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In an essay published in 1931 the late Margaret Richey referred to Ither, the Red Knight in Wolfram's Parzival, as 'perhaps the most bafflingly ambiguous of all Wolfram's figures'.[1] This ambiguity is due in large measure to the fact that we see Ither from more than one angle. While on the one hand he appears as the rival and enemy of Arthur, the Queen, together with Trevrizent and Cundrie, sees him as a paragon of knightly virtue whose death can only be mourned.[2] In turn this double perspective further complicates our interpretation of the Ither episode as a whole which might equally well be described as 'bafflingly ambiguous'.

At the time, as Wolfram is at pains to emphasise, Parzival is an immature and ignorant youth who kills a man simply in order to possess his armour, although the effect of this is to rid Arthur of an enemy. Furthermore, Parzival himself believes that he has a right to the armour, having been 'given' it by the King.[3] At a later stage in the poem, however, the scene appears in a wholly new light. In Book IX, in revealing that in Ither Parzival has killed a kinsman, Trevrizent denotes this act as one of the hero's zwuo grôze sünde (Pz.499, 13-25).

Yet, despite its complexities, it is precisely the Ither episode which, in recent years, has come to be seen as central to an understanding of Wolfram's attitude to knighthood and the killing it may involve, must involve, in real life. That Trevrizent denotes the killing of Ither as a sin is regarded as the crucial factor, and, beginning with W. Mohr, the view has gained currency that the import of the episode is to illustrate the potentially sinful nature of knighthood. For Wolfram, Mohr argues, 'wird ... gerade der Totschlag Ithers zu dem paradigmatischen Fall, an dem die Verfallenheit an die Sünde zuerst und am eindringlichston offenbar wird'.[4] In agreement with Mohr M.H. Jones formulates the situation thus:

> The inherent sinfulness of the profession of arms becomes apparent in the disclosure of Parzival's guilt in slaying Ither.[5]

More recently, D.H. Green, in his detailed and closely argued study, shows how Wolfram faces up to what was 'a professional hazard of knighthood', namely, killing.[6] In Wolfram's eyes, Green argues, to kill is a sin and even the crusader knight is exposed to the guilt of homicide.[7]

While it can be fully appreciated how the above scholars arrive at their conclusions, this essay seeks to argue that support can be found in Wolfram's works for a rather less radical attitude to the problem of killing.

At the very least it is possible to suggest that the evidence is too inconclusive to impute to the poet the view that knighthood and sin are inextricably linked. Moreover it is difficult to reconcile such a view with the fact that Wolfram was himself a military man. The interest in, and understanding of, military tactics revealed in Willehalm is such as to suggest, in the words of A.T. Hatto, 'experience as a staff officer', and on the basis of the kind of remarks the poet makes about himself Hatto suggests that he may have been a 'crack jouster'.[8] It is difficult to accept that as a layman involved in military matters Wolfram would have equated knighthood with sin in the manner of the Abbot in Hartmann's Gregorius.

In any discussion of Wolfram's attitude to killing, Willehalm is clearly a significant poem, for here the conduct of military encounters is not determined by the idealised conventions, so characteristic of the romance, which dictate that the knight behave like a gentleman and hence avoid killing his opponent. Indeed, at the beginning of his poem, Wolfram is at pains to stress this point. He describes his story as wâr, doch wunderlîch,[9] and sets the conflict between Christians and heathens in the context of a life or death struggle. Implying a contrast with his earlier work Parzival the poet remarks of what took place on the battlefield at Alischanz:

dâ wart sölch ritterschaft getân,
sol man ir geben rehtez wort,
diu mac für wâr wol heizen mort.
swâ man sluoc ode stach,
swaz ich ê dâ von gesprach,
daz wart nâher wol gelendet
denne mit dem tôde gendet:
diz engiltet niht wan sterben
und an freuden verderben.
man nam dâ wênic sicherheit. (Wh. 10, 18-27)

This is borne out in practice as the Christians slaughter their opponents with relentless brutality.[10] Vivianz kills,[11] Willehalm himself kills frequently.[12] In a manner which W. Schröder considers wenig vornehm,[13] the hero draws attention to the number of heathen deaths he has to his credit:

âne rüemen wil ichz sagen,
der heiden hât mîn hant erslagen,
ob ichz rehte prüeven kan,
mêr denn mîn houbet und die gran
der hâre hab mit sunderzal. (Wh. 206, 19-23)

Above all, however, it is the death of the heathen Arofel which epitomises the spirit of the battle. In cold blood Willehalm kills a man whom he has

first rendered helpless by striking off his leg. The heathen's pleas for mercy, his offer of sicherheit, are of no avail: Willehalm slays him and not only severs the head from the body, he also despoils the corpse (Wh. 77, 23-81, 29).

Yet, despite this, Willehalm is apostrophised by the poet as a saint, hêrre sanct Willehalm (Wh. 4, 13), prince on earth and prince in heaven (Wh. 4, 9-11). Vivianz, whose death is portrayed in some detail, clearly dies as a martyr: he is surrounded by a supernatural light (Wh. 254, 3-6) and a wondrous odour streams from his body (Wh. 69, 12-15), the signs which traditionally accompany the death of a martyr. As for the Christians in general, eternal life is their reward should they fall in battle. Again and again, with varying formulations, reference is made to the reward which awaits them[14] and which they attain in heaven.[15]

If participation in the war guarantees an immediate reward in heaven, despite the bloodshed involved, then this is suggestive of two things. In the first place it suggests that the aims of the campaign must be legitimate, indeed worthy. Secondly, it implies in turn that those who risk their own lives[16] in the pursuit of a cause which is just are not open to censure if they kill their opponents, for killing is a regrettable but inevitable consequence of warfare.[17] Even Gyburg tacitly admits as much. She recognises not only the inevitability of the second battle but also, by implication, that men must die as a result. Her plea for compassion is made dependent on a Christian victory; it relates to the treatment of the heathens not during but after the fighting. She addresses die roemschen fürsten in the following terms:

> ob iuch got sô verre gêrt,
> daz ir mit strîte ûf Alischanz
> rechet den jungen Vivîanz
> an mînen mâgn und an ir her:
> die vindet ir mit grôzer wer.
> und ob der heiden schumpfentiur ergê,
> sô tuot daz sælekeit wol stê:
> hœrt eins tumben wîbes rât,
> schônt der gotes hantgetât. (Wh. 306, 20-28)

Wolfram in fact takes considerable care in the presentation of a war which results in the loss of so much life. He works out the underlying motivation in greater detail than does the poet of Aliscans, his source. Wolfram's Christians fight a campaign which is not only just but holy and which is forced on them by necessity. Even the killing of Arofel may be seen to be justified.

That Wolfram sees little specifically to admire in Willehalm's treatment of Arofel is clear. He recoils in the face of such gratuitous brutality, as his evasive comment indicates:

War umbe sold i 'z lange sagen?
Arofel wart aldâ erslagen.
swaz harnaschs und zimierde vant
an im dez marcrâven hant,
daz wart vil gar von im gezogen
untz houbet sîn für unbetrogen
balde ab im geswenket
und der wîbe dienst gekrenket.
ir freuden urbor an im lac:
da erschein der minne ein flüstic tac.
noch solden kristenlîchiu wîp
klagen sîn ungetouften lîp. (Wh. 81, 11-22)

Yet nowhere does Wolfram criticise his hero in terms more explicit than those cited above; more important still, nowhere does he denote this act as a sin. And the change in motivation which the poet appears to have introduced in comparison with his source serves to underline that Willehalm is justified in principle in what he does. For unlike his counterpart in Aliscans, he does not covet Arofel's equipment before he kills him.[18] Although he may exploit the situation to advantage afterwards and take the heathen's armour and horse, there is no evidence that this was his reason for killing him. His express motive - and this represents an innovation on Wolfram's part - is vengeance, in the first instance for the death of Vivianz, his nephew:

do der marcrâve sîniu wort
vernam, daz er sô grôzen hort
für sîn verschertez leben bôt,
er dâhte an Vivîanzes tôt,
wie der gerochen würde,
und daz sîn jâmers bürde
Ein teil gesenftet wære. (Wh. 79, 25-80, 1)

That the poet regards vengeance on such grounds as justified is clear from a comment he makes during the second battle. The heathen Poydwiz slays Kiun of Beaveis:

den rach Heimrîches sun
Billîch: er was sîn mâc.[19]

It is true, as Schröder objects, that Arofel did not kill Vivianz personally,[20] but he is the uncle of the man who did, Halzibier. C. Lofmark formulates the situation succinctly:

> The killing of Arofel is not a sin, but the fulfilment of a duty: Willehalm must avenge his swestersun Vivianz, who has been killed by Arofel's swestersun Halzibier. Willehalm bears this responsibility not only as Vivianz' nearest kinsman, but as the man directly responsible for his untimely death. [21]

Furthermore, Willehalm does not kill to take vengeance for Vivianz alone, although this is his prime motive. He kills also to take vengeance for other of his kinsmen, for whose deaths he holds Arofel, in part, responsible (Wh. 80, 17-21).

It is not only in this particular situation that vengeance is taken for a kinsman. For the Christians a sense of duty to their kin slain in the first battle is an important motive in inspiring them to fight in the second. Vengeance, however, is but one strand in the complex motivation underlying the campaign as a whole.

At the very beginning of his poem Wolfram establishes that the Christians are fighting a defensive campaign. It is the heathens who are the aggressors: it is they who begin the war by invading Willehalm's territory. [22] In the face of an attack by a force vastly superior to their own, [23] the Christians have no alternative but to react in self-defence. After the onslaught by Halzibier has initiated the first battle, the poet comments:

> sît muosen unde solten
> die getouften were bieten. (Wh. 18, 24-25)

Hence the Christians fight a Just War, bellum iustum. According to St Augustine, whose doctrine in this respect remained authoritative throughout the Middle Ages, [24] a Just War is first and foremost a war of defence, [25] provided, of course, that the aggressors attack without legitimate cause. [26]

Throughout the whole poem the motive of defence is of key importance. Apart from the final stages of the campaign it is the Christians who are under attack and they remain fully aware of their defensive position. Before the first battle Willehalm urges his troops: nu wert êre unde lant (Wh. 17, 19). In the ensuing conflict the Christians fight in defence of their lives, Willehalm's territory, Gyburg, the Christian faith, the Christian Empire and with this Christendom itself, for the two stand and fall together. [27] In so far as they fight in defence of their faith and of Christendom they fight a war which is not only just but holy.

It is significant that the motives which Wolfram ascribes to the Christian forces are not exclusively spiritual. Secular motives exist side by side with spiritual, indeed, Wolfram employs a technique of pairing the two.

Willehalm urges his men to fight durh got und durh daz rehte (Wh. 16, 28), before the second battle he addresses those die hie durch got sint und durch mich (320, 1) and encourages them with the thought: wir mugen hie sünde büezen / und behalten werder wîbe grüezen (Wh. 322, 25-26). The Christians fight durh got und durh der wîbe lôn (Wh. 381, 21) and Vivianz dies durh prîs und durh den touf (Wh. 23, 17).

This linking of a spiritual with a secular motive lends equal weight to each. It suggests, perhaps, that it can be equally valid to fight for a secular as a spiritual cause, a point which seems borne out by the fact that it is possible to attain a reward in heaven by fighting for a secular goal, or at least a goal which is formulated in secular terms. Salvation of the soul is the reward for those who fulfil their obligations to the Empire (Wh. 300, 20-22; 450, 26-30). Both to fight for Willehalm (Wh. 14, 12-13; 37, 29-38, 1; 303, 8-15) and to fight for Gyburg (Wh. 403, 1-10) offer the possibility of attaining an eternal reward. On occasion it is almost as though outstanding conduct in battle can be a guarantee of such a reward. Of Willehalm himself we read:

> hurtâ, wie der markîs
> den bêden leben warp dâ prîs,
> dises kurzen lebens lobe,
> und dem daz uns hôh ist obe.' (Wh. 420, 15-18)

All of this helps to suggest that Wolfram accepted that under certain conditions a war could be both necessary and legitimate. Such a war need not be a holy war but the cause must be just. The fact that in Willehalm secular obligations exist side by side with spiritual and can be a guarantee of eternal life, implies the validity of such obligations. But warfare, real warfare, without loss of life is impossible. This is a source of deep regret - and in Willehalm the poet laments the loss of life on both sides (Wh. 23, 15-16; 81, 20-22; 401, 30-402, 1) - but since participation in the campaign may be equated with penance (Wh. 322, 25), it would be something of a contradiction if, in the very act of performing penance (and attaining eternal life) the Christians were to incur yet further sin in killing their opponents. As Willehalm comforts the dying Vivianz he appears anxious that he should not die unconfessed, but although Vivianz is clearly guilty of having killed in battle, neither knight shows any awareness that this is a sin which must be confessed. In fact, Vivianz goes so far as to claim:

> mîn unschuldeclîch vergiht
> sol mir die sêle leiten
> ûz disen arbeiten,
> aldâ si ruowe vindet. (Wh. 68, 18-21)

It has been argued, however, that even in a war such as that which he portrays in Willehalm, Wolfram harbours doubts as to the justification of killing, of knighthood itself. Two passages in particular - both problematic - seem to lend support to this argument. One occurs at the beginning of the poem as Wolfram comments on his hero:

> er liez en wâge iewedern tôt,
> der sêle und des lîbes. [28]

That Willehalm will endanger his soul in participating in the war against the heathens is certainly one interpretation of these lines, although not the only one.

J. Bumke, for instance, argues that sêle unde lîp is no more than 'eine zusammenfassende Formel für die Person des Gemeinten'. [29] This is the interpretation which D. Kartschoke adopts, for in his edition of Willehalm, he renders these lines as follows: Er wagte Leib und Leben. [30] In his commentary, however, he suggests a further possible meaning, referring to Wh. 11, 14, where the poet uses the expression en wâge lân in a literal sense to mean: auf die beiden Waagschalen legen. [31] C.E. Passage seems to adopt this reading, for he translates:

> He weighed in the balance the death of the soul and the death of the body. [32]

The implication is that to participate in the conflict with the heathens might entail the death of the body, but not to participate might entail the death of the soul. Thus the lines in question could mean that far from risking his soul in the war with the heathens, Willehalm was, in fact, ensuring its salvation.

There is, however, one passage in Willehalm which represents the poet's own comment on the action, when he appears to denote the slaughter of the heathens as a sin. Since it is a key passage and moreover the only occasion when the killing of the heathens is referred to in such terms, it is worth quoting in its entirety:

> die nie toufes künde
> enpfiengen, ist daz sünde,
> daz man die sluoc alsam ein vihe?
> grôzer sünde ich drumbe gihe:
> ez ist gar gotes hantgetât,
> zwuo und sibenzec sprâche, die er hât.
> der admirât Terramêr
> mit manegem rîchem künege hêr
> wolte bringen al die sprâche

ûf den stuol hinz Ache
und dane ze Rôme füeren.
si kundenz anders rüeren
mit den ecken, die daz werten
und ûf ir verch sô zerten
dês nu ir sêle sint vil lieht:
sine ahtent ûf kumber niht. (Wh. 450, 15-30)

The first four lines are crucial and at first sight their meaning seems clear enough. Yet when seen not only in their immediate context but also in the wider context of the poem as a whole, then they appear rather more problematic.

In the first place, although they read like a general comment on the conflict between Christians and heathens, they can, in fact, relate only to the final stages of the war, when the tide has turned decisively in favour of the Christian forces. In the first battle it was not the heathens who were slaughtered like cattle but the Christians, vastly outnumbered by their opponents. Willehalm and the eight Christians taken prisoner were the sole survivors.

Hence if it is a sin to kill, then the heathens are just as guilty as the Christians, in fact more so, for ultimately it is they who are responsible if the Christians do incur sin in this respect. Wolfram is quick to point out (vv. 21-27) that in the face of heathen aggression and claims to world domination the Christians had little alternative but to react in self-defence.

Moreover, the passage concludes with a reference to the spiritual reward gained by the Christians in fighting the heathens. This in itself suggests divine approval and in fact immediately prior to the lines quoted above, Wolfram ascribes the victory gained by the Christians to Christ (Wh. 430, 1-3).

The first four lines are emotive lines and seem at odds not only with the remainder of the passage but with the general tenor of the poem. They appear to put the Christians in the wrong, whereas the blame lies fairly and squarely with the heathens. It is made clear later in the passage and frequently elsewhere that the Christians are fighting a justified war of defence for which the reward is eternal life should they fall in battle.

Thus, is it not possible that the polemic is directed not so much against the Christians of Willehalm as elsewhere? Is it not possible that Wolfram is taking a stand against those, crusading propagandists and the like, who saw the slaughter of the heathens as a deed pleasing to God and the fact that a man was a heathen as in itself sufficient justification for killing him? [33] What he wishes to make clear is that religion alone does not justify killing, for all men,

whether Christian or heathen, are gotes hantegetât . In the last analysis this is the point which is being made and which, in fact, underlies the presentation of events in Willehalm. For nowhere do the Christians fight - or kill - the heathens simply because they are heathens. They fight them because they have no choice. In so far as the difference in religion does play a role, it lends added justification to the war in the eyes of both parties. But the Christians make no attack on the heathen faith nor are they motivated by any desire to convert their opponents. Attempts at conversion are made at the verbal level, by Gyburg, not at the point of the sword, and at the end of the poem the heathens are allowed to return home to bury their dead according to their own rites (Wh. 465, 17-20).

In Parzival, too, we may find evidence that Wolfram did not inevitably regard killing as a sin. For although, as Green has so clearly shown, he does not shrink from presenting death as a fact of the chivalrous life even in the romance, the number of occasions when killing, or the possibility of killing, is referred to in terms of sin is, to the best of my knowledge, limited to two: the fear ascribed to Feirefiz that to have killed Parzival once his sword had shivered would have been a sin (Pz. 759, 15-16) and the death of Ither. But for a number of reasons it is difficult to generalise on the basis of these two examples that Wolfram always regarded killing as a sin.

In the first place, Parzival and Ither are kinsmen and it is specifically for this reason that Trevrizent denotes the killing of Ither as a sin. Trevrizent's horror relates not to the killing per se but to the fact that Parzival has killed one related to him by the ties of blood:

> dô sprach er 'lieber swester suon,
> waz râtes möht ich dir nu tuon?
> du hâst dîn eigen verch erslagn.
> wiltu für got die schulde tragn,
> sît daz ir bêde wârt ein bluot,
> ob got dâ reht gerihte tuot,
> sô giltet im dîn eigen leben. [34] (Pz. 475, 19-25)

Secondly, in his own judgement of the Ither episode, while he is critical of certain aspects of Parzival's behaviour, Wolfram does not issue a blanket condemnation of killing as such. In Book III of Parzival, the poet does not divulge that Parzival and Ither are kinsmen and hence the combat is to be judged as between two strangers. In this light Parzival is open to criticism on two counts. Wolfram's remark concerning the root cause of Ither's death - sîn harnasch im verlôs den lîp (Pz. 161, 4) - implies that this was no worthy motive and in lines which tend perhaps to be overlooked but which are independent of the source Wolfram issues a veiled comment on the manner in which Ither was killed:

wær ritterschaft sîn endes wer,
zer tjost durch schilt mit eime sper,
wer klagte dann die wunders nôt?
er starp von eime gabylôt. (Pz. 159, 9-12)

The significance of these lines is twofold. On the one hand it is possible that they imply censure of Parzival for the manner in which he killed Ither - through the eye with a javelin. On the other hand, they seem to suggest that had Ither been killed as a result of legitimate chivalrous combat, then there would have been little cause for lament.

Thus is it appropriate to generalise on the basis of the Ither episode that in Wolfram's eyes it is a sin to kill when his words in Book III of Parzival seem to suggest that he regarded killing as acceptable under certain conditions? What is not acceptable, however, is to kill a kinsman and it is for this reason that Parzival sins in killing Ither.

It has been argued that the remoteness of the kinship between Parzival and Ither suggests that it is symbolic, of the brotherhood of man in Christ against which the knight offends when he kills.[35] Hence, the Ither episode shows symbolically how it is always a sin to kill, irrespective of whether the knights concerned are kinsmen in the strict sense of the word. There is, however, as is well known, a clear link between the Ither episode and the scene at the end of the poem when, without knowing his identity, Parzival comes face to face with his half-brother, Feirefiz. The fact that in the duel with Feirefiz, Parzival uses the sword which he took from Ither evokes the earlier scene and stresses the parallelism between the two. For what we see in the Feirefiz episode is how Parzival, thanks to God's timely intervention, narrowly escapes repeating in more grievous form the sin he committed when he killed Ither. Would not the parallelism, indeed, the whole point, be lost, if in the Ither episode the kinship between the two knights were to be interpreted symbolically rather than literally?

In addition, it seems more in keeping with what Wolfram wishes to illustrate about the nature of sin in Parzival that the sin should lie in the unwitting killing of a kinsman rather than in the killing per se. For what Wolfram seems at pains to show is how man can sin unwittingly and without deliberate intent. This is underlined by what Trevrizent teaches Parzival about original sin (Pz. 465, 1-6) and in particular by a significant innovation as regards the death of Herzeloyde. In the source Perceval sees his mother fall but nevertheless spurs on his horse and gallops away.[36] Parzival, on the other hand, rides away in total ignorance of the consequence of his actions.

As regards the death of Ither, the same point is made more effectively if the sin is seen to lie in the killing of a kinsman. For what is beyond doubt

is that Parzival is ignorant of the kinship between himself and Ither, whereas he must have been aware of the potentially lethal effect of his javelin: he had killed deer enough (Pz. 120, 2-4). Likewise in Book XV what Parzival is ignorant of is that Feirefiz is his half-brother, not the possible consequences of military combat. It is precisely against such unwitting sin that man most needs God's help and this Parzival receives when he fights Feirefiz.

Wolfram was certainly aware that all men may be seen as brothers, in more than one sense. Herzeloyde points out that all men are brothers as descendants of Adam (Pz. 82, 1-2) and the idea of the kinship of man through Christ is central to the prologue of Willehalm. Had Wolfram wished to illustrate how killing involved an offence against the brotherhood of man, then presumably the point could have been made without actually interrelating the characters concerned. The fact is that he deliberately makes Parzival and Ither kinsmen when in the source the two are unrelated, and it is well known how, on other occasions, Wolfram deliberately avoids combat between kinsmen, or at least combat with a mortal outcome. [37] What seems to fill him with particular revulsion is the thought of a man killing a member of his own kin.

It has also been argued, however, that kinship merely magnifies the sin already committed when one knight kills another. [38] Such a view might well be inferred from Parzival's words to Gawan when he relates how Feirefiz, before he discovered his opponent's identity, discarded his own sword once Parzival's had shivered on the grounds that he feared committing a sin:

> er vorhte et an mir sünde,
> ê wir gerechenten ze künde. (Pz. 759, 15-16)

As regards outcome, a point of comparison with the duel between Feirefiz and Parzival is the duel between Gawan and Lischois Gwelljus. Gawan defeats his opponent and has him at his mercy but refuses to kill him although Lischois withholds the oath of surrender. His reason is significant (my underlining):

> dô dâht des künec Lôtes suon
> 'deiswâr in sol alsô niht tuon:
> so verlür ich prîses hulde,
> erslüege ich âne schulde
> disen küenen helt unverzagt. (Pz. 543, 9-13)

Gawan certainly feels that it would be wrong to kill, but he shows concern for his reputation rather than his immortal soul. Hence, what binding conclusions may be drawn about the poet's viewpoint when, in similar situations, a concern for his soul is imputed to one man but another - and der travelrunder hôhster prîs at that (Pz. 301, 7) - feels not that it would be a sin to kill but

rather dishonourable. And further examples may be cited of knights who regard it as dishonourable rather than a sin to kill a man who is helpless or in some way disadvantaged. [39]

Moreover, is it significant that Gawan feels it would have been wrong to kill âne schulde? Is it possible that had Lischois and Gawan had good cause to fight, then, had death been the outcome this would have been acceptable? For this would mean that even if it were a sin to kill in certain situations, this is by no means always the case. Such a viewpoint is very much in keeping with Wolfram's attitude as revealed in Willehalm and also in his portrayal of the Grail knights in Parzival.

The Grail knights, like the knights in Willehalm, give no quarter. As Trevrizent informs Parzival: si nement niemens sicherheit (Pz. 492, 8). Wolfram, however, is in no way critical of such an attitude, even less does he suggest that if they kill their opponents then they are guilty of sin. For the Grail knights fight in a legitimate cause. They, too, fight a defensive campaign: their prime function is to exclude intruders from Grail territory (Pz. 443, 12-20). By extension they fight in defence of the Grail, which, given its spiritual implications, must constitute a form of service of God. That their warfare is meritorious is reflected in the fact that it may be equated with penance for sin (Pz. 492, 1-10). Even though when Anfortas kills he is not strictly speaking 'on Grail business', this is not denoted a sin (Pz. 479, 3-480, 2).

Finally, by way of conclusion one might mention the advice which Gurnemanz gives to Parzival. In much quoted lines the older knight seeks to impress on the young hero the importance of mercy; ideally combat should stop short of killing. But Gurnemanz adds one significant qualification:

> lât derbærme bî der vrævel sîn.
> sus tuot mir râtes volge schîn.
> an swem ir strîtes sicherheit
> bezalt, ern hab iu sælhiu leit
> getân diu herzen kumber wesn,
> die nemt, und lâzet in genesn. (Pz. 171, 25-30)

ern hab iu sælhiu leit / getân diu herzen kumber wesn: this is the exception to the rule. Hatto translates: unless he has done you mortal wrong (p.96). In their translation C.E. Passage and H. Mustard suggest: unless he has done you such wrong as would burden your heart with grief. [40] This qualification is all the more significant as it appears to represent an innovation on Wolfram's part, which, so far as I know, has hitherto gone unremarked. In Chrétien's poem, Gornemant counsels mercy without qualifications. He addresses Perceval:

Biax frere, or vos soviegne,
Se il avient qu'il vos coviegne
Combatre a aucun chevalier,
Iche vos weil dire et proier:
Se vos en venez al desus,
Que vers vos ne se poïst plus
Desfendre ne contretenir,
Ainz l'estuece a merchi venir,
Gardez que merchi en aiez
N'encontre che ne l'ociiez. (Perc. 1639-47)

Gurnemanz's words represent the opinion of a knight and moreover one whom Wolfram characterises as houbetman der wâren zuht (Pz. 162, 23). If this is an innovation on Wolfram's part, then it would not seem unreasonable to see in it a reflection of the poet's own standpoint: under certain circumstances it may be legitimate to kill.

What emerges beyond reasonable doubt from Wolfram's works is that he sees the killing of a kinsman as a sin, but that he equates killing with sin irrespective of the circumstances seems unlikely, all the more so as he appears to allow that under certain conditions it may be legitimate to kill. In Wolfram's eyes motive is all-important. The view that combat should be adequately motivated, which underlies the presentation of events in Willehalm, is borne out in Parzival by explicit expressions of regret that two knights were fighting âne schulde.[41] It can be argued that in Wolfram's view a knight who kills in a cause which is just is not open to censure. For while the poet clearly abhors the unnecessary shedding of human blood, what is equally clear is that he upholds the positive values of knighthood, as Willehalm's words indicate:

ein ieslîch rîters êre
gedenke, als in nu lêre,
do er dez swert enphienc, ein segen,
swer rîterschaft wil rehte pflegen,
der sol witwen und weisen
beschirmen von ir vreisen:
daz wirt sîn endelôs gewin. (Wh. 299, 13-19).

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NOTES

1. 'Ither von Gaheviez', MLR, XXVI (1931), 316. Richey argues that 'in Ither we see an imperfect attempt to combine the Red Knight of Crestien's Perceval with another character, one who is the flower of chivalrous breeding and the delight of women's eyes'.

2. For Ither as Arthur's enemy, see Pz. 145, 13-14; 150, 3-10; 280, 5-12. The Queen's view: 160, 1-30; Cundrie's: 315, 11-15; Trevrizent's: 475, 28-476, 11; 498, 13-16. See also Gurnemanz: 170, 3-4. All references to Parzival are to the 6th edition of Wolfram's works by K. Lachmann, Berlin and Leipzig 1926.

3. The role played by Arthur is somewhat ambiguous. When Parzival first demands Ither's armour, the King appears reluctant to grant his request, albeit on the grounds that he might be killed (Pz. 150, 23-26). Our only guide as to whether the request was granted is Wolfram's own comment, der knappe iedoch die gâbe enphienc (Pz. 150, 27), which is open to more than one interpretation.

4. 'Parzivals ritterliche Schuld', in Der arthurische Roman, ed. K. Wais, Darmstadt 1970, p.347. The point appears underlined, if, as has been argued, Parzival becomes a knight in killing Ither and donning his armour. He is not dubbed formally by Gurnemanz as is Perceval by Gornemant in the source. See in particular the article by J. Bumke, 'Wolframs "Schwertleite"', in Taylor Starck Festschrift, The Hague 1964. It might be appropriate, however, to quote Wolfram's comment as Parzival leaves Gurnemanz at the beginning of Book IV: ritters site und ritters mâl / sîn lîp mit zühten fuorte (Pz. 179, 14-15). Does this not suggest that it is only from this point onwards that we are to regard Parzival as a knight in the true sense of the word?

5. 'Parzival's Fighting and his Election to the Grail', in Wolfram-Studien III, ed. W. Schröder, Berlin 1975, p.64.

6. 'Homicide and "Parzival"', in Approaches to Wolfram von Eschenbach, by D.H. Green and L.P. Johnson, Berne 1978, p.11.

7. Ibid., pp.16-17; p.18, footnote 2.

8. 'Wolfram von Eschenbach and the Chase', in Essays on Medieval German and other Poetry, Cambridge 1980, pp.208-09. See also C. Lofmark, Rennewart in Wolfram's 'Willehalm'. A study of Wolfram von Eschenbach and his sources, Cambridge 1972, pp.84-85.

9. Wh. 5, 15. All references are to the 6th edition of Wolfram's works by K. Lachmann, Berlin and Leipzig 1926.

10. e.g., Wh. 20, 13-26; 240, 20-21; 381, 9-16; 427, 23-25; 436, 4-6.

11. e.g., Wh. 24, 26-30; 46, 22-23. In spite of his wound Vivianz fights valiantly durch sîn êre / und ouch durch manges heidens tôt (Wh. 40, 28-29).

12. e.g., Wh. 21, 4-7; 37, 6-7; 54, 18-19; 55, 25; 56, 9; 77, 19; 88, 12-13; 90, 29; 240, 20-21; 422, 13-25.

13. 'Zur Entwicklung des Helden in Wolframs "Willehalm"', in Wolfram von Eschenbach, ed. H. Rupp, Wege der Forschung 57, Darmstadt 1966, p.525.

14. e.g., Wh. 299, 26-27; 320, 26-30; 322, 10-12.

15. e.g., Wh. 14, 8-13; 27-28; 32, 6-7; 37, 18-21; 37, 29-38, 1; 101, 5-7; 264, 20-22; 344, 28-30; 371, 21-28; 403, 5-10; 420, 6-13; 435, 1; 437, 21-22; 447, 8-10; 450, 8-9; 451, 1-5; 8-10.

16. It is significant that the Christians in Willehalm are offered two kinds of reward: a reward on earth if they live, a reward in heaven if they die. Hence the reward in heaven is seen in perspective to the reward to be attained on earth if they survive. The Christians in Willehalm do not fight to die in order to attain martyrdom as do the Christians in Konrad's Rolandslied.

17. H.E.J. Cowdrey points out that the Church was guilty of a kind of 'double-think', in so far as it recognised certain wars as legitimate but nevertheless demanded penance for the killing involved: 'The Genesis of the Crusades: The Springs of Western Ideas of Holy War', in The Holy War, ed. T.P. Murphy, Ohio 1976, pp.17-18. Wolfram is not guilty of this kind of 'double-think'.

18. In the source Guillaume covets Aerofles' horse. Prior to the encounter between the two he calls upon God: Glorïeus sire, par la toie bonté / Peres propisses, ki me fesistes ne, / Consent moi, sire, par la toie bonté, / Ke jou eusse cel destrier abrievé ! Aliscans, ed. E. Wienback, W. Hartnacke and P. Rasch, Halle 1903, vv.1178-81.

19. Wh. 411, 30-412, 1. See Ernst-Joachim Schmidt, Stellenkommentar zum IX. Buch des 'Willehalm' Wolframs von Eschenbach, Bayreuth 1979, p.127. Schmidt translates billîch as von Rechts wegen and points out: 'Der Begriff der Rechtmäßigkeit schwingt an allen Belegstellen dieses Adverbs im Wh deutlich mit'. The use of the term indicates that the vengeance earns 'den Beifall des Erzählers'.

20. 'Zur Entwicklung', p.526. Schröder, who argues in favour of a development in Willehalm, takes an opposing view, namely, that it would have been appropriate in this instance for Willehalm to have shown compassion. See also Schröder's second article on the subject: 'Die Hinrichtung Arofels', Wolfram-Studien II, Berlin 1974, pp.219-40.

21. Op. cit., p.155.

22. Wolfram's source has no prologue and the poem begins in medias res. As B. Mergell observes (Wolfram von Eschenbach und seine französischen Quellen. I: Wolframs Willehalm, Forschungen zur deutschen Sprache und Dichtung 6, Münster 1936, p.9): 'Die Chanson schildert die Schlacht, Wolfram dagegen Werden und Wachsen der Schlacht'. Thus, albeit briefly, Wolfram does specifically draw our attention to the heathen invasion.

23. Throughout the whole poem the heathens are numerically superior to the Christians, even in the second battle after Willehalm has enlisted the support of the Emperor Loys and is backed by imperial troops. The point receives considerable emphasis. See Wh. 10, 10-14; 13, 5-9; 28, 10-11; 32, 2-3; 27-30; 37, 16-17; 39, 1-5; 58, 3-7; 96, 15-17; 99, 1-3; 107, 20-22; 108, 11-17; 151, 1-10; 197, 22-30; 225, 18-22; 319, 21-23; 328, 29-30; 329, 1-5; 13-14; 393, 20-25; 405, 3-8; 424, 4-5; 425, 10-11; 458, 8-10.

24. See H.E. Mayer, The Crusades, trans. J. Gillingham, Oxford 1972, p.15.

25. See C. Erdmann, Die Entstehung des Kreuzzugsgedankens, Stuttgart 1935, p.5.

26. It is consistent with Wolfram's portrayal of the heathens in general that he motivates the campaign from their standpoint as well as the Christian. The question of right and wrong hinges on Gyburg's conversion to Christianity. Those who defend her, and with her right to remain Christian, must inevitably have right on their side. Those who seek to regain her for the faith which she has chosen of her own free will to abandon must perforce be in the wrong. At one point Willehalm expresses a conviction of his own innocence. He speaks of Terramer der die grôzen überkêre/tet âne mîne schulde (Wh.466, 6-7).

27. This is clear from Heimrich's words to Loys: Wh. 182, 24-27.

28. Wh. 3, 4-5. On the basis of these two lines Green concludes that in Wolfram's eyes 'the crusader's status does not absolve him (i.e. Willehalm) from 'the guilt of homicide incurred by the secular knight, so that homicide is an unavoidable feature of knighthood at large' (op.cit., p.17). Green makes a similar point in relation to Gawan in Book VII of Parzival when Gawan and Scherules hear mass before battle durch der sêle âventiur / und durch ir sælden urhap (Pz. 378, 22-23): 'The danger to their souls (that they might die in battle in a state of sin, guilty of murder) is the same as that to which Willehalm exposed his soul' (ibid., loc. cit.). Sin is not, however, limited to killing, and it is possible that it is because of his sinful state in general that the knight hears mass before battle. Even Hagen knows that a soldier fights better confessed.' (Das Nibelungenlied, ed. H. de Boor, Wiesbaden 1965[18], stanzas 1855-6).

29. Wolframs Willehalm. Studien zur Epenstruktur und zum Heiligkeitsbegriff der ausgehenden Blütezeit, Heidelberg 1959, p.104, note 18.

30. Wolfram von Eschenbach, Willehalm, Berlin 1968.

31. Ibid., p.270.

32. The Middle High German Poem of Willehalm by Wolfram of Eschenbach, New York 1977, p.26.

33. Wolfram may well have Konrad's Rolandslied in mind, for the phrase alsam ein vihe evokes the world of the Rolandslied, where the heathens are slaughtered like cattle precisely because they are heathens. Wolfram clearly knew Konrad's poem and in certain respects he has composed in Willehalm an 'anti-Rolandslied'.

34. When in Willehalm the hero blames himself for the death of Vivianz to the point where he feels he has as good as killed him himself, then he uses a form of words which echo those of Trevrizent. He calls out in anguish: ich sol vor gote gelten dich: / dich ensluoc hie niemen mêr wan ich (Wh. 67, 21-22).

35. e.g., W. Mohr, op. cit., p.343. 'Gerade die Entferntheit der Verwandtschaft zwischen Ither und Parzival entwirklicht sie und macht sie darum um so deutlicher zum Sinnbild der Brüderlichkeit der Menschen untereinander, die zugleich eine Brüderlichkeit in Gott ist.' In his recent translation of Parzival, however, Hatto argues that in Book IX Wolfram suggests that in Ither, Parzival killed a near kinsman (Harmondworth 1980, p.253).

36. vv. 620-30. All references to Perceval are to the edition by W. Roach, Paris and Geneva 1959.

37. e.g. in Parzival: Kaylet and Gahmuret: 39, 11-14; Gawan and Vergulaht: 503, 14-15. A prime example in Willehalm is when the hero avoids killing his own brother by a hair's breadth: 118, 9-26.

38. D.H. Green, op. cit., p.18, note 2.

39. Gawan is unwilling to fight Gramoflanz because the latter is unarmed: wer jæhe mirs für êre grôz, / ob i'uch slüege alsus blôz (Pz. 607, 29-30). In Willehalm, when Rennewart releases the eight Christians held prisoner by the heathens, he finds their captors unarmed. For that reason he spares their lives: von arde ein zuht in daz hiez (Wh. 416, 2) is Wolfram's comment. Moreover, it should be noted that Pz. 607, 29-30 represent Parzival's own interpretation of Feirefiz's motives. Feirefiz himself reveals an attitude very much in keeping with that of Gawan in his duel with Lischois: ich sihe wol, werlîcher man, / dîn strît wurde ân swert getân: / Waz prîss bejagete ich danne an dir? (Pz. 744, 29-745, 1).

40. New York 1961, p.94.

41. e.g., Gawan and Lischois Gwelljus: Pz. 538, 1-4; Parzival and Gawan: Pz. 691, 23; Parzival and Feirefiz: Pz. 737, 22-24.