



Consider the place of faith, religious or otherwise, in the Arthurian tradition

Anna Papadaki

Issues concerning faith were of paramount importance in England in the Middle Ages; as Norman Tanner remarks, Christianity permeated every aspect of life.¹ The Arthurian myth, as one of the most popular and retold stories of the time, bears witness to that fact, with issues of religion playing a dominant – if varying in nature – role in each narration. In this essay I shall examine Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain* and Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte Darthur*. I have chosen these two texts because they are the most influential in the development of the Arthurian tale: Geoffrey's *History* provided the basis for all subsequent texts up to Malory's *Morte*, which has been the best known version of the myth since the fifteenth century. In each of these texts I shall explore the role of Christianity itself, as well as some aspects of pre-Christian belief, focusing on how these interact.

Geoffrey finished his *Historia* in 1136, thirty seven years after the First Crusade captured Jerusalem, twelve years after the Franks captured the city of Tyros and a mere nine years before Pope Eugenius II proclaimed the Second Crusade (which was to fail).² This context has special significance, as the first great successes against the Arabs still seemed to validate the famous slogan 'Deus vult!' (God wills it!), and had not yet been marred by the complete failure most of the following crusades met, or the resulting scepticism towards them.³ Arthur's conquests over non-Christian people are therefore characteristic of the age: in his early battles with the Saxons, for example, Archbishop Dubricius tells those 'who have been marked with the cross of the Christian faith' that death in battle against the pagan Saxons will ensure entry to Heaven.⁴ This effectively links Arthur's knights to the Crusaders, who had also been ensured of forgiveness (by Pope Urban II), and they had literally 'been marked with the cross', which was stitched on their clothing.⁵ Furthermore, Arthur claims to be 'a close relative' of Queen Helen and her son, Emperor Constantine, founder of Constantinople. The choice of Helen and Constantine as Arthur's relatives is highly significant, since Constantine allegedly converted to Christianity after seeing the sign of the cross in the sky with the writing 'with this shall you conquer'; he and his mother later found the Holy Cross in Jerusalem and brought it to Constantinople. Constantine's religious sincerity may have been disputed, but he was greatly responsible for the establishment of Christianity as the official religion of the Roman Empire.⁶ Arthur is therefore not just any

¹ Norman Tanner, *The Ages of Faith: Popular Religion in Late Medieval England and Western Europe* (London; New York: Tauris, 2009), p. 138

² The respective dates are 1099, 1024 and 1145. For a full chronology of the Crusades see Jill N. Glaster, *Sacred Violence: The European Crusades in the Middle East* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), pp. 319-324

³ *Ibid.*, p. 276. See also n. 31

⁴ Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain*, trans. Lewis Thorpe (London: Penguin, 1966), p. 216

⁵ Urban II, 'Speech at Council of Clermont, 1095, Five Versions of the Speech' in *Fordham University Internet History Sourcebooks Project* <<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/urban2-5vers.html>> [accessed 05/12/2011]

⁶ H. A. Drake, 'The Impact of Constantine on Christianity' in Noel Lenski (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Constantine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 111-136. *Cambridge Companions Online*,

king: he is the descendant of the first Christian emperor of the Roman Empire, and the man who not only bore the Cross as a sign, but found the real one – at least, according to the belief of the time. This serves to further validate Arthur's claim to the lands the Saxons have usurped, as does Arthur's shield, which bears an image of St Mary, thereby proclaiming his faith.⁷

Christianity is seen as far more than just a religion by Geoffrey: it is rather a bringer of order and civilisation. For Arthur's enemies, a 'numberless horde' of 'naked and unarmed' Irish, are inevitably defeated and display no signs of bravery or courage – in fact, their description is reminiscent of beasts, rather than humans.⁸ After conquering Ireland and (also non-Christian) Iceland, Arthur returns to Britain and rules in peace for twelve years.⁹ Arthur's success may be due in part to his own bravery and generosity, but his military victories are implied to be due to divine sanction.¹⁰ Moreover, Arthur enhances his own image as a defender of Christianity by rebuilding the churches that the Scottish destroyed and giving the best seats at his table (on his immediate right and left) to priests.¹¹

The priests that guide Arthur spiritually are invariably described as 'saintly' and virtuous, and since they have been appointed by him, this reflects well on his own wisdom and judgement.¹² By contrast, this high degree of faith seems to be missing from the Roman Emperor Lucius, who decides to fight Arthur. In a clear anachronism, the Romans are allied to Ali Fatima, a King of Spain with an Arabic name, as well as Ypolitus of Crete (probably a form – erroneous etymologically – of Hippolytus, the mythical son of Athenian King Theseus and Amazon Queen Hippolyta) and the King of Babylon. Not only are Rome's allies depicted as Muslim and pagan by Geoffrey, but they were, in fact, at least partially occupied by Muslims at the time Geoffrey was writing. This fact would hardly escape the notice of contemporary readers, and once more reinforces the importance of Arthur's Christianity: his campaign against them is almost another crusade, complementing the ones against the Scots, the Irish or the Icelanders; the British are shown yet again as the faithful battling against infidels.

If Arthur's campaigns reveal a straightforward distinction between Christian and pagan, the existence of Merlin is the opposite, being ambiguous and almost uncanny. He is mocked for having no father, and it is hinted that the strange spirit who visited his mother was an incubus.¹³ Moreover, Merlin is shown to use drugs in order to give Utherpendragon the appearance of Gorlois, in order for him to sleep with Ygerna.¹⁴ The use of such magic may have been considered 'natural' (and therefore not evil *a priori*) by William of Auvergne, but he did condemn the use of 'divination and fortune-telling' – and, of course, any contact with demons.¹⁵ Surprisingly, however, neither Merlin's demonic birth nor his use of magic are sufficient to condemn him in the eyes of Geoffrey. Crick notes his similarity with Daniel,¹⁶ and indeed, the parallels spring to the eye: both start as young boys who advise corrupt kings (Nebuchadnezzar and Vortigern), after interpreting something that the kings'

<http://cco.cambridge.org.ezproxy.nottingham.ac.uk/uid=1279/pdf_handler?search_scope=collection&id=ccol0521818389_CCOL0521818389A008&collection_id=complete&collection_id=literature&collection_id=philosophy-and-religion&collection_id=music&pdf_hh=1#xml=http://cco.cambridge.org/pdf_highlighter?search_scope=collection&query=empero+r+constantine&id=ccol0521818389_CCOL0521818389A008&collection_id=complete&collection_id=literature&collection_id=philosophy-and-religion&collection_id=music&pdf_hh=1> [accessed 18/01/2012]

⁷ Monmouth, p. 217

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 224-225

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Siân Echard, 'Geoffrey of Monmouth' in Siân Echard (ed.), *The Arthur of Medieval Latin Literature: The Development and Dissemination of the Arthurian Legend in Medieval Latin* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2011), pp. 45-66, 55

¹¹ Monmouth, p. 221, 228

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 230

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 167-168

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 206-207

¹⁵ Quoted and explained in Robert Bartlett, *The Natural and the Supernatural in the Middle Ages: The Wiles Lectures given at the Queen's University of Belfast, 2006* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 21-22

¹⁶ Julia Crick, 'Geoffrey and the prophetic tradition' in Siân Echard (ed.), *The Arthur of Medieval Latin Literature*, pp. 67-82, 69

councillors could not; they make prophecies about the future and fall of the kingdom, as well as the eventual arrival of a great prince or king who will restore the just to life and power.¹⁷ These similarities to one of the great Biblical figures undermine Merlin's problematic parentage, and underline the difficulty of humans to understand the will of God – which is also made clear by the 'Angelic Voice' that declares Merlin's prophecies to be the 'will of God'.¹⁸ Merlin is therefore a strange figure, who has a demonic heritage but nevertheless brings about the birth of the good King Arthur. It is perhaps due to this ambiguity that Merlin never comes into direct contact with Arthur: his controversial practices would hardly befit the idealised king.

Being but one in a long series of kings within Geoffrey's opus, Arthur ultimately falls prey to treason, much like his grandfather Constantine II, uncle Aurelius Ambrosius, and father Utherpendragon before him. Their common fate links Arthur, Uther, Aurelius Ambrosius and Constantine together, as do their actions – they are all presented as good kings who for a while managed to unite the Britons.¹⁹ Yet Arthur is greater than his ancestors, since he achieves peace for twelve years, thereby returning Britain to the wholeness it had not had since the days of Brutus.²⁰ Though Geoffrey's story may lack a personified, individual Fate (as was the pre-Christian, Indo-European tradition), this cyclic process of history is at odds with the linear Christian narrative from the Fall of Man to the Revelation, as it hints to a destiny shared by members of a certain family and periodically repeated.²¹

Despite Arthur's apparent similarities to Constantine and Brutus, there is also a significant difference: Arthur does not die, but is taken to Avalon; he is prophesied by Merlin to return and recapture Britain from the Saxons.²² This perceived return of the King, which was taken to be true by the readers for several centuries, is also a common theme between older Indo-European myths, most notably the homeric *Odyssey*; the idea of passing over water on the way to the afterlife is also common.²³ These latent pre-Christian elements, together with Merlin's ambivalent function and identity, reveal the prevalent role of pagan pan-Indo-European tradition in Geoffrey's work, which is less purely Christian than he would have his readers believe: the will of God, manifest in the Crusades and in Arthur's and his councillors' goodness, is reconciled with Merlin's magic and an unavoidable, self-repeating fate.

Sir Thomas Malory wrote his *Le Morte Darthur* over three centuries after Geoffrey's *History* was finished, at a very different historical time. While Christianity was the only faith in England (and had been since 1290), it was felt to be shrinking: the Black Death had significantly diminished the population and the Ottoman Empire was spreading into Europe; anticlericalism was evident both in literature (most notably in Langland's *Piers Plowman*) and the popular uprisings of 1389 and 1450.²⁴ With the perceived threat towards Christianity at once more urgent and farther away than in the time of Geoffrey, Arthur and his knights must face their own doubts and ethical shortcomings, for the greatest danger to them and their faith comes from within, not from the pagans.

Saracens (a word that here denotes simply non-Christians)²⁵ may appear in *Le Morte Darthur*, but they do not function as significant antagonists of Arthur, as they did in *The History of the Kings of Britain*. Instead, they are said by Merlin to attack his enemies, and can

¹⁷ Merlin's prophecies: Monmouth, *History*, p. 169, 170-185, 282

Daniel's prophecies: Dan ii.27-45, vii-xii, in *The Bible: Authorised King James Version with Apocrypha* (Oxford: Oxford World Classics, 2008)

¹⁸ Monmouth, pp. 282-283

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 151 (Constantine), 186-194 (Aurelius), 202-204 (Utherpendragon)

²⁰ Echard, p. 55

²¹ M. L. West, *Indo-European Poetry and Myth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 379-380

²² Monmouth, p. 261, 282

²³ West, p. 439, 389

²⁴ Tanner, pp. 134-140

²⁵ Sir Thomas Malory, *Le Morte Darthur* (New York: Norton, 2004), note 6, p. 27

thus be seen as lawful judgement on the nobles who rebel against the king. This reflects the belief, growing since the 13th century, that those invaded by the Arabs were not worthy to be saved.²⁶ Merlin's main concern is to stop Arthur killing the rebels needlessly, after he has already defeated them, as the Saracens do not pose a danger to the young king himself.²⁷ The issue in this passage, therefore, is not the absent, faceless Saracens, but rather the eleven kings' own rebellion, coupled with Arthur's own pitilessness; these events can, if Arthur allows himself to be ruled by his vengeful feelings, inadvertently lead to the victory of the Saracens elsewhere. This time the 'infidels' are not an external threat that will unite the Christian Britons against them, but function rather as a warning of what will occur if the Britons continue fighting amongst themselves, thereby making this passage almost a parable for the War of the Roses.

The Saracens' threat to Britain is later realised, when they appear as allies of Rome in Malory's version of the war between Arthur and Lucius. Along with 'fyffty gyauntys that were engendirde with fendis', the Saracens are described by Malory as Lucius' 'horrible peple'.²⁸ Despite the fact that Rome was, at the time *Le Morte Darthur* was written, the last of the old strongholds of Christianity (after the fall of Asia Minor to the Ottoman Empire), Malory chose to portray it as a corrupt, greedy empire that resorts to alliance with infidels and demons in order to defeat Arthur – for, as the ambassadors say, the British King is too powerful to be defeated with natural means.²⁹ These prove to be a great challenge for Arthur and his people, as he loses many good knights – but, of course, Arthur must win in the end;³⁰ the supernatural enemies serve to emphasise the British King's superiority over the Roman Empire. This victory, arguably the greatest of his achievements, reflects the fact that crusades, despite their military and moral decline, were still idealised in the 15th Century.³¹

Malory's work does not portray Saracens merely as antagonists, however: Sir Palomides from Babylon attains a place in Arthur's court. Initially Palomides abducts Isode, but loses her to Tristram; Isode spares his life, so that he will not die a pagan.³² Instead, he goes to Arthur's court, and proceeds to perform great feats in order to win Isode, in the manner of the Round Table's 'worshipful knights', seeking worldly honour for the love of his lady³³ – he even manages to defeat Lancelot, albeit briefly and not entirely fairly.³⁴ Flawed though Palomides still is, his faults now stem not from aggressive desire, but from courtly love, a fault all too well known to the knights of Arthur. So, he begs Lancelot's forgiveness for 'myne unknyghtly dedes', and persuades Lancelot not to fight further, but rather to let him be honoured in the eyes of his lady.³⁵ Palomides' victory may be thanks to the (unacceptable, by courtly standards) killing of Lancelot's horse. Yet Lancelot's understanding, in part due to his own love for Guinevere, illustrates not only that the first knight of the Round Table is now in a moral decline, but also that the Saracen is ascending.³⁶ In fact, everyone that sees him on this day says 'Alas... that Sir Palomydes were nat crystened', and later Tristram remarks that, as no Christian man can boast that he ever fled from them, he will certainly face the Saracen Palomides.³⁷ It is clear from these two quotes that, no matter how much Palomides achieves, he can never be truly regarded as an equal to the other knights because he is not technically a

²⁶ Glaster, p. 236

²⁷ Malory, pp. 26-27

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 118

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 133, 135

³¹ The military decline can be seen by the fact that Jerusalem was never captured by Christians after the end of the Third Crusade (1187-1192); the moral one by the brutal sacking of (entirely Christian, if not Catholic) Constantinople in 1204, during the Fourth Crusade, due to a quarrel between the Crusaders and their former ally, Emperor Alexius. Glaster, pp. 212-218

³² *Ibid.*, p. 265

³³ Beverly Kennedy, *Knighthood in the 'Morte Darthur'* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1992), pp. 177-199

³⁴ Malory, pp. 435-436

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ Kennedy, p. 193

³⁷ Malory, p. 435, 491, respectively

Christian. Malory's insistence that baptism (as opposed to good works alone) is a prerequisite for salvation is part of a wider ideological debate of the Middle Ages, also evident in the poem 'St Erkenwald'.³⁸ In fact, Malory goes one step beyond the 'Erkenwald' poet, for in the end Palomides not only displays great generosity and fairness towards Tristan, but he also asserts that he has long believed in Jesus and Mary: even good deeds coupled with faith cannot save a non-Christian, according to this book.³⁹ The 'Book of Tristan' ends with Palomides' reconciliation with Tristan, his baptism and their consequent return to Camelot.⁴⁰ The strategic place of the baptism, which is the only resolution the tale of Tristan can have (since Isode is married, a happy end for them is out of the question) also serves to enhance the importance of the ceremony.

It is clear, then, from the example of Sir Palomides, that there can be no salvation for those who have not been christened, regardless of their moral value or, indeed, even their own personal faith. This is also evident in the extent to which priests, anchorites and hermits influence the knights' perception of the world and their actions. During their quest for the Holy Grail, in particular, the knights often turn for guidance to holy men and women. Lancelot, after failing to see the Grail and losing his horse, consults a hermit and does every penance that is required of him.⁴¹ He also has his adventures interpreted by an anchoress.⁴² After he has completed his penance, which not only included self-imposed restraint and fasting, but also a divinely ordained twenty four days' sleep, he is worthy to briefly see the Grail.⁴³ His penance may be dependent on his own self-discipline and repentance, and the will of God, but the hermit's and anchoress's interpretation and guidance are also crucial for the acknowledgement of his sin. His obedience to the holy people's advice also reflects his turning away from the sin of pride, even though he can still not attain the stability (i.e. the perseverance in the pursuit of holiness) required for complete success at the quest.⁴⁴

Tanner notes that hermits, anchorites and the clergy were exceptionally numerous in the late Middle Ages, exercising great influence over the laity.⁴⁵ Yet Sir Bors' experience shows that not all those who pose as holy men are to be trusted: he meets a man 'clothed in a religious wede' who, far from aiding and guiding him, chides him for abandoning his brother in order to save a lady.⁴⁶ It is later revealed that the supposed hermit was, in fact, 'the fynde', who is trying to steer Bors away from the Grail.⁴⁷ Bors was swayed and tormented by the false hermit's remarks because what he had told him was in accord with 'proper' behaviour: his brother, his own blood, should come before a stranger. Ultimately, however, it was his own judgement that he had to rely on, and it led him to the right decision. This is in accord with the more internal aspects of faith and piety evident in Malory's work that I have already mentioned: provided that the knight in question is 'tendir-herted' and faithful, like Sir Bors, he will make the right decision of his own accord, not having to depend blindly on some general rules.⁴⁸

The role of religious people as interpreters and guides is further complicated by Merlin, who not only helps Uther trick Igraine (as he did in Geoffrey's *History*), but also acts as guide to Arthur in his early days, prophesying the end of Camelot and even saving the

³⁸ Thorlac Turville-Petre, *Reading Middle English Literature* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), p. 107

³⁹ Malory, p. 492

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 494-495

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 533

⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 537-538

⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 577-578

⁴⁴ Dhira B. Mahoney, 'The Truest and Holiest Tale: Malory's Transformation of *La Queste del Saint Graal* in Dhira B. Mahoney (ed.), *The Grail: a casebook* (New York: Garland, 2000), pp. 379-396, 390

⁴⁵ Tanner, pp. 140-143

⁴⁶ Malory, p. 549

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 552

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

king's life by using an 'inchaumentement'.⁴⁹ Merlin is certainly not a Christian figure, yet he is nevertheless a benevolent being with supernatural powers. However, he is not present throughout the narrative. In fact, he is put 'undir the stone' (i.e. buried alive) by the Lady of the Lake relatively early in the narrative; his downfall is precipitated by his 'dotage' for Nenyve.⁵⁰ The word 'dotage' implies that his love for her is foolish, which diminishes his perceived wisdom in the eyes of the reader; in fact, Merlin knew all along how their affair was going to end, but he could not help himself. This hints at a certain moral failing on his part, a lack of the self-restraint and prudence which is expected of Arthur's court and is particularly crucial during the quest for the Holy Grail.

The aforementioned cases illustrate the complex, often contradictory nature of faith in Malory's work: non-Christians cannot be saved unless they are christened (Palomides); knights need to accept the advice and guidance of holy people and do penance for their sins (Lancelot) – yet supposedly holy men and women can also lead them astray, where their own judgment would have served them better (Bors). Moreover, sorcerers can provide good guidance to Christians for a while (Merlin). Malory offers an ambiguous world with few absolute truths, and very permeable boundaries between right and wrong, between holy and fiendish. In this world knights must use their own judgement, yet the existence of a God who will judge these decisions is never doubted.

The most overtly Christian figure is none other than Sir Galahad. Galahad is the most high born of all knights, being a direct descendant of Jesus Christ on his father's side,⁵¹ according to Guinevere, and 'cousyn nughe unto Joseph of Arimathea' on his maternal grandfather's side.⁵² His conception may have been sinful, but his life could hardly be more pure and Christian: he is raised in a monastery, has no relations with women, is capable to heal the Maimed King with the help of the Grail and finally gives his life in the service of God, a God often makes himself manifest through real, tangible miracles.⁵³ According to conventional Christian faith, miracles are characterised by their causation (God), the wonder they arouse, and / or their function as signs.⁵⁴ The two swords in the stone (Arthur's and Galahad's) certainly adhere to these standards: their divine origin is considered certain by the Archbishop and Lancelot; their unyielding nature to any knight but their rightful owner and, not least, their ability to reveal the exceptional virtue and abilities of these knights ensure that they are regarded as miracles.⁵⁵

The greatest miracle, however, and the one that most influences the Round Table, is the appearance of the Holy Grail. The Grail's nature and works inspire the Knights to start their longest, most demanding quest. It is important to note, however, that the Grail is not originally an object of Christian faith, but its myth can be traced to pagan Celtic mythology about a dish of plenty.⁵⁶ Indeed, the fact that it can feed the knights and heal the (castrated?) Maimed King harks back to pagan legends of fertility, as well as Jesus feeding the five thousand.⁵⁷ Not only is it pagan in origin, but the Grail's connection to Christianity itself is heavily based on the apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemus. C. W. Marx notes that the *Gospel of Nicodemus* was very popular in Britain in the late Middle Ages, used by other authors and translated from French and Latin; bearing in mind that its original language was Greek, the many translations prove its popularity and the fact that it was largely accepted in Western

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 62, 36, respectively

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 78-79

⁵¹ Malory, p. 502

⁵² Ibid., p. 464

⁵³ Kennedy, p. 210

⁵⁴ Bartlett, pp. 8-9; see also Ps.cxviii.23

⁵⁵ Malory, pp. 8-9, 498-499

⁵⁶ Roger Sherman Loomis, *The Grail: From Celtic Myth To Christian Symbol* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1963), p. 223

⁵⁷ Malory, p. 583, 503

Europe.⁵⁸ The tale of Joseph's arrival in Britain, extensively narrated by Malory,⁵⁹ does not come from *Nicodemus*: it is part of a series of medieval legends, probably stemming from French romance, and specifically the 'trilogy of universal history' of the prose *Joseph d'Armathie, Roman de Merlin* and *Perceval*.⁶⁰ The syncretism evident in Malory's depiction of the Grail gives a more open and accepting impression of faith than the romance would otherwise have. It is a tale where the old pagan myth, official Christian dogma and apocryphal stories are presented as equally valid. Yet despite the fact that 'The Noble Tale of the Sankgreal' has some elements of non-Christian faith and culture, Malory gives it a wholly Christian interpretation, with Christ himself appearing to Galahad and instructing him on how to heal the Maimed King.⁶¹ Moreover, the knights seeking the Grail must rely on a completely different set of values than the one they live by during their mundane quest.⁶²

Apart from the Christian and Celtic elements, *Le Morte Darthur* also reveals belief in fate, a force that determines the future and cannot be changed by human agency, as is revealed by Merlin.⁶³ Furthermore, when Arthur, just after his crowning, decides to have all the children born in May killed because of Merlin's prophecy, the only one to escape is Mordred, who is to fulfil the prophecy.⁶⁴ This incident of self-fulfilling prophecy, a common theme in Greek mythology (e.g. the tale of Oedipus), bears evidence to other non-Christian influence in the matter of fate. Like Geoffrey's *History*, the idea that the king is not dead but will one day return to his old realm is present.⁶⁵

If some aspects of faith in Geoffrey's *History* and Malory's *Morte* are straightforwardly Judaeo-Christian, then, others reveal a more complex syncretism between dominant Christianity and older pagan religions. Elements of Indo-European belief, like an inexorable fate and benevolent natural magic, managed to survive the arrival of Semitic monotheism. Such elements may not be very extensive, and they probably do not represent a conscious choice of their authors. Yet their very existence serves to undermine the firm Judaeo-Christian conviction that there is only one God, thereby offering a richer, contradictory view of medieval faith.

⁵⁸ C. W. Marx, 'The Gospel of Nicodemus in Old English and Middle English' in Zbigniew Izydorczyk (ed.), *The Medieval Gospel of Nicodemus: Texts, Intertexts and Contexts in Western Europe* (Tempe: Arizona State University, 1997), pp. 207-260

⁵⁹ Malory, pp. 507-509

⁶⁰ Richard O'Gorman, 'The Gospel of Nicodemus in the Vernacular Literature of Medieval France' in Izydorczyk (ed.), *The Medieval Gospel of Nicodemus*, pp. 103-132, 121

⁶¹ Malory, pp. 583-584

⁶² Mahoney, p. 383

⁶³ See n. 50

⁶⁴ Malory, p. 39

⁶⁵ Here, of course, it is enhanced by the wholly Christian promise that Arthur shall then recover the Holy Land. *Ibid.*, p. 689

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