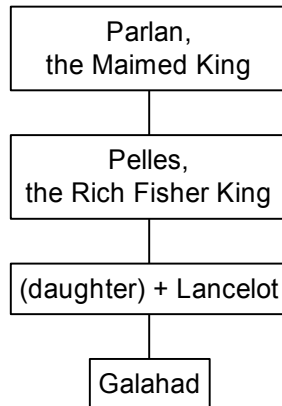


## Quest of the Holy Grail: Genealogies



The character of Galahad is an attempt, across the development of the Grail legend, to rationalize the genealogy of the central quester. Galahad is the thirteenth-century replacement for Chrétien de Troyes's Perceval, the hero of *Li Contes del Graal* (*The Story of the Grail*, c. 1191). Chrétien's romance does not have a conclusion, so it was left to a complex series of "Continuators" to bring the Grail quest to a close. The naïve Perceval then becomes the third of the successful Grail questers.

Chrétien's "grail" is not a Christian symbol or artifact, although the grail ceremony has Eucharistic resonances; Chrétien's romance also contains suggestions of the Waste Land motif that links the health of the king to the fertility of the land. Robert de Boron wrote the first specifically "christian" grail narrative; the Continuators added other narrative details. In the thirteenth century, the whole Arthurian legend was codified in a five-part cycle known as the "Vulgate Cycle"; these are the texts to which Thomas Malory refers when he speaks of his "frensshe bookes."

The Vulgate Cycle "clarified" the genealogy by making Galahad the illegitimate son, and eventual spiritual supplanter of his father, Lancelot. This development also permits the author of the Vulgate *Queste* to articulate his critique of medieval romantic (*i.e.*, "courtly") love.

Chrétien's romances are available in translations by D. D. R. Owen (Everyman) and David Staines (Indiana). *The Quest of the Holy Grail* has been translated by Pauline Matarasso (Penguin).