CHRISTIAN ALLEGORY IN TENNYSON'S

IDYLLS OF THE KING

by

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List of Abbreviations

BB  "Balin and Balan"
CA  "The Coming of Arthur"
GL  "Gareth and Lynette"
GE  "Geraint and Enid"
G   "Guinevere"
HG  "The Holy Grail"
LE  "Lancelot and Elaine"
LT  "The Last Tournament"
MG  "The Marriage of Geraint"
MV  "Merlin and Vivien"
PA  "The Passing of Arthur"
PE  "Pelleas and Ettarre"
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Introduction

The reputation of Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* has varied from age to age. For the most part, Tennyson's contemporaries praised the work. Typical of the majority of critical and public opinion in Tennyson's day concerning this composition is Harold Littledale's comment that it is

... a poem, almost perfect in unity of design and proportion of parts, and imbued with a moral significance fitted to the aspirations of our own days, while preserving to a certain extent the archaic colour, the loves and quests, the conflicts and enchantments, of the feudal world.¹

Later, a more cynical public listened to such voices as that of Eliot, who, although he admired some of Tennyson's work, is certainly among those most responsible for his literary decline.² Of the Laureate's narrative


² Ironically, recent scholars recognize Eliot's debt to Tennyson. John D. Rosenberg, *The Fall of Camelot*: 1
skill, he comments, "Tennyson could not tell a story at all." As a result of such derogatory remarks by a man of Eliot's literary stature as well as by others following Eliot's lead, the Idylls suffered in the public's opinion along with the entire Tennyson canon. Because the charges against much of Tennyson's work now seem too severe, critical material re-evaluating certain poems appears often. The Idylls is one of these poems currently undergoing such re-evaluation. In fact, one recent writer refers to it as, in many ways the "... crucial work in modern critical approaches to his [Tennyson's] achievement." Other scholars have also begun to appreciate it again as a work worthy of serious and detailed study.


One purpose for so much critical scrutiny is to determine the meaning of the *Idylls*, about which Hallam Tennyson quotes his father as saying, "Poetry is like shot-silk with many glancing colours. Every reader must find his own interpretation according to his ability, and according to his sympathy with the poet." That the poem has been interpreted in so many different ways perhaps attests to its complexity and its multivalence. Tennyson himself invited an allegorical interpretation in the "Epilogue" when he declared that it is an "... old imperfect tale, / New-old, and shadowing Sense at war with Soul." Later he decided the critics were reading too much into it. In spite of the poet's assertion, "They have taken my hobby, and ridden it too hard ...", however, critics have continued to find allegorical

5 Hallam, Lord Tennyson, Alfred Lord Tennyson: A Memoir (1897; rpt. New York: Greenwood Press, 1969), II, 127. Hereafter, this work will be referred to as Memoir, II.

6 John Pfordresher, ed., A Variorum Edition of Tennyson's "Idylls of the King" (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1973), 11. 36-37. All quotations from the *Idylls of the King* are from this text.

7 Memoir, II, 126-127.
significance in the work; in fact, M. W. MacCallum, writing in 1894, maintains:

... I cannot but think that much of the disparaging comment on the *Idylls of the King* which we have lately heard, is due to the neglect of their allegoric character, or to the adoption of a false allegoric clue.  

Of course, there has been some controversy over the nature of the allegory. Again, it was Tennyson, who initiated the idea of one force struggling with another. When Pallen worked out the allegory of Sense at war with the Soul in an elaborate design, Tennyson's letter to him encouraged its acceptance in these words: "I thank you for your critique on the *Idylls of the King*. You see further into their meaning than most of my commentators here have." Others produced variations on Tennyson's

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8 M. W. MacCallum, Tennyson's "Idylls of the King" and Arthurian Story from the XVIth Century (Glasgow: James Maclehose and Sons, 1894), p. viii.

original idea by continuing to view the Idylls as a series of conflicts--between good and evil, between pride and love or faith and doubt, between appearance and reality, and so on.

Besides the element of conflict, several critics began to see in the work a social significance with more specific applications than earlier commentators had perceived. These critics noticed parallels between Camelot and society in general and discerned that the same destructive forces in Arthur's kingdom were present there. Among those who consider it a portrayal of society in general is Priestley, who claims, "The tragic collapse of Arthur's work in the Idylls is an allegory of the


collapse of society, of nation, and of individual, which must follow rejection of spiritual values." \(^{13}\) Others believed the poem to be a warning, not to society at large, but to Victorian England in particular, that she, like Camelot, through internal strife and a weakening of her moral fiber, could bring about her own destruction. \(^{14}\)

Numerous other interpretations of the *Idylls* have appeared. Ryals, for example, thinks it is Tennyson's vehicle for proclaiming his philosophy on "... art, morality, and the whole spiritual life of man," \(^{15}\) whereas Helterman believes Tennyson was experimenting with several medieval narrative modes to see "... what happens when


the forms work against their content." 16 For Kincaid, "It is a poem which, at its opposite ends, asserts the alternating visions of comedy and irony," 17 but for Ward Hellstrom the central issue is

... the relation between men and women, or more specifically the role women play in individual redemption or destruction and in social integration or dissolution. ... 18

And on and on goes the search for meaning in this series of narratives.

In spite of the abundant critical material—early and late—on the Idylls, not enough attention has been given to the Christian elements in the poem. Clearly, King Arthur is represented as a Christ figure throughout. Some earlier scholars had recognized the similarity between Arthur and Christ to a degree, but the latest

16 Jeffrey Helterman, "Narrative Modes and the Dynamics of Passion in The Idylls of the King," Victorians Institute Journal, No. 3 (July, 1974), 45.


critics of the work such as Kissane, Eggers, Rosenberg, Slinn, Chepiga, and Kincaid, to name a few—all write in the 1970's—allude to it as indisputable. So common, in fact, has this idea become that Ryals states: "His [Tennyson's] identification of Arthur in the Idylls with Christ is so obvious to any reader familiar with the New Testament that the resemblances need hardly be pointed out." No one, however, has fully explained how really essential this parallel is to the understanding of the work. The standard indexes contain no entries on this topic.


20 Ryals, p. 102.

bibliographical study lists nothing pertinent to this subject. Although books by Mims, Masterman, Sneath, Battenhouse, and Benziger all contain sections on Tennyson as a religious poet, none touches upon the Christian parallels present in the *Idylls.*

Although some commentators have examined Tennyson's poetry for his theological stand and use of the Bible, they have not dealt, to any notable degree as this study does, with the significance of the Christian allegory in the *Idylls.* Writing on Tennyson's theology, Parsons, for example, does no more than cite the *Idylls* as one of the works in which Tennyson sets forth various

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doctrines concerning Christ. Robinson in her study demonstrates how Tennyson used Biblical allusions during different stages of his career. She refers to many such allusions in the Idylls as well as in other works, but her purpose is to show Tennyson's artistic and poetic development through his use of these kinds of allusions. Van Dyke's Studies in Tennyson includes a chapter on the Idylls which does not deal with this subject and one on "The Bible in Tennyson," which acknowledges the presence of many Biblical allusions in this work. Although Van Dyke lists several of them, he elaborates on only a few. He refers to the many allusions to the life of Christ in Tennyson's works in general, naming some of the specific idylls in which these occur, but concludes that they are too many to enumerate. There is no further mention of the matter.

Two other commentators, Vann and Burton, deal specifically with several parallels between Arthur and


26 Van Dyke, pp. 121-165, 189-213.
Christ. Vann calls attention to these similarities to suggest a reason for Arthur's failure as a character but does little more than list the parallels. Burton's unpublished dissertation contains a section on the use of Biblical allusions in the Idylls. In it he cites dozens of allusions associating Arthur with Christ. His major contribution is to demonstrate that these parallels serve to unify the narratives. My investigation goes beyond Vann's and Burton's, however. I have studied Christian allegorical meanings in the total work instead of limiting my study to those associating Arthur with Christ. This exercise has disclosed extensive Christian parallels in other areas as well. Since these parallels are so close as to be functional in affecting the informed reader's response to the work as a whole, a detailed analysis of the Christian elements in the text is needed to clarify points left obscure by other commentators. In particular, attention to the Christian allegorical elements


in the poem provides a possible solution to certain critical problems related to characterization, indicates that the poem contains a comprehensive range of characters used as symbols and types, and reveals the allegorical structure of the work.

Since the validity of this interpretation largely depends upon whether it can be established that King Arthur is a medieval representative of Christ, my procedure will be first, in Chapter I, to adduce the parallels between the two. The portrayal of Christ as a medieval knight is certainly not unique with Tennyson in English literature. Sister Marie Le May has traced this theme from the Ancren Riwle, which presents Christ as the "... divine Lover of the Soul, exhibiting his knightly prowess to win the favor of His Beloved" to Piers Plowman, in which Christ in a joust with Satan exhibits His heroism. She also refers to certain fifteenth-century lyrical pieces in which Christ is pictured as a knight. An important passage to support the hypothesis that Tennyson follows this old tradition of presenting Christ

as a medieval warrior in the *Idylls* comes early in the poem. When Gareth expresses his yearning to follow Arthur, his mother urges him to "'... stay: follow the deer / By these tall firs and our fast-falling burns'" (GL 89-90). In Gareth's response, "'Follow the deer? follow the Christ, the King!'" (GL 116), he uses the word *King* in apposition with the word *Christ*. Burton argues only that *King* is almost in apposition with *Christ*, but the several parallels in the text between the two figures and Arthur's actions in his relationship with the other characters support the argument that they are, indeed, one and the same. In the following discussion, I shall point out these various parallels establishing Arthur as an allegorical representation of Christ. It will then be possible to examine how the relationship between each of the characters involved and Arthur as Christ offers a solution to certain problems such as why Arthur is presented as such a "colorless" character, why he "fails" in his relationship with those closest to him, and why many of the characters are antagonistic toward him.

Certainly, I do not maintain that the allegorical

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level is the only one on which Arthur functions. In fact, when one applies to Arthur Dante's four levels of interpretation (literal, allegorical, moral, and anagogical), the result indicates that Arthur operates on all four levels. Literally, he is himself, "the blameless king" who establishes a kingdom dedicated to righting wrong. Allegorically, he is Christ, the savior of the individual soul and of the world. Morally, he is the bringer of truth or enlightenment to the spiritually ignorant soul and to the unenlightened world. Anagogically, he is the Christ, who will rise as promised to deliver the soul and the redeemed world from hell. Although it is not in the scope of this paper to demonstrate how each character might function on all four levels, I do wish to show how, on one level of meaning, they fit into the Christian allegorical scheme.

In Chapter II I apply an allegorical interpretation

to major characters in the *Idylls* other than those already analyzed in Chapter I. Special attention will be given in this part of the study to the relation of certain characters to such groupings familiar to the Christian allegorist as the Seven Deadly Sins and the Seven Christian Virtues. My investigation shows that all of these vices and virtues are represented in one form or another by one of the characters. Besides the embodiments of the vices and virtues, other characters are found to represent certain types of Christians, either because of their allegorical function or because of their close parallels to certain Biblical personages or types. Such a reading provides a deeper understanding of these characters by exploring their relationship to Arthur in his role as Christ.

In Chapter III I examine the structural significance of the parabolic nature of the *Idylls*. Some readers have wrongly assumed with Baum that it is "... utterly wanting in unity and coherence of structure. ..."\(^3\)\(^2\) Fortunately, however, this false notion has largely been

dispelled by many enlightening exegeses on the structural unity of this long poem. For example, several explicators have written on the cyclical structure of the work. Engelberg finds Tennyson's use of beast imagery a unifying device which "... points up the old Medieval and Renaissance view of man divided against himself by divine strivings and a bestial predisposition."33 In his view the *Idylls* ends with Arthur's kingdom reverting to the bestial state from which it began. To Kozicki this cyclical movement illustrates Tennyson's philosophy of history as a continually changing process in which civilizations rise and fall.34 Some have discovered the seasonal organization of the *Idylls* wherein the cycle of the seasons corresponds to the state of Arthur's kingdom from its rise and development through its fall and


34 Henry Kozicki, "Wave and Fire Imagery in Tennyson's *Idylls*," *Victorian Newsletter*, 43 (Spring, 1973), 21. See also R. B. Wilkenfield, "Tennyson's Camelot: The Kingdom of Folly," *University of Toronto Quarterly*, 37 (1968), 281, for this writer's notion of "... rhythmic structure of ebb and flow which in its external form corresponds to ... the rise and fall of a civilization... ."
demise. 35 Turner compares the cyclical movement to the turning of the Wheel of Fortune in Arthur's life-span. As the Wheel revolves, "Arthur's life-cycle . . .," Turner explains, "is made to typify a 'cycle of generations', the historical process by which the human race advances, through alternating periods of progress and regress, rise and fall." 36 Although the cyclical movement suggests different interpretations to different writers, that so many have recognized this structural device in the poem is evidence of its presence there.

In addition to the cyclical structure, some have observed the dramatic form of the Idylls. Priestley compares it to the modern three-act drama with each act composed of four idylls each. Act I shows Arthur's kingdom in its early glory, but, as each act progresses,


36 Turner, p. 151; Hellstrom, p. 100, limits the analogy of Arthur's life cycle to the rise and fall specifically of his kingdom rather than to a "cycle of generations."
it dramatizes the gradual deterioration of his realm. 37
Also, Kozicki refers to the work as a tragic drama enacting the dying god ritual, wherein "... Arthur is the Year-Daemon raising up the world in gentle and gracious spring, becoming great in summer, and, bearing the burden of sin and pride, heavy with pollutions, falling toward death and replacement, performing endlessly the cycle of the dying God." 38 This idea combines the dramatic and cyclical form.

Besides the above two methods of unification, Shaw discerns a different kind of unity. By regrouping the Idylls into four pairs of opposing beliefs, he finds there a unity of ideas. Thus, he pairs "Gareth and Lynette" and "Balin and Balan" to contrast empiricism and idealism, "Pelleas and Ettarre" and "Geraint and Enid" to contrast skepticism and credulity, "Merlin and Vivien" and "Lancelot and Elaine" to contrast sensuality and stoical repression, "The Last Tournament" and "The Holy Grail" to

contrast the limitations of atheism and mysticism. He concludes that Tennyson, by contrasting the two extremes, condemns them both. 39

The preceding review of criticism on the structural unity of the Idylls is sufficient to illustrate that Tennyson used several devices to organize this long poem. Without disclaiming any of these organizational techniques, I suggest that an analysis of the Christian allegorical elements in this work will reveal yet another method by which Tennyson achieved structural unity. Since Tennyson himself first called attention to the "parabolic drift" 40 of the work and since his hero is so pointedly associated with Christ, I have pursued the possibility that each idyll, like the Biblical parables, demonstrates some important lessons for the Christian to learn and that their final arrangement is influenced by the Christian truths each emphasizes. Although references to the Idylls as a parable or parables is fairly common, 41 no one has

40 Memoir, II, 127.
41 Van Dyke, p. 147; Reed, p. 6; Priestley, Language and Structure in Tennyson's Poetry, p. 129.
fully explored their parabolic significance in Christian terms nor its effect upon the form of the work. My study has revealed that, in between the frame idylls, the others act as parables to emphasize the dangers of the Seven Deadly Sins to the individual and eventually to the kingdom and to the world and also to stress the importance of exercising the virtues to counteract the vices. Moreover, the arrangement of events within each of the parabolic idylls as well as the overall arrangement of these idylls is significant in setting forth the moral of each and of the work as a whole. This structural technique is thus used as a unifying device throughout the poem.

In many details my study is indebted to the various modern scholarly discussions of the Idylls. My primary sources are Pfordresher's A Variorum Edition of Tennyson's "Idylls of the King" and the King James Version of the Bible.
Chapter I

Christian Allegory as a Solution to Certain Critical Problems

Although current criticism on the Idylls has generally been favorable, some critics are still bothered by what they see as Tennyson's ineffective portrayal of character. Some of their most scornful remarks concern its hero, King Arthur, whom Kissane says, "... critics have rightly regarded as 'colorless'..."\(^1\) They deem him a dimly conceived character whose inability to establish a satisfactory relationship with those closest to him brought about his own downfall. They also criticize the lack of motivation in the apparently inexplicable hatred Mark, Tristram, Isolt, Modred, and Vivien have for Arthur. A detailed analysis of the Christian allegorical elements in characterization, however, offers a solution

\(^1\) Kissane, p. 101.
to all of the above problems raised, the key to which lies in the relationship of Arthur to the other characters. From the beginning idyll, we see that Arthur clearly is no ordinary hero to be judged by ordinary standards. Those who have compared him with conventional protagonists have rightly seen him as a failure in his associations with the other characters in the work. Even a cursory reading of the Idyls, however, reveals him, not as a typical hero, but as one whose life and character parallel that of Christ. This factor is essential to an understanding of the character's function--that of Christ figure--throughout the Idyls.

Vann, one of the first to comment on these parallels at some length, lists some of the important correspondences which establish this relationship, including not only the general characteristics such as "... a leader come to establish a new order, the champion of the downtrodden and oppressed, the embodiment of justice, the exemplar of truth and honor and personal righteousness" but also the specific events which parallel those in the life of Christ.² The first specific parallel,

² Vann, p. 99 et passim.
a requisite for any Christ figure, is the mysterious, supernatural birth. Though there are different accounts of Arthur's birth—natural and supernatural—Tennyson, according to Gerhard Joseph, clearly wants us to believe the supernatural one. In the supernatural account, Merlin and Bleys see a dragon-winged ship "'... so high upon the dreary deeps / It seemed in heaven, ...'" filled with "'... shining people on the decks'" (CA 372-373, 375). Shortly thereafter, the infant Arthur washes in on a mighty wave and rests at the feet of Merlin. A second likeness that Vann points out is, as in the life of Christ, there is nothing known about Arthur between his birth and the beginning of his public career except for one incident. With Christ, the incident occurs when He is twelve years old during a trip to Jerusalem with His parents at Passover. On the journey home, His parents search for him among His kinsmen but cannot find Him. Later, back in Jerusalem, they discover Him "'... sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions'" (Luke 2:41-46). The one

incident mentioned between Arthur's birth and his appearance as a newly crowned king happens during his wanderings across the realms of Lyonesse when he finds a crown of diamonds (LE 34-55).

Another similarity is that, just as the dove's appearance at Christ's baptism symbolized divine approval of His beginning ministry, so the appearance of the Lady of the Lake and the three queens at Arthur's coronation signifies divine approval of his beginning ministry (CA 275, 282). Other parallels which Vann lists are that both Arthur and Christ gather about them a band of followers through whom they hope to perpetuate their ideals; both have their authority questioned, even by those closest to them; both are betrayed by one in the inner circle—Christ, by Judas, one of the disciples, and Arthur, by Modred, one of the members of the Round Table; both are essentially alone when their ends come; neither experiences the physical decay which usually accompanies death since Christ rises from the dead before physical disintegration occurs and Arthur journeys to Avilion in the barge of the three queens; and both promise to return while leaving a remnant behind to carry on their work. Burton also lists most of these correspondences between
Arthur and Christ as well as dozens of Biblical allusions associating the two. Some of the most significant parallels he finds not already enumerated above are the similarity of Arthur's and Christ's influence on their times, the farewell statements each makes, and the concern each feels for his followers after his death.

In addition to those similarities Vann and Burton record, there is the necessity for Merlin to hide the baby Arthur to prevent his murder by those enemies of Uther who regard Uther as Arthur's father (CA 208-224), an event which corresponds to the necessity for Christ's parents to flee to Egypt to keep Herod's murderous forces from killing the baby Jesus, who the wise men told Herod was "... born King of the Jews ..." (Matt. 2:2). As if the aforementioned events were not enough to establish Arthur's similarity to Christ, the poet endows him with preternatural powers. For instance, on the battlefield he can see the world "... so clear about him, that he saw / The smallest rock far on the faintest hill, / And even in high day the morning star" (CA 97-99). Also, in the accounts of the lives of both men, there is evidence

4 Burton, pp. 53-62, 100-170.
that each has a preordained mission to carry out. For example, when Christ's mother informs Him that the wine has run out at a marriage celebration, Christ responds with "... Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come" (John 2:4). When the Jews become angry with Christ for healing on the Sabbath day and for proclaiming Himself the Messiah, they try to capture Him, but the Bible records that "... no man laid hands on him, because his hour was not yet come" (John 7:30). Again when He angers those in the treasury, according to St. John "... no man laid hands on him; for his hour was not yet come" (8:20). Just before Christ's crucifixion, He tells His disciples, "... The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified" (John 12:23), and before the last Passover with His disciples, "... Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father ..." (John 13:1). During His prayer of intercession preceding His death, He prays, "Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee" (John 17:1). Each passage cited above implies that Christ at some specified time will fulfill a particular mission. Such is also the case with King Arthur. Since Arthur's life is in danger at his
birth, Merlin hides the baby, we are told, "'... until
his hour should come . . .'" (CA 214). Later, Merlin
brings him before the great lords to crown him king
"'... for his hour had come . . .'" (CA 227). These
passages also imply that, like Christ, Arthur has a par-
ticular mission to fulfill at a specified time, and the
similarity to Biblical phrasing serves to reinforce more
strongly the analogy between Arthur and Christ. The
mission that each fulfills is the most important parallel
of all—the sacrifice of self for others.

Despite the many close parallels between Arthur
and Christ, Burton still does not accept Arthur as
"... a full-scale, consistently-detailed allegorical
presentation of Christ"; He is not Christ the Son of God,
Burton insists, but rather the ideal man whom Tennyson
associates with Christ, "... the figure that his readers
accept as the epitome of the ideal. . . ."5 While it is
true that in the "Epilogue" Tennyson refers to Arthur as
"Ideal manhood closed in real man" (38), this description
does not negate the possibility that Tennyson is portray-
ing the life of Christ in the form of King Arthur. In

5 Burton, pp. 169-170.
fact, what better description of Christ—Himself both human and divine—has been written than this line? Moreover, if, as Burton suggests, Tennyson wanted only to associate Arthur with Christ as a means of assuring his readers' acceptance of him as the ideal man, he surely would not have had to work out the association in such elaborate details—details which extend not just to parallels between Arthur and Christ but to parallels between other major characters surrounding Arthur and their Biblical counterparts, sometimes specific Biblical characters and sometimes general Biblical types to be discussed in the next chapter. Although it is now impossible to prove that Tennyson intended to draw these parallels, his frequent use of the Bible reveals his familiarity with it; and since many of the parallels enumerated above appear in the first narrative of the series, we can conjecture, since the parallels are so close and so numerous, that Tennyson meant for his readers—themselves avid Bible readers—to be aware of them from the beginning. In any case, the informed

6 Robinson, p. 1. Miss Robinson has counted about two thousand Biblical references in Tennyson's works.
reader, observing these close similarities, will associate Arthur with Christ and will perhaps see all the other characters in relation to this concept. When Vann suggests the association of Arthur with Christ as a reason for Arthur's failure as a character, he is not considering the possibility that, if Tennyson did consciously pattern Arthur after Christ, he might also have had in mind Christian parallels for each of the other characters. In this case, Arthur's relationship to these characters must then be judged in this light to determine its success or failure. The following pages explore the possibility, therefore, that most of the figures surrounding Arthur function in relation to Arthur's role as Christ and that their actions can be interpreted in this light. What appears to the uninformed reader, then, to be a failure on Arthur's part in his relationship with his men, with Lancelot, and with Guinevere and to be motiveless antipathy in some of the characters toward Arthur may indeed be a part of the poet's design. Regardless of the author's conscious intention, however, such an analysis clarifies certain problems concerning the characterization of the above personages heretofore left obscure and offers
a solution to the problem of whether or not Arthur succeeds or fails in these relationships.

In considering Arthur's relationship with his knights in general, Ryals takes the position that he fails. If Arthur were an ordinary leader, perhaps such a charge would be justified; but as Christ, his mission is to establish an ordered society based on love, loyalty, justice, and the performance of noble deeds. To accomplish this goal, he gathers around him a group of followers who, because the question of whether Arthur is King Uther's rightful successor is never resolved, must accept his kingship on faith. He tries to instill in them his own ideas of perfection, demanding that they swear

'To reverence the King, as if he were Their conscience, and their conscience as their King, To break the heathen and uphold the Christ, To ride abroad redressing human wrongs, To speak no slander, no, nor listen to it, To honour his own word as if his God's, To lead sweet lives in purest chastity, To love one maiden only, cleave to her, And worship her by years of noble deeds, Until they won her. . . .'

(G 465-474)

Arthur's critics condemn him for making such impossible

7 Ryals, p. 73.
demands upon his men. As the representation of Christ, however, his relationship to them is that of Christ's relationship to His disciples. These conditions are, therefore, necessary to establish the kingdom of righteousness; and the gentle, compassionate, blameless King moves among his men as a living example of the kind of perfection necessary for a completely ordered society. As Buckley says, "... the great argument of the Idylls as a whole is simply that, without such virtues and the faith which sanctions them, neither the individual nor the state can attain rational order or spiritual health."  

So completely are the followers immersed initially in Arthur's cause that Bellicent notices a change in their appearance, which Gray calls "Arthur's transfiguring effect on his newly-made knights." She beholds "'From eye to eye through all their Order flash / A momentary likeness of the King!'" (CA 269-270). Strongly denouncing Arthur for forcing his men to submit their wills to his, Ryals writes, "To make men perfect, he must mold them as

8 Buckley, p. 182.

he would have them be. But in attempting to make them perfect, he must demand the submission of their wills to his, thus denying to them their own individualities."\(^10\)

If the kingdom of righteousness is to flourish, however, this is exactly what must happen. Since human nature's propensity is to sin when left to its own volition, Christians must submit their wills to Christ just as Arthur's knights must submit their wills to their King. If they do not, sin reigns. For this reason Arthur insists on the kind of perfection Ryals sees as destructive to their individualities. As long as the knights live up to these strictures, all is harmonious; but when they fall short of them, discord follows.

Another reason Arthur demands perfection from his men is that they, like Christ's disciples, go forth into the world to set examples for the heathen nations around them and for the unbelievers at home. Sometimes they are successful; sometimes they are not. That their experiences usually illustrate something essential for the follower of Christ to know is structurally significant to

\(^{10}\) Ryals, p. 193.
the Idyls and will be treated in Chapter III of this study.

Despite the valuable lessons in Christian living which most of the men gain and despite Arthur's well-designed plan for a perfect society, the kingdom begins to crumble. When the opportunity to search for the Holy Grail comes, most of the followers, to Arthur's displeasure, use it as an excuse to escape the responsibilities at home. Since only the pure in heart can see the Holy Vessel, only a few are qualified for the quest. Most of them return "Wasted and worn . . ." (HG 720) to a decayed Camelot. Their horses stumble

'On heaps of ruin, hornless unicorns,
Cracked basilisks, and splintered cockatrices,
And shattered talbots, which had left the stones
Raw, that they fell from. . . .'

(HG 714-717)

This picture represents what happens to man and society when the Christian neglects his primary duties of guarding the kingdom of Christ to "' . . . follow wandering fires'" (HG 598). But why do the men fall away from Arthur? Some writers, such as Ryals, believe that Arthur, by making his men emotionally dependent upon him, destroys "' . . . the
very values of love and freedom\textsuperscript{11} he created; and they hold him directly responsible for the kingdom's collapse. Discouraged because they cannot live up to the ideals Arthur imposes upon them, many knights do seek lesser ideals within their grasp. The old Seer had warned Gareth not to go into Camelot, or he would become

'A thrall to his enchantments, for the King will bind thee by such vows, as is a shame. A man should not be bound by, yet the which No man can keep.

(\text{GL} 265-268)

Other writers assert that Arthur's failure to maintain the respect of his men when he allowed Guinevere's sin to go unchecked is the reason for the kingdom's disintegration. Guinevere supports this theory with her outburst concerning the quest for the Holy Grail, "'This madness has come on us for our sins'" (\text{HG} 357). Both reasons—the men's inability to live up to such high ideals and their loss of respect for Arthur—account for the kingdom's dissolution, as Arthur himself realizes.

The question here, however, is whether Arthur's

\textsuperscript{11} Ryals, p. 73.
mission fails. Chepiga believes that it does.\textsuperscript{12} Judging Arthur by Northrop Frye's definition of an ironic hero, one who ". . . was not sufficient to have stood . . .",\textsuperscript{13} Chepiga does not consider the paradoxical nature of Arthur's mission: to fail in order to succeed. To satisfy the role of Christ figure, Arthur must fail in the sense that the world regards failure because success in this world would have meant failure in the divine scheme since he, like Christ, came to fulfill prophecy, not to establish an earthly kingdom. Christ put it in these words: ". . . My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence" (John 18:36). Like Christ then, Arthur, indeed, does not expect to establish a permanent kingdom on earth. Instead, he has come to demonstrate how such a kingdom is possible in the future. In Arthur's defense, Priestley maintains that Arthur is ". . . constantly associated with the bringing of order out of chaos,

\textsuperscript{12} Chepiga, p. 70.

harmony out of discord. . . . The life of man, the life of society--each depends upon a principle of order, upon the recognition of a set of spiritual values to which all is harmonized."¹⁴ This is precisely the point of the whole discussion of Arthur's relationship with his men. Instead of being deliberately blind to the "... moral lapses of his knights . . ."¹⁵ according to Lewin, on the contrary he knew, as the Christ, that only a few could live up to the strict vows he had bound them to; he knew those who expected a different kind of ruler would be disillusioned with his doctrines of love and forgiveness. But, having shown his followers the way to an ordered society, he had done what he came to do. At this time, he must pass into the great deep and leave the faithful remnant, symbolized by Bedivere, to carry on the work of spreading the gospel of peace, but "'The old order changeth, yielding place to new, / And God fulfills himself in many ways'" (PA 408-409). The new order will prepare the world for Arthur's Second Coming, as it will

¹⁴ Priestley, "Tennyson's Idylls, p. 37.

for Christ's, at which time the Bible promises, "... The
kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our
Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and
ever" (Rev. 11:15).

Critics have also found fault with the Idylls
because Lancelot is a more attractive character than the
hero. Some suggest that Tennyson simply erred in judgment
by not centering the work upon him instead of Arthur. 16
Surely, however, Tennyson was not so lacking in perception
that he did not realize that the warmth of the colorful
Lancelot would undoubtedly appeal more to his readers than
the abstract goodness of Arthur. MacCallum's interpreta-
tion of Lancelot as the imagination which is "... always
the intermediary between spirit [Arthur] and sense
[Guinevere], though it too often forgets its function,
and serves only to glorify the latter" 17 does not account
for the seeming misjudgment on Tennyson's part. The
reason becomes apparent, however, when we consider

16 Baum, p. 209.

17 MacCallum, p. 335; see also Charles Tennyson, ed., "The Idylls of the King" and "The Princess" (London
and Glasgow: Collins; New York: W. W. Norton and Company,
Lancelot as representing the world. Since the world is more attractive to mankind than perfection, it is artistically necessary in the Christian allegorical design for Lancelot to be more appealing than Arthur. Milton had exactly the same problem in portraying Satan and received similar criticism. "Though chang'd in outward luster," 18 Satan had to be both powerful and alluring enough to precipitate the Fall of man. Lancelot, too, symbolic of the world, must be powerful and alluring enough to bring about the fall of Guinevere. Tennyson, then, has the formidable task of making perfection appealing but of deliberately keeping him from being so attractive that Guinevere's preference for Lancelot, an artistic necessity, as noted, in the Christian scheme, would be believable.

There are several textual indications that Lancelot is, indeed, the allegorical equivalent of the world. The flower images associated with him in the beginning of the Idylls suggest the world as it existed

in its Edenic state. When Arthur sends him to bring Guinevere to Camelot, he "... past away among the flowers, / (For then was latter April) and returned /
Among the flowers, in May, with Guinevere" (CA 449-451). This is a picture of the world in all its innocence before sin appears. Now Lancelot's perfection equals Arthur's; in fact, according to court rumor, Guinevere thinks Lancelot is Arthur when she first sees him (MV 774), an indication that the world in its perfection resembles the perfection of Christ. At this time, Lancelot champions the King's cause and pays full allegiance to him, symbolizing the world's desire to follow the Christ. Sin enters his life, however, and mingles with the good. At first the sin in undetectable, and others regard him as the supreme example of Christian virtue. As he becomes more and more enmeshed in the illicit love affair with the wife of the one to whom he had sworn eternal fealty, the conflict within him grows. Unable to renounce his sin, he clings more and more to it. His chance to disentangle himself from his involvement with Guinevere comes in the form of Elaine; but, because he is devoted to the wrong cause, he rejects her offer of a pure love. If he could have given up his guilty love for Guinevere for the
innocent love of Elaine, he could perhaps have found peace, if not happiness; but, in remaining faithful to the Queen, he continues to suffer guilt and frustration, indicating the perpetual state of the world when its loyalty to sin outweighs its loyalty to Christ.

Having chosen the wrong love, Lancelot becomes unsure of himself when Guinevere doubts his faithfulness to her. He has been unable to live up to the perfection Arthur required and has also lost confidence in Guinevere. To fill the vacuum created by his loss of faith in her, he wanders off on the fruitless quest for the Holy Grail. Lancelot desires to be worthy of seeing the Holy Vessel and chases feverishly after it, but to be pure, he must renounce his sin, something he cannot yet do. He explains why he could not find the Holy Grail in the following passage:

". . . but in me lived a sin
So strange, of such a kind, that all of pure, Noble, and knightly in me twined and clung
Round that one sin, until the wholesome flower And poisonous grew together, each as each Not to be plucked asunder. . . ."
(HG 769-774)

The image of the flower associated with Lancelot in this passage is very different from the flower images earlier
connected with the innocent world. Now he represents a
good world tainted by sin. Without the guiding hand of
a strong faith, the world seeks to rid itself of this
poison as Lancelot's following passionate cries illustrate:

"... and while I yearned and strove
To tear the twain asunder in my heart,
My madness came upon me as of old,
And whipt me into waste fields far away."
(HG 782-785)

He tries to wash away his sin in the sea, but all of his
attempts to redeem himself end in vain. All of the
efforts of Lancelot, representing the world, to cleanse
himself without Christ prove that unaided humanistic
efforts are totally ineffective. Lancelot laments that
he was

"... beaten down by little men,
Mean knights, to whom the moving of my sword
And shadow of my spear had been enow
To scare them from me once... ."
(HG 786-789)

Because he "... still aspires to higher things, even
in the slough of his sin," as Pallen observes, "he is
vouchsafed a glimpse of the Holy Vessel."¹⁹ Since the

¹⁹ Pallen, p. 87.
vision was "... veiled / And covered" (HG 848-849), however, Lancelot is never sure he has seen it and concludes, "... this Quest was not for me" (HG 849).

The last picture we have of the world embodied in Lancelot shows that it has degenerated. Lancelot has been left in charge of the kingdom while Arthur is away fighting the Red Knight. Evidently, this Lancelot is not the fair, noble, chivalrous knight he had once been. His sin has continued to deepen and is clearly discernible as it has been for some time. Even the inexperienced Elaine is able to detect traces of its effects on his face. She sees that

The great and guilty love he bare the Queen,
In battle with the love he bare his lord,
Had marred his face, and marked it ere his time.

(LE 244-246)

Now he sits in the seat of Arthur, judging the Tournament of the Dead Innocence, a fitting task for one in whom innocence has died completely. Literally, his replacement of Arthur "... publicly reflects Lancelot's secret usurpation of Arthur's role as husband," 20 but

20 Hellstrom, p. 129.
symbolically it indicates that the world has supplanted Christ and has deteriorated even further in His absence. The poet describes Lancelot as "... Sighing weariedly, as one / Who sits and gazes on a faded fire, / When all the goodlier guests are past away. ..." (LT 156-158). His countenance is so altered that Tristram says of him:

'... for I have seen him wan enow
To make one doubt if ever the great Queen
Have yielded him her love.'

(LT 560-562)

The physical change in Lancelot only mirrors the moral change. No longer does the great Lancelot punish the wrongdoer but sits idly by while the laws of the tournament are broken and the King is cursed. Significantly, the ignoble Tristram wins the tournament. Though Lancelot knows Tristram does not deserve the prize, he hands it to him. The gesture signifies Lancelot's complete submission to evil, an unavoidable result in a world without Christ.

At last, Lancelot flees the court when Modred obtains definite proof of his adulterous love affair with Guinevere. In the subsequent battle between his forces and Arthur's, Lancelot refuses to lift his hand against his King (G 434-435). This refusal of Lancelot's to fight
Arthur indicates that, while the world, loving evil more, is not yet ready to receive the Christ as its supreme master, neither is it ready to fight against His goodness. Viewed in this light, Arthur is no longer the rather simple-minded husband who cannot see the obvious signs of the love affair between his best friend and his wife, "... whose only imperfection is his inability to see the imperfections of others."²¹ No, he is the Christ, who loved the world and gave Himself for it (John 1:29, 4:42, I John 4:14) and provides an example to the world of love and forgiveness. That Arthur/Christ's sacrifice for the world is not in vain is symbolized in Lancelot's dying a holy man (LE 1418). Thus is fulfilled the Biblical prophecy quoted earlier that the world will eventually belong to Christ (Rev. 11:15).

Numerous critics have also characterized Arthur's unimpassioned relationship with Guinevere a complete failure and have excused her for turning to the more passionate Lancelot. These critics over-emphasize the human side of the relationship between Arthur and his Queen. In this light, Lewin views Arthur as an inadequate

²¹ Eggers, p. 11.
husband\textsuperscript{22} and Guinevere as an inadequate mate "... for the spiritual king."\textsuperscript{23} Although such a reading accounts for Arthur as the spiritual ideal, it does not properly interpret Guinevere's role in relation to that spiritual element. Again, Tennyson provides his readers with the material for understanding the problem. Arthur loves Guinevere from the first moment he sees her. He feels "Travail, and throes and agonies of the life, / Desiring to be joined with Guinevere" (CA 75-76). He asks himself, "'Shall I not lift her from this land of beasts / Up to my throne, and side by side with me?" (CA 79-80). When he wants to marry her, Leodogran harbors doubts about his origin and hesitates to give his permission. Leodogran has heard that Arthur is baseborn, that he is the natural son of King Uther, and that he is of divine origin; but he cannot find proof for either rumor. His doubts are dispelled by a dream in which he sees Arthur crowned in heaven. Joseph's doubts about taking Mary to wife are also dispelled when an angel appears to him in a dream to reassure him (Matt. 1:20). This further parallel between

\textsuperscript{22} Lewin, p. 33.

\textsuperscript{23} Lewin, p. 36.
Arthur and Christ is another reminder that Arthur represents Christ in this Christian allegory and that the reader must examine Guinevere's character in the light of that assumption. Then Baum's complaint that "... as a character she is flat, without the excuse alleged for Arthur, that of being a symbol" becomes invalid, for she is indeed a very important symbol in the Christian allegorical interpretation. Perhaps one could even say that, next to Arthur, she is the most important symbol in the Idylls since Arthur's relationship to her is that of Christ's relationship to the soul.

There are other theories, of course, besides the above stated one to explain this relationship. MacCallum interprets it as the "... need of the ideal to fulfil itself in sense..." A typical interpretation of the relationship, and one similar to MacCallum's, is that held by Gerhard Joseph, who writes:

"... Tennyson epitomizes his idea of love as a pilgrimage of man's soul, alternately free from and accompanied by sense, toward divine perfection. The

24 Baum, p. 211.

25 MacCallum, p. 327."
marriage of Arthur and Guinevere, the primary representatives of soul (or conscience) and sense... suggests a Dantesque love wherein the embodied soul wishes to carry sense aloft with it as together they search for the beatific vision. Yet, insofar as the union of Arthur and Guinevere becomes preeminently a "war," Tennyson illuminates a second tradition in which sense and soul are at bitter enmity when soul, coming to a full understanding of sense's corrosive powers, struggles to disengage itself as it labors to return to a discrete realm of spirit.26

Similarly, Stopford Brooke sees Guinevere as the heart and Arthur as the soul which, "... to do its work, must be knit to the heart in noble marriage."27 None of the above interpretations, however, accounts fully for the travails, throes, and agonies of life Arthur suffered for Guinevere. When we consider Guinevere as the soul, however, the only part of human beings which in Christian theology is everlasting, and Arthur as the Christ, who, to do His work to guarantee the soul's eternal bliss, must be knit to the soul in a spiritual marriage, the longing to unite with the soul is understandable. Her story symbolizes the soul's progress from its lost state, when


its love for the world is all-important, to its redemption when its love for Christ supersedes worldly interests.

At the time Leodogran agrees to his daughter's marriage to Arthur, Guinevere is indifferent to the King. On the way from Cameliard to Camelot, she is attracted to Lancelot, the world. When her marriage to Arthur—Christ—transpires, however, Guinevere—the soul—is still pure and promises to love her husband "... to the death!" (CA 469). A short time later, though, the world, much more attractive and warm than the "... cold, / High, self-contained, and passionless ..." Christ (G 402-403), lures her away from Christ, and the soul sins. Indifferent to the spiritual commitment it has entered into, it is easily overpowered by the lust of the flesh. It has no aspirations for the higher love of Christ which transcends sexual desire. Eventually, the sin affects the others in the kingdom and brings chaos to Arthur's realm. Following the example of Guinevere and Lancelot, others enter into adulterous relationships and disregard their commitments to Arthur. When the soul is joined to the world—the symbolic meaning of Guinevere's adultery with Lancelot—like a contagious disease, it spreads its evil to other souls and infects them with unrighteousness.
until at last Arthur/Christ must sacrifice himself to make a return to order possible.

Guinevere's flight to a convent in Almesbury symbolizes the idea that the soul must escape the world to make salvation accessible. While she is there, a young novice, unaware of Guinevere's identity, prattles endlessly about the peace and harmony in Arthur's realm before his marriage to the Queen. She pictures the happiness of the subjects and speaks of the miracles, wonders, and signs performed then. Soon Guinevere's conscience begins to hurt. "'Will the child kill me with her innocent talk?" (G 212), she mutters to herself. Earlier, at court, Guinevere had sat between Enid, "her best" (G 27), and Vivien, her worst, as if to symbolize "... the image of her divided nature"28 or a conflict between "... a good and bad angel ..." who were "... contending for her soul."29 The bad angel had won momentarily, but now the novice, the representative of Christ's church, makes Guinevere aware of her unredeemed state and prepares her for Arthur's final

28 Lewin, p. 37.
29 Reed, p. 71.
visit. She sings a song which alludes to the parable of the virgins awaiting the arrival of a bridegroom whose wedding they plan to attend (Matt. 25:1-13) and reinforces the idea of Arthur as a Christ figure. Although the structural importance of this song is argued later in this paper, it is important to note here that the song refers to the literal bridegroom Arthur, who has come to bid farewell to his unfaithful wife, and to the figurative bridegroom Christ, who has come to reclaim the wayward soul. The soul grovels before him and makes "... her face a darkness from the King" (G 414). The faithless soul cannot look upon the blameless King because only moments before, her mind had been preoccupied with the thoughts of Lancelot, an indication that she has not yet renounced the world.

Of all the lines in the Idylls, Arthur's farewell speech to Guinevere has perhaps received the most ridicule. Masterman, for example, concludes, "... no man, however perfect, has a right to address another human creature, however degraded, as Arthur addresses Guinevere in his farewell; no man possesses the right to forgive 'as
Almighty God forgives.'"\textsuperscript{30} A typical estimation of it in many modern critics' eyes is Southam's comment, "Arthur sounds no better than an outraged husband in a Victorian melodrama . . .,"\textsuperscript{31} and Kissane's complaint that all of the sections in "Guinevere" " . . . where Arthur makes high-minded pronouncements over the prostrate form of his humiliated queen are essentially a failure of taste."\textsuperscript{32} Attempting to justify the speech, Ryals observes, "Critics have objected that Arthur here speaks like a prig, and so indeed he does. For Arthur is the redeemer, the hero from the realm of pure value who is more messiah than man; he is exactly what Tennyson said he is: an ideal man--and the ideal man simply does not talk like the usual cuckolded spouse."\textsuperscript{33} Ryals has hit upon the crux of the matter here, for Arthur does not speak to Guinevere as her husband but as her redeemer. In this light the scene no longer repels us as would a

\textsuperscript{30} Masterman, pp. 200-201.


\textsuperscript{32} Kissane, p. 158.

\textsuperscript{33} Ryals, p. 87.
similar scene between a husband and wife. It is entirely appropriate and even essential between the messiah and the lost soul. This whole scene is, in fact, the final phase in preparing the soul for salvation. The representative of the Church has awakened Guinevere's conscience. Now Christ must chastise it into repentance. Rosenberg views this scene in much the same way and argues:

The ferocity of Arthur's initial denunciation of Guinevere is deliberately chilling, coming as it does immediately after her anguished dialogue with the novice has quickened our sympathy. Yet her conscience and her will are still deeply at odds, and it requires the final onslaught of Arthur's words in the convent to precipitate her salvation.  

For this reason Arthur delivers a stinging rebuke, reminding Guinevere of what her sin has caused; then with Christlike compassion, he tells her he loves her still and forgives her "'... as Eternal God / Forgives ...'" (G 541-542). He expresses the hope that she will purify her soul and claim him only as her husband in the meeting before God. After Arthur's departure Guinevere attempts to see his face through a window, but the "creeping

34 Rosenberg, p. 128.
mist," (G 5) a symbol of her sin, hides it from her view. But the desire to look upon Christ, indicated by her effort to see Arthur, is the first step toward repentance. The second, the awareness of the sacrificial atonement of Christ for the soul's sin, follows almost immediately. Passionately Guinevere cries out, "'Gone--my lord! / Gone through my sin to slay and to be slain!'" (G 607-608). The soul's recognition of Christ's true worth and the admission of its love for Christ instead of for the world are the final steps before repentance and salvation. Guinevere takes these final steps with these words:

    ... now I see thee what thou art,
    Thou art the highest and most human too,
    Not Lancelot, nor another. Is there none
    Will tell the King I love him ... ?
    (G 643-646)

At last Guinevere's salvation is complete with the rejection of the world for Christ which her above words indicate. Although it is too late to undo all the turmoil her sin has caused, she will spend the remainder of her life in the convent in Christ's service.

    Now it remains only for Arthur to die for his relationship with his men, with Lancelot, and with Guinevere to be fully significant. The account of his
death in "The Passing of Arthur" contains several parallels between Arthur and Christ too obvious to miss. At the time of Arthur's death, all of those closest to him have deserted him as those closest to Christ had deserted Him, and, in his suffering, he, too, cries out with words which echo those of Christ on the cross, "'My God, thou hast forgotten me in my death'" (PA 27). On the battlefield, Bedivere points to Modred and calls him "'... the traitor of thine house'" (PA 153). Arthur responds with

> 'But call not thou this traitor of my house
> Who hath but dwelt beneath one roof with me.
> My house are rather they who sware my vows.'
> (PA 155-157)

Christ had also said, "For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother" (Mark 3:35). During the ensuing fight with Modred, the mist, so thick that the men cannot tell whether they are fighting their own forces or their enemies, will suggest for some readers the heavy darkness which fell

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35 Burton, pp. 52-62, 164-167, lists several of these.
upon the world at Christ's crucifixion. The only survivors of the battle are Bedivere and Arthur, who receives a fatal sword wound similar to the wound in the side which Christ received. On his back Bedivere carries the dying King suspended between heaven and earth as Christ was on the cross. When they reach the shore, Arthur commands Bedivere to fling Excalibur into the sea, completing "... the idea of voluntary sacrifice enacted before a perfect witness, Bedivere."\textsuperscript{36} With the surrender of the sword, Arthur passes from this life on a barge with the three queens who had been present at his coronation, having sacrificed himself for his men, for Lancelot, and for Guinevere. But the reader is not saddened because he has Arthur's promise, "'... I pass but shall not die'" (PA 28) and knows that his defeat is only temporary. Though Baum argues that "... Tennyson has done nothing to make his return probable ...","\textsuperscript{37} the similarity between Arthur's promise and Christ's, "... I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go ... , I will come

\textsuperscript{36} W. David Shaw, "The Idealist's Dilemma in Idylls of the King," \textit{Victorian Poetry}, 5 (1967), 51.

\textsuperscript{37} Baum, p. 212.
again" (John 14:2-3), suggests another clue to assure the reader with faith in the Biblical promises that Arthur/Christ will come again. Burton compares these same words of Christ's to the following spoken by Arthur: "'But now farewell. I am going a long way / With these thou seest—if indeed I go'" (PA 424-425). Though Burton comments that Arthur's words express doubt whereas Christ's state a fact, there is no conflict here. Christ, too, had doubted during the agonizing moments on the cross when he feared God had forsaken Him. Reed suggests that Arthur's doubt symbolizes "... the inevitable questioning of God's will," which Christ had also experienced. Then come the resurrection and ascension, symbolized here in Bedevere's account of the faint sounds heard as Arthur sails to Avilion, "... as if some fair city were one voice / Around a king returning from his wars" (PA 460-461).

Arthur's apparent failure in his relationship with the other characters, then, is really a success. In the line "'The old order changeth, yielding place to new"

38 Burton, p. 53.
39 Reed, p. 110.
(PA 408), which Rosenberg dubs "... the best-known and least understood line of the poem,"\textsuperscript{40} Arthur/Christ assures Bedivere that his cause will prevail. In allegorical terms, the old order--paganism, bestiality, chaos--will yield place to the new--Christianity--as the faithful remnant prepare the world through the salvation of the individual soul for the Second Coming.

Another problem in the \textit{Idylls} which has disturbed some readers is the apparently motiveless antipathy some of the characters have for Arthur. Three of these are Mark, Tristram, and Isolt. The excessive contempt they have for him seems to have no foundation if the \textit{Idylls} is read as pure narrative, nor have any of the other allegories accounted for it satisfactorily. Many have commented on the parallels between their story and the Arthur-Lancelot-Guinevere triangle, but the contrasts are far more evident than the similarities. The striking thing about these contrasts is not merely that they indicate differences, but that they denote diagonally opposed extremes. An analysis of the Christian allegorical elements responsible for the contrasts explains the

\textsuperscript{40} Rosenberg, p. 37.
seemingly motiveless antipathy of Mark, Tristram, and Isolt toward Arthur. If we consider Arthur as Christ, Lancelot as the world, and Guinevere as the soul, the reason for the hatred of Mark, Tristram, and Isolt for Arthur is understandable because they are the exact opposites of the other three: Mark, then, could represent Satan; Tristram, the world which rejects Christ; and Isolt, the unrepentant soul. As Tennyson so often does, he is presenting the other side of the situation. He shows what happens if the world as a whole accepts the rule of Christ and if the individual soul repents of its sin. In Tristram and Isolt he demonstrates what would happen if the world rejected Christ altogether and if the individual soul did not renounce evil. Forgiveness and salvation are the rewards for those who follow Christ; the alternative—to follow Satan—leads to spiritual damnation, eternal punishment in hell.

In writing about Mark, Rosenberg, including Modred in his summation, admits they have a reason for hating Arthur but concludes that "... the strength of their malice far exceeds the adequacy of their
motives." Ryals, commenting on Mark's character, says:

From the various references to Mark we see that he is associated with malice, particularly with treachery. Furthermore, we see that he is allied with Vivien, who likewise seems to be a representation of malice. But what is the motivation for their malevolence? Tennyson does not provide the answer.

But Tennyson does provide the answer. It is apparent to most readers that Mark is "Arthur's antitype," representing the opposite of all Arthur stands for, but there is ample evidence in the Idylls to support the theory that Mark even represents Satan. In "The Last Tournament" Isolt describes a night when she is thinking of Tristram. As she speaks his name aloud,

'Then flashed a Levin-brand: and near me stood,  
In fuming sulphur blue and green, a fiend—  
Mark's way to steal behind one in the dark—  
For there was Mark: "He has wedded her," he said,  
Not said, but hissed it. . . .'

(LT 611-615)

41 Rosenberg, p. 132.  
42 Ryals, p. 181.  
This example alone would suffice to illustrate that Mark is identified with Satan. Like Satan, he is a "fiend," standing in blue and green sulphurous fumes traditionally associated with hell. Instead of speaking, he hisses, an act linking him to the serpent, Satan's symbol. But Isolt even more explicitly identifies him with Satan when she warns Tristram to be careful lest Mark should kill him and "'... leave me all alone with Mark and hell!" (LT 534). There are other examples to support this theory. Arthur describes Mark as "'... a man of plots, / Craft, poisonous counsels, wayside ambushings'" (GL 423-424)—all characteristics of Satan. Mark steals "'Catlike through his own castle ...'" (LT 514) like Satan, whose subtle ways sneak up on the individual before he is aware of sin. Like Arthur, Mark rules a kingdom, but he has "'... tarnished the great name of king'" (GL 418). Mark is "A name of evil savour in the land" (GL 377). In these passages, then, Mark is associated with evil and Satan. As the representation of Satan, then, he is the natural enemy of Arthur/Christ and needs no further motivation just as the mongoose and cobra, also natural enemies, need no further motivation for seeking each other's destruction. As absolute evil, Mark/Satan would
understandably loathe Arthur/Christ, absolute good, and seek his destruction.

Early in the Idylls Mark tries to infiltrate Arthur's forces to weaken his kingdom. He tries to buy entrance into Arthur's band by sending his messenger with a gold cloth as a gift for Arthur. Scorned, he then sends Vivien, his emissary, to Arthur's court to corrupt his men, thereby getting revenge on Arthur as Milton's Satan had corrupted Adam and Eve to get revenge on God. Ironically, Mark has heard rumors

That out of naked knightlike purity
Sir Lancelot worshipt no unmarried girl
But the great Queen herself, fought in her name,
Sware by her--vows like theirs, that high in heaven
Love most, but neither marry, nor are given
In marriage, angels of our Lord's report.

(MV 11-16)

and that many of the men, believing the love between Lancelot and Guinevere to be "pure," follow this example

'So passionate for an utter purity
Beyond the limit of their bond, are these,
For Arthur bound them not to singleness.
Brave hearts and clean! and yet--God guide them--young.'

(MV 26-29)

Such talk of purity is too much for the evil Mark, who,
as Satan, would hate the pure. Knowing the weakness of man, however, he suspects, as his following words to Vivien manifest, that

... 'Here are snakes within the grass;
And you methinks, O Vivien, ...
... can stir them till they sting.'

(MV 33-34, 36)

The snake, symbolic of Satan, here represents the part of man which yearns to follow Satan. Mark relies on this side of human nature to disrupt Arthur's kingdom. His psychology is sound, for, through his agents, Vivien, Modred, and later Pelleas, Arthur's work is undermined and his kingdom ruined.

Like Mark, Tristram, too, hates Arthur. He is one of the inner circle among Arthur's men, and, in Van Dyke's words, "... the most brilliant and powerful of the new knights who followed the King only for glory, and despised him in their hearts..." But why does Tristram despise Arthur so much? Again, Tennyson provides the answer by contrasting him with Lancelot. He, too, represents the world as does the mighty Lancelot, but, as

44 Van Dyke, p. 157.
he himself says, "'And worldling of the world am I . . . .'" (LT 691). Although a worldling is one who devotes himself to worldly things, as Tristram does, the -ling also indicates a diminutive form as in duckling. Since he represents the world which rejects Christ, his moral nature is, therefore, inferior to Lancelot's, who, though sinful, grows morally because, by continuing to battle the evil in his nature, he eventually wins. Since Tristram scorns the idea of changing his way of life with "'... we are not angels here / Nor shall be ...'" (LT 693-694), his moral nature shrinks. Since both men represent worlds—Lancelot, the world which eventually turns from evil as prophesied, and Tristram, the world which would perish if it did not reject evil and prepare to receive Christ—worldling as applied to Tristram indicates that the world he personifies is a morally diminished copy of the greater world personified by Lancelot. As Kissane observes, "In . . . Tristram, we see, if Lancelot does not, the exaggerated image of his own worst self."45 Like Lancelot, he is constantly associated with images of nature. In "The Last Tournament"

45 Kissane, p. 112.
he is called "Sir Tristram of the Woods" (177) and refers to himself as "woodman of the woods" (694). At the tournament he is

. . . armoured all in forest green, whereon
There tript a hundred tiny silver deer
And wearing but a holly-spray for crest,
With ever-scattering berries. . . .
(170-173)

The song he sings to Dagonet is composed in the woods (283). While he rides through the forest toward Lyonesse, the sounds and sights of the forest take his mind off Queen Isolt (363-372). He stops to rest at

A lodge of intertwined beechen-boughs
Furze-crammed, and bracken-rooft, the which himself
Built for a summer day with Queen Isolt
Against a shower, dark in the golden grove
Appearing . . .
(375-379)

where he had lived with Queen Isolt for a month. When he rests, he lays "His brows upon the drifted leaf . . ."
(405). As he leaves the lodge, he rides "... beneath an ever-showering leaf" (491). He hears dogs barking and feels "... the goodly hounds / Yelp at his heart . . . ." (502-503). These images unquestionably unite Tristram with the natural world which he symbolizes.
Once Tristram, as noble as Lancelot, had honored
Arthur and had sworn to follow him, who then had
''... seemed to me no man, / But Michael trampling
Satan ...'' (667-668). Then

'... every knight
Believed himself a greater than himself,
And every follower eyed him as a God;
Till he, being lifted up beyond himself,
Did mightier deeds than elsewhere he had done,
And so the realm was made. ... '
(671-676)

Eventually, however, he loses respect for Arthur, which
Lancelot never does even at his lowest point, and begins
to wonder why he should bind himself to one who cannot
command faithfulness even in his own wife. Then he
begins to doubt the right of Arthur to rule. With doubt
come excuses for breaking the vows he has made. "... .
We are not angels here / Nor shall be ... ,'' (693-694),
he reasons and decided that

'The vow that binds too strictly snaps itself--
My knighthood taught me this--ay, being snapt--
We run more counter to the soul thereof
Than had we never sworn. ... '
(652-655)

Of Tristram's loss of faith, Reed writes, "His disbelief
in the vows is conditioned largely by the fact that his
own behavior would be inconveniently restricted by them." So it is with a world which dedicates itself to pleasure as Tristram's actions symbolize. Such a world renounces all moral bonds, as Tristram does, and hates the instigator of such bonds, blaming the strictness of the code for the moral weakness within itself like Tristram. It is then that Tristram begins to diminish in moral stature, evident in the comparison Isolt makes when she calls Lancelot "... thrice as courteous as thyself--" (701). Tristram is no longer a noble world with Christ as the guiding principle but a worldling who rejects Christ entirely. Instead, he follows Mark/Satan, whom he hates. Although he never admits to being a follower of Mark/Satan, he allies himself with the evil king's forces when he turns from Arthur/Christ. In this regard Priestley observes:

46 Reed, p. 117.

47 In Christian theology there are only two sides--that of Christ and that of Satan--as Christ Himself declared in these words: "He that is not with me is against me ..." (Matt. 12:30). By his open rejection of Arthur (Christ), Tristram has, therefore, automatically aligned himself with Mark (Satan).
Vivien and Tristram are both associated with the court of Mark, a court of active and irreconcilable evil . . . [but Tristram] . . . replaces Vivien as a symbol of "Mark's way." . . . In him the naturalist philosophy of the court of Mark has become more conscious and rationalized.

He loses all knightly courtesy and insults the ladies at the Tournament of Dead Innocence, causing them to murmur, "... 'All courtesy is dead . . .'" (211) and "'The glory of our Round Table is no more'" (212). Though Tristram's sin is the same as Lancelot's, death and damnation are Tristram's reward because he does not struggle to overcome the evil within himself as Lancelot does, but deliberately turns without remorse from good to evil. Tristram meets his end in the following manner:

... while he bowed to kiss the jewelled throat, Out of the dark, just as the lips had touched, Behind him rose a shadow and a shriek— 'Mark's way,' said Mark, and clove him through the brain.  

(745-748)

Mark/Satan has destroyed Tristram, the worldling completely given over to sin. The great world Lancelot has continued to struggle against sin and has won the battle;

but, through Tristram, who loves evil and hates good, Tennyson illustrates what happens to those worldlings who reject Christ.

Isolt of Ireland, Guinevere's antithesis, is the unrepentant soul, the soul wedded to Satan, hating the alliance but unable to escape it. In "The Last Tournament" she refers to her husband as "my Mark" (517, 594) because she knows she is Satan's. Isolt's antipathy for Arthur/Christ is different from Mark's and Tristram's. Mark, as Satan, hates him because he is good; Tristram, as the unredeemed world, hates him because he imposes a code too rigid for Tristram's unprincipled life style; but Isolt's is an unconscious antipathy to Arthur manifested in her rejection of his principles. This kind of antipathy, resulting from moral weakness, is often more difficult to conquer than conscious animosity. Unlike Guinevere, who did not at first realize that Arthur was "the highest and most human too," Isolt does recognize his superiority over all others. Her following words to Tristram about Arthur when she is trying to persuade her lover to flatter her with lies reveal her opinion of the King: "'Will ye not lie? not swear, as there ye kneel, / And solemnly as when ye sware to him, / The man of men,
our King . . .'" (641-643). Formerly, she had even thought of following God (or Christ, whom Arthur represents, since in Christian theology, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are three in one) after she heard that Tristram had married Isolt of Brittany and cried out: "'I will flee hence and give myself to God'--" (619). At another point, she realizes her need for God. When Tristram angers her with "'May God be with thee, sweet, when old and gray, / And past desire!' . . ." (622-623), she exclaims, "I need Him now" (625). But Isolt's reasons for resorting to God are unacceptable to Him because it is only when the world she loves fails her that her thoughts turn to God. The world is too attractive to her, however, and she is lured back each time. Isolt's following outcry to Tristram reveals her belief that she cleaves to the world instead of giving herself to God because Satan has her in his power: "'O were I not my Mark's, by whom all men / Are noble, I should hate thee more than love!'" (594-595). In reality, however, it is her sin of loving the world which keeps her bound to Satan (I John 3:8). If she would renounce the world, she could escape Satan's clutches. Still her love for it persists. Yet she admires Lancelot, symbol of the noble
world, and asks Tristram, "'... say I loved / This knightliest of all knights . . . / Well then, what answer?'" (705-706, 708). But Tristram, knowing Isolt too well, has only to show her the jewels he has brought her, and she forgets at once any thought of a higher, nobler world than the one Tristram represents.

Isolt's inability to reject the world originates in her incapacity for facing reality. Tristram, the lost world, makes her sin seem insignificant with "'... if ours be sin, / Crowned warrant had we for the crowning sin / That made us happy . . .'" (571-573). She begs him, "'Flatter me rather, seeing me so weak / . . . that I should suck / Lies like sweet wines: lie to me: I believe'" (637, 639-640). In addition, she and Tristram do not take Mark seriously but laugh at "'... the much ungainliness, / And craven shifts and long crane legs of Mark--'" (722-723). Thus they laugh at evil, disregarding its danger, and determine their ends. Through their unhappy fates, the poem allegorically portrays that the unredeemed world will be totally demolished and that the unrepentant soul which cannot turn from the world and accept Christ will be joined to Satan forever in spiritual death.
The animosity that Mark, Tristram, and Isolt feel for Arthur, then, results from Arthur's role as a Christ figure. Although the first of these—Mark—is mentioned only a few times in the Idylls and has been too often ignored by the critics, he is an extremely important character. In keeping with his role as Satan, he would seldom appear directly but would wreak his havoc indirectly through others. It is through his insidious influence, however, that Arthur's kingdom is ultimately destroyed.

Here the question arises of why Tennyson allowed Mark to defeat Arthur if Mark represents Satan and Arthur represents Christ. The answer is simple: Tennyson is following Biblical teaching. According to Revelation 20, Satan will not be overthrown until after the Second Coming, at which time he will be bound for a thousand years (20:2). Even then, however, Satan's end has not come, but after the thousand years, "... he must be loosed a little season" (20:3) and will make a last attempt to defeat Christ's forces. Eventually, though, he is "... cast into the lake of fire and brimstone ..., and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever" (20:10). Until Arthur/Christ comes again, then, Mark/Satan reigns in the world. If the world--Lancelot--turns to Christ, it will
be spared; but if it does not, Satan will destroy it as Mark, symbolizing Satan, has destroyed Tristram, the unredeemed world. The individual soul has a choice as does the world. It can turn to Christ in repentance and receive salvation as in Guineveres case, or it can cling to the world, as in Isolts case, and be ultimately claimed by Satan. Tennyson has presented every alternative with its consequences in the Idylls of the King.

Other characters besides Mark, Tristram, and Isolt hate Arthur for no apparent reason, yet they labor diligently to instigate the collapse of Camelot. As with the other three enemies of Arthur, a knowledge of their roles in the Christian allegorical scheme clarifies the situation.

One of these characters is Vivien, who 

49 In several passages the Bible makes it clear that all who follow Satan will be destroyed--both those who follow him deliberately and those who, like Tristram and Isolt, do so without conscious intention simply because they have rejected Christ. Some of these passages indicate that the actual destruction--whether physical as well as spiritual or only spiritual--will come from God/Christ (II Pet. 2:2-6, II Thess. 1:7-9); others, that it will come from Satan (I Pet. 5:8) as the experiences of Tristram and Isolt symbolize.
loathes Arthur and his Round Table . . ." and actively seeks their destruction. In attempting to explain her character, some compare her to various Biblical figures. Several look upon her lust "for Merlin's forbidden knowledge" as similar to Eve's desire to eat of the forbidden fruit in Genesis, a comparison which even Merlin himself makes. Several compare her to Delilah in her untiring persistence to extract Merlin's secret from him. Her act of washing Merlin's feet before the seduction recalls the harlot who bathed Christ's feet (Luke 7:37-38). Although all of these analogies enlighten us with regard to specific acts of Vivien, none accounts for the extent of her malice toward Arthur. Eve eats the forbidden fruit, not from hatred but from curiosity; Delilah acts out of greed rather than out of hatred for Samson; and the harlot washes Christ's feet out

50 Pallen, p. 69.


52 Pallen, p. 73; Van Dyke, p. 132; Eggers, p. 63; Rosenberg, p. 163, n. 18; Hellstrom, p. 117.

53 Rosenberg, pp. 164-165, n. 3.
of gratitude to and love for Christ, making Vivien's imitation of it an ironic perversion of Scripture. Terms applied to Vivien such as "antithesis to Arthur," "Anti-Christ," and "feminine Iago" are all attempts to account for her malevolent nature, but none is specific enough to be satisfying. Brooke observes, "Absolute falsehood, unredeemed meanness, 'motiveless malignity,' are not found in sane humanity, and Vivien is all the three." Ryals, as quoted above, remarks also on the insufficient motivation for Vivien's and Mark's malevolence toward Arthur. As demonstrated, however, Mark's motivation for evil stems from his function as Satan. Vivien's motivation for evil and hence her hatred of Arthur are for a similar reason: she, too, is satanic in nature. Priestley puts it thus:

Vivien's whole being is dedicated to one purpose, the destruction of the Order; she has no fleshly motive for her wickedness, nor does she need any; her motive is essentially the hate felt by evil for the good.  

54 Ryals, p. 181; Slinn, p. 8; Van Dyke, p. 131.  
55 Brooke, p. 57.  
For this reason some critics actually see her in the role of Satan. Certainly there is evidence in the Idylls to support this theory because Vivien does, indeed, have satanic characteristics. In an article comparing "Merlin and Vivien" to Book IX of Paradise Lost, Adler lists several of the similarities between Vivien and Milton's Satan, some of which are the epithet "wily," which both Tennyson and Milton use to describe the two; Vivien's serpentine qualities; and the use of flattery and temptation by both to bring about another's fall. Vivien's attempt to seduce Arthur also resembles Satan's temptation of Christ in the wilderness. Both attempts to corrupt perfection prove unsuccessful, and neither victim is influenced by the contact with evil. In fact, of Arthur, the poet relates, "... the King / Had gazed upon her blankly and gone by ..." (MV 158-159). Like Satan, she, too, distorts Scripture as she does in the following lines:

As Love, if Love be perfect, casts out fear,
So Hate, if Hate be perfect, casts out fear.
(MV 40-41)

57 Adler, pp. 1398-1400.
Hellstrom sees this perversion of I John 4:18—"There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear . . ."—as an indication that Vivien represents " . . . the hatred which destroys as opposed to the love which saves," as an indication that Vivien represents " . . . the hatred which destroys as opposed to the love which saves," another characteristic which could be regarded as satanic.

In spite of her demonic qualities, however, Vivien is not Satan. Those who see her as the Archfiend fail to consider her relationship with Mark, who himself represents Satan. Eggers also rejects the notion of Vivien as Satan, seeing her as " . . . a potent force but not of the actively rebellious and heroic proportions of Satan; her nature is not that of a fallen angel but the portress of hell gate, able to seduce with attractive graces." Characterized as " . . . one from out the hall of Mark" (BB 431), Vivien is undoubtedly Mark's emissary on a mission of evil instigated by him. If, instead of Mark, she were Satan, she would issue orders rather than take them. Because she is Satan's follower, though, she assumes the characteristics of Satan just as Arthur's

58 Hellstrom, p. 117.
59 Eggers, p. 85.
60 Ryals, p. 189.
followers, according to Bellicent, had assumed "A momentary likeness of the King" (CA 270) after taking vows to serve him. That the likeness is only momentary foreshadows the knights' eventual failure to adhere to the strict vows Arthur imposes on them. Vivien, though, never deviates from Mark/Satan's evil plan to destroy Arthur's realm and, therefore, maintains her satanic attributes throughout. In addition, she is one of Satan's descendants. Satan and Sin in Paradise Lost brought forth death, and Vivien describes herself as a child of death: ". . . for born from death was I / Among the dead and sown upon the wind--" (MV 44-45). As the disciple and descendant of Satan, then, Vivien closely resembles him in form and nature. Pallen calls her ". . . a soul fashioned after Mark's own malicious will. . . ." Thus she, too, as Adler points out above, has a serpentine quality most evident when she is engaged in carrying out

61 Rosenberg, p. 113, alludes to this incident in Paradise Lost: "Like Satan and Sin, whose incestuous union begets Death in Paradise Lost, Vivien is born of rebellion and death . . ., and begets them both throughout the Idylls."

62 Pallen, p. 70.
Mark/Satan's plans. During her temptation of Merlin to obtain the secret which results in Merlin's entrapment in an oak tree, she

Writhed toward him, slid up his knee and sat,  
Behind his ankle twined her hollow feet  
Together, curved an arm about his neck,  
Clung like a snake. . . .  
(MV 237-240)

By destroying Merlin's usefulness to Arthur and by spreading rumors which, though Tennyson is not explicit, apparently diminish the knights' respect for Arthur, she further weakens Arthur's forces. In this way she accomplishes the mission her master sent her on and establishes herself as Mark/Satan's chief agent—a kind of Beelzebub, who in Paradise Lost is next to Satan in power.

Another character who hates Arthur without sufficient reason is Modred. In spite of Rosenberg's argument mentioned earlier that both Mark and Modred have cause for hating Arthur, though he believes their hatred lacks adequate motivation, I find no evidence in the Idylls of any grounds for Modred's loathing of Arthur. In fact, he has even less cause for the antipathy he exhibits toward him than do Mark and Vivien. At least Mark had been openly rejected when he petitioned Arthur to make him one
of his followers, and Vivien had been humiliated when Arthur appeared not to notice her attempt to seduce him. Modred, however, is a member of the Round Table who has sworn allegiance to Arthur and has received no injury from him. Tennyson has even removed a possible reason which Malory includes by having Arthur deny the rumor that Modred is his illegitimate son by his half-sister Bellicent. Nevertheless, Modred quietly throughout the Idylls waits for a chance to destroy Arthur. His opportunity comes while Arthur is fighting Lancelot's men. At this time Modred with other former knights of the Round Table joins the heathen forces against Arthur, and they fight the "... last, dim, weird battle of the west" (PA 94). Nothing in the narrative accounts for Modred's turning from Arthur in this way.

Attempting to explain Modred's motivation for his malevolence toward Arthur, Littledale calls him "... the man of envious ambition, rebelling against lawful sway."\(^{63}\) Although envy and ambition can distort a man's values and can lead him to treachery, Modred's malice toward Arthur begins long before Arthur attains the zenith of his power. \(^{63}\) Littledale, p. 156.
Even before Arthur's marriage to Guinevere, when King Leodogran questions Bellicent about Arthur's origin, Modred has his ear pressed to the door (CA 322-324) as if then to glean information to use against him later. Reed proposes that Modred "... is meant to suggest all of the evil inclination within one's own dominion—be that self or kingdom ..." and that because the virtuous man must defeat this evil inclination within himself, Arthur's defeat of Modred is necessary before Arthur can go to Avalion.  

Such an explanation could account for the struggle itself, but it does not satisfactorily explain why the self in an individual like Arthur, whom Tennyson over and over again calls "the blameless king" and "the stainless king" and who Reed himself had said earlier has never sinned and has no need to worry about his reward in Avalion, would have to struggle so fiercely with himself at this time. Surely, in such a man, even if he were not the Christ, evil inclination would have been subdued long before his hour of death approached. It is more logical to consider Modred in the light of Christian allegory with

64 Reed, p. 112.
65 Reed, p. 111.
a predetermined part to play in the downfall of
Arthur/Christ. In the Christian story Christ's betrayal
is part of the prophecy connected with His life and death.
Evidence that Judas fulfills his function in that prophecy
comes from Christ's own mouth. When Judas comes with a
large number of armed men to deliver Christ to the chief
priests and elders, Peter, one of the disciples, tries to
defend Him. Christ, though, says to Peter the following
words:

... Put up again thy sword into his place:
for all they that take the sword shall perish
with the sword. Thinkest thou that I cannot
now pray to my Father, and he shall presently
give me more than twelve legions of angels?
But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled,
that thus it must be?

(Matt. 26:52-54)

Since Christ's betrayal, then, had been part of the divine
plan, Arthur as Christ must suffer the same fate. He,
too, must have a Judas, who is called Modred here.
Several incidents from the text support this theory.
First, like Modred, Judas is one of the inner circle with
no more reason for harming Christ than Modred has for
harming Arthur. The novice telling Guinevere the events
leading to Arthur's betrayal also refers to Modred as a
traitor (G 194), and again, during the last battle between Arthur and Modred, Sir Bedivere, speaking to Arthur, refers to Modred as "'the traitor of thine house'" (PA 153). Furthermore, it is Modred who is responsible for Arthur's death when he smites Arthur with a fatal blow of the sword. Judas, too, had been responsible for Christ's arrest and eventual crucifixion, during which Christ also had received a wound.

Littledale refers to Modred's satanic qualities. Textual references support the idea that Modred, like Vivien, is satanic in nature. When Lancelot catches Modred spying upon Guinevere, Modred is dressed in green, a color associated with the serpent, Satan's symbol. Infuriated at Modred's action, Lancelot

... as the gardener's hand
Picks from the colewort a green caterpillar,
So from the high wall and the flowering grove
Of grasses Lancelot plucked him by the heel,
And cast him as a worm upon the way.

(G 31-35)

Modred here is compared to a caterpillar and a worm, both

66 Littledale, p. 36; see also Shaw, "The Idealist's Dilemma in Idylls of the King," p. 50 n.
forms of the serpent. Moreover, he is cast into the dust, recalling the words regarding the serpent in Genesis:
"... upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life" (3:14). Furthermore, Genesis 3:1 refers to Satan as a subtle beast, a phrase which Tennyson also uses to characterize Modred (G 58).

All of the above images linking Modred with the Archfiend only reinforce the theory of Modred's representing Judas, for it is scripturally accurate that Modred as Judas possesses satanic attributes. One reference to Judas' satanic nature appears in John: "Jesus answered them, Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil? He spake of Judas Iscariot the son of Simon: for he it was that should betray him, being one of the twelve" (6:70-71). Luke also records that when the chief priests and scribes, fearing the people, seek a way to kill Christ,

Then entered Satan into Judas surnamed Iscariot, being of the number of the twelve. And he went his way, and communed with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray him unto them.
(Luke 22:3-4)

Again, when Jesus, speaking of His forthcoming betrayal, foretells that one of the disciples will betray Him, one
of them asks who it will be. Jesus answers in the following words:

... He it is, to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it. And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon. And after the sop Satan entered into him. Then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest, do quickly.

(John 13:26-27)

In the two latter accounts Satan entered into Judas or, in other words, Judas assumed the characteristics of Satan when he was carrying out Satan's will. Like Vivien, Modred also, as Judas, assumes the characteristics of Satan when he acts as Satan's agent. Thus, references associating Modred with Satan indicate that Satan has "entered into" him, not that he is Satan, and that he will carry out his satanic mission. Apparently Modred is aware of what that mission is and waits "mute" and "sullen" (GL 31, 32), "all ear and eye" (G 24) until the right moment for him to act. Finally, at the end of "Pelleas and Etтарre," realizing that conditions in Arthur's kingdom have deteriorated to the proper point for the prophecy's fulfillment, he thinks, "'The time is hard at hand'" (597). In betraying Arthur and causing his eventual passing, he fulfills Merlin's prophecy about Arthur, "'From the great deep to
the great deep he goes" (CA 410) as Judas had fulfilled the prophecy concerning Christ's betrayal and eventual passing. Both characters, agents of Satan, bring about the demise of one greater than they. In so doing, both fulfill their prophetic functions and, unknowingly, make possible the rest of the prophecy: the promised return.

Both Vivien and Modred, then, carry out their purpose in Tennyson's account of the Christian story. Vivien performs as Mark's agent in her various symbolic roles to be explained later, and Modred acts as Judas to complete his prophetic function. In each case the association of these two characters as well as of Mark, Tristram, and Isolt with the parallel each represents in the Christian allegory gives the reader a better insight into their otherwise inexplicable antipathy for King Arthur. Similarly, the analysis of the Christian allegorical roles that Arthur's men, Lancelot, and Guinevere assume in their relationship to Arthur as a Christ figure explains the reason Arthur's "failure" in his associations with these characters is deemed a success. The following chapter also analyzes the nature and function of characters not already treated in this chapter to determine their role in the Christian allegorical design.
Chapter II

Characters in the Christian Allegorical Scheme

In the preceding chapter the examination of the relationship of specific characters to Arthur as a figuration of Christ provides a feasible solution to some problems of characterization. At the same time, it suggests the possibility that other characters besides those already analyzed function symbolically as part of the Christian allegorical scheme of the _Idylls_. Investigation into such a possibility has uncovered the presence of characters embodying each of the Seven Deadly Sins and embodying each of the Seven Christian Virtues or its antithesis. Furthermore, other characters seem to represent certain types of Christians. In some cases the text clearly indicates their allegorical function as particular kinds of Christians; in others, the close parallels between the characters and certain Biblical personages or general Biblical types suggest that these characters act
as representatives of such individuals. An analysis of the function of the characters in each group provides a deeper insight into their symbolic nature and a fuller understanding of the Idylls as Christian allegory.

Characters as Symbols

In the first group—those that act as symbols—all of the Seven Deadly Sins and all of the Seven Christian Virtues are represented by individual characters, as noted above, either in that the vice or virtue is their dominant quality or in that their downfall can be attributed to the lack of a particular virtue in them.¹ Lyall recognizes this feature of the work when he writes, "... the poem is a splendidly illuminated Morality, unfolding scenes and

¹ Morton W. Bloomfield, The Seven Deadly Sins: An Introduction to the History of a Religious Concept, with Special Reference to Medieval English Literature (East Lansing: Michigan State College Press, 1952), pp. 66-67, gives the traditional list of the vices—pride, avarice, lust, envy, gluttony, anger (wrath), and sloth—and of the virtues—fortitude, prudence, temperance, justice, faith, hope, and charity. The virtues are composed of the four cardinal virtues (fortitude, prudence, temperance, and justice) and the three Christian Virtues (faith, hope, and charity), but the term "Christian Virtues" now often includes all seven of these qualities, as it does in this study.
incidents that illustrate heroic virtues and human frailties . . ."² but he does not elaborate on what virtues and frailties they illustrate. Since the Idylls has a medieval setting, it is entirely consistent for Tennyson to use this medieval ploy of personifying the vices and virtues as others had done before him. Some of the most famous precedents for utilizing this type of character are Langland's Piers Plowman and Spenser's Faerie Queene, both containing sections in which the Seven Deadly Sins are personified. Although Tennyson's figures are not so obviously allegorical as the characters in these two works who even bear the name of the quality or type they represent, they nevertheless symbolize various facets in the Christian's struggle with good and evil, a struggle during which, as the Idylls demonstrates, good can win only through the character's complete submission to Arthur/Christ's authority.

Among the characters who illustrate these qualities are Gareth and Lynette, whom Rosenberg dubs "... the least of the characters in the Idylls."³ In the

² Lyall, p. 100.
³ Rosenberg, p. 105.
Christian allegorical scheme, however, they are not the least of the characters in the Idylls; they are, rather, among the most important, for they personify two major qualities significant in the Christian struggle with good and evil: faith and pride.

Gareth represents the first of these, faith, the most important of the Christian Virtues. Strong textual evidence in support of this theory is found in the scene between Gareth and his mother at the beginning of "Gareth and Lynette." The young man's one consuming desire is to become a knight of Arthur's, but Bellicent, Arthur's half-sister, believing her son too young, refuses to allow it. As Gareth implores her to let him serve the King, she warns him of the uncertainty surrounding Arthur's rule in the following words:

'. . . there be many who deem him not,
Or will not deem him, wholly proven King--'
(119-120)

She exhorts him to "'. . . stay: follow the deer / By these tall firs and our fast-falling burns . . .'" (89-90). But Gareth, whose strong faith in the King mocks the doubters, answers:
'Follow the deer? follow the Christ, the King, Live pure, speak true, right wrong, follow the King-- Else, wherefore was I born?' (116-118)

Gareth's use of the word \textit{King} in apposition with \textit{Christ} in the above passage reveals his recognition of and faith in Arthur as the Christ. The rest of the passage indicates his realization that the Christian, born for the purpose of following Christ, the King, must exhibit purity in words and actions.

So far Gareth has demonstrated his strong faith in Arthur—and therefore in Christ—and his desire for service. There is yet another requirement for the follower of Arthur/Christ to test his faith: the readiness to suffer for the cause. Bellicent's question tests him in this area: "'... wilt thou leave / Thine easeful biding here, and risk thine all, / ... for one not proven King?" (125-127). This question recalls Christ's interrogation of His disciples James and John, "... can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" (Mark 10:38). In both cases, the meaning is clear: the Christian, represented here by Gareth, must be willing to suffer for the cause of Christ. Gareth's reply, "'... I will walk
through fire" (131), reveals that he is willing. As Bellicent knows, however, the novice in his newfound faith is often glad to perform the most dangerous feats to prove his loyalty but often fails in the meaner tasks. She, therefore, imposes upon him the condition that he go disguised to Camelot to serve in the kitchen there for a year and a day. Believing her son too proud to serve in such a lowly position for very long, she expects and desires him to return home to her soon, thus typifying the mother who, though professing to believe in the King herself, is reluctant to sacrifice her youngest and favorite son to his service. The eager Gareth agrees to the condition, however, and journeys to Camelot with two of his servants—all dressed as "... tillers of the soil" (178). Once more Gareth's faith is tried—this time by his companions who desire to "... go no further ... " (195) for the following reason given to Gareth:

'Lord, we have heard . . .
... that this King is not the King,
But only changeling out of Fairyland,
Who drave the heathen hence by sorcery
And Merlin's glamour."

(198–202)

Undaunted by their doubts, though, Gareth never wavers in
his faith but enters Camelot to be with the other knights who have ". . . faith in their great King" (323). Having withstood pressure from family and from associates, Gareth thus proves his strong faith in "Christ, the King."

Although Gareth personifies faith, the quality dominating and directing his life, as the above examples indicate, he still must conquer pride, perhaps the worst of the Seven Deadly Sins and one to be subdued only by increasing an already strong faith. To fight against pride, he must first acquire humility, a process begun under the supervision of Sir Kay, the seneschal, to whom Arthur assigns Gareth after granting the young man's petition. Sir Kay works him harder than he does the others and gives him the lowliest tasks to perform, but

. . . Gareth bowed himself
With all obedience to the King, and wrought
All kind of service with a noble ease
That graced the lowliest act in doing it.

(477-480)

Although he meekly performs these menial kitchen chores, he does it " . . . all for glory" (468), denying the idea that he has " . . . no pride to be brought low." 4 Still,

4 Reed, p. 123.
he must battle pride, revealed in his desire for glory. Opportunity comes through Lynette, symbol of the pride Gareth must overcome in his own nature. She appears in King Arthur's court to cry, "'O King, for thou hast driven the foe without, / See to the foe within!'" (579-580).

Though Lynette believes "the foe within" to be the knights holding her sister Lyonors against her will in the Castle Perilous, ironically, Lynette herself—pride—is the foe within and the hardest to defeat. Priestley, too, sees her along with Geraint "... in their perverse obstinacy and reluctant recognition of values," as representing "... internal obstacles to be overcome, rather than external forces threatening the good."  

Though Lynette requests Arthur's mightiest knight to fight against the powerful brotherhood of Day and Night holding Lyonors, the King, having learned Gareth's identity and having made him a knight in secret, grants him permission to contend with the brotherhood. When Lynette learns that one who she thinks is a kitchen knave will go instead of the mighty Lancelot, she leaves the court in a rage, thinking Arthur mad.

5 Priestley, "Tennyson's Idylls," p. 47.
Though Gareth has been humbled in his association with Sir Kay to the extent that Lynette's jeers at his unworthiness do not intimidate him, pride still dominates him. Significant to this argument is Gareth's reply to Lynette's jeers, "'... Damsel, the quest is mine. / Lead, and I follow'" (727-728). At this point the epithets she hurls at him and her declaration that "'... thou art not knight but knave'" (981) are correct. Until faith leads pride, he will continue to be "Sir Kitchen-knaves," "Sir Scullion" (767, 771). Equally significant is the statement Sir Kay had made earlier about the audacity of a kitchen knave's volunteering to redress Lynette's wrongs. Thinking Gareth had overstepped his bounds, he had said, "'... he was tame and meek enow with me, / Till peacocked up with Lancelot's noticing" (702-703). Though Kay is as blind to the true worth of an individual as Lynette is and though he attributes Gareth's pride to the wrong reason, his comparison of Gareth to a peacock, symbol of pride, indicates his recognition of this young knight's one quality to prevent his complete submission to Christ. With Lynette--pride--leading Gareth--faith--, he is in danger of losing his spiritual way as Lynette's exclamation, "'... I have missed the only way / Where
Arthur's men are set along the wood" (767-768), soon demonstrates. Now led into dangerous territory, Gareth must fight a battle he could otherwise have avoided if he had subdued pride earlier with a stronger faith. In this battle he prevents six men from drowning a Baron, one of Arthur's friends. Gratefully the Baron gives the young couple food and lodging for the night. Importantly, the servants set "... a peacock in his pride" (829) before Lynette, who refuses to eat at the same table with Gareth, evidencing that pride is still unsubdued as does Gareth's request to her the next day when they continue their journey, "'Lead, and I follow'" (869).

Soon thereafter, however, there is a shift in Lynette's attitude. She has continued to berate Gareth even after he has defeated two of the four brothers, but during the fierce battle with Evening Star, she begins to judge him by his deeds rather than by his lineage. As she cheers him on, he becomes stronger until at last he defeats his opponent. This change in her attitude from

6 Charles Tennyson, ed., "The Idylls of the King" and "The Princess," p. 65, comments on Tennyson's use of Lynette's song to show her changing attitude toward Gareth.
proud disdain to respect and even love indicates the weakening of pride with the subsequent strengthening of faith. Significantly, the next time Gareth repeats what he has said periodically during the journey, "'Lead, and I follow,'" Lynette answers, "'I lead no longer; ride thou at my side'" (1128). Still unaware of Gareth's true identity, Lynette apologizes for her behavior, which, Gareth reminds her, has developed because "'... you mistrusted our good King'" (1143), an indication of the lack of faith resulting from too much pride.

Now that faith has subjugated pride, he has only one more lesson to learn before his final battle. At this point Lancelot, who has been following the couple all the way on Arthur's orders, pretends to want to avenge some wrong Gareth has done a friend. During the ensuing clash, Gareth falls with one touch of Lancelot's spear. Overthrown does not mean defeated, however, as Lancelot implies when he rebukes Lynette for being ashamed of Gareth again when he falls. Lancelot says to her:

'. . . O damsel, be you wise
To call him shamed, who is but overthrown?
Thrown have I been, nor once, but many a time.'
(1227-1229)
This regression of Lynette's actually represents the reason for Gareth's fall. Since she is the physical embodiment of the pride in him, this one last evidence of her pride indicates the last vestige of pride in him. He has suffered humiliation from Sir Kay for glory; he has believed he could overthrow even the mighty Lancelot himself after his successful defeat of Evening Star (1152-1154). Now, though, he meets with apparent failure, a common part of the Christian's life with which Gareth, the new Christian, must learn to cope. That he has come to this realization is evident in his laughter over his upset. His Christian education now complete, Gareth merits Lancelot's praise for a good fight and for taking his overthrow cheerfully. The different titles given to Gareth indicate the steps he has passed during his educational process. He is called "knave," "kingliest of knaves," and, finally, "Prince" and "Knight." As long as pride controls him, he is a knave. When he subdues pride, he takes on kingly qualities though he is only the kingliest of knaves. But when he learns to take setbacks cheerfully without losing faith, he becomes a true Christian--a Prince and Knight worthy to follow Arthur/Christ.
At last, Gareth is ready to face his final battle. Throughout the narrative the allegorical meaning of the four brothers—Morning-Star, Noon-Sun, Evening-Star, and Night/Death—has been obvious. Clearly they represent the lifelong battle against pride, a structurally significant point to be developed later. Here it is enough to say that, after the Christian has conquered pride through humility and faith, symbolized in Gareth's experiences with Sir Kay and Lynette, and realizes that there will be moments of discouragement which he must learn to accept cheerfully, symbolized in his fight with Lancelot, then he can defeat death as surely as Gareth defeats the last brother, who represents death.

Pelleas, the young knight in "Pelleas and Ettarre," is very much like Gareth in character and situation. Like Gareth, he has faith in Arthur and is innocent, persistent, and proud. Like him, too, Pelleas petitions Arthur to make him a knight, undergoes a trial of his faith, journeys in the wilderness with a scornful maiden who calls him names, engages in battle for her, determines to keep all vows made, and has a conflict with Lancelot. Rosenberg remarks that Pelleas' idyll tells
the same story in reverse as "Gareth and Lynette," and Smith refers to Pelleas as a "bitterly ironic parallel" to Gareth. In an attempt to account for Pelleas' failure in spite of his similarity to the highly successful Gareth, several commentators write of him as a courtly lover too much concerned with pleasing his lady to be a good knight. Poston compares him to Chaucer's courtly lover, Troilus, accusing both of idolatry in their worship of a lady. Similarly, Priestley regards him as "... the ideal of the courtly lover, seeking fame for a lady." In the same vein Smith comments on the difference between him and Gareth: "... he [Pelleas] seeks to please a lady, not a king, by the rules of courtly love to win a mistress rather than the approval of Arthur." Certainly his overwhelming desire to serve a maiden, his persistence

7 Rosenberg, p. 31.


11 Smith, p. 64.
in spite of her rejection, his pining away for love are all characteristics of the courtly lover. This theory, while it offers a partial explanation for Pelleas' actions, does not adequately account for his disillusionment with Arthur, who in no way figures in Pelleas' pursuit of Ettarre as he had with Gareth's mission for Lynette. Even so, its proponents correctly diagnose Gareth's and Pelleas' relationship to Arthur and to the ladies of their respective idylls as the main cause for Gareth's victory over self and Pelleas' surrender to self. In all of Gareth's activities his main goal is to serve Arthur, but before he can serve most effectively, he must overthrow pride. For this reason he endures Lynette's scorn and at last subdues her, the symbol of his pride, through his determination to complete successfully the mission on which Arthur has sent him. Pelleas, on the other hand, while professing to serve Arthur, thinks only of pleasing Ettarre, who herself mocks the King (244). If we regard Gareth and Pelleas as contraries in the Christian allegorical scheme, we realize that this interpretation accounts for all of Pelleas' actions including his final turning from Arthur. Just as Tennyson has presented the two alternatives for the world and the
soul, with Lancelot and Guinevere representing the positive side and Tristram and Isoit, the negative, so does he present the contrasting side of the battle between faith and pride. In "Gareth and Lynette" he demonstrates how faith, the most important of the Seven Christian Virtues, overcomes pride, the worst of the Seven Deadly Sins. In "Pelleas and Ettarre," using similar characters and situations, he shows how faith can die if pride remains dominant in the Christian's life. Pelleas represents this loss of faith, and Ettarre embodies his unconquered pride.

Before Pelleas, representing the Christian in this idyll, ever sees Arthur/Christ, he knows that Christians are commanded to "... love one another..." (I John 3:23) and is, therefore, seeking someone on whom to bestow this love. His idealized conception of what Christian love involves is symbolized in his search for the ideal maiden to love. As he seeks her, he asks himself:

'. . . Where?
O where? I love thee, though I know thee not.
For fair thou art and pure as Guinevere,
And I will make thee with my spear and sword
Ironically, the maiden Pelleas meets and loves shortly thereafter is as beautiful and as pure as the adulterous Guinevere, and, equally ironically, he is her Arthur in the sense that she rejects the divinity in him that, according to Christian theology, all Christians possess, just as Guinevere--the soul--at first rejected Arthur/Christ, the source of all divinity to Christians. Significantly, Ettarre has already lost her way when Pelleas first sees her. Since she is an extension of his pride, her lost condition foreshadows Pelleas' own doom. His blind love for her is really a love of self, of which pride is the chief symptom, and his determination to serve her is a subconscious desire to serve self. In keeping with this idea is Pelleas' immaturity, emphasized throughout the idyll in his unrealistic attitude toward love, his inability to distinguish between Ettarre's outward and inner self, his susceptibility to her flattery, and his tendency to stammer when he talks with her. If he were more mature in his faith, he would recognize his love for her as self-love, or pride, and
would seek to conquer pride, like Gareth, through humility and service to Arthur/Christ. There is still hope for him at this point, however, indicated by his leading Ettarre out of the wilderness to the King. In "Gareth and Lynette," Lynette's leading Gareth, as explained earlier, indicates his continued submission to pride as Pelleas' leading Ettarre out of the wilderness to Caerleon signifies that he has not yet yielded fully to his pride.

When Pelleas arrives in Caerleon with Ettarre, he believes himself ready to serve Arthur/Christ and asks the King to make him a knight "... because I know, Sir King, / All that belongs to knighthood, and I love!" (7-8). These lines are the clue to one of Pelleas' delusions: he wrongly believes that knowing all that knighthood requires and loving are the only essentials for a follower of Christ. Just knowing the requirements of knighthood and of Christianity is not fulfilling them, however, just as misdirected love does not fulfill Christ's commandment to love others. To love in the Christian sense is to put Christ first, an action which involves conquering pride as Gareth does. When this happens, then the Christian can love his fellows
unselfishly. What Pelleas does not understand is that pride keeps him from loving in this Christian sense of the word. Gareth, though, learns that a strong faith weakens pride and replaces it with unselfish love. On the other hand, Pelleas' pride only becomes stronger as we see in "The Tournament of Youth." There Pelleas actually fights for pride and wins the golden circlet. That his pride is at its height is evident in these lines describing Ettarre about to crown herself in Napoleonic fashion:

. . . the heat
Of pride and glory fired her face; her eye
Sparkled; she caught the circlet from his lance,
And there before the people crowned herself.
(164-167)

Until now Ettarre, hoping to flatter Pelleas into winning the circlet for her, has been courteous to him. As she receives the prize, however, "... for the last time she was gracious to him" (168). Pride, uppermost in the now forlorn Pelleas, completely dominates him from this time on. Importantly, when Ettarre and company leave the city for home, Pelleas follows them, an indication, as with Gareth when Lynette leads him, that he is totally submissive to his pride.
In spite of Pelleas' acquiescence to pride, his faith in Arthur/Christ, as yet, has shown no visible signs of weakening. His journey back into the wilderness, however, from which he had emerged full of joy and expectation the first time leading Ettarre is a sad, frustrating journey into spiritual chaos during which his faith, like Gareth's, undergoes a trial. In Gareth's case the first trial under Sir Kay's tutelage tests the endurance of Gareth's faith with dull, unpleasant chores; the second in the wilderness with Lynette tests it with Lynette's sneers at his lowly status and with her rejections of his offers of succor. Both situations stand for what often results in a loss of faith for the young Christian when he, fired with enthusiasm for Christ's cause and expecting to live in a perpetual state of religious ecstasy, discovers that most service is unexciting and that many reject offers of Christian aid. Gareth survives both with faith intact. Ettarre, like Lynette, also tests Pelleas' faith, hurling epithets at him as Lynette has formerly done at Gareth. One of these, "Sir Baby," (183) again reminds the reader of Pelleas' immaturity, his failure to advance beyond the early stage of Christianity when the idealistic novice expects all to
respond to him in kind. When Ettarre refuses to let him
enter her castle, he excuses her behavior toward him as
a natural characteristic of ladies, thinking

'These be the ways of ladies,' ...
'To those who love them, trials of our faith.
Yea, let her prove me to the utmost,
For loyal to the utmost am I.'

(202-205)

As shown above, Pelleas realizes his faith is being
tested, but he idealistically expects a happy ending,
revealed in these words to her:

'. . . for I have sworn my vows,
And thou hast given thy promise, and I know
That all these pains are trials of my faith,
And that thyself, when thou hast seen me strained
And sifted to the utmost, wilt at length
Yield me thy love and know me for thy knight.'

(236-241)

In other words, Pelleas expects to overthrow pride
without the fight necessary to do so. Though Gareth's
fight against pride was for a lifetime, symbolized in the
battle with the brothers of Day and Night, Pelleas expects
it to happen instantaneously without the struggle Gareth
endures. While it is true that Pelleas battles the
three knights whom Ettarre orders to drive him from her
castle wall, it is a battle brought on by his own
foolishness, not one to overcome pride. In fact, after defeating the knights several times, he even allows himself to be captured when he overhears Ettarre tell them to bind him and bring him to her. His fight, then, is not to overcome pride but to demonstrate his uttermost loyalty to it (as he has sworn) and even to embrace it if possible. His submission to the knights signifies his willingness to be governed by pride.

The perseverance Pelleas exhibits in his pursuit of Ettarre is another trait he has in common with Gareth. In Gareth, however, it keeps him from giving up on the mission for Arthur in the face of adverse conditions. By contrast, Pelleas' perseverance is not in the service of Arthur or of Ettarre since she neither needs nor wants his aid, but of self. His steadfast refusal to leave her is the Christian's stubborn refusal to give up pride though it makes a fool of him as Ettarre vehemently points out (108, 247, 250). Still, he clings to pride no matter what the consequences as his vow to serve Ettarre reveals: "... 'Behold me, Lady, / A prisoner, and the vassal of thy will'" (232-233).

During Gareth's journey with Lynette, her attitude changes from scorn to respect to love,
indicating, as we have seen, the weakening of pride and the strengthening of faith in Gareth. In like manner Ettarre's changing attitude toward Pelleas from scorn to wrath to hate (211, 217) indicates the strengthening of pride and the weakening of faith in Pelleas. Instrumental in this weakening and eventual loss of faith is doubt, which goes through three well-defined stages before faith's complete annihilation. The first stage is self-doubt, seen in Pelleas' words to Ettarre, the embodiment of his own pride. When he beholds her angrily commanding her knights to cast him out of her presence, he tells her, "'I had liefer ye were worthy of my love, / Than to be loved again of you . . .'" (293-294). Since she, as the embodiment of his pride, is an extension of him, his remark to her is really directed to himself. It symbolically reflects his waning faith in self. At the beginning Pelleas had felt himself worthy to follow Arthur because he loved. Because his love never extends beyond self-love, however, he begins to doubt his own worthiness as a follower of the King and in the preceding lines symbolically expresses the desire to be more deserving rather than to continue in love of self.
Then when Gawain, happening upon Gareth during one of his struggles with Ettarre's knights, promises to win Ettarre for him, Pelleas allows it, a sign of the recognition of his own inadequacy in overcoming his pride alone. Unfortunately his reliance upon Gawain for help is a farce since Gawain also thinks of self above all else. His forthcoming betrayal of Gawain is the second stage in Pelleas' loss of faith. When the more experienced knight has not returned on the third night, Pelleas starts to doubt him and, after searching, finds him lying with Ettarre. In the sense that Gawain proves false to Pelleas, this idyll is about the decay of honor,¹² as Burchell mentions, but this instance of moral degeneration in Gawain is a relatively minor point in the overall picture. What is important to the whole is the effect this blow has on the young Pelleas' faith. In Ettarre and her company he has encountered non-believers who mocked his leader; now he is betrayed by one of the brothethood, a professed follower of Arthur/Christ, one who pretends allegiance but mocks the King by breaking his vows of loyalty and purity. This discovery is even more crushing

¹² Burchell, p. 422.
than his frustrating experience with Ettarre. Already he has begun to doubt self, but now he faces the fact of even greater imperfection than his in other believers. Like many Christians, he blames God, not self, for all of his frustrations as the following lines evidently about the King, representing God, manifest:

'Dishonoured all for trial of true love--
Love?--we be all alike: only the King
Hath made us fools and liars.'

(468-470)

All along he has deluded himself into thinking his love for Ettarre "true love" and her rejection of him "a trial of his faith." In reality, however, his love for her is self-love, as we have argued, and his trial is brought on by his failure to admit the existence of this part of his nature. The shame Pelleas experiences on seeing Gawain and Ettarre together is a self-loathing brought on by having to look inwardly at his own nature. Kissane interprets the event similarly: "Having taken Ettarre's beauty for the objectification of his soul's purity, Pelleas now finds in her lewdness a reflection of his own
essential vileness."¹³ This vileness he sees in himself—the realization that "I never loved her, I but lusted for her!" (475)—enrages him because it shows him that he is little better, if any, than the false Gawain.

Doubt of both self and fellow believer having turned to loss of faith in each, Pelleas then vanishes into the night, an act betokening the spiritual death he is moving toward. Though his refusal to slay the sleeping Gawain because "... the King hath bound / And sworn me to this brotherhood" (439-440) manifests Pelleas' continued faith in the King in spite of his idea that somehow Arthur is responsible for his situation, he is about to lose the last vestige of his faith. Even though Ettarre has proved false, he still believes in Guinevere's purity, by which he has judged the purity of all. When during a meeting with Percivale, who hints of Guinevere's infidelity, Pelleas loses faith in her, too, he doubts all, even Arthur, as he cries out:

'Is the Queen false?' and Percivale was mute.
'Have any of our Round Table held their vows?'

¹³ Kissane, p. 111.
And Percivale made answer not a word.
'Is the King true?'
(522-525)

What Reed says of Pelleas' experience with Ettarre applies also to his disillusionment with Guinevere: "It does not prompt him to review his own values and reconsider their nature and application in terms of his experience; instead it is the values he is prepared to disown."\(^{14}\) This is exactly what Pelleas does. Since Guinevere represents the soul, Pelleas' reaction to her impurity is the naive Christian's reaction to the knowledge that the human soul in everybody is imperfect. It is this knowledge which drives him temporarily insane as he races madly along the countryside, much as Hawthorne's Young Goodman Brown did when he thought his wife Faith had consorted with Satan. In both, their disillusionment in the purity of the soul leads to their complete loss of faith in all goodness, especially in Pelleas' case in Arthur/Christ, the chief source of goodness. Ryals maintains that Arthur is to blame for Pelleas' madness by forcing his high ideals on him; then when Ettarre and Gawain betray him, "... he

\(^{14}\) Reed, p. 106.
completely foreswears the high ideals enjoined upon him." While Arthur actually does not force his way of life on Pelleas but accepts him only upon Pelleas' request, it is true that Pelleas' refusal to accept the duality of the human soul maddens him.

Nevertheless, he has opportunity in the form of Lancelot to rise cheerfully from defeat as Gareth had. He encounters Lancelot during his enraged state. When the older knight persists in finding out his name, Pelleas answers:

'No name, no name, . . . a scourge am I
To lash the treasons of the Table Round.'

'Yea, but thy name?' 'I have many names,' he cried:
'I am wrath and shame and hate and evil fame,
And like a poisonous wind I pass to blast
And blaze the crime of Lancelot and the Queen.'
(553-558)

Since Tennyson has identified Pelleas as the Red Knight, these words foreshadow the loss of identity which Pelleas undergoes after he embraces evil, a point to be explained more fully in the later treatment of the Red Knight. Like

15 Ryals, p. 84.

Gareth, Pelleas also contends with Lancelot—the world—and, like Gareth, suffers defeat when his horse falls. Whereas Gareth's faith enables him to take his setback good-naturedly, Pelleas begs instead for Lancelot to slay him (564, 567). He had rather die than struggle with the doubt common to all those associated with a world not yet committed totally to Christ. For this reason he receives not praise from Lancelot as Gareth had in his overthrow, but censure as Lancelot commands him: "'Rise, weakling. . .'." (570). When back at court, the Queen offers Pelleas consolation and help, saying, "'. . . If I, the Queen, / May help them, loose thy tongue, and let me know'" (587-588), Pelleas

... lifted up an eye so fierce
She quailed; and he, hissing, 'I have no sword,'
Sprang from the door into the dark.
(589-591)

Here, as elsewhere in the Idylls, the hissing associated with Satan, is a sign of the character's joining forces with him. From that moment on, Pelleas determines to be the opposite of all Arthur stands for. As Pelleas' fate symbolizes, faith has now been completely destroyed because it could not overcome pride.
As for Ettarre, when she discovers the sword, which Pelleas had laid across her naked throat, and realizes he could have killed her and Gawain,

. . . her ever-veering fancy turned
To Pelleas, as the one true knight on earth,
And only lover; and through her love her life
Wasted and pined, desiring him in vain.

(483-486)

As Guinevere finally comes to love Arthur, and Lynette, Gareth, so Ettarre now loves Pelleas. With the other two, however, they finally love because they yield to the noble side of their natures. Ettarre, though, does not love Pelleas until she destroys his innocence. She then wastes and pines away her life, longing for the innocence in herself which was Pelleas before he yielded to the prideful part of himself which she stands for.

Both Gareth and Pelleas once had the same potential for Christian service. In both idylls the young men represent faith, and in both the maidens embody the pride in their natures that each must conquer. Because Gareth subdues pride, he becomes a positive force for good, whereas Pelleas, unable to conquer his pride, loses his faith entirely. Once again Tennyson has shown the choices open to the individual.
In many ways Geraint resembles Gareth and Pelleas: his youth, his initial innocence, his devotion to a lady, and his faith in Arthur/Christ. Reed suggests that Geraint must struggle with pride, which he classifies as "... vanity, or pride of nature." In this respect, then, he would, in this allegorical interpretation, be like the other two also. The difference is that, at the beginning of "The Marriage of Geraint," Geraint has already conquered Edyrn, "... the obvious representative of simple pride," the account of which the reader gets in a flashback. His story, therefore, begins where Gareth's had ended--with the defeat of pride. While Reed's observation applies to the Geraint of the flashback, it is not the vice with which he must contend in the present. Rather, Geraint's trouble begins after his defeat of pride in the form of Edyrn when he becomes morally lazy. He, therefore, represents sloth, which like pride is deadly because it leads to other sins. Often the first symptom of sloth in the Christian is a lessening of his devotion to Christ. Such is the case with Geraint.

17 Reed, p. 59.
18 Reed, p. 59.
That Enid replaces, or at least rivals, Geraint's affection for Arthur/Christ is manifested in the statement that Geraint loves Enid "... as he loved the light of Heaven" (5). Since Christ is often referred to as light, we can infer that Geraint, after Pelleas' fashion, has turned his affections from Arthur/Christ to an earthly love and begins to worship her, thereby transgressing the first commandment: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (Ex. 20:3).

Because of this idolatrous love for Enid similar to that which Pelleas had for Ettarre, Geraint, instead of remaining to serve Arthur, makes excuses to return to his own princedom at the first hint of Guinevere's infidelity. Before his marriage to Enid he had wanted her and Guinevere to love each other, for, he had thought, "'... how can Enid find / A nobler friend?" (792-793). Now he fears the corrosive influence which the Queen could have on Enid and withdraws with her to his homeland. Instead of alleviating his fears, however, the departure from the King's service provides him with even more time to spend with Enid. As his devotion to her increases, his loyalty to Arthur/Christ decreases until at last he becomes...
Forgetful of his promise to the King,
Forgetful of the falcon and the hunt,
Forgetful of the tilt and tournament,
Forgetful of his glory and his name,
Forgetful of his princedom and its cares.
(50-54)

In other words, Geraint neglects his knightly (or Christian) duties in his uxorious attention to Enid. When she becomes sad, realizing that others scoff and jeer at Geraint's excessive devotion to her, Geraint mistakenly suspects her of unfaithfulness. Blaming herself for not telling him of others' reaction, she says, "'O me, I fear that I am no true wife'" (108). Unfortunately, when Geraint hears these words, his suspicions increase. The source of his suspicions of Enid is his disillusionment with Guinevere, whom he, too, has regarded as the epitome of virtue. Doubt in her purity, something else he has in common with Pelleas, causes him to doubt the existence of all purity. Kincaid expresses his theory of the whole matter in the following way:

Through Geraint, Tennyson shows the corrupting force of rational doubt. . . . It is not Geraint's doubt of his wife but his doubt of the queen's
loyalty—that is, elementary doubt itself—which emasculates him. . . .19

Although the immediate cause for his leaving Arthur's court is, indeed, doubt of Guinevere—or "elementary doubt"—resulting in mistrust of Enid, it is not, as Kincaid argues, doubt in any form which emasculates him. His emasculation had already begun before he heard the rumor about Guinevere when Enid replaced Arthur/Christ as first priority in his life, leading soon to his neglect of his King. In fact, if Geraint had not been guilty of moral inertia, he would have had his mind on the King's business instead of on court gossip since, at this time, there is no hard proof of Guinevere's disloyalty to her husband. Sloth, then, has allowed the entrance of unchristian thoughts, followed by doubt of the Queen and hence of Enid, followed by jealousy, the emotion leading to his unreasonable demands of Enid. Without telling her what she has done, he orders her to put on her "'... worst and meanest dress'" (130) and ride with him into the wilderness. When Enid asks to know her offense, he commands, "... 'I charge thee, ask

19 Kincaid, p. 173.
not, but obey'" (133). Although Geraint's purpose is to test her willingness to obey him without question, disobedience is precisely what he himself is guilty of. Because he has not obeyed his King's commands to discharge his duty as a faithful knight, he has betrayed that office. His journey through the wilderness with Enid helps him to come to this realization and to resume his knightly duties.

In what way, though, is Enid important to Geraint's spiritual regeneration? The answer to this question requires examination of Enid's allegorical role also. The clue to her function is in the various trials Geraint forces her to endure. The first is the unreasonable demand without explanation to ride ahead of him in silence. Enid fails this first test because of her great love for her husband. Though it means certain displeasure from her lord, she twice warns him of villains lying in wait to ambush him. In this way she moves him to anger and then to action. Each time he is so angry that he attacks his assailants more violently than he might have otherwise and slays them. Another test she endures is humiliation from him. He orders her to don the tattered dress she wore when he first saw her to accompany him
into the wilderness. When Limours, her old suitor, sees her in it, he tries to win her away by persuading her that if Geraint loved her, he would not treat her in this way. He reasons thus:

'Though men may bicker with the things they love,
They would not make them laughable in all eyes,
Not while they loved them; and your wretched dress,
A wretched insult on you, dumbly speaks
Your story, that this man loves you no more.
. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .
. . . nor will ye win him back,
For the man's love once gone never returns.'
(GE, 325-329, 332-333)

For the third time Enid violates the command to silence in order to tell Geraint that Limours has proposed locking him up and taking Enid for himself. Again, she incurs Geraint's wrath for disobeying him.

Geraint's above harsh treatment of Enid has bothered several Tennyson readers. Wilson, for example, censures Tennyson for transforming "... the character of Geraint to such an extent that even favorable critics are hard put to justify the knight's brutal treatment of his wife."

In an attempt to account for Tennyson's

depiction of the otherwise admirable knight in this way, Gladstone, Tennyson's contemporary, reasons: "Something of what we now call Eastern manners at one time marked the treatment even of the women of the West. . . . [T]ime and place explain and warrant the treatment of Enid by Geraint."²¹ Baum even proposes, "There are even times when Tennyson seems to approve of Geraint's masterful treatment of his wife. . . ."²² Although one critic maintains that Enid "... conformed to Tennyson's ideal for womanhood,"²³ few, I think, would agree that Tennyson approved of this kind of marital relationship, not even in a time and place condoning it. If, however, my interpretation of the Idylls as Christian allegory is valid, as the evidence seems to indicate, Tennyson's depiction of both Geraint and Enid is consistent with the overall theme. Enid as well as Geraint has erred through neglect


²² Baum, p. 182.

of duty (or through sloth). By failing to inform her husband "... out of bashful delicacy" (MG 66) of the spectacle his irrational devotion to her has made of him in the eyes of his people, she is, in reality, "no true wife." Although, through no fault of Enid's, she has come to dominate her husband, it is her duty as a good wife to abdicate her position over him, thereby forcing him to resume his place as lord of the marriage. Regardless of Tennyson's own personal belief about the proper relationship of men and women in marriage, if he adheres to the Biblical theme, as I believe he has done throughout the Idylls, he must consider the Biblical injunction to women to

... submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.

(Eph. 5:22-24)

That Enid rides ahead of Geraint during their trek through the wilderness is appropriate to the situation. With Gareth and Pelleas, the maidens' preceding them symbolizes their submission to the pride these ladies represent.
Likewise, Enid's leading Geraint denotes "... the disharmony and inversion of their relationship." Their journey into the wilderness is to bring this marriage back into its proper perspective. At the same time, there is an even more significant reason for it. Enid must help Geraint resume not only his place as a husband but also as a follower of Christ, whose fortitude was one of His chief attributes. Through His prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane just before His crucifixion "... O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matt. 26:39), He reveals His willingness to obey though He might not fully understand God's purpose. Enid's is a comparable test. Geraint certainly is not a God-figure, but, as Enid's husband, according to the above passage from Ephesians, he is her lord, and, therefore, represents the seemingly irrational behavior human beings attribute to God. Like every Christian, she must learn to accept the will of God, no matter how capricious it seems. The wilderness, then, which Reed says, "... is not her wasteland, but Geraint's, for it is he who requires governance within

24 Hellstrom, p. 112.
himself," does, indeed, become her wasteland, too, since it requires the most difficult self-governance of all—obedience to the point of seeming absurdity and in spite of self-degradation. In three of her tests Enid disobeys Geraint's order of silence in order to save him from harm. Finally, she obeys even in the face of danger, though she still acts. When she sees Limours and his men coming after Geraint, instead of speaking, she raises her finger to warn him, and even when he makes caustic remarks about Limours as her lover, she leads, "... answering not one word...." (GE 495). Because she has learned through fortitude to obey unreasonable demands and to bear humiliation obediently—two frequent requirements of the Christian life suffered even by Christ—she has passed the test of a true Christian. Now Geraint must pass his test, a feat possible only through Enid, for she represents fortitude, the Christian Virtue in him necessary to counteract sloth, the vice he symbolizes.

Having angered Geraint through her disobedience, Enid has awakened him out of his lethargy to action, but in each case, she has been the one to perceive the danger.

25 Reed, p. 63.
Until Geraint remembers his first obligation—to serve the King—he will be incapable of apprehending the spiritual hazards to which his apathy has brought him and will remain effeminately ineffectual. As fortitude—Enid—conducts sloth—Geraint—along this spiritual journey, however, Geraint's manhood gradually returns as his riding closer and closer to Enid after each victorious conflict with evil signifies. Finally, after fainting from loss of blood from the wound received during his fight with Limours, he is carried to Doorm's castle. Though he revives, he feigns unconsciousness still to test Enid further. When she resists all of Doorm's attempts to force her to his will (GE 628, 672) and provokes him to strike her, Geraint at last acts on his own against evil. He realizes his injustice to her, jumps to her defense when she cries out, and slays Doorm. He tells her that from henceforth he had "'... rather die than doubt'" (GE 744), evidencing the restoration of his faith in fortitude as a means to abolish the sloth within himself. As they flee from Doorm's men on Geraint's charger, Enid at her husband's bidding sits behind him, symbolizing his return to master in the marriage and, more importantly, to service as a true knight of Arthur/Christ. Geraint
then resumes his duties as he goes back to his land where "... he kept the justice of the King" (GE 955). Never again does he doubt Enid (fortitude), and, therefore, never again does he give in to sloth. To the end he remains an active force against evil and eventually dies "In battle, fighting for the blameless King" (GE 969). Thus, through the experiences of Geraint and Enid, this idyll illustrates that only when the Christian, through fortitude, persistently resists the urge to relax his guard can he emerge victorious against one of his greatest enemies—sloth.

The two brothers in "Balin and Balan" also function allegorically in the Christian design of the Idylls. As many critics have noted, they represent two sides of a single character. Balin's ungovernable temper had once caused Arthur to banish him when he, thinking one of Arthur's thralls had spoken evil against him, had almost killed the man. Only Balan, the positive side of the split personality, can subdue Balin's rage. Wrath, which Balin embodies, is one of the Seven Deadly Sins the Christian must either conquer or be conquered by. That the two brothers slay each other at the end of the idyll indicates Balin's failure to conquer wrath and illustrates
that uncontrolled rage is directed inward resulting in self-destruction to the would-be Christian who, like Balin, cannot subdue his wrathful nature.

Some critics argue that the double fratricide applies not to the individual but to society at large. Solimine, for example, seeing the Idylls as Tennyson's attempt to trace "... the formation and degeneration of a state" interprets "The slaying of one brother by another" as the "tendency of Camelot to destroy itself suicidally at its roots of brotherhood and fellowship." Eggers also considers it "... a vision of society in civil war," and Slinn maintains that it "... symbolically foreshadows the wider destruction of Arthur's kingdom." To Miyoshi, however, who argues that the "... confusion, the perplexity, the deep unease of the

27 Solimine, p. 106.
28 Eggers, p. 176.
29 Slinn, p. 6.
English nineteenth century," resulting in a division of self among the writers of the time which is reflected in their works, "Balin and Balan" is one example of Tennyson's use of the theme of the divided self. According to this theory, this idyll would mirror not society's but the poet's own conflict between faith and doubt. Although the interpretation of the idyll both as a conflict in society and as a reflection of Tennyson's own internal conflict has validity, the Biblical allusions associated with the twins suggest that they, too, have a function, as stated above, in a Christian allegorical reading.

As an example of the preceding statement, Arthur's first encounter with the brothers is comparable to the incidents in the parable of the laborers (Matt. 20:1-16). In this parable the householder goes out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. At various intervals during the day--the third hour, the sixth hour, and the ninth hour--he hires others to work in his vineyard. Even as late as the eleventh hour he sees men

"... standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle?" (6) and hires them also. At the end of the day he pays every man the same wages, even those hired at the eleventh hour. The point, of course, is obvious. Christ tells this parable to illustrate what the kingdom of heaven is like: even those who enter at the last minute will receive the same rewards as those who enter early. The account of Arthur's first encounter with Balin and Balan is similar to this parable. Like the householder, Arthur, too, goes out early in the morning (18) to search for Balin and Balan. When he finds them, he asks, "... 'wherefore sit ye here?'" (29). As Burton points out, the similarity in the phrasing of Arthur's question and that of the householder's "Why stand ye here all the day idle?" suggests a comparison of Arthur with Christ, but it also suggests a comparison of the two brothers with the laborers hired at the eleventh hour. These men are also idle like the laborers. Furthermore, they are idle for the same reason the laborers are: "Because no man hath hired us" (20:7), or, in other words, because no one has given them the opportunity for

31 Burton, p. 117.
salvation. Arthur/Christ will offer the brothers this opportunity as the householder does for the eleventh-hour laborers, and, as with the laborers, this chance will be their last. If they accept, their rewards will be as great as those of Arthur's other knights.

Another Biblical allusion, in addition to "... sustain[ing] the Arthur-Christ relationship in 'Balin and Balan,'"32 associates Balin (and Balan, too, since his destiny as the other part of Balin's dual nature is that of Balin's) with sinners in need of salvation. Arthur's reason for venturing forth so early in the day is that he has heard that the brothers attack and defeat any of his knights who pass by. In this way, Balin, recently returned from exile, hopes to prove himself worthy to be received back into Arthur's court, and Balan, to be made a knight. When they, not knowing Arthur's identity, fight with him, however, he easily defeats them. Now they believe there is no chance of achieving their goals. Later, though, Arthur sends for them. After they answer all of his questions truthfully, he, like Christ, forgives

them both. Tennyson describes the attitude of the court toward Balin's reinstatement as follows:

Thereafter, when Sir Balin entered hall,
The Lost one Found was greeted as in Heaven
With joy that blazed itself in woodland wealth
Of leaf, and gayest garlandage of flowers,
Along the walls and down the board. . . .
(77-81)

Burton has noted that this account of "Balin's return to Arthur's court is described in terms of the sinner returned to God" and compares this incident to the following parable of the lost sheep:

What man of you, having an hundred sheep,
if he lose one of them, doth not leave the
ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after
that which is lost, until he find it?
And when he hath found it, he layeth it on
his shoulders, rejoicing.
And when he cometh home, he calleth together
his friends and neighbours, saying unto them,
Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which
was lost.
I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in
heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than
over ninety and nine just persons, which need
no repentance.

(Luke 15:4-7)

Certainly the two events are analogous, but there is also

a similarity between Balin's return and events in the other two parables in Luke 15: the parable of the lost coin and the parable of the prodigal son. In the first one, when the woman, after losing one of her ten pieces of silver, finds the coin, she calls in her neighbors to rejoice with her (Luke 15:8-10). In the second, the prodigal son, having been reduced to feeding swine after squandering his inheritance, returns to a loving father who remarks to his other son, "It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found" (Luke 15:32). Since the emphasis in each of these three parables is on "the Lost one Found" followed by great rejoicing, any one of them would serve as a parallel to Balin's situation. If the story ended here, it would be a happy ending, but, unfortunately, it is only the beginning for Balin. The opportunity for salvation granted him, he must now either accept or reject it. Now he must conquer the Balin side of his nature and submit to the Balan side, or the Found one will be Lost forever.

To Balin's credit he makes a determined effort to overcome the vice he represents. Two factors, however, contribute to his failure to do so. The first is Balan's
departure from Camelot to search for the demon of the woods, who has slain one of Arthur's knights. His leaving symbolizes the subversion of Balin's positive side, without which his rage has no anodyne. The second factor contributing to Balin's failure to subdue his wrath is his choice of Lancelot as model. Now that his negative side has taken over, his judgment is faulty. Consequently, instead of emulating Arthur/Christ, he chooses as his model Lancelot, who, though noble, nevertheless represents the world. Although Wendell Stacy Johnson rightly implies that Balin's emotional attachment to the Queen is a type of self-destructive woman-worship which leads to "disillusionment and death," Balin's sole object in worshipping Guinevere is to become more like Lancelot or, in short, to become more worldly. The following passage reveals his conscious turning to her for this reason:

'. . . But this worship of the Queen,
That honour too wherein she holds him--this,
This was the sunshine that hath given the man
A growth, a name that branches o'er the rest,
And strength against all odds, and what the King

Seeing the ennobling effect of Lancelot's love for Guinevere upon him, Balin thinks perhaps, if the Queen will give him some token (some worldly thing) to remind him of her, he will forget his violences. She agrees to give him her crown-royal.

For a while this token works for him to keep his wrath under control. But because Balin's faith is in the world and in worldly things instead of in Arthur/Christ, as evidenced in his desire to be like Lancelot and in his dependence upon the crown-royal to restrain his rage, because he disobeys the commandment to "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world..." (I John 2:15), he finds his old ways returning. This realization inspires him to strive even more strenuously to live up to Arthur's high standards though he thinks it impossible (221). He ". . . fought / Hard with himself . . ." (233-234), the poet relates, but his failure to overcome self symbolizes the impossibility of the Christian's conquering wrath alone since he must obtain strength from Christ, a circumstance which Balin in his
blindness cannot perceive. That he rejects Arthur/Christ is symbolized in his leaving the court without Arthur's permission when he suspects that Lancelot and Guinevere are more than subject and queen. This suspicion deepens his depression and increases his rage. He strikes out along the same path Balan had taken, ". . . blind and deaf to all / Save that chained rage, which ever yelped within" (313-314). At last his wrath explodes when Garlon at Pellam's court insults Guinevere. After slaying Garlon, he escapes Pellam's men.

Now that his wrath has overcome him completely and has led him to transgress yet another commandment, "Thou shalt not kill" (Ex. 20:13), he is ashamed to carry the crown-royal and hangs it on a tree, crying out ". . . 'My violences, my violences!'" (429). At this point, after Balin has put his faith in the world and in worldly things, only to discover their inadequacy in time of crisis, he gives up to despair. His good side completely submerged, his faith in the world and in things of the world shaken, his dejection at its nadir, he is now more susceptible to evil than ever. Significantly, Vivien, Mark/Satan's emissary, comes to him immediately, pretending to flee from "'A lustful king . . . '" (467) to
Arthur for protection. Her lies convince him of what he has already suspected: that Lancelot and Guinevere have engaged in illicit love. His faith completely shattered by this time, Balin loses control and "... his evil spirit upon him leapt" (529). Robinson, whose study traces Tennyson's development as an artist through his use of Scripture, has observed the similarity between this line and Acts 19:16: "And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded." She interprets its reference to a character like Balin as evidence that "The attitude toward Scripture is fierce and depraved or at best utterly pessimistic and hopeless." The comparison of Balin with a man possessed by devils, however, does more than express an attitude toward Scripture. Rather, it indicates the effect of evil, embodied in Vivien, upon one with no spiritual reserve to combat it. Like the man in Acts who turns on his tormentors, rips their clothes off, and wounds them, so Balin rips from the tree the shield bearing the crown-royal, symbol of those who have tormented him by betraying

35 Robinson, p. 56.
his trust, and "wounds" it by crushing it under his heel. His evil spirit, wrath, has "possessed" him. Now he is about to turn his destructive urge inward upon himself. It is no accident of narration that Balan, his other self, appears at this moment. Believing Balin's shrieks to be those of the Wood-devil, Balan approaches Balin. Neither recognizes the other, and in the ensuing fight, Balin slays his brother. Having completely destroyed his better nature, Balin guarantees his own downfall. Immediately Balin's tired horse, falling on him, crushes him to death. His death from internal injuries Gray considers poetic justice since "... all demons have come from within. ..."36 Certainly this statement is true in the sense that all of his troubles have resulted from internal rage. Now salvation is impossible for Balin, who, in killing the goodness within himself, has illustrated the consequences of uncontrolled wrath.

Merlin and Vivien, the subjects of much critical writing, have their place, too, in the Christian allegory. The interpretation of their idyll, "Merlin and Vivien,"

36 J. M. Gray, "Fact, Form and Fiction in Tennyson's Balin and Balan," Renaissance and Modern Studies, 12 (1968), 104.
however, as the conflict between Reason and Passion is so common that Adler refers to it as ". . . very nearly a cliché of criticism." 37 According to this interpretation, Merlin represents the decay of intellect 38 as it yields to the "wiles of the flesh," 39 represented, of course, by Vivien. Kaplan, however, sees it as ". . . an allegory about the struggle between two aspects of the artist," with Merlin illustrating the "creativity of imagination" 40 and Vivien, the ". . . negative side of Merlin the poet and of the creative imagination." 41 Vivien's victory over Merlin would, according to this theory, represent the failure of the poetic imagination. Slinn, however, rejects the idea that Merlin and Vivien are two aspects of a single artist. Rather, he explains the conflict as ". . . the struggle between two different

37 Adler, p. 1397; see also Eggers, p. 63; Kincaid, p. 182; Brashear, p. 34, for variations on this theme.

38 Burchell, p. 422.


41 Kaplan, pp. 289-290.
Adler takes the position that the idyll is "... a conflict between lasting fame, which arises from the reasonable use of knowledge for the benefit of others, and a passionate, wholly selfish satisfaction in the glory of the passing moment." All of the theories associating Merlin with the mind (reason, wisdom, intellect, knowledge, the creative imagination) and Vivien with the flesh (passion, instinct, natural urges) leave some unresolved questions. If, for example, Vivien represents passion, why is she so passionless in her cold, calculating seduction of Merlin? And, if Merlin represents reason, what causes him to err in judgment regarding Vivien early in their relationship? An examination of their function in this Christian allegory provides a possible answer to these questions.

In all of the above postulations of what these two characters represent, Vivien symbolizes some form of

42 Slinn, p. 9.

43 Adler, pp. 1397-1398.
destruction, a quality of hers leading Gerhard Joseph to characterize her as the archetypal *femme fatale* who carries within her the germs of universal corruption." As noted already, however, Vivien's desire to spread "universal corruption" appears to spring from the hatred all satanic followers have for goodness. As Satan's chief representative, her business is to destroy by corrupting as many of Arthur/Christ's disciples as possible. In addition to her role as emissary to Satan, though, Vivien has another important function in "Merlin and Vivien"—that of two of the Deadly Sins: envy and avarice. Her part as Satan's agent does not conflict with her symbolic representation of these two vices; in fact, these facets of her character are two reasons she serves Mark so willingly. By bringing those of Arthur's court down as Mark wants, she hopes to make herself more powerful. Mark/Satan makes use of Vivien's envy and avarice to persuade her to inveigle her way into Camelot through flattering the Queen into accepting her. Although her goal is to dupe Guinevere in the following words of flattery, there is a distinct note of envy in her words

calling the Queen "... Woman of women--thine / The wreath of beauty, thine the crown of power ..."
(77-78). While one person may covet another's beauty and position without personifying envy, Vivien's actions exhibit how strongly affected she is by this vice. Her envy is connected to and strengthened by her avarice—or greed for the power the Queen's position brings.\footnote{Although avarice is usually connected with greed for riches, it is used here in the broader sense of greed also for power and fame which, of course, are often associated with wealth.} Yet she longs for even more power than the Queen's; she hopes to bring Arthur down to set herself even above him. To this end she seeks the Queen's downfall and, therefore, spreads rumors about her relationship with Lancelot, which, at this time, she only suspects is illicit. Since her main prey is Arthur, she hopes the rumors of Guinevere's unfaithfulness will reach him, thereby weakening the Queen's position with her husband and making Arthur more susceptible to her own charms. If she can usurp Guinevere's place with Arthur, she can eventually dethrone him and, one assumes, set herself up in his place.
When her attempts to seduce Arthur not only fail, however, but also make her the laughingstock of the court, she turns her attention to Merlin, who "Had built the King his havens, ships, and halls" (166). Although Vivien knows the destruction of Merlin will weaken Arthur's kingdom considerably and avenge Arthur's slight to her, her primary reasons for seducing him are pure envy and avarice. Her efforts to satisfy these vices through Arthur having failed, she tries again with Merlin, "... the most famous man of all those times" (164) and second only to Arthur in power. When Vivien discovers that only Merlin knows the charm which would enclose in a tree the one it was wrought upon, she endeavors to extract the secret from him, believing that, if she can work the charm on him, "... her glory would be great / According to his greatness whom she quenched" (215-216). Thus, envious of his fame and greedy for his glory, she uses every trick she knows to wrench the secret from him. She wears him down until at last she obtains it.

If, instead of passion, Vivien's motivating forces are envy and avarice, the two vices she embodies in this idyll, what then does Merlin stand for? At first he appears to represent Reason, but by the time he appears
in "Merlin and Vivien," he has made some serious errors in judgment which make the interpretation of him as a man of Reason suspect. His first serious error is in tolerating Vivien at all. Although she does not attempt the seduction outright but "... played about with slight and sprightly talk, / And vivid smiles, and faintly-venomed points / Of slander ... " (169-171), Merlin knows that she has an ulterior motive and should have disregarded her from the beginning. He enjoys watching her game, however, and "... thus he grew / Tolerant of what he half disdained ... " (175-176). Seeing that she is only half disdained (177), Vivien redoubles her efforts to win him. He begins to be affected by her flattery "... and at times / Would flatter his own wish in age for love, / And half believe her true" (182-184). In this way he illustrates that sin tolerated takes a firm hold on the individual and becomes more and more appealing to its victim.

Though Merlin resists for some time, Vivien attacks him during a period of great melancholy. His second mistake is giving in to this despair.46 In this

46 Ryals, p. 143.
respect, he, whom the people called prophet (315), resembles the prophet Elijah, who flees into the wilderness to escape Jezebel's wrath and almost yields to despair because he thinks only he among the children of Israel serves Jehovah. Merlin also retreats to the wilderness when he thinks all good has gone from the world. He has a sense of impending doom

. . . that ever poised itself to fall,
An ever-moaning battle in the mist,
World-war of dying flesh against the life,
Death in all life and lying in all love,
The meanest having power upon the highest,
And the high purpose broken by the worm.

(189-194)

These lines reveal that his melancholy results, not from love as Haight proposes,47 but from his concern over the topsy-turvy condition of his world in its state of deterioration. Although Elijah has his God to reassure him with news of the seven thousand faithful followers still left in Israel and to command him to resume his duties as a prophet of the Lord God of Israel (I Kings 19:15-18), Merlin has only Vivien to comfort him in his

despair. Ever the opportunist, this willing servant to Mark/Satan, finding a weak spot, strikes hardest there. Therefore, she pretends to love him, tries to elicit vows of love from him, sits in his lap, and plays with his beard—all part of her plan to draw from him the secret of the charm. Several have considered Tennyson's handling of this tale too sordid for artistic treatment. Swinburne is a surprising example of one who lashes out against the Laureate's characterization of Vivien and his portrayal of the entire situation in these terms:

The Vivien of Mr. Tennyson's idyl seems to me, to speak frankly, about the most base and repulsive person ever set forth in serious literature. Her impurity is actually eclipsed by her incredible and incomparable vulgarity. . . . She is such a sordid creature as plucks men passing by the sleeve. . . . I do not remember that any modern poet whose fame has been assailed on the score of sensual immorality . . . has ever devoted an elaborate poem to describing the erotic fluctuations and vacillations of a dotard under the moral and physical manipulation of a prostitute . . .; it is the utterly ignoble quality of Vivien which makes her so unspeakably repulsive and unfit for artistic treatment.48

Brooke also considers this story of an old man
"... allured to his ruin by a young woman ... too
disagreeable for art to take as a subject; but if it be
taken, it ought to be kept within nature; it ought not
to be made revolting; it ought to be excused and made
piteous by a kind of madness in the man."\(^{49}\) If Tennyson
had done as Brooke wished, however, the whole point of the
tale would have been lost since it is important to the
theme of the idyll that Merlin retain his wits. For
Tennyson to have made him act as he does out of "a kind
of madness in the man" would have taken away all of the
responsibility for his final surrender to her charms.
Instead, the poet leaves no doubt that Merlin is not
fooled by Vivien's guile when he relates how the great
wizard, after submitting to Vivien's chicanery for a time,
sadly smiles and asks:

>'To what request for what strange boon, ...'
>'Are these your pretty tricks and fooleries,'
'O Vivien, the preamble?'

(262-264)

Since the above passage indicates Merlin's

\(^{49}\) Brooke, p. 57.
awareness of Vivien's ulterior motives, this man who is supposed to represent Reason is acting very unreasonably in treating evil so lightly. The argument that these actions symbolize Reason in the process of yielding to Passion's blandishments is unconvincing because there is no indication in the text that any passion has been aroused in him yet. Rather, Merlin's treatment of Vivien is more like that of an older man toward a child than of a man sexually aroused. This attitude apparently arises from Merlin's third serious error in judgment: underestimating his opponent. As his words to her below reveal, he senses her role in his destruction:

'O did ye never lie upon the shore,
And watch the curled white of the coming wave
Glassed in the slippery sand before it breaks?
Even such a wave, but not so pleasurable,
Dark in the glass of some presageful mood,
Had I for three days seen, ready to fall.

... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ...
You seemed that wave about to break upon me
And sweep me from my hold upon the world,
My use and name and fame.'
(289-294, 300-302)

Still, however, he considers himself her mental superior and, therefore, does not heed the warning of his better judgment to avoid her altogether. The following passage, coming after Vivien's argument that it would be better
for him to tell her the secret than for her to find the
book in which it is written and, after reading the charm
try to work it herself, is evidence of the disdain he has
for Vivien's mental powers:

And smiling as a master smiles at one
That is not of his school, nor any school
But that where blind and naked Ignorance
Delivers brawling judgments, unashamed,
On all things all day long, he answered her:
'Thou read the book, my pretty Vivien!'
(660-665)

Merlin's attitude toward Vivien appears to approximate
the attitude of those who believe themselves mentally
and morally capable of resisting seemingly harmless sin.
In this respect Merlin is like Hawthorne's Young Goodman
Brown, who merely wishes to make a brief contact with
evil and return from the forest to his Faith. Having
once encountered it, however, he is led by degrees to go
farther and farther into the forest, symbol of evil, and
eventually to rush toward Satan, the source of evil. So
it is with Merlin. He tolerates Vivien--evil--at first
because watching her efforts to bring him down entertains
him and decreases his melancholy. Again, like Young
Goodman Brown, he believes his Faith will sustain him and
that he can turn from evil at will. At no time does
either expect his evil companion to succeed in persuading him to participate actively in sin. The failure to recognize the power of evil is the undoing of both men. Since Merlin does not deem the "pretty Vivien" a formidable opponent, he is unprepared when she strikes. He then falls an easy prey to her wiles as she leads him by degrees to evil.

But the question of what Merlin represents is still unresolved. In view of the defects in his reasoning described above, it is implausible to think of him as Reason overcome by Passion. As noted already, his faulty reasoning occurs before Vivien warms his blood. Rather, Merlin seems more nearly to represent intemperance, the lack of the Christian Virtue temperance, and Vivien's defeat of him, the effect of evil on the one who lacks self-control. His inability to control his desire to believe Vivien's flattery; his inability to control his depression without Vivien's aid; his inability to control the feeling of superiority over her, a mistake causing him to relax his guard against evil--all are examples of his lack of self-restraint. Having soothed him into considering her harmless, Vivien is now ready for the final victory. During the storm, she
Her seduction of him represents, not Tennyson's "... destructive attitude towards his own sex which the poet half divined, half feared in all women"\textsuperscript{50} according to Betty Miller's psychoanalysis of the poet, but the effect of evil on one void of temperance. Lacking self-control, he succumbs to the evil in his nature. Now Merlin in yielding to evil is "... lost to life and use and name and fame" (968)--lost to life both physically and spiritually; lost to use to self and to Arthur/Christ; lost to name, which is erased from the book of life\textsuperscript{51};

\textsuperscript{50} Betty Miller, "Tennyson and the Sinful Queen," Twentieth Century, 158 (1955), 360.

\textsuperscript{51} The book of life is apparently a record of all those Christians who remain faithful. Only they will receive eternal life and the rewards of heaven. Since Merlin did not overcome evil, the following scriptural passage explains the reason his name will not appear in the book: "He that overcometh, ... I will not blot out
lost to fame in this world and the next. The repulsiveness of the actions of Merlin and Vivien, to which Swinburne and Brooke objected, is, then, the appropriate effect created by this idyll. For a man like Merlin to fall from the height of power and glory to damnation because he lacks temperance is, indeed, a repulsive predicament. This idyll, therefore, appears to serve as a warning to others tempted by evil to exercise the self-restraint needed to avoid the perils of succumbing to temptation.

Following "Merlin and Vivien" is "Lancelot and Elaine," which Baum, one of the Idylls' severest critics, using the damming-with-faint-praise technique commends as one of the best of the idylls because the "... subject was congenial to Tennyson and the matter not beyond his range." He further implies that its superiority over the other idylls results because "... there is no involvement with allegorical meanings" and because in it Lancelot and Guinevere "... become almost human

his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels" (Rev. 3:5).
In spite of Baum's qualified approval, however, there is no sudden shift from allegory to straight narrative, but the allegorical thread continues in this section as it does throughout the work. Elaine, in fact, illustrates the lack of one of the Christian Virtues—prudence—in her relationship with Lancelot, who continues to function allegorically as the world still in its unredeemed state. If he along with Guinevere, still the allegorical representative of the soul in this idyll, appears to be "almost human," as Baum states, it is in addition to their allegorical function.

Most critics of "Lancelot and Elaine" interpret Elaine as the symbol of Innocence. Certainly Tennyson establishes this quality in her from the beginning of the idyll, referring to her as "... the lily maid of Astolat" (2 et passim). At the same time he mentions her seclusion "High in her chamber up a tower to the east" (3) and her brother's urging Lancelot to tell them of Arthur's wars "... for we live apart..." (283). Such references indicate Elaine's lack of contact with the world and imply that hers is a cloistered virtue as

52 Baum, p. 186.
yet untried. As soon as Lancelot, symbol of the world, enters her domain, however, her innocence gives way to imprudence, indicating the power of the world's attraction for the imprudent. Several references suggest the rash behavior characteristic of the imprudent. For example, Elaine falls in love with Lancelot just from hearing the sound of his voice before she even sees him "And loved him, with that love which was her doom" (259); before she knows his name, she rashly implores him to wear her favor, the scarlet sleeve, at the diamond tournament, a tribute usually reserved for the knight's lady; then, when he agrees to wear it because it may keep others from guessing his real identity since he has never worn a lady's favor in a tilt before, she vainly hopes it means he loves her. All of these impetuous acts she commits within the first day of their acquaintance.

Elaine also exhibits the kind of willfulness frequently associated with imprudence. Aware of this fault in herself, Elaine blames her father for always giving her her way. Now that she is mature enough to recognize her faults, however, she can no longer blame others for them but instead must accept the responsibility for her own actions. Nevertheless, her imprudence leads
her to beg her father's permission to find Lancelot, seriously wounded in the diamond tournament. He submits to her wishes, saying "... get you gone, / Being so very wilful you must go" (771-772). Like a willful child receiving its own way, she becomes more cheerful but keeps hearing her father's comment to her which "... changed itself and echoed in her heart, / 'Being so very wilful you must die'" (777-778). In these lines lies the clear warning to her that her willful nature, directing her to act imprudently, will lead to the death of her innocence and to her spiritual death as well. At the end of the idyll she compromises herself by offering to follow and serve Lancelot as his wife or, if he will not marry her, in any way he wants her. Though Lancelot, too noble to dishonor her in this way, rejects her offer, denying her the opportunity for sin, she loses her innocence with the willingness to participate in a sinful action.

Appropriately, the above scene takes place among the garden yews, symbols of death. Although Eggers argues that the yews "... portend the death of the realm and introduce the waste land of the grail idyll," more

53 Eggers, p. 200.
specifically they are indicative of the death of Elaine's innocence and of her spiritual death. Although she does not lose her virginity, she still sins, for in Christian theology sin occurs, not just with the commitment of sin but when the desire for sin enters the heart. On this subject Christ spoke the following warning: "But I say unto you; That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (Matt. 5:28). Though the reference refers specifically to those who look upon a "woman to lust after her," it applies equally to those who look upon a man to lust after him. Since Elaine clearly offers herself to Lancelot as his mistress when he indicates his unwillingness to marry her, we can assume she "lusts after" him. Elaine's sexual longing for Lancelot represents the desire of the innocent imprudent for experience in worldly ways. Viewing her as the symbolic representation of imprudence makes more credible her otherwise inexplicable behavior with Lancelot. Although it is difficult to believe that a woman could love a man whom she has known for only one day so deeply that she determines to die if she cannot have him, the yearning of the imprudent to emerge from the isolation of Astolat for the attractions of the world at large is
understandable. Yet contact with the world, or rather love for the world, is seen to bring moral and spiritual destruction to one who, as Elaine does, acts willfully and rashly.

The color imagery associated with Elaine reinforces the ideas presented above. Red, the color of the sleeve she gives to Lancelot to wear in the diamond tourney, represents "... the passion which destroys her"—to borrow Buckley's idea and phrase—and white, the conventional color for purity, represents her innocence.54 White, however, as Adicks reminds us, is symbolic also of death.55 That Elaine, dressed in white as she floats on the river holding a white lily, is physically dead symbolizes the death of her innocence. Just as the plucked lily, symbol of her purity, will soon wither since it will no longer be nourished by the mother plant, so has her innocence already expired since it has no spiritual nourishment on which to feed, for Elaine is spiritually dead as well as physically as the blackness of the barge

54 Buckley, pp. 182-183.

on which she floats suggests. If the voyage in "The Voyage"\textsuperscript{56} and the river in "The Lady of Shalott"\textsuperscript{57} are two images representing life, then Elaine's journey on the river of life is one toward eternity, symbolized by the ocean toward which the river flows. That she moves toward eternal darkness is clearly revealed in the scene during which Elaine watches Lancelot through the window as he prepares to leave Astolat, a scene paralleling that of Guinevere's watching Arthur from the convent window after their last confrontation. Unlike Guinevere, though, who turns from Lancelot to Arthur and recognizes Arthur as "the highest and most human too," Elaine, to the end, loves Lancelot, "'Him of all men who seems to me the highest!'" (1070). She loves, like Guinevere at first, not the highest but the most appealing. Even though she confesses her sins before she dies, she continues to


believe that Lancelot--the world--not Arthur/Christ is "'... God's best / And greatest ...'" (1086-1087). Her last act of willfulness, in fact, is to elicit her father's promise to permit her a final journey on a barge to Camelot after her death with a letter to Lancelot placed in her lifeless hand, a letter proclaiming to all her love for him. Such action indicates that her mind is still on worldly, not spiritual, matters.

Elaine's death allegorically illustrates a crucial point in Christian theology: that an individual does not have to participate actively in sin to die spiritually. Rather, spiritual death occurs with the preference for the world to Christ as Elaine's preference for Lancelot symbolizes. Since the first words of criticism written about this idyll, critics have compared the adulterous Guinevere unfavorably with the innocent Elaine. Although Phelps cites one early critic's opinion of Elaine as being "... very forward in her love,"58 most early commentators and many modern ones have considered her a type of

58 William Lyon Phelps, "Lancelot and That Forward Hussy Elaine as Seen by Godey's," Scribner's, 95 (1934), 434.
true love as opposed to Guinevere, a type of false love.\textsuperscript{59} This distinction has arisen from Tennyson's subtitle of \textit{The True and the False} for the first four idylls published—"Enid," later divided into "The Marriage of Geraint" and "Geraint and Enid"; "Vivien," renamed "Merlin and Vivien"; "Elaine," now "Lancelot and Elaine"; and "Guinevere." Taken literally, these four idylls appear to be, as Ryals thinks the 1859 reading public viewed them, "... a contrast between the true maiden (Elaine) and the true wife (Enid) on the one hand, and the harlot (Vivien) and the faithless wife (Guinevere) on the other."\textsuperscript{60} In this light, Elaine and Enid would represent examples of true love while Vivien and Guinevere would stand for false love. When they are seen as part of a Christian allegorical design, however, the roles of Elaine and Guinevere reverse. According to Christian doctrine, Elaine's love for the world is false, leading to her damnation, while Guinevere, who turns from Lancelot--the


\textsuperscript{60} Ryals, p. 40.
world—to Arthur/Christ and spends the remainder of her life in Christian service "... in the holy house at Almesbury" (G 2), represents true love. Elaine, because of her imprudence—evidenced in her rash behavior and her unrestrained willfulness—steadfastly refuses to look beyond the attractions of the world to eternity and, as a result, according to Biblical teaching, loses her spiritual reward.

In addition to the Deadly Sins personified in the characters treated above, gluttony is also represented in the Idylls. Three characters—Limours, Doorm, and the Red Knight—illustrate varying degrees of this vice, here pertaining not only to excessive eating but also to excessive wine drinking. This vice is a result of self-indulgence, a trait leading to more serious transgressions. While under the influence of wine, all three of these men commit sins against self and against their fellow man.

The effect of gluttony upon the first of these, Limours, one of Enid's former suitors, seems at first to be relatively minor: it loosens his tongue so that he "... told / Free tales, and took the word and played upon it, / And made it of two colours" (GE 290-292).
The reader familiar with the New Testament, however, remembering Christ's warning

... That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned. (Matt. 12:36-37)

will realize that Limours is condemned already and that his downfall is imminent. Indeed, gluttony moves him almost immediately to more serious offenses. Asking and receiving permission to speak with Enid, whom he says he has not ceased to love, he staggers over to her. Gluttony now has led to more than "idle words"; it has rekindled in him a lust for Enid. Too much wine and Geraint's seeming approval of his risqué stories and suggestive language have made him bold enough to act upon his desire for her. He declares his love to her and even suggests locking Geraint away to prevent his interfering with the adulterous relationship Limours expects to enjoy with Enid. Since to the Christian, as we have noted with Elaine, whoever has the desire for adultery in his or her heart "hath committed adultery" with that person already (Matt. 5:28), Limours is guilty of yet another sin--adultery--to which gluttony has brought him.
Next, gluttony, in the form of excessive wine drinking, arouses Limours' self-pity, a stage which often precedes violence in the inebriated. As Limours' eyes become moist with tears, Enid apparently senses this underlying force in him and the potential danger his maudlin concern for self could engender. The poet relates of her, "... but Enid feared his eyes, / Moist as they were, wine-heated from the feast" (GE 350-351). Perceiving how close to violent action he is, she pretends weariness and begs him to come back for her the next day. The psychology of such procedure is obvious: she hopes the effects of the wine will have worn off by morning and that he will realize the absurdity of his proposals. Limours accedes to her request and leaves. Outside, he boasts to his friends "How Enid never loved a man but him, / Nor cared a broken egg-shell for her lord" (GE 363-364). Now he has resorted to lying, another sin brought on in this case by gluttony. Although lying appears to be less serious than adultery, it is, on the contrary, more serious in this instance. So far, Limours' adultery has been only "in his heart." He has made no overt moves toward Enid. His lie, however, not only endangers his soul's salvation as does adultery but also
damages the reputation of an innocent victim, a crime against his fellow man.

Evidently Limours does not retire to sleep off his drunkenness as Enid has hoped, but continues the revelry with his drinking companions all night. At dawn, filled with wine, he and his friends rush after Geraint and Enid, who have by now resumed their journey. The wine has made Limours so wild (GE 457) that his passion for Enid is uncontrollable. Thinking to take her by force, then, he attacks Geraint with the intent to kill if necessary but quickly suffers defeat along with another rioter riding immediately behind. Their comrades fallen, the others flee, leaving their drunken companions lying in the path. The author comments on the situation thus: "So vanish friendships only made in wine" (GE 479). Idle words, adultery, lying, and attempted murder—sins first against self and then against his fellow man which become increasingly more serious as Limours consumes more and more alcohol—illustrate the dangers of gluttony, which this character and the two following personify.

Doorm represents an even more advanced stage of gluttony than does Limours. Although Limours' over-indulgence in wine leads to the sins enumerated above,
at the beginning at least he tries to "... keep a touch of sweet civility" (GE 312). From the moment Doorm first appears, however, it is obvious that he has thrown off all restraints and that he overindulges all of his appetites, practices widespread among his followers, who emulate his own unbridled impulses. Already, too, he has reached the stage which Limours, at his worst, has only attempted. Doorm kills remorselessly anyone who hinders him from satisfying his appetites. In fact, so common is this practice that those who see Enid weeping over Geraint, injured from his battle with Limours and Limours' accomplice, think him just another victim of Doorm's and pay no attention to her, "For in that realm of lawless turbulence, / A woman weeping for her murdered mate / Was cared as much for as a summer shower" (GE 521-523).

That Doorm's gluttony, the vice which has resulted in such an extreme form of self-indulgence, has descended to the animal level is manifested in the animal imagery associated with him and his subjects. His vassals call him "the Bull" (GE 439), symbol of unrestrained power and sexuality. When Doorm, because of Enid's beauty, commands two of his men to take the wounded Geraint to his hall,
the two men, furious at the delay in participating in the morning's raid, are described as follows:

Each growling like a dog, when his good bone Seems to be plucked at by the village boys Who love to vex him eating, and he fears To lose his bone, and lays his foot upon it, Gnawing and growling: so the ruffians growled, Fearing to lose, and all for a dead man, Their chance of booty from the morning's raid. (GE 558-564)

Such a description of men growling like dogs over a bone indicates the widespread greed in Doorm's earldom. Their greediness is even more evident during the eating scene when the men drink wine and eat "... whole hogs and quarter beoves" (GE 601), behaving all the while like animals. The meal is far from the social occasion it has become among the civilized; in fact, the men do not speak a word but create the effect of animals attacking other animals and devouring their prey. The only sound heard is that which animals make when they eat "... like horses when you hear them feed" (GE 605). The uncouth noise makes Enid, the representative of civilized society, shrink. Animalike, Doorm turns his attention to something else only when he has finished eating and drinking, but it is only to satisfy another appetite: his passion for
Enid. Speaking with food still bulging in his cheek, he recognizes her superiority over the other women present and offers to share his earldom with her in these words:

'For ye shall share my earldom with me, girl, And we will live like two birds in one nest, And I will fetch you forage from all fields, For I compel all creatures to my will.'

(GE 625-628)

Although his proposal appears honorable, his simile reveals that he would drag Enid down to the animal level also. The reference to birds here is not to those of a gentle variety but to those which "compel all creatures" to their will, perhaps to birds of prey which take their victims by force and destroy them. That they are to live in the same nest indicates he would expect her to become like him—a creature dominated by appetites. In fact, he cannot believe she does not already put appetite first as he does. As she grieves for the stricken Geraint, he offers her his cure-all—food and drink (GE 613, 657). When Enid refuses to share his earldom, to eat or drink, or, finally, to trade the old dress Geraint has commanded her to wear for a beautiful one, the Earl, unaccustomed to having his desires frustrated, strikes her. In so doing, he violates the law of
hospitality, a custom requiring the host to protect his
guests at all costs. It was so powerful in Biblical
times that Lot, thinking the two angels in his house are
men, to prevent the men of Sodom from sexually assaulting
these strangers to whom he has given hospitality, offers
his own virgin daughters saying, "... do ye to them as
is good in your eyes: only unto these men do nothing; for
therefore came they under the shadow of my roof" (Gen.
19:8). During the Middle Ages, the setting of the
Idylls, the law is still operative--but only among people.
The beastlike quality of those in Doorm's kingdom pre-
cludes adherence to such a law, but its violation brings
disaster to Doorm. Whether or not Tennyson intended the
name Doorm to be "... redolent of doom," 61 as J. M. Gray
suggests, Doorm certainly meets his, for Geraint, hearing
Enid scream, grasps his sword and cuts the Earl's head
off.

Thus Doorm's fate illustrates the harsher judgment
for the greater sins. Although Doorm and Limours are

61 J. M. Gray, "Source and Symbol in 'Geraint and
Enid': Tennyson's Doorm and Limours," Victorian Poetry, 4
(1966), 132.
guilty of the same vice, gluttony, Limours' lack of control results from too much wine, a temporary condition. Significantly, Tennyson leaves Limours' fate uncertain. Geraint "... left him stunned or dead" (GE 464), he relates, indicating the uncertainty of his moral fate. It may be that he is morally dead already, in which case he is damned, but, if he is only stunned, he may rise from the moral dirt to which gluttony has reduced him and take advantage of his second chance for salvation. Doorm's self-indulgence, on the other hand, has become a permanent way of life, to satisfy which he would violate all laws or customs. His every appetite must be satiated even if it means striking down goodness symbolized by Enid. Such gluttony has produced the evil which permeates Doorm's kingdom, indicated again by the animal imagery associated with the women of Doorm's court who are described in the following manner:

While some, whose souls the old serpent long had drawn
Down, as the worm draws in the withered leaf
And makes it earth, hissed each at other's ear
What shall not be recorded—women they,
Women, or what had been those gracious things,
But now desired the humbling of their best,
Yea, would have helped him to it: and all at once
They hated her, who took no thought of them.

(GE 631-638)
As is the case everywhere in the *Idylls*, the serpent represents evil. These hissing women are Satan's representatives—evil creatures surrounding good, desiring to bring her down simply because she is good. When neither they nor Doorm can reduce Enid to their level, Doorm strikes her. The blow, though light, is a blow against goodness itself, a sin far greater than Limours' transgressions, which were only against himself and man. For this reason, Limours may get another chance, but not Doorm. His destruction is swift and complete as "... like a ball / The russet-bearded head rolled on the floor" (GE 727-728). There is no doubt about the fatality of that blow, a fitting punishment for his heinous sins.

Although Doorm's gluttony is in an advanced stage, it is not the worst. The incident in "The Last Tournament" concerning the Red Knight, though brief, is important in illustrating this worst stage of gluttony, the final degradation to which this vice, if not controlled, can lead. The narrative, briefly summarized, begins with one of Arthur's churl's relating how the Red Knight has maimed him and has driven the churl's swineherd to his own castle. Marching forth with a hundred of his newest
knights, Arthur journeys north where the Red Knight has established his kingdom. As they approach the Red Knight's castle, they hear the riotous revelry of the drunken knights. Though Arthur's men, inflamed along the way at seeing one of their own hanged by the Red Knight's men, yearn to battle them, Arthur insists on going into battle alone with the Red Knight (436). When the two leaders confront each other,

... Arthur deigned not use of word or sword,
But let the drunkard, as he stretched from horse
To strike him, overbalancing his bulk,
Down from the causeway heavily to the swamp
Fall. ...

(LT 457-461)

As soon as the red-armored figure falls, Arthur's knights rush upon him and trample him to death in the slimy mire, disfiguring his face beyond recognition. The above account brings out several factors important to the theme of this section: the term drunkard used to refer to the Red Knight; the idea that Arthur goes alone to confront him; and the point that his drunkenness, not Arthur, defeats him.

The first factor reveals the extent to which the vice of gluttony controls this character. He is, in fact,
a drunkard, a term denoting one who has reached the point of total dependency upon alcohol. That the Red Knight's alcoholism has brought him to a kind of hell of his own making is reinforced by the images of Satan and hell associated with him. Burton suggests that the line referring to the Red Knight and his men, who "Make their last head like Satan in the North" (LT 98), is an allusion to the following Biblical passage:

How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!

For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north:

I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High.

(Isa. 14:12-14) 62

Since, as Hellstrom observes, "There is . . . an extensive tradition which associates Satan with the North," 63 that both the Red Knight and Lucifer set up kingdoms in the north devoted to the furtherance of evil would certainly link the two. The Red Knight is not Satan, however, as

62 Burton, p. 152.

63 Hellstrom, p. 86.
some critics claim, though he does have satanic qualities. Since Tennyson has identified Pelleas as the Red Knight, we know how he, through loss of faith in Arthur/Christ, automatically leagues himself with Satan, signified by the hissing sounds he makes when he deliberately chooses evil over good. At least, though, he is still recognizable as Pelleas when he last appears in "Pelleas and Ettarre." The more steeped in evil he becomes, however, like Vivien and Modred, the more like Satan he appears until at last it is difficult to distinguish them. Arthur, of course, representing Christ, would realize he could not be his Archenemy, yet the text seems to imply a failure on the King's part to recall Pelleas' name, a point to be examined more closely later.

Another example illustrating that the Red Knight is already in hell is the description of the sun glaring on the Red Knight's tower as Arthur approaches it. The fiery effect creates the image of hell, another image appropriate to the Christian theme since Christ is supposed to have descended into Hades before He ascended.

64 Hallam, Lord Tennyson, ed., *Idylls of the King*, p. 501.
into heaven (Eph. 4:9). Arthur's being in this hellish place further associates him with Christ, then. Further evidence that this is a kind of hell is the Red Knight's curse when he sees Arthur. He shouts, "'The teeth of Hell flay bare and gnash thee flat! --'" (LT 443). Such references indicate the hellish existence of a drunkard whose confrontation with Arthur/Christ signifies his desire to crush the savior of mankind, thereby assuring the damnation of all with him since, in Christian theology, only through Christ is salvation possible.

A second point which the material under scrutiny brings out is that Arthur as Christ goes alone to oppose the Red Knight. Without persuasion or weapon, Arthur defeats him. This point symbolizes the idea that gluttony, like all evil, when it reaches its final stage destroys its victim and that sin is powerless before goodness in Christ. In crushing its victim, though, it destroys itself since it cannot exist except in the wicked hearts of men. When the Red Knight sees Arthur, he tells him that, because of an injury one of Arthur's men has done to his paramour's brother, he has sworn "... by the scorpion-worm that twists in hell, / And stings itself to everlasting death" (LT 450-451) to hang any of Arthur's
knights he defeats in battle. It is appropriate that the Red Knight associate himself with the scorpion stinging itself to everlasting death because his fate is similar. Now his gluttony, no longer controllable, has turned on him. In an effort to annihilate Arthur/Christ, he leans from his horse to strike, but he is so drunk that he loses his balance. Literally, then, as the passage quoted at the beginning of this section brings out, the Red Knight's gluttony, not Arthur, destroys him, for Arthur makes no move against him. While it is true that Arthur's men trample him to death, the Red Knight falls without assistance and thus is responsible for his own death. Again, as with the other two representatives of gluttony, the severity of the punishment suits the atrocity of the sin. Whereas Limours' gluttony, a temporary condition springing from the wildness brought on by the loss of Enid, results only in sins against self and man and whereas Doorm's gluttony, a permanent way of life caused by his bestial nature, attempts to strike down goodness, the Red Knight's gluttony as part of the evil he deliberately cultivates results in an attempt to destroy Christ himself and thus to deny salvation to all mankind. Consequently, not only does he fall as do the
other two, not only does he meet unmistakable death as does Doorm, but also he begins to suffer even before death in the hellish existence of alcoholism and after death to lose his identity forever. The following lines from the text seem to support the assumption of the Red Knight's loss of identity:

. . . Arthur knew the voice; the face Wellnigh was helmet-hidden, and the name Went wandering somewhere darkling in his mind. (LT 454-456)

Since it is necessary for the reader to know that the Red Knight and Pelleas are one in order for him to see the effects of a deliberate turning to evil on the individual, Tennyson has identified them as the same in a note. However, the above lines appear to imply that Arthur, though recognizing a familiar voice, cannot remember Pelleas' name. If this reading is correct, the passage is significant in disclosing Pelleas' spiritual fate. Two Biblical passages prove helpful in interpreting the action. The first from Job appears below:

Drought and heat consume the snow waters: so doth the grave those which have sinned. The womb shall forget him; the worm shall feed
In the second, concerning those unrepentant sinners who call on the Lord for admittance into heaven, Christ warns, "And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matt. 7:23). In both passages it is clear that the unredeemed sinner will be forgotten in the same way that Arthur has forgotten Pelleas. After he falls from his horse, Arthur's men "There trampled out his face from being known" (LT 469), and his identity remains forever a mystery to Arthur. His literal loss of identity reflects his spiritual state since he, like Merlin, according to the above Biblical verses, also has his name removed from the book of life.

Limours, Doorm, and the Red Knight—all representatives of varying stages of gluttony, all defeated by the sin they symbolize, and all receiving punishment in direct proportion to the seriousness of their offense—allegorically illustrate the grave consequences of this vice. In each case the character's gluttony leads to more serious transgressions and results...
in his downfall, symbolizing the spiritual dangers to those unable or unwilling to conquer this vice.

Of the Seven Deadly Sins personified in the Idylls, only lust remains to be treated. There is no one particular character, however, to embody this vice. Instead, several different ones illustrate the dangers of yielding to sexual passion, which in each case symbolizes more than the physical attraction of one individual for another. For Lancelot, symbol of the world which eventually turns to Christ, and Guinevere, the soul which comes to love Christ as "the highest and most human too," lust represents the mutual attraction that the soul and the world have for each other. In their case, however, both turn to Christ and renounce their sin. The lust which their opposites, Tristram, representing what would happen to the world if it rejected Christ, and Isolt, illustrating what would happen to the soul if it rejected Christ, have for each other is also the mutual attraction between the soul and the world. For them, however, there is no repentance and hence no forgiveness. As a result both are annihilated—Tristram, physically and spiritually, and Isolt, spiritually. Pelleas' lust for Ettarre is self-love engendered by pride, embodied
in Ettarre, which he cannot subdue. His end is also physical and spiritual annihilation. With Merlin lust for Vivien is the culmination of several episodes during which he displays a lack of temperance. In this last intemperate act, revealing his total lack of self-control, he forfeits all "life and use and name and fame" in this world and the next. Elaine's lust for Lancelot is the pull of the world on the imprudent who desire the experience and excitement which they cannot find apart from the world. Because of this longing for the world, she acts rashly and willfully in determining to die if she cannot claim it as her own. She, too, after losing her innocence, dies both physically and spiritually. Limours' and Doorm's lust for Enid signifies the point to which their gluttony has reduced them. In trying to satisfy their appetites, beginning with their thirst for wine, they commit sins against self and against their fellow man, ending in an attempt to force themselves upon Enid for gratification of their sexual appetites. Both, however, are brought down by the vice which they personify. Although Limours may rise again, Doorm is indubitably dead, both physically and spiritually. Thus, in the case of each of the above transgressors, lust appears to be more than sexual
passion. The poem presents it as a symptom of the lack of self-control which the true Christian must exercise.

As for the remaining virtues, they are all incorporated in Arthur, representing Christ. Although all of the virtues exist in Christ, He is especially associated with hope, love (charity), and justice. He represents hope because, according to Christian theology, only through Him can the world and the individual soul receive salvation; He represents love because He lovingly sacrificed Himself for the sins of both the world and the soul to make this salvation possible; He represents justice because those who reject His offer of salvation are punished by spiritual death. Since Arthur, as Christ, fulfills all of these functions, he stands for these virtues, too. As argued in detail in previous sections, he, like Christ, sacrifices himself for the sin of Lancelot (the world) and Guinevere (the soul), symbolically providing each with the hope for immortality. Significantly, as observed, both devote themselves to holy lives only after Arthur/Christ's death. If Arthur's way

is rejected (symbolizing a rejection of Christ), then justice is administered without mercy. This justice may be indirectly meted out as with Tristram and Isolt when Mark murders Tristram, leaving the miserable Isolt "... with Mark and hell" (LT 534). Mark's act symbolizes the destruction which God allows Satan himself to wreak upon his victims. Or the justice may be executed by Arthur directly as in Modred's case. Arthur's defeat of Modred in the "... last, dim, weird battle of the west" (PA 94) is symbolic of Christ's ultimate victory over evil which His sacrificial death assures. Arthur, then, as Christ, embodies the virtues of hope, love, and justice. His experiences with the other characters in the Idylls symbolically portray Christ's love for the world and for each soul, because of which He provides a means for immortality to both through His death. If the chance for salvation is rejected as is signified in the actions of Tristram, Isolt, and all others who, through lack of self-control, are engulfed in the vice they represent, then He administers justice directly or indirectly and condemns them to eternal punishment. If, however, they overcome their weaknesses and turn to Him,
He offers mercy as Arthur does to Guinevere and to Lancelot.

Attention to allegorical elements of the *Idylls* has revealed that all of the characters in this section represent one of the vices or virtues (or the lack thereof). All of the Seven Deadly Sins are personified: Lynette and Ettarre embody pride; Geraint, sloth; Balin, wrath; Vivien, envy and avarice; Limours, Doorm, and the Red Knight, gluttony; and several illustrate the dangers of lust. Not only are the Deadly Sins represented, but so are all seven of the Christian Virtues in some form, either in that the character is dominated by a particular virtue or in that the character falls because of its lack. Thus Gareth personifies faith, but Pelleas, the lack of it; Enid personifies fortitude, but Merlin, the lack of temperance; and Elaine, the lack of prudence; Arthur as Christ incorporates all of the virtues but in particular hope, justice, and charity. Furthermore, a Christian allegorical interpretation indicates that, although each performs as a character in a particular narrative, in reality they all work together to portray graphically the danger of yielding to sin. When the figure illustrating some virtue dominates, the sinner is spared, but
when one lacks the particular virtue necessary to check the vice tempting him, he perishes—sometimes physically, but always spiritually. This analysis provides a new insight into the nature and function of these characters and offers further evidence that the *Idylls*, on one level, is Christian allegory.

**Characters as Types of Christians**

Besides the figures who represent vices or virtues or the lack of a particular virtue, some of the characters stand for various kinds of Christians. The Bible instructs its readers on the kinds of followers pleasing to God and on the kinds displeasing to Him. By gleaning the teachings of Christ and the epistles to the early Christian churches in particular, one can compile a list of both sorts of followers. Although every type which would appear on such a long list is not represented in the *Idylls*, several characters do seem to exemplify some of the most common classes of Christians receiving Biblical praise or censure. For example, high on the list of those recipients of Biblical approval would be the unselfish Christians who deny themselves to bring
spiritual enlightenment to others, thereby enlarging the kingdom of God; the loyal Christians who ultimately remain faithful despite occasional moral lapses; the grateful Christians who, because of sins forgiven, serve willingly in any capacity; and even the initially unwilling converts who, like the Apostle Paul, are brought low by force but who rise to become a militant power themselves in the fight against evil. On the other hand, the list of the kinds of followers receiving condemnation would include the selfish, unproductive ones unwilling to sacrifice to bring others into the kingdom of God; the disloyal ones who deliberately disobey Christ's commandments; the immature ones whose faith ceases to grow and develop; the expedient ones who serve only for personal gain; and the ones who have given up the struggle against evil, thinking it too powerful to resist. A study of some of the characters in the Idylls discloses the presence of those appearing to stand for all of the types listed above. At times their nature and function clearly indicate their allegorical roles; at times their close parallels with certain Biblical characters or with general Biblical types suggest them as representatives of these kinds of Christians.
In the first group—those who, according to Biblical teaching, please God—fall Galahad, the nun, and Sir Bors. Their willingness to sacrifice themselves for others establishes them as representatives of the unselfish Christians. These are the truest followers of Christ (or Arthur as Christ) because they emulate the self-sacrificial nature of Christ himself. Sir Galahad, dressed always in white armor as a symbol of his purity, is, in fact, so Christlike in nature that he, like Christ, voluntarily offers himself to the service of mankind. As a matter of fact, he intentionally sits in a chair Merlin designed and called "The Siege perilous" because "'No man could sit but he should lose himself!'" (HG 174). Hearing that Merlin had once sat there by mistake and had been lost, Galahad exclaims, "... 'If I lose myself, I save myself!'" (HG 178). As almost every critic writing on Galahad has noted, there is a similarity between these words and those of Christ to His disciples in the verses below:

... Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it.

(Mark 8:34-35)
The similarity of the phrasing of Galahad's words to that of the above passage in which Christ speaks of the necessity of self-denial for His followers reinforces the idea of Galahad as an allegorical figuration representing this type of Christian. Obviously, in echoing these words of Christ, he is willingly accepting the obligation of self-denial imposed upon the Christian. His sitting in Merlin's chair signifies his readiness to support his words with actions. Although the chair is perilous, it can be "Perilous for good and ill . . ." (HG 173), depending upon the motives of the individual. Merlin sits in it inadvertently and loses himself for ill, but Galahad deliberately does so, symbolizing, not his "selfish idealism," 66 but his willingness to lose himself for good in the service of Arthur/Christ and his fellow man. It is while he is sitting in the chair that he sees the Holy Grail clearly and hears a voice saying, "'O Galahad, and O Galahad, follow me!'" (HG 292). These words seem to give divine sanction for his decision to deny self and to imply his readiness for real service as a true follower after such a decision.

The only other person besides Galahad to see the Grail clearly is Percivale's sister, a nun who resembles Galahad in purity. In fact, the purity of their hearts so manifests itself in their eyes that they even look alike. Percivale, amazed at this phenomenon, comments thus:

'. . . and this Galahad, when he heard
My sister's vision, filled me with amaze;
His eyes became so like her own, they seemed
Hers, and himself her brother more than I.'
(HG 139-142)

This purity can be explained as the reflection of Arthur/Christ's purity, evident in all whose hearts and lives approximate his.

Like Galahad's, too, the nun's actions qualify her as a representative of the unselfish Christian since she, too, sacrifices herself for others, denying self to bring spiritual healing to Arthur's realm. When her father confessor expresses the wish that the Holy Grail "'... would come, / And heal the world of all their wickedness!'" (HG 93-94), she asks whether it might come to her by prayer and fasting. Although he cannot guarantee her that it will, he realizes that her heart is pure enough to accomplish this miracle. While Hellstrom
contends that "... the nun manifests her purity in a selfish asceticism of no use to society ...," an examination of the text in the light of James 5:15-16 reveals the exact opposite. In this Biblical passage the Christian receives the following promise and exhortation:

And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

The nun, then, is acting according to the Scriptural urging to pray for others that they may be healed, not just of physical maladies but of spiritual ones as well. While Galahad and the other knights can fight evil in open warfare, this frail creature can combat it only in this way. She, therefore, prays and fasts until her emaciated body looks to Percivale as if "'She might have risen and floated. ...'" (HG 100). She thus risks loss of health and life for the possibility of bringing

67 Hellstrom, p. 124.
salvation to others. Such physical and emotional suffering for others is hardly selfish asceticism.

When the Grail actually does appear to the nun one night, she sends for Percivale to tell him the Holy Cup is among them and urges him and the other knights to fast and pray "'That so perchance the vision may be seen / By these and those, and all the world be healed'" (HG 127-128). As soon as Galahad hears of the incident, he visits her. Several commentators have noted the obvious sexual imagery used in describing the scene between these two symbols of purity.68 As the nun binds Galahad with a sword-belt made from her own hair with silver and crimson threads intertwined to form "A crimson grail within a silver beam" (HG 155), she says:

'... "My knight, my love, my knight of heaven, O thou, my love, whose love is one with mine, I, maiden, round thee, maiden, bind my belt. Go forth, for thou shalt see what I have seen, And break through all, till one will crown thee king Far in the spiritual city:" and as she spake She sent the deathless passion in her eyes

Through him, and made him hers, and laid her mind
On him, and he believed in her belief.'
(HG 157-165)

The reason for presenting this scene in sexual images
becomes clear when we examine it as Christian allegory.
In addition to her role as an unselfish Christian, the
nun, like the novice with Guinevere, also is the repre-
sentative of the Church. Allegorically, the scene between
her and Galahad represents the relationship between the
Christian and the Church. The love which they have in
common is that love for Christ. The belt with which she
binds him represents the ties between the Church and the
Christian. Although Johnson suggests the Holy Grail as
a "symbol of feminine sexuality" with the obvious meaning
attached to its blood-red color, on the allegorical
level it appears to stand for the spiritual health which
Arthur's kingdom needs—a point to which Percivale's
narration of its healing qualities gives credence (HG
54-58). Its blood-red color suggests the blood of Christ,
through the shedding of which spiritual healing occurs.
The silver beam represents the enlightenment which comes

69 Wendell Stacy Johnson, p. 169; see Pratt, p. 311, for a treatment of the Grail as a phallic symbol.
to those, like Galahad, who believe in the Church's doctrines. Both the Church and the Christian—in the ideal state as these two symbolize—are chaste ("maidens"). Represented by the nun, the Church sends the Christian forth into the world to minister to others and to overcome every obstacle until he is crowned in heaven. There the knight of heaven, serving now on earth as a warrior for Christ's cause, becomes a spiritual king, receiving the spiritual crown promised him in various New Testament passages. Although the crown is alternately called the "crown of righteousness" (II Tim. 4:8), the "crown of life" (James 1:12, Rev. 2:10), and the "crown of glory" (I Pet. 5:4), it is promised to "... all them also that love his [Christ's] appearing" (II Tim. 4:8) or "... to them that love him [Christ]" (James 1:12). From the Church the Christian learns of these promises as she inspires him with a "deathless passion" for service, makes him hers, and instills in him her precepts for living the Christian life. It is after the encounter with the nun—the Church—when he "believed in her belief" that Galahad voluntarily sits in "The Siege perilous," offering to lose himself to service and thereby save himself for his spiritual crown.
After receiving inspiration from the Church and making his commitment to serve through sacrifice of self, Galahad sees the Holy Grail. The vision increases his strength so that he overcomes many knights in the last tourney before leaving on the quest. Furthermore, because the Church has taught him how to perceive spiritual truth, symbolized by the Holy Grail, which remains with him day and night, he is enabled to wage war against evil (HG 468-481). He shatters "... all evil customs everywhere," conquers Pagan kingdoms, defeats Pagan armies (HG 477-479)—all because he is armed with a spiritual insight denied those like Gawain who are blind to spiritual matters, those who will not accept the teachings of the Church and live by them.

Another indication that Galahad functions allegorically as a type of the unselfish Christian is his willingness, at great personal sacrifice, to share his beliefs with others as the Christian is commanded to do in the Great Commission, worded as follows:

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:
Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I
have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.
(Matt. 28:19-20)

In so doing, he guides others into the truth. One of those to whom Galahad ministers is Percivale. During the quest for the Holy Grail, Percivale suffers many hardships without obtaining sight of the Cup. At his lowest point he finds a chapel at which Galahad himself appears. There they pray and partake of holy communion together. Percivale, even then, does not see the Holy Vessel, which appears there to Galahad as it descends upon the shrine (HG 465). Afterwards as Galahad witnesses to Percivale of what the Holy Grail has enabled him to do and of the crown which awaits him in the spiritual city, Percivale "... grew / One with him, to believe as he believed" (HG 486-487). After this experience Percivale then also sees the Grail hanging over Galahad's head as this purest of the knights rides off to the spiritual city (HG 526). Since Percivale has explained that the effect of Galahad's words has been to cause him to believe as Galahad does and since Percivale is able then to see the Holy Grail, even if from afar, only after the experience with Galahad, perhaps Galahad's riding off to the spiritual city
signifies allegorically that Galahad has fulfilled his purpose in enabling others to understand the Christian precepts as commanded. Now that he has accomplished his mission, perhaps he goes to receive his heavenly reward—
the spiritual crown the nun referred to earlier.

Besides Galahad and the nun, Sir Bors also represents the unselfish Christian. Textual evidence for this assumption is the reference to Bors' emblem, the pelican on his casque (HG 633). This emblem is appropriate for him since he, like the other two, sacrifices self in Christlike service to others.70 It is this quality of sacrificial unselfishness which Bors exhibits toward Lancelot, or the world, which Lancelot symbolizes. He is, in fact, so concerned with bringing the healing power of the Grail to the world that he would gladly give up the high privilege of seeing the Cup himself or, the ultimate in unselfishness, of receiving spiritual healing for self. Speaking of Bors,
Percivale relates to Ambrosius that he would have
"... been content / Not to have seen, so Lancelot
might have seen, / The Holy Cup of healing" (HG 650-652). Just as this same spirit has prompted men and women for centuries to go to underprivileged countries, denying themselves all luxuries and many necessities to present spiritual healing to the natives there, hoping to win the world for Christ but meeting with hostility instead as the natives resist conversion to Christianity, so Bors, representing just such a Christian, journeys to
"... the lonest tract of all the realm" (HG 658), inhabited by pagans who scoff at the quest. There he apparently evangelizes, for when they hear "... he had a difference with their priests" (HG 671), they imprison him. Because he unselfishly travels like Galahad to the heathen country to fulfill the Great Commission, Bors, too, there in the prison sees the Holy Grail through a gap in the cell as the Vessel glides by. In spite of this spiritual triumph, however, he remains sad because the world remains unhealed of sin. Escaping prison, he returns to Arthur's court, where he rushes immediately to Lancelot and clasps his hand, indicating his continued concern for the world still lost to sin.
Galahad, the nun, and Bors—all illustrate Christians who unselfishly serve Christ by serving others. Of all the types of Christians not represented in the Idylls, why, one might well ask, would Tennyson use three characters to stand for one type instead of three different types? To answer this question is to review the nature of the three different personalities involved. Galahad, a being so pure that he has already attained a perfection comparable to Arthur/Christ's, gallops from place to place searching for evil to combat. Likewise, the nun, whose purity equals Galahad's, also fights evil but in a different way—through prayer and self-denial. Even so, her method is as effective as Galahad's, as the miracle she accomplishes in this way manifests. Few, however, can be as morally pure as these two models of virtue. Bors, though, illustrates the possibility that even the ordinary man can be consumed with compassion for others and can work to bring truth and enlightenment to the world. If, indeed, Tennyson is employing characters to represent types of Christians, as it appears, the use of so many to illustrate the unselfish follower indicates that all can cultivate the quality of unselfishness—the extraordinary, like Galahad and the nun, and the ordinary,
like Bors. Unselfishness can also manifest itself in different ways, as these illustrate—through action such as that of the two warriors or through prayerful concern like the nun's. All three fulfill in their own ways the Biblical injunction to wage open warfare "... against the wiles of the devil" (Eph. 6:11) and, therefore, receive the promise that "... whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it" (Luke 9:24).

In contrast to the above three are Percivale and Ambrosius, belonging to the second group of types of Christians—those who, according to the Scriptures, displease God. They represent a kind of Christian who, though morally pure, does not actively engage in fighting evil or seek to win converts to the cause of Arthur/Christ. In short, these stand for the unproductive Christians.

The first of these two, Percivale, trained as a warrior by Arthur/Christ himself, has the potential to be another Galahad, who sways others to the faith by remaining in the world to rout out evil wherever he finds it and to bring spiritual enlightenment to mankind. Although in character Percivale is so upright that he is called "The Pure" (HG 3), he is really morally inferior to Galahad because he does not have that same selfless
concern for others. Hints of Percivale's moral deficiency appear early in "The Holy Grail."\(^{71}\) When Arthur rebukes the knights for their vow to search for the Holy Grail, he says, "'What are ye? Galahads?--no, nor Percivales'" (306). This line implies more than the obvious--that not all of the knights have the character or temperament to follow after such abstract ideals as the Holy Grail. By it the King also intimates the inferiority of Percivale's nature to Galahad's by implying that the other knights are certainly not Galahads, who will lose themselves in the service of others, nor even Percivales, who, though pure enough to glimpse the Grail, will not, as Arthur/Christ realizes, fulfill their responsibility of using the spiritual knowledge they obtain from the quest to win others.

Percivale even has a premonition that the quest is wrong for him. He relates to Ambrosius that after he leaves Camelot to begin the Grail search,

\(^{71}\) Ryals, p. 153, seems to support this idea of Percivale's defective moral nature when he states, "... Percivale is not credited with one glorious deed or unselfish act in any of the idylls."
"Thereafter, the dark warning of our King,
That most of us would follow wandering fires,
Came like a driving gloom across my mind.
Then every evil word I had spoken once,
And every evil thought I had thought of old,
And every evil deed I ever did,
Awoke and cried, "This Quest is not for thee."'
(HG 368-374)

In spite of the warning, however, Percivale is determined
to go on, but everything he touches along the way turns
to dust. Although Bloom in a Freudian analysis of
Percivale interprets these encounters as Percivale's
"... death instinct directed outwards,"\(^72\) what
Percivale learns from a holy hermit is that these things
disintegrate into dust because he does not have
"... true humility, / The highest virtue, mother of
them all" (HG 445-446). Moreover, he cannot see the
Holy Grail because, as the hermit also tells him, "'Thou
hast not lost thyself to save thyself / As Galahad...''
(HG 456-457). Because he cannot lose himself in service
to others, he, therefore, cannot save himself from the
spiritual consequences of disregarding the Great

Commission to enlighten others. At one point it seems that he will be able to carry on where Galahad leaves off. Just after the two men have met in the chapel, Galahad inspires Percivale to believe as he does, and Percivale is allowed a glimpse of the Holy Grail, symbol of the spiritual truths necessary for spiritual healing. Instead of transmitting these truths to others as Galahad has done, however, he chooses to keep them to himself by enclosing himself behind walls away from the world, which is still in need of the healing these spiritual truths can bring. As Christ, Arthur realizes the imperfect motives for Percivale's action: he selfishly longs for the quiet, undisturbed life of the monastery, where righting wrong is unnecessary. Such motives for withdrawal are not in accordance with the commandment to Christians to "... take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand" (Eph. 6:13). Percivale, armed with spiritual insight, indicated by his vision of the Holy Grail, will not stand in the evil day, but will sit among the yew trees, telling Ambrosius the story of his glorious vision, a vision which will profit neither
him nor others because he has forsaken his duties as a militant, soldier for Arthur/Christ.

Ambrosius, too, represents an unproductive Christian. Morally pure but completely useless in winning converts to Christianity, he has spent his entire life within the walls of the monastery. Though he has never "... known the world without, / Nor ever strayed beyond the pale ..." (HG 20-21), he longs to experience the world's pleasures. This longing manifests itself in his following words to Percivale:

"For we that want the warmth of double life,
We that are plagued with dreams of something sweet
Beyond all sweetness in a life so rich,—
Ah, blessed Lord, I speak too earthlywise,
Seeing I never strayed beyond the cell,
But live like an old badger in his earth,
With earth about him everywhere, despite
All fast and penance."

(HG 623-630)

Though these comments reveal his desire to go out into the world, his inert nature would forbid him to venture forth if he had the opportunity. He delights in listening to Percivale's account of the quest for the Holy Grail, reading ancient books about "miracles and marvels" (HG 543), gossiping with the townspeople (HG 553). Listening, reading, talking—-all are passive activities
requiring little action. Such a man is content to remain insignificant—to listen to, to read about, and to report on great deeds done for Arthur/Christ, but never to perform them himself, not because he cannot, but because he will not. His inactivity, therefore, makes him unproductive. Like Percivale, equally unproductive, he sits beneath "a world-old yew-tree" (HG 13), symbol of the death of their usefulness in their devotion to the monastic life of inactivity and perhaps even of their spiritual death.

Although Reed states that Ambrosius' "... endeavors and accomplishments are as valuable as any, for they are moved by humility and love," the parable of the talents clarifies the actual spiritual danger Ambrosius as well as Percivale faces. In this parable a man about to go on a trip gives a certain number of talents to his three servants to keep for him until his return. Two of them double the amount of money given them by investing it wisely, but the third one buries his one talent in the earth for fear of losing it and incurring the wrath of his master. When

73 Reed, p. 154.
the master returns, he praises the first two for their resourcefulness but condemns the other for not at least giving his money to the exchangers to draw interest. These harsh words spoken to the third servant reveal how angry his master is over the incident and how serious an offense he considers the lack of productivity: "And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. 25:30). Traditionally the master has been considered to represent God, and the talents, any God-given resources or abilities. Those who use these things to serve God are like the first two servants; those who do not are like the unprofitable one to be cast into outer darkness. Despite their humility and love Ambrosius and Percivale, like the unprofitable servant, are in danger of losing their souls because of their refusal to use their abilities to win the world for Arthur/Christ. Humility and love must be demonstrated by action as James 2:14-17 clearly states:

What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give
them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?

Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.

Since the faith of Percivale and Ambrosius does not issue in works, it is likely to die and with it their chances for immortality.

So far the characters standing for praiseworthy Christians have all been steadfast in their faithfulness to Arthur/Christ, wavering not even once. Such individuals are rare. A more common type is the kind Bedivere appears to typify, the kind who, despite his very human weaknesses, resulting in a moral lapse, ultimately remains loyal. The Bible has many accounts of this type, but one of the most notable is Peter, one of Christ's disciples, with whom Bedivere has much in common.\textsuperscript{74} In fact, a

\textsuperscript{74} Burton, p. 58, compares Bedivere to John, another of Christ's disciples, since both are the only followers to remain with their leaders to the end. In this respect only are the two situations comparable. The reasons for their being the only ones left are very different. In the case of John he alone of all the disciples has enough courage to follow Christ into the palace for His arraignment before the high priest (John 18:15) and then on to His crucifixion (John 19:26). In the case of Bedivere, however, he is the one remaining knight because the other loyal followers have been slaughtered in the battle with Modred's men.
comparison of Bedivere with Peter, who also exhibits human weaknesses resulting in moral failure but who in the final analysis remains a loyal follower of Christ, is helpful in understanding why Bedivere represents the loyal Christian.

Bedivere's moral lapse referred to above comes when the knight disobeys his King's command to fling Excalibur into the mere. Although Burton compares Bedivere's disobedience to the "... failure of the apostles to follow Christ's instructions in the garden prior to his death," the situations are not really analogous. In the Garden of Gethsemane Christ, knowing that a band of officers and priests will soon arrest Him, asks His disciples to wait and watch for Him while He prays. Three times He returns to find them asleep instead. Recognizing that their disobedience results from their inability to stay awake at such a late hour, Christ says to them after the first time, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matt. 26:41). Since their non-compliance with Christ's request stems, then, from their

75 Burton, pp. 55-56.
lack of physical stamina (both Matthew 26:43 and Mark 14:40 note that "... their eyes were heavy"), their disobedience differs sharply from Bedivere's. Bedivere's disobedience more nearly corresponds to Peter's denial of Christ than it does to the failure of the exhausted disciples to obey in the Garden of Gethsemane. On three different occasions Peter lies about being with Christ and denies even knowing Him (Matt. 26:69-75). After His crucifixion and resurrection, however, Christ appears to Peter to grant him another chance, knowing Peter's potential and realizing that in him lies the hope of spreading the Christian ideal throughout the world. Christ forgives him and commands him to feed His sheep (John 21:16, 17), or, in other words, to provide the spiritual nourishment the lost world must obtain to prepare itself for Christ's Second Coming. History shows that Peter lived up to his potential in becoming a leader in spreading Christianity.

Bedivere's sin also involves lying and denial.

76 Burton, p. 167, also suggests an association of Bedivere with Peter in the similar reactions they have to the forthcoming death of their leaders, but he does not mention this particular parallel.
Twice Arthur commands him to throw Excalibur into the mere; twice Bedivere thinks of a reason not to obey and lies each time about what he sees when the sword is supposed to have landed in the water. In a sense, then, Bedivere's action, like Peter's, is a denial: it is a denial of Arthur's kingship and the obedience Bedivere owes him as king. Arthur himself realizes the significance of Bedivere's deed. Angrily the dying leader denounces Bedivere thus: "'Ah, miserable and unkind, untrue, / Unknightly, traitor-hearted! Woe is me! / Authority forgets a dying king!'" (PA 287-289). As Colville observes, Bedivere's struggle between his desire to keep the priceless sword of the King and his desire to obey Arthur is actually the "... struggle between faith and reason." Eventually, however, faith triumphs. Just as Christ grants Peter another chance, so does Arthur give Bedivere a second one for the same reason. Arthur's comment to Bedivere, "'... thou, the latest-left of all my knights, / In whom should meet the offices of all'"

(PA 292-293), indicates Arthur's awareness of Bedivere, the loyal remnant of all his disciples, as his only means for perpetuating his ideals until his second coming. Arthur, therefore, says to him,

'Yet, for a man may fail in duty twice,
And the third time may prosper, get thee hence:
But, if thou spare to fling Excalibur,
I will arise and slay thee with my hands.'

(PA 297-300)

Although the angry tone of these words and the threat of violence are uncharacteristic of the gentle Christ, whom Arthur represents, it is not without precedent. All four of the gospels record Christ's anger over the practice of buying and selling in the temple. John relates that He drove the offenders out with a "scourge of small cords" and overturned the tables of the moneychangers (John 2:14-17). The incident concerning Bedivere's disobedience and the one concerning the moneychangers' defilement of the temple have little in common except to indicate the anger and violence of which both Arthur and Christ are capable. In Bedivere's case the anger and threat are necessary because of the disastrous consequences to him if he does not heed the command this time. Even taken literally, Bedivere's disobedience to his king is a very serious
offense, punishable by physical death. Symbolically, however, the disobedience is even more serious since it involves disobedience to Christ, an offense punishable by spiritual death. In the above passage, Arthur makes it clear that this is Bedivere's last opportunity to prove his loyalty. If he fails here, he perishes spiritually as the last line of the preceding passage indicates. Bedivere, however, like Peter, compensates for his previous sins. And, like Peter, he figuratively feeds Arthur's sheep. As we know from the first lines of "The Passing of Arthur," Bedivere has kept Arthur's memory and, therefore, his ideals alive by telling his story to others.

Since Bedivere and Peter parallel each other so closely in the above respects, it is logical to assume that Bedivere's influence in preparing the world for Arthur's second coming is comparable to that of Peter's in preparing it for Christ's Second Coming. In any case, the comparison of these two men is helpful since both come from failure to success. On the brink of disloyalty they, nevertheless, seize their last opportunity and prove themselves faithful followers. By presenting Bedivere as the loyal Christian, the idyll shows that
even one guilty of breaking the commandments of Christ through moral weakness can receive another chance to prove his loyalty. By associating him with Peter, guilty of the same kind of sin, the idyll indicates the possibility not only of forgiveness but also of his becoming a leader in winning the world to Christ.

In contrast to Bedivere, Gawain does not remain loyal. Evidence of his changeable nature appears as early as the first idyll in the passage comparing Gawain to a colt which "... leapt at all he saw" (CA 321), or, in other words, followed first one and then the other, not remaining long with any. The changeable youth grows into a changeable man with dire consequences for all concerned. In the parable of the sower (Matt. 13:3-23), Christ describes a kind of follower similar to Gawain. He is like the seeds which fall upon stony places. They spring up rapidly, but, because they have little dirt for their roots to grow in, they soon die. When Jesus interprets the parable, he explains that this kind of follower hears the word of God joyfully and lives according to its precepts for a while. Later, however, when it becomes difficult to maintain the high standards required, he gives up. This is exactly what happens to Gawain. At
first he is such a worthy knight that his shield "blazoned rich and bright" (GL 408), indicating the many glorious deeds done for Arthur/Christ. Later, though, when his desires conflict with Arthur's code for his followers, he proves an unfaithful disciple. His actions, therefore, suggest that he represents the disloyal Christian.

The first sign of his unfaithfulness manifests itself in a relatively minor incident. Instead of delivering a diamond to Lancelot as Arthur commands, he, tiring of the search for Lancelot, gives it to Elaine to deliver. Even Elaine realizes the significance of Gawain's disobedience. After Gawain leaves, she pleads with her father to permit her to find Lancelot to deliver the diamond "'Lest I be found as faithless in the quest / As yon proud Prince who left the quest to me!'" (LE 756-757). Her words support the argument for Gawain as a representative of the disloyal Christian. Further evidence is Arthur's reaction to Gawain's disloyalty. Because Gawain has failed to obey in this small matter, Arthur rejects him for more important assignments, saying, "'... ye shall go no more / On quest of mine, seeing that ye forget / Obedience is the courtesy due to kings'" (LE 711-713). These words recall those of the rich man in
Christ's parable of the unjust steward who has wasted his lord's goods. The rich man rebukes the steward saying, "... give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward" (Luke 16:2). In both accounts the master denies the servant future responsibilities because each knows that obedience in small things is necessary before one can be entrusted with large responsibilities, or, as Christ states at the end of this parable, "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much" (Luke 16:10). The association of Gawain with the steward who fails in loyalty to his master is further indication that he possibly typifies the disloyal Christian. As Christ, Arthur realizes that Gawain's ardor for discipleship has lessened and that he will soon falter altogether. With this slight disobedience he has broken the first of the vows which Arthur has made all the knights swear, "To reverence the King ..." (G 465), since failure to carry out even the King's smallest command evidences a lack of reverence.

More serious consequences follow this first symptom of Gawain's unfaithfulness. During the search for the Holy Grail, Gawain, as enthusiastic as the others
at the beginning, again wearies of the quest. When he finds "... a silk pavilion in a field, / And merry maidens in it ..." (HG 742-743), therefore, he remains there. Later Gawain, concerning future quests, swears to Arthur that henceforth he will be deaf and blind "'To holy virgins [such as the nun who instigated the quest] in their ecstasies'" (HG 862-864). Arthur once more rebukes Gawain for his outburst as follows:


"'Deafer,' said the blameless King, 'Gawain, and blinder unto holy things Hope not to make thyself by idle vows, Being too blind to have desire to see.'"
(HG 865-868)

Because Gawain has wearied of the quest, preferring the company of the merry maidens to a view of the Holy Grail if it means suffering hardship, he receives condemnation. At the same time Arthur praises Bors, Lancelot, and Percivale, 'For,'" as Arthur points out, "'these have seen according to their sight'" (HG 871): These words are reminiscent of Christ's comments to His disciples when they do not understand His warning to "... beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the leaven of Herod" (Mark 8:15). Of course Christ refers to spiritual matters, but the disciples think he refers to their lack
of bread. Jesus wonders how they could misunderstand His message and asks,

. . . Why reason ye, because ye have no bread? perceive ye not yet, neither understand? have ye your heart yet hardened?

Having eyes, see ye not? and having ears, hear ye not?

(Mark 8:17-18)

Like Christ, Arthur, too, refers to Gawain's blindness to spiritual matters. The fickle Gawain, lacking the depth of character necessary to endure adversity for any cause, is "too blind to have desire to see," a worse predicament than that of those who cannot see the Grail because of their impurity. These know their spiritual condition, but Gawain, because of the shallowness of his faith, does not want to see the Holy Vessel. To do so would necessitate leading a purer life, a task too difficult for so superficial a faith. Perhaps for this reason Solomon can state: "Readers should not see the quest as a pure waste of time for any of the knights. Gawain alone is a total failure." 78

Gawain's final rejection of Arthur's principles comes in "Pelleas and Ettarre." Pelleas, smitten with love for Ettarre, who hates him, is attacked by her three knights. Arriving on the scene and seeing three against one, Gawain offers aid because "... through his heart / The fire of honour and all noble deeds / Flashed ..." (PE 269-271). Pelleas refuses his offer since he is a willing victim of Ettarre's every whim. Ironically Gawain scorns Pelleas for enduring such treatment gladly, reminding him of his knighthood and asking,

'. . . wherefore hast thou so defamed
Thy brotherhood in me and all the rest,
As let these caitiffs on thee work their will?
(PE 313-315)

These lines precede Gawain's pledge to Pelleas, sworn "'... by the honour of the Table Round'" (PE 334), to try to win Ettarre for the young knight. Instead, when Gawain finds Ettarre appealing, he takes her for himself. During the whole incident he commits several wrongs. First, he lies to Ettarre to gain an audience with her by pretending he has slain Pelleas, a direct violation of the oath to Arthur "To honour his own word as if his God's" (G 470). By engaging in sexual intercourse with
Ettarre, he breaks another promise exacted from all the
knights,

To lead sweet lives in purest chastity,
To love one maiden only, cleave to her,
And worship her by years of noble deeds,
Until they won her. . . .

(G 471-474)

Certainly this occasion is not the first on which Gawain
has broken this portion of his vow; in fact, his fickleness
in love, as in everything else, has earned him the
title "light-of-love" (PE 353). The broken oath is
doubly heinous here, however, because it is coupled with
the betrayal of a fellow knight. Furthermore, since
Gawain has sworn by the honor of the Round Table to act
in Pelleas' behalf, his action brings shame to it, some-
thing he had rebuked Pelleas for only a short time before.
Worst of all, however, these further violations of
Arthur's code are another sign of the lack of depth in
his spiritual life.

The story of the changeable Gawain is an account
of an unfaithful disciple. As long as the way is easy,
Gawain's faith flourishes, but when following Arthur/Christ
interferes with pleasure, his faith is too superficial to
give him moral strength. In "The Passing of Arthur,"
however, Arthur's dream, during which he hears Gawain's ghost crying, "'Hollow, hollow all delight!'" (33), signifies that at last in death Gawain realizes the futility of a faith so small that it chooses pleasure over Arthur/Christ, a faith planted in shallow spiritual earth, unable to take deep root and, therefore, perishing in the face of moral difficulty. But the realization comes too late. His unfaithfulness to Arthur/Christ has cost him the crown of life which awaits Bedivere and the other loyal followers (Rev. 2:10).

The Fool seems to exemplify another kind of Christian, the grateful Christian--grateful because of sins forgiven. The text gives clear indication that the relationship between him and Arthur is that of sinner and savior. When Tristram, thinking the Fool too proud of his position as Arthur's fool, reminds him of his past depraved life, he responds in the following manner:

'. . . I have wallowed, I have washed--the world Is flesh and shadow--I have had my day. The dirty nurse, Experience, in her kind Hath fouled me--an I wallowed, then I washed-- I have had my day and my philosophies-- And thank the Lord I am King Arthur's fool.‘

(LT 315-320)
These lines disclose the reason for the Fool's gratitude—he has been cleansed of sin—and his realization that Arthur is responsible for his cleansing. To compare his experience with the incident of Christ and the unchaste woman, who is the kind of Christian the Fool appears to represent, clarifies further the relationship between the Fool and Arthur. This woman is so appreciative of Christ's forgiveness that she follows Him to the house of Simon, the Pharisee, washes His feet with her tears and wipes them with her own hair, kisses them, and anoints them with oil. When Simon complains that Jesus would know this woman for a sinner if He were a prophet and would thus avoid her, Jesus answers him as follows: "Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little" (Luke 7:47). Because of her gratitude to Him, she lovingly performs even this task too lowly for the proud Simon. The relationship between the Fool and Arthur is similar to that of the unchaste woman and Christ. The Fool, a "symbol of depravity reclaimed," is, like

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the unchaste woman, so grateful for sins forgiven that he gladly serves even in this low position of Arthur's fool.

Just how degenerate the Fool had become, Tristram recounts in the following lines:

'. . . --for here be they
Who knew thee swine enow before I came,
Smuttier than blasted grain: but when the King
Had made thee fool, thy vanity so shot up
It frightened all free fool from out thy heart;
Which left thee less than fool, and less than swine,
A naked aught--yet swine I hold thee still,
For I have flung thee pearls and find thee swine.'
(LT 303-310)

Although Tristram intends these words as a slur upon Dagonet's character, he has hit upon the whole purpose for Arthur/Christ's mission on earth. Christ said, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Luke 5:32). In the Fool's following response to Tristram's question, "'. . . is the King thy brother fool?" (LT 352), the reason for Arthur's mission is shown to be similar to that of Christ's:

'Ay, ay, my brother fool, the king of fools!
Conceits himself as God that he can make
Figs out of thistles, silk from bristles, milk
From burning spurge, honey from hornet-combs,
And men from beasts--Long live the king of fools!'
(LT 354-358)
Just as Christ came to reclaim sinners, so has Arthur come to make men from beasts, or, in short, to reclaim sinners. Just as Christ's forgiveness of the unchaste woman cleanses her of her impure moral nature, so Arthur's forgiveness of the Fool lifts him above the beasts (swine) out of the moral filth into which the "dirty nurse, Experience," had thrown him and cleanses him of his impure moral nature. Both he and the unchaste woman express their gratitude and love for their saviors for lifting them out of sin.

In the accusation that Arthur's making Dagonet his fool caused him to become vain and left him "... less than fool, and less than swine, / A naked aught..." Tristram unknowingly lights upon another Christian truth. Two Biblical passages illuminate the text here. In the first,

> For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men.
> We are fools for Christ's sake.
> (I Cor. 4:9-10)

St. Paul here, as elsewhere, makes it clear what the
non-Christian world thinks of Christians: they are fools.

The second passage has a similar message as follows:

Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

I am become a fool in glorying; ye have compelled me: for I ought to have been commended of you: for in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing.

(II Cor. 12:10-11)

Again, the term fool is used to apply to the follower of Christ, but here also the idea of becoming nothing for Christ's sake is advanced. Dagonet has become nothing ("a naked aught") to Tristram, symbol of the lost world.

It is not surprising, though, that Tristram regards Dagonet as a fool when we consider the following passage of Scripture: "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (I Cor. 2:14). Tristram as symbol of the lost world represents all "natural" men and, therefore, regards all followers of Arthur/Christ as fools. Dagonet, however, knowing what the unredeemed like Tristram think of Christians, remains unperturbed, and his refusal to dance to Tristram's tune signifies his determination not
to conform to their idea of what the Christian should do. Instead he can say unashamedly, "... an I wallowed, then I washed--/... And thank the Lord I am King Arthur's fool." Since, like the unchaste woman, he has been forgiven much, he loves much and is grateful, as we have seen, for his cleansing. As his words indicate, he has willingly become a naked aught, a fool for Arthur, the king of fools. Although Slinn regards this title as one "... which criticizes both Arthur and his knights...," Dagonet's use of it actually further associates Arthur with Christ, who is also, as the above Biblical passages clearly indicate, the King of fools. The passage from II Corinthians further explains why Dagonet but not Tristram can see the star called Arthur's harp in the daytime and hear the silent music it makes. The star symbolizes "the things of the Spirit of God," which the natural man cannot discern. Therefore, this heavenly music, silent to the lost world, is the music only Arthur/Christ's fools dance to.

At the end of "The Last Tournament" only the Fool

80 Slinn, p. 14.
81 Cf. Burton, p. 159.
is with Arthur. At this point Tristram, the unredeemed world, has been destroyed; Lancelot, the symbol of the world which eventually turns to Christ, has not yet done so; Guinevere, the soul, is still unrepentant; and Arthur will soon die. These were also the conditions present just before Christ died: the world was lost; the individual soul, without hope; and Christ, headed for the Cross. As the disciples had forgotten Christ's promise to rise again, so Dagonet has forgotten Arthur's promise to pass but not die. Like Christ's disciples, therefore, Dagonet, still proclaiming himself to be Arthur's fool, thinks all is hopeless, and, through his tears, laments that he will never make Arthur smile again (LT 756). But, though the future looks dark in this idyll, as it did at the crucifixion of Christ, "The Passing of Arthur" offers hope just as the news of Christ's resurrection offered hope to the first followers of Christ. Although this last idyll of the poem ends with Arthur floating away in a barge, the music Bedivere hears in the distance ". . . as if some fair city were one voice / Around a king returning from his wars" (PA 460-461) represents his resurrection and ascension. The last line of the idyll refers to the new sun rising on the new year. This fusion of the old
year with the new one, in Joseph's phrase, "... encapsulates the mystery of Arthur as once and future king."\(^82\)

While the world awaits the second coming of Arthur/Christ, the faithful remnant, symbolized in Bedivere, recount the glorious deeds of their leader to "new faces, other minds" (PA 5) in preparation for the promised return. These are, like Dagonet, the grateful fools serving Arthur/Christ, "the king of fools," until then.

Sir Kay seems to represent another kind of Christian—the immature Christian—receiving Biblical censure. The following New Testament passages describe this kind of follower, one who does not grow in the faith:

> And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ.
> I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able.
> For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?
> (I Cor. 3:1-3)

For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.

For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. (Heb. 5:12-14)

In both passages the term *babe* is used to refer to the Christian whose faith has not matured. The tone of both is one of reproof because the "babes" have not advanced to a diet of meat instead of milk, a sign that their ability to discern right from wrong is still underdeveloped, resulting in their continuation of carnal activities. These passages are applicable to Sir Kay. Although he is one of Arthur/Christ's followers, his faith never matures. The passage describing him as "... a man of mien / Wan-sallow as the plant that feels itself / Root-bitten by white lichen" (GL 443-445) is significant to this assertion. Although Ricks, in a discussion of the unevenness of the *Idylls*, uses this simile as an example of one of the "... triumphs which are saddening in that they so seldom relate intimately to the poem's real
concerns . . . ," it is central to the argument that Kay represents the immature Christian. By comparing Sir Kay to a plant which, diseased at the roots, ceases to grow, the author could be implying the decease of Kay's spiritual growth.

Sir Kay's actions, which also reflect his stunted spiritual development, can also be cited in support of this argument. One such example is his disapproval of Arthur's aiding a widow whose husband Arthur has slain in battle and who now enjoins Arthur to help her. She wants revenge on her husband's brother, who has enslaved her son for his inheritance and has starved him to death. As she asks this favor, she shows her hatred for Arthur, but he, nevertheless, sends one of his knights to right the wrong done her. In doing so, however, he reminds her of other kings who would have burned her, scourged her dead, or slit her tongue for the things she has said (GL 366-368). Kay plainly thinks Arthur should be more like these kings in his actions toward the widow;

certainly he believes to grant her request is foolish as the following lines prove:

'A boon, Sir King! even that thou grant her none, This raile, that hath mocked thee in full hall-- None; or the wholesome boon of gyve and gag.'
(GL 360-362)

Obviously Kay's faith is so dwarfed that he does not perceive that Arthur's way is through right, not might. Quickly, though, Arthur reminds Kay of this new kind of rule when he says, "'We sit King, to help the wronged / Through all our realm'" (GL 363-364). This incident recalls to those familiar with the New Testament Christ's words to His disciples when they wanted to call down fire from heaven to consume a group of Samaritans because they would not receive Christ into their village. Chiding them He says, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them" (Luke 9:55-56). In both cases the desire for revenge mirrors a lack of Christian maturity and of a true understanding of the nature of Arthur/Christ's mission on earth.

Another example of Sir Kay's immaturity as a Christian is his treatment of the young Gareth. When the
boy in disguise first arrives at Arthur's court, the King assigns him to Sir Kay, the seneschal. Since Kay does not recognize Gareth's noble qualities, he makes life as difficult as possible by giving him the lowliest kitchen tasks to perform. To account for Kay's contemptuous attitude toward Gareth, Kincaid explains it as the hatred of the old for the young. An interpretation of the situation as Christian allegory, however, leads to a more logical solution. As noted earlier, Gareth represents one of the Christian Virtues—faith. Sir Kay cannot mature as a Christian because his faith has stopped expanding. His actions toward Gareth, then, represent his attempt to repress faith in general. For this reason Kay resents Gareth's quest for Lynette, on which his faith will strengthen, and even tries to prevent his going. To force Gareth's return, he rides after the young knight. As Kay challenges him, he speaks, "'Knowest thou not me? thy master? I am Kay: / We lack thee by the hearth'" (GL 735-736). But Gareth, no longer slave to an immature faith, responds, "'Master no more! too well I know thee, ay-- / The most ungentle knight in Arthur's

84 Kincaid, p. 168.
hall'" (GL 737-738). In the ensuing fight Gareth's easy victory over Kay symbolizes the ease with which a strong faith soon outstrips an immature faith. Though a follower of Arthur/Christ, Kay will never fight glorious battles against evil, for these belong to the spiritually mature. Because his faith has become diseased at the roots, like a sick plant it is unlikely ever to develop. Though Kay may serve in the kingdom, it will be only in a minor way, as his low position of seneschal signifies, because he will never mature beyond a spiritual babe.

Paul Turner is among those who argue that Pellam, because of his decision to lead a monastic life renouncing all worldly pleasure and because of the references to the shrine of his chapel containing many statues of saints, represents Catholicism. In this Christian allegory, however, Pellam illustrates a much more general group than a particular religious denomination. Instead he typifies the expedient Christian found in all Christian congregations. This kind of Christian pretends to follow Christ because it is good business or good politics. In a sense he is "forced" into following Him for practical

reasons. Later, forgetting his original motive—opportunism—he regards himself as a devout Christian and often becomes fanatical about the ritual of worship. Because there is no inward concern for, or real interest in, Christ, these outward displays of devotion become important to convince himself and others of his sincerity. So it is with King Pellam. Once he had openly opposed Arthur, but having been defeated, he had been required to send tribute to Arthur periodically, or, in a sense, he had been forced to follow him for the very practical reason of survival. Now seeing that Arthur's kingdom has "prospered in the name of Christ" (BB 96), whom Pellam in his spiritual void does not realize is embodied in Arthur himself, he becomes interested in holy things because it is financially and politically expedient. He, therefore, pretends a kinship with Joseph of Arimathaea, the first Christian missionary to Britain; starves himself; turns from his wife, refusing even to allow women in his gates for fear of contamination; and collects holy relics. He becomes so caught up in the trappings of religion in an effort to convince himself and others of his sincere devotion that he begins to worship the
religious pageantry rather than Christ, as his refusal to pay the tribute to Arthur/Christ signifies.

Against this sort of hypocrisy, which Pallen observes in regard to Pellam, is "a picture of the external show of spirituality without its soul," the Bible records some of its harshest warnings. The following verses illustrate Christ's displeasure as He warns against empty religiosity:

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.

(Matt. 23:27-28)

Although Christ speaks these words to the scribes and Pharisees, they clearly apply to all practitioners of religious sham. The "woe" promised such hypocrites is a portion in eternity of "weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. 24:51).

But the suffering described above, which is caused by hypocrisy, is not confined in eternity to those guilty

86 Pallen, p. 68.
of it since dissembling often has the opposite effect from the desired one. Although Pellam, eventually convinced that he is even purer than Arthur/Christ himself (BB 101), desires to drive out evil from his kingdom altogether, he harbors it instead in the form of the Wood-devil terrorizing his domain. In addition, since hypocrisy breeds evil, it is not surprising that the wicked Garlon is Pellam's spiritual heir as well as the heir to his kingdom, which Pellam has already turned over to him. Since, as stated previously, hissing is always indicative of evil in the Idylls, there is no mistaking Garlon's association with Satan when Tennyson records that Garlon hissed in response to a comment by Balin. In addition, Balan's news that Vivien, Satan's emissary, "'... dallies with him [Garlon] in the Mouth of Hell'" (BB 604) further unmaskes him as Satan's servant. From Pellam's original desire to profit from Christianity, he advances to religious fanaticism to prove his purity to self and to others, starts to worship the trappings of religion instead of its leader, and eventually puts himself and his kingdom into the hands of Garlon, Satan's follower. With this act Pellam aligns himself with Satan, his real master, though he has yet to realize it. Expediency has
cost him the crown of life also and has assured his spiritual death.

Another common Biblical image of the Christian is that of a soldier in training to wage warfare against Satan. In one Scriptural passage the Christian is urged to "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. . . . and having done all, to stand" (Eph. 6:11, 13). In spite of this commandment, however, Yniol, Enid's father, one who has ceased to fight against evil, has put down his arms. As a result Edyrn has taken over his kingdom without a struggle. Because Yniol refuses to fight, as his rusty arms symbolize, but endures "'... it all most patiently'" (MG 473), he has lost his high position and now lives in a dilapidated castle. As his following words to Geraint indicate, his passivity has also cost him his self-respect:

'And I myself sometimes despise myself; For I have let men be, and have their way; Am much too gentle, have not used my power.'

(MG 465-467)

In Yniol's experience is another lesson for the Christian: if he does not continually struggle against evil, it will emerge the victor as he becomes powerless to oppose it.
Fortunately Geraint, with Yniol's rusty sword, defeats Edyrn and restores Yniol to his kingdom to demonstrate what an active Christian even with inadequate resources can accomplish against the same foe if he fights.

At the same time Geraint, by defeating the proud Edyrn, wins an unwilling convert to Arthur/Christ's cause. Edyrn, therefore, seems to represent the Christian who, like Paul, is won by first being brought low. As suggested in an earlier section he, in a sense, even personifies the pride which Geraint conquers in himself. Edyrn's face "of haughtiest lineaments" (MG 190) reflects the vice in him as does the cranky dwarf riding with him, pictured as ". . . doubling all his master's vice of pride" (MG 195). The dwarf's shrivelled body reflects his shrivelled soul and indicates the spiritual condition of one who allows pride to conquer him. Edyrn's spiritual nature is shrinking in just this way, and his soul is in danger of drying up as his pride reduces it to nothing.

When Guinevere, personifying the soul, sees Edyrn in the forest, she sends her maiden to inquire his name. The dwarf refuses both to tell her and to allow her to ask Edyrn. When Geraint then attempts to get the information, he receives a cut on his cheek from the
dwarf's whip for his trouble. Angered, Geraint swears to avenge the insult done the Queen through her maiden. He promises to track Edyrn down, and, though unarmed at present, he hopes to borrow arms, fight with him, and break his pride. The entire scene signifies the dishonor pride does to the soul. Geraint, a militant Christian before sloth overcomes him, actively seeks to destroy this harmful pride in the form of Edyrn. Although Yniol has given up in the face of such pride, as already noted, Geraint, using Yniol's rusty sword and accompanied by Enid, representative of fortitude, defeats him soundly. Since the men are equally matched, however, the battle is difficult because, of all the vices, pride is probably one of the hardest to subdue, especially in an unwilling participant. After Geraint breaks his pride, though, he spares Edyrn's life only on the condition that he, his lady, and the dwarf ride to Arthur's court to ask pardon for insulting the Queen and that he give Yniol back his earldom. Edyrn goes an unwilling convert, expecting to be treated with scorn but finding only gentleness from all. He at last looks at himself and realizes how degraded his life has been. He then goes to Dubric, a representative of the Church, to learn about Christianity.
His nature then changes so drastically that Arthur makes him a member of the Round Table and calls him "'One of our noblest, our most valorous, / Sanest and most obedient . . .'" (GE 909-910). Later recounting his unwilling conversion, he expresses gratitude to Geraint for "... set[ting] his foot upon me, and giv[ing] me life. / There was I broken down; there was I saved" (GE 849-850). In gratitude to Geraint for forcing him to learn a better way, he remarks:

'... once, when I was up so high in pride
That I was halfway down the slope to Hell,
By overthrowing me you threw me higher.'

(GE 789-791)

Later Edyrn dies fighting for the King. Geraint, as a militant Christian, not only defeats the evil in Edyrn but also wins an initially unwilling convert who becomes militant himself for the cause of Arthur/Christ.

All of the above characters who exemplify kinds of Christians receiving praise or blame in the Bible provide either good or bad examples in Christian living. Those who obey the Biblical injunctions are promised the future rewards of dutiful servants. Those who defy the commands, however, are in danger not only of losing their
spiritual reward altogether but also of losing their souls in spiritual death.

Chapters I and II have treated every significant character in the Idylls. Although each performs on the literal level as a major or minor figure in his respective narrative, all have important roles in the Christian allegorical design of this work, all working together to fulfill their part in the Christian story. Chapter III turns from the emphasis on character to analyze the structure of the Idylls in relation to its Christian allegory.
Chapter III

The Allegorical Structure of the Idylls

The preceding chapter has pointed out how the characters in the Idylls function allegorically. This chapter examines the narrative arrangement of the work in relation to its Christian allegory. The frame idylls, as outlined in Chapter I, establish the parallels between the birth and death of Arthur and the birth and death of Christ. In between the frames the remaining idylls act as parables to illustrate the dangers of yielding to sin and the importance of exercising the virtues to counteract it. The arrangement of events within the individual parabolic idylls as well as the final arrangement of these idylls as a whole is significant in getting across the moral point of each of the idylls and of the overall work.

With regard to the importance of the order of certain events in the individual parabolic idylls, we look first at "Gareth and Lynette." The arrangement of events within this narrative shows how Gareth's faith develops.
as he defeats pride, one of the greatest enemies to a strong faith. Before the actual battle with pride, however, another significant occurrence comes at a strategic point in Gareth's experience. Soon after he arrives at court and enters the hall, he sees Arthur on his throne listening to complaints from his subjects. During this scene Gareth, the new follower, learns what sort of King he will serve as he watches Arthur pass judgment in three different situations. In the first he restores to a widow the field which Uther, Arthur's supposed father, had unjustly taken from her. As he grants her request, he declares,

'. . . No boon is here,  
But justice, so thy say be proven true.  
Accursed, who from the wrongs his father did  
Would shape himself a right!'  
(338-341)

Through this action Gareth learns that his King is just. In the second incident Gareth observes Arthur grant another widow's request to avenge her son's death. At the same time she proclaims her hatred of Arthur for having slain her husband during the Barons' War. In spite of Sir Kay's admonition to put her in shackles and gag her for mocking him, Arthur grants her boon. Gareth
learns from this episode that his king is merciful even to those who hate him. The third incident involves a servant of Mark, symbol of Satan, who comes to announce Mark's imminent arrival to petition for admission into the fellowship of the Round Table. Arthur roughly denies Mark's boon, saying of him,

'M... Mark hath tarnished the great name of king, As Mark would sully the low state of churl.'

(418-419)

Here Gareth learns that, though Arthur is merciful, he is intolerant of evil in his kingdom and drives it out forthwith. All of these things—that his leader is just, that He is merciful, and that He is intolerant of evil—the follower of Christ, whom Arthur symbolizes, should realize before he commits himself to lifelong service. Therefore, to acquaint Gareth with the character of his king, these three apparently unconnected incidents precede Gareth's petition to serve Arthur/Christ, a petition which Arthur grants.

Although Gareth has demonstrated his faith in Arthur/Christ and although he has definitely determined to follow him and to serve him after observing the kind of leader he is, he still has not conquered his pride.
The arrangement of the events which follow in the remainder of "Gareth and Lynette" indicates the difficulty of subduing pride. First, he learns humility through the indignities suffered from Sir Kay. Even though he endures Sir Kay's bullying "all for glory" (GL 468), indicating the presence still of pride, the demeaning experiences with the seneschal prepare Gareth, by teaching him patience and humility, for the lifelong fight against pride, rather obviously symbolized in the battles with the Brotherhood of Day and Night, battles which become increasingly more difficult. The first with Morning-Star, Gareth wins with comparative ease, but he has more difficulty overcoming Noon-Sun, his next foe. At one point he even fears he will lose the battle, but he eventually wins when his opponent's horse slips. The third struggle with Evening-Star, whose strength is that of twenty boys, is the hardest of all for Gareth because his adversary is wrapped in hardened skins. After much effort, however, Gareth defeats him. When he eats and sleeps, perhaps to symbolize the Christian's need for spiritual sustenance and restoration in the struggle with pride, he is ready to meet Night/Death, who is reported to have the strength of ten and to eat infant flesh.
Gareth, Lynette, and even Lancelot, who has been following the couple at Arthur's instigation, are frightened. With one stroke, however, Gareth defeats this last opponent, discovering that underneath his fearsome attire is a young boy. The point of the preceding allegory is that faith's fight against pride is a lifelong struggle and that the longer it takes to suppress this vice in self, the more difficult it is to subdue in later life. Once it is under control, however, as the change in the attitude of Lynette, embodiment of Gareth's pride, toward Gareth indicates, the Christian's faith increases, and he can defeat death as easily as Gareth does the last of these brothers, or perhaps, as Kincaid suggests, he can turn "... him into life itself: 'the bright face of a blooming boy / Fresh as a flower new-born' (1373-1374)."¹

Through the arrangement of events, the next two idylls, "The Marriage of Geraint" and "Geraint and Enid," warn against the dangers of sloth by actually showing Geraint in the process of moral disintegration caused by sloth. His subsequent spiritual regeneration brought

¹ Kincaid, p. 171.
about by fortitude, personified in Enid, teaches how important this virtue is in counteracting sloth.

Although "The Marriage of Geraint" begins in medias res at the point where Geraint begins to shirk his duties, the major portion of the idyll is a flashback during which Enid remembers how she met Geraint. This method of narration shows the young knight in his role of active servant to Arthur/Christ before sloth sets in. While stressing his nobility in declining to harm a dwarf who rudely refuses to give his knight's name to the Queen and who even strikes Geraint when he tries to obtain it for her, the flashback also exhibits the swiftness with which Geraint acts to avenge the indignity. Knowing that the dwarf behaves according to his master's wishes, Geraint, to avenge the insult to the Queen, follows the knight at once, breaks his pride, and forces him to tell Geraint his name. By compelling this knight, Edyrn, to journey to the court to beg the Queen's forgiveness, Geraint is instrumental in Edyrn's transformation from an evildoer to a loyal follower of Arthur/Christ and a fierce antagonist of evildoers himself. This episode relating Geraint's victory over Edyrn symbolically demonstrates the powerful influence for good
an active Christian can have even on an unwilling participant.

The arrangement of events is such that Geraint witnesses the dangers of sloth before he succumbs to it. In Yniol he has a living example of what happens when a man gives up the fight against evil. Thus cautioned about the consequences of inactivity, he should have guarded against it, yet he, too, falls prey to this vice. The incident stresses the insidious nature of sloth, a vice working so subtly that the victim is often unaware of its harmful presence until all defenses are down. In fact, this vice is so subtle that Yniol never fully realizes that his inactivity results from indolence rather than from "patience," his misnomer for his moral inertia in the face of evil. Geraint, like Yniol, has also become the victim of sloth without realizing it. Before the flashback, in which Geraint's nobility shines forth, the narrator relates how the knight gradually allows this vice to overtake him, a subject treated previously. The end of the idyll returns to the present where the next narrative, "Geraint and Enid," opens. Here the structure permits a contrast between the Geraint of the flashback, too noble to take unfair advantage of
the dwarf deserving retribution for the wrongs to the
Queen and to himself, and the Geraint of this idyll who
unreasonably commands his wife to ride silently before
him without explanation and who reprimands her for
breaking her silence even to save his life. His actions
graphically exemplify how low sloth has brought him.
As explained in Chapter II, the rest of the idyll illus-
trates how fortitude, embodied in Enid, is necessary to
purge Geraint of this vice. Through her patient endur-
ance, she forces him back to activity and then to a return
to loyal service for Arthur/Christ.

The structure also allows a contrast between Yniol
and Enid. Although he rationalizes that his inaction
stems from patience, Enid, patience personified, refuses
to remain idle in the presence of evil. As painful as it
is for her to displease her husband by disobeying him for
whom she would gladly die, her warning each time brings
him out of his lethargy to save them both. Thus she
illustrates that fortitude is by no means passivity toward
evil; rather, as her willingness to suffer humiliation
for Geraint's spiritual restoration signifies, it is the
patient endurance of severe trials while continuing to
oppose evil. As observed earlier, she eventually discovers a way to obey and to withstand evil at the same time, a lesson which Geraint, representing the follower of Christ, must also learn. Enid's discovery is a prelude to the restoration of Geraint as lord of the marriage and as an active servant to his lord--Arthur/Christ. Through Enid's example he learns the necessity of fulfilling his own responsibilities as a masterful husband and as an obedient servant.²

Although the warning against the dangers of sloth is the major lesson of these two idylls, "Geraint and Enid" also warns against gluttony. During his journey Geraint comes in contact with Limours and Doorm, two representatives of varying stages of this vice--both of whom have been treated extensively in the previous chapter. Again, the arrangement of events is significant in setting forth the moral. Earlier Geraint himself had been guilty of a mild form of gluttony when he had eaten "... all the mowers' victual unawares" (215). Since he

had made immediate restitution for his unthoughtful act by sending the youth back for more food for the mowers, he is not known to have suffered further from it. Here is seen the importance of conquering the vice immediately. Significantly he encounters Limours and Doorm shortly thereafter. Through them the idyll teaches how this vice, if not controlled at once as Geraint has done, can result in spiritual death as surely as the sin of sloth.

In "Balin and Balan" the structure also assists in advancing the moral lesson: the dangers of uncontrolled wrath and the futility of the efforts of the Christian, represented here by Balin, to attempt to save himself without the aid of Arthur/Christ. How Balin, representing wrath, destroys the goodness within himself even while trying to control his wrathful nature through his own efforts has been discussed at length. Balin's story, however, is interspersed with references to King Pellam, whose own doomed efforts at self-improvement reflect those of Balin's. This structural arrangement makes possible the periodic comparison of the two similar situations. At the same time it indicates that Balin, who journeys to Pellam's court, actually witnesses the dire consequences of relying on oneself for moral and spiritual strength as
Balin himself does. To Pellam goodness means fasting, celibacy, and rejection of all worldly pleasures in general. Instead of Christ he worships the trappings of religion as his refusal to send Arthur any tribute money signifies. His attempts to obtain Christianity without Christ result in a "... grotesque religion of his own invention." How completely his efforts fail is manifested in the evil permeating his kingdom, which he has abdicated to the wicked Garlon, his spiritual heir. When Balin arrives in Pellam's kingdom, there he witnesses the effects of Pellam's "grotesque religion." In this king's chapel he sees Christ subordinated to the objects associated with Christianity as he "... stared about the shrine, / In which he scarce could spy the Christ for Saints" (402-403). Balin has been guilty of the same erroneous thinking as Pellam. He, too, has rejected Christ, symbolized in his leaving Arthur/Christ's court without his permission, and has subordinated his faith in Arthur/Christ to an object--Guinevere's crown-royal--to help him conquer his wrathful nature. Like Geraint, who does not profit from his warning through Yniol's example

3 Miyoshi, p. 239.
of the consequences of sloth, Balin disregards his warning also and continues along Pellam's course of relying on a moral code of his own invention and on the crown-royal as a substitute for moral stamina.

With all of his inner goodness subverted, the meaning of the departure of Balan, the good side of Balin's dual nature, and without Christ, whom he has rejected, to sustain him morally, his wrath leads him to the murder of Garlon. Afterwards he then feels unworthy to carry the crown-royal and sinks into deep despair.

Again the structure helps make the moral point. Significantly Vivien, the messenger of Mark/Satan, appears at this crucial time. Deprived of all virtue and despairing over his unworthiness, Balin is now a prime target for this representative of evil. She works on his wrath, increasing it by purporting to have seen Lancelot and Guinevere together in illicit love. At this news Balin's 

"... evil spirit upon him leapt" (529), and shrieking with rage, he crushes the crown-royal underfoot. Balin's next act is also significant. Now completely given over to wrath and not knowing the identity of his opponent, he fights and kills Balan, who thinks Balin is the Wood-devil for whom he has been searching. Thus the order of events
In this narrative, through Balin's experiences, advances the idea that a persistence in subverting one's better nature coupled with rejection of Christ as a source of moral strength will eventually result in yielding completely to evil and in the destruction of goodness in self altogether. Now his spiritual death is inevitable as the events in the last part of the idyll evidence. Significantly, at the same time Balan does, Balin dies from internal injuries received when his horse falls on him. Before his death, however, he addresses these words to his dying brother, "... Dark my doom was here, and dark / It will be there" (612-613), a textual indication of his recognition that his wrath, referred to as his madness in line 608 of the poem, has resulted in his spiritual as well as his physical death.

Events in the next idyll, "Merlin and Vivien," are also arranged to point up the moral: the dire results of intemperance. The idyll opens during a gathering storm before Merlin has succumbed to Vivien's blandishments. There is a rapid shift in a flashback to the Cornish court, where Vivien, emissary of Mark/Satan, receives her orders from him to go to Camelot to stir up trouble. It recounts her acceptance at Arthur's court, the ensuing
discord caused by Vivien's rumors, the ridicule she brings upon herself for attempting to seduce Arthur, and her subsequent turning to Merlin after her failure with the King. The flashback makes clear an important point in the downfall of Merlin—that he, as a court resident, is completely aware of Vivien's character, her purpose, and her methods of achieving that purpose. Despite this knowledge of her potential danger to him, however, he still becomes her victim because, as argued previously, he is intemperate. The remainder of the idyll is so structured as to show how Vivien, capitalizing on his lack of temperance, leads him by degrees into sin.

Vivien, the embodiment of evil, begins the conquest of Merlin cautiously. Her first step is to induce him to tolerate her. Aware as he is of her ulterior motives, he should shun her altogether, but she uses his pleasure in watching her attempts to win him (172-175) and his susceptibility to her flattery (176-184) to worm her way into his favor. Having succeeded in the first step, she quickly advances to the second when opportunity comes. During a period of great melancholy for Merlin, she uses his despair to ingratiate herself with him further. Although he has a premonition of her
part in his ruin, he is grateful to her because her proclamations of love and her "pretty tricks and fooleries" (263) decrease his despair. He, therefore, relaxes his guard against her even more. Finally, he makes a serious error in judgment when he begins to underestimate her. His disdainful remarks concerning her ability to read the book containing the charm she has nagged him to tell her (660-688) reveal his feeling of superiority over her. Merlin's attitude toward Vivien symbolizes the idea many have toward sin, the idea that they are morally strong enough to toy with evil without being affected by it. They, in other words, feel superior to it. Once he considers her harmless, though, and lowers all his defenses against her, she is then able to seduce him and get the charm, which she promptly uses to incapacitate him.

Thus Merlin's intemperance--manifested in his inability to control his pleasure at Vivien's flattering attempts to gain his favor, his inability to conquer his despair without her aid, and his inability to control his feeling of superiority over her--has caused his destruction. The arrangement of the events leading to Merlin's downfall aids in showing allegorically how sin tolerated,
as Merlin tolerates Vivien, gradually leads to a dependence upon it as it becomes more and more attractive to its victim who, like Merlin, lacks temperance, until, convinced of its harmlessness, he yields and brings about his spiritual death.

The following idyll, "Lancelot and Elaine," warns against the danger of a lack of self-control to the individual's spiritual well-being. Both the arrangement of incidents and the diamond imagery running throughout the narrative reinforce this major teaching. The first few lines of the poem describe Elaine's lavish attention to Lancelot's shield which he leaves in her father's castle on his way to the diamond joust. Immediately following the lines introducing the diamond imagery is a flashback relating how Arthur found the diamonds given as a prize at this annual tournament. He discovered a crown composed of nine diamonds during his wanderings around Lyonesse long before becoming king. Two brothers, one a king, had

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4 Russell M. Goldfarb, *Sexual Repression and Victorian Literature* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1970), p. 83, has an interesting theory to account for Elaine's strong attachment to the shield. He suggests that it is a fetish, an object to which an individual transfers sexual interest when the main object is denied him or her.
fought and had killed each other. The crown of diamonds still remained on the bleached skull of the unknown king. The account of Arthur's discovery of the crown is as follows:

And he, that once was king, had on a crown Of diamonds, one in front, and four aside. And Arthur came, and labouring up the pass, All in a misty moonshine, unawares Had trodden that crowned skeleton, and the skull Brake from the nape, and from the skull the crown Rolled into light, and turning on its rims Fled like a glittering rivulet to the tarn: And down the shingly scaur he plunged, and caught, And set it on his head, and in his heart Heard murmurs, 'Lo, thou likewise shalt be King.' (LE 45-55)

The line in the above passage relating that Arthur "Had trodden that crowned skeleton . . ." further associates Arthur with Christ, about whom is prophesied that He will "... put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death" (I Cor. 15:25-26). The passage also significantly associates Arthur and Christ with the crown of diamonds, the beauty of which endures though surrounded by death and corruption. Since the circular crown symbolizes perfection and since the diamond is one of the hardest and, therefore, one of the most durable of the precious stones, the crown of diamonds is
an appropriate image for Arthur—or Christ—and his kingdom before its degeneration. The largest diamond in the center of the crown may well represent Arthur/Christ, with each of the four diamonds on each side standing for the perfection of his kingdom in its early stages. Significantly the decay of Arthur's kingdom corresponds to the yearly diamond tourney, for as Lancelot, symbol of the world, wins one of the diamonds each year, the foundations of Arthur's empire crumble further. Although the diamonds are separated from the original crown, symbolizing the disunity of the kingdom, the original diamonds remain as durable and as beautiful as ever, just as the ideals of Arthur's kingdom remain as durable and as beautiful as ever though some reject them. Now only the large center diamond, possibly symbolizing Arthur/Christ, remains.

If the above argument is valid and the center diamond does, indeed, symbolize Arthur/Christ, then the placement of the report of its discovery so early in the narrative is important since all of the major events relate to this significant point. At one time or another all of the major characters in the idyll—Lancelot, Elaine, Gawain, and Guinevere—possess this diamond. In
each case the relinquishment of it seems to indicate a rejection of Christ because the individual lacks self-control. The order of the events following seems to support this theory. First, the wounded Lancelot, winner of the tournament, refuses to accept the diamond (or salvation through Christ which the diamond represents) when Arthur proffers it. This rejection of the spiritual healing which the diamond of salvation can bring almost costs him his life in his consequent bout with death. Next, Gawain is entrusted with the diamond with orders from Arthur to deliver it to the disguised Lancelot. It will, if taken, bring spiritual healing to the world, embodied in Lancelot. As a follower of Arthur/Christ, Gawain is charged with the duty of taking the diamond of salvation to the world. Instead, unable to control his boredom with the assignment from Arthur, he turns it over to Elaine to deliver for him, thus signifying Gawain's disobedience and thus rejection of Arthur/Christ. Eventually Elaine, still innocent, searches for Lancelot and delivers the diamond to him. Her actions indicate her willingness to serve the world, which she loves and for which she later sacrifices her innocence as her inability to control her sexual urges leads to imprudence when she offers
herself to Lancelot—or the world. As has been fore-
shadowed by her dream of someone's putting a diamond too
slippery to hold into her hand (LE 210-212), she misses
her chance of salvation forever. From the moment she
sees Lancelot, she "... stood / Rapt on his face as if
it were a God's" (LE 353-354). In the moment she looks
upon the world as her God, the meaning of her actions,
she endangers her spiritual future. Now the delivery of
the diamond to Lancelot, a job which should rightly be
Gawain's, indicates the extent to which she will sacrifice
herself for the world. As soon as Lancelot receives the
diamond from Elaine, signifying his temporary acceptance
of Christ, he begins to improve. Evidence that this is
only a temporary acceptance is shown in the lines
describing his promises to live a purer life after his
brush with death, followed by those describing his
forgotten vows as soon as he begins to recuperate and
long for Guinevere again (LE 873-879). Unable to control
his feelings for the Queen, he gives the diamonds away to
her upon his return to Camelot, indicating his rejection
of Christ once more. Appropriately, too, at this stage
Guinevere, lacking control of her jealousy, flings the
diamonds away. Since she symbolizes the soul, her action
indicates that the soul is not yet ready to receive Christ and the principles upon which His kingdom are based. Although she believes Lancelot false, having heard rumors of his love for Elaine, she still loves him (the world) more than she does Arthur/Christ, as her jealous outburst in throwing the diamonds into the river manifests.

As the order of events helps to show, all four of these characters, because they have rejected Arthur/Christ in one way or another, are in spiritual peril. The end of this idyll, however, relates that Lancelot died a holy man, symbolizing, as noted in Chapter I, the world's eventual acceptance of Christ. In "Guinevere" is the account of the Queen's recognition of Arthur's superiority over Lancelot and her realization that she loves him rather than Lancelot, an indication of the soul's recognition of Christ as the means for salvation from spiritual annihilation. The other two, however, lose forever their opportunity of receiving the diamond of salvation. Gawain, the unfaithful servant, continues to live only for the moment until his unhappy ghost in "The Passing of Arthur" laments the futility of a life lived only for pleasure. And Elaine truly does let the diamond of salvation slip through her fingers forever.
From the beginning of her relationship with Lancelot, she considers him superior to all others, even to Arthur (LE 316-318) and dies thinking him "... God's best / And greatest ..." (LE 1086-1087). Her love of the world thus assures her spiritual death, the meaning of her physical death brought on by her grief over Lancelot.

"The Holy Grail," the idyll following "Lancelot and Elaine," narrates the experiences of five characters who have dedicated themselves to a religious life—the nun, Galahad, Bors, Percivale, and Ambrosius. The structure of the idyll helps to provide a means of arriving at one of the main messages of this poem. Exactly what is this message? Some think that, because of the destructive influence of the quest, the idyll is a condemnation of the kind of religious fervor prompting it⁵ and a judgment against the ascetic life.⁶ The juxtaposition of the narratives of these five people, however, helps to show


that the idyll is neither of these. When each of the characters is compared and contrasted with the others and with certain minor characters drifting in and out of the narrative, as this sort of arrangement encourages—if not forces—the reader to do, he discovers that the motivation for the actions of the characters involved is significant in both situations.

A comparison of Galahad and Bors, for example, indicates that the quest is part of their service to others. Instead of dismissing their responsibilities, like Percivale and the others, both continue to serve Arthur/Christ wherever they go. For them the quest is not a destructive force but a means of spreading the principles of Arthur/Christ abroad. By contrast, the rest of the knights are "following wandering fires" because their motivations for the quest are unworthy. Some go because they are caught up in the emotional excitement of the moment but tire after a time like Gawain; others, like Lancelot, want to be purged of sin, yet refuse to surrender the sin keeping them from a clear vision of the Grail. For these the quest itself is sinful since it is futile and keeps them from responsibilities at home.
As for withdrawal from the active life, again the juxtaposition of these characters permits a contrast between the nun and the other two devotees of the quiet life to indicate that the motivation for withdrawal is all-important. As observed in Chapter II, the nun retires into her cell to serve mankind better. Since she is not equipped to fight actively against evil, she must do so through prayer and fasting, to which the seclusion of her cell is more conducive than life in the world at large. That she is able to perform the miracle of bringing the Holy Grail to Arthur's realm through prayer and fasting indicates that, for her, withdrawal is a worthy calling. On the other hand, Percivale and Ambrosius do not spend their time praying for others. Rather, Percivale glories in relating his past adventures during the quest; Ambrosius, in hearing them. To them the ascetic life is only a means of avoiding the duty of righting wrong, a circumstance concerning which Arthur's words near the end of the idyll imply censure (893-895).

The juxtaposing of these characters, then, helps convey the main message of "The Holy Grail": that one should serve in whatever capacity is best suited for him but that even more important than how one serves is the
motive for service. The nun, best suited for intercession on mankind's behalf, and Galahad and Bors, best suited for evangelizing—all motivated by love for Arthur/Christ and for fellow man—perform their tasks nobly. Percivale and Ambrosius, though, do not seek their best place of service but, motivated by selfishness, retire into their own pleasant world, useless to self and to mankind. The first three are promised a crown of life; the others are threatened with expulsion into outer darkness.

The structure of "Pelleas and Ettarre" is also significant in setting forth the moral of the idyll. It supports the idea through Pelleas' experiences that the loss of faith begins when the individual, lacking self-control, begins to doubt self, then his fellowman, and at last the purity of all including Christ. First, as explained previously, when Pelleas cannot conquer Ettarre, the extension of the pride within him, he loses faith in her (or himself), which his remark to her, "'I had liefer ye were worthy of my love, / Than to be loved again of you,'" indicates (293-294). Then, when he finds Gawain, who, though promising to help Pelleas win Ettarre, betrays him instead by sleeping with her himself, Pelleas loses faith in his fellowman. With Gawain's betrayal, Pelleas'
doubt extends beyond self to the brotherhood of the Round Table, symbolizing his loss of faith in a professed follower of Christ whom Pelleas expects to uphold the principles of Christianity. Even though doubt of self and of a fellow believer has left Pelleas crushed, he still has faith in Guinevere (the soul) and in Arthur (Christ). This faith is short-lived, however, since Percivale soon afterwards hints at the Queen's impurity. As explained in the preceding chapter, since Guinevere represents the soul, Pelleas' reaction to the knowledge of her adultery symbolizes the immature Christian's disillusionment with the knowledge of the duality of the human soul. His following words to Percivale reveal how this doubt of the soul's purity and his doubt of the loyalty of fellow believers in adhering to the principles of Christianity lead to doubt of Christ himself:

'Is the Queen false?' and Percivale was mute.
'Have any of our Round Table held their vows?' And Percivale made answer not a word.
'Is the King true?'

(522-525)

Not long after he begins to doubt Christ, indicated by his last query, he reaches the final stage in the Christian's loss of faith--defection to Satan's side,
symbolized in the hissing sound he emits (590). In "The Last Tournament," immediately following "Pelleas and Ettarre," the extent to Pelleas' disillusionment with the King and the Order manifests itself in his following words to one of Arthur's churls:

"Tell thou the King and all his liars, that I Have founded my Round Table in the North, And whatsoever his own knights have sworn My knights have sworn the counter to it—and say My tower is full of harlots, like his court, But mine are worthier, seeing they profess To be none other than themselves—and say My knights are all adulterers like his own, But mine are truer, seeing they profess To be none other."

(LT 77-86)

Clearly Pelleas, now the Red Knight, has consciously dedicated himself to the opposite of all Arthur/Christ stands for. The idyll also recounts his demise, the allegorical significance of which has already been argued.

In addition to completing the story of Pelleas, "The Last Tournament" also has Lancelot and Tristram appearing together for the first time. The back-and-forth account of what these two men have become permits a contrast between these representatives of two kinds of worlds—Lancelot, the one which will eventually receive Christ and, therefore, forgiveness, and Tristram, the one
representing what would happen if the world does not receive Christ. Although other commentators have noticed the unifying element of two major images "... which run as threads through the poem ...", the image of the dying year and the image of the beast, they do much more than merely unify the idyll. Indeed, they help to make the moral point by contrasting the representatives of the two different kinds of worlds. The following lines associate Lancelot, the arbiter of the Tournament of the Dead Innocence, with the first image—that of the dying year:

The sudden trumpet sounded as in a dream
To ears but half-awaked, then one low roll
Of Autumn thunder, and the jousts began:
And ever the wind blew, and yellowing leaf
And gloom and gleam, and shower and shorn plume
Went down it. Sighing weariedly, as one
Who sits and gazes on a faded fire,
When all the goodlier guests are past away,
Sat their great umpire, looking o'er the lists.
(LT 151-159)

The second image—that of the beast—is associated with Tristram as evidenced in Isolt's following caustic response to an insulting comment he makes to her:

7 Litzinger, p. 53.
'For when had Lancelot uttered aught so gross
Even to the swineherd's malkin in the mast?
The greater man, the greater courtesy.
Far other was the Tristram, Arthur's knight!
But thou, through ever harrying thy wild beasts--
Save that to touch a harp, tilt with a lance
Becomes thee well--art grown wild beast thyself.'

(HT 626-632)

Both images aid in allegorically presenting the spiritual outcome of these symbols of the two worlds. The implication of lines 151-159 is that, since Lancelot does not now meet the conditions of forgiveness set forth in the next idyll, he is, like the dying year, in the autumn of his spiritual life. Like the dying year, however, which will begin anew when the cycle starts over again, Lancelot, after his decision to devote himself to Christ, will also begin his spiritual life over. This time, as we know from the end of "Lancelot and Elaine," he will remain faithful as he awaits the Second Coming. Tristram, however, having once made the same vows as Lancelot to uphold Arthur's principles in an attempt to rise above his bestial nature, has reverted to it. Conscious of his reversion to the worst in himself and determined, furthermore, to remain as he has become, he is at last destroyed by Mark/Satan, thus illustrating the violent end of a world which persists in denying Christ and the
loss forever of any chance of the forgiveness Lancelot receives.

Besides all of the above, the idyll also illustrates through Isolt the spiritual outcome of the unrepentant soul. As noted in the first chapter, Isolt's love for Tristram represents in the Christian allegorical design of this work the soul's inability to tear itself away from the world's allure. As a result, she remains wedded to Mark, the allegorical representation of Satan, and, therefore, remains as unforgiven and as spiritually dead as Tristram. Thus, through Isolt's story, the structure permits a contrast between the spiritual hopelessness of the unrepentant soul, embodied in Isolt, and the redemption possible for the repentant soul, embodied in Guinevere, the subject of the next idyll.

"Guinevere," the last of the parabolic idylls, narrates Guinevere's spiritual regeneration. An enumeration of the steps from sin to salvation which she experiences reveals that the arrangement of events in this idyll, too, is related to its Christian allegory. First, she flees to the convent at Almesbury to symbolize the soul's need to give up the world before salvation is possible. While she is there, she is led by the novice
to an awareness of her unredeemed state, is verbally chastised, then forgiven by Arthur/Christ, recognizes at last the superiority of Arthur/Christ to Lancelot (the world), repents of her sin, and devotes the rest of her life to service for Christ. All of these steps and their allegorical significance have been discussed at length in Chapter I in the order of their occurrence. It yet remains, however, to explain the structural significance of the song of the novice to the Queen's regeneration. A detailed analysis of this song the novice sings to her indicates that its position in the idyll is crucial to her redemption because it comes at the exact moment when the soul (Guinevere) must be prepared to meet Christ (Arthur). In only twelve short lines it alludes to every aspect of her sin, a vital step in making her aware of her unredeemed state, and acts as a catalyst to bring her eventually to repentance and salvation.

First, the song alludes to the idea that once a sin has been committed, the effects are inevitable. Over and over again, the novice sings, "'Late, late, so late!'" (166, 167) and "'Too late, too late!'" (168, 171, 174), indicating that it is too late to prevent the consequences of her sin. The most immediate effect of the sin is the
effect it has upon the two people directly involved. Lancelot, once the noblest knight of the Round Table, and the Queen, once the model of virtue, are now objects of ridicule. It is also too late to prevent the effects of her sin upon the other knights of the Round Table who because of her, the King tells her, have forsaken truthfulness, honor, purity, and loyalty to him and to their fellow men. In addition, it is too late to prevent the death and destruction which her sin will cause. Traditionally, evil has been associated with night, and death with night and cold. Both of these ideas come together in the line "'Late, late, so late! and dark the night and chill!'" (166). Before the end of the poem the forces of evil have begun their destruction. For example, when Arthur visits the Queen, he has already fought with Lancelot's men in a battle with heavy casualties on both sides and is on his way to participate in a struggle between his forces and Modred's which only Bedivere will survive.

Just as "night and chill" have traditionally symbolized evil and death, so has the absence of light symbolized lack of understanding or ignorance. In the line "No light had we . . ." (169), the song implies that
Guinevere's sin is a result of her ignorance of Arthur's real worth. As Guinevere reflects on her first impression of Arthur, she remembers that she had "... thought him cold, / High, self-contained, and passionless, not like him, / 'Not like my Lancelot' ..." (402-404). These lines clearly indicate her early failure to appreciate Arthur. His nobility would demand a higher love than she was capable of giving at that time and had caused her to turn to the lesser man.

In spite of all the misery Guinevere's sin has caused Arthur, the song foreshadows his forgiveness of her in the following lines:

'No light had we: for that we do repent;
And learning this, the bridegroom will relent.
. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .
Have we not heard the bridegroom is so sweet?
O let us in, though late, to kiss his feet!'
(169-170, 175-176)

Before the actual forgiveness occurs, however, the rest of the song, coming at a strategic moment in Guinevere's preparation for Arthur--or, allegorically speaking, in the soul's preparation for Christ--serves another crucial purpose. It acts as a catalyst to bring Guinevere eventually to repentance and salvation. While, as we
have seen, she is aware of the consequences of her sin, she has not yet turned from it. She has been in the nunnery for weeks without going to confession. According to the doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church, she would be denied entrance to heaven if she should die without confessing a mortal sin. The song, however, reminds Guinevere of her unredeemed state in the refrain, "'Too late, too late! ye cannot enter now'" (168, 171, 174, 177). The word now is crucial. Guinevere has no hope of entering the heavenly kingdom now because her sin has not been confessed and forgiven. At one point she calls out to heaven for help and promises to repent. She even thinks she has already repented in promising never to see Lancelot again. In the next few lines, however, she begins to think again of the pleasant days she has spent with him, evidence that she cannot enter now because her repentance is not genuine.

But the song reminds the Queen, too, that she may yet enter into heaven and leads her, at last, to repentance and salvation. The novice sings, "'Late, late, so late! but we can enter still'" (167). It is too late to stop the consequences of Guinevere's sin; it is still possible, however, for Guinevere to attain a state of
grace by repenting of and confessing her sin. The novice plays an important role in bringing Guinevere to this realization. Significantly "the creeping mist," symbol of Guinevere's sin, blurs her vision of the novice, an indication that the sinful Queen cannot look clearly upon the guileless maiden, the representative of the Church. Her innocence and purity contrast sharply with the experience and worldliness of Guinevere, but it is this purity and innocence which first touch the Queen's conscience. Unaware of the Queen's identity, the maiden insists that the sorrows of anyone so beautiful "'... do not flow / From evil done ...'" (186-187). Ironically the maiden tries to comfort her by asking her to compare her grieves with those of the King, whose sorrow must be much greater than hers. Through her naive babbling, the novice pictures the kingdom as it had been before Guinevere's arrival. She tells the Queen of the peace and harmony in the kingdom then; of the signs, wonders, and miracles performed; of the happiness of the "spirits and men" (267). She reminds the Queen of the confusion and corruption in the kingdom since her marriage to Arthur. She also forces Guinevere to compare Arthur and Lancelot by asking her which of them is the nobler. When
Guinevere assures her they are both noble, she points out Lancelot's disloyalty to the King. All of these innocent ramblings prepare the way for the change in Guinevere's attitude toward Arthur. It is not until Guinevere recognizes the importance of loving "the highest when we see it" (655) that the mist is lifted from her life. That the mist is also lifted from the land after Arthur's last triumph over evil apparently symbolizes that Guinevere, too, has won the victory over the evil within herself. Indicative of Guinevere's repentance and, therefore, of the soul's salvation is the reference to her being chosen for "... her good deeds and her pure life" (687) to replace the dead abbess and to her going "To where beyond these voices there is peace" (692) after her death three years later.

This commentary on the song of the novice establishes its structural importance to "Guinevere." Through it, to summarize, the novice reminds Guinevere of the widespread effects of her sin, implies that her sin stems from her inability to recognize the King's superiority to Lancelot, makes her aware of her unredeemed state, assures her of the possibility of yet attaining grace,
and foreshadows Arthur's forgiveness of her near the end of the idyll.

Not only is the structure of the individual idylls important in setting forth the moral point of each, as the above discussion illustrates, but the structure of the Idylls as a whole works to advance the overall theme. In view of Tennyson's comment, cited in the Introduction, on the "parabolic drift" of the poem, it is not illogical to assume that he consciously used a common moral theme as another means of achieving structural unity. Regardless of his intentions, however, the idylls are unified by the theme of the struggle of the individual to conquer self. Furthermore, attention to the Christian allegorical elements indicates that the struggle is, more pointedly, that of the Christian's fight to combat sin in self as his good and evil tendencies clash. In no way does this study contradict Tennyson's assertion in the "Epilogue" that the Idylls shadows "... Sense at war with Soul" (37).

Rather, the interpretation that Guinevere, embodiment of the human soul, must recognize the superiority of Arthur, embodiment of Christ ("the Ideal Soul of Man"8) to

8 Hallam, Lord Tennyson, Idylls of the King, p.
Lancelot, embodying the world, to combat sensual pleasures supports this statement.

In this battle the characters of the early idylls are able to govern self because they cultivate the virtue necessary to combat their besetting sin. Thus Gareth's strong faith helps him subdue pride, and Geraint's fortitude overcomes his sloth. Later idylls, however, narrate the unhappy outcomes of those who, because they lack a particular virtue or because it is so under-developed as to be powerless, yield to sin. Appropriately "Balin and Balan" is the first of these idylls because it actually shows the savage side of man's nature (Balin) in conflict with the good (Balan). It is the first idyll with an unhappy ending. It portrays through Balin the individual who longs to follow Christ but who cannot conquer the base side of his nature because his rejection of Christ, symbolically portrayed in his leaving Arthur's

443. Tennyson's statement that he ". . . intended Arthur to represent the Ideal Soul of Man" reinforces the idea of Arthur as the representation of Christ. In Christian theology the human soul is that divine part of the individual which is, according to the Bible, ". . . Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27).
presence, as we have seen, leaves him with no redeeming virtue. The next five idylls—all with unhappy endings—demonstrate what happens to others who, like Balin, lack self-control. "Merlin and Vivien," the first of these five, warns against the dire results of the lack of self-control leading to intemperance. Merlin's ruin, like Balin's, results when no offsetting virtue is present to strengthen his will against sin. In fact, the only influence on Merlin is the envious and avaricious Vivien, who uses his lack of self-restraint to seduce him and obtain the secret which will transfer his fame and power to her. Next "Lancelot and Elaine" pictures how widespread the lack of self-discipline has become in Arthur's kingdom. It has affected all—from the noble Lancelot to the less noble Gawain, from the pure Elaine to the less pure Guinevera.

"The Holy Grail," next in the series of idylls instructing in the perils of the undisciplined self, illustrates vividly what happens when enough individuals such as those pictured in "Lancelot and Elaine" lack this self-control. After a time their undisciplined actions begin to affect the foundations of the kingdom, and they crumble as Camelot did. In an effort to restore the
kingdom to its former virtuous state, the knights search for the Holy Grail, hoping therewith to bring to the land spiritual healing, which, as established earlier, the Grail represents. However, only through the kind of self-denial and self-sacrifice, two characteristics demanding self-control, that the nun, Galahad, and Bors exercise can this spiritual healing be gained, evidenced in the fact that only they see the cup clearly. Although Smalley finds particularly offensive the passages relating Percivale's experiences during the quest with his childhood sweetheart, they are important for indicating his willingness to deny himself wealth, power, and pleasure. Yet he sees the Grail only from afar because, as observed, he is not willing also to sacrifice himself for others as are the above three. Although most of the other knights wish to see the Grail, they cannot even exercise the control of Percivale to deny themselves the worldly pleasures. As a result, the Grail cannot remain in the land to bring the mass spiritual healing hoped for.

In the light of the above comments, the moral teaching of this parabolic idyll becomes clear. In order for spiritual healing to occur, the idyll seems to say, it must begin with the individual. By combating sin in self, the individual simultaneously combats it in the community. Quick methods of mass social reform such as the knights had hoped for with the presence of the Holy Grail are impossible. 10 Reform comes only through the slow method of individual transformation brought about by such people as the nun, Galahad, and Bors, who will lose themselves in service to others. Of all those concerned with obtaining healing for Arthur's realm through the Holy Grail, only they are willing to pay "the terrible human price" which Gerhard Joseph says that Tennyson usually emphasizes as the individual's payment for the fulfillment of "sublime yearnings." 11 This "terrible human price" is, of course, as stated above, the control


of self through denial and sacrifice. It is significant that Percivale narrates the Grail story to Ambrosius, both of whom have withdrawn from the community. They represent those who yearn for the sublime but who will not bear the cost of self-sacrifice to bring the sublime to society as a whole. Disgusted with the unrighteousness all about him, Percivale removes himself from the mainstream of life instead of remaining to redress wrong. His withdrawal suggests the actions of those believers who cluster together but refuse to mingle with the unworthy members of the community at large. As a result, the community is deprived of their good influence and deteriorates. This is the situation that Arthur laments in the following lines, during his speech on the effects of the quest on his realm:

"And out of those to whom the vision came
My greatest hardly will believe he saw;
Another hath beheld it afar off,
And leaving human wrongs to right themselves,
Cares but to pass into the silent life.
And one hath had the vision face to face,
And now his chair desires him here in vain,
However they may crown him otherwhere."

(HG 891-898)

Because too few remain to serve as models for the others--some because they cannot and some because they will
not—Arthur's kingdom deteriorates rapidly, resulting in the loss of faith, the subject of the next idyll.

"Pelleas and Ettarre" logically follows "The Holy Grail" because it illustrates through Pelleas the loss of faith, a natural outcome of the situation which has resulted in the deterioration of the kingdom. When the individual fails to conquer self as illustrated in "Balin and Balan," "Merlin and Vivien," and "Lancelot and Elaine" and when this lack of control becomes widespread enough as illustrated in "The Holy Grail," the result is a tendency to doubt the Order itself as well as its founder. With doubt often come a loss of faith and then, as in Pelleas' case, a conscious choice to follow evil.

Not only must "The Last Tournament" succeed "Pelleas and Ettarre" to caution against the inevitable spiritual death of one who, like Pelleas, consciously chooses evil, but also it must precede "Guinevere," the idyll emphasizing the forgiving nature of Arthur/Christ. When the idyll opens, at no time have the forces of evil been so dominant in the kingdom as now, and, therefore, at no time has there been greater need of forgiveness than now. For example, the Red Knight and his men murder any of the Round Table on sight. Also, Arthur's concern
for the character and loyalty of his new knights proves well-founded when they, in spite of Arthur's cries to the contrary, leap upon the fallen Red Knight in animal fashion to trample his face and then slaughter all the Red Knight's followers. Not long after this incident, many of them even join Modred in rebellion against the King.

In addition to the above circumstances in "The Last Tournament," Lancelot has reached his lowest moral point. With Arthur gone to crush the Red Knight, Lancelot, now in charge of the tournament, watches the participants break all the rules without intervening. His face also shows the signs of the strain he is under as his sinful nature and love of Arthur/Christ conflict. The idyll teaches, then, how a lack of self-control, emphasized in the preceding idylls, can bring down the most noble, even those like Lancelot. Nevertheless, Lancelot is more noble than Tristram, though both are guilty of the same sin, because he continues to combat sin in himself. Tristram, however, openly mocks Arthur and renounces his vows to serve him. The end of the idyll warns against what will happen if the unredeemed world, which Tristram represents, and the unrepentant
soul—Isolt—who is as attracted to the world as ever, continue on their present course. The world will be destroyed, and the soul will be wed to Satan forever.

In "Guinevere," the last of the parabolic idylls, the hope for forgiveness and the conditions under which it may be received are outlined. It comes through repentance. Of Tennyson's attitude toward repentance, Hallam Tennyson writes, "Throughout the poem [the Idylls] runs my father's belief in one strong argument of hope, the marvellously transmuting power of repentance in all men, however great their sin." It is this "marvellously transmuting power of repentance in all men" at work in "Guinevere." Structurally, then, it is essential to the parabolic nature of the Idylls that "Guinevere" be the last of these parabolic idylls because it emphasizes charity, the greatest Christian Virtue and the one most typical of the loving Christ, who, if the soul repents, will forgive all the sins warned against in the other idylls. Since the novice is the intermediary between Guinevere and Arthur in the sense that she prepares the Queen for Arthur's visit, as noted above, allegorically

12 Memoir, II, 131.
her actions symbolize the Church's role in the salvation of the soul. Its purpose is to ready the soul for its reception of Christ. Although Tennyson uses different characters combating different vices to suggest the diversity as well as the universality of sin, Guinevere's spiritual journey represents the process each individual soul must go through before repentance and salvation are possible, regardless of the nature of its sin. The Idylls does not advance the idea that salvation comes only through the established Church. It does, however, perhaps remind the Church, through emphasizing the importance of the novice and her song to Guinevere's repentance and salvation, of its primary purpose for existence: to aid the Christian in his struggle between good and evil, portrayed allegorically throughout the Idylls, by warning of the consequences of sin and by assuring the repentant sinner of Christ's forgiveness.

The above analysis of structural unity achieved through the common theme of the individual's struggle to conquer self reveals a kind of circular movement in the Idylls. The movement is from the ideal situation in "Gareth and Lynette," when virtue triumphed over vice, to the gradual decay of morals and thus the triumph of
vice over virtue. At the end of the Idyls, however, the movement is back toward the ideal. With the forgiveness of Guinevere (the soul), with the assurance in "Lancelot and Elaine" that Lancelot (the world) will die a holy man, and with Bedivere (the faithful remnant) to propagate the faith in preparation for the second coming of Arthur (Christ), the ideal may yet be achieved. Though the process will be long and difficult, the new sun rising on the new year in the last line of the Idyls indicates the yielding of the old order to the new. Sypher makes the following comments on this final statement of the Idyls:

In light of this conclusion to his allegory, Tennyson's Idyls might be regarded as apocalyptic. But even though his symbolism, his lament for the evils of his age, and his prediction of disaster, all coincide with the conventions of Hebrew and Christian apocalyptic, there is one profound difference that prevents Tennyson's work from being identified with that tradition. The apocalyptic writers look towards a golden age of righteous

13 For Christ's predictions of the long time to pass and of the many tribulations to come before His Second Coming, see Matthew 24:1-31. Since Arthur represents Christ in this allegory, we can assume that the same conditions will exist before his second coming.
judgment, redemption, and eternal bliss. The second coming of Christ will mark the end of historical time and the completion of God's plan for the world. But in Tennyson's view the old order will continually yield place to new; history will ever move in cycles of destruction and regeneration. The forces of Chaos and Cosmos, Sense, and Soul, will war with one another for ever.\footnote{14}

This argument might be valid if the Christian elements in the Idylls did not point to exactly what Sypher has denied. Since the events of Arthur's life and the reason for his death so closely parallel those of Christ's, it is unreasonable not to assume that Tennyson does in this poem ". . . look towards a golden age of righteous judgment, redemption, and eternal bliss" when Arthur as Christ returns as promised.

Conclusion

The systematic examination of the Christian allegorical elements in the *Idylls of the King* leads one to some general conclusions about the value of an allegorical reading. Such a reading is particularly helpful in the study of the characterization and structure of the poem. For example, it suggests a solution to certain problems related to characterization. In addition, it clarifies the relationship of certain characters to others. Moreover, it is an effective way to point up how the structuring of the idylls is instrumental in their teaching.

One of the problems which a Christian allegorical reading of the work helps to solve is that of why Arthur seems to fail in his relationship with those closest to him. When he is judged as an ordinary hero, he appears to be an ineffectual leader unable to maintain the loyalty of his men or to keep his kingdom from disintegrating. When he is judged as an ordinary husband, he
appears to be too naive to see the obvious love affair between Lancelot, his best friend, and Guinevere, his wife. If, however, Arthur is seen to function allegorically as Christ; his men, as Christ's disciples; Lancelot, as the world yet to be redeemed; and Guinevere, as the soul yet to be cleansed of sin, then the reason for Arthur's failure with them is clear. To portray accurately their roles in the Christian allegory, the knights, like Christ's disciples, must become discouraged with the strict vows imposed upon them and with their leader's doctrines of love and forgiveness. For the same reason, since the soul is lured from Christ by the world, Lancelot, representing the world, must be disloyal to Arthur/Christ in entering into the adulterous relationship with Guinevere, the soul, and she must find the world more appealing at first than she does Arthur/Christ. Since Christ's mission on earth was to redeem the world and to save the individual soul from spiritual death by sacrificing Himself, Arthur, representing Christ, must also suffer death for the sin of Lancelot and Guinevere. In this light Arthur's "failure" is really a success since he accomplishes what he, as Christ, came to do: to show
his men that a society based on order and love is possible and to sacrifice himself for the sin of others.

Another problem related to characterization which is illuminated by an allegorical reading of the poem is the otherwise inexplicable antipathy of certain characters, including Mark, Tristram, and Isolt, toward Arthur. If these three are meant to perform only on the literal level, their antipathy seems motiveless, but if they are regarded as the allegorical contrarieties of Arthur, Lancelot, and Guinevere, then their antagonism toward Arthur is understandable. Mark, representing Satan, is the natural enemy of Arthur, symbolizing Christ, and hates him as absolute evil always hates absolute good. Tristram, representing what the world would become if it did not eventually turn to Christ, hates him for imposing such rigid rules of conduct as a condition for salvation. The antipathy of Isolt, symbolizing the unrepentant soul, manifests itself passively in her refusal to turn from the world Tristram represents to the higher life advocated by Arthur/Christ. All of these characters, then, behave in accordance with their function in the Christian allegory.
Besides suggesting solutions to the above problems, the interpretation of the *Idylls* as Christian allegory is valuable in clarifying the relationships of certain characters to each other. It explains, for example, the relationship between Geraint and Enid. If their story is read as pure narrative, it is difficult to understand the motivation for Geraint's harsh treatment of his wife. When she is viewed as the symbol of fortitude, however, which must be tested before it can be effective against sloth, personified in Geraint, the reason for Geraint's actions is clear. The tests he imposes upon her represent the seemingly irrational demands made by God (or Christ) on Christians. The Christian, however, must learn to obey these demands no matter how unreasonable or absurd they may seem or how self-degrading obeying them may prove. When Enid learns this lesson, then she is able to lead Geraint back to activity. Likewise, an allegorical reading clarifies Elaine's relationship to Lancelot. Taken literally, the story of a young woman so in love with a man after just one day's acquaintanceship that she determines to die if rejected—and indeed does die when she cannot have him—is incredible. When Lancelot is viewed as the world,
however, and Elaine, as one of the imprudent who yearn for the experience and the excitement which they believe only the world can supply, then her death for love of Lancelot is seen as inevitable. It symbolizes her spiritual death resulting from her refusal to see the imperfections of the world and to turn to the higher spiritual way of Arthur/Christ.

A systematic examination of the Christian allegorical elements is also an effective way to point up how the structure of the individual idylls is instrumental in their allegorical teaching. The events in some of the idylls are arranged to show the various steps leading either to a character's victory over evil or defeat by evil, depending upon whether he exercises virtue to defeat vice or whether his lack of virtue makes him ineffectual against evil. "Merlin and Vivien" is among those idylls with this kind of structure. The events of this idyll are arranged to show how Merlin allows Vivien, embodiment of evil, to lead him step by step to sin because he lacks the temperance to resist her. Aware of her character, as we know from the flashback near the beginning of the idyll, Merlin, nevertheless, tolerates her because he enjoys watching her attempts to win him and being the
object of her flattery. After this first mistake of tolerating her at all, it is easier for him to make the second: permitting Vivien to use his depression to gain a firmer hold on him. His gratitude to her for decreasing his despair softens him further toward her until he begins to underestimate her power, his third and most serious mistake. Having lulled him into believing her harmless, she has lowered his defenses to the point that the seduction is possible. After she seduces him into telling her the charm which will transfer his fame and power to her, she uses it to entrap him in a tree and render him powerless forever. Thus, the order of events in this idyll has served to advance the moral teaching: that sin tolerated, here in the form of Vivien, becomes stronger until it brings about by degrees the spiritual demise of one who, like Merlin, lacks the necessary temperance to squelch it in the beginning.

Instead of ordering the action to arrive by degrees to a specific end, some of the idylls juxtapose certain characters to permit significant comparisons or contrasts. "The Last Tournament" serves as an example of this type of arrangement as an aid in advancing the moral point. It permits a comparison of Lancelot and
Tristram, the representatives of the two kinds of worlds. Both are shown to have deteriorated morally. Lancelot, judge of the Tournament of Dead Innocence in Arthur's place, remains silent when the rules of the contest are violated, and Tristram now openly rejects Arthur, to whom he has sworn fealty. Lancelot is spared destruction, however, because he will eventually repent of his sin and serve Christ, the significance of the reference in "Lancelot and Elaine" that he will die a holy man. On the other hand, Tristram is destroyed by Mark/Satan to symbolize the destruction in store for a world rejecting Christ. The structure of this idyll also allows a contrast between Isolt, representative of the unrepentant soul who remains wed to Satan because she cannot turn from the world Tristram represents, with Guinevere, the repentant soul, whose salvation when she renounces the world for Christ is narrated in "Guinevere," the following idyll. The arrangement of events, then, aids in showing symbolically the necessity to the individual soul and to the world of repentance of sin before spiritual salvation is possible.

Not only is the arrangement of events significant in setting forth the moral teaching of the individual
parabolic idylls, but the arrangement of the total work is important in getting across the overall theme: the struggle of the individual to conquer self (or, to put it in Tennyson's phrase, "... Sense at war with Soul") and the importance to the individual, to society, and to the world of the individual's victory in that struggle. In the early idylls, "Gareth and Lynette" and the Geraint-Enid idylls, the heroes conquer self by strengthening the virtue necessary to defeat their sin. As the poem progresses, however, the characters lacking self-control and possessing no sustaining virtue, yield to sin until in "The Holy Grail" the kingdom disintegrates from widespread lack of control. This situation results in the kind of loss of faith which Pelleas illustrates. "The Last Tournament" presents the world which Tristram represents heading toward destruction, a natural outcome when a lack of control reaches world-wide proportions. In "Guinevere," however, Arthur/Christ offers forgiveness to the repentant soul, indicating that the hope for the world's salvation is through the exercise of self-control by the individual. With repentance comes forgiveness of all sins warned against in the preceding idylls with the
eventual winning of the world to Christ, which Lancelot's salvation symbolizes.

Since the Christian elements are such an integral part of the Idylls, as I have demonstrated, a failure to recognize this aspect of the poem can impair the reader's ability to respond to it properly. Perhaps one reason the poem was so popular in Tennyson's day was that his readers were conditioned by their Victorian moral and religious instruction to make such a response to this kind of allegory while later the readers with a different background were perhaps less likely to react to it. In any case, the study undertaken here has strongly suggested that close attention to the Christian allegorical elements can substantially increase the reader's understanding of this work.
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