

SCHRIFTLEITUNG

PD Dr. Dagmar Ende, Diana Stört
Otto-von-Guericke-Universität Magdeburg
Institut für Germanistik
Zschokkestraße 32
D-39104 Magdeburg
Fax: 0391/67-16559
E-Mail: Wolfgang.Adam@GSE-W.Uni-Magdeburg.de

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Beiträge sind ausschließlich an Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Adam, Otto-von-Guericke-Universität Magdeburg, Institut für Germanistik, Zschokkestraße 32, D-39104 Magdeburg, Fax: 0391/67-16559, E-Mail: Wolfgang.Adam@GSE-W.Uni-Magdeburg.de, zu senden.

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August Sauer

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Hans Pyritz

in Verbindung mit
Roger Bauer
Michael Schilling
Peter Wapnewski

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Forms of kinship:
unresolved tensions in Wolfram's *Willehalm**

by

SHAMI GHOSH (King's College, London)

Wolfram's *Willehalm* is an epic poem recording a conflict between Christians and heathens. It derives from a long tradition in French as well as the German *Rolandslied*. Unlike in its sources, however, the opposing sides are not portrayed unambiguously in polarised terms, rather, the justification for the war appears to be questioned, and although this work has often been classified as a 'crusading epic', the moral dilemmas it very consciously raises distinguish it markedly from other works of crusading literature. The basic dilemma, which concerns the justification of war with the heathens, is caused partly by the kinship ties between heathens and Christians and also, it could be argued, by an awareness that the heathens are, in cultural values and beliefs as well, in many ways akin to the Christians.

The cause of the conflict, in very basic terms, is clear: Tybalt, Gyburc's former husband, has persuaded her father to bring together the might of the heathen world to help him to win back his wife, and also re-conquer lands to which he believes he has a claim; this claim is never effectively contradicted within the text (ll. 8, 6–7; 221, 11–19; 298, 1–15).¹ This inverts the crusading topos; instead of Christians going to the Holy Land to re-conquer the lands they claim as theirs, the heathen armies have come to Christendom to reclaim a woman and land. This inversion of the Crusades is in itself an example of the tension within the text, which calls into

* I would like to express my profuse thanks to Martin Jones for innumerable inspiring talks about Wolfram and his patient guidance during the preparation of this essay. I am grateful also to Timothy McFarland for discussing the ideas presented here at length, and to Suzanne Conklin Akbari and Rajeshwari Ghose for very kindly taking the time to read and comment on an earlier version. Finally, I would like to thank Manini Sheker for her support and for being a sounding board for all my ideas in their nascent stages.

¹ The text used is Wolfram von Eschenbach, *Willehalm*, ed. Werner Schröder, Berlin/New York 1978. On the background to the conflict, see also Werner Schröder, "deswar ich liez ouch minne dort". *Arabel-Gyburcs Ehebruch*, in: *An Arthurian Tapestry. Essays in memory of Lewis Thorpe*, ed. Kenneth Varty, Glasgow 1981, pp. 309–27, here pp. 314–23.

question the justification of the actions of the Christians. In this case, although Willehalm's marrying Gyburc and conquering the lands that Tybalt claims is never explicitly criticised by the narrator, it is implicit in the text that Tybalt has some justification in feeling a grievance.²

The background to the battles therefore already establishes a measure of ambiguity in their justification. This is further heightened by kinship ties (through marriage) between the two armies. Kinship ties were important in the Middle Ages, and are of great significance in this text too. The family ties of Gyburc and Willehalm link both the warring armies together, and are therefore an obvious source of moral discomfort. Although Gyburc has converted and renounced her lands, religion, and former family, it is clear that she still feels strongly bound to her heathen kin (see for example ll. 253, 16–18; 254, 16–20; 310, 9–16).³ There is some indication that Willehalm feels this sense of kinship too, for he avoids fighting with Ehmereiz because of it (ll. 75, 21–29), and the graciousness with which he treats Matribleiz at the end is caused at least in part by the latter's kinship to Gyburc, and therefore to Willehalm himself (ll. 461, 24–29; 462, 24–463, 1). Fighting is problematized by such kinship, especially as it has, in this text, fatal consequences. While *Willehalm* is not a courtly romance, it would be unreasonable to suppose that notions of 'triuwe' due to one's kin are completely different from the moral values generally accepted in that genre. References are made repeatedly to *Parzival*, and Wolfram's audience would have been well aware that one of Parzival's greatest sins was the killing of Ither, a very distant relative.

This moral dilemma caused by conflict with kin could be seen as partly resolved by the religious nature of the battles. The prologue sets out in very clear terms an identification of the Christian as the 'getoufte', which is contrasted throughout the text with the identity of heathen, the one who is not baptised.⁴ The fact that Gyburc converted not just *durh liebes vriundes minne*, but also *durh minne von der hoehsten hant* (ll. 9, 18–19) is stressed throughout the text, and it is difficult, if not impossible, to ascer-

² Moreover, apart from two exceptions, contemporary opinion held that a marriage between unbelievers could not be broken by just one partner without the agreement of the other; should one partner chose to convert – see Marlis Schumacher, *Die Auffassung der Ehe in den Dichtungen Wolframs von Eschenbach*, Heidelberg 1967, here pp. 28–9.

³ Cf. Schröder [n. 1], p. 319.

⁴ Timothy McFarland, *Gyburc's Dilemma: Parents and Children, Baptism and Salvation*, in: *Wolfram's Willehalm: Fifteen Essays*, ed. Martin H. Jones and Timothy McFarland, Rochester, N. Y. 2001, pp. 121–42, here p. 123; Carl Lofmark, *Das Problem des Unglaubens im "Willehalm"*, in: *Studien zu Wolfram von Eschenbach. Festschrift für Werner Schröder zum 75. Geburtstag*, ed. Kurt Gärtner and Joachim Heinzle, Tübingen 1989, pp. 399–413, here p. 399.

tain which was the greater motivation.⁵ It is clear too that Terramer wages war against his daughter more because of the wrong and dishonour he has suffered by her conversion than because of the dissolution of her marriage.⁶ The political motive of imperial conquest is only fully introduced before the beginning of the second battle (l. 340, 4ff.), after Gyburc's 'Toleranzrede', and therefore after the religious justification has already been undermined. It is clear that this is not the primary cause, and it is introduced only later as a secondary motivation.

In the context of the first battle, Christoph Kleppel makes the interesting point that although 'minne' is initially stated to be an equal motivation for battle for the Christians (for instance ll. 17, 1–2), after the description of the obviously far more valuable garments of the heathens, the worldly motivation for the Christians is apparently forgotten (at least for the moment): "Die Konfrontation mit einer Kultur, welche die eigenen materiellen Möglichkeiten weit übersteigt, führt dazu, daß man sich auf das zutiefst eigene zurückzieht – die Überzeugung des Glaubens".⁷ Willehalm, after his first sighting of the heathen forces, tells his knights that they must fight to defend their faith (ll. 17, 3ff.), although the narrator has given no indication so far that a larger, less personal, religious conflict is the cause of this battle – ll. 7, 27–9, 20 portray the heathens' motivation being to win back Gyburc and the lost lands (l. 8, 6–7), and the theme of religious war is not yet introduced. This shift of emphasis in a religious direction could be seen as caused by a tacit acknowledgement of the justification of the heathen cause – if there is no moral or material justification for conflict, and if in fact it is the Christians who are in the wrong, only the conviction of a religious superiority can justify fighting of the sort *diu mac vür war wol heizen mort* (l. 10, 20).⁸

⁵ See Schröder [n. 1] for a detailed analysis of Gyburc's motivation for leaving Tybalt; I follow his view that the primary motive was her love for Willehalm, though this is inextricably linked to her love of Christ.

⁶ See for instance ll. 9, 12–16; 44, 6–12; 44, 20–30; 107, 26–108, 1; 217, 16–30; cf. Klaus Kirchert, *Heidenkrieg und christliche Schonung des Feindes. Widersprüchliches im Willehalm Wolframs von Eschenbach*, in: *Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen und Literaturen* 231 (1994), pp. 258–70, here p. 268. It must be stated, however, that while the religious motivation might be the prime motivating factor for Terramer, Tybalt and many of Gyburc's relatives would have wanted to fight just to win her – and the lost lands – back.

⁷ Christoph Alexander Kleppel, "vremder bluomen underscheit". *Erzählen von Fremdem in Wolframs "Willehalm"*, Frankfurt a. M. 1996 (= *Mikrokosmos* 45), here p. 56, similarly also pp. 49–51.

⁸ The promise of heavenly reward is also a method of finding comfort in defeat: "Die Niederlage in aussichtslosem Kampf [...] bedeutet auch ein neues, tieferes Gelingen im Hinblick auf den *solt des ewigen lebens* (37, 21)" (Christian Kiening, *Reflexion – Narration. Wege zum "Willehalm" Wolframs von Eschenbach*, Tübingen 1991 [= *Hermeneia* 63], here p. 177).

This religious nature of the conflict is stressed at many points of the text, and it is notable that the Christian knights are persuaded to fight in the service of Christ; their deaths are praised as martyrdom for Christ in defence of their religion.⁹ The dubious morality of fighting against one's kin, and moreover when the opposing forces can be seen to have some justification on their side, is therefore countered by what was perceived to be the far superior morality of religion, since this conflict is caused not only by Gyburc's love for Willehalm, but also by her love of Christ. As love of Christ is greater than all else, right is firmly on the Christian side in defending their faith and Gyburc's decision, for *swer sich vinden lat durh in [i. e., Christ] in not, / der enpfahet unendelosen solt* (ll. 31, 12–13).

The polarised view of the world as being divided between the good Christians and the bad heathens is one of the topoi of 'crusading ideology', yet it must be noted that "den Konflikt zwischen neutestamentlicher Lehre und der kirchlichen Theorie des heiligen Krieges hat das Mittelalter nie zu einem Ausgleich bringen können ...".¹⁰ This conflict becomes all the more acute if one considers, as a background to the crusading texts and especially as a background to *Willehalm*, the extent of contemporary awareness of Muslim culture and religion. Religious conflict could still be seen as justifiable, despite any kinship ties, due to the fundamental differences in belief, if there were sufficient grounds for believing the religion of the opponent to be completely opposed and inferior. On the other hand, if, as in the case of the Jews and the Muslims, a fair degree of kinship between their beliefs and Christianity could be established, including the fact that their God was the same, the ultimate justification for religious war too would be undermined. Any religious war is predicated on a fundamental difference of belief; if this is removed, so also is the justification for the war. An accurate knowledge of Islam, therefore, and an awareness of the closeness of the heathen culture (by which religious as well as other cultural values are meant) to that of the Christian knights would make the 'other' appear less foreign, and therefore a less suitable target for Christian hate and violence.

Wolfram von Eschenbach is an author whose 'illiteracy' has been a cause of much controversy, but it is now generally acknowledged that he had access to a wide range of knowledge and ideas, not least concerning

⁹ See for instance ll. 31, 12–15; 303, 20–30; 304, 19–25; 322, 10–13. For examples of statements conferring blessedness on the Christian warriors, see ll. 37, 19–21; 37, 29–38; 344, 28–30; 420, 6–14 (esp. l. 11, where the dead Christians are referred to as *marter*); 435, 1–7; 450, 26–30 (cf. McFarland [n. 4], pp. 129–31. References to Vivianz' death are not included here).

¹⁰ Rüdiger Schnell, *Die Christen und die "Anderen". Mittelalterliche Positionen und germanistische Perspektiven*, in: *Die Begegnung des Westens mit dem Osten*, ed. Odilo Engels and Peter Schreiner, Sigmaringen 1993, pp. 185–202, here p. 201.

the civilisation of the east.¹¹ Regardless of whether Wolfram himself had any personal experience of the Orient as a crusader, it would be reasonable to suppose that he would have encountered many at the Thuringian court who had such experience: Hermann, the Landgrave of Thuringia, who had himself taken the Cross, had close ties with the Teutonic Order, and an earlier Landgrave died crusading in the 12th century.¹² In both *Parzival* and *Willehalm*, Wolfram displays considerable knowledge about a number of aspects of Islamic culture, ranging from science to geography to courtly values. Moreover, it seems likely that he was also well aware of many of the disputes current in the theology of his time.¹³ It is therefore something of a surprise to confront his largely inaccurate description of the heathen religion, especially considering his overwhelmingly sympathetic, accurate and humane portrayal of other aspects of their culture.

In what follows, I will examine the extent of knowledge of Islam that could have been available to Wolfram, and some of the reasons why, had he actually possessed a more accurate knowledge of Islam than his text betrays, he might have chosen to suppress it. It should be stated at the outset that the purpose here is not to prove any specific relationship be-

¹¹ Our appreciation of the extent of Wolfram's learning with regard to the Orient is indebted primarily to the work of Paul Kunitzsch; see his *Die Arabica im "Parzival"* *Wolframs von Eschenbach*, in: *Wolfram-Studien* 2 (1974), pp. 9–35; *Die orientalischen Ländernamen bei Wolfram* (Wh. 74, 3ff.), in: *Wolfram-Studien* 2 (1974), pp. 152–73; *Quellenkritische Bemerkungen zu einigen Wolframschen Orientalia*, in: *Wolfram-Studien* 3 (1975), pp. 263–75; *Caldeis und Cōatī* (Wolfram, *Willehalm* 192, 8), in: *DVjs* 49 (1975), pp. 372–7; *Erneut: Der Orient in Wolfram "Parzival"*, in: *ZfdA* 113 (1984), pp. 79–111; *Der Orient bei Wolfram von Eschenbach – Phantasie und Wirklichkeit*, in: *Orientalische Kultur und europäisches Mittelalter* [see n. 14], pp. 112–22; *Zur Typologie orientalischer Namen in der mittelalterlichen deutschen und europäischen Literatur*, in: *Namen in deutschen literarischen Texten des Mittelalters*, ed. Friedhelm Debus and Wolfgang Laur, Neumünster 1989 (= *Kieler Beiträge zur deutschen Sprachgeschichte* 12), pp. 43–56. Useful information in this context is also provided by Herbert Kolb, *Von Marroch der mahmumelīn. Zur Frage einer Spätdatierung von Wolframs Parzival*, in: *Euphorion* 82 (1988), pp. 251–60; *Afrikanische Streiflichter. Detailstudien zu Wolfram*, in: *Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen und Literaturen* 225 (1988), pp. 117–28.

¹² Herbert Kolb, *Ein Kreuz mit drei Enden. Zu Wolframs "Willehalm" 406, 1 – 407, 7*, in: *ZfdA* 116 (1987), pp. 268–79, here pp. 278–9; Rudolf Hiestand, *Kreuzzug und höfisches Leben*, in: *Höfische Literatur, Hofgesellschaft, höfische Lebensformen um 1200*, ed. Gert Kaiser and Jan-Dirk Müller, Düsseldorf 1986 (= *Studia Humaniora* 6), pp. 177–211, here p. 190.

¹³ David A. Wells, *The Medieval Religious Disputation and the Theology of Wolfram von Eschenbach's "Willehalm"*, in: *Studi Medievali* 41 (2000), pp. 591–664, here p. 597; on Wolfram's literacy, see also David A. Wells, *Religious Disputation Literature and the Theology of Willehalm: An Aspect of Wolfram's Education*, in: *Wolfram's Willehalm* [n. 4], pp. 146–65.

tween a given text and Wolfram, but to establish the fact that there were a number of ideas regarding the heathens (and Jews), many based on fairly accurate knowledge of the other culture, that were current in the intellectual climate which must be considered the backdrop to Wolfram's work. There are also indications that even when an accurate knowledge of Islam was available, it was suppressed or distorted, and it is therefore possible that Wolfram might have done the same.

That a reasonably accurate knowledge of Islam was not inaccessible even at the time Wolfram was writing is now widely acknowledged.¹⁴ Ac-

¹⁴ What follows is based on the following detailed surveys; it is only possible here to present an extremely condensed picture of the large topic of contact between Arab culture and Western Christendom. On the historical background and cultural exchange between the Christian and Muslim worlds: Hadia Dajani-Shakeel, *Natives and Franks in Palestine: Perceptions and Interaction*, in: *Conversion and Continuity. Indigenous Christian Communities in Islamic Lands. Eight to Eighteenth Centuries*, ed. Michael Gervers and Ramzi Jibran Bikhazi, Toronto 1990, pp. 161–84; Norman Daniel, *The Cultural Barrier. Problems in the Exchanges of Ideas*, Edinburgh 1975, esp. pp. 151–77; *The Arabs and Medieval Europe*, London 1979²; *Islam and the West. The Making of an Image*, Oxford 1993²; Julia Gauss, *Anselm von Canterbury. Zur Begegnung und Auseinandersetzung der Religionen*, in: *Saeculum* 17 (1966), pp. 277–363; *Toleranz und Intoleranz zwischen Christen und Muslimen in der Zeit vor den Kreuzzügen*, in: *Saeculum* 19 (1968), pp. 363–89; Benjamin Z. Kedar, *Crusade and Mission. European Approaches towards the Muslims*, Princeton 1984; James Kritzeck, *Peter the Venerable and Islam*, Princeton 1964; *Orientalische Kultur und europäisches Mittelalter*, ed. Albert Zimmermann and Ingrid Craemer-Ruegenberg, Berlin 1985 (= *Miscellanea mediaevalia* 17); Rainer Christoph Schwinges, *Kreuzzugsideologie und Toleranz. Studien zu Wilhelm von Tyrus*, Stuttgart 1977 (= *Monographien zur Geschichte des Mittelalters* 15); *Die Wahrnehmung des Anderen durch Geschichtsschreibung: Muslime und Christen im Spiegel der Werke Wilhelms von Tyrus († 1186) und Rodrigo Ximénez' de Rada († 1247)*, in: *Toleranz im Mittelalter* [see below], pp. 101–27; William of Tyre, *the Muslim Enemy, and the Problem of Tolerance*, in: *Tolerance and Intolerance. Social Conflict in the Age of the Crusades*, ed. Michael Gervers and James M. Powell, Syracuse 2001, pp. 124–32; Richard W. Southern, *Western Views of Islam in the Middle Ages*, Cambridge, MA 1962; *Toleranz im Mittelalter*, ed. Alexander Patschovsky and Harald Zimmermann, Sigmaringen 1998 (= *Vorträge und Forschungen* 45). For an extensive bibliography and critical summary of secondary literature till 1986, see Ludwig Hagemann, *Zur Auseinandersetzung des Christentums mit dem Islam im Mittelalter und in der Reformationszeit*, in: *Verkündigung und Forschung* 32 (1987), pp. 43–62. Specifically on the theme of literary reflection of the heathens, see for instance Albrecht Classen, *Emergence of Tolerance: An Unsuspected Medieval Phenomenon. Studies on Wolfram von Eschenbach's "Willehalm", Ulrich von Etzenbach's "Wilhelm von Wenden", and Johann von Wuerzburg's "Wilhelm von Oesterreich"*, in: *Neophilologus* 76 (1992), pp. 586–99; *Confrontation with the Foreign World of the East: Saracen Princesses in Medieval German Narratives*, in: *Orbis Litterarum* 53 (1998), pp. 277–95; Jürgen Werinhard Einhorn, *Franziskus und der "edle Heide"*, in: *Text und Bild: Aspekte des Zusammenwirkens zweier Künste im Mittelalter und früher Neuzeit*, ed. Christel Meier and Uwe Ruberg, Wiesbaden 1980,

cording to Benjamin Kedar, the understanding of Islam could differ widely, ranging from the belief of William of Malmesbury that the Christians, Jews and Saracens were sects, differing with regard to the Son, but worshipping the same Father and Creator,¹⁵ to the views of Fulk of Chartres, who believed the Saracen religion to be polytheistic and idolatrous.¹⁶ Pope Gregory VII mentions that heathens and Christians have the same creator and one God.¹⁷ Peter the Venerable commissioned a translation of the Qur'an (which was "... widely distributed among the libraries of Europe"¹⁸) and other Muslim texts in the middle of the 12th century, and wrote a commentary on them of considerable length. While the translations are far from accurate, especially with regard to the life of the Prophet, both they and the commentaries at least establish some basic facts about the nature of Islam, and could have corrected many misconceptions that had previously been current.¹⁹ Peter was also notable in that he acknowledges that the Muslims have much in common with the Christians in their belief, and furthermore in believing that conversion, rather than slaughter, was the way to deal with them.²⁰ The Spanish Jewish convert, Petrus Alfonsi, has also been mentioned as providing some sort of background for Wolfram's ideas (whereby it must be noted that no direct bor-

pp. 630–47; Hans Naumann, *Der wilde und der edle Heide. (Versuch über die höfische Toleranz)*, in: *Vom Werden des deutschen Geistes. Festgabe Gustav Ehrismann*, ed. Paul Merker and Wolfgang Stämmeler, Berlin 1925, pp. 80–101; Alfred Raucheisen, *Orient und Abendland. Ethisch-moralische Aspekte in Wolframs Epen "Parzival" und "Willehalm"*, Frankfurt a. M. 1997; Siegfried Stein, *Die Ungläubigen in der mittelhochdeutschen Literatur von 1050 bis 1250*, Darmstadt 1963; Herbert Walz, *Islam und Abendland. Toleranz und Doktrin in der Reconquista am Beispiel christlicher Ependichtung des 12. Jahrhunderts*, in: *Stimmen der Zeit* 202 (1984), pp. 383–91; see also the works cited in nn. 7; 10; 11; 12; 13.

¹⁵ Kedar [n. 14], pp. 87f; Southern [n. 14], pp. 34f.

¹⁶ Kedar [n. 14], p. 89.

¹⁷ Schnell [n. 10], pp. 198–9.

¹⁸ Daniel, *Islam and the West* [n. 14] p. 37.

¹⁹ On Peter the Venerable, see Kritzeck's monograph [n. 14], which includes reproductions of Peter's commentaries, and extensive references to earlier Eastern Christian theologians' writings on Islam, as well as to relevant secondary literature. A more recent edition is that of Reinhold Gleis, *Petrus Venerabilis. Schriften zum Islam*, Altenberge 1985. Gleis's edition, however, lacks the extensive introduction and commentary that Kritzeck provides (cf. Hagemann [n. 14]). See also Kedar [n. 14], pp. 99–103, on Peter's contradictory views on the Muslims and the Crusades. On Ketton's Qur'an translation, see Daniel, *Islam and the West* [n. 14], pp. 41ff. and Ludwig Hagemann, *Die erste lateinische Koranübersetzung – Mittel zur Verständigung zwischen Christen und Muslimen im Mittelalter?*, in: *Orientalische Kultur und europäisches Mittelalter* [n. 14], pp. 45–58.

²⁰ Kritzeck [n. 14], pp. 20–23; Kritzeck also notes, however, that Peter's work had little or no influence on later attitudes to the Muslims (pp. 198f.).

rowing or influence is implied), and he was an author who was exceptionally well informed about the real religion of the Muslims.²¹ David Wells also finds points of comparison between *Willehalm* and a work of Alan of Lille, though he believes some parts of the latter might be of no relevance because it betrays "... a more accurate knowledge of Muslim theology than the tradition of the literary texts ...",²² I would argue that if Wolfram was familiar with some of Alan's work, he might well have also absorbed the knowledge of Muslim theology, and left it out of his work for reasons other than ignorance. Otto of Freising also knew that the Muslims followed the laws of the Old Testament, including the rite of circumcision, and did not attack Christ, but only denied he was the son of God.²³ William of Tyre, who lived for a considerable length of time in Jerusalem, and knew Arabic, combined an accurate and sophisticated understanding of Islam and a very sympathetic portrayal of the Saracen kings with a more traditional condemnatory attitude.²⁴ He not only believed that the Muslims had the same God as the Christians, but also granted some legitimacy to the Muslim beliefs and believed it possible for a Muslim king to be a "Bürger des Gottesstaates".²⁵ William also, quite crucially, granted the Muslims equal legal rights, including the right to defend themselves against attack; both sides of the conflict therefore had right on their side.²⁶ Interesting in our context is the fact that Wolfram appears to have had an especial knowledge of William of Tyre's work, at least at the time of the composition of *Parzival*.²⁷

²¹ Wells, *Religious Disputation Literature* [n. 13], pp. 156–7; *Medieval Religious Disputation* [n. 13], pp. 632–4; Kedar [n. 14], pp. 90–92. For a further analysis of Petrus Alfonsi, see John Tolan, *Petrus Alfonsi and his Medieval readers*, Gainesville, FL 1993, esp. pp. 27ff.; 108ff.

²² Wells, *Medieval Religious Disputation* [n. 13], p. 642; the work referred to is Alan of Lille's "De fide catholica contra haereticos sui temporis".

²³ Southern [n. 14], p. 36.

²⁴ Schwinges, *Kreuzzugsideologie* [n. 14], pp. 110–41, esp. pp. 116f.; 121.

²⁵ Schwinges, *Kreuzzugsideologie* [n. 14], p. 290; see also pp. 129–33; 190; 245; 292–4. Schwinges also believes William found especial points of contact between Christianity and Shi'ite Islam (op. cit., pp. 111–14).

²⁶ Schwinges, *Wahrnehmung des Anderen* [n. 14], pp. 117–9; more detail, with references, in: *Kreuzzugsideologie* [n. 14], pp. 214–67.

²⁷ Kunitzsch, *Die Arabica* [n. 11], esp. p. 18; *Orientalische Ländernamen* [n. 11], p. 152; *Quellenkritische Bemerkungen* [n. 11], p. 274; *Der Orient bei Wolfram* [n. 11], pp. 115f.; *Erneut: Der Orient* [n. 11], pp. 83; 85f. Kunitzsch also notes that William of Tyre could not have been Wolfram's only source, as they differ on some points, and says that he was probably no longer using William of Tyre as a source while working on *Willehalm* (*Quellenkritische Bemerkungen* [n. 11], pp. 267–8). Nevertheless, this need not mean that Wolfram did not absorb some of the accurate information about Islam, as well as the more tolerant attitude, when he did have access to and was using

Willehalm is normally supposed to have been written in the second decade of the thirteenth century,²⁸ and it is therefore perhaps possible that Wolfram might have had access to the ideas flowing out of Byzantium following its fall to Catholic Christendom. Byzantium had exerted considerable fascination on Western Christendom during the course of the 12th century, the German Crusaders had especially extensive contact with the Byzantine court, and Byzantine influence on literary works prior to *Willehalm* has been suggested (e. g. the *Rolandslied*, the romances of Chrétien and *König Rother*).²⁹ The Byzantine Emperor Manuel Comnenus (1143–1180) entered into a dispute with his clergy because he believed that the God of Muhammad and his own God were the same.³⁰ It is possible that some of the more accurate knowledge of Islam that was available in Byzantium might have been preserved and conveyed to Western Europe after the fall of Constantinople in the 4th Crusade.³¹

William of Tyre's text. For a detailed comparative study of William of Tyre and Wolfram, see Karl Bertau, *Das Recht des Andern. Über den Ursprung der Vorstellung von einer Schonung der Irrgläubigen bei Wolfram*, in his *Wolfram von Eschenbach. Neun Versuche über Subjektivität und Ursprünglichkeit in der Geschichte*, Munich 1983, pp. 241–58.

²⁸ Joachim Bumke, *Wolfram von Eschenbach*, Stuttgart 1997⁷, pp. 18–9; Joachim Heinzle (ed.), *Wolfram von Eschenbach, Willehalm. Mittelhochdeutscher Text, Übersetzung, Kommentar*, Frankfurt a. M. 1991, pp. 792–3.

²⁹ Hiestand [n. 12], pp. 194–7; 204–6; on the contact between the two cultures, see Peter Schreiner, *Byzanz und der Westen: Die gegenseitige Betrachtungsweise in der Literatur des 12. Jahrhunderts*, in: *Friedrich Barbarossa. Handlungsspielräume und Wirkungsweisen des Staufischen Kaisers*, ed. Alfred Haverkamp, Sigmaringen 1992 (= *Vorträge und Forschungen* 40), pp. 551–80. Schreiner notes that 12th century French literature "[hat] eine Fülle byzantinischer Stoffe (sowie antiker und orientalischer in byzantinischer Vermittlung) aufgenommen und an andere Kulturkreise weitergegeben" (p. 555, n. 11).

³⁰ Kedar [n. 14], p. 95; Schwinges, *Kreuzzugsideologie* [n. 14], p. 83. For greater detail, see Craig L. Hanson, *Manuel I Comnenus and the "God of Muhammad": A Study in Byzantine Ecclesiastical Politics*, in: *Medieval Christian Perceptions of Islam. A Book of Essays*, ed. John Victor Tolan, New York/London 1996, pp. 55–82. It should be noted that Manuel's position was more in line with that of earlier Byzantine theologians, who saw Islam as a form of heresy, and Manuel's acceptance that they had the same God should not be understood as real tolerance of their beliefs (Hanson, pp. 74ff.).

³¹ On contacts between the Orient and eastern Christendom up to the 12th century, see Gauss, *Toleranz und Intoleranz* [n. 14]; Hanson [n. 30]; Daniel Sahas, *The Art and Non-Art of Byzantine Polemics: Patterns of Refutation in Byzantine Anti-Islamic Literature*, in: *Conversion and Continuity* [n. 14] pp. 65–73; *The Arab character of the Christian disputation with Islam. The case of John of Damascus (ca. 655 – ca. 749)*, in: *Religionsgespräche im Mittelalter*, ed. Bernard Lewis and Friedrich Niewöhner, Wiesbaden 1992 (= *Wolfenbütteler Mittelalter-Studien* 4), pp. 185–205. A detailed analysis of the relationships between Christian and Islamic theology as well as an examination of the early (Eastern Christian) responses to Islam is provided by J. Windrow Sweetman, *Islam and Christian Theology. A Study of the Interpretation of Theological Ideas*

"By the middle of the twelfth century, therefore, rational views of Islam were beginning to be fairly widespread, since we can find them casually and independently expressed by authors in England, France, Germany and Spain".³² Of course, for the most part, those who had a more accurate knowledge of Islam wrote about it with the intention of discrediting it; nevertheless, there were also friendly encounters at a less abstract and intellectual level, and it is possible that Wolfram's relatively tolerant ideas regarding the heathens were the fruit of a symbiosis of learned knowledge and actual contact (even if only at second hand).

It is notable too that in terms of their chivalric values, wealth, and culture, the heathens are depicted in entirely favourable terms,³³ and in a fair amount of detail,³⁴ whereas their religion is depicted only cursorily, and negatively. As Kleppel notes: "Wolfram trennt [...] zwischen gesellschaftlichen-kulturellen und religiösen Bewertungen".³⁵ A similar distinction was sometimes made between 'Arabs' and 'Saracens', the latter term connoting the religion, and being condemned, the former referring to a culture, with its systems of medicine and science as well as its ethics and overall civilisation, which was praised. This contradiction was one which

in the two Religions, London 1945–67, esp. pp. 63–83. Many Byzantine responses to Islam bespeak extremely accurate knowledge of that religion, and might have filtered down to Wolfram's contemporaries. According to Schwinges, at least one person, William of Tyre, could have been influenced by Byzantine views of Islam in formulating his more tolerant views (Schwinges, *Kreuzzugsideologie* [n. 14], pp. 133f.).

³² Southern [n. 14], p. 36; similarly Kedar [n. 14], p. 90.

³³ Daniel (*Arabs and Medieval Europe* [n. 14], p. 169ff.) discusses at length the common ground between Arab and European courtly culture, showing that the favourable description of the heathens in *Willehalm* corresponds with other contemporary sources. Of special interest is the importance of the value of generosity that was prized by both cultures, and finds expression in *Willehalm* in, for instance, the praise of Arofel's 'mitte' (ll. 78, 19–22); Daniel's study (pp. 181ff.) provides many examples of Arab noblemen being similarly praised by Western chroniclers for their generosity and prowess.

³⁴ Examples of such characterisation abound; see for instance ll. 22, 14–25; 78, 1–22 (notable for the positive description of Arofel, just before he is killed by Willehalm); Willehalm's recounting of his battles with Arofel and Thesereiz, ll. 204, 1–30; 205, 14–28, notable especially because this positive depiction comes from the mouth of Willehalm. On the theme of the positive depiction of the heathens, see also Martin H. Jones, *The Depiction of Battle in Wolfram von Eschenbach's "Willehalm"*, in: *The Ideals and Practice of Medieval Knighthood*, vol. 2, ed. Christopher Harper-Bill and Ruth Harvey, Woodbridge 1988, pp. 46–69, here pp. 64–6; Jones notes too that the deaths of the Saracens are depicted in a relatively humane way: the audience is reminded of the suffering and grief these deaths cause the families of the dead, no less than the grief suffered by the Christians over their dead.

³⁵ Kleppel [n. 7], p. 98.

people coming up against it would have been well aware of.³⁶ Similarly, the differing treatment of cultural/chivalric and religious values in *Willehalm* is in fact untenable, something that Wolfram's audience might well have noted.

The reason for such a contradiction is not hard to find; while the culture of the Arabs was something that one could profitably learn from, in the relatively polarised world of the thirteenth century it would have been dangerous to grant legitimacy to their religion. Religion was therefore isolated from other factors in the interaction with the Arab world.³⁷ This does not, however, deny the fact that there was indeed an understanding of their religion, and there was also a certain awareness of the kinship Islam had with Christianity. But the significance of admitting to such a kinship differs depending on the context. In the context of a philosophical or theological tract, where it is an abstract argument, it is far easier to admit some legitimacy to the opponent. It is important to note that, at the end of the 'Religionsgespräch' between Gyburc and Terramer, Gyburc says that even if Terramer's gods were superior, she would remain faithful to Willehalm (l. 220, 1ff.). In religious disputations, the end is often left open,³⁸ which is possible because of their abstract nature, whereas in the real context in which *Willehalm* is set, it would not be feasible. By the same token, in a situation of actual war, to show too much knowledge of the kinship between the two religions would prove to undermine the basis of one's own cause too much; even when such kinship is not explicitly stated, it is necessary for the author in this text to have Gyburc provide a different, overriding motivation, apart from religious belief. In the context of a religious war, admitting kinship with the opponent, whether it be as God's creation or especially in terms of related religious beliefs, would undermine the very basis for the war.³⁹ For this reason, it would be a dangerous undertaking, because a practical man cannot stop and think of the justification when faced with a war, but must fight, and fight to win. While Wolfram might well have had sufficient knowledge to portray the heathen

³⁶ Kedar [n. 14], pp. 90f.

³⁷ Cf. Daniel, *Cultural Barrier* [n. 14], pp. 167ff, esp. for instance p. 170: "They [translators of Arabic texts into Latin] were often generous in their appreciation of the 'Arabs', not as actual people, but disembodied and dissociated from everything but a library of 'philosophical' techniques"; p. 177: "The body of scientific knowledge [...] was culturally neutral. Its cultural bearings were easily absorbed, because they were a part of the common inheritance of the Arab world and of Europe. Theological sensitivity was perhaps the only index of this mediaeval allegiance to Europe".

³⁸ Wells, *Medieval Religious Disputation* [n. 13], p. 628.

³⁹ Cf. Kleppel [n. 7], p. 96: "Die Notwendigkeit, die existentielle Bedrohung des Eigenbereichs [...] abzuwenden, erzwingt die Identifikation mit dem eigenen System des Weltverständnisses in der Abgrenzung von dem des Angreifers".

religion more accurately, doing so would have highlighted the tensions inherent in his text to a degree that would have made its basic premise – religious conflict – untenable.⁴⁰

It is impossible, of course, to make any definitive statements about Wolfram's knowledge of Islam, and his depiction of the heathen religion would appear to contradict the possibility of an accurate awareness of Islam.⁴¹ Nevertheless, there are a number of factors to indicate that Wolfram did indeed have a far more accurate knowledge of Islam than he displays, and that there were reasons – shared by contemporaries of his who also possessed such knowledge – for suppressing it.⁴² There was some knowledge of Islam within the intellectual climate of Wolfram's time, and if one agrees with Wells' statement, regarding Wolfram's knowledge of the tradition of theological disputation and the status granted to the Jews and the heathens, that "... it would be improbable if he was not also aware of the arguments current in contemporary theology",⁴³ it seems reasonable to suppose that he might well have shared the informed views current in that same theology regarding the nature of the heathen religion. That the heathens have only a vague knowledge of the Bible in this text also need not necessarily indicate only a limited understanding of Muslim belief on Wolfram's part, it might also be a hint stemming from a deeper, suppressed knowledge. Furthermore, the depiction of the heathens as 'Minneritter' par excellence is perhaps not without religious significance; considering the many similarities that they have with the Christians, it could well be that the inextricable connection between love and

⁴⁰ In this context, however, it is useful to consider Daniel's statement: "Not the least remarkable aspect of the crusading states was their lay character. They seem more secular than the kingdoms of Europe, largely no doubt because they were established and maintained by soldiers" (Daniel, *Arabs and Medieval Europe* [n. 14], p. 174). Soldiers would have had greater contact and less theological baggage to prevent them from appreciating the common aspects and admirable qualities of their opponents; they would also have to be especially careful in allowing their appreciation to be conscious, as this would potentially create great moral dilemmas if they had to fight.

⁴¹ Excellent arguments to this effect, closely based on the text, are provided by Wells, *Medieval Religious Disputation* [n. 13], pp. 613–21.

⁴² It is interesting to note here that the historical records on the Christian side contain few reports of fraternisation between the Christians and the Muslims, whereas the Muslims did record that there were friendly interactions too: "From the memoirs of Usama ibn Munqidh it is evident that there was friendly intercourse between Franks and Arabs from the first, which would pass almost unguessed from our Frankish sources. The latter were too self-conscious, or too ashamed to admit it ..." (Daniel, *Arabs and Medieval Europe* [n. 14], p. 198); similarly also Hiestand [n. 12], pp. 198–202; Emmanuel Sivan, *Islam and the Crusades: Antagonism, Polemics, Dialogue*, in: *Religionsgespräche im Mittelalter* [n. 31] pp. 207–15, here p. 208.

⁴³ Wells, *Medieval Religious Disputation* [n. 13], p. 597.

love of God as exemplified by Willehalm and Gyburc is present in the heathens' concept of love as well.⁴⁴ That both the heathens and the Christians fight for the dual reward from God (or in the case of the heathens, gods) and of love is clear; while Wolfram, as a believing Christian author, can hardly grant the heathen gods equal legitimacy, he nevertheless does grant their motivation some level of parity with that of the Christians.⁴⁵

In Wolfram's reference to the Jews, there is perhaps a further indication that he does know about the kinship of the heathen religion to that of the Christians. The reference to the 'touf' of the Jews in ll. 307, 23–4 (*der juden touf hat sunder site: / den begent si mit einem snite*), is unusual, and the argument could have proceeded unhindered without these lines. The rite of circumcision is one that for the Jews is indeed akin to that of baptism, setting them apart as the chosen people of God.⁴⁶ This rite serves the same function among Muslims. Furthermore, the word 'touf' has been used throughout the poem in a specifically religious context as denoting the Christians, those who will be saved, separating them from the 'other'. To use it in the context of the Jews, and that shortly before a statement (ll. 309, 1–4) that asks for forgiveness for the heathen because God himself forgave those who killed Him (i. e., the Jews), appears to indicate that the 'touf' that connotes a certain privileged place in God's world can be extended to the Jews as well.⁴⁷

It is also significant that Gyburc refers to her God as the *Tetragrammaton*, (l. 309, 9), who, by sacrificing his life, gave *sinen kinden lon / ir vergezzenlicher sinne* (ll. 309, 10–11). This was not the normal form of reference to the Christian God, and is the only occasion of its use in this text. This would, however, have been a normal form of reference to the Jewish God.⁴⁸ An awareness of Islam would show that there is far more similari-

⁴⁴ Cf. Joachim Bumke, *Wolframs Willehalm. Studien zur Epenstruktur und zum Heiligsbegriff der ausgehenden Blütezeit*, Heidelberg 1959, pp. 176–8 on the religious import of the love between Willehalm and Gyburc; for a more detailed analysis of this relationship, see Schumacher [n. 2], esp. pp. 143ff.

⁴⁵ Fritz Peter Knapp (*Heilsgewißheit oder Resignation? Rennewarts Schicksal und der Schluß des "Willehalm"*), in: *DVjs* 57 (1983), pp. 593–612, here pp. 609ff.) examines the fact that the author does grant a certain subjective legitimacy to the heathen religion, and that the abandonment of the heathen religion would therefore be a conflict with the value of 'triuwe' for the heathen.

⁴⁶ And, as Wells notes, it was not unknown for a parallel to be drawn between baptism and circumcision (*Medieval Religious Disputation* [n. 13], pp. 658f.; *Religious Disputation Literature* [n. 13], p. 156).

⁴⁷ McFarland [n. 4], pp. 139f.; Bertau [n. 27], pp. 255 believes that "... die einschränkende Taufverwandtschaft der Christen in der Tat zu einer sanguinitären Geschöpflichkeitsverwandtschaft aller Menschen mit Gott wird ..."; "... den Juden [wird] ein dem touf analoger *sundersite* zugesprochen, von dem Wolfram nur nicht wußte, daß ihn auch der Islam übte"!

⁴⁸ Heinze [n. 28], p. 1026.

ty between the Muslim God and the God of the Jews than the God of the Christians, and if there is an acknowledgement that the Jews and Christians believe in the same God, there is a tacit acknowledgement that the Muslims do as well. It is also pertinent to ask who the children referred to in this passage are: as this statement is located in a passage where God is identified as having pardoned those who killed him (ll. 309, 3–4), and having given up his life for the sinners (ll. 309, 7–9), those children of God are most probably the Jews – and if the commonality of the Jewish and heathen religion is accepted, by extension the heathens too.⁴⁹

Wells shows that there was some acknowledgement of the Jews' having a special place in God's world.⁵⁰ There was also a belief that despite their unbelief, God would somehow confer his grace on them (if this is extended to the heathens it would be another argument against killing them). If the Jews were not considered God's children, this was not because of a denial of their belonging to the 'sippe' of Abraham, but because of their denial of Christ; in other words, though God's children, they were seen to have forfeited their inheritance of God's Kingdom.⁵¹ Their disinheritance is however rather problematic – after all, it is unclear if disinherited children can still be considered children because of their origin; the fact that they still have a privileged place in their Father's world seems to indicate that this is indeed possible. The use of the word 'touf', which has been used throughout the text to denote a conferring of a status of kinship between God, the Father, and mankind, His children, could well be an acknowledgement that some kinship exists between the Jews and God (and therefore the Christians), one which is moreover highlighted by the fact of their having a 'touf' of their own. In making such a statement about the Jews, Gyburc would not be stating anything totally unorthodox, for such views were not unknown, and not wholly without support at the time.

A knowledge of Islam (which Gyburc, as a heathen, would have had) would therefore inevitably call for the same status to be conferred on the Muslims as on the Jews. Both religions have the rite of circumcision, both

⁴⁹ Schnell [n. 10], pp. 195, esp. n. 38. Completely different conclusions on ll. 307, 23–4 and ll. 309, 7ff. are reached by Christoph Fasbender, "Willehalm" als Programmschrift gegen die "Kreuzzugsideologie" und "Dokument der Menschlichkeit", in: *ZfdPh* 116 (1997), pp. 16–31.

⁵⁰ David A. Wells, *Attitudes to the Jews in Early Middle High German religious literature and sermon*, in: *London German Studies* 4 (1992), pp. 27–69, esp. pp. 30, 35, 45, 54; See also Schnell [n. 10], p. 200; Bertau [n. 27] (p. 245) refers to the Canons of the third and fourth Lateran Councils as stating that both the Jews and the heathens "... sollten [...] als 'Nächste' im Sinne des Evangeliums geduldet werden".

⁵¹ Fritz Peter Knapp, *Und noch einmal: Die Heiden als Kinder Gottes*, in: *ZfdA* 129 (2000), pp. 296–302, here 298–300.

religions worship the same God, who is also the God of the Christians, and both Judaism and Islam are strictly monotheistic (which is why for both religions the Christian Trinity causes considerable suspicion). Moreover, the Muslims, like the Jews, were respected and prized for their learning, something that was rather in contradiction to the condemnation of their beliefs.⁵² By hinting at certain similarities between Judaism and Islam, Wolfram would therefore not only be showing similarities between Islam and Christianity, but also making implicit that the relative tolerance granted to the Jews should also be granted to the Muslims.⁵³ Moreover, a relationship between Judaism and the heathen religion inevitably brings up the problem of kinship of religions, as well as kinship as children of God, and its related difficulties.

The issues of how the religions might be related brings us back to the issue of kinship, at three levels: the kinship between the families, at a purely human level; the kinship between all humans, as 'children of God' by virtue of being His *Hantgetat*;⁵⁴ and religious kinship, caused by sharing in similar beliefs.⁵⁵ At the first level, there is an obvious dilemma caused by the fact of having to wage war against one's kin. At the second level too, I believe that there is sufficient evidence to believe that Wolf-

⁵² It is also worth noting that there were many similarities in the criticism of Christianity that both the other religions brought forth; cf. Gauss, *Toleranz und Intoleranz* [n. 14], p. 384 (admittedly dealing with an earlier period): "Was die Position der Mohammedaner [...] weithin verstärkte, war die Tatsache, daß die Juden in ihrer Kritik an dem christlichen Dogma mit ihnen einig gingen. Denn so schwach an Zahl die Juden im damaligen Europa sein mochten, so besaßen sie dennoch eine ungemeine geistige Macht. Jüdische und islamische Religionsphilosophie schlossen sich nicht selten zusammen". On the possibility of salvation without baptism, and the comparison of heathens with the Jews, see also Bumke, *Wolframs Willehalm* [n. 44], pp. 163–7.

⁵³ By this I mean a tolerance of their beliefs, without necessarily any agreement with them; however, see Wells [n. 50], for a study of attitudes to the Jews: attitudes to them (especially in vernacular, lay literature), although generally far from amicable, were not as polemical and antagonistic as the attitudes towards the heathens at the turn of the 12th century. Tolerance of Jewish religious practice did have a theological background, but it must be noted that it was, as Klaus Lohrmann notes, rooted in the financial 'Realpolitik' of the religious and secular powers (Klaus Lohrmann, *Fürstenschutz als Grundlage jüdischer Existenz im Mittelalter: Zur Frage der Toleranz gegenüber Juden im Mittelalter*, in: *Toleranz im Mittelalter* [n. 14], pp. 75–99.

⁵⁴ It is worth noting once again that *gotes hantgetat* was the "... traditionelle Bezeichnung für den Menschen, die darauf abhebt, daß ihn Gott mit eigener Hand (*manu*) gebildet hat, während die anderen Geschöpfe durch bloßen Befehl (*iussu*) erschaffen wurden" (Heinzle [n. 28], p. 953; see also p. 1023).

⁵⁵ See McFarland's essay [n. 4] for an introduction to the first two levels of kinship (pp. 122–4) and an analysis based on the tensions between them; Bertau [n. 27], p. 253ff.; stresses the biological form of kinship, as common descendants of Adam, but relates it also to religious kinship.

ram was aware that even the heathens could be considered children of God, and therefore related, kin, to the Christians, even if they did not inherit the Kingdom of God, especially if one believes that he might have had an accurate knowledge of the relationship between Islam and Judaism. While the Jews were considered disinherited from the Kingdom of God, there was no dispute regarding the fact that they were the people referred to in the books of the Old Testament, according to which they were the descendants of Abraham and God's chosen people. That they had lost this privileged position because of their refusing to accept Christ can be contrasted with the fact that they were nevertheless seen to have some sort of special position in God's world. Moreover, as there was an acknowledgement that God created the Jews and gentiles in His own image, there was also a belief that the Jews would by some special favour of God finally be converted (and not necessarily by the efforts of preachers), and rejoin God's Kingdom.⁵⁶ This could well relate to Gyburc's statement immediately following the lines quoted above:

*sin erbarmede richiu minne
elliu wunder gar besliuzet,
des triuwe niht verdriuzet,
sine trage die helfecliche hant
diu bede wazzet und lant
vil künsteclich alrest entwarf*
(ll. 309, 12–17).

These lines, referring to God's merciful hand which He never tires to extend, might well indicate some hope that even those disinherited children might somehow be brought back to the fold – if they are left alive.⁵⁷

I am aware that the issue of the 'Gotteskindschaft' of the heathen which I have raised here is a very controversial one, and I do not propose to try and resolve it.⁵⁸ However, Timothy McFarland has recently suggested that ll. 307, 26ff., if taken to indicate that the heathens are indeed God's children, should be seen not as a strictly theological argument, but

⁵⁶ Wells [n. 50], pp. 45, 54.

⁵⁷ Also an indication of the contradiction between the Christian virtue of compassion, and the 'crusading ideology'; cf. Schnell [n. 10], p. 200, quoting Augustine: "Ersucht Gott darum, daß ihr euch gegenseitig liebt. Alle Menschen, auch eure Feinde sollt ihr lieben [...] Liebe auch den, der noch nicht an Christus glaubt". It should be noted that any hope that the heathens might attain God's grace (perhaps in the form of an eventual conversion) need not be related to any missionary motives; there is no such motivation in this text.

⁵⁸ See McFarland [n. 4], pp. 132–8, for the most clear summary and analysis of the issues involved; see also Joachim Heinze, *Noch einmal: Die Heiden als Kinder Gottes in Wolframs "Willehalm"*, in: *ZfdPh* 117 (1998), pp. 75–80, and Knapp, *Und noch einmal* [n. 51], for the most recent statements of the main opposing views.

one based on ties of blood, arising from Gyburc's human position.⁵⁹ I believe it would be profitable to extend this position to the narrator, and consider this second level of kinship, as children of God, also divisible into two further levels: a theological viewpoint, according to which non-believers will not inherit the Kingdom of God, and therefore cannot be considered God's children, an attitude based more on the future status of the non-believers; and a human, 'biological' perspective, according to which even heathens, as sharing the same creator and ancestor in Adam, could be regarded (in this world at least) as kin, simply because of their humanity. It is a fact that even at the theological level there is a certain amount of ambiguity, and there is always the possibility of unbelievers finding their way to Christ through God's grace.⁶⁰ Wells notes that there was a strand of Pauline teaching that indicated a possibility of universal salvation; he also states that there might be "a distinction in the level of divine beneficence between a general grace conferred on mankind as a whole and a particular gift to believers".⁶¹ Such hair-splitting distinctions are more than likely to have caused confusion in the minds of lay believers, leading them to come to their own conclusions one way or another.⁶² That apart, belief in the fact that all humans were created by God, and a knowledge that the heathens and the Jews also claimed descent from Abraham, might well have supported a belief that they were therefore related, belonging to the same 'sippe'. Fine distinctions between these positions might have been the rule of theology, but it is likely they were not always clear to lay believers. These issues were problems current at the time, and not only for crusaders; Wolfram's addressing it is therefore not a total anachronism, rather, it "... reflects an issue present in theology from the beginning of the previous century".⁶³ It must also be stressed that the concern of the warrior is at the immediate and biological level of life and death in

⁵⁹ McFarland [n. 4], pp. 138–42; similarly also Schnell [n. 10], pp. 195–6.

⁶⁰ See for instance Schnell [n. 10], p. 198: "Einigen [Theologen] zufolge reichte die Hoffnung auf Erlösung und eine tiefe Liebe zu Gott aus, wobei sich gerade darin das Erbarmen Gottes mit den Ungläubigen dokumentiere"; Schwinges, *Kreuzzugsideologie* [n. 14], p. 291, quoting Robert of Melun: "Der Heilstod Christi ist allgemein, weil er hinreichend ist für das Heil eines jeden, wenn auch nicht jeder ihn persönlich zur Ursache seines Heiles macht".

⁶¹ Wells, *Medieval Religious Disputation* [n. 13], p. 660.

⁶² Cf. Wells, *Medieval Religious Disputation* [n. 13], pp. 653, 656. For a more detailed analysis of the Scriptural attitudes, see McFarland [n. 4], pp. 124–6; a comprehensive analysis of attitudes of tolerance to non-Christians based on the examples of religious disputations, is provided by Wells (*Medieval Religious Disputation* [n. 13], esp. pp. 621ff.). Wells's study, however, focuses primarily on disputation with the Jews, not the Muslims.

⁶³ Wells, *Religious Disputation Literature* [n. 13], p. 154.

this world; he cannot be concerned with who will inherit the next world, a question for the clergy, the Pope, and ultimately God. Moreover, it was a common concern of crusading theology that by killing the heathens, the Christian condemned them to hell; conversion was seen to be better than killing.⁶⁴ If there were grounds for believing that God could at any time bring the heathens to the 'true' faith, there would be all the more reason not to kill them, regardless of their obstinacy in their beliefs.

Ultimately, however, whatever hints there might be at the kinship between the two opposing armies are ignored; in the heat of battle, the (male) warriors cannot listen to *eines tumben wibes rat* (l. 306, 27),⁶⁵ and the narrator too cannot fully agree with his character's advice. It is therefore important to remember that this work is not simply or even primarily a plea for tolerance, and the conventional, mainstream ideas of Christianity and its superiority are also repeatedly reasserted throughout the text.⁶⁶

The narrator does appear to acknowledge the humane notions of Gyburc's 'Toleranzrede' after the end of the battles in ll. 450, 15–20, with an explicit reference in l. 450, 19 to Gyburc's speech (l. 306, 28):

*die nie toufes künde
enpfiegen, ist daz sünde,
daz man sie sluoc alsam ein vihe?
grozer sünde ich drumbe gihe:
ez ist gar gotes hantgetat,
zwuo und sibenzec sprache, die er hat.*

Willehalm too, in his treatment of Matribleiz, might seem to act under the influence of this idea of tolerance and kinship. His recounting of his discovery of the dead heathen kings (ll. 464, 4ff.) and his allowing, or rather requesting Matribleiz to take the bodies so that *man si schone nach ir e / bestate* (l. 465, 19f.) shows some acknowledgement that the heathen religion is deserving of some level of respect, and not completely morally depraved. This view is supported by the fact that there is no motivation stated in the text for Willehalm's relating of how he found the dead Saracen kings (ll. 464, 4–465, 20). The ostensible reason for this episode is so that Willehalm can inform Matribleiz where the balsam can be found:

⁶⁴ Wolfgang Mohr, *Willehalm*, in his *Wolfram von Eschenbach. Aufsätze*, Göttingen 1979 (= GAG 275), pp. 266–331, here p. 314f.; Schnell [n. 10], pp. 196–7; Knapp, *Heilsgewißheit oder Resignation* [n. 45], pp. 604–5. For an extensive study of the criticism and ambivalent theological positions on the Crusades, see Kedar [n. 14], p. 97 ff.

⁶⁵ Cf. Kirchert [n. 6], pp. 262–3.

⁶⁶ See Wells, *Medieval Religious Disputation* [n. 13], pp. 600–9 for an analysis of Wolfram's presentation of essential and largely conventional Christian views.

*ich sach da manec balsamvaz.
her küneec, ich sagez iu umbe daz:
ob wir balsam sullen han,
den sol iu der priester lan,
und dar zuo swaz dar under si
(ll. 465, 11–15).*

The detail with which Willehalm relates his experience, and the fact that the explanation for it cited above comes after thirty-six lines describing his *vunt*, seems to indicate a deeper meaning in this scene; it serves the function of showing a realisation of the legitimacy of the heathen religion and perhaps therefore its relationship to Willehalm's own.

It is nevertheless obvious that the contradictions have not been resolved. Taken by itself, or in conjunction with Gyburc's speech (ll. 306, 4–310, 29), the statement of the narrator quoted above (ll. 450, 15–20) could well indicate that the message of the text is a plea for tolerance. The comparison with the *Rolandslied*, which encourages the slaughter of the heathen *alsam ein vihe*, might well make the text appear opposed to a more traditional 'crusading ideology' in condemning such slaughter as sin.⁶⁷ Yet the same section of the poem also contains the following lines:

*Jesus mit der hæhsten hant
die claren Gyburc und daz lant
im [i. e., Willehalm] des tages in dem sturme gap
(ll. 450, 1–3).*

Immediately after condemning the sin of slaughter the narrator goes on to state that those who defended Christianity did so for their salvation, which is indeed granted to them – despite the sin of slaughter:

*Smorgens do ez begunde tagen,
an manegen hufen getragen
wart diu reine kristenliche diet,
den ir sælde daz geriet
daz si ime sturme ir lip verlurn
(ll. 451, 1–5).*

These lines follow the detailed description of the second battle, in which the narrator does not shy away from praising the valour of the Christian warriors, and in describing their victory over Terramer, apart from stating of the Christians that *ir sælekeit si merten* (l. 435, 1) he also explicitly says

⁶⁷ See Heinze's commentary [n. 28], p. 1086 for the comparison with the *Rolandslied*, as well as a discussion of the different ways of interpreting ll. 450, 15–20, based on differing punctuation and reading of the manuscripts.

mit der warheit diu gotes hant / des [i. e., the Christian victory] gap die besten stiure (ll. 435, 6–7).⁶⁸

Although Willehalm shows some respect for the heathen religion, and notably commends Matribleiz to *dem der der sterne zal weiz / Unt der uns gap des manen schin* (ll. 466, 30–467,1), an image from the Psalms,⁶⁹ and one which would therefore have a resonance for all peoples who accept the Old Testament (perhaps another indication of an awareness of religious kinship in terms of common belief), his conciliatory message bears a caveat:

*Der die grozen überkere
tet ane mine schulde, [i. e., Terramer]
des genade und des hulde
ich gerne gediende, getorst ichs bitten,
swie er gebüte, wan mit den siten
daz ich den hæhsten got verküre
und daz ich minen touf verlüre
und wider gæbe min clarez wip*
(ll. 466, 6–13).

This statement appears both to deny, and tacitly acknowledge Terramer's cause for taking offence – the use of the verb 'wider geben' indicates an acknowledgement that his (Willehalm's) wife was 'taken' in the first place – and reminds the audience of Bernart's words to Willehalm shortly preceding this:

*Tybaltes lant und des wip
du hast; dar umbe manegen lip
noch gein uns wagen sol sin var*
(ll. 457, 17–19).

Implicit in these lines is a recognition of the justification of the heathen cause, and they also show an awareness that ultimately, whatever humane sentiments are expressed, the contradiction between them and the hard facts of life cannot be resolved. This pragmatic side is further stressed by the lines immediately preceding those quoted above:

*süeze vinden, manege sure vlust,
niht anders erbes muge wir han.
[...]*

⁶⁸ For other examples of similar statements conferring blessedness on the Christian warriors see n. 9 above. However, see also Jones [n. 34], pp. 67–9; despite the fact that the Christian heroes are portrayed as martyrs, their acts are also portrayed in an "anti-heroic" manner (p. 64, n. 30), thus making their deeds ambiguous.

⁶⁹ Heinzle [n. 28], p. 1091.

*wir müezen lande herren sin!
wer liez uns lant und lande hort
ane bluot und swertes ort?*
(ll. 457, 10–16)

and is never far from the surface; indeed it often appears to overcome the other, more morally uncertain side of the narrative. That this contradiction is present and very painful is evident at the end of the text, not just from the lines quoted, which show that the conflict is far from being resolved, but also from the consistent tone of lament and despair in the last part of the poem. While Willehalm accepts his brother's practical arguments (ll. 460, 15–20), his first statement in rejoinder, *got weiz wol waz er hat getan* (l. 459, 23), coming before a renewed, lengthy lament (ll. 459, 24–460, 14) shows not so much faith in the ultimate power and grace of God as a despair at the insoluble contradictions of human life.⁷⁰ Moreover, one should note that the arguments presented to counter Willehalm's lament are purely practical ones;⁷¹ there is no expression of any religious argument to counter Willehalm's plaint, which is, as noted, at least in part a plaint against God.⁷² Because of this, the battle seems to take on the character of just a battle, and not one of a religious nature and therefore innately just – and it therefore brings with it the moral qualms associated with any sort of killing, despite the pragmatic considerations that might make it necessary.

In an interesting article on *Willehalm*, Peter Strohschneider argues that "sich dem Fremden im literarisch experimentellen Spiel zu konfrontieren, ist eine der wichtigen Vollzugsformen von Selbstidentifizierung, über welche jene Adelsgesellschaften verfügen, die Träger höfischer Dichtung

⁷⁰ Cf. l. 456, 1f.: *miner vlust maht du dich schamen, / der meide kint*; compare with Gyburc's lament in ll. 100, 28ff, esp. l. 101, 10: *sich mac din gotheit wol schamen!* Gyburc's desperation is by the end of the text shared by Willehalm, and I would suggest by the narrator as well. It is notable that the last complete sentence in the text (if one accepts ll. 467, 9ff. as authentic; cf. Heinzle [n. 28] 1091f.) is a statement of even greater despair: *der marcgrave mit jamers siten / alrest umben wurf do warf*. Cf. Mohr [n. 64], pp. 329–31; Kiening [n. 8], p. 189.

⁷¹ l. 451, 10 is the last line where any mention is made of salvation being attained by the Christian warriors because of their having fought for Christ, and there is absolutely no religious justification presented as a counter to Willehalm's lament; cf. Kiening [n. 8], p. 215: "Die Betonung des Heils [...] leistet keine durchgehende Aufhebung der erzählten Welt in die Sicherheit der Heilsgeschichte".

⁷² Because of this, while it is true that the initial parts of the text are "... erfüllt von einer tiefen christlichen Heilsgewißheit, die als solche jede Tragik ausschließt" (Heinzle [n. 28], p. 801), it should not be forgotten that this element is hardly present at the end of the text. It could therefore well be possible that Wolfram started with a Saint's life, but by the time he reached the stage of the text where it breaks off, he found himself faced with a work of a very different nature.

sind".⁷³ This process of identifying oneself inevitably leads back to the closest and most deeply held value, that of religion. Yet even this is shown in the course of this text to be a questionable value, if it is used to separate the Christians and the heathens and thereby justify conflict. Furthermore, at the end it is obvious that the process of self-identification and justification leads, for Willehalm and his kin, not primarily to a religious rationalization, but rather to the identity as *lande herren*, who must protect what is theirs – wife and land. The encounter with the 'other' has led to an experience of the 'other' as closely akin to oneself; this cannot, however, ultimately resolve the conflict.⁷⁴ That there can be no lasting peace is clear, and in Bernart's speech it is also stated bluntly enough that the reason is not of a religious nature.⁷⁵

The story begins with only Gyburc and the land being the motive for battle: *Arabeln Willalm erwarp, / dar umbe unschuldic volc erstarp* (ll. 7, 27–8); [Tybalt] *klagete ere und wip, / dar zuo bürge und lant* (ll. 8, 6–7). The introduction of the idea of religious conflict serves to suppress the fact that the Christians were the ones who originally caused offence, and the motivation of imperial conflict, inherited from previous generations, serves a similar purpose. At the end, however, the original, true cause is stated again very bluntly by Bernart: *Tybaltes lant und des wip / du hast*. The great love of Gyburc and Willehalm, which alone, along with the help of God, can pro-

⁷³ Peter Strohschneider, *Kreuzzugslegitimität – Schonungsgebot – Selbstreflexivität. Über die Begegnung mit den fremden Heiden im "Willehalm" Wolframs von Eschenbach*, in: *Die Begegnung mit dem islamischen Kulturraum in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, ed. Stefan Krimm and Dieter Zerlin, Munich 1992, pp. 23–42, here p. 24.

⁷⁴ In contrast, Strohschneider [n. 73] believes that "... die entscheidende 'Vermittlung' zwischen dem Anderen, dem Heiden, und dem Selbst, der Christenheit, nicht in ihrer Gemeinsamkeit (von Sippenbindung und Gottesgeschöpflichkeit) begründet ist, sondern in der Anerkennung ihrer Differenz" (p. 37f.); "Das 'Recht des Andern' [ist] das Recht des Andern auf Alterität [...], sein Recht darauf, *von mir nu vri zu [...]* sein" (p. 38). However, because of this, "... wird nicht er [i. e., the other] fraglich, sondern das Selbst, das Eigene, das Vertraute. Im thematischen Zentrum der Glaubenskriegerzählung war aber das Vertrauteste, daß man die Andern *sluoc alsam ein vihe*" (p. 39). Strohschneider's different perspective therefore leads to a similar conclusion: an acceptance of the difference of the other does not deny the fact that it is the Christians who caused the slaughter, and the reflection that ensues which reminds the Christians of the real cause of conflict also leads to the realisation that there can be no lasting peace, regardless of an acceptance of the alterity of the other, or a recognition of any kinship.

⁷⁵ Bernart therefore returns to the original motivation of the conflict; in doing so, as Kiening points out, he also negates the "historical" aspect of it, as inherited from the events narrated in the *Rolandslied*: the conflict "... ist von Bernart in seiner spezifischen Eigendynamik gesehen, als Resultat jüngster Vergangenheit, die des Rückgriffs auf ein 'Karlserbe' nicht bedarf" (Kiening [n. 8], p. 91).

vide *trost* for Willehalm's grief (l. 456, 19–20), is also the cause of their sorrow, for as the narrator says, *durh Gyburge al diu not geschah* (306, 1).

The unfinished ending makes it impossible to come to any conclusion about the ultimate 'message' of this work, but it seems clear that no real resolution to the contradictions posed by the text is in sight at the point where it breaks off. The audience is left feeling the anguish of Willehalm, and remembering too Gyburc's pained speech before the war council. Wolfgang Mohr, in what is one of the most insightful essays on this work, which also succeeds in plumbing the depths of its emotional agony, said of that speech:

"Gyburg ringt um etwas, womit sie nicht fertig wird, und Wolfram wird auch nicht damit fertig [...]; [Gyburg] schwingt sich zu einem Glaubensbekenntnis auf zu einem Gott der Hilfe, der die Welt so schuf, daß der Krieg der Planeten [...] sie in Gleichgewicht hält, eine Welt von Kälte und Wärme, Eis und Wasser, das in den Bäumen aufsteigt, Winter und Sommer. Das steht in irgendeinem geheimnisvollen Zusammenhang mit Heidentum und Christentum, Grausamkeit und Erbarmen, Sünde und Vergebung, aber wie findet das eine zum anderen? Zum Schluß der Rede zerbricht ein Satz nach dem andern und statt der Worte bleibt nur das Weinen".⁷⁶

To what extent does Wolfram's 'Rede' – called *süeze[r] rede* in the prologue! (l. 5, 10) – also end in 'Weinen'?

The lament that runs through the text like a thread is the final impression the reader is left with; these contradictions, that love must cause sorrow, that the followers of Christ cannot show compassion and must kill, that the creatures of God turn against each other, is ultimately left as an open wound. And while those Christians who die in the war might attain salvation, the anguish that results due to the tensions is inevitable,

*wan jamer ist unser urhap,
mit jamer kom wir in daz grap.
ine weiz wie jenez leben erget:
alsus diss lebens orden stet*
(ll. 280, 17–20).

⁷⁶ Mohr [n. 64], p. 324.