The Monk in the Old Arthurian Romances: The Portrait of the Monk in the Old French and Middle English Arthurian Romances (1171-1471) with a Verification from Twelfth and Thirteenth Century Monasticism

Joseph Battaglia
Loyola University Chicago

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PREFACE

If it is true, as Chateaubriand observes, that "a thing is poetically beautiful in proportion to the antiquity of its origin," then it must be admitted that Christian monachism has some claim to our admiration, for it dates from the early centuries of the Church.

Innumerable have been the studies on monasticism--of its rise, of its spread, of its manifold influences, including that on English literature. Many studies have also been made of the monk as he is actually represented in the pages of modern English literature. But to my knowledge no thorough study has been made of the monk in medieval Arthurian literature.* Students of the Arthurian legend who have not devoted their energies to technical questions of origins, relations, and influences have interested themselves in the more important characters of Arthurian romance--such as Arthur, Guinevere, Merlin, Lancelot, Perceval, and Galahad. The minor (if we ex-

*Charles P. Weaver in his excellent study, The Hermit in English Literature From the Beginnings to 1660, traces the stages of the hermit's literary evolution. He purposes to give "a satisfactory history of the hermit as a figure in English literature" and is, therefore, content as regards Arthurian literature to treat of an identical reference to a hermit only as it occurs in one verse and one prose romance.
cept the monk of La Queste and Perlesvaus) character of the monk has not, it seems, appealed to students of the Arthurian materials. However, if one pieces together all the references to the monks** in these romances, one obtains a definite, albeit incomplete, picture of the medieval monk; a picture which it is interesting to compare with the "original copy" in contemporary monasticism.

Without any delimitation this would, indeed, be a colossal task; yet, given definite and precise limitations the picture is not impaired because the representation of the monk soon became traditional in the Arthurian romances, and is, therefore, very much the same in the Arthurian romances of other languages and of later centuries. Hence, I shall confine myself to the Old French and Middle English Arthurian romances, both verse and prose, written within the three centuries,--1171 (Chretien de Troyes) and 1471 (Malory). I choose this period because it was the achievement of the French to exploit and give shape to the "matter of Britain" (originated by the Celts), and it was on English soil that, after many imitations and paraphrases of the French, the full flower of Arthurian romance made its appearance--namely, Sir Thomas Malory's Morte Darthur.

**In this study the word "monk" is used in the broad sense so as to include the hermit. Cf. Regula Sacra S. Benedicti, Cap. I.
A verification, in part, at least, of the portrait of the monk drawn in these romances can be made by a study of the French and English monks whose lives were cast in the first two centuries of this period—the twelfth and thirteenth—as their manner of life, undoubtedly, served as a pattern to the first romance-writers; and later Arthurian romancers merely perpetuated the tradition.

This study, therefore, aims at the following objectives: firstly, to collect for the first time all the references to the monk in the Old French and Middle English Arthurian romances (1171-1471); secondly, to make a mosaic of these materials and thus give the portrait of the monk in these romances; thirdly, to verify this picture—as far as this is possible—from the several pertinent Rules and Statutes, from biographies, and from the monastic annals, chronicles, and histories treating of twelfth and thirteenth century monachism in France and England.
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CHAPTER I
THE MONK

That the imagination will have to supply many of the lights and shadows in our picture of the monk gleaned solely from a group of Arthurian romances is self-evident. And yet, although every line of the portrait drawn in this and the following two chapters is prompted only by an authenticated reference in a romance of our period (1171-1471), the sketch produced on the canvas is fairly clear and distinct.

HIS HOME

"A monastery," Perceval learns from his mother, "is a most sacred place, full of holy bodies (relics), where they sacrifice the body of Jesus Christ, the Holy Prophet." The abbeys mentioned by name are Glastonbury, Winchester, Galafort, Abbey of the Trinity, Abbey of the Cross, Abbey of the Black Cross, Abbey of La Beale Adventure. The name of

3. J. D. Bruce, Le Morte Arthur, vv. 4014-16.
the Abbey, *Li Secors as Pours*, was changed to *La Petite Aumosne*, because a Scottish king, Helsier by name, traveling *incognito*, received a small dole from the porter of the monastery. 9 Frequently in *La Queste* occurs the phrase "abbey of White Monks," *i.e.* Cistercians. 10

Most of the abbeys lie in some sequestered spot in the forest, 11 one nestles in a valley, 12 another overlooks the sea. 13 Of two Cistercian abbeys it is said that they are surrounded by stout walls of enclosure; 14 one of these has deep moats beyond the wall. 15 A gate, 16 piercing the wall, gives access into the courtyard. 17 At one abbey several towers rise from these walls. 18 Somewhere on the premises is a beautiful monastery garden. 19 Hard by the church the deceased sleep the sleep of death in the abbey cemetery. 20 There is one central altar in the abbey church called "the high altar." 21 In one church an iron grating forms a side

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11. *e.g.* W. H. Miller, *Sir Degarre*, vv. 35-40.
16. *e.g.* Comfort, *ibid.*, p. 34.
chapel in which Mass is celebrated. 22

Various motives are assigned for the founding of abbeys. To commemorate his victory over the five kings, King Arthur builds on the site of the battle a fair abbey and endows it with great livelihood. 23 In memory of the Duchess of Bretagne he erects a church and monastery on the site where this unhappy lady was killed by a giant and where she lay buried. 24 When the same king is near death, his counsellor advises him to found abbeys in France. 25 For his crime of wounding Piers, Symen must burn in an earthly fire in which the heavenly power has constrained him. He prevails upon King Galas of Hocelse to establish a place of religion in order that through the prayers of the monks he might find relief in his sufferings. 26 King Modrails, after being struck blind for trying to see the Grail, retires to a hermitage, turns it into an abbey for White Monks, and richly endows it. 27

22. Comfort, ibid., p. 66.
25. Bruce, ibid., vv. 3403-04.
HIS VOCATION

Instances of kings and nobles retiring to a monastery are not infrequent in the romances. To the abbey which King Modrains founded, come a great number of lords and barons desiring to live there as White Monks till the end of their days. After King Parlan, the Cripple King, had been made healthy and sound, he withdrew into a community of Cistercians. Constant waived his right to succeed his father, King Constantine, in order to enter a monastery. The monk Adragain had been a former knight. A like retirement from secular to spiritual arms is recorded in Lancelot of the Lake.

The religious vocation and subsequent life of the King-Monk Constant, son of King Constantine, may be given there. From the chronicles of Geoffrey of Monmouth and of Layamon we know that he was placed in a monastery by his father "ut monachilem ordinem susciperet"; and from all indications it appears he became a full-fledged monk. In Arthour and

Merlin we read that at the request of his dying father he was forcibly taken from the monastery and made king; from the first day of his reign the people called him, "King Moyne."35 Schooled to a contemplative life, he was wholly unfit to lead an army; and when Vortigern, one of his trusted advisers deserts him, he loses a decisive battle to Angys of Denmark. The unanimous opinion of the princes is that Constant is a weakling, a "bebeling," and that if they had Vortigern for their leader, so calamitous a disaster would not have befallen them.36 They go to Vortigern and complain that the King-Monk, far from being of any help in battle, runs as soon as he sees the sword. "If the monk were dead, I would help you," the traitor promises.37 When the opportunity presents itself, the nobles kill the king.38 Thus does the King-Monk, who left the service of God only under coercion, meet an untimely death.

HIS LIFE

Concerning the life of the monk in the cloister we have very little in the romances if we do not take into account his service to his fellow-men. That the abbot is the highest superior in the monastery we can infer from the fact that he

36. Koelbing, ibid., vv. 162-64.
gives orders to the monk (guest-master) attending on Bors, but more logically from the fact that in the female branch of monasticism, the abbess presides over a meeting of her nuns. We have only two references to the order of the day: Matins are chanted early in the morning; before the hour of Prime, Mass is celebrated in the abbey church. --One other brief glimpse of the daily monastic life—the rule of seniority—is given us in *Arthour and Merlin*: the king commands that the knights should go to battle and to table as do the monks who live in monasteries. --The only suggestion of any wealth in a monastery occurs in *Le Queste*: the monks of the abbey in the valley furnish silk cloth in which to wrap the corpse of Yvain; they erect also a fine tomb for him, inscribing on it his name and the name of him who killed him. --Reference to sanctity of life is very meagre. Bors is directed to the abbot as the worthiest man in the monastery both in rank and in excellence of life; and before Bors departs the abbot, humbly and in a manner indicative of a saint, beseeches him: "Now I beg you to pray on my behalf, for I believe He would hear you more readily

40. Bruce, *op. cit.*., vv. 3624-37.
42. Comfort, *ibid.*., p. 66.
than He would me." Out of love for King Parlan, His good servant, God performs many miracles.

**HIS SERVICE TO MAN**

With the exception of Chretien's allusion to the curriculum of the monastery schools in his description of the mantel-cover embroidered with the four allegorical figures of geometry, arithmetic, music, and astronomy, we do not find the monks in any united work for the world, but only in more individual, though not less important, labor. The monk as confessor, counsellor, and interpreter of knightly adventures we reserve until Chapter Three. Here we shall speak of his hospitality, his care of the sick, and his burial of the dead.

The hospitality of the monks is almost an everyday occurrence in the romances. Doubtless, every knight at some time or other in his errantry stayed at a monastery. We read that on the fifth day of the Quest Galahad stops at a Cistercian abbey. In response to his knocking at the gate some of the monks come out, and with much courtesy help him dismount. He soon discovers that the monks are also host to two other companions of the Round Table--King Bademagus and Yvain, the

46. Comfort, _ibid._, p. 147.
47. Comfort, _ibid._, p. 219.
Avoltres. That night the three of them are regaled with all that the monks can command.49 Under the hospitable roof of the monks the two brothers, Gawain and Gaheriet, are joyfully reunited.50 Seeing that Perceval is a knight-errant the monks gladly come out to welcome him. Knight and horse are cared for as well as the monks can afford.51 Many instances of this alacrity to serve knight-errants occur in La Queste.52 Sir Gawain and his cousin-german, Sir Uwaine, are kindly lodged overnight at an abbey in the forest.53 The happy pair Erec and Enide are triumphantly received at Carnant, where amid the tumultuous ringing of the church bells, they go first of all to the monastery, the monks meeting them with a procession. After praying in the abbey church they go to the palace.54

In Lovelich's Holy Grail a whole army, it seems, comes to impose on the monks. The king of Northumberland with his army is enroute to Galafort. Then,—

Tyl to humber water he Cam Atte laste,  
and Entrede Into A priorye,  
he and Al his compenye.55

From the text we cannot learn what is the reason for their brief sojourn in this priory. They do not stay long because

50. Comfort, ibid., p. 41.  
51. Comfort, ibid., p. 65.  
52. e.g. Comfort, ibid., pp. 161, 190, 211.  
55. Furnivall, op. cit., XLIV, vv. 383-84.
on the same day they come to Galafort to hold a campaign before the walls of the castle. It is possible, even probable, that the troops stop either for refreshments or in order to attend Mass or an Hour of the Divine Office.

In the practice of corporal works of mercy the monks use their knowledge of medicine in caring for sick and wounded knights. Late at night Lancelot leaves Lionel, sorely wounded, at the abbey of La Petite Aumosne. Monks, likewise, care for the wounded King Bademagus and the aged and enfeebled King Modrain. The monks who receive the seriously injured Sir Melyant within their walls first provide for him spiritually, hearing his confession and bringing him Viaticum. Within a month they effect his cure. Unable to save the life of Yvain, mortally wounded, the monks administer the Last Sacraments to him. Other knights made whole by the skill of monks are Sir Belliance, Sir Galehot, and Sir Uwayne, the latter in the Abbey of the Black Cross.

Numerous burials within monastic inclosures occur in the romances. King Arthur inter Sir Bedwere and others slain in battle in the Abbey of Relygoun, and has Masses offered for

58. Comfort, ibid., p. 212
59. Comfort, ibid., p. 53.
them. Monks assist in the obsequies for the slain knight Yvain and Count Hernolx. The prior and monks of Winchester bury the corpse of Gawain with all honor and splendor. Joseph of Arimathea is buried in the abbey of Modrains; the corpse of his son Josephe, though at first interred in the same cloister, is carried by the people of Escoe to a monastery in their own country. Another exhumation and translation occurs in an abbey at the entrance to the country of Gorre, the monks removing the remains of Simeon from the crypt to the sanctuary of the church. At Glastonbury lie Pendragon, Arthur, and Guinevere. After his death in the arms of Galahad the monks bury King Modrains with rights due to a king. Modrain's wife, King Nasciens and his wife, King Bademagus of Gorre, and the squire of Sir Aglovale are also interred within cloistral walls.

67. Bruce, op. cit., vv. 4014-16.
68. Furnivall, Lovelich's Holy Grail, LIV, vv. 139-40.
71. Koelbing, op. cit., vv. 2485-86.
75. Comfort, op. cit., p. 211.
CHAPTER II

THE HERMIT

The portraiture of the hermit in the Arthurian romances is much more complete and detailed than that of the monk in the strict sense. In the Grail romances, especially, there is ever a cell in the background; and it is cause of surprise when Messire Gawain on a certain day rides all day long without finding either hold or hermitage.77

HIS DWELLING

To many the word "hermit" immediately conjures up hidden haunts in the forest or crude caves on the mountain side; and in the romances these are the usual retreats for the solitary. In Le Queste the hermitages are almost all in the forest;78 Yvain finds a hermitage in the forest;79 the hermit who baptizes Label lives in a wood;80 Lancelot is cured of his wounds by a hermit who lives in "a forest grene;"81 Perceval betakes himself to a hermitage in a thicket which is so like a jungle that the path to the house had to be made by knotting together

78. e.g. Comfort, op. cit., pp. 50, 95, 135.
80. Furnivall, op. cit., XXXIII, 371-75.
81. Bruce, op. cit., vv. 952-53.
the branches of the trees and bushes.82 The house of the
hermit-archbishop of Canterbury is atop a rocky mountain;83
Gawain and Hector scale an almost inaccessible height to
reach the lonely dwelling of a hermit;84 two other cells rest
on hills;85 another, in a valley;86 another, at the foot of a
mountain beside a stream.87 But besides these usual sites we
read of a hermit living in a grove quite near a castle;88
Perceval, sailing on the sea, sights two hermitages on an
island beside the sea-shore;89 Baudwin's dwelling is below a
wood, a fair stream flows near-by, and across from it is a
high cliff.90

These hermitages are generally very simple: "a little
house and chapel,"91 "a poor dwelling and a tiny chapel,"92
The chapel or oratory is always mentioned;93 often there is a
garden,94 an orchard,95 or stable96 attached. If a stable
is wanting, one room of the house serves as a stall for the

82. Newell, The Legend of the Holy Grail and the Perceval of
86. Comfort, ibid., p. 22.
91. Comfort, op. cit., p. 95.
93. e.g. Furnivall, op. cit., XV, vv. 365-68; 587-88; 591-94;
horse of the guest-knight. 97 Some of the hermitages, however, are more elaborate: one has a cloister-walk connecting house and chapel; 98 another, "a great chapel with a right fair manor," the latter building used for a guest-house. 99 On the top of a high mountain Lancelot lingers to admire a chapel newly-built, right fair and rich, with a leaden roof, and two golden quoins. Around the chapel is a graveyard. Three separate houses face the chapel. 100 Perceval discovers a colony of hermits residing in twelve separate houses, each with its own chapel. All the buildings surround a graveyard wherein lie twelve dead knights over whom the hermits keep their vigils. 101

The nakedness of the recluse's cell is very marked. The romance writers speak only of a bed 102 (once it is of herbs; 103 once, of grass 104 ) and of a seat. 105 The one exception to this poverty in the cell is the abode of the young solitary, Joseus, which is armed with shield and spear, javelins and habergeon, as a defense against robbers. 106

100. Evans, ibid., Vol. II, p. 133.
102. Bruce, op. cit., vv. 3857; 3867.
The chapel is provided with all necessary furnishings,—a bell calls the worshippers to Mass;¹⁰⁷ there is an altar for the celebration of the Sacrifice;¹⁰⁸ the sacred vestments, called "the robes of the Holy Church,"¹⁰⁹ "the robes of our Lord,"¹¹⁰ "the arms of God,"¹¹¹ are specifically mentioned; crucifixes and images complete the chapel fixtures.¹¹²

As in the case of the abbeys, so also with regard to the hermitages, diverse motives are given for their erection. In thanksgiving for his victory over the giant who killed Elain, Arthur builds a chapel in honor of the Virgin Mary.¹¹³ King Bohort of Gannes rears a church in commemoration of his escape from destruction at the hands of King Cerses.¹¹⁴ To the memory of the renowned hermits Salustine and Ermonies beautiful chapels are built.¹¹⁵ The priest Pharans allows Balaans to construct for him a hermitage with chapel, "his Masse and preieris to seyn Inne there."¹¹⁶ Hermits of the forest build chapels and houses of religion over the holy relics received from Perceval.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁰. Comfort, ibid., p. 66.
¹¹³. Furnivall, Arthur, vv. 397-402.
¹¹⁵. Furnivall, Lovelich's Holy Grail, XVI, vv. 571-78.
HIS VOCATION

That in the days of chivalry, when a knight had finished his career of warfare and adventure, he was supposed to crown his earthly life by retiring to a hermitage and spending his last days in prayer and meditation, can be abundantly verified in the romances. After excommunicating Sir Modred, the Archbishop of Canterbury has to flee to save his life. Aware that mischievous war is afoot, he goes nigh unto Glastonbury, where in a solitary place he lives as a hermit in poverty and holy prayers. Here, within the space of six months the Archbishop clothes seven knights with the religious habit. Bedwere is the first to join him, for on discovering that Arthur has been buried in this place, his only wish is to live near-by in fasting and penance in order to pray for the king. Lancelot, and soon after him five other companions of the Round Table, beg and receive admittance into the holy house. All lead a God-pleasing life. Even after the death of Lancelot Erec comes to associate himself with this little community praying for their former brother-in-arms and for Queen Guinevere.

The vocation and religious life of Lancelot, which are both closely bound up with his former guilty lover, Queen Guinevere,

118. C. W. French, Tennyson's Idylls of the King, p. 397.
119. J. C. Dunlop, History of Fiction, p. 68.
are related with slight variations by three different romancers.

In the Vulgate version of The Death of King Arthur we read that Lancelot, on returning from exile, visits Guinevere—now a nun at the convent of Almesbury and implores her to accompany him to France. Upon her refusing to relinquish the religious state, Lancelot resolves to abandon the world. Years later he hears of her death; and, chastened by penance, he also dies a holy death.122

In the prolix English Le Morte Arthur of the late fourteenth century the romantic element in Lancelot's conversion is greatly heightened. After the death of Arthur the unhappy knight hastens westward in search of the convent wherein the Queen is a nun. In the presence of the abbess and community Guinevere bids her former lover to return to his kingdom and take a wife. He declines to follow her advice and avows that he will share her destiny, will enter some religious house, and pray ever especially for her.123 True to his word he does withdraw into the secluded company of the hermit-archbishop with whom he spends his remaining days.124

In Malory's version in the twenty-first book of Le Morte Darthur Lancelot survives the queen. In a vision granted him thrice in one night he is charged in remission of his sins to

123. Bruce, op. cit., vv. 3624-37.
124. Bruce, ibid., vv. 3780-93; 3810-15.
hasten to Almesbury, where he will find Guinevere dead. He must with his companions convey the corpse to the tomb of Arthur and bury it at his side. When he arrives at the nunnery and beholds the pallid countenance of his queen, he recites the Dirige and offers Mass as he is now a priest. The funeral cortege wends its way from Almesbury to Glastonbury. The archbishop himself sings the Mass of Requiem with great devotion, while all the other seven hermits say Mass privately for her. As the body is being lowered into the grave, Lancelot swoons and remains unconscious until revived by one of his confreres, who reproaches him for displeasing God by such manner of sorrow making.125

Still others hide themselves in way-side shrines in the forest,—the Hermit-king, a knight of the court of King Uther Pendragon,127 a knight in the service of King Bohort of Gannes,128 Perceval in La Queste.129

We have already seen some of the reasons which motivate the choice of the heremitical life by knight and noble. The archbishop of Canterbury seeks refuge from the anger of Modred,130 Sir Bedwere desires to pray and do penance for his

former liege;¹³¹ Lancelot and his companions wish to pray for their former Queen.¹³²

A similar motive governs the sojourn of the priest Pharan in the place where the twelve brothers were murdered; as his external work he nurses the wounded Piers.¹³³ The thirteen men who are baptized in the Castle of Trial scatter to all corners in strange forests in order to subject their bodies to penance in reparation for their sin in maintaining a false law and also in order "to win the love of the Savior of the world."¹³⁴ The two Welsh knights who by way of gay adventure had entered the sacred chapel in the castle of the deceased Perceval come forth changed men. Clad in hair shirts and eating nought save roots, they live a vigorous life in the desert; yet they are exceedingly cheerful and happy, and to all who ask them whereof they rejoice, they reply: "Go thither where we have been, and you shall know the wherefore."¹³⁵ "For great goodness" Baudwin of Brittany forsakes many lands and hies his way to willful poverty.¹³⁶ Josuías, too, renounces "all for the love of God and (is) fain to set his body in banishment for Him."¹³⁷

¹³¹ Bruce, op. cit., vv. 3550-65.
¹³² Bruce, ibid., vv. 3810-25.
¹³³ Furnivall, Lovelich's Holy Grail, LI, vv. 263-73.
¹³⁴ Evans, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 36.
¹³⁵ Evans, ibid., Vol. II, pp. 278-79.
In the pages of the various romances we become rather intimately acquainted with the private life of the hermits. Their interior joy radiates from their countenances. A squire of Perceval tells Gawain that he (the squire) will never have true joy until he has entered into a hermitage to save his soul. A young hermit permits Lancelot to look beyond the veil and to see the happiness of his life: "Sir, of this only do I repent me, that I came not hither ere now." After a spiritual conference with Lancelot a solitary sleeps but little, for his mind is "more upon heavenly, than earthly things." In requesting Bors to pray to God for him when he comes to the Holy Grail, a certain recluse manifests a sign (of course, not an infallible one) of holiness. -- Perfect stability in his house for forty years is no mean proof of an anchorite's sanctity. The prophecies of various hermits and the miracles God was pleased to work through their instrumentality (see below pp. 25-27) are so many seals upon their sanctity of life.

That some of the hermits were well-educated no one can gainsay: one had been an archbishop; many of them were priests (e.g. Pharans).
The hermit in Degarre is competent to instruct a boy in clerical things.\textsuperscript{146}

Only of the King-Hermit do we read that he labors with his hands.\textsuperscript{147}

Two instances of marked sentimentality may be given at this juncture. The words of an old white-haired hermit concerning the sword of Galahad as also his crocodile tears make him appear sentimental; nor does his advice to the knight quite redeem him.\textsuperscript{148} The hermit Lancelot's unreasonable mourning after the death of Queen Guinevere is unworthy of any man—much less of one who has severed worldly ties. For six weeks he eats and drinks hardly anything, and lies groveling on the tomb of Arthur and Guinevere.\textsuperscript{149}

Prayer, the very breath of the religious life, occupies a considerable portion of the solitary's day. A little after day-break he rises to serve God and all the saints, chanting Matins and then celebrating Mass.\textsuperscript{150} Although he probably fulfills the injunction of the psalmist to praise God seven times in the day, we actually find him, however, at only one other Hour, namely, Vespers. In two instances he subjoins the Vespers of the Virgin to the Vespers of the day.\textsuperscript{151}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{146} Miller, \textit{op. cit.}, v. 268.
\item \textsuperscript{147} Evans, \textit{op. cit.}, Vol. I, p. 171.
\item \textsuperscript{148} Comfort, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 201.
\item \textsuperscript{149} Rhys, \textit{op. cit.}, Vol. II, p. 398.
\item \textsuperscript{150} Comfort, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 135. Bruce, \textit{op. cit.}, vv. 3748-54. Miller, \textit{op. cit.}, vv. 233-36.
\item \textsuperscript{151} Comfort, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 42, 107.
\end{itemize}
Perlesvaus we come across a joint service before the Holy Grail: on three days in the week the hermits of the surrounding forest come in procession to the Castle of the Souls. Led by the cross-bearer, who is clad completely in white, the rest, bearing lighted candles in their hands, follow in single file. They sing "with sweet voices" as they proceed. When all are in their places in the castle-chapel, they ring the bell and begin "a service, most holy and most glorious," one of their number chanting the Mass. The Sacrifice over, they disperse, each going his way to his own solitude.\textsuperscript{152}

The exterior appearance of the recluse in the romances will not fail to arrest the attention of even the most casual observer. We notice first a distinctive dress. Bedwere begs the required habit—"poor clothes"—from the hermit-archbishop.\textsuperscript{153} Lancelot, likewise, is invested with the habit by the archbishop;\textsuperscript{154} and his five companions are similarly clothed.\textsuperscript{155} Salustine wears a black habit;\textsuperscript{156} Joseus, a grey cape over his black tunic.\textsuperscript{157} Sometimes the reference is simply, "dressed in religious garb."\textsuperscript{158}

\textsuperscript{152} Evans, ibid., Vol. II, p. 112-14.
\textsuperscript{154} Bruce, ibid., vv. 3780-93.
\textsuperscript{155} Bruce, ibid., vv. 3810-25.
\textsuperscript{156} Furnivall, \textit{Lovelich's Holy Grail}, XV, vv. 641-42.
\textsuperscript{157} Evans, ibid., Vol. II, p. 47.
\textsuperscript{158} e.g. Comfort, ibid., p. 131.
In *La Queste* a hermit speaks of a rule forbidding the members of his Order to wear linen shirts.159

At the Castle of Beards, where as a toll knights are shorn of their beards, an attendant tells Lancelot that they have sore need of beards, for hermits in the forest make hair-shirts of them.160

From the emaciated appearance of some of these worthy men we can see that they live a very austere and mortified life. The men who live with the hermit-archbishop are so wasted that they can hardly be recognized:

So lytell they wexe of lyn And leryrs, 
Them to know it was stronge.161

Their long beards added to their fearsome mien.162 Of Salustine who had cured her sick mother, Sarracynte says:

For Certein he hath A long berd and An hore; 
And Euere whanne I lokked vpon his berd 
Sekir, Modir, I scholde ben Aferd.163

Usually the hermit is an old, old man, white-haired164 or bald;165 but one notable exception is the youthful Joseus, of whom his uncle Josuias says:

Although he be a hermit, no knight is there in Great Britain of his heart and hardiment (physical vigor). 166

Numerous passages in the romances attest to the spare larder of the solitary. Perceval receives as a part of his penance to eat at the frugal board of a hermit for two days. On the first night, which is Good Friday, the holy man sets before him only water of the well and lettuce seasoned with cress. Salustine lives for thirty-six years in a forest eating nothing "but Erbes and Rotes that in Erthe were," and has never eaten anything prepared by human hands. 168 Ermonies eats only of food that God gives him; 169 another, whose name we do not know, eats only of what God has "loaned" to him. 170 The haggard appearance of Lancelot is attributed to his sickness as well as to the "poor food" of the hermit who has cared for him. 171 The hermit-archbishop and Bedwere live in fasting and great abstinence. 172 Gawain and Hector find a hermit plucking nettles for his table, "like one who has tasted of no other food for many a day." 173 A hermit lays bread and water before Bors saying that such is the meat of celestial knights, and not heavy food which leads men to luxury and mortal sin. 174

169. Furnivall, ibid., XVI, vv. 563-64.
On two occasions in *Le Queste* a hermit breaks his fast only in the evening when he partakes of some bread and beer.175 In the *Perlesvaus* a recluse treats Sir Gawain to green-meat and barley with water of the spring for drink.176 Thanks to the strange conduct of a madman the hermit in *Ywain and Gawain* enjoys a more palatable fare. The demented Ywain, naked and with a bow in his hand, comes to the house of the worthy man, who, greatly frightened and wishing to conciliate the idiot, puts out bread and water on the window. Ywain takes it and leaves in exchange some animal he has killed in the forest. The hermit takes the animal, prepares it for his meal, sells the skin in the city, and with the money buys better bread. This daily bartering endures for some years.177

Although the hermits live abstemiously, a very few of them have some property, and most of them have a servant.178 When the archbishop of Canterbury seeks asylum in a hermitage, he brings with him gold and silver;179 he is in a position, consequently, to supply the monastic habit to the seven knights who come to him;180 from the women who bear to his place of retreat the corpse of King Arthur he receives an offering of a

179. Bruce, *op. cit.*, vv. 3550-60.
180. Bruce, *ibid.*, vv. 3561-65; 3780-93; 3810-25.
hundred tapers and more than a hundred pounds. 181 Frequently the solitary has a horse or mule; 182 Perceval donates the horse and arms of the knight Hardy to the hermit who has provided that dying knight with the Last Sacraments. 183

Prophecies, visions, and miracles are not unknown things in the lives of the hermits. The solitary living near Trebes and who baptized Lancelot predicted great good of him, declaring that he would be the flower of chivalry. 184 On the day of Pentecost Nasciens foretells that the Holy Grail will appear the same day in King Arthur's palace and nourish the companions of the Round Table. 185 In explaining a vision for Gawain a recluse prophesies Arthur's war against Lancelot as also his death in his encounter with Mordred. 186 Another assures Bors that he will sit, together with two other companions of the Round Table, at the table of the Holy Grail. 187 All these prophecies are fulfilled to the letter.

While asleep the hermit-archbishop frightens his companions by loud laughing. They awaken him and learn that in a vision he saw an army of angels bearing Lancelot to Heaven.

The brethren go directly to Lancelot's bed, and find him dead. Ermonies, "the man in black," performs so many miracles that his reputation for holiness is known far and wide. Moys is released from the power of the devil by the prayers of a hermit. After the baptism of Gawain, in answer to the prayers of the officiating hermit, the infant's namesake, God had conferred on the newly-baptized a wonderful gift: Gawain's strength always increases towards mid-day, and he becomes fresh and vigorous again. The attempt to murder by the sword and by fire the uncle of Agaran is stayed by the invisible power of God; as a proof that the hermit has died because it was the will of God, the flames burn neither his flesh nor his clothes. At the tombs of two hermits of Sarras and Obery "grete Myracles" are worked daily.

The death of the holy solitaries is often attended by many supernatural happenings. Scarcely has Sarracynte left the cell of Salustine, then she hears sweet music and sees three wonderful beings of light come down upon the clouds to his chapel; a half mile farther on she meets the "man in black" (Ermonies), who, knowing by a revelation of the death of Salustine, informs her of the same. Three angels have carried the

190. Furnivall, ibid., L, vv. 351-60.
soul of the holy man to the throne of God.\footnote{194} In a wayside shrine whither he has repaired to pray God that he be reformed, King Arthur is a silent witness at the judgment of the hermit Calixtus who has just expired. Many devils and angels are contending over the soul of the deceased. The devils, making a great noise with their bass voices, rejoice in lieu of the judgment which will soon be given in their favor. Then the voice of a Lady, speaking so sweetly and clearly, says:

"Begone from hence, for no right have ye over the soul of this good man, whatsoever he may have done aforetime, for in my Son's service and mine is he taken, and his penance he hath done."

To this the devils assent but plead that the dead man had been a murderer and a robber for forty years or more and only a hermit for five years. But the Lady reaffirms her first words, and while the devils go their way all discomfited and aggrieved, "the sweet Mother of our Lord God taketh the soul of the holy man, and so commendeth it to the angels and archangels that they might present thereof to her dear Son in Paradise." And triumphantly singing the \textit{Te Deum laudamus}, the procession, led by the "Holy Lady," wings its flight heavenwards.\footnote{195}

Two violent deaths of recluses are recounted in the romances. The hermit-king Pelles is slain after celebrating Mass by one Aristot, out of spite for Perceval, the holy man's nephew.\footnote{196} Another, "a venerable old man," tries by gentle...
admonition to save Bors from his infuriated brother Lyonel; but failing this, he lies close upon the body of Bors. When Lyonel sees this, he draws his sword and strikes the worthy man so hard that he breaks his neck. Without any hesitancy we may regard this hermit as a martyr of charity.\textsuperscript{197}

HIS SERVICE TO MEN

Pastoral Nature

The work of the hermit in behalf of his fellowmen may be distinguished into that of a pastoral and that of a non-pastoral nature.

One of the very first duties of religious is to pray for others; and in this the recluses of the romances are not remiss. The dying mother of Sarracynte bids her daughter to ask Salustine to pray for the repose of her soul.\textsuperscript{198} Having seen in a dream the dire peril of a certain castle-lord, a hermit prays for his welfare.\textsuperscript{199} Pharans prays for the fratricide of Chanaan; Piers also seeks the worthy man's prayers.\textsuperscript{200} In the Perlesvaus we meet three hermits and their clerks, who, in alternate choirs, daily chant psalms for the dead Queen Guinevere; daily, too, they offer up Mass for her.\textsuperscript{201} Sir Bedwerek and his five brethren continue even after the death of Lancelot to pray for King

\textsuperscript{197}. Comfort, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 153-54.
\textsuperscript{198}. Furnivall, \textit{Lovelich's Holy Grail}, XV, vv. 53-58.
\textsuperscript{199}. Furnivall, \textit{ibid.}, XLV, vv. 333-51.
\textsuperscript{200}. Furnivall, \textit{ibid.}, LI, vv. 263-73.
Arthur, Guinevere, and Lancelot. While Perceval is besieging the unlawful possessors of the Grail Castle, the thirteen solitaries pray for his success.

Hermits dwelling in pagan lands grasp the opportunity to convert some of the heathens with whom they come in contact. From Sarracynte, the wife of King Evalach, we learn of her own and her mother's conversion. Her mother, the Duchess of Obery, had long been ill from an issue of blood; and after spending over fifteen thousands besants on doctors, had resolved to go to the holy hermit, Salustine, who lived in Obery. She begged his help and prayers, promising him silver and gold, or "What thing on Erthe thou bidde me do." Salustine, desirous only that she would believe, had told her that belief in God would heal her. She made an act of faith; and Salustine, after praying, bade her rise in the name of the Trinity. Cured, she arose, confessed God's might, and begged for baptism. "Thanne the Goode Man hire Cristened Anon there." A little later she had brought her daughter (Sarracynte) to Salustine, and had asked her to worship Him who had cured her mother. Sarracynte, thinking that her mother meant the hermit, had refused because of his beard. The hermit laughed at this and informed her of whom her mother spoke. Sarracynte, then, declared that she would love God

if he were fairer than her brother. A most beautiful person appeared to her; and she consented to be baptized by Salustine.

And Anon there he Cristenede Me
In the holi Name of the Trenite

Salustine, then, had instructed Sarracynte and her mother concerning Christ's death, resurrection, ascension, the descent of the Holy Ghost, and the command to celebrate the Sacrament.

And there made he bat holy Sacrament
With hy devocioun and good Entent;
And to my Modir there it tho took,
And sche it Resceyvede, & not forsook
Thanne After to me he Cam Anon,
And in My Mowth he wold han it don.205

Ermonies, the successor of Salustine, baptizes the two servants of Sarracynte "In the Name Of the fadir & soni & holi gost."206

Several other conversions of heathens occur in the romances. The hermit Denis baptizes the thirteen men in the Castle of Trial.207 After a long conference on holy things a hermit receives King Label into the Church.208 Pharans converts Balaans, who had built for him his chapel and dwelling.209 It is a hermit, too, who pours the waters of regeneration on the heads of King Lamet and daughter.210 Kalafes, the pagan king of the city of Naante, is baptized by the holy hermit Alphasem, after whom he is named.211

205. Furnivall, ibid., XV, vv. 305-58. An almost identical account of these two baptisms occurs in W. W. Skeat's Joseph of Arimathie, vv. 621-667.
Besides these baptisms of pagans the hermits baptize also the children of Christians. Calling it Merlin, "a godes name," Blase baptizes the incubus-child born to one of his penitents, and thus retrieves it from the power of the demons. 212 King Arthur, the off-spring of King Uther Pendragon and Queen Igraine, is christened by the solitary Antor. 213

Lancelot 214 and Gawain 215 are also enrolled among the ranks of Christians by hermits of the forest. The story of the baptism of Degarre ("Egarre", almost lost) is romance at its height. Against her will the daughter of the King of Little Brittany conceives and bears a child from a fairy-knight. Determined to expose it, she sends it with a friend into the forest; on the doorstep of a hermitage the friend places the crib in which there are also a sum of money and a letter directing that the child be baptized. Early in the morning the cries of the little foundling awaken the good hermit.

The holi man his dore vndede,
And fond the cradel in the stede,
He tok vp the clothes anon,
And biheld the litel grom;
He tok the letter, and radde wel sone....
And for joie he rong his bell....
And cristned the child with gret honour;
In the name of the Trinite
He hit nemnede Degarre. 216

216. Miller, op. cit., vv. 218-52.
That the numerous hermit-priests afford ample opportunity to the knight-errants to assist at Holy Mass need scarcely be remarked. Erec, on the morning of a tournament, as soon as dawn breaks, repairs to a hermit's chapel for Mass; the "triumvirate", Galahad, Perceval, and Bors tarry at a hermitage to attend a Mass offered up in honor of the Holy Ghost. On two different occasions in the anchorage-chapel of a recluse Perceval hears Mass offered up by her hermit-chaplain.

Besides administering Holy Communion during Mass, the solitaries also reserve the Sacred Species in order that the dying can be fortified by the Holy Viaticum. The hermits are thus able to provide the mother of Sarracynte and the sister of Perceval for their journey into eternity.

The most famous burial in all romantic literature is that of King Arthur and Queen Guinevere in the hermitage of the exiled-Archbishop of Canterbury. The latter relates to Sir Bedwere:

Abowte mydnyght were ladys here,  
In world ne wyste I what they were;  
Thys body they broght vppon a bere  
And beryed it with woundys sore;

Besavntis offred they here bryght,
I hope an C poumd and more,
And bade me pray bothe day and nyght
For hym that is buryed in these moldys hore

Vnto ower lady bothe day And nyght.
That she hys sowle helpe sholde.223

When Guinevere dies in the convent at Almesbury hermits come

And forthe they bare hyr theym by-twene,
And beryed hyr with masse full merry
By syr Arthur, as I yow mene,
Now hyght there chapell glassynbery,
An abbay full Ryche, of order clene.224

In the fifteenth century Morte Arthure the obsequies for Arthur are very elaborate:

The baronage of Bretayne thane, bechopes and othire,
Graythes theme to Glaschenbery with gloppynnande hertes,
To bery thare the bolde kynge, and brynge to the erthe,
With alle wirchipe and welthe pat any wy scholde.
Throly belles thay rynge, and Requiem syngys,
Dosse messes and matynys with mournande notes,
Relygeous reveste in theire riche copes
Pontyficalles and prelates in precyouse wedys.225

In Chretien's Lancelot we find a solitary, the custodian of a chapel and cemetery in which there are beautiful tombs destined (so the inscriptions read) for many famed and cherished knights,—Gawain, Yvain, and others.226 Hermits sing the

223. Bruce, op. cit., vv. 3538-47.
224. Bruce, ibid., vv. 3954-61.
225. Perry, Morte Arthure, vv. 4329-36.
Requiem Mass and bury the mother and sister of Perceval. 227 King Bademagus inters with royal honors the mortal remains of Melyant in a hermitage. 228 The knight Perin de Mount-beliard, slain before a hermitage by the knight Garlon, is buried in the adjoining churchyard by the hermit and the knight Balin. 229 The religious confreres of Lancelot remove his corpse to Joyous Gard, where, after obsequies for fifteen days, they lay him to rest in the choir. 239

The account of the pastoral ministrations of the hermit does not end here. His labor in a few individual cases must still be noted.

Twice he acts as a peacemaker: Ogrin aids the two lovers Tristam and Ysolt to make peace with King Mark. 231 The hermit-king separates Lancelot and Perceval, who, unknown to each other, are contending in deadly conflict. 232

The hermit Amustans, sometime court-chaplain of King Arthur, helps him to unravel his marital tangle, deciding that Queen Guinevere is his lawful wife. By gentle persuasions Amustans prevails upon the false Guinevere to make a clean breast of her duplicity. For a penance he imposes on her to repeat what she

231. R. S. Loomis, The Romance of Tristan and Ysolt, p. 162.
told him before Arthur and his barons in order that all might see the justice of the decision. This she does difficult as it is. Since Bertholai has already told Arthur of his own deceit in the matter, the king is at last able to solve his matrimonial troubles. And when Queen Guinevere maintains, that, owing to Arthur's sentence of death against her, she is free to marry again, Amustans upholds the marriage-bond, declaring that she is not free but that she must return to Arthur and leave any punishment to the Church, which will see that justice be meted out to her. 233

The concern and solicitude of the hermit Blase, confessor and adviser to the unfortunate mother of Merlin is told and retold in the various romances. 234 A summary of this episode follows:

Aware that the devil is at work in a particular family, Blase goes to the two remaining sisters and urges them to be virtuous, but only the older of the two heeds his exhortations. He warns her above all things never to give way to impulses of wrath, for in such moments she will be at the mercy of the devil. She must cross herself before going to bed and always keep a light burning. The girl obeys, and for two years leads a good life until one day her dissolute sister accuses her of illicit relations with her confessor, and also beats her. The

233. Sommer, op. cit., Vol. IV, pp. 75-82.
unhappy victim angrily withdraws to her own room, and in her excitement before going to rest, forgets to say her prayers and to bless herself. Seizing his opportunity the fiend cohabits with her whilst she is asleep. Remembering the occurrence the next morning as a dream she tells her confessor all. Blase is at first incredulous; when, however, he is convinced of her strange story, he urges her to continue her virtuous life, gives her holy water to drink, makes the sign of the cross upon her, and commends her to God. When her pregnancy is discovered and she is arrested, Blase persuades the judges not to put her to death at once for this offense, but to wait until after the birth of the child. Immediately after its birth, he baptizes it, calling it Merlin. In such wise is "The Council of the Demons" brought to nought, for Merlin inherits his father's preternatural powers but not his wickedness.235

Non-pastoral Nature.

In addition to their pastoral labors the hermits are of the greatest service to their fellow men in various other ways. Chief among these latter are their hospitality, their care of the sick and wounded, and their aid in the conquest of the Grail-Castle.

In Chapter Three we shall see many examples of hospitality

plus real help given; here we wish to list acts of hospitality, pure and simple. In the *Perlesvaus* a hermit lodges Gawain and a damsel over-night.\(^{236}\) Joseus provides, in the best way he can for Lancelot's stay with him.\(^{237}\) His dwelling becomes, in fact, the trysting-place of Sirs Gawain, Perceval, and the Knight of the White Arms.\(^{238}\) In *La Queste* Lancelot accepts a solitary's invitation to be his guest for three days; before his departure the worthy man provides him with a horse, shield, lance, and sword, all of which he had secured from his own brother who is a knight.\(^{239}\) Other knight-errants to enjoy the hospitality of a solitary's lonely retreat are Galahad,\(^{240}\) Perceval, and Bors,\(^{241}\) and Tristam, the last named protracting his visit into ten days.\(^{242}\)

Of all the knights of the Round Table the one on whom the hermits lavish the greatest amount of medical attention is Lancelot of the Lake, the son of King Ban of Benoic and Queen Elaine; and always do we find identical accounts of one and the same instance in the several romances. Hard by a hermitage Lancelot is severely by a wild boar. Maddened by his wound

\(^{239}\) Comfort, *op. cit.*, p. 57.
he threatens the life of the hermit who runs to render "first-aid" to him. Undaunted, the worthy man secures the aid of a passing knight and his men, who carry Lancelot to the little hut, where in a short time he is completely restored. On another occasion when pierced in the back by a random arrow and unable to pull it out, Lancelot seeks out a hermit, who with tender compassion extracts the missile. Severely wounded in the tourney at Winchester, Lancelot asks Sir Lavaine to carry him to the hermit Baudwin, "a full noble surgeon and a good leech." The hermit quickly staunchs the bleeding and makes him drink good wine. In less than a month owing to the skill of Baudwin (and the care of the fair maiden of Astolat) Lancelot is restored to health. One day, however, Sir Bors and Sir Lavaine abetting him, he essays fully armed, to ride his steed, and bursts open the healing wound. On his return from the forest Baudwin is very angry to find the knight in this plight, but saying little, he starts anew his medical treatments. Hermits, also attend upon the wounded knights Perceval, Palomides, and Epinogris.

It is the hermit-king who encourages his nephew Perceval to undertake the conquest of the Grail-Castle and to depose its unlawful possessor, the King of Castle Mortal. The old man's discourse is very characteristic of a romance:

*Fair nephew two lions are there at the entry of the gateway... Put your trust in the white, and look at him whenever your force shall fail you; and he will look likewise at you in such sort that straightway you shall know his intent by the will and pleasure of our Saviour.*

On his way to the Castle Perceval meets thirteen hermits ready to leave the country seized by the felon king and flee into exile. He prevails upon them to remain, promising--by God's help--to defend them and make them safe. He asks them to pray for him to God that He might deign to grant him back that which by right is his own, because since the death of King Fisherman and of his own mother, he is next heir to the Castle. And so, before he begins the attack the hermits bless him and commend him to God. During the siege one of their number, the youthful but powerful Joseus, is of the greatest assistance to Perceval in his hand-to-hand struggle with the twenty-seven knights and the wicked king. When at last the king and his allies have fallen, the hermits and Perceval enter into the master-hall of the Castle amid the chanting of *Gloria in excelsis* in the inner chapel; and entering into this chapel, they make their orisons and pray the Saviour of the world to restore swiftly to them the most Holy Grail and the sacred
hallows that were wont to be therewithin, whereby they might be comforted. It does return, and the lance and the sword (of St. John) do bleed. 249

Yet other diverse services do these lonely men of the forest render to whosoever they are able. To Merlin, who had been baptized by him, Blase is "maister Blays." 250 He is confessor, counsellor, and secretary to the enchanter. After the trial of his mother whom he vindicates, Merlin, though not yet three years old, dictates to the learned clerk an account of Joseph of Arimathea and his companions, of the Holy Grail, and of his own origin. 251 At frequent intervals throughout his eventful life Merlin visits his master who has retired to Northumberland, and dictates to him detailed accounts of Arthur's many wars. 252 During his last visit (which lengthens into eight days) Blase vainly endeavors to persuade him from visiting Viviane, who, as it turns out, Dalila-like, extracts from him the secret of his witchcraft and imprisons him forever in the forest of Brocelecande. 253

Koelbing, op. cit., vv. 117-88.
The hermit who baptizes Degarre takes the child to his own married sister living in the neighboring city, and has her to rear the boy for ten years; from then until Degarre's twentieth year he himself instructs the boy in "clerkes lore." Adragain, a knight before he donned the monastic cowl, informs Queen Elaine, both of whom have retired to the cloister, that their sons--Lancelot, Lionel, and Bohort--were alive and in safe but alien custody. At their request he journeys to Arthur's court, seeking and obtaining that lord's promise to effect the release of the three youths from the power of Claudas.

Joseus enables Perceval to travel incognito by loaning to him a shield from his hermitage. On another day he warns Lancelot to be on his guard against the kinsmen of the four thieves whom he hanged. Similarly, a hermit of the Deep Forest cautions Perceval to be wary lest he fall into the hands of the knights lying in wait to kill him.

254. Miller, op. cit., vv. 257-68.
255. Miller, ibid., vv. 285-86.
Hermits Win the Confidence and Devotion of People

Because the hermits work good to all men, doing so much both for body and soul, they win their esteem and confidence, their love and devotion. A valet singles out a hermit as "the best and most upright man in this country." The endearing name, "maister Blays," shows the love and devotion of Merlin for Blase. Before Degarre goes into the world to look for his relatives, he thanks on his knees his benefactor, the kind hermit, for all the good things he has done for him; he also gives the good man half of the gold which his mother had put into his cradle when he was exposed. Both separate weeping. The confidence the people repose in these humble men and the influence they exert is clearly seen in the case of Blase and Merlin's mother. He becomes the confidant and adviser to the two sisters. When the one falls into the snares of Satan and is arraigned on charge of prostitution, the hermit's wise pleading of the case stays any sentence for two and a half years after the birth of Merlin. As the day for the trial approaches, the young mother sends for Blase. Before the court he affirms the truth of that which Merlin, the youthful prodigy, says to defend his

264. Koelbing, ibid., vv. 943-64.
Sarracynte is full of confidence that Salustine, so intimate with Christ, can predict anything before it happens; and, indeed, he had predicted to her the death of her brother.²⁶⁷

The fact that whenever extraordinary and mysterious adventures befall the knights and they have recourse to the monks and hermits proves that they place the utmost confidence in these men of God. But this leads us to our next chapter.

²⁶⁶ Koelbing, ibid., vv. 1233-52.
²⁶⁷ Furnivall, Lovelich's Holy Grail, XV, vv. 435-44.
CHAPTER III

THE MONK AND HERMIT

AS CONFESSOR AND COUNSELLOR

Without doubt the most important single office of the monks and hermits in the Arthurian romances is that of confessor and counsellor. In this capacity, particularly in some of the Grail romances, they pervade the whole story, influencing and guiding the actions of the chief characters. They invest with a new significance the adventures of Arthur and his knights in sylvan shrines, in eyrie castles, at awful tombs, and with lorn ladies. All these strange and baffling adventures they interpret as mere trials of that faith which must survive all trials along the way of life, and as tests of moral and spiritual strength. 268

The hermit Nasciens by his interpretation of the Quest of the Holy Grail as the search for God determines all the assembled knights of the Round Table to set out on the Quest without wife or friend. 269 This is the only instance of a monk influencing all the knights at one time. The cases of single influence we shall take up as they occur in the individual career of Arthur or one of his knights.

269. Comfort, ibid., p. 15.
At the entrance to the hermitage chapel of St. Augustine King Arthur is stayed by an invisible power, forcing him to hear Mass from there. After the hermit has finished his Mass, he comes out to the king, and tells him that his sins and offenses against God and St. Augustine prevent him from entering the shrine while the Holy Sacrifice was in progress. Bluntly he accuses the King for being an example of evil-doing to all the world instead of an example of well-doing, of largesse, and of honor. When Arthur protests that he is resolved to reform, the man of God concludes, rather summarily:

God grant you may amend your life in such sort that you may help to do away with the evil Law that is made new by the crucifixion of the Holy Prophet.270

In the prose Lancelot of the Vulgate Cycle a solitary rebukes Arthur in no uncertain terms for honoring the rich and neglecting the poor. True repentance, he avers, can alone restore him to the love of God. After the king's confession the hermit gives him most wise counsel:

He is to go and stay in all the towns of his kingdom and gain the love of his people, both high and low. A good king wins the love of his people by humility, and the love of God by righteousness.... Sit with the poor, learn to know them, and let them know you. Use discretion in distributing gifts: to kings, dukes, and barons give luxurious jewels and silks; to the rich man, what pleases him; to the poor, what is good and useful.... The giver ought to have as much pleasure as he who receives the gift. Nobody ever perished by largesse. If thou doest as I tell you, thou wilt gain honor, the hearts of thy people, the love of God.

At Arthur's request the good man also sheds light on the

cryptic metaphors of the clerks:

The water is the world; the lion is Jesus, born of
the Virgin; the physician without medicine is God.
By the flower is meant the flower of flowers from
which sprang the fruit which sustains all. This
fruit fed the people in the desert; and on this
fruit the church now subsists day by day. The
flower is the Holy Virgin, the Mother of God; the
fruit is Christ. All other flowers fade and per­
ish; she is everlasting. By her alone canst thou
be saved. If thou honorest this flower, thou wilt
be preserved against all perils.271

In Chretien's poem, Perceval, who had promised his mother
to go dutifully and gladly to church and monastery,272 so far
forgets himself that he remembers God no longer and during five
years enters no monastery, nor adores God or His holy cross.
But one Good Friday he meets three knights and ten dames coming
from the cell of a hermit. This chance meeting and the con­
versation which follows prompts Perceval to seek out the man of
God. Deeply contrite, and the hermit gently exhorting, he lays
bare his life of sin. On learning his name, the holy man tells
Perceval that he has been punished for a sin of which he was
not aware, namely,—his desertion of his mother caused her to
grieve to death.

Therefore, because of thy sin, naught didst thou
inquire respecting the lance or the Grail; there­
fore hath much evil befallen thee; and were it not
that she commendeth you to God, He would not have
looked favorably on thee, and redeemed thee from
prison and death. Sin closed thy lips when thou

didst gaze on the iron and did not ask why it bled; foolish thou wert when thou didst fail to learn who was served with the Grail.

He then explains to Perceval that not by luce, salmon, or lamprey has the Fisher King been nourished, but by a single wafer of the Grail. The worthy man's admonition may be summarized thus:

Go to Mass, believe in God, love and adore Him, honor knights and ladies, rise to greet the priest. If a lady require thine aid, help her, be she widow or orphan.

For a salutary penance the hermit enjoins on the knight (1) to remain with him for two days and to eat such food as he eats; (2) to go to the hermitage chapel or monastery in whatever place he may be and stay until the priest has finished Mass.

Finally, the anchorite confides to Perceval a very naive prayer, containing many names of the Lord, "too mighty for lips of man to utter, unless in mortal danger." He is to use it, therefore, only when in direst peril.273

In the Perlesvaus the king-hermit expounds an adventure which befell his nephew Perceval:

The beast is a symbol of the Lord Jesus Christ. The two priests are hermits of the forest; the one, Jonas, kissed and adored the cross because it was the instrument of salvation; the other, Alexis, beat and reviled it because it was the instrument of Christ's death.274

Again, it is a monk who explains to Perceval the marvelous spectacle in the abbey church, namely, King Modrains subsisting solely on the Holy Communion. The monk draws a happy parallel between the aged king and the Simeon of Luke 2: 22-35. 275

More than any other knight, Lancelot of the Lake, comes under the influence of monk and hermit. From one hermit he learns that his sins disable him from accomplishing certain adventures; 276 from another, that only the Grail Winners will be able to understand the vision of the White Stag and the four lions. 277 In the Perlesvaus a hermit strives in vain to help Lancelot have universal contrition; but the knight will not be sorry in his heart for his guilty love of Guinevere. Promising to pray every day for his conversion and even declaring himself ready to bear the punishment due to this sin, the worthy man is forced to send him away, unabsolved. 278

In Le Queste a hermit succeeds in disposing Lancelot for confession by giving him compelling motives: eternal happiness in Heaven if he confesses his sins; eternal punishment in Hell if he conceals them. This same solitary interprets the knight's experiences on the Quest by means of the parable of the talent.

(Luke 19:11-28), by the incident of Moses drawing water from the rock (Exodus 17:1-7), and by the story of the barren fig tree (Mark 11:12-26). He displays an accurate knowledge of the Scriptural passages quoted and draws sharp and convincing parallels to Lancelot's own state of soul.279 During his stay of three days Lancelot receives much good counsel. The hermit instructs him in the true purpose of the Quest: The Grail symbolizes God; and the search for it is the search for God. This is the true purpose of life as conceived in the cloister. Unrelentingly the man of God pursues his object, namely,--to steel the once wayward knight against future relapses into sin.280

The next hermit who contacts Lancelot reveals a gift of reading souls akin to that of the Cure d'Ars. Like the preceding hermit this man acquits himself fairly well of his duties as a confessor: he is a "spiritual father" because he knows how to temper his severe reprimands of Lancelot's past actions by gentle encouragement for the future; he is a "physician of souls" because he knows the causes and remedies for the diseases of the soul; he is a teacher because he instructs Lancelot in the requisites of a good confession. He shows the unhappy knight how the devil had deceived him by a woman; he discovers to him how pride and lust went hand in hand. The remedy is easily seen: he must carry out his promise not to commit sin with Guinevere or with any other woman.

This hermit, too, echoes the words of the former: The Quest is not for earthly treasure, but for heavenly treasure. He likens the Quest to the parable of the wedding feast (Matthew 22:1-14). So persuasive are his words that Lancelot's heart is warmed; he is moved to tears; and while his heart is soft as wax, the holy man exhorts him to continue faithfully in the manner of life which he has so recently begun.

Before he dismisses him on the following morning, the hermit gives Lancelot a hair-shirt formerly worn by a saintly man, assuring him that he will never fall into mortal sin so long as he wears it. The holy solitary recommends that so long as Lancelot is on the Quest, he eat no flesh and drink no wine, and, if possible, go daily to Mass. Finally, he beseeches him to do right and to confess each week.281

To the next hermit with whom he stays (scarcely a week later) Lancelot tells of his lethargy in the presence of the Holy Grail so that this hermit also suggests a "full and frank confession." When the holy man has heard him confess his entire life, he gives him much comfort and confidence, and says so many kind things to him that Lancelot is much happier than before. This hermit's elaborate interpretation of the knight's dream is as ingenious as the dream is fantastic; we could not find either outside the pages of a romance.282

Next to Lancelot the knight Gawain obtains the most counsel from the monks and hermits. Before and after venturing into the Grail Castle he confesses his sins to a hermit,—the first solitary instructing him concerning his conduct in the Castle;\(^{283}\) the second, consoling him in his failure to see the Holy Grail.\(^{284}\)

To another hermit Gawain is drawn to make his confession because the worthy man is so old and worthy of respect. The man of God sternly rebukes him, interprets—very ingeniously—his adventures in the Maiden's Castle, and offers him counsel which he is not disposed to follow.\(^{285}\) Another time the disgruntled knight does not heed the advice of a hermit counseling him to give succour to his nephew, Meliot of Logres.\(^{286}\)

Sir Bors, riding along one day, overtakes a man of great age, dressed in religious garb, and riding upon an ass. Together they journey along, discussing the Quest of the Holy Grail. The worthy man emphasizes the necessity of confession before entering upon the Quest; he says the food of the Holy Grail is food for the soul, and compares it to the manna with which for so long a time God fed and sustained the people of Israel in the desert.

\(^{284}\) Sommer, \textit{op. cit.}, Vol. IV, pp. 348-49.
\(^{285}\) Comfort, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 42-44.
When Bors asks the hermit as one who stands in the place of Jesus Christ to counsel his son, he replies rather diffidently:

In God's name you are asking much of me. Yet, if I should fail you now, and later you should fall into mortal sin or error, you would have a right to blame me before the face of Jesus Christ on the great and terrible day. Therefore, I shall counsel you as well as I can.

The next morning he hears the knight's confession and gives him Holy Communion.

Several days later Bors recounts all his experiences on the Quest to a Cistercian abbot, who, after rather long consideration, launches out into a long but clever interpretation of the knight's adventures and visions. 287

For Galahad, the Good Knight, hermits expound two adventures. From the tomb of a wicked knight the devil is expelled by the presence of Galahad, as pure and as free from sin as mortal man can be. In a rather far-fetched interpretation a monk explains to Galahad that the tomb signifies the great hardness of the Jews while the dead body signifies the Jews themselves and their descendants who came to their death through mortal sin; and just as the devil lost dominion over all men after the advent of Jesus Christ, so also shall the strange adventures in the kingdom of Logres cease with the coming of the Good Knight.

To Galahad, Perceval, and Bors a hermit explains the meaning of the White Stag transformed into a celestial man, and the four

lions changed respectively into a man, an eagle, a lion, and an ox. The latter represent the four evangelists; the former, the transformation Christ underwent on the Cross.288

A saintly and learned monk breathes meaning into the adventures of the newly-knighted Melyant: he shows him how through pride and covetousness he fell into the snares Satan laid for him.289

Without success King Modrains seeks from several monks the interpretation of his dream;290 another time, however, a hermit is able to explain his vision and to advise him wisely.291

Using all the references to the monk in French and English Arthurian literature of the period 1171-1471, we have striven in these three chapters to give his portraiture in these romances. We turn now to its verification—necessarily, of course, incomplete—from the several pertinent Rules and Statutes, from biographies, and from the monastic annals, chronicles, and histories treating of twelfth and thirteenth century monachism in France and England.

CHAPTER IV

VERIFICATION OF THE MONASTIC PORTRAIT IN THE ROMANCES

At the outset of this chapter it might be in place to justify the choice of twelfth and thirteenth century monachism to verify the portrait of the monk in a sixth century setting. To begin with: the extant Arthurian literature of medieval England dates only from the period 1135-1141, during which Geoffrey of Monmouth wrote his Historia Regum Britonum—the universally recognized starting point of extant Arthurian romance. Geoffrey, of course, did not create these materials; and as regards the monk there is very little in them. Though we gratuitously grant that the romance-writers after Geoffrey might have recognized an already established monk tradition, we can assert on the best authority that they were also alert to contemporary monasticism in France and England, as is evident for example, by the "White Monks" of Le Queste, i.e. the Cistercian monks, an Order which dates its formation during the years 1098-1134, its golden period, 1134-1342.292

Again, it should be remembered that the monasticism (in the strict sense) of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries was very much the same as that of the sixth and seventh centuries due to the wide-spread Benedictine Rule, the great force making for

monastic unity during these centuries. Finally, R. M. Clay, probably the best authority on English heremitical life, maintains that the twelfth and thirteenth centuries were pre-eminently the period of the solitary. Of the 750 cells which she lists in her extensive documented Tables, 232 date from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. These manifestations of religious and monastic fervor could not have failed to influence the romance-writers in their characterization of the monk.

The purpose of this chapter is to present authenticated historical material which will show that the picture of the monk in Arthurian romance is, all things considered, a fairly good representation of the historical monk of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. This verification can scarcely be complete in all details because details are so often lacking, for example, most of the pastoral ministrations of the hermit-priests, so integral a part of their sacerdotal office, are taken for granted; and hence not even mentioned in a biography of a hermit, of which biographies there are very few. The reason and sources, too, of much of the delineation of the monk lie deeply buried in the traditional concept of the monk. Finally, an amount of hyperbole in deeds as well as in words is to be expected in a romance: the superlative prevails.

As to plan this chapter will follow the divisions of the first three chapters.

The Home of the Monk

Two of the monasteries that figure in the romances existed during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, Glastonbury Abbey and Winchester Abbey.

Among some of the Religious Orders sites for their monastic home are traditional; the Benedictines usually build on hills in the country, often in a forest; the Vallumbrosans. (vallis umbrosa), in a valley.

To verify the construction of an abbey as given in the romances one has only to compare it with one of the old prints given in Mabillon and Dugdale, or with the inventorial description of Glastonbury Abbey which has come down to us.

The motives given in the romances for the erection of abbeys are all plausible. Battle Abbey, founded by William the Conqueror (1066-87), is a parallel case in monastic history, for it commemorated some great battle, presumably, that of Hastings. In 1120 the nobleman, Conrad a Sellenburen, prompted by pious motives, founded the celebrated monastery of Mons Angelorum—vulgarly called Engelberg. The instance of a hermitage growing into a monastery is of rather frequent occurrence in monastic history; in the twelfth century the priories of Finchale, Stoneleigh, Cockersand, and Baulieu were of heremitical origin.

299. Jean Mabillon, Annales Ordinis Sancti Benedicti, Bk.73, ch.113.
The Vocation of the Monk

The examples of nobles and knights retiring to a monastery are legion. Conrad, founder of Engelberg, became a monk in that monastery. In his chronicle for the year 1120 Mabillon records that many illustrious and noble men, wishing to retire from the vanities of the world and to expiate their many sins, became monks, consecrating themselves and all their possessions to God in the Major Monastery. Among these were Gauflinus, Rainaldus, and Jacqueline--all of Daumeriacus--and Peter of Chemiliacus. The knight Caradoc (d. 1124) left the court of Rhys to become a monk at Dandaff.302

The Life of the Monk

The meagre account of the monk's life which we have in the romances can easily be substantiated. To discover that the abbot was the highest superior in the monastery we need but examine cursorily the Rule of St. Benedict. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries as today the abbot had within his monastery the jurisdiction of a bishop.

Twelve chapters in The Holy Rule are devoted to the worthy

299. Jean Mabillon, Annales Ordinis Sancti Benedicti, Bk. 73, ch. 116.
301. Mabillon, op. cit., Bk. 73, ch. 110.
303. Hunter O. Blair, Regula Sanctissimi Patris Benedicti. See esp. ch's. 2, 3, 5, 64.
celebration of the *Opus Dei*;\(^{305}\) for the actual execution of these injunctions we can for our period refer to the *Life of St. Anselm* by Dean Church.\(^{306}\) --The rule of seniority in a Benedictine monastery is laid down in Chapter LXIII of the Holy Rule; from the inventorial description left us of the refectory at Glastonbury we know how this rule was observed in practice.\(^{307}\) --A word about the wealth of the monasteries of the Middle Ages is hardly necessary. In our two centuries, as in others, the abbeys were enriched by royal grants of extensive tracts of lands and by valuable offerings on the part of kings and nobles.\(^{308}\)

That the sanctity of the Cistercian monks of our period was acknowledged by their contemporaries can be seen in such encomiums as that of Cardinal de Vitry:

> All the church of Jesus Christ is full of the high reputation and opinion of their sanctity.\(^{309}\)

In the year 1144 the poet Rodulfus Tortarius wrote a eulogy on the two abbots Bernard and Peter the Venerable, both of whom were still living.\(^{310}\) Mabillon, quoting Aelredus, gives us a pithy biography of the holy monk Simon (d.1135).

> filius aetate, pater sanctitate, amicus caritate.\(^{311}\)

\(^{305}\) Blair, *op. cit.*, ch's. VIII-XIX.

\(^{306}\) Dean Church, *Life of St. Anselm*, ch. 3.


\(^{309}\) Fox, *op. cit.*, p. 294.

\(^{310}\) Mabillon, *op. cit.*, Bk. 78, ch. 44.

\(^{311}\) Mabillon, *ibid.*, Bk. 76, ch. 83.
The Monk's Service to Men

The reference in Chretien to the Quadrivium--geometry, astronomy, arithmetic, and music--can certainly be verified in medieval monastic history. We know that Charlesmange (d.814) assigned these four subjects to be taught in the lesser schools (scholae minores) conducted in the monasteries and in the palaces of Bishops. There seems to be no reason for doubting that they were not retained in the curriculum of the monastic schools on through the centuries--at least until the rise of the universities about 1299.312

The hospitality of the monks was proverbial. They never forgot: "It is a more blessed thing to give, rather than to receive" (Acts 20:35). For two days and two nights were travellers made welcome; and during that time, if their health allowed, they followed, as at Abingdon, the spiritual exercises of the monastery.313 The great abbeys, such as those of Malmesbury and of St. Albans, were open houses constantly visited by the mighty ones of the land. William of Malmesbury tells us how his own monastery was distinguished for its "delightful hospitality", where "guests, arriving every hour, consume more than the inmates themselves."314 Matthew Paris has the follow-

ing entry in his chronicle for March 9, 1255,—

...the king (Henry III) went to St. Albans, and remained there for six days during which time he prayed....315

Even Giraldus Cambrensis, the most caustic critic of the Cistercians, acknowledges their unbounded hospitality.316

Professing as he does to follow the Gospel teaching, the monk of our period could not be unmindful of the words, "Bear ye one another's burdens" (Galatians, 6:2). He was no misanthrope but was wise enough to know that the welfare of the body is a great means towards securing the welfare of the soul. He, therefore, looked to the claims of the sick and of the traveller. Food, shelter, rest, and tender care he freely offered at God's house.317 The Hospitalia Anglicana Pro Infirmis, an off-shoot of the Order of St. Augustine, existed for the express purpose of caring for the sick;318 a branch of the Knight Hospitallers of St. John of Jerusalem flourished in England in the twelfth century. Various statutes in their Rule concern the visitation of the sick, the reception of the sick into their houses, the administration of the sacraments of Penance and the Holy Eucharist to the sick.319 Matthew, prior of St. Martin's of Campis during the second quarter of the twelfth century, took care of the sick, the poor, and the guests.320

320. Mabillon, op. cit., Bk. 73, ch. 15.
The custom of interring the bodies of the nobles within abbeys was very popular during the Middle Ages. Dugdale mentions by name ten kings and princes buried at Glastonbury during the tenth and eleventh centuries; but there he stops short in his enumeration. Of three princes who died in France in the year 1127 two were buried in monasteries, -- Carl the Good, at the abbey of Blandiniensis; William, son of Robert of Nortmannorum, at the abbey of Sithiensus.

The Dwelling of the Hermit

It is easy to identify actual sites of hermitages of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries with those of the romances. Godric (d. 1170) was a free denizen of the wood, living successively in the deserted den of a wild beast, in a turf-covered log hut, and in a cave near a bend in the river Wear; an abode well sheltered by the rushing river, with its steep, rocky, densely wooded banks. The hermitage, Guy's Cliffe, near Warrick, was beautifully situated on a rugged precipice washed by the Avon. The profound silence of the spot was emphasized by "the river rollynge with a praty noyse over the stones." First built in or before the tenth century, this hermitage was the abode early in the thirteenth century of one Brother Wiger, canon of

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322. Mabillon, op. cit., Bk. 75, ch. 6.
Oseney, who had determined with the consent of his Abbot, to lead the solitary life. Here, too, Gilbert, described in an ordination list (1283) as the "hermit of Warwick" might have dwelt. 324

Usually there was an austere architectural simplicity about the dwelling and oratory of the solitary. The cell and guest-house of Bartholomew (d. 1193) was built of roughly hewn stone. 325

The bare cell in the romances reflects that of actual life. Bartholomew of Farne, to his old age, would have no couch, no pillow, no prop to support his body. 327 Some allowed themselves a straw bed with skins of sheep for covering. 328 In his Rule for Hermits Abbot Aelred (12th century) did not approve of covering the naked walls with pictures and carvings, or of deck­ing the chapel with a variety of hangings and images: such ornaments, he argued, savored of vanity. 329

That the hermits who were priests had altars for Holy Mass we can easily believe; and we do know that Robert of Knaresborough (d. 1218) had an altar in his chapel. 330

The Vocation of the Hermit

Down through the centuries, urged by the love of God and

326. Mabillon, _op. cit._, Bk. 74, ch. 56.
328. Mabillon, _op. cit._, Bk. 74, ch. 20.
330. Clay, _ibid._, p. 43.
the desire for greater perfection, sons of kings and nobles have entered upon the heremitical life,—St. Henry (d. 1127), hermit of Coquet Island on the Northumbrian shore came from a noble Danish family;331 the man who fled from the wrath of Richard, the Lionhearted (1189-1199) to the cell of Robert of Knaresborough, was a rich and famous knight;332 in the time of Henry III (1116-72) the Bishop of Llandaff obtained permission to live apart from men in the hermitage of La Charryng.333

The Life and Death of the Hermit

History substantiates the popular consensus that the hermits of our period—Bartholomew of Farne, Godric of Finchale, Robert of Knaresborough, and Wulfrio of Hasbury (d. 1154) were examples of heroic asceticism. They strove after Christian quietude by bending all their activities to self-conquest; they upheld a lofty and austere moral ideal in the face of self-indulgence. They lived a life of unflinching sacrifice and detachment—a life typified by the nakedness of their cell. More than one Rule devoted a chapter to manual labor;334 in fact, the hermit was usually dependant on the garden which he tilled for his bodily needs.335

331. Mabillon, op. cit., Bk. 73, ch. 127.
333. Clay, ibid., p. 68.
334. e.g. Blair, op. cit., ch. XLVIII.
335. e.g. J. B. Dalgairns, The Spiritual Life of Medieval England, p. vii.
Mabillon, op. cit., Bk. 74, ch. 56.
It is only logical that their manner of life should bear the fruit of interior peace and joy, such as we read of both in the romances and biographies.

Though most biographers of hermits somehow fail to tell of the prayer-life of their subject—or, perhaps, take it for granted—we cannot peremptorily conclude from this that these solitaries were not men of prayer. Rotha M. Clay writes,

the hermit celebrated divine offices in his chapel for the benefit of wayfarers.336

Bartholomew was greatly given to meditation;337 Girardus, to the Divine Office.338

It is but natural that the hermit's venerable and ancient aspect should have become proverbial. Strangely enough, while the self-imposed hardships of his life produced a premature appearance of great age, the rigor of his life seems actually to have preserved his health and promoted longevity. He overpassed his day till he was, indeed, as later pictured by Shakespeare, "a withered hermit fourscore winters worn." In our period we have at least four aged asetics,—the ancient Aedric (d.1110); Wulfric lived to be "full of days"; Bartholomew, died at the age of seventy-three; Godric, "the athlete of Christ," who passed sixty years of his manhood at Finchale, gives us pause to marvel not only at his iron strength of will but also at his iron constitution, which could support such hardships in such a climate.

337. Arnold, op. cit., Vol. 301.
338. Mabillon, op. cit., Bk. 74, ch. 56.
for so many years.339 As it was the fashion of the time, all the hermits wore beards. Godric had a thick and rather long beard.340

As a visible sign of separation a habit was regarded as necessary; and no man felt like a hermit until he had put on some distinctive dress. Richard Rolle, for example, at the beginning of his career endeavored to present "a confused likeness of a hermit" by wearing simultaneously his sister's white and gray dress, to one of which he sewed a capuche or hood.341

The Rules direct

that the hermit's dress be according to the bishop's ordinance; it must not too closely resemble that of any order, lest it cause offense. Let hys clothyng be humyle & not curious....And yf he wyll of devosyon were next hys flesh a cylyce it ys lawfull.342

The habit varied as considerably as did the office. It usually consisted of loose garments of somber hue, caught up with a leather belt or a cord. To parallel the rule forbidding linen shirts to hermits we might quote from a decree sanctioned by Pope Gregory IX (d. 1241): "we strictly forbid any of the religious henceforth to wear linen shirts."343

That the romancers' picture of the hermit's fare is true history bears out amply. His food did consist of herbs, roots,

grain, milk, cheese, and fruit; flesh-meat was rarely tasted. The Rules directed him to fast three days in the week; on Saturday, on bread and water.\textsuperscript{344} Wulfric used to mortify his members with much fasting, and bring them under control by toil and vigils so that his flesh scarcely hung on his bones.\textsuperscript{345}

That the hermit-archbishop of the romances had gold and silver was the exception; that most hermits had companions, the rule. Indeed, Rules impressed the advisability of fellowship with another of like mind and purpose.

\begin{quote}
Let him never be alone if he can conveniently have with him a companion or servant.\textsuperscript{346}
\end{quote}

Thus it happened that around Roger (c. 1123) were gathered five hermits, all of them striving to emulate his life. In cases of failing health the services of a young disciple were sought. Godric joined an aged monk at Wolsingham; the two lived together for two years, and when Aelric became feeble, Godric in his turn was served by a young nephew; in his old age he had a priest living with him. Robert of Knaresborough was joined by Ive and by several servants who shared his labors. Wulfric, it seems, had Brichtric as his companion.\textsuperscript{347} The recluse Martin, "keeper of Coquet Island," in the thirteenth century had a servant.\textsuperscript{348}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{344} Clay, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 101-02.
\item \textsuperscript{345} Clay, \textit{ibid.}, p. 118.
\item \textsuperscript{346} Clay, \textit{ibid.}, p. 128.
\item \textsuperscript{347} Clay, \textit{ibid.}, pp. 128-29.
\end{itemize}
In the Middle Ages the hermits of England and France occupied an oracular office somewhat akin to that of the Hebrew seer. They regarded themselves as followers of Elias and of John the Baptist. It was, consequently, his vocation to read the signs of the times and to predict the future. Wulfric foretold events with astounding clearness. He claimed to speak in the name of the Lord, and was highly esteemed as a prophet. He prophesied that Henry I (1100-35), about to depart to foreign lands would not return "either sound or whole." And when the monarch's death took place, the holy man intimated it to the knight Sir William Fitzwalter. Several other prophecies of a minor nature are attributed to him. 349 Godric foretold his own death and also the sudden accession to the throne of Richard the Lionhearted. 350 King Richard, in turn, was warned by a solitary in the plains of Normandy of his own sudden death. 351 Girardus prophesied the death of Pope Galasius II (d. 1119) and also the fire at Vizeliaci. 352

Visions, too, occurred in the lives of our recluses. Gaufridus records of Bartholomew of Farne that, shortly after his entrance into the monastery of Durham, St. Cuthbert, the renowned solitary of Farne, appeared to him, bidding him to follow in his footsteps; 353 and again, a young monk of Lindisfarne, while praying in the chapel of St. Columba, has a vision acquainting him

352. Mabillon, op. cit., Bk. 74, ch. 56.
with Bartholomew's death. Similarly, the nun Agnes saw Gilbert of Sempringham (d. 1189) in beatitude on the night he died.

In life and in death the saints of God have been instrumental in working miracles. The wonders worked at the grave of Thomas, associate of Bartholomew, are so many divine seals on his sanctity. In his lifetime Bartholomew effected the cure of a possessed woman, a young man suffering from goitre, and another afflicted by a year-old fever. Wulfric healed the lame and sick; his tomb became a place of pilgrimage on account of the many miracles wrought there. Thousands resorted to the shrine of Godric seeking and obtaining miraculous cures. In 1239 the tomb of Robert at Knaresborough emitted a large quantity of medicinal oil.

History does not record any supernatural happenings at the death of a hermit of our period, although the death of Bartholomew and of Godric were very holy and edifying. During the reign of Henry II (1154-89) a hermit of Eskdaleside was mortally wounded by a hunting party of knight-barons, who, in their fury at having lost their game, concluded, hastily and very irrationally, that the old man was responsible.

358. Clay, op. cit., pp. 74; 135; 152.
The Hermit's Service to Men

Pastoral Nature

Strange as it might at first seem we have not been able to unearth in history or biography a single reference to the sacramental ministrations of the hermit-priests. In explanation we can surmise either that historians and biographers considered these sacred functions so integral a part of the sacerdotal office that they wanted the reader to take them for granted, or that the sacraments (exclusive of the Holy Eucharist and Penance) were very rarely administered by the solitaries.

However, we have seen in different Rules statutes concerning the distribution of Holy Communion to the sick; we have the testimony of Rotha M. Clay that the hermits afforded opportunity to the wayfarer of attending the Divine Offices and Holy Mass364 we have one authentic case of hermits celebrating Masses for the departed: The Exchequer Roll of 1272 mentions two hermits who offered up Mass for the soul of King Henry (II) 's father365.

We know for certain that it was long customary for the cell to become the tomb of its tenant; Bartholomew,366 Godric, and Robert367 were each buried in his oratory. It is not unlikely that many a prince and noble was laid to rest in the cell of which he was patron. The historical claim that Arthur was buried

at the hermitage which later developed into the abbey of Glastonbury seems to be a late one. In the *Gesta Regum Britonum* William of Malmesbury states expressly that the burial place of Arthur was unknown. However, in his *De Antiquitate Glastonensis Ecclesiae* a passage asserts that Arthur was buried at Glastonbury. Professor Freeman labels this an interpolation added after Geoffrey of Monmouth's time, when the Arthurian legend had reached its final form through that writer's fabrications. This passage in William of Malmesbury and Giraldus Cambrensis are accepted by Dugdale and Hill but J. Douglas Bruce, a more astute critic, especially on Arthurian romance and its source, rejects them as a baseless invention of the monks of Glastonbury, as a kind of publicity-stunt on their part.

**Non-pastoral Nature**

Among the hermits of our period there was a great diversity of practice regarding communication with the world outside, depending largely on the character and circumstances of the individual. His love for silence and contemplation might grow with

368. cf. H. F. Stokes, *Glastonbury Abbey before the Conquest*, pp. 55-57, for the text of these interpolations.
the exercise of it, and his union with God become ever more intimate; or, full of human interests, he might be constrained to a more active life serving his fellow men. At Farne the guest-house was in constant use: Aelric and Bartholomew were as ready to serve as to meditate. So hospitable was the latter that on one occasion he killed his only cow to supply the needs of his guests.374 Before the year 1114, Goathland hermitage, where dwelt the priest Osmund and his brethren, was a house of hospitality. In 1184 Hugh Garth, "an heremyt of gret perfection," founded a hospice at Cockersand to shelter travellers. The genial Robert of Knaresborough was ever surrounded by a crowd of poor pensioners and pilgrims, for which he built a guest-house near his cell.375

The historiographical materials of our period do not tell of a single specific case of a hermit caring for the sick or wounded. Here without doubt the romance-writers drew solely on their imagination. Sick persons would scarcely venture out to forest or dale; wounded persons (and they were far less numerous in reality than in fictitious knight-errantry with its continual jousting) would only rarely cross the path of the solitary.

In the life of St. Christina we read how three twelfth-century fen and forest recluses, dwelling miles apart, concurred to help her in dire distress. Forced to marry (despite her vow of virginity) and cruelly persecuted by her own parents, she sought the aid of Edwin, the hermit of Higney. He secured for her a

boy and a horse to convey her to the anchoress of Flamsteed.
From here she travelled to Roger of Markyate (c. 1123) whose
devoted disciple she became.376

Hermits Win the Esteem and Love of the People

It is an easy matter to show that the hermits won the es-
teeem and love of the people. One authority says "they enjoyed
the esteem and regard of the general public for a term bordering
on a thousand years.377 In the Liber Vitae of the Church of
Durham hermits rank above abbots and monks of the cloister.378
The patronage with which the kings of England favored them
proves they were held in high esteem by the Crown. Thus, Henry
II (1154-89) pensioned the anchorites Geldwin of St. Aedred at
Winchester and Richard of St. Sepulchre's, Hereford;379 he
also gave the cell at Ardland, or Ertlond, to a hermit named
William. To the hermit-custodian at Clipston in the royal for-
est of Sherwood King John (1199-1216) paid 40s. a year; and
Henry III (1216-72) continued the grant to one Benedict, hermit
of St. Edwin at Birkland.380 On March 3, 1257, Henry III, to
show his devotion to the two hermits Roger and Sigard, gave
money to repair and decorate their bier.381

376. M. Roscarroock, Life of St. Christinie, In Nove Legenda,
379. Clay, ibid., p. 78.
381. Giles, Matthew Paris' English History From the Year 1235
Again, it was only natural that the crowds who flocked to confide in the hermit should be devoted to him. Sir William Fitzwalter had a great respect for the saintly Wulfric; Bartholomew and Kenyth (12th century) were revered and loved by all who visited them. Great was the popular grief upon the death of Robert of Knaresborough, "benefactor of all;" his cell was claimed as Crown property; his chapel became a place of pilgrimage; his sainthood was proclaimed by the popular veneration.

The Monk and Hermit as Confessor and Counsellor

In the Middle Ages the cloistral monk and the silvan solitary, living a life of contemplation, were recognized as being qualified to exercise spiritual influence and give wholesome counsel. Awed by such austerity of life, the conscience-stricken and heavily-laden resorted to them in order to unburden their sins and sorrows and to receive peace and absolution. Such as were priests undoubtedly used their power to forgive sins in the sacramental confession; all of them gave advice and consolation. They were at once father, friend, counsellor.

The influence of the monk Bernard (d. 1153) was incalculable. His word was law; and his counsels were regarded by kings, prin-
ces, and the common people as commands to which the most respectful obedience was due. The stern Wulfric, endowed with rare insight and a wisdom born of experience and meditation, held spiritual sway over two proud and passionate Norman kings,—Henry I (1100-35) came to him a suppliant; Stephen (1135-54) left him a penitent. The man of God fearlessly rebuked the latter for disturbing the peace of England by his misrule. Stephen confessed to the hermit, and after much salutary exhortation, departed. During Bartholomew's forty-two years of uninterrupted residence Farne was a spiritual center, whither persons from all parts resorted for comfort and exhortation. His cheerful, out-spoken, sympathetic manner, and especially his holiness of life, attracted rich and poor alike to him; and on all of them he exercised a strong and abiding influence.

CONCLUSION

The mosaic which we have made of the numerous references to the monk in the Old French and Middle English Arthurian romances (1171-1471), and the historical verification (necessarily incomplete though it be) of this picture lead us to the following evaluations on the monk of Arthurian romance.--(1) The name of (save for two exceptions), the site of, the construction of, and the motives assigned for the foundation of the abbeys and hermitages are all plausible. (2) The vocation of the monk and hermit, although tinged by a slight touch of artificiality and sentimentality, is an echo of like retirements in twelfth and thirteenth century monasticism. (3) Their life is the personification and even the idealization of monastic perfection. Lancelot, however, appears very sentimental. The hermitage and the raiment of a hermit seem but an effective background against which he retires. Somehow, despite his new surroundings and his renunciation of Guinevere, he seems to remain the chivalrous knight, the guilty lover of the Queen. But we must allow for this sentimental exception here in this milieu where the laws and attitudes of amour courtois prevail as they do in Arthurian romance. (4) The innumerable services, pastoral and non-pastoral, which the monk and hermit render to their fellow men are (if we except the care of the sick by the hermit and their assistance in conquering the Grail-Castle) all in accordance
with the Rules, Statutes, traditions, and history of the monk and hermit of actuality. (5) The sphere of influence which the monk and hermit of romance exert can be matched by that of the monks and hermits of reality.

Of course, we can not treat all this evidence with rigor; we can not press some of our verifications too strongly; we have not proved that the monk and hermit of the twelfth and thirteenth century are faithfully represented in these romances; we know that the monk and hermit in these romances and the monk and hermit of real life are decidedly different persons. But to one who can bring to the pages of literature the experience of years lived in a monastery it is evident that these Arthurian romances reflect in a surprisingly realistic fashion the figures of the monk and hermit as depicted in medieval monastic history.

FINI S
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TEXTS OF ROMANCES


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The thesis "The Monk in the Old Arthurian Romances," written by Reverend Joseph Battaglia, O.S.B., has been accepted by the Graduate School with reference to form, and by the readers whose names appear below, with reference to content. It is, therefore, accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

James J. Young, A.M. June 3, 1936
Morton D. Zabel, Ph.D. June 26, 1936