

SOURCES OF THE GRAIL:

The earliest records of the west come from the Near East. Persian worshipers poured libations from jars into bowls set before the altars of their gods. In these original religions, the water tank and the bucket, the jug and the bowl were respected as the source of life, along with the womb of the mother goddess, all which were part of the divine. they were all prophecies of the Grail.

At ELUSIUS, the mysteries celebrated dealt with these themes of the wasteland which is restored. Demeter, the Greek goddess of vegetation, made the earth a wasteland before she recovered her daughter Persephone from Hades, she then allowed again the greenery of spring and the harvests of autumn.

During the nine day celebrations at Eleusis, sacred vessels were shown. On the last day, as far as we know for these were supposed to be secret, the participants were given a cup, or chalice with a potion which seems to have been ergot from rye, related to LSD and with this preparation would understand the mysteries of life/death and eternal life.

Other rites such as that of Orphus or the mysteries of Dionyisus had the same effect, one died and then was born to eternal life. An element of these ancient mysteries would reach the Christian religion quite strongly.

CYBELE (Rhea)

The first oriental god was consulted by the senate in Rome in 205-BC. The Sibylline oracle had declared that Hannibal would be forced out of Italy if the mother of the gods, the Greek Rhea, could be sent from Phrygia to Rome.

A black meteor stone representing the female principle of creation was delivered in 202 BC and installed in Rhea's temple on the Palatine. The war was soon over, and the precedent was set for the crusadors to find the divine way in a stone fallen from heaven, which some would call the grail. Rhea, known as cybele in Rome, became a rival to Christianity and her temple was not destroyed till 550 BC. The Vatican now sits there.

~~MITHRA~~

~~another competitor with Christianity with great influence was widespread clear into Britian. Hewas identified with the sun (birthday dec. 25) and came from Persia. He was the bringer of light to humanity, the mediator in the cosmic struggle against aheramin, the evil one.~~

~~Part of their service was communion with consecrated cup and bread, symbols of the holy supper which Mithras had taken with the sun after his time on earth. They also beleived in the survival of the divine essence in humanity, and in rewards and punishments in an afterlife. Mithras would descend on the warring world like Christ at the last judgement, awaken the dead, seperate the virtuous from the sinners and rule over a heaven on earth.~~

~~Eastern dualism and the symbolism of the light of the good sun were important features in the later legends of the grail. The ceremonies at Eleusis and for Mithras brought in many of the elements of the Grail procession. From these ancient cults and perceptions, the symbolism of the Grail was born.~~

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next

~~THE LEGEND OF THE GRAIL:~~

~~More than any other western myth, the legend of the grail has retained the vital magic which marks it as a living legend capable of touching both imagination and spirit. At its core there exists a secret which has sustained the mystical appeal of the Grail for the last 900 years, while other myths and legends have slipped into oblivion .~~

~~Something seems to grip the western mind, some alchemical process that transforms this often muddled and confused story into an archtypal dream image of the Ultimate Quest for all and Everything.~~

~~Is there any historical evidence to suppose there really was a-grail to be acheived? In searching for answers we must step into an enchanted and mythical world which appears to endlessly expand in complexity and beauty.~~

Religion in Northern Europe in the Iron age

Main sources of knowledge about Celtic religion are the material remains of the period dating from about 500 B.C.E. at Lake Neuchatel in Switzerland.

The Celts culture included the use of horses and iron weapons. they appeared in the early 7th cent. B.C.E. in central Europe east of the Rhine. They spread into the Balkans, north Italy and France and reached the British isles by the 3rd Cent. B.C.E.

Eventually their culture was destroyed by the Romans and the spread of the Germanic tribes.

Their religion can be cautiously reconstructed.

One recurrent feature is the importance of natural sites as focal points for ritual, notably sacred groves, forest clearings, hilltops and expanses of water.

Many things have been recovered from lakes, marshes, wells and rivers which were apparently thrown in as offerings.

For a long time it was thought that natural sites were all they had but archeology has revealed an ancient native tradition of man-made enclosures, shrines and temples.

Openings in the earth inside or around these shrines, sometimes very deep, contain pottery and both human and animal bones as well as other things used for offering.

Clearly such openings in the earth were believed to be means of access to an underworld of supernatural powers.

many temples have heads and actual skulls displayed in niches around doorways. The Celtic fondness for head-hunting is well attested by classical authors and Irish tales. Besides being trophies they may have served magical and necromantic purposes.

Symbols

Few have survived as they were probably made of wood. There are some bronze masks and some pre-roman stone statues.

The wheel, swastika and spiral were attributes of a sky-god who controlled sun and lightning.

Neck rings symbolized authority and often appear on representations of the gods.

Janus-headed statues and four sided column with four identical faces may symbolize omniscience.

Many animals, particularly boars, rams and snakes, possessed supernatural significance.

Ritual

Celtic religion clearly had elaborate ritual and thus an organized priesthood.

The Druids were the priests whose chief functions were to preserve and transmit myths, legends and poetry, and

probably also tribal history and law; to organize sacrifices, interpret omens, and carry out magical rites; and to act as arbitrators in lawsuits and bloodfeuds.

Celtic burials testify to a strong belief in an afterlife, Valhalla. They provided food for the journey.

This is not unusual, but the belief that after some years the soul passes into another body and that people may live again in a child descended from and named after them is unusual.

Celtic divinities in Roman times

Roman rulers tried to suppress human sacrifice and the organized Druid priesthood.

Tried to get Celts to identify their gods with Roman deities.

Julius Caesar states that the chief god of the Gauls was one who protected craftsmen and traders and gave wealth. The Goddess of healing, of arts and crafts, a sky-god, a war-god and an underworld ancestral god.

There are many gods and goddess and much devotion to gods and goddesses of healing, especially at thermal or medicinal springs.

Irish Divinities

Ireland never underwent any Romanization so it preserved many archaic myths and hero-legends.

In their view the world of magic, portents and taboo is

not remote but the supernatural and human constantly mix and interact.

this world lies beneath the Irish lakes and mounds and can invade human lives or be invaded by people.

Two Gods are described in considerable detail. Dagda (the good god), warrior chieftain, father and magician. The other is Lug (also known in Gaul), he too is a warrior, magician, poet and master of every craft.

It is typical of Celtic gods to combine varied functions, reflecting all the qualities of an ideal leader.

Irish Goddess

Many Irish goddess are maternal figures, bestowing fertility on crops, herds and men.

some are river goddess, others personifications of Ireland who grant love to kings.

Some are macabre, haunting battlefields, appearing in bird form or as hags and use sorcery. This includes Morrigan (queen of Phantoms).

Gods or heroes who mate with them learn magical arts of war, tho he who rejects them meet a rapis doom.

four major Irish festivals which were probably common to the whole Celtic world.

Samain, on Nov. 1 marked the start of winter and the Celtic new year. On this day and its eve, especially, the natural and supernatural worlds mingled, and the forces from the otherworld threatened humanity. This is now of course

Halloween followed by all saints day (Nov. 1) on the Christian calendar.

little is known about Feb. 1 celebration but the spring feast was Beltane on May 1. Cattle were driven to pasture, passing between bonfires to avert disease.

The fourth was on August 1 called Lugnasad, 'Lug's wedding'; it was linked with goddesses and may have involved a ritual marriage to assure good harvests.

These festivals were celebrated at great gatherings lasting several days with dancing, horse racing and sacrifices.

Germanic Religion

Archeology indicates many links between Germanic religious practices and those of the Celts and of Bronze age peoples.

Most worship in the open with small wooden shrines to house images of the gods. Sacrifices done in the open.

unlikely that priests ever formed a separate social group.

in general it was the king or local chieftain who carried out public rituals at assemblies and festivals, the shamanistic seers also had a place in religious life.

virtually no images of deities have survived.

several peat bogs in Denmark, Sweden and Germany were the sites of repeated votive offerings continued for centuries.

War Gods

The cult of war gods is mentioned by many in Roman times by Tacitus. Mars and Mercury among them as interpreted by Tacitus.

Mars was probably Tiwaz after whom Tuesday is named. He is wise and valiant and the rune named after him was put on weapons to ensure success.

Tiwaz must have been more than a war god; his name (related to Zeus and deus) shows he was originally a sky-god and there are signs that he assured law and justice. By the viking age he was almost forgotten.

Wotan (the one the romans called Mercury) called Odin in Scandanavia, Woden in England bestowed victory and protected princely heroes but his power was that of a divine sorcerer, master of occult terrors; he was also lord of the dead and death in battle was the ultimate fate of his worshippers.

Human victims sacrificed to him were despatched by simultaneous spear-thrust and hanging, and cremation was associated with his cult. He carried a spear and was accompanied by eagles, ravens or wolves. Wednesday is named after him. His cult was practiced in Sweden, Denmark and England.

The Valkyries

Odin's female emissaries, the Valkyries grant men victory or summon them to Valhalla.

Often described as beautiful women in armour riding through the air bestowing their love on living heroes and serving wine to the dead.

They can also appear as gigantic hags who appear before battle, riding wolves, sprinkling blood, or weaving on a loom of human guts and skulls.

Deities of war necessarily present a dual aspect.

Thor

name means "thunder", he was a sky-god, especially a storm-god. the Romans identified him with Jupiter. since he ruled weather, he was invoked by seafarers and farmers and was especially popular to the vikings.

He enforced law and justice, oaths were sworn on rings sacred to him and the Icelandic assembly always began on Thursday.

In myths, he is a mighty fighter always crushing giants and monsters who would otherwise destroy the world.

by the close of the period, Thor was the god most widely revered, both in Scandinavia and in Viking settlements as a universal protector.

Fertility Deities

The Matres were worshipped in Roman times by the Germanic tribes and the Celts as they gave fertility to men and women and to nature.

The "earth mother" Nerthus, whose symbol was carried

round the fields in a covered wagon, and then washed in a lake by slaves who were then drowned.

In later centuries there were many goddessess who had much in common, they gave fruitfulness to the land, wealth, love and fertility to men and women, and luck to children.

Freyja was the best known, the goddess of sexual love, magic and divination. her brother/lover Freyr was a chief fertility-god who like Freyja was a patron of love, marriage, peace and plenty. He loved an underworld giantess which indicates his marriage to the earth.

There were several types of lesser deities such as elves, "earth spirits", guardian-goddesses and the like.

the dead

Odin's Valhalla was one concept where heros feast till the end of the world.

the goddess Hel rules a dark realm where people were conceived as traveling on foot or wagon.

traces of belief in reincarnation tho wide variety. rich were buried with much equipment. less wealthy people were buried or burnt with a few weapons, clothes, ornaments or tools and were plain or covered with stones forming a circle, square or outline of a ship.

The burial of the dead in actual ships was practices in the viking settlements in the 7th to the 9th centuries. were very lavish.

cosmic myths

Icelandic cosmology is best known as most germanic myth is not known.

creation myths include the mingling of ice and fire in the void, the diismemberment of a primeval bisexual giant, a flood, and the creation of humans from tree-trunks.

The compleated universe consisted of various worlds, of gods, people, giants, and underworld beings--all linked by, or indeed contained in, the World Tree Yggdrasil.

This sacred archtypal tree was life giving and protective, decaying yet ever renewed and would endure eternally.

Loki the trickster god, in the myth of the end becomes demonic and destroys most of the earth and gods. but it will rise again from the sea and a few surviving gods and people will found a better world.

evil than will reappear, and the cycle will begin again.

THE NEO-PAGAN MOVEMENT

Beginning in the 1960s, alongside a resurgence of the occult, a very decentralized religious movement has sprung up which is an effort to recover the pre-Christian religion of Europe.

There are throughout the U.S. thousands of such groups numbering between a few people to several hundred members in each. These are very individualistic, autonomous, and self made, having no masters or gurus. They have no temples and most often meet in woods, parks, apartments and homes.

In contrast to most organized religion, money seldom changes hands and entry into these groups is by choice, not conversion.

These groups differ in regard to tradition, scope, structure, organization, ritual and names for their dieties but do regard each other as part of the same religious/philosophical movement. They call themselves pagan or Neo-pagan. They share a set of values and communicate with each other thru a network of newsletters and regional and national gatherings.

They are polytheistic and share a goal of living in harmony with nature and see ritual as a tool to end alienation. Most look to the old pre-Christian nature religions of Europe and the mystery religions (Eleiusinian in particular) for inspiration.

What needs to be understood here is that what most of these groups are looking at is the Romantic movement of the late 18th and early 19th century rather than what really existed in pre-Christian Europe. The Romanticized ideas of what these religions were like is their main inspiration. Some of these even overtly

look to Robert Graves or J.R.R. Tolkien for inspiration.

Most of these groups have grown up in cities where the loss of nature has been felt and where the tools to enlarge such a perception exist. This movement, including the wicca or witchcraft movement, is only partly an occult phenomena. It is often interwoven with the artistic and visionary tradition, the ecology movement, the feminist movement and the liberation traditions.

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WICCA OR WITCHCRAFT MOVEMENT

This movement also seeks inspiration from pre-Christian sources, European folklore and mythology. Wicca means the 'craft of the wise' and they consider themselves priests and priestesses of the ancient european shamanistic nature religion that worships the goddesses and gods of celtic and teutonic lore.

Many neo-pagan witches see themselves as modern day heirs to the ancient mystery traditions of Egypt, Crete, Eleusis, etc. as well as more popular peasant traditions of celebratory festivals and seasonal rites.

again, like the neo-pagan movement, of which they are part, they don't realize that what they are really drawing from is a romantic view of the past.

Neo-pagans look at religion differently than most which see a need for a deity (usually male) and contain 'beliefs' and 'dogma'. the word Religio means to re-link, re-connect, and therefore refers to any philosophy which makes deep connections between human beings and the universe. One very important

characteristic of the neo pagan movement is the return to the ancient idea that there is no seperation between secular and sacred., spiritual and material.

Thus, they see no contradiction between their political and social concern and their concern for 'things of the spirit'. Most tribal peoples would agree with them.

Up to now the neo-pagan movement consisted of men and women attempting to live a way of life and uphold values that have been a minority vision in western culture. In general, Neo-pagans embrace the values of spontaniety, non-authoritarianism, anarchism, pluralism, polytheism, animism, sensuality, passion, a belief in the goodness of pleasure, religious ecstasy and the goodness of THIS world as well as the possibility of many others.

They may differ in regard to tradition, ritual, and the concept of diety but they all view the earth as the Great Mother who has been raped, pillaged, and plundered and must once again be exaulted if we are to survive.

One thing they will definately point out to Christians accusing them of Satan worship and heresy is that Satan has no part in their religion, and never has. Satan never was part of the European pre-Christian heritage and they certainly don't see themselves as 'heretics' but rather as a return to a purer and freer religious tradition. a tradition not filled with guilt.

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ARTHUR AND THE GRAIL
THE STORIES

yes Arthur
~~CAMELOT - WHERE WAS IT?~~

There were 12 battles in which Arthur was the victor and it can only be surmised as being somewhere on the mainland of Britain. Keeping a force of hundreds of mailed knights in the field involved sophisticated planning and a wandering court. Recent excavations show that many iron age hill forts were re-occupied by the Celtic warlords, adding stone and wooden ramparts along with gate towers and halls.

The feudal system was not yet in place as in the Grail romances so the court could not be supported by the local country people for much more than a month. Thus, King Arthur and his fighters had to ride from place to place to maintain themselves.

The probable sites of Arthur's travelling Camelot were these: The Roman city of Colchester, where he would have fought the Saxons; Cadbury Castle, South Wales, Carlisle and Edinburgh, where he would have opposed the Picts from the north and Scotti from the west.

Tactics insist on movement. that is why the ancient chronicles and Grail romances altered places and names so frequently. What is certain is that the truth of Arthur was taken up by the Celtic bards to create the legend of a conquering hero.

The actual Celtic Grails which existed from Author's time were hanging bowls, not communion chalices in the hands of priests. several of these have been found. In the early Welsh legends of Arthur, the king led his knights on a raid to seize the spoils of Annwn, including a magic cauldron of rebirth. this lay in a Faerie Fortress, as the Grail Castle would.

The rim of the cauldron was ornamented in the style of contemporary hanging bowls with dark blue enamel and pearls. This cauldron could provide meat and drink for everybody. Yet in this version, Arthur filled it with the treasures of Ireland and took it back from that country to his own.

tal e a son
In Taliesin's poems, another cauldron gave him divine inspiration and wisdom when he licked three drops of the boiling mixture in the iron vessel off his fingers.

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yes
Evidence of the Roman Church's growing suspicion of the legend of Arthur was seen in later Welsh tales about him in which he was presented as a trickster and a thief. In various lives of the saints, he was shown to be evil. The Holy See continued to view Arthur as a rebel against its claims to supremacy.

GEOFFREY OF MONMOUTH: In 1135 Geoffrey of Monmouth conferred a legitimacy upon Aruthur when he wrote the sourcebook of King Arthur and the matter of Britain.

Geoffrey was either welsh or Breton and he built up the legend of Arthur to illustrate the fact that the Celts and the Normans had defeated the Anglo-Saxon incursion into England, even tho the Normans were actually Vikings who had invaded France and taken over Normandy and Brittany in the 10th century. Geoffrey concocted a European empire for King Arthur as large as the true one of Charlemagne in the 9th century.

Geoffrey insisted that the deeds of Arthur lay in the memories and traditions of many people as surely as if they had been written down. Arthur should be commemorated because of his long resistance and his restoration of Celtic morale.

TROUBADOURS and Celtic minstrals spread the legends of Arthur and his companions all over Europe and the British Isles. It was thru them that the "stories of the Grail" and the "stories of Arthur and his companions" were combined by the Troubadours.

In this illiterate era, before the printing press (1427) it was these wandering minstrels who spread the word of Arthur. These stories reached Italy so that by the end of the 12th century it was reported by one Norman that Arthur had been sighted living in the fiery crater of Mount Etna, that natural cauldron of Annwn.

The spreading of the stories of Arthur and his knights over Europe and the Near East with the crusades was the seedbed of the Grail. The age of the crusades yearned for a holy mission as well as justification for taking over new lands in the Mediteranean.

THE MILEAU:

Europe in the 12th century was sick. The male dominated church of Rome had subsumed all local myths into its own grand scheme. But its rigid orthodoxy and weird hatred of Eve, ie women, had resulted in a one-sided, stagnant and corrupt vision.

Thus, the timing of the written grail legends is significant and hardly a coincidence. A strange wave of hysteria had swept the Christian world at the turn of the 10th century, since the world was supposed to end in 1000.

But instead of the promised paradise on earth, people found themselves surrounded by a barren wasteland. Jerusalem had been won and lost. Christian armies were no match for the "infidels" who appeared to have a far more civilized culture than their own, while Christians knew their leaders were corrupt. It was a spiritually charged, crusade ridden epoch, an age of turmoil. The grail legends fulfilled the thirst for a myth with which a changing Europe could identify.

the knights returning from the crusades had gained a great respect for the Islamic life and began to emulate a way of life which was patently far more cultured than their own. These knights returned to Europe infected with the infidel's ways, and through these carriers dangerously new and revolutionary ideas spread like a virus thruout the various realms.

THE ROMAN CHURCH'S ATTITUDE:

The Church of Rome would never quite swallow the quest for the Grail. For this search derived from the worst of heresies, which was preached in the Near East and in Britain before the time of King Arthur.

The great offense to the Bishop of Rome was the idea of a direct approach to God without the intercession of the Church. Pelagius, a celt declared a heretic in 431, argued that people could perfect themselves and that original sin was non-existent. Augustine won

the argument and original sin, the idea that we are so depraved that we have no hope without grace, became church doctrine.

What the Celtic heresy of Pelagius did was to deny the authority of Rome. ^{YES} It took [several hundred years to defeat the Celtic view, ~~but we will deal with this in subsequent~~ lectures.]

Important for our Grail and Arthur legends is that it was this sustained period of Celtic resistance during the 5th and 6th centuries when the Anglos, saxons, jutes and finally, the italians descended on Britian to make it "Roman Christianity".

The heresy of *SALVATION THRU GOOD WORKS* was the inspiration of the Knights on the quest for the Grail. By his virtue, each member of the round table might reach the light of God and the Holy Spirit w/o need of a priest to absolve his sins.

Thus, the legends of the Arthur and the Grail were to enshrine the resistance of many peoples to the authority of the holy See. That is why they would prove so popular in their spread across Europe and further, until by the 12th century, the prior of Tewkesbury could state that the praise of Arthur had reached every place, even Italy.

Rome was to try to take over the legend of King Arthur and the Grail, altho it was heretical. This was because the stories of Camelot and chivalry would inspire the crusaders to the Levant. Pope Gregory the Great was happy to substitute the pagan for the Christian in England. He wrote.

"...the temples of the idols in England should not on any account be destroyed. Augustine must smash the idols, but the temples themselves should be sprinkled with holy water and altars set up in them in which relics are to be enclosed. We ought to take advantage of well-build temples by purifying them from devil-worship and dedicating them to the service of the true God."

The one religion used the other to infiltrate the new faith. Yet Arthur and the grail legends were only half heartedly sanctified. This is because of the historical Arthur, whose

stance as the Celtic leader in war and faith was clear. He stood against the authority of imperial Rome. To all the emperors and king~~s~~ who would need to resist the Holy See, Arthur became the symbol of that opposition.

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CELTIC ROOTS OF THE LEGEND

Just as there is no single account of the quest, there is no single description of the mysterious Grail itself. It variously appears as a dish, a cauldron, a chalice, the cup of the last supper, the emerald which fell from Lucifers crown as he plummeted to hell, a philosophers stone and a beatific or vision of the Divine.

The quest is as varied as the vessel sought. A search for the Ultimate source, a search for the cauldron of rebirth, the fountain of everlasting Youth, direct communion with God thru the body of Christ, enlightenment (Indiana Jones "last Crusade"), individuality, God or simply avanging a blood fued.

The Grail cannot be sepeerated from the quest for it. Both grail and quest embody the ultimate human fulfillment, whatever form the author wishes it to take. It is not a singular story, but a nest of stories circling a central theme yet with no one master blueprint.

there are actually three branches feeding into the grail stories and this is why it can b e confusing. I have already discussed the middle Eastern background which is the root of all of these three brances. The Celtic branch representing the myths of regeneration and renewal. the rightful kingship and the sovereignty of the land is the first.

The second sacred branch symbolizes the esoteric Christian legends of Redemption and salvation. In these, the hero seeks his Maker, and thru becoming worthy attempts to bring heaven to earth, either reconciling Super Nature, or surpassing Nature and entering the beyond.

The third branch signifies alchemical ideas of Rebirth and the Transformation of the individual. In this view, Nature is of itself seen as spiritual, spontaneously capable of giving rise to love and compassion.

I intend to deal with the Celtic Branch here as it is actually the least well known even tho it is the basis of most the legends. Chretien was not a celt but a Frenchman, but from what he tells us there was both written and oral accounts. It is generally accepted that the original sources of all the stories are to be found within the Irish ECHTRAÍ.

the Echtraí, or adventures from which the Grail romances were drawn tell of fantastic visitations of heroes to the island realms and palaces of gods and immortals. Much like we have already discussed.

The most persistant and remarkable Celtic image within the Arthurian legends has to do with the quest for sovereignty. Originally, the goddess of sovereignty was the Irish symbol for the land. Only a potent relation of the hero and the goddess could bring well being in the land.

One character who appears in virtually all the many versions of the grail myth is the maimed Fisher-King whose realm is barren and a wasteland. To the Celts, a maimed king, or an impotent king, is not fit to rule. thus his land is a waste.

It is quite clear that the grail of ^{Chr. Tien} Chretien's story had no particular religious significance, in fact the grail and the lance were unashamedly pagan. But when the story passed thru the celibate cloisters of Christianity it took on an entirely new significance. Thru a series of misunderstandings a Celtic Blessed Horn of Plenty became the Blessed body of Christ and the pagan graal of Plenty was transformed into a vessel intimately associated with the last supper.

It is important to note that it was the Celts who realized the problems with a system in which one sex dominates the other and they look back to a golden age when there was an equality. This, as we have discussed, was always part of the Brehon laws. They recognized the necessity of a balance between a Sky God and an Earth Goddess.

The Celts looked back on this golden age as both an inner and outer realm. The idea that action can take place in the historical world and yet at the same time in an enchanted

and otherworldly place simultaneously is not a problem for the Celtic mind. It is the loss of the otherworld which takes place when the land becomes a wasteland.

This paradise is lost because of a certain warrior and his followers, Amangon, rapes the maidens of the wells and stole their sacred vessels, thus ending communion with the sovereignty of the land. Before this time, seekers could find union with the otherworldly paradise thru drinking what the maidens offered. Thus at the outset of the legend we are told of the Fall and the loss of paradise.

Thus the grail myth echos this catastrophe. Of course the Christian and Jewish myth of Adam and eve becomeing disobedient and being driven into the wasteland has the same idea. In the Celtic myths it is the grail hero that must re-establish the precious links between the female sovereignty and the king of the realm.

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The papacy at this time was trying to assert its authority over all secular power. What chivalry of Europe demanded was a sacred quest which sanctified individual bloody actions w/o the need for absolution from the catholic church. Rome denied the giving of communion to lay people in the 13th century. The Body and Blood of Christ, the host and the chalice were reserved for the priest alone. Now the grail could answer the prayer of the knight alone on his way to battle or the crusades.

THE KNIGHTS OF THE GRAIL:

Chretien de Troyes created the story of the Grail in his Perceval putting it together from many ancient and contemporary tales, as well as from his own imagination. Born in about 1135 in France, he was trained to be a priest but instead became a translator of OVID and other Latin authors.

Perceval or the Story of the Grail was his last romance and it was unfinished when he died. Chretien presented Perceval as a rebel against authority, much like his patron Count Phillip, who had fallen out with the King of France. He was a simple Welsh youth with lethal proficiency with javelins. He badgered passing knights to find out what they did, and then deserted his mother to make his way to the court of Arthur.

There he discovered that a Red Knight had insulted the King and had stolen a gold cup. He pursued the knight and killed him with a javelin thru his eye, taking his armour and his horse and returning the cup to Arthur. Untaught, Perceval went on his way towards the Grail Castle.

This ingenious opening prhopesied the mysteries of the mission. Perceval was too simple to see the quest for the Holy Grail as more than a fight to recover a stolen precious object.

Perceval found himself in the castle of the Fisher King where he was given a sword of Arabian work. The following procession of the Grail was also associated with the East and

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the crusadors. It was led by a squire carrying a white lance with a tip that bled drops of crimson blood.

The discovery of The Holy Lance below the cathedral of Antioch in Syria had saved the first crusade from disaster. This relic was held to be the iron point which the blind Centurion Longinus had put into the side of Christ, only to have his sight restored by the blood and water that ran into his eyes.

That flow of blood was caught by *Joseph of Arimathea* in the cup used at the last supper, which was to become the chief symbol for the Grail. Yet *Perceval* next saw two squires bearing candle holders also associated with Jerusalem and the first crusade. Then a maiden appeared with the jewelled Grail, shining with brilliant light. She was followed by another maiden with a silver platter, who passed the bed of the maimed Fisher King.

Altho a bleeding lance was associated with the death of Christ, it also had a parallel in the magic spear of Welsh and Irish literature. This belonged to the god Lug and was both lethel and life-giving.

the harm of its point could only be blunted in a cauldron or bowl of boiling blood and water: The male principle creating birth from the female. Otherwise, its wounds might lay waste to the land of the Fisher King, who was incurably maimed by its thrust between his thighs.

Chretien went further by combining the Celtic and Nordic cauldron and the horn of plenty with the communion chalice. In *Perceval* the vessel appears to have a lid, which was removed before it served its inexhaustable food for the needs of all present. IT WAS CARRIED BY A YOUNG WOMAN.

This, of course, was anathema to the Church of Rome. The communion cup could only be borne by a male priest and the elevation of the Host to the congregation remained a sacred mystery. Yet to Chretien all those in search of perfection might see the Grail.

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He was associating the giving by Christ of his body and blood with pagan goddesses of fertility, the chalice representing the womb.

The host seen by perceval was not the communion wafer but the blessed bread distributed among all believers at the feasts of the early Christian communities, and still is in the Orthodox Church, and later the Cathar heretics of southern France (Provence). It had more to do with the miracle of the loaves and fishes than communion.

In the sacred objects of the Grail procession he combined the Celtic and the Nordic with the Christian, the Jewish Cabbala and Islam.

The bleeding lance derived from the castle of the god Lug as well as St. Longinus. The candelabra suggested ancient Jewish and Byzantine ceremonies as well as the tomb of the prophet Muhammed. There was a major school of Kabbalah in Troyes led by Rabbi Rashi at the time of writing. and the Golden Grail set with gems was a Celtic cornucopia and a Christian Chalice. The silver platter represented the cauldron of plenty and the dish on which was once set both the head of John the Baptist and the lamb of the last supper.

Chretien's last romance contributed to the spiritual awakening of Western Christendom at the time. There were discoveries and re-discoveries in science, mathematics and philosophy, the founding of monasteries, military orders (Templars), courtly love and chivalry, building of the Gothic cathedrals and the arrival in Jerusalem of the crusaders hoping to build a holy and heavenly city on earth.

RELICS - THE MOST PRECIOUS GRAILS OF THE 12th CENTURY:

Once the quest for the Grail had been described by Chretien de Troyes, many actual "grails" were identified within the Christian faith. Although the Grail had ancient and pagan sources, it was declared to lie within the bowls, dishes, weapons and instruments that the Gospel's associated with the Last Supper and the Crucifixion.

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Anything that was believed to have contained or touched the blood of Jesus was considered to be a kind of Grail. In the ecstatic confusion of the real and the visionary which was the inspiration of the crusades and the early Middle ages, sacred relics were venerated and became the advertisements of the abbeys and cathedrals which were spreading the worship of God across Europe. Holy relics were the medieval verdict of history on the bible. What was believed, had taken place. 7

The most precious grails of the 12th century were the HOLY LANCE and THE HOLY SHROUD, the HOLY VEIL OF ST. VERONICA, THE TRUE CROSS, the CROWN OF THORNS, and the CUP OF JOSEPH OF ARIMATHEA.

Relics had, however, been around since the 2nd century and next to Jerusalem, Constantinople was considered to be the largest depository. In 1204 the fourth crusade sacked Constantinople and brought most of its relics back to western Europe.

So many relics of Christ found their way to the West that miracles were needed to explain the host of them. In one case, it was declared that the True cross at Jerusalem renewed itself, however many slivers were cut from it. Even today, a new Catholic church has to have a relic in order to be consecrated..

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JOSEPH OF ARIMATHEA and the GRAIL

The Grail romances became so popular with the crusadors that the French demanded a Christian and Norman purpose. Robert de Boron added the biblical legend of Joseph of Arimathea, who brought the grail from Jerusalem to Britain and France and provided a lineage for the Fisher King and the heroic knights.

However, the Celtic sources of the Grail were anathema to de Boron, altho he may have added the corroboration to the claims of the monks of Glastonbury Abbey, who declared at the end of the 12th century to have unearthed the bones of King Arthur and his Queen. These relics provided for the rebuilding of Glastonbury.

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JOSEPH OF ARIMATHEA by de Boron, Joseph was a knight in the service of Pontius Pilate, who gave him the vessel to catch the blood of Jesus and also permission to bury the body, beginning the tradition of the Grail as a stone on which Jesus bled.

He took the vessel into which Jesus bled home with him and was from then entrusted with the Holy blood. For Robert de Boron, the Grail was a 'vase' which contained the Holy blood of Jesus.

When Joseph was later imprisoned, the Grail kept him alive for forty years. Only when he gave it to Bron (another version of the Celtic god, Bran) could he depart from the earth. While Bron took the Grail to the west. Bron later caught a fish and laid it beside the Grail. So he became the Rich Fisher of the Grail castle.

The fish, of course, was a Greek acronym for "Jesus Christ, son of God, Saviour" it represented the miracles of food for all and of living in the great waters of birth.

Joseph and Bron took the Grail to Sarra and Avalon. It was kept on a table beside a cup and a book. It had become an allegory of the conversion of France and England to the Roman Catholic faith and away from the Celtic Christianity.

The Grail Castle was located at Glastonbury, thus joining Christianity to the bones of the legendary British Arthur. In a later writing, de Boron added that Joseph of Arimathea brought the Grail to the most ancient Christian abbey in the south-west of England. and for all of its evocation of the Passion and the Eucharist, it still upheld the Celtic myth of the magic cauldron of plenty and of judgement.

GALAHAD: THE CHRISTIANIZATION OF THE GRAIL

The version of the Grail story we are probably most familiar with is the LANCELOT CYCLE which was probably written by a Cistercian monk. Galahad now becomes preferred to Perceval as the man w/o sin who could find the Grail.

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The Grail appeared at Arthur's court for the first time since it had dispensed manna from heaven to the Israelites and the paschal lamb at the Last supper, ONLY because Galahad, the son of Lancelot by the daughter of the Fisher King and the descendant of King David and Joseph, had sat in the Siege Perilous at the Round Table, the Judas seat which tipped any imperfect knight into Hell.

Galahad and the 12 best knights (matching the apostles) left on the quest for the grail after hearing Mass. Galahad and the knights are going thru a knightly "pilgrims progress" of trials. They pass thru many adventures, all with allegorical christian interpretations. Five years later, Galahad, Perceval and Bors reach the Grail castle of the maimed Fisher King. There they encounter the vision of the Grail. Drops of blood from the raised holy lance fell into the sacred cup, which was then covered with a cloth.

Joseph consecrates the communion and a naked bloody Christ appears and gives the knights communion. The vision of Christ tells Galahad to remove the sacred dish from the British castle to the heavenly city of Sarras in Southern France

. He must first heal the wound of the Fisher King, which he does with a few drops of blood from the holy lance. Once the king was healed, the Wasteland turns green, and the king enters a monastery of the white monks.

Lancelot then takes the Ship of Solomon with the grail resting on its silver table, and carries it into Sarras, where he was told to. This released all the knights who were in prison there. Here Bors, Perceval and Galahad saw Joseph release his spirit from his body to reach heaven.

THE QUEST FOR THE HOLY GRAIL was called a Christian allegory by most French Critics who saw it as full of St. Bernard's doctrine of Grace and mystical union with God. It is never described but is clearly the dish of the Last Supper. Yet in the Quest, Celtic and heretic doctrines survived. Knights might see the grail during their trails and tribulations w/o benefit of the Church.

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PERLESVAUS was yet another version of the grail stories by an anonymous French author. Joseph of Arimathea was said to be the author thru the voice of an angel.

Descended from King David, Joseph was the progenitor of the grail lineage until Arthur.

Perceval, the perfect knight, had failed to ask the right question when confronted with the grail (which was: whom does the Grail serve?) of the Fisher King, which allowed Arthur's kingdom to be changed into a wasteland.

GAWAIN took up the quest who had a series of adventures, including finding the sword that beheaded John the Baptist, which allowed him into the Grail castle. He saw the same vision as Percival did and also failed to ask the right question.

LANCELOT then picked up the quest, but he could never reach the grail because of his mortal sin of loving Guinevere. He got to the Fisher King's castle, was fed, but did not see the vision.

PERCEVAL again took up the quest and had several bloody encounters on his way to the grail castle. When he heard the Moors had taken Camelot from His mother, he rode to deliver it.. Killing the Muslim leader and his warriors was the exact same scene of ritual slaughter found on the Gunderstrup cauldron of Druid sacrifices.

After more slaughter, which for perceval was a rite of passage, Perceval saw, in the castle, the grail appear again and the bleeding Holy Lance, as well as the sword that beheaded John the Baptist, the shroud, and many other holy relics.

The New Testament all that was preached and Perceval killed anyone who did not follow it. As for Arthur, he pursued his vow reaching the Grail castle and had a vision of his quest. He saw the Grail appear at the mass, in five different forms that none ought to tell. He beheld all the changes with the last of them a change into a chalice.

In none of the Grail romances was there a vision of the chalice's holiness that so confirmed its infinite metamorphosis. It appeared in many shapes; it altered its substance

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and its essence; it was all things to all knights, yet it gave all that was needed - divine food, drink and grace.

The *PERLESVAUS* was more significant for its Celtic relish in severed heads like those of the divine Bran, and in sacrificial cauldrons of blood, while the grail itself was translated into mystical as well as actual shapes. This was a version of Christianity well suited to the chivalry and slaughter of the Crusades.

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THE MABINOGION from Wales, named the good knight PEREDUR, a popular name in Celtic literature. Chretien's romance of the Grail and the romance of Peredur were both written at much the same time.

There are a few similarities between this and Chretien de Troyes works but this is even more Celtic. There is a horrific Grail procession with 2 youths entering the hall carrying a huge spear with three streams (not drops) of blood running along it from socket to floor. This was followed by two maidens with a great platter between them, with a man's head on the platter bathed in blood. Later Peredur finds out this is his cousin's head who was killed by witches, and whom he must avenge.

More Celtic mysteries are revealed when Peredur went to the court of the witches to improve his military skills; a tradition of women warriors that stretched back as far as the Amazons.

After many adventures, including going to Constantinople and marrying the empress, and receiving a stone talisman with magical powers, similar to the stone of scone, he returns to the Grail castle. He is initiated as its ruler, becoming celibate until his death. His last act of vengeance was to kill his mentors, the Witches, with the help of King Arthur to avenge his cousin and the Fisher King.

This is the most Celtic of romances and it stressed the roots of the legends of the Grail in Welsh Mythology. The many sacred vessels shared characteristics of the Grail, with its

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many properties. They could heal wounds and madness with sweet spices. They could provide endless supplies of food and drink in the manner of the cornucopia of the classical age. a shared property with the Christian grails was the refusal to sustain the unworthy.

PEREDUR AND PERCEVAL drew from similar tradition and material, yet they did not correspond except in the guiding myth of the Grail. In Peredur, unlike Perceval, the author was conscious that the Welsh peoples were being invaded and conquered by the Normans, who had taken over England.

The huge and bleeding spear was a symbol of a wasted Wales with its wounds and suffering. His hero had to inspire his countrymen to resistance before he could rule again in the Celtic castle of the Grail.

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CONCLUSION: The story of the grail is the story of a symbol which is transferred from one religion to another, retaining most of its original significance. The Celtic god who possessed the marvellous vessel was the god of the sun, lord of the Otherworld, creator of mankind. The maiden who carried the cup and 'married' the hero was Sovereignty, the goddess who represented the kingdom. the union between hero and goddess symbolised the possession of his kingdom by the hero. In the sovereignty tales the hero is given food, and in the grail castle the events occur during, or shortly after a meal.

The symbolism was easily fused with already existing Christian symbolism. The ceremony is still connected with food and drink of a kind easily recognized by men, but endowed with ritual significance.

The last supper was a meal on which was based the sacrament of Holy Communion... the Grails power to produce food may be traced to the marvellous vessels possessed by the gods and the Otherworld beings in Celtic mythology.

The power to move of itself comes from the same source. Both characteristics were easily adapted to the demands of Christianity by attributing them to the power of God.
