation of sun-worshippers and their uplifting reformation of mankind under their king Dur, the founder-king of Sumeria who reigned over Cappadocia and Mesopotamia from 3378 to 3349 BC.

Dur, in a punitive expedition against the raiding Chaldeans, captured from the city of Khamazi (Kar-Kamish or Gar-Gamish: the Fort of Gamish, now identified as Carchemish on the Upper Euphrates) the magical Stone Bowl or Cauldron which was the central fetish of the serpent-worshipping cult and their most treasured possession. King Dur consecrated this "life-giving" stone bowl as a sacred vessel of his own sun-cult.

The sacred trophy stone Bowl of Dur, the first Sumerian king, was inscribed and dedicated to Dur by his great-grandson King Udu of Kish City, the fourth imperial king of the First Sumerian Dynasty who reigned from 3247 to 3242 BC. King Udu deposited the last fragment of the stone bowl in the chief place of honour beneath the foundations of Nippur, the oldest sun-temple in Mesopotamia on the old channel of the Euphrates south-west of Babylon. When the fragment of the stone bowl was unearthed at the beginning of this century, it was disclosed as the actual material of the famous war trophy captured from the Chaldeans at the Well of Urd by King Dur.

The Chaldeans cast a replica of the stone bowl in bronze and it became a special utensil for divination of the serpent-worshipping matriarchs of Van, Asia Minor and Chaldea. The original chief centre of dispersion of the main horde of the serpent-worshipping matriarchs was the shore of the inland sea or great salt-water Lake of Van (Van Golu) in eastern Turkey, lying sixty-five miles south-west of Mount Ararat at 5400 feet above sea-level. Van is the capital city of the province of the same name. The modern city is on the eastern shore of Lake Van at a height of 5640 feet south-east of Erzurum. The focus of interest in the province is the lake itself, overlooked on the north side by two extinct volcanoes. Vanand was the Greco-Roman name for the district between Van and the Upper Halys at Swas. Vanota was at the crossing of the Halys near Caesarea on the border of Galatia. This part of eastern Asia Minor was a centre of the matriarchal cult of the Mother-Goddess and her priestesses down to the Greco-Roman occupation.

The Van hordes of hunters spread westwards from the Lake Van region of Asia Minor into Europe and up the Danube valley to Germany and Finland, and westwards to Vannes, the port of the Veneti in the province of Armorica, Gaul. The migration of the Vans was westward from Lake Van, through Asia Minor to the Dardanelles and Bosphorus, and then across Europe to Britain. The line of Van influence extended along the upper Euphrates to the Halys Valley of Cappadocia to Galatia, and along the Vanda Hills to Phrygia and the old Phrygian Hellespont and Bosphorus, and across those straits along the Danube to Vienna and Austrian Galicia to Finland and the southern shores of the Baltic, and westwards to Iberia and Iberian Galicia and Gaul, and thence to the British Isles.

"Two score days before the Flood (c 2900 BC), came Ceasair into Erin (Ireland). Ceasair, daughter of Bheata, was the first woman Van who came to the Island of Banbha (Erin) before the Flood."
(Geoffrey Keating, *History of Ireland*, 48-50)

The first traditional migration of Vans into Erin is significantly stated in the Irish Scot records to have been led by a woman, Ceasair. The tradition of a woman leader appears to afford the clue to the matrilineal custom (or parentage and succession through the mother and not through the father), which Mother-right, according to the Irish and Pictish chronicles, prevailed in early Erin. The custom is admittedly a vestige of the primitive matriarchy, or rule by mother, which was, according to leading authorities, the earliest stage of the family in primitive society. This tradition, therefore, that the first immigrants to Ireland were led by a woman, is in agreement with what leading anthropologists have elicited in regard to primitive society.

Ceasair, the first matriarch of Erin, was the high-priestess of the sacred Magic Cauldron which she had brought with her from the Lake Van region. She is reported to have landed with her horde at Dunn-m-Barc or "The Fort of the Barks or (Skin) Boats", now Dunamark in Bantry Bay on the south-west coast of Erin. The name Bantry Bay means "Bay of the Shore of the Bans". Ceasair naturally named the island "Banbha"--the Good Ban Land, as she now considered herself safe from hostile pressures. The Magic Cauldron, the sacred fetish of the Van matriarchal serpent-worshipping cult, became known as the Coirean Dagda or "Churn of Fire" of the Irish Celts.

According to Celtic tradition, the Cauldron of Abundance, having the character of a talisman of abundance and rejuvenation, was the Cauldron of Dagda which came to Ireland with the Tuatha de Danann, a race of necromancers from Asia Minor. This tribe, whilst sojourning in Asia Minor, were at war with the Syrians; and were enabled to triumph through the aid of the magic cauldron, as it possessed the power of resuscitating those who fell in battle by animating their corpses with demons, so that the Syrians found with dismay that those whom they had slain met them in battle next day as vigorous as ever. In this difficulty, the Syrians had recourse to the advice of their priests, who told them to drive a stake of mountain ash through the bodies of those they slew, and that, if they had been animated by demons, they would instantly turn into worms. This course was followed, and the Tuatha de Danann were compelled to quit that country. The early traditions of the Celts thus confirm the account of the migration of the matriarchal Vans from Asia Minor to Ireland.

The power exercised in Britain by the family of Bran Fendigaid (the Blessed) through the influence of the magic cauldron bears a strong resemblance to that possessed by the Tuatha de Danann. It had the power of resuscitating slain men overnight and Bran brought it out of a lake in Ireland, but was later to return it as part of his sister Branwen's dowry for her marriage to Matholwch, king of Ireland.

Vannes was the capital of the Veneti of the province of Armorica in Gaul who gave Julius Caesar so much trouble and who were tributaries or allies of the Britons. Their capital is significantly

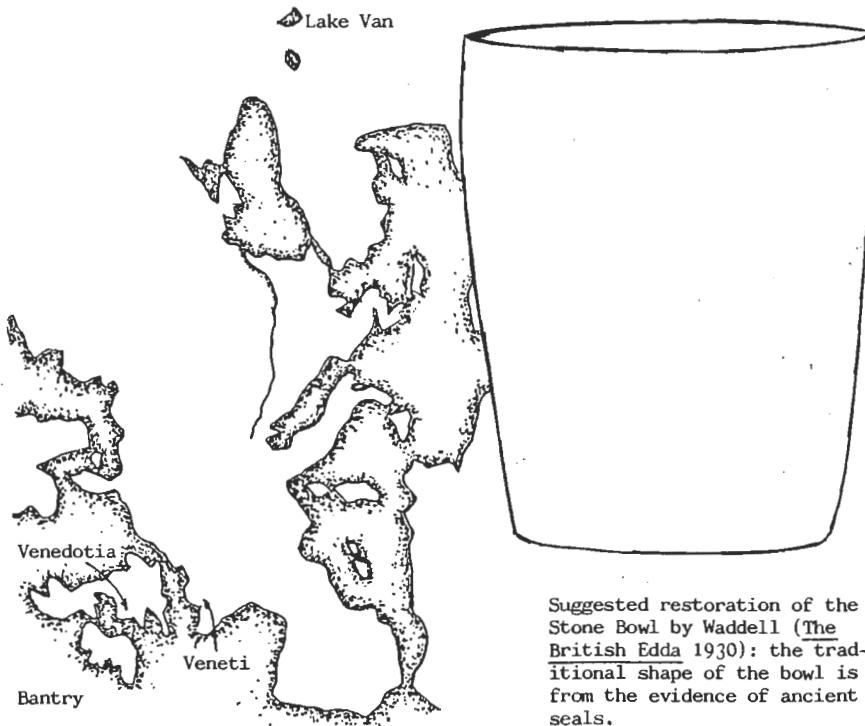
the site of vast prehistoric dolmens and menhirs, a class of funereal monument which was prevalent amongst the later Vans and their descendants in the British Isles under the rule of the Britons.

Gwynedd in north Wales was formerly known as Venedotia after the tribe of the Venedotae, who like the Picts were of Van origin. Math ap Mathonwy, Lord of Gwynedd, was named as the druid wizard of the Tuatha de Danann and held court at Caer Dathyl in Arfon.

The famous Van Lake of Llyn-y-Fan Fach, a small lake at the foot of Bannau Sir Gaer near Llanddeusant, Carmarthen Fans, Dyfed, was until this century a place of popular pilgrimage for the Welsh, and significantly it was sacred to the Lady of the Lake, presumably a deified Van matriarchal high-priestess of the sacred Magic Cauldron.

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the Early Grail Legends

Sid Birchby

For once, here is an article about the Grail which does not attempt to draw a conclusion. It seems worth while to look in some detail at the earliest literary sources of the legend, which is in the last analysis essentially a literary construct, and possibly to glimpse something of the times in which it arose. Inevitably, the footnotes tend to overwhelm the body of the article but the alternative of trying to build them in would, I suggest, have destroyed what little coherence it possesses.^a

The earliest surviving Grail story is that of Chrétien de Troyes: Perceval or Conte du Graal and was written at the instigation of Count Philip of Flanders, at whose court Chrétien passed his last years, and from whom he had the material. He died ca 1185, leaving the story unfinished. Background: Troyes, a city on the Seine with a magnificent cathedral, is the former capital of Champagne.

The fact that Count Philip supplied Chrétien's material implies the prior existence of Grail legends in Flanders. For their British equivalents, a good modern source-book is St Joseph of Arimathea at Glastonbury by L S Lewis, vicar of Glastonbury (died ca 1955) which refers to various books now lost but mentioned by later writers.^b Possibly some of the books never existed or were monkish inventions, such as the book of ancient British legends allegedly seen by Geoffrey of Monmouth--although there is now less doubt about his book than formerly. However, one book in particular is well-attested, being quoted by such later writers as John of Glastonbury ca 1400 and John Capgrave ca 1464. This is The Acts of the Illustrious King Arthur attributed to Gildas Badonicus (516-570).^c

The Acts (says Lewis, 99) is also mentioned in the margin of the Cambridge Ms of William of Malmesbury's De Antiquitate Glastoniae ca 1135. In a very old hand, as if the writer had Gildas at his side, there is written:

The book of "The Acts of the Illustrious King Arthur" testifies that in the quest of a certain Knight called Lancelot of the Lake made by the Companions of the Round Table (viz, where a certain hermit revealed to Waleran² the mystery of a certain that changed its taste and colour frequently) which miracle should not cease until there should come a great lion, which also should have his neck bound with great chains; that Joseph of Arimathea a noble decurio with his son called Joseph and several others came into Greater Britain which is now called England, and there finished his life.^c

The Acts also says (Lewis, 95) that In the search for a vessel which they there call the Holy Grail it is related almost in the beginning, where Galaat, a white knight, shows to his son Lancelot the mystery of a certain wonderful shield, which he committed him to carry, which no one else without great damage could carry even for one day.

Another source (Lewis, 94) is Historia de Rebus Britannicis by Maelgwyn/Melchinus of Avalon "who was before Merlin", written ca 540. Although the book is now lost, the antiquary John Leland saw it in the library of Glastonbury Abbey in 1534, shortly before the Dissolution, and those earlier writers John of Glastonbury and John Capgrave, mentioned above, quote from it in surviving MSS, saying that Joseph is buried on the Isle of Avalon with two white

and silver cruets containing the blood and sweat of Jesus. Lewis comments that "It is rash to assert that the two cruets ... are merely another version of the Holy Grail story". Yet Maelgwyn and Gildas appear to have been contemporaries, which makes the evidence for 6th century Grail legends fairly strong.³

Admittedly, both the above books are known only in quotation, but that is so with many ancient records⁴ which are nevertheless acceptable on face value, ie, insofar as they are inherently plausible and do not conflict with more firmly-based sources. Incidentally, Gildas's surviving work is very bitter about Maelgwyn, which suggests that they knew each other. Unfortunately, there was more than one Gildas, and possibly several Maelgwyns, so that we have not only two lost books but uncertain authorships for them.^d

Indirect evidence of early Grail traditions in France appears in the chronicles of Helinand, a monk of the French abbey of Fromond, who quotes the writings of a hermit in Britain who in 717 had a vision of St Joseph and the Grail. A french scholar who spent forty years on the subject was firmly convinced that this date was that of the earliest Grail story (Lewis, 97) but I note that the final entry in Helinand's chronicles is under the year 1209 and that he died ca 1219. Grail romances were popular in France at that period, and it's not beyond possibility that Helinand invented the tale.^e

FOOTNOTES

1. GILDAS. There seems to have been at least three authors of that name (see Lewis, 85, 98 for sources):

a. GILDAS CAMBRIUS, fl 73, who allegedly translated into Latin "Brutus's prayer to Diana", whatever that was. It sounds very pagan.^f

b. ST GILDAS ALBANICUS / THE WISE, 425-512, a Glastonbury monk who founded an oratory at Street in Somerset, where the modern parish church bears his name. Possible author of The Ruin of Britain and of an Epistle more crabby than wise, one would think. But he was highly esteemed in his day: see Butler's Lives of the Saints.

c. GILDAS BADONICUS, 516-570, so-called because he claimed to have been born in the year of the Battle of Badon. Usually supposed to have written The Ruin of Britain and reputedly at least two lost ones: The Acts of Arthur and The Victory of Aurelius Ambrosius.^g For what it is worth, Geoffrey of Monmouth mentions the latter.

Leslie Alcock's Arthur's Britain is helpful as a guide through the morass, but there is no certain path. Bring your own wellies.

2. WALERAN. Count of Meulan / Mellant, 1104-1166, to whom, plus Earl Robert of Gloucester, Geoffrey of Monmouth dedicated his book in 1137. The marginal note "in a very old hand" deserves further study for its glimpses of a lost Arthurian tale.

3. MAELGWYN. I suspect that, as with Gildas, there was more than one Maelgwyn. The name comes from the Irish mail, mael of the period; a slave or shaven man (cf Welsh moel, bald) and indicates a monk. On the other hand, Gildas says that Maelgwyn was a disciple of St Illtud on Caldy Island who became king of Gwynneth with the title of Dragon. Something else that calls for research.

4. ANCIENT RECORDS. Very few historical sources are accurate. Be-

fore printed books arrived, written information was transmitted in Britain by writing on vellum or parchment, made from sheepskins. The writing surface was tough, and it was common practice to scratch-out and make alterations at a later date. Ink was cheaper than vellum. Nowadays, such erasures can be detected, but relatively few parchments have been examined critically. Whilst it was possible to scratch-out words written on vellum without apparently doing so, and thereby arousing modern suspicion, it became much less feasible with words printed on paper, and so fairly quickly in the 15th century there appeared multiple-copy and dated texts that could not be wholly expunged.

PRINTING. The two discoveries of moveable type and paper seem to have coincided in the 15th century. Allegedly, the Chinese invented moveable type, although they don't seem to have done much with it. In the West, printing would have been impossible without a surface that would take the ink without spreading it. Vellum was too shiny, and paper by itself was just blotting-paper, so that the printing of books demanded a whole set of inventions apart from that of re-usable type. The first English paper-mill is recorded in 1495, although Shakespeare puts it in the time of Jack Cade's rebellion, ca 1450. See Henry VI, Pt 2, Act 4, Sc 7, wherein Jack Cade accuses Lord Say thus: "... Whereas, before, our forefathers had no other books but the score and the tally, thou hast caused printing to be used; and contrary to the king his crown and dignity, thou hast built a paper-mill."

Because printing was such a high-tech process, most religious houses retained the ancient practice of hand-copying outworn vellum MSS until the Dissolution of 1536-39. The work was done by novices for the most part, albeit under supervision, yet despite the best intentions the process inherently led to errors, omissions and alterations. More seriously, the new MSS became "as good as" the old one, and gradually the Past was re-written. It is fairly true to say that, with a few exceptions, all pre-printing historical sources are not original MSS but copies of copies of copies, whereas after Caxton or perhaps his Oxford predecessor Corsellis (1478) transcription changes can be identified more easily, because more than one copy of an edition may exist for comparison with a later one.

SOURCES. I apologise for belabouring the printing matter, but it does become highly important in dealing with such literary subjects as the Grail to bear in mind that few, if any, of the earliest records can be guaranteed to be as-written at the time of the alleged authors. Do we have a genuine Chrétien de Troyes MS which dramatically breaks off when he dies, and if someone says Yes, how do we know that it is not a later copy with possibly major alterations? Answer: we don't, and the danger is quite real that we shall invent some Grail fantasy that satisfies ourselves. Worse ... it may satisfy others.

EDITOR'S FOOTNOTES

a. At the author's suggestion, the editor has also added some dissenting footnotes whilst also agreeing with some of the article's main points.

b. Lewis throws out many stimulating ideas but is credulous and at times misleading. Useful for checking his statements are Gildas, The Ruin of Britain and other works (ed/trans M Winterbottom, Phillimore 1978); Geoffrey of Monmouth History of the Kings of Britain (trans L Thorpe, Penguin 1966); and

John of Glastonbury, The Chronicle of Glastonbury Abbey (ed James P Carley, Boydell Press 1985).

c. Carley (op cit) says this material is from the 12th century William of Malmesbury, a marginal note indeed, as Lewis says, which is incorporated into the main text in later editions. This fountain episode is found in the 13th century so-called Vulgate Lancelot. The later shield episode is found in The Quest of the Holy Grail (13th century) where Galahad first appears in medieval literature. John of Glastonbury's Cronica (mid 14th century) quotes the same text, and presumably Capgrave follows John. "Waleran" should in fact be "Walwanus", a regular medieval Latin form of Gawain. The "very old hand" that Lewis mentions as responsible for the William of Malmesbury marginalia must postdate William (early 12th century) and it is difficult to see what Lewis is getting at--is it likely that the marginal note was written first and the main text later?

d. Lewis's "Maelgwyn" should be Maelgwn, the medieval Welsh contraction of Maglocunus. Maelgwn finds its way back into medieval Latin as Mailcunus. Carley (op cit, lvi) suggests that this could have easily evolved into Melkinus (Melchinius).

There was more than one historical Maelgwn. One was buried in South Wales in the Dark Ages (marked by a pillar inscribed with MAGLOCUN--see Pendragon Vol XVI No 4, 28). Another was the ruler of Gwynedd, who died about 547, denounced by Gildas. Maelgwn of Gwynedd's yearnings to be a monk may account for the claim that he was a bard and a prophet.

e. What Helinand of Froidmont has to say about the grail itself could derive from romances. However, his early 8th century "British hermit" who has the vision of the "bowl or dish" of the Last Supper is supported by the Grand Saint Graal and by 16th century scholars, so this claim for early connections between Britain, Joseph and the grail may be worth consideration. The 16th century John Bale says the story was famous in the time of King Ina, perhaps an attempt, based on tradition, to locate the account in the Wessex area (which of course then included Glastonbury).

f. Brutus's prayer to Diana is quoted in Geoffrey of Monmouth's History (op cit, 65). Geoffrey claims that Brutus, the eponymous founder of Britain, landed on the island of Leogetia in the Mediterranean, sacrificed and prayed at the temple of Diana and received in a dream a message from the goddess. She told him that he and his people would inhabit Britain. The Brutus connection did not originate with Geoffrey (it probably pre-dates "Nennius" whose account, in the early 9th century, is the earliest we have) but the Brutus prayer itself probably did arise out of Geoffrey's imagination. Gildas Albanicus and Gildas Badonicus are one and the same, alive in the sixth century. Lewis's dates for "Albanicus" are spurious; Badonicus's title "the Wise" means "learned in book-Latin".

g. Geoffrey of Monmouth, op cit, 125. Aurelius Ambrosius (instead of the more correct Ambrosius Aurelian) is the typically Galfridian form of the name, and renders the ascription to Gildas suspect. For a good general discussion of Geoffrey's contribution, reliability and sources E K Chambers, Arthur of Britain (1927 and 1966) is hard to beat.

LATE NEWS

A very stylised Glastonbury Thorn was featured on the 13p value stamp issued as part of a set at Christmas 1986 ... A Bath solicitor appears in the British Telecom Bristol & Northavon phone book as "King Arthur.L" ... In October 1986 an Arthurian exhibition and symposium was organised by the French "Ordre de la Rose-Croix" (199 bis rue Saint Martin, 75003 Paris) at their cultural centre; speakers included Jacques Lebeau, Jean Markales and Yann Brekilien ...

the Nanteos Cup

Fred Stedman Jones

For many years a small wooden bowl, famed for its miraculous healing powers, was kept by the Powells of Nanteos in Mid-Wales. It was originally known in Wales as the "Phiol Sanctaidd Ystrad Fflur" (The Holy Cup of Strata Florida) after the Cistercian Abbey of the Vale of Flowers. Later it became the Tregaron Healing Cup--the Tregaron Estate was originally part of the Abbey lands. Now it is known to all as the Nanteos Cup. It is a small bowl in form but it has always been known as a "cup" or cwpau.

Nanteos, the Brook of the Nightingale, is a Georgian mansion set in a large and lonely park in the valley of the Paith, two and a half miles from Aberystwyth. The Powells, an ancient Welsh family, were from Llechwedd Ddyrys in South Cardiganshire.¹ In 1690 William Powell married Averina le Brun, heiress of the Nanteos Estate. Since then nine generations have lived there. The last of the Powells was Margaret; she died in 1951 aged 89. Her will was contested and the Cup was lodged in a bank for several years before Mrs Betty Mirylees, a grand-niece, inherited. She moved away from Nanteos in 1967, taking the Cup with her. A replica was on show there subsequently and this may have misled visitors. Mrs Colgate, the present owner, still receives enquiries and visitors seeking cures. Mrs Betty Mirylees died in early 1986 and the Cup is now in the possession of her daughter Fiona.

There are several "traditions" concerning the Cup. The best known today is that it is the Holy Grail, the Cup of the Last Supper, and that it was taken to the Cistercian Abbey of Strata Florida by seven monks from Glastonbury at the time of the Dissolution, 1539. On the approach of Thomas Cromwell's commissioners the monks fled fifteen miles over the "impassable mountains" and found sanctuary at Nanteos--as servants of the Powells. On his death bed the last monk entrusted the Grail to the family "until such time as the Church shall claim her own."

The story is obviously set into conventionalised folklore patterns.² We see an idealised picture of human conditions: poor saintly grail-bearers wandering through a threatening mountain region pursued by evil persecutors, agents of a despotic king. They are given protection and noble patronage and live out anchorite lives, exiled from the world in holy poverty. Their duties done they are buried in unmarked graves, but the relic associated with them becomes a prized possession--the power flows on. The story is fully euhemerised in Isabel Hill Elder's The Cup of the Last Supper.³ The insistence on the number seven is interesting: it brings to mind the seven survivors in the Mabinogion story of Bran who journeyed through Wales with their beloved king's head.

The "tradition" ignores the complex political events of 1530-39. Affairs moved too swiftly and unexpectedly for anyone to have foreseen where such a relic might be taken for safety--certainly not to another abbey! Strata Florida, classified as a "minor" house, should have closed in 1535 but Abbot Talley paid a large delaying fine. It was "visited" in 1536 and a detailed inventory made. Whiting of Glastonbury had been assured in 1538 that his Abbey would not be appropriated: Henry's commissioners arrived 19th September, 1539 without notice to arrest the old Abbot, By November he was dead. Professor Treharne's comments are apt:

"Why the monks of a great Benedictine Abbey in England should have sent so precious a treasure as the Grail (supposing them to have had it) to a small, and, by that time, very decadent Welsh Cistercian Abbey having no known connection with Glastonbury, it is difficult to imagine."⁴

The journey to Wales through robber-infested country would have been sheer lunacy--more sensible to have taken ship to the Continent from a West Country port, surely?

A corroborative detail sometimes added is that the monks rested overnight in the remote church at Ozleworth in the Cotswolds and there is a brass tablet in the church telling how the Grail was placed in a niche in the tower. The present vicar assures me he has never heard of any such notice; two previous incumbents knew of "a vague tradition".

If the monks ever got to Strata Florida they must have had a shock --for the Stewardship and the Court of the Abbey were in lay hands, even before its dissolution in 1539. John Stedman was agent and bailiff of the Devereux family who held the first lease. Later he purchased the Abbey and its lands for himself, but he claimed in a legal case that Richard Talley, the wily Abbot, had leased lands to him there as early as 1533. He even lived in a part of the Abbey buildings before building his own house nearby. If the Cup was handed over to anyone it would be him, for the Powells were not at Nanteos for another 150 years!

The second tradition varies in detail. In 1887 the Bishop of St Davids, Basil Jones, Oxford scholar and a Welsh-speaking squire of Cardiganshire, gave a presidential address to the Cambrian Archaeological Society at Lampeter. On display in a temporary museum of interesting curios was the Cup, labelled "healing cup from Nanteos, believed to be made of wood of the True Cross." The Bishop spoke of old traditions and beliefs of West Wales and told how the Cup was borrowed from the Nanteos family by local farmers. He described the Cup as a possession of Strata Florida, "which passed with that demesne from the Stedman family to the Powells." He believed the monks had preserved it as a relic "to which thaumaturgic powers were ascribed," and conjectured that "the new lords of Strata Florida probably had some belief in its efficacy."⁵ Most Welsh commentators have held consistently to this tradition.

It has always been the ladies of the family who have served as the Guardians of the Cup. In 1903 the penultimate Mrs Powell confided to a visitor that the Cup was older than the monastery of Strata Florida--indeed, the monastery had been built to receive it. It had been handed down from abbot to abbot through the ages, and in each age its secret was told to one or two: "this Cup is none other than the one from which our Lord drank at the Last Supper."⁶ We must conclude that the Cup did not come from Glastonbury to Wales, it was there all the time! It was the last Mrs Powell who made the equation: GLASTONBURY GRAIL = NANTEOS CUP, under the influence of Tennyson's Idylls of the King, I believe. In 1938 she was seeking a book she remembered seeing at her son's prep school long before. She thought it contained the story she had come to believe. What is certain is the old lady's reverence for the Cup: she would not let anyone touch it unless they had washed their hands.

A senior member of the Powell family recently sent me the following information:

"Stedman, a son of a duke of Arabia--a Knight of the Sepulchre--was

brought to this country by Richard Coeur de Lion in 1191. He brought the Cup with him from the Holy Land and gave it into the safe-keeping of the monks of Strata Florida Abbey."

This is the romantic lineage claimed by the Stedman family, but what is certain is that the last of the line, Richard, married Anne Powell of Nanteos and died intestate. His estates and possessions passed to his brother-in-law and chief creditor Thomas Powell in 1747. Thomas had built the present Nanteos in 1739. Richard's coat of arms seems well suited to his role of Grail-Keeper!

There is no room to talk of Strata Florida, the "Westminster Abbey" and "Iona" of Wales. There the History of the Princes was kept, and The Red Book of Hergest (the source of The Mabinogion) transcribed. The Cistercians in Wales replaced the old Celtic church in the people's affections; the abbots of Strata Florida were all Welshmen. One Cardiganshire scholar has claimed that the Cup was at the Abbey soon after its foundation in 1164, and "was the object of pilgrimage".⁷

The Cup is made of Dark wood. It was originally about five inches in diameter and three inches in depth, with a shallow base roughly one and a half inches in diameter. It is badly cracked and held together by several rivets. Less than a half remains because sufferers have nibbled away pieces of the wood. (As early as 385 AD armed deacons surrounded the True Cross at Jerusalem in order to prevent pilgrims from kissing it and taking splinters away in their teeth.) It was whole as late as the middle of the nineteenth century, when it is reported that a silver hoop was fitted to the rim--but this was removed because the Cup ceased its healing.

Constant handling has distorted and obscured the patina and grain of the Cup, making it very difficult to identify the wood. Most writers state that it is made of olive wood but this has never been proved. Timber experts could probably identify it scientifically and date it from a shaving of the wood, but Mrs Mirylees refused to allow this. Her pragmatic view was that it heals and nothing would be gained "by finding out that it was made in Birmingham."

In 1977 the Cup was carefully examined over two days by a group of experts from the University of Wales and the Forestry Commission. Their conclusion was that it is made of Wych-Elm. If true, this would cast serious doubt on a Palestinian origin for the relic. (These implications must be left for a future article.)

The vessel is kept in a small wooden box with a sliding glass lid. With it are handwritten receipts spanning the nineteenth century, recording borrowings, many marked "cured". Then it was borrowed by local families who left a coin or a watch as a token of faith. The average loan was three and a half weeks, the longest six. It was invariably borrowed on behalf of a female at that time. In 1887 John Roberts, a local harper, scoffed at the power of the Cup: that night he suffered great disturbance of mind. Next morning he returned to Nanteos to handle the Cup and wrote on an old playbill: "This cup was handled by John Roberts, Telyn-or Cymru,, on the morning of 4th of May, 1887. Mind completely at ease." Arthur Machen mentions this in The Great Return, his Grail romance (1915).

The Cup feels unusually cold to touch, a privilege I was allowed in September 1985. It is not impressive to look at but it does impress one, far more than I had ever anticipated. Simon Appleyard wrote in 1979:

"As I held the Cup in my hands I felt rather humble ... It seemed wholly credible that it could be the kind of plain bowl that Christ would have used for his Last Supper on earth. No-one will ever know for certain if it is really the Holy Grail, but the many letters testifying to its healing powers make it an object of reverence as well as deep mystery."⁸ I would concur with this.

The relic continues its miraculous healing. Mrs Mirylees had letters from many who claimed to have been cured by drinking water from it. Actually, this is not possible now--instead the Cup is immersed in water placed in the glass dish in which it is kept. These modern cures include epilepsy, failing sight, deafness, arthritis, a brain Tumour (1974) and multiple sclerosis (1977). Mrs Mirylees' belief was kindled when her young daughter Jean lay mortally ill with a head fracture caused by a fallen ladder. In desperation she held the Cup and prayed; soon after, the hospital rang to report an unexpected recovery.

Following a magazine article in the 'fifties, the family were besieged. Three thousand letters were received pouring out personal sadnesses and cranks wrote demanding the return of the Grail to their care! Visitors would barge in and demand to see the Cup. Today it seems to be known world-wide: in 1974 it was loaned to the Sangreal Foundation in Dallas, Texas. Large sums of money have been offered for it over the years.

Major Mirylees died in 1979 and the family moved again, mainly to escape this unbearable pressure. Mrs Mirylees felt the responsibility of the Cup to be a heavy one. She did not wish to deny its healing to those who believed, but her own privacy had to be preserved. When I called I was received with patience and understanding, and I was deeply grateful to Mrs Mirylees for answering my questions and allowing me to hold the Cup. I promised not to reveal her whereabouts; in true Grail tradition the Cup is not lost but hidden, and must be the object of a personal quest.⁹

The stewardship is to continue "until the Church shall claim her own". Has it done so? In 1938 Rev Lionel Smithett Lewis, Vicar of Glastonbury, led a pilgrimage of four to Nanteos to view the Cup and ask for its return. Mrs Powell decided no. Later he formally requested its return under the seal of his church. This was done a second time by Rev Knapman in the 'sixties. Sir Charles Marston accompanied Lewis to Nanteos; he is the only expert in the archaeology of the Middle East to have seen the Cup, I believe. He deserved judgement, unfortunately.

"But which church?" asked Mrs Mirylees. St Davids would seem the best choice if the Cup is a Celtic relic or a mass cup from Strata Florida Abbey. Downside Abbey has replaced Glastonbury as the great Benedictine house in Somerset; its abbots sometimes bear the honorary title "Abbot of Glastonbury". (It is built on the estate of Mount Pleasant once owned by another Stedman family who bore the same arms as the Stedmans of Strata Florida!)

Would the Church welcome its return? It is an anachronism, such things shouldn't exist in the twentieth century, surely? Mrs Colgate would like to have the Cup at Nanteos again, but does it belong to the house or to its guardians? Whom does this grail serve?

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I would very much like to hear from anyone who is interested, especially anyone who has seen the Cup or has knowledge of specific cures:

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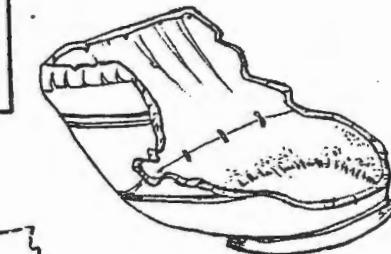
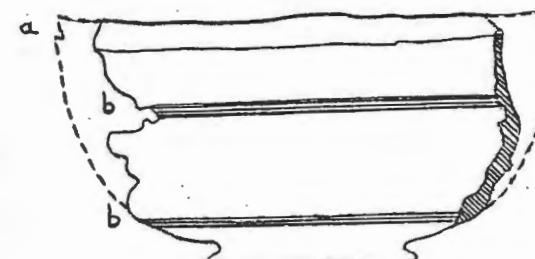
Left One of many testimonies to the Cup's cures at Nanteos: lent to Ebenezer Vaughan "for the use of his wife" in 1857 and returned a year later.

Below The Nanteos Cup as it is now, with an elevation of its remaining portion.

- a. Rebate for silver rim;
- b. Turned grooves.

(Fred Stedman-Jones.)

1st September 1857.
Cup lent this day to
Ebenezer Vaughan
Gwernan
Clwydianorth uch
for the use of his wife
Left £1.0.0.
Cup returned 5th October
1858.
Cured.



THE CHANGELESS IMAGE John Matthews

CONTEMPORARY THEORIES OF THE GRAIL

There is a famous passage in the *Perlesvaus* which describes how the Grail underwent five mysterious changes which "ought not to be spoken of".¹ This injunction has not prevented many intrepid writers from putting forward new and intriguing theories concerning the form, locale or meaning of the Grail. Whether or not it possesses one shape or function--which seems unlikely--there are certain immutable laws governing such objects which make it virtually impossible to say either where they originate, or, for that matter, why they exist at all. The Grail has exerted a perennial fascination over the minds and hearts of so many people that we should not be surprised if this has resulted in a wide variety of theories. Indeed this began as long ago as the Middle Ages, when the Grail was already seen variously as Cup, Stone, Dish, Ark or Jewel. This vagueness has been seen as something of a challenge by investigators ever since, and in recent times the number of theories relating to the grail have steadily increased.

One of the most recent is that put forward by Noel Currer-Briggs² who suggests that the real identity of the Grail resides in the Shroud of Turin--or more specifically the Mandylion, a mysterious wonder-working object which passed through Templar hands during the Crusades and subsequently vanished--reappearing, it has been suggested,³ at Turin, where it was identified with the Shroud of Christ.

Mr Currer-Briggs makes a convincing case for the movements of the Mandylion from place to place, and if he is right he may well have laid the mystery of the Templar "Head" to rest once and for all. But is the Mandylion the Grail? I think not, although I am willing to allow it to have had a part in the complex stream of influences which helped establish the imagery of the Grail.

More challenging and certainly less easy to evaluate is Michael Beckett's theory⁴ which follows a complicated web of clues, finds the Grail to be mathematical formulae, closely bound up with the structure of the Pyramid of Giza and the geomantic layout of various sacred sites in Britain. There is much of an interesting nature in Beckett's theory, but I suspect that it leads us further away from an understanding of the Grail.

The same may be said of what is probably the most notorious of the recent theories--that advanced in the best-selling book *The Holy Blood & the Holy Grail*.⁵ The authors' contention that the Grail represents a blood-line rather than an actual object has been the cause of much argument since the book appeared. It has, indeed, probably done more to make the Grail a household word than any other publication since the Middle Ages; but it makes what I can only see as a serious error in taking what has always been regarded as a spiritual object into the political arena. To suggest that the Grail was "invented" purely as a way of writing about the lost dynasty of the French nation seems somehow ludicrous--and the basis of the argument, which turns upon a scribal error which translated the words *San Greal* (Holy Grail) into *Sang Reale* (Holy Blood), is rather overworked.

The significance of the Royal Bloodline, or more precisely of the

sacred blood of Kingship does, it seems to me, bear more fruit, as another writer has already indicated.⁶

The fact that these--and other theories which point to the Grail's alchemical,⁷ Qabalistic or Hermetic⁸ origins, or to its pagan ancestry⁹--all fail, to one degree or another, to isolate the mystery, seems only to indicate the real nature of the object, which is in essence changeless rather than changing.

The Grail is indeed capable of being all these things and more, but its actuality lies elsewhere, in the potency of the symbol and the effect it has upon those who go in search of it. After all, why seek the Grail at all--especially if its existence is so tenuous?

The answer, and it is a personal one, seems to stem from a universal desire to make contact with the infinite, the otherworldly and the divine. The food which the Grail offers to the knights gathered at the Round Table in Camelot is spiritual food, designed to assuage the hunger felt by many people today. In looking for the true meaning of the Grail, it is to this area of our consciousness that we should look--not to the treasure-seekers, the ley-hunters, or those who are filled with wild surmise. The theories are endlessly fascinating, and I for one will continue to read them--but I very much doubt if they will prove more than red herrings in the Quest. That is best accomplished by turning inwards rather than outwards, where the true country of the Grail is to be found.¹⁰

© John Matthews, September 1985

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The above is a shortened extract from John Matthews & Marian Green *The Grail-Seekers' Hand-Book*, Aquarian Press 1986.

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The Grail Question

Chris Lovegrove

Specialists use the term "question" to designate a problem area in their chosen field, such as the historian's "Irish question" or the scholar's "Homeric question". The more usual meaning of course is a simple statement of inquiry such as "What is your name?" The title of this article is deliberately ambiguous so as to examine briefly not only some of the vexed arguments regarding the identity of the grail of medieval literature but also the possible answer to the most important single inquiry found in grail stories, "Whom does the grail serve?"

While in India in 1938 the psychologist C G Jung was visited with a vivid dream.¹ In this dream he and some associates were on an island "presumably situated not far off the coast of southern England." It was about twenty miles long from north to south, and narrow. The visitors were standing in the courtyard of a castle sited on the southern coast, and here a German professor was lecturing about "the relationship of the British to the French sources of the Grail story."

Jung was aware, as the professor was not, that this was the castle of the Grail and that this same evening there was to be a "celebration of the Grail" there. Behind the group was a tower; through its gate a wide stone staircase led upwards to a columned hall, illuminated by candlelight. The professor was blind to the situation. Jung then tried in vain to draw his attention to a wrought iron trelliswork, imitating a grapevine, with tiny iron houses and, no bigger than a mouse, a scurrying iron gnome with a hood.

At this point there was a break in the dream sequence. Jung and his associates were now outside the castle, in a barren landscape or wasteland; the Grail had not yet arrived for the evening celebration, and had to be fetched from a solitary "small, uninhabited house" in the northern part of the island, so Jung and half a dozen companions set off. After some hours the narrowest part of the island was reached, and here it was discovered that the sea separated them from the northern part by a hundred yards or so. It was now night and, when his exhausted colleagues fell asleep, Jung determined to strip and to swim the channel to fetch the Grail.

At this crucial point he awoke. He realised that this astonishing dream had great significance, and he interpreted his dreamquest as a symbol for the goals he was pursuing in psychology back in the West. He was well aware of the other levels of meaning, however, although he does not comment on, for example, why he failed to reach the Grail tabernacle (from the Latin for "little house") or the parallels between his colleagues' actions and Gawain's falling asleep at the Grail Castle (like the disciples before Christ's Passion).

The main reason Jung never examined the grail question in depth in print was that his wife Emma had been working on the subject from about 1935 up to her death in 1955.² Out of deference to her he made only passing references to the meaning of the Grail in his writings. Nevertheless he was very well aware (as his dream indicates to us) that the Grail had been of importance to the Western collective unconscious for close on eight hundred years,

ever since Chrétien de Troyes' *Perceval* of about 1180.³ And not just the unconscious either. As the Grail romances proliferated, it became clear that one of the main obsessions was to be the nature of the grail itself. In a Christian age the supernatural object was very soon associated with the Passion of Christ, and not merely in a symbolic way. Chrétien's grail carries a wafer of eucharistic bread (as a paten does in the mass) but other authors identified it as the actual Cup of the Last Supper, and by a bizarre extention, the receptacle of Christ's blood at the Crucifixion. In this way it brought together the two elements, wine and blood, which formed part of the central mystery of the liturgy of the Mass.

As far as we know, it was Robert de Borron who, about 1190, introduced this concept into Grail literature in his *Joseph of Arimathea*, and, with one or two exceptions (notably Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival*), this theme is subsequently mostly repeated or elaborated. From there it was perhaps inevitable that, contrary to the accounts in the romances, claims began to be made regarding the final resting-place of the grail-as-Last Supper vessel.⁴

GENOA was certainly by the 16th century claiming Holy Grail status for its *sacro catino* or holy dish. Brought to Genoa in 1147 after being plundered by Crusaders from Caesarea in 1101, experts suggest that this Roman moulded glass dish might date from as early as the first century AD. This effectively cuts out any notions that it is also a present to Solomon from the Queen of Sheba.⁵

But if Genoa's Cathedral of San Lorenzo has the grail, or the eucharistic dish of the Last Supper, what about the claim of the cathedral of the Assumption of the Virgin in VALENCIA in Spain? There it is speculated that St Peter carried the grail (this time a cup) to Rome, where it was used by the popes till the time of Sixtus II. Tradition says that in 258 St Lawrence sent it to his birthplace, Huesca in Spain, during the persecution of the Emperor Valerian, and that in 713, at the time of the Moorish invasion, it was transferred to the monastery of San Juan de la Peña. There is evidence that it was there in the thirteenth century, which leads John Harvey to declare that "it seems likely enough that during its sojourn in the mountain fastness of San Juan de la Peña its fame gave rise to the grail legends of the Middle Ages." King Martin of Aragon had it in his possession in Saragossa in 1399, and it was finally given to the Cathedral of the Virgin in Valencia in 1437 where it now rests in the former chapter house, now the Chapel of the Holy Grail. The *santo grail* or *sacro caliz* is variously described as oriental agate, veined chalcedony or red cornelian (all forms of quartz) and measures 10 cms in diameter and 7 cms in height. The stem and handles of gold, set with pearls, emeralds and beryls, and the base, an inverted censer also of chalcedony with a ninth century Arabic inscription, are all said to be late 14th century additions. However, the cup itself is claimed to have been made in a Near East workshop, possibly in Alexandria, before Christ's ministry.⁶

A relative newcomer is the chalice which came to light in ANTIOCH in 1910. Made from silver, the decorative framework shows Christ and the apostles surrounded by birds on the branches of vines hung with grapes. Generally dated to the 5th century, particularly the reign of Theodosius II, it was exhibited at the British

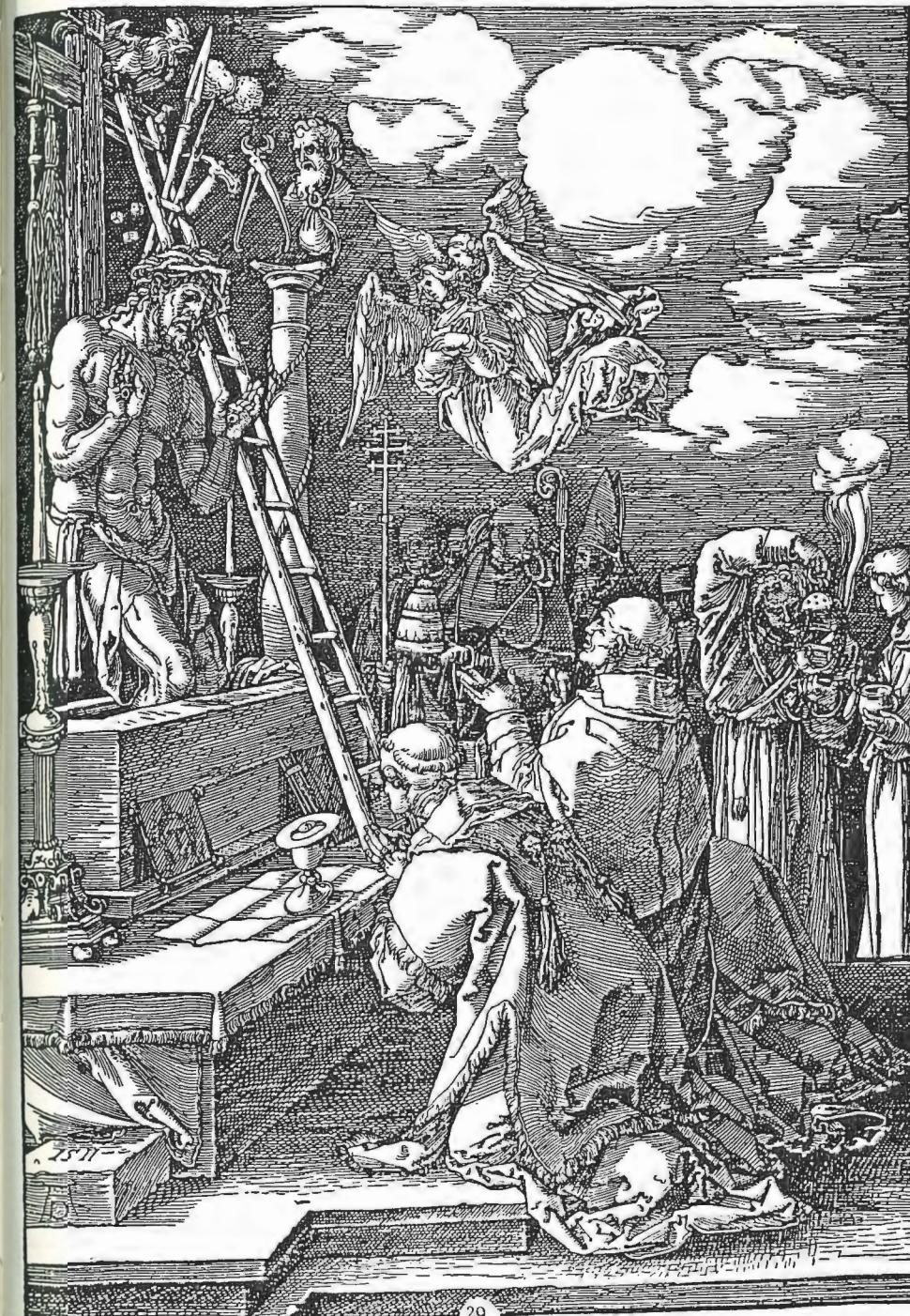
Museum in 1977 on loan from the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. It has an inner cup of wood which is said to be the cup of the Last Supper. The issue is clouded by occult claims that it is one of two "secondary" chalices stolen from London in 1908, desecrated by black magicians and taken to Syria where it was stolen again in 1910 and sold. The "true" grail (a terracotta *krater* encased in a chalice-shaped golden reliquary like the Antioch chalice) was taken at the same time but subsequently destroyed. Like most occult legends the truth is unverifiable; the story seems to be a mishmash of wide reading and wishful thinking.⁷

Even if these "grails" were all used at the Last Supper (and it would take a generous attitude to accept the histories claimed for them) they nevertheless cannot hope to match the number of claimed receptacles of Christ's blood. Some would argue that the Grail was not primarily conceived as a Holy Blood relic.⁸ Yet there is no doubting early interest in this testimony to Christ's death.

There was an Italian tradition of a lead box being discovered in MANTUA in 804 with the inscription JESU CHRISTI SANGUIS. In the box was a vessel containing drops of the said blood. More marvellous still, a hospice garden disclosed yet yet another phial of the same in 1041, now in the crypt of the basilica of Sant' Andrea. In 1267 the Count of Holland sold a portion of this relic (collected by Longinus at the Crucifixion) to Edmund, son of the Earl of Cornwall. One third of this was given to the Cistercian abbey at Hailes in Gloucestershire in 1270, the remainder to an Augustinian house at Ashridge.⁹ In 1539 the Hailes relic was destroyed after being declared as clarified honey coloured with saffron.¹⁰ This sad tale has no obvious link with any grail. Nor has the Holy Blood relic reported by Matthew Paris as given by Henry III to WESTMINSTER ABBEY in 1247.

Other contenders claim grail links. In 1149 Thierry d'Alsace (Dietrich of Flanders) brought his relic of Holy Blood from the Holy Land, escorted by Templars. This was housed in the Chapel of the Holy Blood in BRUGES. Thierry's successor Philip supposedly furnished Chrétien de Troyes with the first account of the Grail, though, despite the proximity of the bleeding lance, the grail in *Perceval* has no connection with Christ's blood.¹¹ In any case, doubt has been cast on the traditional story: David Sox notes that recent research indicates that the lamb's wool saturated with blood came to Bruges after the sack of Constantinople in 1204. In FECAMP, Normandy, further down the North European coast another relic is still shown in the abbey church of La Trinité, said from at least 1171 to have been brought by miraculous means in the floating trunk of a fig tree from the Holy Land. With the Precious Blood was a knife used by Nicodemus to scrape the dried fluid from Christ's body. This grotesque concept may have influenced Wolfram when he included in his *Parzival* two silver knives to scrape away the poison in the blood of the ailing Grail King when it had stuck to the lance.¹² GLASTONBURY, not to be outdone, also claimed Christ's blood and, like Bruges, his sweat, but this was only made official by the publication of "Melkin's Prophecy" in the mid-fourteenth century. Sensibly the abbey didn't actually produce any physical evidence of these but left it as a mystery to be solved by future generations.

Though the idea of the Blood's survival continues to fascinate, and even convince the credulous, all this has brought us far from





Albrecht Dürer's "Beheading of John the Baptist" (1510) In Peredur, the grail is replaced by the platter that bears the head of the cousin of the Perceval-type hero, and in The High Book of the Grail the sword that beheads John the Baptist allows Gawain entry to the Grail Castle. There are echoes too of the severed head of the Welsh figure Bran which presides over a prototype Grail Castle in Branwen. Previous page: The Mass of Pope Gregory the Great.

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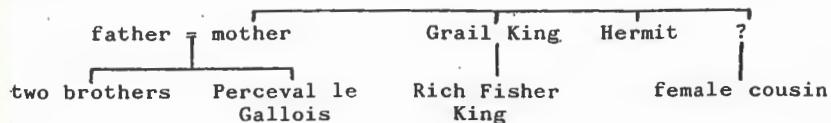
Chrétien's simple description of "a grail" rather than "the Holy Grail", even if it is once called a holy object because it bears the consecrated mass wafer. The plain fact is that the story of Perceval as conceived by Chrétien is rather more concerned with the reactions of the inexperienced young man than with the dream-like marvels that he witnesses. To understand this concern, rather than the historically later obsession with the grail itself, a brief synopsis is called for.

Perceval knows nothing of the outside world, his mother being the centre of his life in a Welsh forest near Snowdon. She deliberately keeps him in ignorance, fearful that he might be drawn to the knightly life that ultimately destroyed his father and two elder brothers. In vain does she defy fate, for the boy leaves her in a deathly faint after he is attracted by the strange new world which has breached his maternal environment. In his encounters with external reality he starts to make the acquaintance of his extended family.

And so it is that after proper training as a knight he tries to return to his mother's home. He instead meets a crippled fisherman who is his mother's nephew, his cousin, though he does not know it. At the fisherman's castle he receives a sword which he is told was destined for him. This was the medieval way of declaring that he was coming into his inheritance, but he still does not take the meaning. He does not ask about a procession which parades before him a lance, candelabra, a grail and a carving dish, and so does not discover that they were being conveyed to his mother's ailing brother, his maternal uncle.

His knightly training has stifled his natural curiosity to the extent that he has unwittingly alienated himself from his kin. Having failed to ask the question, "Whom does the grail serve?" he has missed his first opportunity to be recognised as the heir to the kingdom of the Grail Castle. For displaying such lack of compassion he is cast out from the castle in the morning following. He then meets a cousin (as she informs him) mourning for a dead knight. She bitterly upbraids him for not enquiring after the significance of the bleeding lance and the identity of the person served separately from the grail. Turning his back on his mother was his first mistake, the result of which was his failure to ask the right question which would have healed the Fisher King, redeemed the Grail King and righted other wrongs. She predicts that the sword he has been given will let him down by shattering to pieces.

Later, at Arthur's court, he is again reminded of his failure by a loathly damsel, and he vows that he will unceasingly quest for the lance and the grail. On a Good Friday, five years and many adventures later, he is still searching when he encounters a hermit. The anchorite reveals himself as Perceval's uncle, his mother's brother, and explains at last who it is that is served from the holy grail. More than that, he is taught how to serve God and how to do his duty to other Christian men and women.¹³



Chrétien's account of Perceval's quest stops here, and various continuations and recastings of the tale were made after his death. Wolfram von Eschenbach's Parzival¹⁴ is the most elaborate and consistent, and he too was aware of the hero's gradual discovery of his extended family; in fact the majority of the characters in his account are related to Parzival such that a vast family tree is reconstructed in one edition of the work.¹⁵ In the Welsh version of the tale, Peredur,¹⁶ the family relationships are revealed immediately, however; significantly perhaps the grail is represented by a platter with a severed head on it, which, it is later disclosed, is that of Peredur's cousin awaiting revenge. With Arthur's warband, Peredur then slays the warrior witches of Gloucester who had not only killed Peredur's cousin but had also lamed his uncle. The cousin's severed head has echoes of the execution of Jesus' cousin, John the Baptist, and in another grail romance, Perlesvaus, Gawain wins the sword that beheaded the Baptist, thus gaining a passport to the Grail Castle.¹⁷

This aspect of Perceval's story, the acknowledgment of kin, has been recognised by a few commentators. One writes that "it begins to look as if the mystery of the Grail is a family secret and as though the hero's failure at the Grail Castle was, in effect, a failure to claim his inheritance;" another remarks that "by means of the question Perceval reveals himself to be a descendant and establishes the connection with his ancestors." Carl Jung too saw the importance of Perceval's discovery of family by drawing parallels with his own explorations of kin relationships, especially his uncles and his father. The latter he saw, with compassion, to be a type of infirm Grail King (Wolfram names him Amfortas) whom Jung¹⁸ as a kind of Parzival-figure, had to redeem by his own actions.

To conclude, I would like to suggest that part of the malaise that many individuals, young and old, feel is due to a lack of recognition of where they fit in. Changing moral values and social mobility as well as the so-called generation gap all contribute to a general feeling of alienation. While we all need to fulfil ourselves as individuals, no person is an island. In extended families, clans, tribes and various other social groupings the individual's place in the scheme of things is continually being repeated and reinforced. While there are undoubtedly negative aspects to this, the positive gains are the concern of Chrétien's story. In medieval Wales family genealogies reaching back to the Dark Ages were compiled for this very purpose (and also reconstructed, thus causing confusion for modern scholars!); while Alex Haley's Roots is a modern equivalent, where an American black's quest for his own history leads him to an emotional encounter with his ancestor enshrined in the memory of a villager in The Gambia.

The quest for the grail is a metaphor for seeking a balance between self-fulfilment and being aware of the needs of a community. Achieving the grail may show that the two may not necessarily be incompatible.

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15. Parzival (trans Helen M Mustard and Charles E Passage (Random House 1961) 444-5
16. "Peredur son of Efrawg" in The Mabinogion (trans G Jones and T Jones (Dent 1949)
17. The High Book of the Grail ("Perlesvaus" trans Nigel Bryant, D S Brewer 1978) 61-71
18. Richard Cavendish King Arthur & the Grail (Weidenfeld and Nicolson 1978) 134; Emma Jung op cit 295; C G Jung op cit 241-2

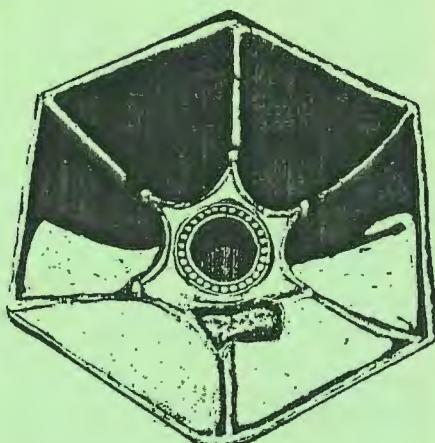
PS

They seek him here, they seek him there... While SOMERSET is planning to celebrate the 800th anniversary of the discovery of their Arthur at Glastonbury in 1191, the ISLE OF MAN tourist board is supporting the American Dr Norma Goodrich's belief that Arthur was a Scottish king born near Carlisle and buried on St Patrick's Isle near Man (Daily Telegraph). Meanwhile David Pykitt, a Pendragon member, is featured in the Burton Mail Weekender section (4.4.87) outlining his solution to the Arthur riddle in the person of St Arthmael or Armel who died peacefully in BRITTANY (look out for a forthcoming article). But in South Wales, Alan Wilson and Baram Blackett are "100%" sure that Arthur is Athruius, buried at the ruined church of St Peter's near Llanharan between Cardiff and Bridgend. (History Today February 1987, 3-4). That damn'd elusive rex quondam! An assessment of all these claims is urgently needed. (Information from Peter Ratazzi, Paul Smith among others.)

Some recent publications for which there is no space, alas, this issue, include Richard Barber's King Arthur: Hero and Legend (Boydell 1986, £12.95); Charles Thomas' Celtic Britain (Thames and Hudson 1986); Chris Barber More Mysterious Wales (David & Charles 1986). Plus related subjects in Andrew Collins' London Walkabout (Earthquest Books 1986), Nigel Pennick's The Cosmic Axis (Runestaff-Old England 1987) and Sid Birchby's Ten Million Rainbows (the "first Newsletter Anthology")--all, with luck, will be reviewed in the near future.



Left: The Antioch Chalice,
Silver framework 5th century



Below: Santo Caliz,
Valencia
Cathedral,
First century
BC?
Right: Sacro Catino, Genoa,
Cathedral of San Lorenzo
First century AD?

