

The Meaning and Significance of the Holy Grail

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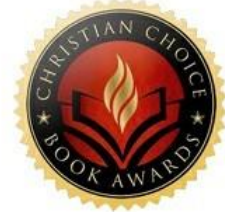
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Unholy Grail



Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near. Let him who does wrong still do wrong; let him who is filthy still be filthy; let him who does right still do right; and let him who is holy still be holy.

Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to every man according to what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End... I am the Root and Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star.

~ Revelation 22:10-12, 16

Introduction

The Holy Grail was, of course, the cup that Christ used at the Last Supper to celebrate the Passover with his disciples before his crucifixion. But despite the many stories surrounding it, there is no evidence whatsoever that the actual cup survived antiquity. So rather than speaking of it as a literal object, most of the stories instead focus on its symbolism. Like the bread used in Christian communion services, the cup is a symbol of Jesus' body or essence, and the wine in the cup represents the blood of Christ, which was poured out at his death as the ultimate sacrifice for the sins of humanity. As Jesus said in Luke 22:20 "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you."

However, the symbolism doesn't end there. Jesus' crucifixion took place on Passover – the Jewish celebration of their liberation from Egypt in which the blood of a lamb was smeared over the doorpost of their houses so that the angel of death would "pass over" them. The lamb then was roasted and eaten – Christ is the "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" and at the Last Supper he said, "This is my body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me." Easter Sunday when Christ rose from the dead was also the Jewish festival of First Fruits, and the Apostle Paul uses that analogy:

But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep. For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming, then comes the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule, all authority, and all power. (1 Corinthians 15:20-24)

The Eucharist – the celebration of bread and wine in remembrance of Christ – is thus the richest and most complex of all religious symbols, and the Holy Grail is typically presented as a gateway to immortality, and a means of securing eternal life for those who "drink" of it.¹

¹ The symbolism continues: in the Old Testament the Ark of the Covenant was placed in the innermost part of the Temple, in a room known as the Holy of Holies. The central portion on the lid of the Ark between the golden figures of the cherubim was known as the "Mercy Seat" – the place where God would provide propitiation and mercy for the sins of the people. The exact design for the Temple was given by God to Moses and was a representation on earth of what is in heaven. The High Priest of Israel was the only person who could enter the Holy of Holies and he did so only once a year on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, in order to sprinkle blood from a sacrificial animal on the Mercy Seat. When Jesus died, the veil covering the Holy of Holies was torn from top to bottom, showing that the way was open for all to come into the presence of God through the blood of Christ. In the words of Petra's song *Enter In*,

Once a year for sacrifice just one priest could pay the price, and step inside the inner veil to make the people free.
The Temple stood the same for years till the Nazarene appears – things will never be the same since 33 AD.
When He spoke and bowed his head, he who saved the world was dead.
Then the earth began to shake, heaven's wall began to break.
Opening the Holy Place, the temple veil is torn in two, the way is clear for me and you to enter in.

In addition to Jesus being the Passover lamb, one of his many other titles is "High Priest." In that role he symbolically

Since the time of Christ, his followers have celebrated his death and resurrection in this manner, but the actual Last Supper cup did not become a focus of attention until a thousand years later. The Middle Ages was the era when the Holy Grail was invented as a literary concept. In 1136 Geoffrey of Monmouth wrote the highly popular work *Historia Regnum Britannie*, which “documented” the existence of King Arthur. Then during the years 1180 through 1240 after the religious fervor that inspired the first four crusades (i.e., from 1099 through 1204), was the time when most of the grail romances were written. These include: *Le Conte du Graal* by Chrétien de Troyes c. 1190, *Le Roman du Graal*, *Joseph d’Arimathe*, *Merlin*, and *Perceval* by Robert de Boron c. 1205-10, *La Queste del Saint Graal*, c. 1225 included in the *Vulgate* or the *Lancelot-Grail Cycle* (a collection of Arthurian stories) c. 1245, and *Parzival*, by Wolfram von Eschenbach, c. 1216. Sir Thomas Malory’s *Le Morte D’Arthur*, was written later (c. 1469) and was essentially a rewriting of all of the stories of King Arthur into one consistent tale. All of these were read and told throughout Europe and were immensely popular. They have also retained their popularity through the centuries even down to the present – the Wagnerian operas were based on these themes,² and films such as *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* and *The DaVinci Code* continue to retell the stories with new twists.

This was also the era when chivalry, the Lord and the Lady, and *Noblesse Oblige* were at their height, and the grail romances had a large impact on the societies of that day. A number of these literary works, especially those of Chrétien de Troyes, were actually commissioned by Henry II, King of France and England, and/or Elanor of Aquitaine, his queen, for a different and much more prosaic purpose.³ Nevertheless, one of the main motives of these writings was to elevate the conduct of men-at-arms so that these men would help build up society rather than tear it down.

entered the Holy of Holies for us, gave his own blood that was figuratively sprinkled on the Mercy Seat as the sacrifice for everyone, and opened the way for all to enter. Before returning to heaven Jesus indicated that he would send the Spirit of God to live in us, and the Eucharist therefore symbolizes us partaking of Jesus through the Spirit, which now lives within us. Furthermore, Jesus is both priest and king and therefore he has both ecclesiastical and political power. After his return he will rule as king, and his throne will be the Mercy Seat of the Ark.

² Wagner was essentially neo-pagan and attracted to the philosophy of Arthur Schopenhauer. The latter was an atheist, enamored with Eastern religion, and believed that the world was inherently irrational. But Wagner’s final work *Parsifal* was a recreation of Wolfram von Eschenbach’s *Parzival* as a sacred consecration play which included a celebration of the Eucharist. According to Nietzsche, Wagner knelt before the crucifix, and may have sought for the God of the Bible. Like the rest of Wagner’s work and the state of his soul, it is a mystery.

³ Henry II, who was the cleverest and most powerful of all of the Angevin rulers, had his own purpose for commissioning these literary works. They were funded not simply to improve public morality, but also as a subtle form of propaganda, meant to associate himself and his Norman (French) lineage with an ancient and mythic past, and so legitimize his reign in the minds and hearts of his Celtic and Anglo-Saxon subjects in England. The latter were resentful of Norman rule which was often overbearing and high-handed (Sir Walter Scott’s novel *Ivanhoe* provides insight into the tenor of those times). England was essentially the milk cow that supplied the Angevin rulers with money to carry out their plans. Henry II was the Count of Anjou in France before becoming King of England, and the Angevin dynasty, which included Richard the Lionhearted as well as Prince John of Robin Hood fame, was based in Angers, France. The Angevins were more French than they were English, and the many conflicts in this royal house were for the most part responsible for the long and destructive wars, and the hatred between France and England.

Typical of the Arthurian stories is the poem *Der Arme Heinrich*, which was written by Hartmann von Aue, a German writer and minnesinger who was a contemporary of Chrétien de Troyes. Hartmann was interested in achieving balance in life between job, marital and family relationships, and devotion to God. This poem tells of a young wealthy knight and baron who was stricken with leprosy and told that he could be healed only by the blood of a virgin who would sacrifice herself for him. He eventually meets a daughter of a commoner who falls in love with him. He is eventually healed, marries the girl, elevates her to noble status, and the two of them achieve salvation through service.

In other words, the Arthurian/Grail stories were not merely entertainment; they also contained a number of moral and spiritual themes:

1. The need for adventure and for seeking greatness, as well as the concept of life being a struggle, which should involve a quest for a higher meaning and purpose.
2. The need to improve conduct, especially for leaders, and to provide paradigms of highness and nobility for both male and female, each in their own way.
3. The importance of marriage, and that sexuality should be ideally and fully expressed in the context of a committed relationship. The man should be a servant leader and the woman should submit and give herself to him.
4. The reality that morality and spirituality are inseparable—that purity and moral standards are an essential aspect of those who would seek for God.
5. The idea that a key element of life involves sacrificing oneself for the good of others; that a person is not really living until he or she has something worth dying for. It is significant that the Grail is a “serving” device.

Joseph of Arimathea, Mary Magdalene, and the Holy Grail

The grail stories have their origin in the symbolism of the Last Supper as indicated above, during which Jesus foretold his own death and resurrection. But they also involve the actions of Joseph of Arimathea, a wealthy religious leader. The New Testament Gospels tell us that he was a member of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish aristocracy in Jerusalem, who were the ones most responsible for having Jesus arrested and crucified. At some point during the day of Jesus' death, Joseph went to the Roman authorities and asked for the body of Christ. Together with Nicodemus, another member of the Sanhedrin who had become convinced of the reality of Jesus' divinity, the two men prepared the body of Christ for burial and placed it in Joseph's own tomb, braving the hatred of their colleagues. After Jesus' resurrection his apostles and disciples began preaching and teaching very boldly, which drew the renewed wrath of the Jewish religious leaders. The Sanhedrin had planned on killing Lazarus, a friend of Christ, and whom Jesus had raised from the dead, and they continued their hostility to all of Christ's followers. Joseph of Arimathea, being one of their own, was therefore a traitor to them, and may have been arrested and imprisoned. Eventually he was released or escaped, and according to tradition, Joseph, Lazarus, Mary Magdalene, and perhaps others⁴ boarded a ship and sailed away from Israel in AD 37 (the date of AD 63 has also been cited) in order to escape persecution.

There is some evidence that they may have landed on the island of Cyprus, as there are several churches on the island dedicated to Lazarus ([Sorensen, 2011a](#)). The latter may have remained on Cyprus, but with or without Lazarus, the group purportedly continued their voyage to Gaul and landed near Marseille at the place where the town Saintes Maries de-la-Mer is now located (at that time Marseille was known as Massillia, and was an outpost town of the Roman Empire). The church Notre-Dame-de-la-Mer in St. Maries de-la-Mer still honors the memory of Mary Magdalene and other women who were with her or who met her. Mary Magdalene and Lazarus were said to have stayed in the Marseille area, and there is a strong tradition of their living not only in Marseille, but also in the area around the town of St. Maximin, north of Marseille in the rocky Baume Mountains (Maximin was said to have been one of the 70 disciples that Jesus sent out to preach, and who sailed with Mary to Gaul). The tombs of Mary and Maximin are located in the crypt of the St. Madeleine Basilica in the town, and the supposed skull of Mary Magdalene is also kept there in a reliquary. Near the town and farther up in the mountains there is a grotto where Mary Magdalene is said to have gone to pray, and in some of the stories, to live in isolation for many years.

Mary Magdalene ([Sorensen, 2011c](#)) was therefore not directly involved with the Holy Grail object itself, but rather with its themes of service and sacrifice. She was the woman who served Jesus by anointing him and washing his feet, thereby preparing him for his death and resurrection. Thus her life became a representation of the grail principles – a human picture of the grail in action.

⁴ Some say that the group also included Mary the Mother of Jesus, Martha the sister of Mary Magdalene, and Philip the Evangelist.

Joseph of Arimathea ([Sorensen, 2011a](#)), possibly the first custodian of the grave-cloth that has become known as the Shroud of Turin ([Schwartz, 2024](#)), had a more direct connection with the Holy Grail. Robert de Boron's story of him being the original keeper of the grail cup and holding it under the cross to catch Jesus' blood, may well be a literary version of the fact that Joseph was the first owner of the Shroud by virtue of his provision of both the tomb and the cloth used for Christ's burial. De Boron was a cleric who wrote *Joseph d'Armathe* in 1205 after his master, Gautier de Montbéliard, returned to France following the fourth Crusade. The Shroud had been kept in Constantinople since 944 and was displayed regularly in religious services there, but the city was sacked by the crusaders in 1204, and the Shroud was taken (in one of the many ironies of history, the Crusaders of 1204-5 thus never made it to the Holy Land, and instead sacked the capital city of the Roman Empire). A number of crusaders had seen or heard of what to them was a mysterious and holy object. If the Shroud of Turin is actually the burial cloth of Christ, then it is a "grail object," as it contains his blood. So when De Boron wrote his story, he may have "shrouded" the acts of Joseph by referring instead to the cup used at the Last Supper as a way of emphasizing the significance of both the blood of Christ and Joseph's actions. See the following article: ([Sorensen, 2011e](#)).

There are other fascinating stories and/or legends about Joseph of Arimathea traveling to Britain. It was said that the source of Joseph's wealth was trading, and especially trading in tin. There are tin mines in Cornwall that were in operation at that time, and it has been speculated that Joseph owned a fleet of ships for transporting tin ore from the mines to buyers (bronze was a popular metal of antiquity which required both copper and tin in its production). If Joseph was indeed a tin merchant, he may well have made a number of voyages to England. Therefore, he would have been well equipped to leave Israel by boat and take others with him. The Talmud (Jewish scribal writings) indicated that Joseph of Arimathea was Jesus' great uncle (the brother of the Virgin Mary's father). It was therefore speculated that Joseph brought Jesus to England as a boy during the "silent" years of Jesus' youth (the Bible doesn't provide any information on the life of Jesus between age 12 and 30). William's Blake's well-known poem *And Did Those Feet In Ancient Times* written in 1808 speaks of this, and the poem was the source of the anthem *Jerusalem* regarded by many as the national anthem of England. The poem and the anthem inspired the popular 1981 film *Chariots of Fire* as well as others.

The stories of Joseph tell us that he came to Glastonbury in Cornwall, the location of the Isle of Avalon in the King Arthur tales. If true, he was therefore Britain's first evangelist, and was said to have founded the first church in England at Glastonbury (a mud and wattle structure that later became the "Lady Chapel," the ruins of which can still be seen). He supposedly thrust his staff into the ground on Wearyall Hill, and the staff budded and became the "Glastonbury Thorn," which has been tended by the monks there for centuries. De Boron also wrote that Joseph brought the Grail cup with him to England and to the Isle of Avalon where King Arthur was later said to have died. The cup was supposedly dropped into what became known as the "Chalice Well." The water from the well flowing out of the "Blood Spring" has a high iron content, and the red deposits from the well-water are said to symbolize the iron nails used at the Crucifixion. Visitors can still drink the water, and this may have

been the inspiration for William Morris' book *The Well at the World's End*, where a well at the edge of the sea contains a cup engraved with the words, "The Strong of Heart Shall Drink from Me."

It was also said that Joseph was the ancestor of King Arthur through his daughter, who supposedly remained in Britain, married a Welsh prince, and became the ancestor of the Pendragons – the Christian kings of Britain, and it is claimed that the graves of Arthur and Guinevere are in Glastonbury. De Boron wrote that the Round Table of King Arthur was the successor to the Last Supper table. Similar to the Jewish Passover custom of leaving an empty seat at the table for the return of Elijah, one seat at the Round Table was left open for the *Siege Perilous*, the Perilous Seat of the knight who would one day be successful in the quest for the Holy Grail.

But regardless of whether Joseph was actually an evangelist to Britain, or his daughter was the distaff side of a dynasty of Cornish/Welsh kings leading ultimately to King Arthur, we do know that Christianity came to Britain very early, and that the Celtic people in England readily responded to it, as did the Irish Celts when St. Patrick came several hundred years later. Whether history, legend, or both, the stories of Joseph of Arimathea and Mary Magdalene are thus intimately connected with King Arthur, the legendary grail king and Celtic hero.

The Religions of the Celts—Druidism and Christianity



Druid Priest

The religion of the ancient Celts prior to the coming of Christianity was Druidism. Druidism was, in many ways, the essence of the Celtic spirit – a nature religion that was magic and wild, in which one could supposedly enter the trees, the rocks, the waves, and the birds, and become one with them. It was also very passionate, with powerful desires – for sex, for fighting, and for life itself.

Male-female relationships among the Celts were much less constrained than in other societies of the same era. Although men led and dominated in both politics and home life, women were not as

restricted as they were in Roman society, and there were many powerful Celtic women. There was a corresponding freedom in Celtic sexuality, which was perhaps a little too free: rapes were common, and when a king was crowned he would copulate with a white mare to demonstrate his virility.

Nature was of central importance to the Druids, especially forests and oak trees; the natural world was seen as being imbued with magic and wonder. A Druid adept could supposedly “shift his shape” and fly with a raven, enter a wave or a tree, or become an animal such as a boar or an ox.

However wonderful this magic appeared, there were also dark elements to Druidism and Celtic religion. The “shape-shifting” meant that there was no fixed identity – everything was fluid and the patterns were not predictable. Nature was filled with curses, traps, and taboos known as “gessa,” a Celtic word that also means “obligation.” Like a concealed pit in a forest, a person could easily and even unwittingly stumble into these or fail in a duty, and so become cursed. Sooner or later it was inevitable that a taboo would be broken and that life would be ruined, leading to fatalism and a sense of resignation. Many young warriors expressed the desire to die young and in battle, and in the Celtic tales, all of the heroes had one or more fatal flaws that eventually and inevitably destroyed them, like the Greek myth of the heel of Achilles.

The gods of the Celts were the source of these “gessa,” and were capricious, cruel, dangerous, and treacherous. They ate humans and were constantly looking to entrap and devour people; consequently they were feared and dreaded.



The statues of the ancient Celtic gods display their ferocity and grotesqueness—they were sometimes depicted as killing and eating men. The carved gargoyles and demons from Celtic Ireland and England which now seem rather quaint and amusing were very real and terrifying to the Celts. Thus, ancient Celtic society, inspired by Druidism, was at once full of life and full of death.

The great Gaols of Ireland are the men that God made mad.
For all their wars are merry, and all their songs are sad.
G.K. Chesterton

The grotesque and fearful nature of the ancient Celtic and Druidical gods helps to explain the wild and drunken Celtic culture, particularly in Ireland, where prior to a fight the men would paint themselves blue and tear off their clothes. Wearing only sandals and a golden *torc* around their neck, they ran naked into battle, shrieking and enraged to such an extent that they were no longer recognizable. Celtic warriors spoke of the *warp-spasm* which came over them in battle and supposedly transformed them into awesome fighting machines before whom their enemies fled. In order to sleep they would drink themselves into a stupor to avoid the horrible nightmares of the gods who called them to dismember their enemies in extreme acts of rage and cruelty. It is said that some warriors died of fright from these alcohol-induced nightmares even before the battle started. Each Celtic tribe warred against and pillaged the others, and the coastal tribes routinely went on slaving raids, entering English and Welch villages at night or near dawn, stealing women for use as sex slaves and children for household and farm work.



Saint Patrick of Ireland

Saint Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland, was born in a British coastal village around AD 387. As a teenager he was captured by an Irish slave trader and sold as a slave to an Irish chieftain. He spent six years in slavery as a shepherd, with little to eat and only rags to wear, despite the fact that he was

required to live outside with the sheep he tended. In his desperate circumstances, he turned to prayer and to God, and one evening he had a dream where a voice told him that it was time for him to leave. Despite the death penalty for slaves who attempted to escape, he walked to the coast and somehow was able to obtain passage on a ship back to his family in England. He spent his middle years as a monk and a pastor but was never at peace until he returned to Ireland at age 40 in AD 433. It was there that he found his true calling, bringing the message of Christ to the Irish. Such was the impact of this one man through the power of his life and the winsomeness of his message, that he profoundly influenced the entire country.

Virtually everyone in authority was initially against him. The ministers to the ruling elite were largely Druid priests (each ruler had a spiritual adviser), and they resented any challenge to their place and position. Patrick was therefore continually and harshly opposed; he indicated that in his early years of ministry in Ireland he feared for his life every day. This intense opposition and the fact that he was completely alone makes his achievements and the power of his message even more remarkable. The following poem ascribed to him is Irish Celtic in its celebration of nature, and is a ringing statement of his faith in the midst of attack:

I arise today
Through a mighty strength, the invocation of the Trinity,
Through belief in the three-ness,
Through confession of the one-ness,
Of the Creator of Creation.

I arise today
Through the strength of heaven,
Light of sun,
Radiance of moon,
Splendor of fire,
Speed of lightning,
Swiftness of wind,
Depth of sea,
Stability of earth, Firmness of rock.

I arise today
Through God's strength to pilot me,
God's might to uphold me,
God's wisdom to guide me,
God's eye to look before me,
God's ear to hear me,
God's word to speak for me,
God's hand to guard me,
God's way to lie before me,
God's shield to protect me,

God's host to save me
From snares of devils,
From temptation of vices,
From everyone who shall wish me ill,
Afar and near,
Alone and in multitude.

Christ to shield me today
Against poison, against burning,
Against drowning, against wounding,
So that there will come to me abundance of reward.

Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me,
Christ in me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me,
Christ on my right, Christ on my left,
Christ when I lie down, Christ when I arise.

I arise today
Through a mighty strength, the invocation of the Trinity,
Through the power of the Creator of Creation.
The Breastplate of Saint Patrick

He was one of the first persons in history to speak out against the slave trade of which he himself had been a victim, and which was routinely engaged in by Irish chieftains. Due to Patrick's influence, slave trading in Ireland was abolished by the end of his life or shortly afterward. The violence of the society was also moderated and the internecine warfare between the tribes reduced. The Irish still celebrate this amazing man – St. Patrick's Day on March 17 was the date of his death.

The nature of the Celtic gods and the brutality of early Celtic culture is also critical in understanding why Christianity had such a powerful impact on Celtic society, first in France and England, and later in Ireland. Understanding that the God of the universe was good, loving, and bountiful was perhaps the most powerful force of all in healing and transforming the Celtic world.

This magical world, though still full of adventure and surprise, is no longer full of dread. Rather, Christ has trodden all of the pathways before us... We only have to be quiet and listen... This [Celtic Christian] sense of the world as holy, as the Book of God—as a healing mystery, fraught with divine messages—could never have risen out of Greco-Roman civilization, threaded with the profound pessimism of the ancients and their Platonic suspicion of the body as unholy and the world devoid of meaning ([Cahill, 1995, p. 133](#)).

The melding of Christianity with Celtic culture thus produced a beautiful thing – a society where people still regarded the natural world with a sense of awe and wonder, but without the fear and dread

of their Druidical forbears, and with a moderation of the drunken violence and conflict that had plagued pre-Christian Ireland. Furthermore, they were not burdened with the Gnostic and Platonic notions of the body being evil – ideas which had deeply infected the Roman Catholic church and led to its doctrine of celibacy and the suppression of women and sexuality. This somewhat Christianized, but nevertheless, very raw and heathen Celtic society was the world of King Arthur.

King Arthur, the Holy Grail, and Christ



King Arthur

The story of King Arthur is a story of the Celts in Britain and is the highest and most fully developed of all of the Celtic tales. Britain had been conquered by Julius Caesar and therefore a part of the Roman Empire for several hundred years, but then Rome fell to the Goths in AD 410. The British had been accustomed to peace and security, but that was suddenly withdrawn when all of the Roman troops were called back to Italy to defend the homeland. Sensing weakness, the Picts from the north, the Irish from the east, and the Angles, Saxons, Jutes, and others from the west, eventually invaded and conquered large areas of what is now England. The Celtic warlord Vortigern had hired and brought in Saxon mercenaries who at first repelled the Picts, but soon they called for more of their countrymen to invade and conquer. The Roman and Celtic British were therefore in desperate straits and in great need of military leadership.

Relatively little is known of fifth and sixth century Britain because of the societal conflict and the fact that the invaders were illiterate. The only known historical account of that era was from the monk Gildas (c. AD 500 – 570) who wrote *De Excidio et Conquestu Britanniae* (“on the conquest and ruin of Britain”) as a sermon to expose the sins of his contemporaries.

King Arthur has been identified with a number of historical figures: Lucius Artorius Castus, a Roman military leader in the second century; Riothamas ([Ashe, 1987](#)), a possible “King of the Bretonnes” in the fifth century; Ambrosius Aurelianus ([Monmouth, c. 1136](#)), a Roman-British military leader who won several battles against the Saxons in the sixth century (the above mentioned Gildas indicates that Ambrosius was a military man but was “not Arthur”); and Artur MacAidan ([Ashe, 1987](#)), the son of a Scottish king who held off the Saxon advance at the end of the sixth century.

Artur MacAidan is the historical figure with the most documentary evidence for being the real Arthur and the source of the legend, although he was not a king. Rather he was a prince and warlord of the Scots, and he died in battle fighting with the Britons against the Saxons and Picts around AD 582. Therefore the storied King Arthur was probably an amalgamation of several of the above figures; some believe that he had no actual historical existence and was instead the personification of a Celtic god. However, there is strong evidence that Arthur was a real historic figure, as several kings in the next century named their sons “Arthur”, but of course, that is not conclusive. Stories of Arthur were sung and retold by bards down through centuries and the tales “grew in the telling” until it became impossible to separate history from fiction. The real significance of King Arthur is therefore literary rather than historical.

The literary King Arthur came from a line of supposedly Christian Celtic kings possibly descended from Joseph of Arimathea as indicated above, and from whom a higher standard of morality and behavior was expected. In a total reversal from past notions of rulership, the king was expected to rule for the benefit of his people rather than merely for himself and his cronies, as unfortunately was and still is typical of many leaders, even in today’s world. A model for the noble and proper use of power was introduced in the tales of Arthur; this model became the essence of chivalry and the core around which the stories of Chrétien, de Boron, Malory, and others were woven. For example, here is the knight’s pledge:

Then the king established all his knights, and to them that were of lands not rich, he gave them lands, and charged them never to do outrageousness nor murder; and always to flee treason; also by no means to be cruel, but to give mercy unto him that asketh for mercy, upon pain of forfeiture of their worship and lordship of King Arthur for evermore; and always do to ladies, damosels, and gentlewomen succour; upon pain of death. Also, that no man take no battles in a wrongful quarrel for no law, nor for no world’s goods. Unto this were all of the knights sworn of the Round Table, both old and young. And every year they were sworn at the high feast of Pentecost.

Le Morte d’Arthur, Sir Thomas Malory

The Round Table was created to symbolize the equality of all of the knights that sat around it, and that everyone was worthy of being heard. It did not eliminate royal power, but placed limitations on it and directed it to serve others rather than being merely self-serving. The table is also a symbol of feasting and the banquet that God will prepare after the end of the world.



The Round Table

It must be remembered that the tales of King Arthur were retrospective and written/sung long after the actual people had passed from the scene (e.g., the real Arthur would not have worn chain mail or plate armor, and he did not live in a stone castle), and fifth century society was to some degree romanticized and presented through rose-colored glasses. But despite this gloss over the harsh realities of early Celticdom, and even though the characters in these tales express desires for morality and order (e.g., the egalitarian nature of the Round Table), they were all too human and did not live up to even their own self-proclaimed standards.

The story of King Arthur exposes the baseness and sinfulness of humanity; it begins in treachery and ends in betrayal and tragedy. It starts with Arthur's father, Uther Pendragon, who lusts after Igraine, the wife of the Gorlis, Duke of Cornwall. Uther asks Merlin, the master Druid, for assistance in seducing Igraine, and with Merlin's help Uther succeeds in entering Tintagel Castle on the coast of Cornwall where she lived, and then impregnating her. Her husband Gorlis was away from the castle engaged in a battle and was killed on the same night. Uther subsequently marries Igraine who then gives birth to Arthur. In some versions of the story, the baby Arthur is taken and raised by Merlin, who had forced Uther to agree to give him Igraine's first-born child as payment for his help, thus poisoning the Uther/Igraine relationship and ensuring that Uther's crimes would create strife and turmoil for him, rather than peace and satisfaction. Uther Pendragon himself dies in battle soon

afterward, and as his dying act, he thrusts his sword into a stone. After his death the country is left without a king because no one was able to draw Uther's sword from the stone, until Arthur grows up and is able to retrieve his father's sword.

The betrayal and tragedy at the end of the story involves the adultery of the knight Lancelot with Guinevere, Arthur's wife and queen. Arthur is forced to condemn Guinevere, but Lancelot rescues her, and in the process kills several Knights of the Round Table, thus betraying his oath. Finally, the climax of the story is the fight to the death between Arthur and Mordred, Arthur's illegitimate son by his half-sister Morgan le Fey with whom he had had an adulterous fling.

The quest for the Holy Grail is thus a metaphor for Arthur's search for redemption and peace. He had established the Round Table and performed many good works as king, but these were not enough. Arthur is grieved by his own failures and seeks for something beyond this world, something both higher and deeper. The search for the Holy Grail was thus an attempt to go beyond nature and the natural world, to climb higher than the trees, to fly above the eagles, and go beyond the atmosphere. It was an attempt to pierce the magic and the limited power of the Druids as represented by Merlin and the natural world, and to seek for God and heaven.

It is very interesting that Merlin perishes from his own magic used against him by a woman. In some tales he is trapped under a stone, and in others, in an oak tree, and dies. Both of these natural elements, especially the oak tree, and were symbols of Druidical power. Merlin, the ultimate Druid, is therefore slain by his own gods and destroyed by the symbols of his own religion. Druidism itself is thus seen as mortal and transient – a false hope – whereas the Holy Grail is immortal and eternal.

Arthur includes others in the search for heaven and beyond, sending his knights on the quest because, like ripples in a pond, the problems in his family affect others, and ultimately the entire kingdom – a metaphor for how the sins of leaders metastasize into the evils of society. The knight Percival and later Galahad succeed in their quests; they find the Grail because their lives have been transformed by the Grail's power. Chrétien's version of the Perceval story and his encounter with the Fisher-king was never finished. But in de Boron's version, Perceval uses the Grail to heal the king. In a play on words, the French word for "fish" is "peche" but it also means "sin," so Perceval uses the Grail to heal the sins of the king (the "Sinful-king" rather than the "Fisher-king"), who then leaves the world to enter heaven. But all of the other knights fail and die, including Arthur himself, who does not find redemption until his death. In the concluding fight with Mordred, a symbol of the evil that had arisen within his own family, Arthur kills his son, but is himself fatally wounded. He returns his sword Excalibur to the lady of the lake, surrendering his power and authority, and then dies.

King Arthur may have been a mythical invention of Geoffrey of Monmouth (it was said that Geoffrey needed to fill in the blank spaces in history of the sixth century). But there is some evidence that the character of Arthur was at least partially based on one of the last kings and/or princes of the Celts prior to the Saxon invasions and re-invasions that finally ended Celtic power in Britain; perhaps even

the Artur MacAidan mentioned above. The Saxons gradually forced the Celts farther and farther south and west,⁵ and eventually wiped them out. There are hints that the last Celtic leader committed or was involved with a transgression against the people, a betrayal and/or some type of adultery, that led to a spiritual crisis in his life and to conflict in the kingdom (the real Artur MacAidan had a sister named Morgan). However, the crisis was never resolved – the Celts and Scots went into battle with the Saxons and were badly defeated. Arthur was slain and Celtic power in Britain was eventually crushed, never to rise again. Thus the legendary line of Joseph of Arimathea, the Pendragons, and the Christian kings of Britain came to an end in treachery, sorrow, and tragedy.

Sir Thomas Malory, the presumed author of *Le Morte D'Arthur*, lived during the tumultuous period in England known as the “War of the Roses,” and he wrote the story while in prison. He was charged with theft, kidnapping, and rape, but it is unclear whether he was actually guilty or whether the charges were politically motivated. In those times it was disastrous for anyone of nobility to be on the wrong political side. Malory saluted the traditions of chivalry – its highness, nobility, and devotion to protect the weak, but also decried its excesses – continual fighting, cruelty, and struggles for power. So he infused his version of the tale with both the possibilities and the sadness of the human condition.

King Arthur’s story therefore symbolizes the following:

1. Our desire for purpose, nobility, honor, fairness, justice, and love.
2. Our innate selfishness and sinfulness leading us to betray our own principles and do wrong.
3. Our search for God and heaven – for a higher meaning and purpose in life, as well as for mercy and divine forgiveness.

This is the real significance of the tales of King Arthur and the Holy Grail. But the story goes on: the Saxons, Angles, and Jutes who defeated the Celts in the fifth and sixth centuries were themselves defeated by William the Conqueror and the Normans in 1066. Furthermore, legend says that one day King Arthur will rise again to fight for Britain. Other countries have similar stories. For example, in Denmark there is a legend of Holger, a Danish warrior who traveled to many countries but finally came back home and fell into a long sleep. It is said that in a time of national crisis, he will awake and return to fight for Denmark. In World War II the Danish resistance movement called themselves “Holger Dansk,” and there is a statue of him in the dungeon of Kronborg Castle (“Hamlet’s Castle”) in Helsingor, asleep with a sword in his hands, waiting for the day of crisis at the end of the world. King Arthur is therefore not merely a symbol of human nobility, failure, and the subsequent quest for God. With the inclusion of the Holy Grail, the story also becomes a paradigm for divine redemption –

⁵ The setting for the seduction of Igraine by Uther Pendragon was in Tintagel Castle on the coast of Cornwall, in the far south and west of England.

a symbol of Christ who died a sacrificial death so that those who seek him like the knights Percival and Galahad would find the mercy of God and live.

The Contemporary Significance of the Holy Grail

As indicated above, the Holy Grail is much more than just historical and literary entertainment. It is a prophetic object that is intended to convey a message from God to people, with the same content for today as was given in the time of King Arthur. The message, as succinctly stated in both the Old and New Testaments, is as follows:

Seek the Lord while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts. And let him return to the Lord, and He will have compassion on him. And to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.
(Isaiah 55:6-7)

Everyone who names the name of the Lord must depart from iniquity. (II Timothy 2:19)

Prophets, such as Isaiah above, were always unpopular because they spoke of our responsibility to God, and the consequences if we failed to obey Him. As our society has become increasingly secular and self-absorbed, we have developed sophisticated ways of tuning out prophetic messages, marginalizing God, and excluding Him from life. We understand that people in the past needed rebuke and correction, but are we equally willing to see the faults of our own culture and change?

In our own day many have abandoned the “grail quest,” the quest for God, in order to focus on self – the religion of humanism. Surveys in America reveal that people are almost universally interested in “spirituality,” but they define that word in whatever way suits their own desires, essentially as a set of roll-your-own designer religions, with the worship of self at the center. The philosophy associated with humanism is post-modernism, where there are no absolutes and truth is relative – you therefore create your own “truth” which supposedly cannot be challenged by anyone else because it is “true” at least for you.

The Romantic movement of the 19th century placed feelings over logic and has become the mantra of western society. Our psychological paradigms and counseling methods constantly places the focus on our feelings rather than on our responsibilities – “how can it be wrong when it feels so right?” or “it feels wrong to me so therefore it must be bad.” Rogerian or “values-free” counseling is one of the most popular methods; the counselor is never allowed to provide any solutions, and instead assumes that the answer is already present somewhere in the counselee’s mind, and simply needs to be explored and brought to the surface. This is in contrast to Biblical counseling, which is based on the counselee learning and absorbing God’s standards and changing their ways to bring his or her life into conformance and obedience to God. We are therefore very uncomfortable with the words “morality,” “obedience,” and “submission,” and there is a wholesale rejection of absolute standards for right and wrong. People can then lie, cheat, steal, and philander without being held accountable, and even can be proud of themselves and encourage others to do the same. When they are troubled and feel guilty, they are told by psychological experts that guilt is a figment of their imagination. Psychology has thus

become hostage to and a mouthpiece for humanism; a means of insulating us from God, and from the judgment to come.

The Biblical directive for wives submitting to their husbands has been rejected, and is instead considered as a source of abuse, exploitation, and misogyny. There is a continual drive toward androgyny and “pure equality” – boys are encouraged to become more passive and girls to become more aggressive, which often results in men and women that are inherently dissatisfied with each other – “Where are the real men? Where are the real women?” Feminism has caused us to devalue motherhood, homemaking, and the raising of children as a waste of time that is better accomplished by part-time child-care services. Instead the focus is placed on how much money a person makes, so that personal worth can be reduced to a financial calculation. Early feminists called homemaker women “parasites,” “token women,” and “mentally ill” because they didn’t have a career and weren’t competing with men. These sentiments, while being somewhat toned down, have been continually pushed by those in government, media, and education resulting in women becoming harder, more competitive, and bitchier. The country of Sweden has gone so far as to penalize any couple where the wife stays home to care for her kids, and home schooling is illegal in many places in Europe. On the male side, rather than a man answering the call to nobility by devoting his life and energies to his wife and family, and loving his wife as instructed by the Bible, many men have become uninvolved, passive-aggressive, and prone to engage in affairs. It is certainly true that there has been rape and wife abuse throughout history. But feminism has not reduced that problem – there is just as much, if not more of both. The fact that women have been hardened also causes a hardening in men – “if she is a bitch, then I may as well treat her like one.” Therefore, divorce rates have climbed along with all of the negative consequences of divorce on society – broken homes, confused/embittered/selfish kids, poverty, substance abuse, crime, depression and related mental problems, abortion, etc.

The roots of feminism are not simply an attempt to reorder the male/female dynamic, but go much deeper, and are based on a theology and a view of God ([Sorensen, 2010b](#)). Feminism typically rejects the Bible and the patriarchy associated with it in favor of the ancient Goddesses (Innana and Ishtar from ancient Babylon, Isis from ancient Egypt, and Sophia as the world spirit). In the context of Arthurian literature, this is typified by Elizabeth Bradley’s novel, *The Mists of Avalon*, which is all about the women of the Arthurian world. Seeing the world through women’s eyes, giving them voice, and understanding their perspective is a valid and worthy goal. But one of Bradley’s central points is that Christianity supposedly enslaved women, while Druidism was loving and tolerant, so that the real solution to our problems is to somehow return to an ancient, feminized paganism. Bradley’s concepts were no doubt partially based on other feminist authors such as Elizabeth Davis, Merlin Stone, and Riane Eisler. According to them, societies of the remote past were matriarchal, worshiped the goddess, and lived at peace with the environment. These societies were supposedly socialistic utopias – there was no private property, no masculine competitiveness, and no social hierarchies. Everyone supposedly had everything they needed, there was no hoarding of wealth, and all things were shared. This supposedly lasted until evil tribes of male warriors conquered the defenseless females and ultimately imposed patriarchal Christianity in order to extinguish the ancient flame. However, that

view is a complete myth with no evidence for it whatsoever – no truly matriarchal societies have ever existed in the entire history of the planet, and it is unclear how such a society could ever have come into being and survived for any length of time. But the point is not so much historical justification as it is to establish a rationale and a mindset typical of the Romantic movement suitable for feminism, in which feelings triumph over logic. As explained above, the Druidical society of Arthur's day was much more cruel, abusive, drunken, intolerant, violent, and male dominant than ours, and the ancient Celts rejected Druidism in favor of Christ. Thus we need to be careful what we ask for. Feminism can serve to help women be all that they can be. But it can also be a way of theologizing and justifying selfishness and relational independence, both for women and men, in a contradiction of the Grail quest.

We are obsessed with self-image and hesitant to discipline our children lest we damage their supposedly fragile egos (i.e., feelings are all important). Forces in contemporary education seek to dilute and compromise parental authority, and to promote progressive initiatives in which grading is eliminated. In youth sports leagues every kid now get a trophy, making trophies meaningless. We are thus removing the notion of striving for good that ultimately provides a child with a strong self-image and sense of purpose.⁶

The idea that students attend school to receive a well-rounded education from all perspectives is pure myth. Our public educational institutions are aggressively intolerant, censoring any worldview except what is propagated by the educational elite. Prayer in schools is banished; the pledge of allegiance is being thrown out; American history is being reimagined;⁷ students cannot refer to God in their speeches; the Ten Commandments cannot be displayed in public places even though they were the foundation for our legal system; schools used to be concerned about minor misbehavior but now there is sex and drugs in bathrooms, school shootings, and mandatory police and metal detectors; teachers are being fired for allowing any of their religious convictions to come out in their teaching, unless they are secular humanists, in which case they are encouraged to do so. Witches are encouraged on Halloween, but Christmas crèches, symbols of Jesus, and now even Christmas trees and carols are rejected and replaced by “magic trees” and Kwanzaa. Anti-Christian bias is vigorously promoted in schools, media, and government, and many lies are told about Christianity – that it is oppressive, anti-female, anti-sex, anti-minority, anti-environment, pro-war, the source of slavery, and so on in a continual attempt to justify its exclusion from the marketplace of ideas. This is also true of public colleges and universities, which should be places that promote freedom of thought, but instead are

⁶ Educational programs like Outcome Based Education sponsored by the NEA and academia seek to eliminate grading and all objective standards for students, in a drive to socialize the education system.

⁷ A good example of this is the “1619 Project” by Nikole Hannah-Jones. This is a highly biased American history curriculum for schools, with the goal of placing the consequences of slavery and the contributions of Black Americans at the center of the United States' national history. Hannah-Jones won a Pulitzer Prize for this effort. Other articles published with it demonstrating its extreme bias and inaccuracies include: "America Wasn't a Democracy Until Black Americans Made It One", "American Capitalism Is Brutal. You Can Trace That to the Plantation", "Why American Prisons Owe Their Cruelty to Slavery", and "How America's Vast Racial Wealth Gap Grew: By Plunder"

typically bastions of liberal censorship. The spirit of our age is one of militantly intolerant political correctness.

We cling to the bankrupt theory of Darwinian evolution as an explanation for the origin of the cosmos, refusing to allow intelligent design to be considered in the classroom, lest, God forbid, some elements of Christianity could possibly creep in as well. The ACLU and other organizations have managed to convince people of the ridiculous notion that intelligent design is “unscientific” because it involves elements of religion, when the Darwinian theory of evolution is equally religious and requires a much larger leap of faith and suspension of disbelief to accept that it is true. Meanwhile scientists are increasingly questioning and discarding this theory as being unworkable and inadequate to explain the incredible complexity of life and the huge unbridgeable gaps in the fossil record. In other words, scientists are acknowledging that the amount of faith necessary to continue to believe in Darwinian evolution is far too high for a reasonable person to accept ([Sorensen, 2020](#)). But it is still taught in schools, and the consequence of widespread acceptance of evolution is a cultural despair and hopelessness. A related issue is the Copernican Principle or the “Principle of Mediocrity” which holds that our planet is ordinary, insignificant, and without purpose.⁸ There have been enormous expenditures of resources to find any possible evidence of civilizations on other planets, and that has become the primary goal of the space program. Why? In order to prop up Darwinism, which is a credal element of humanism. But if all we are is a random collection of molecules that accidentally got together on a cold impersonal rock that is devoid of any higher intelligence and love, then what is the point to life? In ancient times people worshipped idols made of wood or stone whereas the idol of today is nothingness

Using the Civil Rights Act of 1964 as a base, the government has now assumed the power to redefine morality by unelected bureaucrats. Minority groups such as feminists, homosexuals, and the transgendered are using the power of government to force their morality on everyone. The negative consequences are manifold.⁹ Ironically, it is now people who believe in God and in absolutes who are considered a danger to society.

⁸ For example, Carl Sagan in his book *Pale Blue Dot*, wrote the following: “Our posturing, our imagined self-importance, the delusion that we have some privileged position in the universe, are challenged by this point of pale light. Our planet is a lonely speck in the great enveloping cosmic dark. In our obscurity, in all this vastness, there is no hint that help will come from elsewhere to save us from ourselves.

⁹ See, for example, Robert Shaw. MD, *The Epidemic – The Rot of American Culture, Absentee and Permissive Parenting, and the Resultant Plague of Joyless, Selfish Children*

Ways to Ruin Your Child and Your Life

- a. Don’t plan ahead and don’t think early on about arranging a secure home in which to raise a child. Especially, don’t pick a husband or wife with unselfish character traits.
- b. Leave your child to be raised by others.
- c. Keep yourself stressed and busy, be exhausted when you come home, and feel guilty about being that way.
- d. Give in to your child’s whims on everything and demand nothing in return as a way for making up for neglect.
- e. Accommodate consumerism – give in to your child’s endless urges for the latest, coolest, and most superficial things.
- f. Let your child think that he or she is the boss of the universe – avoid frustrating and regulating him or her.
- g. Live without thought of any larger meaning in life.

Those who claim to be Christian live in the same milieu and are steeped in the same relativism as the rest of the culture. It is hard to rise above and reject the secularization and materialism that is foisted on us by government, media, the legal system, and public schools. Therefore, divorce rates and family issues are almost as high in the Christian community as elsewhere. Many seem to be “Chinos” (Christian-in-name-only) and exclude God from daily life. They live their life with little or no real concern for what God wants them to do and are thus unprepared to face Him. They are like the character of the archaeologist René Belloq in the movie *Raiders of the Lost Ark* who puts on ceremonial robes prior to opening the Ark of the Covenant but has no idea what he is getting himself into.

It is certainly true that some throughout history who called themselves “Christian” did bad things and brought shame to the name, and leaders who were in a position to speak for God sometimes led people astray. We must recognize both in ourselves and in others the universal human tendency to twist and distort things for one’s own benefit – “The heart is deceitful above all things and deeply corrupt. Who can understand it?” (Jeremiah 17:9). Many of the popes, especially those who ruled while the church still owned the Papal States prior to 1815, were essentially crooked politicians concerned mainly with their own power, wealth, and prestige ([Sorensen, 2010a](#)).

But the blame for their acts must rest upon those people and not on the faith that they claimed to represent. We are always human first, and Christian (or anything else) second. Regardless of the transgressions of some Christian leaders, a study of the past reveals that rather than being an instrument of oppression, Christianity has instead been the single greatest force for good in the history of the world – for the promotion of justice, equality, the relief of poverty, the rights of women, credit and business development, prosperity, mercy, humane treatment, medicine, addiction remediation, and caring for the sick and the disadvantaged.

The “Grail Quest” is essentially seeking for God and for personal holiness. However, words such as “sin” are often seen anachronistic and therefore in need of redefinition. All groups have a morality and liberals have redefined sin as “intolerance” (i.e., disagreement with liberal views), “racism/sexism” (i.e., being white and male), “misogyny” (i.e., questioning feminism), and “environmental extremism” (i.e., questioning global warming). The silly movie *Noah* where God supposedly judges society for environmental evil is an example of this trend. Others have the idea that holiness is impossible, and/or incompatible with contemporary society. We could watch *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* and think “all of this grail stuff is old and stupid rubbish – now we are educated and freed from medieval superstitions.” The more traditionally religious may think that modern life means “doing church on Sunday, but then getting back to the real world of making money on Monday through Saturday.” So

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- h. Don’t subscribe to any code of ethics or morals that would override yours or your child’s impulses.
 - i. Don’t supervise your child’s friendships.
 - j. Let you child watch all of the TV and play all of the video games he or she wants.
 - k. Act as though your child is already on his own.
 - l. Never give your child chores or expect him or her to help around the house.
 - m. Don’t interfere with your child’s use of drugs, tobacco, or alcohol, and don’t stop them from having sex.

holiness is viewed as being impractical, weird, and medieval – as abstinence from anything fun or enjoyable. It is supposedly the contemporary equivalent of a monk living in a cave where sex is the greatest danger. But nothing could be further from the truth, and that view is completely wrong – the Bible celebrates enjoyment and sex. In commenting on Jesus’ miracle of turning water into wine Ben Franklin was reported as saying, “Beer is proof that God loves us and wants us to be happy.” God is the also the one who originally designed the concepts of masculinity and femininity, of sexuality and orgasm ([Sorensen, 2011b](#), [2011d](#)). He created us as sexual beings and he declared the creation as being “very good.”

In other words, there needs to be a balance in life. This balance could in a way be typified by another Arthurian-related work – by Mark Twain in his book *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court*. Twain satirizes the snobbishness, the class consciousness, the religious control by the Catholic Church, and the malicious romanticization of fighting and war that characterized medieval society by having a quintessential American and a Jimmy Stewart, “Mr. Smith Goes to Washington” type of man named Hank Morgan be transported in time back to sixth century Britain and the court of King Arthur. Poking more fun, Twain wonders, how does a man go about peeing or scratching himself when he is wearing plate armor? Hank Morgan gains power by convincing people that he is a Merlin-like magician and sets about trying to Americanize Camelot. However, at the end of the story, Morgan is transported back to Hartford, Connecticut (Twain’s hometown), and then pines to return to ancient Britain – maybe Camelot was not so bad after all. If he had returned to contemporary America rather than to Twain’s era, he would have no doubt been disgusted with the gender dysphoria, family confusion, feminism, government and media control, socialism, secular materialism, and the advertising banalities of the present. The bottom line is that there are not now and never have been any perfect societies, and one has to make the best of it wherever and whenever he or she lives. Therefore, the Holy Grail is a call to life of adventure, discovery, and passion, as well as holiness and peace.

C.S. Lewis, the famous Christian scholar, said: “God is a hedonist at heart” on the basis of verses such as: “God richly supplies us with all things to enjoy” (1 Timothy 6:17), and “You will make known to me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; in Your right hand there are pleasures forevermore.” (Psalms 16:11).

“If we consider the unblushing promises of reward and the staggering nature of the rewards promised in the Gospels, it seems that Our Lord finds our desires, not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink, sex, and ambition when infinite joy is offered us. We are like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased...

The books or the music in which we thought beauty was located will betray us if we trust to them; it was not in them, it only came through them, and what came through them was longing. These things – the beauty, the memory of our own past – are good images of what we really desire; but if they are mistaken for the thing itself, they turn into dumb

idols, breaking the hearts of their worshippers. For they are not the thing itself; they are only the scent of a flower we have not found, the echo of a tune we have not heard, news from a country we have not yet visited...

Do what they will, then, we remain conscious of a desire which no natural happiness will satisfy... It is written that we shall “stand before” Him, shall appear, shall be inspected. The promise of glory is the promise, almost incredible and only possible by the work of Christ, that some of us, that any of us who really chooses, shall actually survive that examination, shall find approval, shall please God. To please God, to be a real ingredient in the divine happiness, to be loved by God, not merely pitied, but delighted in as an artist delights in his work or a father in a son; it seems impossible, a weight or burden of glory which our thoughts can hardly sustain. But so it is...

At present we are on the outside of the world, the wrong side of the door. We discern the freshness and purity of morning, but they do not make us fresh and pure. We cannot mingle with the splendors we see. But all the leaves of the New Testament are rustling with the rumor that it will not always be so. Someday, God willing, *we shall get in.*”
C.S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory*

There are righteous and unrighteous ways of expressing our desires, and the cost to society for ignoring God and morality is astronomical.¹⁰ Social problems will never be eliminated, and no form of government will ever be able to cure all social ills, because the sickness of human sin is essentially genetic – in the hearts of all people. But societal problems would be mitigated and reduced if people would turn back to God.

If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land. (2 Chronicles 7:14)

As individuals we may have little control or influence over the large forces of government and media, but each of us can make a choice to seek and to do that which is good and right in our own life. Furthermore, God’s nature is unchanging and is unaffected by what we think and believe about Him. Therefore the following verse from Galatians 6:7 is true for everyone: “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man sows, this he will also reap.” Regardless of a person’s orientation and beliefs, and how much he or she wishes to escape personal responsibility, each one will still have to stand before God one day and give an account:

¹⁰ A large percentage of social spending is required to deal with and protect us from the dysfunctionality of our society: for lawyers, judges, prisons, police, bureaucrats, security systems, weapons, the military, addiction treatment programs, psychologists, psychiatrists, counselors, and drug companies. All of these are “medicine” and not “food.” On a personal level are the emotional, psychological, and medical trauma due to divorce, unfaithfulness, wife and child abuse, run-amok feminism, latch-key kids, teen pregnancy, abortion, crime, drunk driving, and drugs. Worst of all is that many of these social pathologies have been enabled by deliberate government, educational, and media policies – our tax dollars at work.

Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. And another book was opened which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. (Revelation 20:11-12)

The entire history of mankind is the story of “unholy grail” – how people have sought for the wrong things and how authority and power has been misused down through the ages. Throughout all of time there has been a *cri de cour* for leaders who would rule in justice, mercy, and peace. The tales of the return of Arthur and Holger are fictional, of course, but they are a metaphor for a deeper truth that there is a Redeemer who will one day return in a time of great crisis, who will establish his kingdom, and will wipe all tears away. In the meantime, Jesus Christ is the Holy Grail, and he stands with open arms to welcome those who will seek for him, and who are willing to have their lives transformed by His power.

Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come into him and will dine with him, and he with me. (Revelation 3:20)

The Spirit and the Bride say “Come.” And let the one who hears say “Come.” And whoever is thirsty, let him come, and let him take the water of life without cost. (Revelation 22:17)

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