

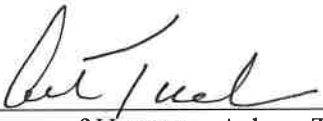
Warring Worldviews on the Field of Honor in Late Medieval Spain

By
Frank Spence

Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of the
Department of History of Vanderbilt University
In partial fulfillment of the requirements
For Honors in History

April 2019

On the basis of this thesis defended by the candidate on April 24, 2019
we, the undersigned, recommend that the candidate be awarded Honors
in History.



Director of Honors – Arleen Tuchman



Faculty Adviser – William Caferro



Third Reader – Peter Lorge

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Thank you Professor Tuchman, Hillary, Professor Caferro, and Professor López for your unwavering guidance, and patience through my writing process. Thank you history honors peers for helping me persevere with this project and for providing me with such excellent feedback on my drafts. And thank you Mom, Dad, Clay, and Camille for your love and support.

*“en la fin está la onra e desonra, bien creades:
do bien acaba la cosa, allí son todas bondades”*

—Juan Ruíz, Açipreste de Fita

“know well that in the end is honor and dishonor,
where the thing ends well, there is all goodness”

—Juan Ruíz, Archpriest of Hita

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Introduction

Around the start of the fifteenth century, Gutierre Díez de Games, standard bearer of the Castilian knight Don Pero Niño, wrote in his biographical chronicle of Niño about “How our Lord Jesus Christ desired for victors in battle to be honored, and he himself honored them with the palm [of victory] that he blessed.”¹ Díez de Games referenced biblical warriors like Joshua and David fighting for the faith as well as notables of the more recent past like Charlemagne and Charles Martel as examples for contemporary knights. He further stated that “knights should place great value in fame and the honor of victory when the son of God gave such honor to the[se] victors”² Though Díez de Games presented a clearly biased approach to reading the Bible, a more fervent religious justification of the warlike lifestyle of knights can scarcely be imagined. Díez de Games claimed God’s blessing of knightly activities. Our author was no Pope Urban II declaring an opportunity for warriors to remit their sins by going on crusade against enemies of the faith.³ Instead, while he emphasized the value of fighting against enemies of the faith, in the same breath he exalted fighting “for the honor of [one’s] king and kingdom,” a far more secular objective.⁴

Indeed, one may only wonder at Díez de Games’ understanding of the Bible when reading his judgement that the a good captain ought to *covet* honor and good fame.⁵ Evidently,

¹ Díez de Games, 35.

“*Cómo nuestro señor Jesucristo quiso que los vencedores de las batallas fuesen honrrados, e él mismo los honrró con palma que El bendiçio*”

² Ibid, 36.

“*mucho deven preçiar los caualleros fama e honrra de vitoria, quando el hijo de Dios tal honrra dio a los bençedores*”

³ In 1095, Pope Urban II launched the First Crusade to recapture holy lands in the east that the Byzantines had lost.

⁴ Díez de Games, 36.

“*por la honra de su rey e reyno*”

⁵ Ibid, 189.

See Exodus 20:17 “Thou shalt not covet”

Díez de Games cherry-picked religious justification for his and his fellow knights' way of life, and at the heart of this justification is the notion that God honors successful knights. Yet Díez de Games' religious argument for pursuing honor, that is engaging in battles, is far from the only one expressed by his contemporaries and predecessors in the Iberian Peninsula as well as in France. And others, especially from the ranks of the clergy, actively pushed against such a view of knights' honor-gaining activities, hoping to quell what they perceived as sinful infighting between Christians. A vast array of perspectives about what constituted honor and honorable conduct and how one ought to go about gaining honor may be drawn upon as a means to understanding the complicated mixture of religious, secular, and personal motivations that informed such differing viewpoints.

For knights, honor represented a common measuring stick of their success, and it constituted something so cherished that its devotees used terms like “worshype” to describe the militant activities engaged in to earn it.⁶ But what, exactly, did honor represent to those who pursued it? In thirteenth to fifteenth century Spain and France, the temporal and spatial bounds of this present study, the term “honor” in its noun form meant, at its most basic level, a reward. One may easily grasp this sense of the word in the way medieval writers talked about knights “winning” honor through their bravery and fierceness in battle. This reward might come in various forms; praise, fame, standing, and riches could all be part of one's honor. And this reward could be for a whole host of actions or individual qualities—ardent love of a noblewoman and bestial savagery in warfare might both be honored in a man.⁷ Yet these are simply the broad brush-strokes of a medieval understanding of honor. As indicated, wildly

⁶ Richard W. Kaeuper, *Medieval Chivalry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 42, 44.

⁷ This thesis focuses almost entirely upon honor as it related to men, making exception only when women occupied traditionally male seignorial positions. The study of honor with respect to women, and especially as it related to ideas around virginity, is beyond the scope of this work.

differing conceptions of honor existed contemporarily and provide us with the basis for understanding the particular values and ideologies of various medieval writers. Because many of the most honor-fixated individuals came from the ranks of the knights, it is essential to note that to these men generally understood honor within the context of chivalry.

To speak of chivalry, one must have a sense of the multiple meanings of the term as used by medieval actors. Richard Kaeuper conveniently summed up these dimensions of meaning:

First, the term could mean ... heroic work with sword, shield, and lance. Second, the term could mean a group of knights. In the simplest sense this may be the body of elite warriors present on some particular field of battle. In a more abstract sense the term might refer to the entire social body of knights considered as a group stretching across space and time. Third, chivalry might be used to mean a knightly code of behavior.⁸

Of particular note is the first definition, since in English such a body of knights could be denominated the “cavalry,” while in the romance languages the word for chivalry was used uniformly to denote any of the three meanings identified by Kaeuper, as in the Spanish *cavallería* or the French *chevalerie*. With regards to a chivalric culture, the third facet of chivalry’s meaning, a code of conduct provided the foundation. Pinning down that code proves futile, however. Certainly, the glorification of heroic acts of violence played a major part, but so too might temperance and courtly love of women. Kaeuper aptly asserted that “[j]ust what that code should be was not clear in detail, sometimes not in fundamentals ... Chivalry can only be interpreted, in other words, as a mixture of ideals and practices constantly critiqued by those who wanted to change both.”⁹ Such varied and changing ideals found reflection in a range of conceptions of honor.

⁸ Richard W. Kaeuper, *Chivalry and Violence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 4.

⁹ *Ibid.*

Just as a variety of groups and individuals with varying worldviews, motives, and values comprised the elite medieval society, so honor represented different things to different people. Predictably, knights often focused on exemplary feats of military prowess as the most honorable actions one could take, and the honor acquired from such actions was not only the praise of their companions-in-arms and of admiring ladies, but also those tangible spoils of war won through victory in battle. Clerics, on the other hand, often shifted the conversation to pious actions as honorable ones and regularly wrote of honoring God. But again, such a dichotomy of views is utterly reductionistic in characterizing the perspectives of large bodies of people, because within each of these groups, knights and clerics, one may find striking differences in what is honored. The inheritance of honor from one's great lineage, as an example, produced contention among members of a supposedly single body, the knighthood. While some with an interest in capitalizing on their lofty position in society considered an honorable lineage of the utmost importance, others considered the earning of honor through one's own actions far more meaningful. In other cases, we find knights or clerics directly contradicting the general inclinations of their groups indicated here, so it is imperative to look at individual motivations and personalized blends of ideologies as playing a crucial role in the formation of perspectives on honor.

Similarly, one also encounters the same thing honored for entirely different reasons by members of these two groups. Whereas a knight might have seen the honor in cutting down an enemy as inherent in that act of physical superiority and dominance, a cleric might have looked at the same situation and, noting that the enemy happened to be a Muslim, concluded that the knight should be honored for defending the faith in slaying the infidel. Alternatively, if that foe

were Christian, the ecclesiastic might pronounce the act gravely sinful.¹⁰ Numerous perspectives and opinions on honor existed at this time. By looking at these varying conceptions of honor we can see how coexisting worldviews came into conflict and how competing strains of thought gained the support of some and the rejection of others.

Only limited historical analysis of medieval honor has occurred, and much of that within the broader study of chivalry—of that body of knights and nobles and of its distinctive ideological features. Historians of chivalry have not homed in sufficiently on the rich assortment of views on honor, instead directing their energies at painting a full picture of how a knighthood and its accompanying ideology came into being and evolved over time. This complicated process of evolution involved changing terms (with varying connotations) used to identify knights, and the changing composition of the knighthood became increasingly associated with nobility and genteel lineage. However, Maurice Keen, one of the earlier English historians to take up the topic of chivalry in recent times, asserted that the “most important legacy of chivalry to later times was its conception of honour ... a nexus between the ideals of society and their reproduction in the actions of individuals ... [that set] the seal of approbation on norms of conduct, recognised as noble when reproduced in individual act and style”¹¹ If honor holds such critical importance to chivalry’s legacy, it manifestly merits greater scrutiny. Tellingly, Keen’s superstructure of a chivalric framework winds up reductionistic in a manner that the study of honor helps illuminate. He depicts a chivalric “conception of secular virtue, centering on courage, loyalty, perseverance and the keeping of faith, [that] was narrowly martial.”¹² Rather than recognize Christian ideology as a major influence in the construction of chivalric ideology,

¹⁰ St. Bernard of Clairvaux, “In Praise of the New Knighthood,” trans. Conrad Greenia, early 12th c., <https://history.hanover.edu/courses/excerpts/344bern2.html>.

¹¹ Maurice Keen, *Chivalry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 149-150.

¹² *Ibid*, 177.

Keen (even while noting the importance of “keeping of faith”) made the claim that chivalry was essentially a secular culture of the knights that existed side-by-side the religious culture of the Church. In this thesis I reject Keen’s contention, as historians including Richard Kaeuper and Jean Flori have done, and show how both religious and secular ideas informed knightly and clerical conceptions of honor and of honorable activities. In particular, Flori’s understanding of chivalry as a synthesis of Germanic warrior values and Christian ones is bolstered by the variety of conceptions of honor I present, which display varying degrees of this cultural synthesis.¹³

Richard Kaeuper does well to emphasize the difference between the medieval sense of honor and our modern one. In a section of his 2016 survey work *Medieval Chivalry* considering (and rejecting) the idea that chivalric warfare constituted a “game of gentlemen” he notes that “[k]nights who were considered thoroughly honorable carried out warfare using the very tactics that romantics think ‘true chivalry’ avoided and condemned.”¹⁴ For instance, knights slaughtered peasant foot-soldiers by the thousands, but medieval chroniclers, focused on glorifying the valiant deeds performed by knights, scarcely mention infantries that vastly outnumbered the knights in battles. Rightly seeking to dispel a modern romanticized view of knights, Kaeuper also highlights that in war “[h]onor was crucial, but it was no stranger to [the] profit” derived from looting and pillaging.¹⁵ In fact, medieval writers often used the word honor to describe or refer to the loot won in battle.¹⁶ Similarly, “deception and trickery,” he asserts, were common practice in war.¹⁷ These clarificatory remarks on the conduct of medieval warfare help to acquaint modern readers with a different conception of war and of honor than the sort held today, but they

¹³ Jean Flori, *Caballeros y Caballería En La Edad Media*, trans. Godofredo González (Barcelona: Paidós, 1998), 22-31.

¹⁴ Kaeuper, *Medieval Chivalry*, 167.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Jean Froissart, *Chronicles*, trans. Geoffrey Brereton (London: Penguin Books, 1968), 143.

¹⁷ Kaeuper, *Medieval Chivalry*, 169

do nothing to illuminate the ideological clashes over the sorts of things medieval knights, clerics, and nobles held to be honorable.

In Kaeuper's *Chivalry and Violence in Medieval Europe*, he unfortunately downplayed such ideological rifts when making the case "that the prowess from which [honour] springs is the fundamental quality of chivalry." Reducing honor to the byproduct of prowess in battle, he claimed that "in chivalric ideology ... the assumption almost without exception, is that honour originates, is merited, proved, and increased sword in hand by those whose lineage leads them to such deeds."¹⁸ While this conception of the origins of honor and its transfer through lineage certainly enjoyed support by many medieval authors, Kaeuper, who appropriately recognized Medieval Europe as "a society with[out] a single set of answers with regard to chivalry," here erred in asserting a single idealized view of honor within an equally idealized conception of chivalry.¹⁹ However, that narrow view of honor coming only from the use of arms sometimes required expression by medieval authors precisely to critique a competing notion that inherited status implied honor. This is just one such way in which ideological fissures existed with respect to honor.²⁰

Comments by Jean Flori and Richard Barber about honor serve as further examples of the way in which honor has taken a subsidiary role to larger arguments about chivalry. Flori, for instance, contends that the knightly practice of invoking one's "word of honor" emerged in the latter half of the twelfth century and to a greater extent in the thirteenth as the practice of

¹⁸ Kaeuper, *Chivalry and Violence*, 130.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 125.

²⁰ The twelfth century Spanish epic Poem of the Cid critiqued the notion that honor could simply be inherited while exalting the honor earned by its protagonist in war: Anonymous, *Poema del Cid*, trans. Francisco López Estrada, *Odres Nuevos: Clásicos medievales en castellano actual* (Madrid: Editorial Castalia, 1968).

allowing knightly prisoners of war to go free given their words of honor to pay ransoms.²¹ The knight's word of honor is not significant to Flori's argument because of a particular understanding of honor. Rather, Flori is interested in the emergence of a chivalric phenomenon. Richard Barber may go furthest among the historians of chivalry in examining honor specifically, writing that

The particular mystique of the word honour ... cannot be explained by religious influence. It was this, perhaps more than any other single feature, that distinguished the way of thought of the knight...Honour was the shrine at which the knight worshipped: it implied renown, good conduct, and the world's approval. The 'word of honour' was the most solemn oath the knight knew.²²

If anything, however, Barber's assertions about honor provoke more questions than they answer. Did medieval minds truly see honor in only a secular light? This seems only a reassertion of Keen's view of chivalry as essentially secular, which has been amply refuted.²³

Outside of the history of chivalry, María Rosa Lida de Malkiel's *The Idea of Fame in the Castilian Middle Ages (La idea de la fama en la Edad Media Castellana)* provides important insight for understanding mentalities about honor. Among Lida de Malkiel's most helpful contributions for the framing of this study of honor is her in-depth analysis of medieval understandings of writing and of books. Tracing ideas about fame from Antiquity up to the end of the Middle Ages, Lida de Malkiel found that "against the express argumentation of Saint Augustine and Saint Thomas [Aquinas], the learned medieval man wound up admitting that 'being put in writing' was a valuable end in itself."²⁴ 158 Furthermore, she compellingly argued

²¹ Flori, 170-171.

²² Richard W. Barber, *The Knight and Chivalry*, Rev. ed. (Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 1995), 44.

²³ Fredric L. Cheyette, review of *Review of Chivalry*, by Maurice Keen, *Journal of Social History* 20, no. 2 (1986): 356-357.

²⁴ María Rosa Lida de Malkiel, *La idea de la fama en la Edad Media Castellana*, 1st ed. (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1952), 158.

that medieval authors “recognized the desire for fame as the impetus for virtuous action.”²⁵ Thus, these authors viewed their purpose in recording the deeds of great men as a means of preserving and amplifying their subjects’ fame in order for them to be remembered and looked to as examples for future generations. The gravity of these authors’ purpose went hand in hand with their veneration of books.

Lida de Malkiel could not be any more clear about the high regard in which medieval authors held books: “for the medieval man, ‘book’ and ‘knowledge’ [were] coextensive terms; knowing [wa]s nothing more than memorizing ancient texts.”²⁶ In such a view, chroniclers and historians functioned, in the words of Henry IV of Castile’s (1425-74) “loyal captain” and chronicler, as “judges of fame and heralds of honor.”²⁷ How writers portrayed historical actors became how they would be remembered. No wonder, then, that Alfonso V of Portugal (1432-81) wrote in a letter to his chronicler that “it is not without reason that men of your position are to be praised and honored, because after princes or captains perform feats worthy of memory ... you write the praise they deserve.”²⁸ This notion that those who acted in exemplary fashion deserved to be put in writing was simply another way of saying that these men deserved to be honored.

“*contra la argumentación expresa de San Agustín y de Santo Tomás, el letrado medieval acaba por admitir como fin valioso en sí el ser ‘metido en escrito,’*”

²⁵ Ibid.

“*pasa a reconocer el deseo de fama como móvil de la acción por distintas vías, a la fama poética que, para el griego y el romano, aseguraba la inmortalidad.*”

²⁶ Ibid, 153.

“*Para el hombre medieval ‘libro’ y ‘conocimiento’ son términos coextinsivos; el saber no es sino memorizar textos antiguos*”

²⁷ Cites from Lida de Malkiel, 257.

Dates of life from “Henry IV -- Britannica Academic,” accessed March 16, 2019, <https://academic.eb.com/levels/collegiate/article/Henry-IV/40046>.

²⁸ Lida de Malkiel, 286.

“*Não é sem razão que os homens que têm vosso cargo sejam de prezar e honrar, que depois daqueles príncipes ou capitães que fazem os feitos dignos de memória, aqueles que depois de seus dias os escreveram muito louvor merecem*”

Insofar as medieval authors frequently used “honor” to mean “fame,” Lida de Malkiel’s compelling case for the centrality of writing in the Middle Ages in honoring and preserving the honor of great men is essential to bear in mind as we approach various depictions of honor. Nevertheless, one must also exercise caution in completely conflating the terms “fame” and “honor.” As Barbara E. Kurtz aptly noted, the meaning of “honor” was “itself multivalent: it suggest[ed] at one and the same time virtue, renown, and material goods or possessions.”²⁹ Thus, fame is only part of the equation when it comes to an analysis of honor.

This thesis supplements our understanding of those elites who pursued honor as their *raison d'être*. It also examines how differing perspectives on honor generated contention as individuals attempted to reconcile honor-related activities with strikingly different value systems as well as with their own personal motivations. I will begin by examining divisions within this wealthy stratum of society on whether worldly possessions constituted honor. While some knights fixated on material honor, that is tangible riches, as their due reward for military prowess and victory, other voices countered that these spoils of war did not, in fact, constitute honor and instead distracted knights from the honor to be gained from impressive feats of prowess and victories in battles.

I next turn to competing conceptions on the source of honor. Though few medieval actors would disagree that honor could be earned through knightly activities, namely those laudable acts of war peppering medieval chronicles and literature, some did push back against the idea that those of noble descent were born with the honor of their ancestors. Though in principle the idea of inheriting honor hinged on the notion that families established traditions of honorable

Dates from: “Afonso V -- Britannica Academic,” accessed March 16, 2019, <https://academic.eb.com/levels/collegiate/article/Afonso-V/3931>.

²⁹ Barbara E. Kurtz, “The ‘Temple d’Onnour’ of Jean Froissart,” *Modern Philology* 82, no. 2 (1984): 164.

conduct, this paradigm represented an ideal. The presence of criticism of inherited honor indicates that it was not always upheld.

Finally I show how those of a more religious bent, especially clerics, voiced a range of views on honor, sometimes in accord with and other times in contradiction of more militant conceptions of honor. I look in particular at religiously-informed visions for the establishment and preservation of peace in a society at war, at the ways in which clerics and knights alike both condoned and condemned the violent activities knights engaged in while pursuing honor, and at how knights selectively used religious justifications of their violent lifestyles.

Through it all, the ambiguity around honor becomes evident. The objective of this thesis is not to compile snippets of a single cohesive understanding of honor but rather to highlight how conceptions of honor differed between individuals and to recognize the ideological grounds upon which these individuals built their understandings of honor. That any given individual's views on honor might include contradictory notions serves only to justify this approach that considers personal and group motivations as well as ideologies as sources of differing conceptions of honor.

Yet these historical actors should not be considered in complete isolation from one another. To do so would be to fail to look for trends of conceptions of honor among certain sets of people with shared status, motivations, or occupation. The authors under study came from the medieval elite, the set of people with the power and status to claim honor, or at least to write about it. They were knights, clerics, and professional writers pertaining to the courts of nobles, and they hailed primarily from modern-day Spain, with a couple of notable exceptions from modern-day France. Finally, all lived in the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries.

I have already established that to speak of a single chivalric ideology, much less a single set of ideas about honor, is to describe a fantasy. Still, looking at the pool of ideas on honor during this period, connections between ideological orientations and certain conceptions of honor emerge. It also bears noting that the world of the medieval elite facilitated the exchange of ideas across vast stretches of space. Chronicles reveal many knights journeying far and wide from their native lands, for instance, and medieval “bestselling” works spread like wildfire from castle to castle.³⁰ The majority of the sources I reference are Spanish, but two French sources also appear. Jean Froissart’s *Chronicles* merit inclusion because it narrated events that took place across western Europe, including in Spain.³¹ And Geoffroi de Charny’s *Book of Chivalry* provides an invaluable comparison to the Iberian Ramón Llull’s *Book of the Order of Chivalry* (*Libro de la orden de caballería*), with which Charny likely possessed at least familiarity.³² Nevertheless, it would be negligent to assume that conceptions of honor did not vary regionally. However, discerning such differences would require a depth and breadth of research that I can only hope scholars will tackle in the future. As it stands, this thesis provides a foundation for such future study, laying out the general lines along which conceptions of honor differed in the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries.

In an effort to get at conceptions of honor from as many angles as possible, this thesis incorporates source material of five general kinds: books of chivalry, legal codes, chronicles, literature, and religious writing. As Richard Kaeuper appropriately asserted, historians studying

³⁰ Flori, 236.

³¹ Froissart, 15.

³² Geoffroi de Charny, Richard W. Kaeuper, and Elspeth Kennedy, *The Book of Chivalry of Geoffroi de Charny: Text, Context, and Translation* (USA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), 28.

the ideas of the Middle Ages must “seek all available evidence and keep the distinction between ideals and descriptions in mind as we encounter their powerful mixture at work” in the texts.³³

Books of chivalry provide prescriptive, idealized guidelines for knights. Ramón Llull’s thirteenth century *Book of the Order of Chivalry*, “the most popular book on chivalry in the Middle Ages,” placed prominent emphasis on a Christian framework in which knighthood (*caballería*) shared the burden of governing society with the clergy.³⁴ Llull’s religiously informed view helps shed light on ways in which the Church sought to shape the chivalric mode of conduct.³⁵ The fourteenth century knight and major figure of the Hundred Years War Geoffroi de Charny wrote a *Book of Chivalry* that provides a useful point of comparison with Llull’s book. Where Llull presented a highly idealized depiction of chivalry founded on Christian principles, Charny listed those things that a knight ought to do in order to gain honor. And whereas Llull defined the knighthood’s purpose as conducting itself honorably in order to secure peace and order in society, Charny viewed the honor won by knights through deeds of arms as an end in itself.

King Alfonso X, “the wise,” of Castile and Leon’s legal code, the *Siete Partidas*, provides a royal formulation of the rights and duties of knights. Known as “Alfonso the wise,” this thirteenth century king surrounded himself with scholars and was a noted scholar himself.³⁶ His legal code includes extensive detail on knightly status in society and offers formulations on how knights should be honored. While this code may have been more grounded in reality than

³³ Kaeuper, *Medieval Chivalry*, 11.

³⁴ Kaeuper, *Chivalry and Violence*, 31.

³⁵ Flori, 216-219.

³⁶ “Alfonso X,” in *Britannica Academic*, accessed February 16, 2019, <https://academic-eb-com.proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/levels/collegiate/article/Alfonso-X/5675>.

narrative sources, its incorporation of an origin myth of knights signals that it also framed ideas about honor in idealized ways.

From a clerical perspective, St. Bernard of Clairvaux's "In Praise of the New Knighthood" exalted knights who fought for the faith while simultaneously condemning the vast majority of Christian knights who fought among themselves.³⁷ Bernard, an influential Cistercian abbot of the twelfth century and the impetus behind the Second Crusade, advanced a perspective that was clearly at odds with knights who sought to win honor through battle.³⁸

Chronicles of knights provide insight into knightly perspectives on honor. Jean Froissart's *Chronicles of the Hundred Years War* (1337-1453) and *El Victorial*, the chivalric biography of the fifteenth century Castilian Count Pero Niño, exemplify how these works functioned as vehicles of praise for the honorable deeds of knights. Yet what was considered honorable was not completely uniform from one knightly perspective to another. In their praise of some knightly activities and their criticism of others, chronicles reveal a range of views on honor. In their aim to glorify great acts of heroism, both to preserve the memories of the knights performing them and to give knightly readers something to aspire to, these chronicles seldom read as straight-reporting. Hyperbolic language and narrative crafting made these chronicles akin to literary creations, and it is essential to consider their historical value insofar as they constitute storytelling just as one would with any literary works. These chronicles may not provide factually reliable accounts of history, but that was never their purpose. Rather, they served to praise the honorable and condemn the dishonorable for posterity, and they reveal their authors' conceptions of honor through fact and fiction.

³⁷ Bernard of Clairvaux, 117.

³⁸ Ibid, 4, 120.

With regards to purely fictional literature or only loosely historically-based works, the same justifications as for the use of chronicles apply. According to Jean Flori, chivalric “literature, more than a deformed reflection of reality is an ‘ideological revealer’ of chivalry and the chivalric world. It offers us [chivalry’s] magnified reflection...which the [medieval] public enthusiastically adopted.”³⁹ As discussed, chivalric ideology couched itself in terms of honor. Its practitioners honored the things which that ideology valued, so the “magnified reflection” of that ideology in chivalric literature is of the utmost usefulness for understanding variances in conceptions of honor. The historian must nevertheless be wary of that “magnified reflection,” recognizing when these accounts hewed closer to ideals and when they appeared more realistic. With an eye to such a gradient, the influence of ideologies and individual motivations are most readily identified in the conceptions of honor that this thesis explores.

Finally, we must pay heed to the backgrounds of these authors and who they write about when they talk of honor. Whether knights or clergy or even professional writers, these authors pertained to the uppermost echelon of medieval society, and they wrote about people from their social set. Some even noted explicitly that those of low status did not merit being put in writing. Don Juan Manuel (1282-1348), grandson of the Habsburg Holy Roman Emperor Ferdinand III and nephew of Alfonso X, wrote along these lines in his *Book of the estates (Libro de los estados)*, a work evaluating men of a variety of statuses and occupations’ opportunities for salvation. Beginning with emperors and moving down the medieval hierarchy, Manuel eventually reaches the small officials of kings and emperors (like their messengers, cooks, and

³⁹ Flori, 100.

“La literatura, más que un reflejo deformado de la realidad, es un ‘revelador ideológico’ de la caballería y del mundo caballeresco. Nos ofrece su reflejo engrandecido...que el público adoptaba con entusiasmo.”

porters) and wrote that “it seems better to silence” such individuals than “put them in such a book as this.”⁴⁰ Such bias towards writing about great men and not about those of low status was the norm, and it corresponded to medieval authors’ understanding of books as vehicles of praise for the deeds of great men. What honor arose from tilling fields or raising animals? Medieval authors do not even deign to answer in the negative; it was implied.

⁴⁰ Juan Manuel, “Libro de los estados,” in *Obras Completas*, ed. José Manuel Blecua (Madrid: Editorial Gredos, 1981), 409.

Chapter One: Honorable Riches?

In the period under examination, the links forged between knights and nobles became increasingly cemented, and the use of honor to refer to the material possessions that pertained to these medieval elites reflected this association between knighthood and riches.¹ Legal codes, like that of King Alfonso X “the wise” of Castile (1252-84), which made noble descent a requirement of knighthood, illustrated that knighthood not only implied, but could even necessitate noble blood.² While recognizing that a desire to situate themselves as heads of nobility motivated kings like Alfonso X to embrace the notion that knights were noble by definition, the very existence of laws like those in Alfonso’s code represent only one manifestation of a larger ideological trend. It requires no leap of the imagination to understand how an association between riches and knightly status coexists with or spawns from this synthesis of knighthood and nobility.

The very language used to talk about riches as knightly honor indicates the level of entrenchment of this notion. In the thirteenth century knight-turned-mystic Ramón Llull’s *Book of the order of chivalry*, “*cortesía*,” which one may understand in terms of the English notions of ‘courtesy’ and ‘courtliness,’ was a quality of “*caballería*,” or chivalry.³ Based on this association, Llull asserts that “it convenes the knight to speak elegantly and to dress elegantly, and to wear beautiful armor, and to have a large house—all of these things are necessary to

¹ See Flori, *Caballeros y Caballería En La Edad Media* for helpful analysis of this fusion of knighthood and nobility over the course of the Middle Ages.

² Alfonso X, “Las Siete Partidas: Código de D. Alonso El Sabio,” in *Códigos Antiguos de España: Colección Completa de Todos Los Códigos de España, Desde El Fuero Hasta La Novísima Recopilación.*, vol. 1 (Madrid: Administración J. López Comancho, Impresor, 1885), 332.

Dates from: “Alfonso X -- Britannica Academic,” accessed March 17, 2019, <https://academic.eb.com/levels/collegiate/article/Alfonso-X/5675>.

³ Ramon Llull, *Libro de la orden de caballería* (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1986), 85.

honor *caballería*.”⁴ Manifestly, the honor due knights according to Lull included riches. That *cortesía* implied both a set of manners and wealth should come as no surprise in this noble context. That this *cortesía*, and by extension riches, did honor to *caballería* requires further scrutiny.

We can look no further than this same passage from *The Book of the Order of Chivalry* to glean a better understanding of how riches could honor chivalry. Drawing a parallel between the exaltation due God and the honor accorded knights, Lull asserted that “as man should recognize that all nobility is in God, so the knight should be attributed all of that for which *caballería* receives honor because of those who are in its order”⁵ In the framework endorsed by Lull, knights pertained to an order of chivalry, a God-ordained order within society tasked with securing peace in all the lands of Christendom.⁶ Echoing sentiments spelled out plainly in Alfonso’s code, Lull also remarked that “nobility in a woman and a knight united in matrimony does honor to the *caballería*, and the opposite [marriage to lay-persons] is the destruction of *caballería*.”⁷ A knight must not only have had noble blood but also had to be wary of not sullyng that noble lineage. Thus, within Lull’s tidy framework, the *caballería* merited honor on the basis of their inherited nobility as well as for their fulfillment of an important, and divinely-appointed role in society. That honor in one sense referred to praise due to knights, but it also clearly referred to material riches.

⁴ Ibid.

“*al caballero le conviene hablar bellamente y vestir bellamente, y llevar bello arnés, y tener casa grande, pues todas estas cosas son necesarias para honra caballería.*”

⁵ Ibid.

“*así como el hombre debe reconocer en Dios toda la nobleza, así al caballero se le debe atribuir todo aquello por lo que la caballería reciba honor por parte de aquellos que están en su orden*”

⁶ Alfonso X, 331.

⁷ Lull, 90.

“*la hidalguía en mujer y caballero unidos en matrimonio conviene el honor de la caballería, y lo contrario es destrucción de caballería.*”

One's very status as a knight implied aristocratic riches. After all, a horse, a suit of armor, and the upkeep of servants that attended to knights required significant investment. Furthermore, in order to learn the art of mounted warfare aspiring knights needed to have access to the elite company of knights who could teach them.⁸ To go on military campaign or to attend tournaments and partake in a courtly lifestyle necessitated even further riches. Thus, knighthood and riches often went hand in hand. The mandates issued by Alfonso X and Ramón Llull that knights be noble and preserve their noble lineage through future generations represent the theoretical notion that nobility was intrinsic to knighthood, and this association allowed for knights' riches to be justified and even praised as simply appropriate to their station in society.

In many instances, however, the riches incumbent upon knightly status can simply be understood as implicit in the meaning of honor. Llull wrote that "knights should be honored by king and high barons." To understand all that honor represents in this deceptively simple sentence, one must look to the statement that follows it: "just as knights make it such that kings and high nobles are honored above all other men, so kings and barons should honor knights above the rest of men."⁹ Llull leaves the meaning of honor here somewhat ambiguous, and it seems meaningfully so. Implicit in the notion of kings and high-ranking barons honoring knights is an embrace of these knights into their socioeconomic world on the basis of their shared knightly status because "kings, princes and lords of the land should be knights, since without the honor that convenes knights they do not deserve to be princes or lords of the land."¹⁰ In other

⁸ Keen, 26-27.

⁹ Llull, 89.

"los caballeros deben ser honrados por los reyes y por los altos barones; pues así como los caballeros hacen que los reyes y los altos señores sean honrados por encima de los demás hombres, así los reyes y los barones deben tener honrados a los caballeros por encima de los demás hombres."

¹⁰ Ibid.

"rey, príncipe y señor de tierra debe ser caballero, pues sin tener el honor que conviene a caballero no merece ser príncipe ni señor de tierra"

words, kings should honor knights as they themselves are honored (because they are knights). The honor referred to here is praise, but it is also status and the accompanying riches and power. As indicated, Lull saw the trappings of being rich as honor due to knights. In effect, knights deserved both the honor of being praised for fulfilling their God-ordained function in society, as well as the material honor incumbent upon their position atop society. Lull's *Book of the order of chivalry* was an idealized vision of the position of knights in society, but far more explicit examples of the materiality of the honor in the hands of knights are myriad.

Spoils of war constituted one category of material honor. In his fourteenth century *Chronicles* of the Hundred Years War, Jean Froissart wrote that all the English who fought under the Prince of Wales at the Battle of Poitiers (September 19, 1356) "became rich in honour and possessions, not only because of the ransoms but also thanks to the gold and silver which they captured. They found plate and gold and silver belts and precious jewels in chests crammed full of them, as well as excellent cloaks, so that they took no notice of armour, arms or equipment."¹¹ Froissart's list of the honor and possessions won in the battle are all material objects of great value, precisely the same sorts of things with which Lull thought knights should be honored. Regardless of whether the author exercised artistic license by including the chests of gems, this booty is nevertheless plainly understood as honor.

The *Poem of the Cid* (c. 1140-1207), aptly described by Pedro Salinas as the story of "the reconquest of the Cid's honor," is replete with examples of material honor gained, lost, and gifted.¹² Though the Cid sought to regain the honor of his status and of his name and family, the acquisition of material riches is no small component of the honor he gained over the course of

¹¹ Froissart, 143.

¹² "Cantar de Mio Cid -- Britannica Academic," accessed April 13, 2019, <https://academic.oup.com/levels/collegiate/article/Cantar-de-Mio-Cid/20049>.

his adventures. Hearing of the Cid's remarkable victory in battle over the Moroccan king Yúsuif and of the fabulous riches that the Cid won in this battle, King Alfonso IV of Castile exclaimed "what a marvel is this Cid, that his honor grows so much!"¹³ And when the Cid came to King Alfonso bearing gifts of "thirty handsome palfreys, all well adorned, and thirty good riding horses, well-saddled," the king responded: "my good Cid Rodrigo Díaz, much have you honored me."¹⁴ Such invocations of honor leave no doubt as to its conflation with riches.

It is noteworthy that the material honor in the *Poem of the Cid* comes to each character by different means. In these examples, the Cid acquired material honor as spoils of war upon conquering an enemy army while King Alfonso received honor in the form of a gift. Yet these are not the only ways in which material honor circulated among these richest members of society. Inheritances, dowries, and the like served as other means of conveying material honor from one noble to another. When the Cid married his daughters to the sons of counts from Carrión, they promised that "the dowry they g[a]ve to [the Cid's daughters] [would] be received with honor."¹⁵ That is, the dowry would augment the daughters' honor by means of making them richer. The dowry in question? Villas on their grand estates. In this exchange of honor, the Cid, in turn, promised the grooms "three thousand marks in value, sturdy mules and palfreys, strong, vigorous running horses, and many rich silk garments."¹⁶ Thus, the marriages served as the locus for an immense exchange of material honor.

¹³ Anonymous, *Poema del Cid*, trans. Francisco López Estrada, *Odres Nuevos: Clásicos medievales en castellano actual* (Madrid: Editorial Castalia, 1968), 81.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 92.

"*treinta hermosos palafrenes, todos muy bien adornados, y treinta buenos caballos de correr, bien ensillados...Mi buen Cid Rodrigo Díaz, mucho me habéis vos honrado; de vos quedo bien servido*"

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 114.

"*La dote que a ellas les dimos, recibirán con honor.*"

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

"*tres mil marcos de valor; y mulas y palafrenes, que de recia talla son, y caballos corredores, fuertes y de gran vigor, muchas ricas vestiduras de paños y seda*"

This understanding of material honor in the *Poem of the Cid* appeared unchanged two centuries later in *El Victorial*, the chronicle of the Castilian knight Pero Niño. A king mentioned in a historical vignette in the chronicle, Menelao, “honor[ed] his daughter Dorotea, [by] ma[king] her the lady [ruler] of a quarter part of his kingdom.”¹⁷ While there is honor in the title and office that Dorotea inherits by becoming the leading lady of this realm, the materiality of this honor is central. This inheritance included “noble peoples, and rich men, and knights, and peons, and loyal and genteel towns in the mountains, and noble villas, and cities, and sea ports, and grand and rich burghers, and fine ships, and knowledgeable sailors, all to [her] honor and command.”¹⁸ That this laundry list of what the realm contained *was*, in fact, the honor that Dorotea received in her inheritance goes to show that the honor of nobles (and knights) could include every manner of wealth under their control, whether goods, lands, or people.

With this understanding of material honor in mind, one may better appreciate the significance of labeling objects as honorable. In this same chronicle, the author wrote about “honorable cloth” garments.¹⁹ Presumably, not any object could be honorable. The denotation of objects like the aforementioned clothes as “honorable” has to do with the objects’ high monetary value and association with nobility. Only wealthy persons could afford silks or other fine cloths, so calling the clothes honorable pointed to their worth and to the types of people who wore them, in this case nobles.

¹⁷ Díez de Games, 145-146.

“*E Menelao, por honrrar a su hija Dorotea, fizola señora de la quarta parte del Reyno*”

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 151.

“*nobles gentes, ricos-hombres e caualleros e peones, e muy leales pueblos de montañas, muy fidalgos, e nobles villas, e çiudades, e puertos de mar, e grandes burgueses, e ricos, e buenos nauíos, e fustas, e marineros muy savidores, todos a vuestro onor e mandado.*”

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 173.

“*honrrados paños*”

Frequently, however, references to honor are ambiguous as to their source. In a battle scene from *El Poema del Cid*, the

Cid g[ave] chase to the Moorish King Búcar. He raised his sword, Colada, and gave [Búcar] a powerful blow. The rubies of his helm flew off, and to the waist his sharp sword clove him. Don Rodrigo killed Búcar, a king from across the seas; in the conflict he won Tizón, which [was] worth a thousand gold marks, and he won that marvelous and grand battle. Here our Cid and all those who pay him homage were honored.²⁰

In this case it is unclear how one might allocate the honor between the superb fighting by the Cid and the riches he won through victory, though evidently they jointly summed to constitute the honor that the Cid and his followers gained in the battle. In this way, the distinction between material honor and prowess-based honor often blurred.

In his *Book of Chivalry*, however, Geoffroi de Charny, King John II of France's (reigned 1350-64) standard bearer who the contemporary Froissart described as "the wisest and bravest knight of them all," sought to provide clarity, distinguishing prowess-based honor while decrying the distractions of riches. In his eyes, the riches gained through conquering enemies were not only secondary to the immaterial honor won with valor but did not even constitute honor in the first instance. Employing this logic, he contended that

one should therefore take far greater account of undertakings involving physical hardship and danger which the great lords are prepared to and do embark on of their own free will without any need to do so other than to achieve personal honor, with no further expectation of any reward for the money and effort which they devote to performing these great deeds of arms; these enterprises should be valued more than those of men who expect some profit or advancement or rise in status as a reward for the honor which they have won or are winning.²¹

²⁰ *Cid*, 109.

"*Cid al Rey moro Búcar cerca del mar diole alcance. Alzo su espada Colada y un fuerte golpe fue a darle. Los rubíes de su yelmo, los sesos quedan al aire, y hasta la cintura llega aquella espada tajante. Don Rodrigo mató a Búcar, un Rey de allende los mares; en la lid ganó a Tizon, que mil marcos de oro vale, y venció aquella batalla maravillosa y tan grande. Aquí se honró nuestro Cid y los que a él dan homenaje.*"

²¹ Charny, 107.

In placing that “personal honor” above all other honors, he arrived at the conclusion that a knight “should not care about amassing great wealth, for the more worldly goods a man acquires, the more reluctant he is to die and the greater his fear of death; and the more honor a man gains, the less he fears to die, for his worth and honor will always remain, and the worldly goods will disappear.”²² Unlike Froissart, who wrote about booty as honor, Charny, in his *Book of chivalry*, warned knights to be wary of losing focus on the honor to be earned in battle by instead focusing on making a profit. He advised knights to “set [their] heart[s] and mind[s] on winning honor, which endures forever, rather than on winning profit and booty, which one can lose within one single hour”²³ In comparison with Froissart, Charny’s perspective should be recognized as ascetic.

Such a perspective did not exist in isolation. A chapter of the *Siete Partidas* entitled “How men should guard themselves from being covetous in wars and in other things they do” decried focusing on riches rather than victory in war as dishonorable. According to the code, those who sought riches in war “showed themselves to be ignoble, wanting to gain worldly riches rather than defeat their enemies, which is the greatest honor that can be.”²⁴ While exalting the nobility of purpose of knights who sought only victory in battle the *Partidas* condemned a fixation on riches, saying this covetous attitude led men to “death, dishonor, or loss of all they ha[d], sometimes even all of these.”²⁵ Far from lumping riches in with the honors of victory in battle, the *Partidas* depicted a desire for riches as the precursor to dishonor.

²² Ibid, 117.

²³ Ibid, 99.

²⁴ Alfonso X, 350.

“mostrandose por viles: queriendo ante ganar otras riquezas del mundo, que vencer a sus enemigos, que es la mayor honrra, que ser puede”

²⁵ Ibid.

“muerte, o en dehonrra, o en perdimiento de lo que han, e las veces en todo”

The mid-fourteenth century *Book of good love* (*Libro de buen amor*), authored by a supposed Juan Ruíz, Archpriest of Hita (*Fita*), offered a scathing critique of the honoring of riches. In a sarcastically-voiced meditation on the properties of money, he wrote that he “saw in the sanctified court of Rome that all humbled themselves before money; with great solemnity they honored it ... Money made many clerics, ordinaries, monks and nuns, sacred religious people: having money they were taken as wise; the poor, they said, were not even literate.”²⁶ Though in this case the tone is darkly comedic as compared to Charny’s didactic advice for knights, the Archpriest of Hita clearly made mockery of honoring wealth and suggested it was anti-Christian. Unlike Charny, who justified turning from money in favor of the honor that is earned through deeds of arms, the Archpriest simply decried worshipping money.

Gutierre Díez de Games shared the Archpriest’s negative view on riches, writing “do not keep a man for his fortune but for his intelligence and virtues. The honor of beasts, the honor of rags, of animals, is the honor of metals; it is from the earth.”²⁷ A clearer denouncement of riches could not be expressed. Díez de Games did here refer to riches as honor, so he did not redefine honor in the manner of Charny. However, by making the distinction that this form of honor is not one that men should value, he arrives at a similar conclusion that riches are of inferior value to the honor associated with virtues.

Finally, Ramón Llull offered his own critique of a perverted focus on riches, writing that “the knight-thief commits greater theft against the high honor of chivalry when he takes that

²⁶ Juan Ruiz, Arcipreste de Hita, *Libro de buen amor*, ed. Jacques Joret (Madrid: Taurus, 1990), 261-263.

“Yo vi en corte de Roma, do es la santidad, / que todos al dinero fazen grand omildat; / grand onra le fazían con grand solenidad: / todos a él se enclinavan, como a la magestat ... Fazía muchos clérigos e muchos ordenados, / muchos monges e monjas, religiosos sagrados: / el dinero los dava por bien examinados; / a los pobres dezían que non eran letrados.”

²⁷ Díez de Games, 71.

“no tengas a ningún hombre por lo que obró en la su fortuna, mas tenlo por lo que es en su seso e en sus bertudes. Ca la honra de las bestias, la honra de los paños, de las animalias, es la honra de los metales, de la tierra es”

honor away from himself and his name than when he steals money and such things; losing honor is increasing vulgarity and infamy in one who should be praised and honored. And because *honor* and *honra* are worth more than money, gold or silver, it is a greater offense to debase chivalry than to steal money.”²⁸ While, as we have seen, Llull did assert that in order to honor the order of chivalry knights ought to, essentially, be rich, in this case he drew the line on the honorability of wealth by equating thievery with a loss of honor. Further, he contradicted himself by stating clearly that money was simply neither *honra* nor *honor*. It is worth noting that in practice the distinction between thievery and licit (even commended) plunder following victory in battle could wind up appearing very similar. Thus, a rejection of thievery like Llull’s could coexist with views of the honorability of spoils of war like those of Froissart or Díaz.

Other writers offered genuine counterarguments to these critiques. Don Juan Manuel wrote to this point in his book of exempla (moral anecdotes), *The book of the exempla of Count Lucanor* (*El libro de los ejemplos del Conde Lucanor*).²⁹ In one exemplum, the protagonist, a king, told his advisor that he “took no pleasure in the honors of this world, not in its riches, nor in any of the world’s things or pleasures,” and that he intended to quit his realm.³⁰ The advisor did not praise his king for his ascetic rejection of “worldly things” but instead begged him to remain at his post, saying “that it would be a great disservice to God if he were to leave so many

²⁸ Llull, 39.

"El caballero ladrón comete mayor latrocinio contra el alto honor de la caballería cuando priva a ésta de sí mismo y de su nombre, que cuando roba dineros y tras cosas; pues quitar honra es dar vileza y mala fama a aquello que es digno de ser loado y honrado. Y como el honor y la honra valen más que dineros, oro y plata, por eso es mayor falta envilecer la caballería que robar dineros."

²⁹ Historical note: Juan Manuel shared a mutual friend with Ramón Llull, King Jaime I of Aragón. The introduction to Manuel’s *Libro de los estados* mentions that he sent that book to King Jaime’s son, his brother-in-law. In: Juan Manuel, “Libro de los estados,” in *Obras Completas*, ed. José Manuel Blecua (Madrid: Editorial Gredos, 1981), 195.

³⁰ Juan Manuel, *Libro de Los Ejemplos Del Conde Lucanor y de Patronio*, 3rd ed. (Buenos Aires: Editorial Losado, S. A., 1939), 21.

“el rey non tomaba ningún plazer en las honras deste mundo, nin en las riquezas, nin en ninguna cosa de los bienes nin de los plazerres que en este mundo habíe.”

people as there were in the kingdom, who he maintained in peace and justice, and that it was certain that if he left that there would be a great ruckus and much fighting, and this would be a great disservice to God and very harmful to the realm.”³¹ By encouraging his king to embrace his station in the world, at the top of the medieval hierarchy, the counselor justified the worldly honors pertaining to him. For his king to walk away from his kingdom, leaving his material honor, would be to reject his divine allotment in life, acting contrary to the very will of God.

Clearly, a range of clashing views on whether riches constituted honor coexisted. Riches came part and parcel with being a successful knight, since the victor in a battle won not only glory but also the belongings of the defeated. But riches could also come from one’s inheritance. For the obvious reason that the first path to riches involved physical effort and danger while the second required only being born to the right family, medieval actors disagreed over the honorability of what passed from father to son. Advocates of earning honor through one’s own efforts critiqued inherited honor, lambasting those who claimed honor solely based on the lands and riches they inherited. On the other hand, defenders of inherited honor pointed to the efforts of their forefathers in elevating a family’s wealth and status as a justification for their claims.

³¹ Ibid.

“que faría muy grant desservicio a Dios en dexar tantas gentes como había en el su reino que tenía él bien mantenidas en paz et en justicia, et que era cierto que, luego que él dende se partiesse, que habría entrellos muy grant bollicio et muy grandes contiendas, de que tomaría Dios muy grant desservicio et la tierra muy grant dapno”

Chapter Two: Noble Blood and Knightly Conduct

The importance of family prestige in medieval elite society cannot be understated. As a means of rationalizing the preservation of family status, the notion that honor flowed from generation to generation through noble lineages enjoyed great popularity. But such ideas broke down in cases of sons inheriting title, land, and prestige yet not conducting themselves in honorable ways. In such instances, did the son have any claim to honor simply because of the situation he was born into? The variety of ways this echelon of society reacted to questions like this one and framed the distinction between inherited honor and honor earned through one's own actions reflected a great deal of dissent and a lack of clarity on the matter. To understand why divisions existed in perceptions of earned and inherited honor, scholars must first know the actors' basis for valuing each kind of honor.

In a general sense, inheriting honor from one's aristocratic forebears implied following their example, preserving the family's honor through a tradition of acting honorably, upheld in generation after generation. A recurring mythology behind the origins of knights that appeared in a variety of texts helps bring clarity to how aristocrats rationalized the idea of honor flowing from generation to generation in noble families. In the *Siete Partidas* of Alfonso X the Wise, the first law, which related to "knights, and the things that they ought to do" explained why knights gained their Latin name of *militia*, saying

in olden-times the knighthood was called the company of noblemen, who were designated to defend the lands. And for this they gave them the latin name *militia*: which means, groups of hard and strong men selected to suffer trials and tribulations: working and going through physical duress for the communal good of all. And for this reason they

have this name that comes from the count of a thousand [*mil*], because in ancient times from a thousand men one was selected to be a knight.¹

The second law explained how the ancients long selected knights for displaying three qualities:

The first, that they be accustomed to physical suffering, in the work of war and in the battles that befall them. The second, that they be accustomed to injuring, because they know how to better and more easily kill and defeat their enemies without easily tiring. The third, that they be without pity in robbing, injuring, or killing their enemies, and that they do not easily become dismayed by blows they receive or inflict on others.²

Thus, the *Siete Partidas* recognized the very practical, physical attributes that suited knights in their travels and battles. By establishing the uniqueness and superiority of knights within this mythologized rendition of the origins of knighthood, the *Siete Partidas* laid the foundation for claiming that the honor of knights is passed on through noble blood-lines. This origin story of knights served as a justification for the place of nobles in medieval society by implying that nobles descended from men of this sort and retained their status because they continued to act honorably after the example of their fathers.

The *Siete Partidas* did note, however, that the honor of noble families did not remain fixed over time and could be lost. The code discussed *hidalguía*, or the “nobility that comes to men from their lineage,” and encouraged knights to act honorably, saying those with *hidalguía* “should do much to guard it so that they do not damage or diminish it.”³ Though not

¹ Alfonso X, 331.

“Cauallería fue llamada antiguamene la compañía de los nobles omes, que fueron puestos para defender las tierras. E por esso le pusieron nome en latin militia: que quiere tanto dezir, como compañías de omes duros e fuertes, e escogidos, para sofrir trabajo e mal: trabajando, e lazrando, por pro de todos comunalmente. E por ende ouo este nome de cuento de mill, ca antiguamente de mill omes escogían vno para fazer cauallero”

² Ibid.

“La primera que fuessen lazradores, para sofrir la grand lazeria, e los trabajos que en las guerras, e en en las lides les acaesciessen. La segunda que fuessen vsados a ferir, porque sopiessen mejor, e mas ayna matar, e vencer sus enemigos, e non cansassen ligeramente faziendolo. La tercera, que fuessen crudos para no auer piedad, de robar lo de los enemigos, ni de ferir, ni de matar, ni otrosi que non desmayassen ayna por golpe que ellos rescibiessen, ni que diessen a otros.”

³ Ibid, 333.

synonymous with honor, *hidalguía* could be substituted here with inherited honor since the *Partidas* state that “knights should be greatly honored ... for the nobility of their lineage.”⁴ And how might a knight diminish this honorable *hidalguía*? According to the code, “this occur[ed] when he diminishe[d] what others grew by marrying a lower-class woman.”⁵ Thus, maintaining the purity of one’s noble line served as a means of preserving inherited honor.

The *Siete Partidas* made clear the centrality of marriage to inherited honor: nobles ought to marry other nobles in order to preserve the purity of their line and maintain their inherited honor. *El Poema del Cid* contains two excellent examples illustrating the meaning of advantageous marriages in terms of a family’s honor. When King Alfonso VI finally restored the Cid to his good graces, he honored him by offering to marry his daughters to the *infantes de Carrión*, noblemen descended from powerful counts. The Cid brought the news home to his wife and children saying, “thanks to God I am here, before you, honored woman. I bring you nephews who will give *honra* to the house. Thank me, my daughters, for you are both already married...by your marriage we grow in *honor*.”⁶ Here the Cid made a clear distinction between the wealth that the *infantes de Carrión* would bring to the family through the marriage, that is *honra*, and the aristocratic elevation that was gained through the marriage, that is *honor*.⁷ By connecting his family to powerful nobility, the Cid attained a share in the honor that the *infantes de Carrión* had inherited through their lineage.

“Fidalguia...es nobleza que viene a los omes por linaje. E por ende deuen mucho guardar los que han derecho en ella que non la dañen, ni la menguen”

⁴ Ibid, 336.

“Honrrados deuen mucho ser los caualleros ... por nobleza de su linaje.”

⁵ Ibid, 333.

“esto es quando el menguasse en lo que los otros acrescentaron, casando con villana”

⁶ *Cid*, 96.

“Gracias a Dios aquí estoy, ante vos, mujer honrada. Yernos os traigo también, que honra darán a la casa. Dadme gracias, hijas mías, que ya estáis las dos casadas...por vuestro casamiento creceremos en honor.”

⁷ This distinction between the two Spanish words for honor, *honra* and *honor*, is not based on strict definitions. These terms were not used uniformly by all medieval Spanish writers, and this citation is only one use case.

The Cid's initial excitement at the prospect of increasing his honor through these advantageous marriages turned to righteous anger, however, when the *infantes de Carrión* turned out to be cowards with bad intentions, hiding under benches when a pet lion escaped in the castle of Valencia, plotting the murder and robbery of a Moorish lord who pays homage to the Cid, and ultimately beating and leaving the Cid's daughters for dead. The Cid turned to his king for justice, and it was delivered swiftly with a determination that two of the Cid's best knights duel the *infantes de Carrión*. At the same court King Alfonso VI also sought to make up for having married the Cid's daughters to such dishonorable men by arranging new, even more advantageous marriages to princes of Navarra and Aragón: "King Alfonso rose and ordered the court to be silent. 'I beg of you, Cid, leader and champion, that if it pleases you ... I would like these marriages to be performed today. With them you will grow in *honra*, lands, and *honor*,'" that is riches, lands, and the honor of connecting the Cid's family to the *hidalguía* of the princes.⁸ With the Cid's agreement, these new marriages proceeded. In describing the difference between the marriages, the author made clear that the first ones could not compete with the honorability of the second: "great were the first [marriages], these are even better; with greater honor are they married than on the first occasion. See how the honor of the one who was born in a good hour [el Cid] grows, that his daughters are ladies of Navarra and Aragón"⁹

Another exemplum from don Juan Manuel's *Book of the Count Lucanor* discusses marriage in a way that elucidates why the *Poem of the Cid* proved critical of the inherited honor

⁸ *Cid*, 145.

"Levantóse don Alfonso, callar la Corte ordenó: -A vos os ruego yo, Cid, caudillo Campeador, que si a vos esto complace...Quiero que estos casamientos queden concertados hoy, pues con ellos creceréis en honra, tierras y honor."

⁹ *Ibid*, 158.

"grande fueron los primeros [casamientos], estos son aún mejor; con mayor honra las casa que en la primera ocasión. Ved como crece la honra al que en buen hora nació, que sus hijas son señoras de Navarra y de Aragón" "así los Reyes de España hoy del Cid parientes son. ¡Que todos en honra crecen por el que en buena nació!"

of the *infantes de Carrión* while praising that of the princes. Discussing the qualities a father should look for in a suitable match for his daughter, Juan Manuel wrote that “the principal thing to have in a marriage is that [the groom] be a good man; because if he is not, then regardless of any honor, any riches, and any [h]idalguía he has, he will never be well married.”¹⁰ Manifestly, the *infantes de Carrión* represented precisely this type of problematic individual—rich and honorable on account of *hidalguía*, but cowardly and malicious. Juan Manuel explained what such men did with their inheritance: for not being “as good as they should, they squandered their lineage and riches.”¹¹ The *infantes de Carrión* are depicted in precisely this manner. Bad men, their king justly exposed and castigated them, diminishing the honor of their inherited status in the process. Meanwhile, the Cid, wronged with the first marriages for his daughters, received his due in honor with the subsequent marriages to worthy husbands. Manuel wrote that so long as men are good, “insofar as the lineage is more noble, the riches greater, [and] the gentility more complete [in these men] ... the marriage is better.”¹² In marrying his daughters to princes who outstripped the *infantes de Carrión* in all of these terms, the Cid gained more honor for his daughters and himself.

The princes also gained honor by marrying the daughters of the Cid. Speaking to these second marriages, the author of the *Cid* proclaimed, “the Kings of Spain today become relatives of the Cid. All grow in honor by the one in whom good was born [the Cid]!”¹³ Whereas the Cid

¹⁰ Juan Manuel, *Conde Lucanor*, 115.

“la principal cosa que cate en el casamiento, que sea, aquel con quien la hobiere de casar, buen hombre en sí; ca si esto non fuere, por honra, nin por riqueza, nin por fidalguía que haya, nunca puede ser bien casada.”

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 116.

“tan buenos como debían, fué en ellos perdido el linaje et la riqueza”

¹² *Ibid.*

“cuanto el linaje es más alto, et la riqueza mayor, et la apostura más complida ... tanto es el casamiento mejor”

¹³ *Cid*, 158.

“así los Reyes de España hoy del Cid parientes son. ¡Que todos en honra crecen por el que en buena nació!”

gained honor by linking himself to powerful aristocratic lineages, the princes, and by extension their fathers, the aforementioned kings of Spain, procured honor by connection to a valiant knight. Unlike the honor of the princes, the Cid's was entirely his own, won with his own hand in battle. Nevertheless, the author made clear that the Cid's honor was at least as valuable as the inherited royal honor. When the princes married his daughters, becoming the Cid's sons-in-law, they gained honor by joining the family of such an honorable knight. By representing the marriages as advantageous for the honor of both sides, the author of the *Cid* indicated that his protagonist, through war and conquest, had increased his honor to a level on par with the highest nobility. In this sense, the Cid acted like the mythologized original knights, establishing the honorable precedent for future generations to follow. The princes, though not descendants of the Cid, nevertheless inherited honor from him by marrying his daughters and becoming part of his family. Thus, *The Poem of the Cid* exhibited the same ideal that inherited honor rested upon the honorable deeds of one's ancestors described in the *Siete Partidas*.

This precedent of honorable action could be quite obvious. For instance, Froissart wrote that "all who fell at [the battle of] Poitiers or were taken prisoner did their duty so loyally to their king that their heirs are still honoured for it and the gallant men who fought there are held in perpetual esteem."¹⁴ Froissart commented similarly on a pair of Scottish knights in a battle against the English, "Sir Patrick Hepburn and his son, also named Patrick, [who] fought splendidly alongside their commander's banner. But for them, it would certainly have been taken. But they defended it so stoutly, thrusting and dealing such mighty blows until more of their men could come to the rescue, that they and their heirs are still held in honour for it."¹⁵ This

¹⁴ Froissart, 138.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, 342.

continued praise not only of the knights who fought valiantly in battle but also of their descendants for springing from their noble lines further illustrated the paradigm of inheriting honor.

Yet inherited honor did not flow evenly from father to sons. The law of primogeniture entitling firstborn sons to their fathers' statuses (as kings, dukes, etc.) and land holdings meant that the honor inherited by eldest sons outweighed that granted to any brothers they might have. Juan Manuel wrote in his *Book of the estates (Libro de los estados)* that "the sons of emperors are not all of the same condition; the eldest, not being entitled by inheritance to the empire, but being the eldest and having the possibility of inheriting it, should carry himself in a more elevated and honorable manner than his siblings."¹⁶ Holy Roman Emperors required election, making their position not entirely based upon inheritance, but the fundamental idea posited by Juan Manuel about eldest sons being more honorable than their siblings applied regardless of the title to be inherited.

What is worth noting is how Juan Manuel skirted the issue of inherited honor being something distinct from earned honor by framing the eldest son's honorability in terms of a mode of conduct rather than something intrinsic. Such language refers us to the ideal presented in the *Siete Partidas* of inherited honor flowing from generation to generation as a kind of mixture of one's physical qualities and disposition, that is one's more intrinsic qualities, and one's learned habits and customs, modeled after honorable ancestors. Juan Manuel would appear to have been pointing primarily to the latter set of qualities, but an important degree of ambiguity

¹⁶ Juan Manuel, "Libro de los estados," 319.

"los hijos de los enperadores non son todos de vna condición; ca el mayor, commo quier que de derecho non es heredero del enperio, pero por que es mayor et puede ser que será heredero, por ende, conuiene que en otra manera mas alta et mas onrada traya su fazienda que los otros sus hermanos."

on the matter is present in his language. Attempting to draw strict lines between intrinsic inherited honorable qualities and learned customs, however, leads to circular nature versus nurture questioning. Furthermore, such a distinction would ideally not have needed to be made. In the words of the *Siete Partidas*, it was a shame if “what in others was begun or inherited should diminish or end” because a nobleman did not live up to the expectations of honorable conduct associated with someone in his position.¹⁷ Only in the case of firstborn sons not comporting themselves honorably might someone question whether they had not accustomed themselves to the habits of the honorable or, far more subversive a thought, considered that their inherited honor was somehow false or unmerited.

Other authors similarly avoided addressing that potential issue, speaking only in terms of the ideal when portraying inherited honor. The *Book of the Knight Zifar*, a chivalric novel loosely based on the story of the Roman Saint Eustace and written by Ferrand Martínez, a cleric in Alfonso X’s council, presented earning and inheriting honor in harmony with each other.¹⁸ The protagonist, a king, is to bequeath part of his honor when his elder son is crowned. His younger son, not coming into the same fortune of inheriting a kingdom, desires to leave his native land to seek honor through great deeds. At a very simple level, the situation presented shows how the law of primogeniture served as an impetus for seeking honor through militaristic means as well as a foundation for claims to inherited honor. Whereas firstborn sons inherited their fathers’ domains, the other sons had to make their own way in the world to acquire lands, status, and honor. In the *Zifar* Martínez raised no issue with either means of attaining honor,

¹⁷ Alfonso X, 333.

¹⁸ “Spanish Literature -- Britannica Academic,” accessed March 17, 2019, <https://academic.eb.com/levels/collegiate/article/Spanish-literature/108586#80466.toc>.

Marcelino Menéndez Pelayo, *Orígenes de la novela*, D. Enrique Sánchez Reyes, vol. 1, 4 vols. (Santander: Consejo superior de investigaciones científicas, 1943), 294.

neatly framing both the inheritance of and the earning of honor within a harmonious framework of God's design. In the story, the king's younger son, Roboan, tells his father,

I believe by the mercy of God our Lord, that He who showed mercy to you [the king], and to my brother, in wanting you to be king and for him to replace you, did not want to desert or forget me ... instead, serving God, I will fight to work and to do so much that He in all his piety will place me in such great honor as my brother¹⁹

When his father protests, wanting his son to stay close to home, Roboan responds,

the greatest decline that it seems to me a knight may have is this: in wanting to be sinful and not use of chivalry as it convenes one; because man, giving himself to vice, becomes forgetful and forsakes the things through which he could have greater honor than that in which he finds himself; because certainly according to reason honor is not given except to he who wants to work for it. Therefore, I ask for your mercy that you do not wish to take me from my good aim, because certainly I am fixed on working and on winning honor.²⁰

Of interest are both the terms of Roboan's ringing endorsement of working, that is fighting in far-off lands, for his honor and his not simultaneously condemning the inactivity of his brother's inheriting honor in the form of their father's kingdom. In considering the author's simultaneous approval of inheriting and of earning honor, it is worth recalling that as a member of King Alfonso X's council, he may have been influenced in favor of inherited honor because he benefitted directly from it by having the ear of the king, the most honored member of the social hierarchy. With this in mind, it is not hard to imagine why he would write in support of all the means by which his king acquired and preserved his honor. Nevertheless, Martínez's singing the

¹⁹ Charles Philip Wagner, ed., *Libro del Cauallero Zifar (El Libro del Cauallero de Dios)* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1929), 252.

“bien fio por la merçed de Dios Nuestro Señor, que el que fizo a vos merçed, e a mi hermano, en querer fazer a uos rey e a el en pos vos, que non querra a mi desanparar nin olvidar ... mas yo seruiendo a Dios, punare en trabajar e fazer tanto que el por la su piedat me porna en tan grant onrra commo a mi hermano.”

²⁰ Ibid, 253.

“la mayor mengua que me semeja que en cauallero puede ser es testa: en se querer tener viçioso e no vsar de caualleria assi como le conuiene; porque dandose el hombre al vicio ponese en oluido e desanparase de las cosas en que podria auer mayor onrra de aquella en que esta; ca çiertamente segund razon la honrra non se da sy non âquel que quiere trabajar por ella. E porende vos pido por merçed que non me querades sacar del proposito bueno en que esto, ca çiertamente oio tengo para trabajar e para ganar onrra.”

praises of earning honor apparently precludes his conceiving of an inherited honor divorced from honorable action.

Martínez, in painting an idealized picture of the law of primogeniture in action, did not denigrate inheriting honor in comparison to earning it. Other authors, however, took firm stances favoring earned honor at the expense of the inherited kind, or even viewed earned honor as the only true honor. Descriptions of how knights ought to conduct themselves and orient their lives offered one variety of affirmation of the superiority of earned honor. In *El Victorial*, Díez de Games devoted a chapter to explaining “what is a knight, and how a knight should be, and who is called a good knight.”²¹ Denigrating the idle, Díez de Games wrote,

Not all those who ride horses are knights; nor are all those who the kings arm as knights. They bear the name, but they do not engage in the exercise of war. Because the noble knighthood is the most honored vocation of them all, all want to take part in that honor: they have the uniform and the name, but they do not follow the rule. They are not knights but phantasms and apostates. The habit does not make the monk; the monk makes the habit ... And there is not nor should there be among the vocations any more honored than this one is. [These false knights] eat bread idly, wear delicate clothing, have exquisite feasts, soft beds, perfumes; being secure, they rise without fear, be idle in their fine accommodations with their women and children, and are served at their will, they grow fat necks, have large guts, and love themselves for doing good and being vicious. What prize or what honor do they merit? None.²²

In Díez de Games’s eyes those nobles living comfortable lives of luxury without undertaking challenges or difficulties had no place being called knights since they failed to engage in such

²¹ Díez de Games, 40.

“*qué es, qué tal deve ser el cavallero, e por quien es llamado buen cavallero*”

²² *Ibid*, 42.

“*No son todos cavalleros quantos cavalgan cavallos; ni quantos arman cavalleros los reyes son todos cavalleros. Han el nonbre; mas no hazen el exercizio de la guerra. Porque la noble cavallería es el más honrrado ofizio de todos; todos desean subir en aquella honrra: traen el ávito e el nombre, mas non guardaban la regla. No son caualleros, mas son apantasma e opóstatas. Non faze el ávito al monxe, mas el monje al ávito...E non es ni deven ser en los ofiçios oficio tan honrrado como éste es. Ca los de los ofiçios comunes comen el pan folgando, visten ropas delicadas, manjares bien adovados, camas blandas, safumadas; hechándose seguros levantándose sin miedo, fuelgan en buenas posadas con sus mugeres e sus hijos, e servidos a su voluntad, engordan grandes cerviçes, fazen grandes barrigas, quiérense bien por hazerse bien e tenerse biçiosos. ¿Qué galardón o qué honrra meresçen? No, ninguna.*”

knightly activities as the “exercise of war.” Not only did they disregard the duties incumbent on being a knight, but their lives reflected the exact opposite of what Díez de Games said knights ought to do. Thus, they did not merit any honor whatsoever.

For Díez de Games and others who glorified the active knightly lifestyle, true knights led lives of dogged persistence in the hard work of seeking out opportunities to grow their honor. Díez de Games explained, “Such is their vocation, a life of hard work, distanced from all vice ... their misery and hard work never ends in the course of a day. Such is the honor that knights merit.”²³ For Díez de Games, only through such trial and tribulation did knights earn praise and honor; without that effort, accomplishments rang hollow. He drove that point home in a vignette about how Bruto, the founder of Britain according to a chronicle Díez de Games cites, won the hand of Dorotea, tetrarch of Armenia without having to battle her brother who, having inherited his father’s crown, demanded his sister’s territories. Reflecting on his marriage, Bruto said, “well do you know that the thing that a man earns and which costs him much through great effort is the most valued. Consequently, I do not value this honor [of marrying *Dorotea*] because it was attained without work.”²⁴

Geoffroi de Charny also shared this view that true knights did not sit on their laurels but instead went seeking honor through action. His *Book of Chivalry* extensively described the most honorable knights, highlighting their active lifestyles. He asserted that “the truest and most

²³ Ibid, 43.

“*Tal es su ofiçio, vida de grand trabajo, alongados de todo viçio. Pues los de la mar, no ay igual de su mal: non acabaría en vn día su lazería e grand trauajo. Que dicha es la honrra que los cavalleros meresçen, e grandes merçedes de los reyes, por las cosas que dicho he.*”

²⁴ Ibid, 156.

“*Bien sabedes que la cosa que honbre gana e más cara le questa por grand afán, más la preçia. E por ende, esta honrra en que só puesto non la preçio, porque la ove sin ningúnd trbaujo*”

perfect form of [men-at-arms] ... look around, inquire, and find out where the greatest honor is to be found ... then they go to that place and, in keeping with their natural good qualities ... cannot be satisfied with themselves if they do not realize to the full their wish to find themselves there and to learn.”²⁵ For Charny, the best knights naturally and eagerly pursued honor, searching out battles, tournaments, and the like. While Charny does not explicitly say that knights inherited these “natural good qualities” he describes, such an implication is highly plausible.

In the *Siete Partidas*, this point is far clearer. The code describes how the mythologized original knights had these natural honorable attributes. Discussing how the ancients selected knights, a law explained that the ancients

saw many instances when [knights] did not feel shame, and they forgot [how they ought to be accustomed to suffering and to fighting their enemies]: and instead of defeating their enemies, they defeated themselves. [These ancients] also heard good things about men who had been seen who naturally felt this shame ... And they saw that more than anything else these were men of good lineage, because they guarded themselves from doing things in which they could fall into disgrace. And because these [men] were selected from good locations, and had something that means ‘good’ in the language of Spain: for this reason, they are called *fijos dalgo* [hidalgos], which means sons of the good.²⁶

Thus, according to the *Siete Partidas*, the original knights had a natural inclination to be ashamed when not engaging in strenuous activity. Furthermore, they would suffer any pains and difficulties to protect and preserve themselves from losing honor and landing themselves in disgrace. Recalling that this description of the original knights served as a mythology of the roots of nobility, the *Partidas* manifestly attempted to provide a pure example for contemporary

²⁵ Charny, 101-102.

²⁶ Alfonso X, 331.

“*vieron despues muchas vegadas, que non auiendo verguença, olvidaban [how they ought to be accustomed to suffering and to fighting their enemies]: e en lugar de vencer sus enemigos, vencianse ellos, ouieron por bien los sabidores, que catassen omes para estas cosas, que ouiesse en si verguença naturalmente...E por esto sobre todas las cosas cataron que fuessen omes de buen linaje, porque se guardasen de fazer cosa porque podiesse caer en verguença. E porque estos fueron escogidos de buenos logares, e con algo, que quiere tanto decir en lenguaje de España como bien: por eso los llamaron fijos dalgo, que muestra tanto como hijos de bien.*”

nobility to follow while also offering a means of justifying one's noble status by pointing to these honorable origins.

If honorable action was essential to knights earning honor, there was no preferable way to gain honor than through one's physical prowess, particularly in battle. Put simply by Charny, "it is from good battles that great honors arise and are increased."²⁷ So important was the battle context to the winning of honor in Charny's perspective that he declared that "he who too quickly gives [up military activity] may easily diminish his reputation. And no one should give up performing great exploits, for when the body can do no more, the heart and determination should take over."²⁸ For Charny, there could be no appropriate resting on one's laurels when one could still earn honor.

In researching great knights with whom to compare his patron, don Pero Niño, Díez de Games also highlighted the importance of the honor gained in battle. Discussing his search for knights undefeated in battle, Díez de Games wrote that

reading and searching, [he] found a good knight, a natural-born Castilian, who spent all his life in the use of arms and the art of *cavallería*, and from his childhood none ever had to work for him. And although he was not as high in status as the aforementioned [Alexander the Great, Hercules, and Atilla the Hun], he was great in his virtues. He was never defeated by his enemies; neither he nor his men. And for this, I found that that he was worthy of honor and fame similar to those who achieved praise and honor for arms and the office of *caballería*, who strove to reach the palm of victory, and whose noble deeds remain in writing.²⁹

²⁷ Charny, 92.

²⁸ Ibid, 93.

²⁹ Díez de Games, 44.

"leyendo e buscando, fallé vn buen cavallero, natural del reyno de Castilla, el qual toda su vida fue en ofiçio de armas e arte de cavallería, e nunca de ál se travaxó desde su niñez. E avnque no fué tan grande en estado como los sobredichos, fue grande en virtudes. El qual nunca fué bençido de sus enemigos; él ni gente suya. E por ende fallé que hera digno mereçiente de honrra e fama çerca de aquellos que alcançaron prez e honra por armas e ofiçio de caballería, e punaron por llegar a palma de vitoria, e porque los sus nobles hechos quedasen en escritura."

To say that this unidentified, and apparently little-known, knight stood nearly shoulder to shoulder in terms of honor with some of the most revered warriors in history is testament to the value Díez de Games placed on earning honor through deeds of arms.

In keeping with the notion that from the physical duress of their activities knights should be honored, the author of the *Cid* spared no details in recounting the glorious feats of arms performed by his protagonist. When the Cid rode out of Valencia to meet the King of Morocco and fifty thousand of his troops, the focus was on the Cid's deeds in that battle that earned him honor. He had already come very far to capture Valencia, and then in his defense of the city he was unstoppable: the "Cid used his lance and had his sword in hand; he killed so many Moors that they could not be counted. Gleaming Moorish blood ran down his arm. Three times he struck Yúsuf, the Moorish king."³⁰ When he returned to Valencia the noble ladies of the city greeted him, and the Cid addresses them, saying "look at this bloody sword and this sweaty horse. This is how to defeat the Moors in the field. Pray to Our Lord that I live a few more years: you all will win honor and praise, and they will kiss your hands."³¹ This gory emphasis, particularly on how the Cid landed blows on a king, underscored the importance to the author of such noteworthy exploits in war as the best means of gaining an honor that edified the individual and even radiated from him.

In Froissart's *Chronicles*, honor gained through excellent feats of arms was so important to those at the Battle of Poitiers, a major battle of the Hundred Years War, that even in defeat the

³⁰ *Cid*, 76.

"Cid empleó la lanza, y a la espada metió mano; mata a tantos de los moros, que no pudieron contarlos. Sangre mora reluciendo la resbala codo abajo. A Yúsuf, que es el rey moro, tres veces lo ha golpeado."

³¹ *Ibid*, 77-78.

"Mirad la espada sangrienta, y sudoroso el caballo. Esta es la manera como se vence al moro en el campo. Rogad a Nuestro Señor que os viva yo algunos años; honras y prez ganaréis y besarán vuestras manos."

French king received honor for his prowess. Following his victory in the battle, Prince Edward of England told the King of France, his captive,

you have good cause to be cheerful, although the battle did not go in your favour, for today you have won the highest renown of a warrior, excelling the best of your knights. I do not say this to flatter you, for everyone on our side, having seen how each man fought, unanimously agrees with this and awards you the palm and the crown, if you will consent to wear them.³²

Such a display of respect and praise of a captive's fighting may seem absurd through a modern view of the violence in war being nothing but tragic, but for these knights, the battlefield represented opportunity to win honor, and they celebrated great deeds of arms. Prince Edward's praising the King of France for fighting honorably, then, should be understood through this lens of exalting superior fighting as a means to the end of gaining honor. Prince Edward recognized the French King's powerful example for all knights who aspired to earn honor in war even though he did not cede any sort of victory to him.

This notion of learning how to act honorably in war appeared elsewhere in Froissart's chronicle. When Edward Black Prince of England sent a messenger, asking for reinforcements from his father, King Edward III, during the battle of Crécy with the French (1346), the king replied,

'go back to him and to those who have sent you and tell them not to send for me again today, as long as my son is alive. Give them my command to let the boy win his spurs, for if God has so ordained it, I wish the day to be his and the honour to go to him and to those in whose charge I have placed him.' The knight went back to his commanders and gave them the King's message. It heartened them greatly and they privately regretted having sent him. They fought better than ever and must have performed great feats of arms, for they remained in possession of the ground with honour.³³

³² Froissart, 144.

³³ Ibid, 92.

In this instance, it was so important to the King that his son had the opportunity to gain experience earning honor that he made the dangerous, though ultimately fruitful, decision not to come to his aid in that battle.

Enabling men to brave battles to earn honor could be taken to extremes. Froissart recounts a battle in which the

noble and gallant King of Bohemia...was in full armour and equipped for combat, [but] he could see nothing because he was blind...Then the King said a very brave thing to his knights: 'My lords, you are my men, my friends and my companions-in-arms. Today I have a special request to make of you. Take me far enough forward for me to strike a blow with my sword.' Because they cherished his honour and their own prowess, his knights consented.³⁴

Whether or not Froissart's historical veracity is to be trusted, the exaltation of such an act as not only brave but honorable helps one appreciate the extent to which earning honor dominated the mindset of knights and provided them with purpose even, and perhaps especially, to their deaths.

The King of Bohemia's valuing honor more than his own life indicates the extraordinary value of honor to knights but it also hints at a deeper tension between competing medieval value systems. This mentality of prizing the honor won in battle more than life itself posed a significant problem for the Catholic Church: achieving salvation and securing honor in order to be remembered well in this world represented disparate objectives. The pious monastic life and the violent glory-seeking life could hardly be more different. Nevertheless, clerics and knights both sought to reconcile these mentalities, coming up with a variety of synthetic worldviews. These formulations often served as self-justification of whichever way of life they preferred, peaceful and pious on the one hand or violent and heroic on the other.

³⁴ Ibid, 90.

Chapter Three: Christian Pacifism Confronts Chivalric Violence

In Jean Flori's *Knights and Chivalry in the Middle Ages*, the author advances the idea that the cultural and religious roots of chivalry came from the fusion of distinctly different traditions. He contended that the culture and norms of chivalry originated from a fusion of Roman, Germanic, and Christian elements. In the early Romano-Germanic kingdoms the ideals of the evangelical and the warrior values of pagan Germanic society came together to produce the early precursor to the chivalry of the High and Late Middle Ages.¹ Over the course of centuries, the melding of such seemingly opposed cultural orientations as peacefulness and violence yielded a synthetic culture that never fully reconciled some of these tensions. Conceptions of honor closely reflected both these tensions and the harmonies that existed in this conjoining of ideals. In particular, the examination of militant and religious perspectives reveals how very different opinions arose as to how one ought to acquire honor, what one should honor in another, and even who deserved to be honored. Reconciling the strong Christian orientation, even duty, towards establishing and maintaining peace with the clearly violent aspects of being a knight was no small task, and different authors approached this cultural discord in strikingly different fashions. While some churchmen tried to mitigate the violence tearing apart medieval society by channeling knightly violence into holy war, others blessed knights headed into battle even when they were destined to kill other Christians. Knights, on the other hand, accepted religious justifications of their warrior lifestyles but only as additional motivation on top of their fundamental quest for honor.

¹ Flori, 22-31.

In their books of chivalry, Lull and Charny proscribed similar types of honorable activities for knights to engage in, but each framed these militaristic functions as serving very different ends. Whereas Lull, through a religious lens, understood the role of knights as being defenders of peace, Charny saw knights' violent actions as an end in themselves for gaining honor. Charny, for instance, when speaking of the greatest knights, wrote that

They look around, inquire, and find out where the greatest honor is to be found at that particular time. Then they go to that place and, in keeping with their natural good qualities, are keen to discover all the conditions of armed combat in war, and cannot be satisfied with themselves if they do not realize to the full their wish to find themselves there and to learn.²

As has been touched upon, Charny had a clear predilection for the active knightly lifestyle, and his view that for knights to become maximally honored they must perform many great “deeds of arms” reflected this penchant. Charny personally devoted himself to being a great warrior and was recognized as an exemplary knight as a founding member of French King John II's Order of the Star.³ Therefore, one may evaluate his perspective in two ways: either one takes his view on how knights ought to comport themselves in order to gain honor with a grain of salt because he comes off as somewhat one-dimensionally oriented towards warfare, or one understands him as a knight *par excellence* and takes his perspective as a kind of distillation of the knightly worldview. Insofar as knights formed a cohesive group within society by sharing a military duty, it is appealing to view Charny's perspective in that second light. However, the realities of the knighthood undercut this analysis as overly simplistic. Though bearing arms may have been the prescribed occupation of knights according to a widely circulating tripartite view of society comprising those who pray, those who fight, and those who work the land, many so-called

² Charny, 102.

³ Ibid, 15.

‘knights’ never actually acted in their military capacity.⁴ Thus, we find that Charny’s view of the best kind of knight being the one who occupies himself entirely with seeking out battles in order to gain as much honor as possible is simply one knight’s perspective on honor, and a knight devoutly attached to war at that. Though his views may have represented the warrior mentality taken to an extreme, such a perspective is highly informative for understanding a set of ideas that melded in myriad ways with pacific Christian ones in the minds of Charny’s contemporaries.

Charny’s reflections on knights’ legacies brought into focus the centrality of deeds of arms, in his worldview, as the means to the ultimate end of gaining honor. Charny wrote that “[i]n this vocation [of being a knight] one should ... set one's heart and mind on winning honor, which endures for ever.”⁵ For Charny, gaining honor was paramount not simply for the praise it garnered while one lived but, perhaps even more importantly, so that one might be honored beyond the grave. Charny saw honor as its own end; he told knights in his book written specifically for them to pursue honor in order to be honored in life as well as in death. In Ramón Llull’s *Book of the Order of Chivalry*, we find a distinctly different perspective, reflecting, in no small part, Llull complex worldview as monk, mystic, and philosopher.⁶

Llull’s focus on the knighthood as an order in relation, especially, to the clerical order reflected his view of knights from a distinctly Christian perspective. The very notion of the tripartite society came from the Church itself (and was encoded in the *Siete Partidas* of Alfonso

⁴“Not all those who ride horses are knights; nor are all those who the kings arm as knights. They bear the name, but they do not engage in the exercise of war.”

“*No son todos cavalleros quantos cavalgan cavallos; ni quantos arman cavalleros los reyes son todos cavalleros. Han el nonbre; mas no hazen el exercizio de la guerra.*” (Díez de Games, 42.)

⁵ Charny, 99.

⁶ “Ramon Llull -- Britannica Academic,” accessed March 18, 2019, <https://academic.eb.com/levels/collegiate/article/Ramon-Llull/48651>.

X, Llull's contemporary), so recognizing that the order referred to in the title of Llull's work was the order of knights within that framework indicates, even from the book's cover, that Llull advanced a theoretical ideal.⁷ Llull believed strongly in this fundamental interdependence between orders, writing that "the most noble, the most honored, the closest occupations that there are in this world are the cleric and the knight; therefore, the greatest friendship there is in this world should be between cleric and knight."⁸ He further wrote that "since the cleric does not follow the order of the clergy when it is contrary to the order of chivalry, so the knight does not stay true to the order of chivalry when it is contrary and disobedient to the clerics."⁹ By Llull's understanding these orders were not simply dependent upon each other, but they also needed to be in alignment so as not to run counter to each other. According to Llull, knights ultimately had to obey clerics. Thus, though these orders were theoretically interdependent and deferent to each other, the Church wound up having the final say in commanding obedience from the knights. Herein lay the basis of Llull's conception of the knighthood serving Christian ends.

⁷ Llull endorsed a tripartite view of society explained in the *Siete Partidas*. According to this vision of society, knights were referred to as *defensores*, or defenders. According to the classic formulation encoded in the *Siete Partidas*, "*Defensores* are one of the three estates through which God wished the earth to be maintained ... those who pray to God for all the people are called *oradores*, and those who work the land and do with it those things by which mankind may live and be maintained are called *labradores*, and those who are to defend all the people are called *defensores*."

"*Defensores son, vnos de los ters estados porque Dios quiso que se mantuuiesse el mundo ... los que ruegan a Dios por el pueblo, son dichos oradores, e otrosi los que labran la tierra, e fazen en ella aquellas cosas, porwue los omes han de biuir e de mantenerse, son dichos labradores: otrosi los que han a defender a todos son dichos defensores.*" (Alfonso X, 331.)

For a classic and thorough study of the medieval idea of the tripartite society see: Georges Duby, *Three Orders: Feudal Society Imagined*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

⁸ Llull, 30.

"*los más nobles, los más honrados, los más cercanos dos oficios que hay en este mundo, son oficio de clérigo y oficio de caballero; y por eso la mayor amistad que hubiera en este mundo debería darse entre clérigo y caballero.*"

⁹ Ibid.

"*así como el clérigo no sigue la orden de clerecía cuando es contrario a la orden de caballería, así el caballero no mantiene la orden de caballería cuando es contrario y desobediente a los clérigos*"

Within this Christian framework, Lull saw the primary purpose of the order of chivalry as the establishment and maintenance of peace. Lull stated very clearly that “as it was in the beginning, it is now the occupation of the knight to secure peace among men by the use of arms.”¹⁰ Though Lull and Charny were largely in accord about the ways in which knights went about gaining honor, Charny saw that honor as an end in itself, indeed the ultimate end for knights, while Lull viewed those honor-gaining activities through the use of arms as having to be oriented towards a pacific end.

Clerics who sought to prevent bloodshed between Christian armies corroborated Lull’s view of the knightly occupation being oriented towards securing peace. In Jean Froissart’s chronicle of the Hundred Years War there appears a noteworthy scene depicting a particularly active Church intervention in battle proceedings. King John II of France and Edward the Black Prince had ordered their troops and squared off for battle. Suddenly, the Cardinal de Périgord came riding up to King John beseeching the king to give him the opportunity to convince the English that the French thoroughly outnumbered them and that the English did not stand a chance. He appealed to King John first by flattering him: “you have with you here the whole cream of your kingdom’s nobility, pitted against what in comparison is a mere handful of the English.”¹¹ After this attempt at convincing John that his army was vastly stronger than the opposing one, the cardinal invoked the honor he knew the king prized: “[i]f you could overcome them without a fight by accepting their surrender, it would redound more to your honour and advantage than if you risked this large and splendid army in battle.”¹² Granted permission, the cardinal then rode over to Edward, attempting to convince him that the English army could not

¹⁰ Lull, 43.

"así como en los primeros tiempos, es ahora oficio de caballero pacificar a los hombres por la fuerza de las armas"

¹¹ Froissart, 130.

¹² Ibid.

possibly defeat such a force of Frenchmen. Over the course of more than a full day the cardinal carried proposals for truces full of insulting stipulations to-and-fro between camps. The Cardinal de Périgord attempted to stop the impending bloodshed between the French and English forces precisely by appealing to the object of their desire, honor. Yet while his reframing of honor as something to be gained by securing peace may have gibed with Lull's view on the ends of the order of chivalry, it ran aground against these warriors' fundamental understanding of warfare as the primary context in which to gain honor.

Though they may have entertained the cardinal's attempts at forestalling battle, ultimately both sides displayed complete disregard for the Cardinal's requests in favor of going to battle, demonstrating their commitment to the idea that the greatest honors were to be gained through violence. In a final response to these delays, Sir John Chandos, one of Edward the Black Prince's greatest knights delivered a "great and memorable remark," according to the chronicler. He pronounced to his lord, "[r]ide forward, sir, victory is yours! Today you will hold God in your hand. Let us make for your adversary, the King of France, that's where the real business lies."¹³ This call to arms in the face of a cardinal's pleas is striking in its stridently sacrilegious tone, indicating a rebuttal of both the Cardinal's request to call off the battle as well as a rejection of that cleric's reframing honor as being gained through such non-action. On the French side, growing contempt for the cardinal's failing attempts at securing peace resulted in an even more direct affront to the cardinal when they finally cried out in exasperation "go back to Poitiers, or wherever else [you like], and bring no more peace proposals, or it might be the worse for [you]."¹⁴ The knights of both parties could only tolerate so much interference by the Church,

¹³ Ibid, 136.

¹⁴ Ibid, 132.

which proposed a version of honor anathema to their own, before their greatest desire of winning honor through violence prevailed.

Knights' resistance to the Church's cries against violence also stood firm with regards to tournaments. While the Church attempted to prevent some battles, as in the case with the Cardinal de Périgord, it held a particularly hard line on jousting and tournaments. The Council of Clermont of 1130, ordered by Pope Innocent II, condemned

absolutely those detestable jousts or tournaments in which the knights usually come together by agreement and, to make a show of their strength and boldness, rashly engage in contests which are frequently the cause of death to men and of danger to souls. If anyone taking part in them should meet his death, though penance and the Viaticum shall not be denied him if he asks for them, he shall, however, be deprived of Christian burial.¹⁵

That stance, reaffirmed by the Church in 1179 and again in 1215, remained Church doctrine for centuries, but the reaffirmations simply pointed to the failure of the Church to gain traction in disallowing tournaments. In the fourteenth century, on and off allowances and prohibitions of tournaments by kings in France and England, where tourneying was particularly popular, indicated shaky support of the Church's stance.¹⁶

In *el Victorial*, Díez de Games showed just how much value knights placed in the sport, writing that in a tournament in Paris Pero Niño “performed so many great deeds-of-arms, that all who were there spoke well of him; and they said that he ... showed what great honor there was to be earned through the art of bearing arms and the occupation of chivalry.”¹⁷ Chroniclers like

¹⁵ “The Canons of the Second Lateran Council, 1123,” Internet History Sourcebooks Project, accessed October 22, 2018, <https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/basis/lateran2.asp>.

¹⁶ Flori, 145-146.

¹⁷ Díez de Games, 75.

“fizo tantos buenos fechos por sus manos en armas, que quantos ende heran fablauan vien; e dezían que él...mostraua que grand honrra auía de alcançar por arte de armas e oficio de cauallería.”

Froissart also showered praise on feats of arms in tournaments, revealing how these chivalric games remained enormously popular as a context in which knights could gain honor through violence in spite of the Church's admonitions against them.¹⁸

This same understanding of violence as the best, or only, medium through which one could gain honor appeared elsewhere in Froissart's chronicle as well as in *El Victorial*. In another of Froissart's vignettes he turned to Ghent, in what is today Belgium, describing a scene where the captain-general Philip van Artevelde, under siege, explained to his fellow townspeople that he saw three possible courses of action: one, "to shut [themselves] up in th[e] town, blocking up all the gates, mak[ing] [their] sincere confessions and go[ing] into the churches and chapels, there to die shriven and repentant, like martyrs on whom none w[ould] take pity." Two, to "all of [them] go, men women and children, with halters round [their] necks, barefoot and bare-headed, and throw [themselves] on the mercy of the Count of Flanders," their assailant. And three, to "pick five or six thousand of the fittest and best-armed men in [the] town and ... go after [the Count of Flanders] at Bruges and fight him."

With regards to the first option, Philip portrayed it as a religious course of action, saying "[i]n that event God w[ould] have mercy on [their] souls and, wherever the news is known, it [would] be said that [they] died like brave and faithful people," but clearly his rhetoric about this martyrdom was overshadowed by his claims about how the people of Ghent would be remembered without pity. Philip's rhetoric reflected a Charny-esque mindset, in which how one was remembered, that is how one was honored (or not honored), was of the utmost importance. To the second course of action the captain-general proclaimed that "[i]f it w[ould] appease [the

¹⁸ Froissart, 375.

Count of Flanders’] anger, [Philip] w[ould] be the first to offer [the count] [his] head,” and continued by stating that “[he was] ready to die for the sake of the people of Ghent.”¹⁹ This was a clear setup to rouse his audience to take the third course, about which he declared that “[i]f [the people of Ghent were] killed in that venture it w[ould] be an honourable death. God w[ould] have pity on [them] and men also ... [they would] be the most highly honoured of any people since the Romans.”²⁰ Though Philip said that the first option would produce a good result in the eyes of God, this final option, the one that the town ultimately chooses, was the best of both worlds. Not only would God pity these people, but, more importantly to Philip, as denoted by his describing the result of such action in comparison to a romanticized image of the Romans, this would be the most honorable way to die, and therefore represented the best choice. Philip’s rejection of the pacifist tradition of martyrdom in favor of fighting for honor even in the face of death displayed the high value that he and knights like Charny and Chandos placed in honor earned through violence.

Díez de Games took a more nuanced approach, recognizing honor as being gained in the securing and preservation peace, but denouncing it as valueless in comparison to the honor earned through violence. In a section of the chronicle telling the story of Bruto, the founder of Britain, Díez de Games quoted that hero as saying to his knights:

Friends, you already know how the fortune inherent in all things led me to gain title to this land where I live, and to the winning of a lady of high lineage. All this that I have, I have gained without battles or hard work. Well do you know that the thing which costs a man more to win is more valuable, and to this end, I do not value this honor I have gained, because I got it without work ... The authors do not praise that which a man gains in peace.²¹

¹⁹ Ibid, 232.

²⁰ Ibid, 232-233.

²¹ Díez de Games, 156-157.

Bruto's winning the hand of a noble lady was in the face of her brother preparing to wage war to take the lands bequeathed to his sister as his own. Upon Bruto's marrying her, the brother backed down, meaning the marriage had secured peace. Such an episode clearly lent itself to being characterized positively; clearly from a perspective like Lull's this resolution of conflict was far superior to the violent alternative. Instead, Bruto says the honor of this marriage had no value to him.

In clear contrast, the *Zifar* offers examples of marriages peacefully resolving conflict and praised this alternative to war. In one instance in that novel, a noble lady has had a siege upon her villa broken by the knight Zifar, and the son of her enemy, a local count, is now her prisoner. Shortly thereafter, the count sends envoys to propose a resolution to the conflict: the count offers his only son in marriage to the lady. Upon her agreement, marriage accords are signed, and the arrangement is described by the author, Ferrand Martínez, as redounding much to her honor.²² Clearly this understanding of the source of honor was at odds with the one exalted by Díez de Games. Whereas Martínez viewed a peaceful resolution of a war as an ideal conclusion to a conflict, for Díez de Games honor gained without physical effort, particularly in battle, was of such a vastly inferior quality as to have no value whatsoever. His warrior mentality simply could not comprehend gaining honor without winning it through violence.

Whereas some authors simply glorified securing peace and others heroism in war, others attempted to reconcile and synthesize those perspectives. Juan Manuel expressed his concern

“Amigos, ya sabedes cómo la bentura que traen todas las cosas me truxo a cobrar esta tierra en que bivo, e alcanzé muger de tan alto linaje [Dorotea]. Todo esto que yo ove, úbelo sin batalla e sin grand trauajo. Bien sabedes que la cosa que hombre gana e más cara le questa por grand afán, más la preçia. E por ende, esta honrra en que só puesto non la preçio, porque la ove sin ningúnd trauajo. Ni aún de mí farán carne, ni dirán sinon que la ove en donado. Lo que hombre á en paz, non lo loan los avtores.”

²² Wagner, 70-77.

about the dangers facing the souls of knights, writing that “every man should guard himself from committing bad deeds” but “especially the knights, who have great need of the grace of God to guard their souls and to maintain them in this world in honor and without shame, and to guard them from the dangers in which they walk all day, more than men of any other estate.”²³ Those dangers, it should be noted, arose from the violent work that knights performed, exposing them to such sins as murder.

Though an active knight himself, Manuel did not glorify war in the same manner as Charny or Díez de Games.²⁴ He wrote that “from war comes poverty, misery, and pain; and dishonor, death, devastation, pain, disservice to God, and the depopulation of the world are born from it.”²⁵ Manuel spared no effort in detailing the myriad negative consequences of war, yet he nevertheless defended that “emperors, and really all great lords, should do more to guard their honor than any other thing in the world.”²⁶ His stance, in a nutshell, was that knights (particularly great lords) should avoid war and seek peace but only if those aims could be achieved without a loss of honor. Manuel understood that was not an easy task when protecting one’s honor often meant responding to violent affronts with more violence. Nevertheless, like Llull, he maintained that the Christian aim of securing peace was crucially important. Unlike Llull, however, Manuel

²³ Juan Manuel, “Libro del cauallero et del escudero,” in *Obras Completas*, ed. José Manuel Blecua (Madrid: Editorial Gredos, 1981), 108.

“*todo omne se debria guardar de fazer malas obras et por que Dios non gelo acalonnase en este mundo nin en el otro. Et mayor mente los caualleros, que an tanto mester la gracia de Dios para les guardar las almas et para los mantener en este mundo en onra et sin vergüença, et para les guardar de los peligros en que todo el dia andan, mas que ningunos omnes de otros estados*”

²⁴ “Don Juan Manuel -- Britannica Academic,” accessed March 23, 2019, <https://academic-eb-com.proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/levels/collegiate/article/Don-Juan-Manuel/44054>.

²⁵ Juan Manuel, “Libro de los estados,” 332.

“*por la guerra viene pobreza et lazeria et pesar, et nasce della desonra et muerte et quebranto et dolor et deseruicio de Dios et despoblamiento del mundo et mengua de derecho et de justicia.*”

²⁶ *Ibid*, 333.

“*los enperadores, et avn todos los grandes sennores, la cosa del mundo por que mas deue[n] faser es por guardar su onra*”

viewed personal honor as even more valuable than peace, which speaks volumes as to the centrality of honor in the elite medieval (and particularly the knightly) worldview. Furthermore, it clearly shows that he did not see securing peace as an honor-winning enterprise. Rather, in pursuing peace, one's honor could stand in jeopardy.

Turning to the Catholic Church, one may justifiably wonder about its peaceful orientation. After all, the Church launched both the Crusades and the Reconquista, two bloody sets of wars. Though at a high level the Church generally advocated for peace, this rule had plenty of exceptions, the Cardinal de Périgord representing only one of them. War against enemies of the faith represented one manner of violence blessed by the Church. Though Pope Urban II's call for the First Crusade is often looked to as the seminal moment of Church support for holy war, the influential twelfth century Cistercian abbot Saint Bernard of Clairvaux wrote an impressive apology for the first religious orders of knights that formed during his lifetime. Bernard "was first and foremost a man of peace and a maker of peace. Yet he certainly was no 'pacifist' since he firmly believed that in many cases war was the lesser evil."²⁷ Furthermore, Bernard initiated the Second Crusade (1147-9), defending it as an opportunity for the sinful knight to fight "for the sake of the salvation of his soul."²⁸ He even went as far as to say that "The new knight" who undertook this crusade became "a permanent candidate for martyrdom," which in his view was "the supreme goal of the knight's life."²⁹ By framing crusading as a means to securing salvation through martyrdom, Bernard provided a Christian justification of knightly violence. In his *In Praise of the New Knighthood*, an apology of the then newly formed religious knightly orders in the east, particularly the order that would become the Templars, Bernard

²⁷ Bernard of Clairvaux, 120.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

extended his support of holy warriors. Writing that this new form of knight should “Rejoice ... if [he] live and conquer in the Lord; but glory and exult even more if [he] die and join [his] Lord,” Bernard clearly placed the value of salvation above all else.³⁰ Bringing this point home, he contended, “Life indeed is a fruitful thing and victory is glorious, but a holy death is more important than either.”³¹ Such religious endorsements for holy war may not have been needed to encourage knights, but they provided a strong justification for their violent ways.

Knights happily adopted religious justifications for earning honor by going into battle. Díez de Games described one instance of war against the moors (i.e. the enemies of the faith) in which Pero Niño engaged at the city of Granada. A battle like this one could be justified in the usual terms of it being an opportunity to gain honor, true of any battle, but in this instance, it also constituted holy war, an opportunity to work for God while winning honor. Díez de Games described Niño and his companions after this battle as having done a “great service to God and the king [of Castile, their lord], and to their honor because that day they crushed those enemies of the faith.”³² Unlike Bernard, who justified warfare only in service of God, when death meant martyrdom and immediate salvation, Díez de Games talked about serving God in battle as only one of several motivations, the others being service to one’s king and the increase of one’s honor. In this way, Díez de Games viewed salvation as only one objective alongside others.

Even outside the context of holy war, however, the Church sacralized the violence perpetrated by knights and reinforced the warrior vision of honor. In Froissart’s *Chronicle*, when

³⁰ Ibid, 130.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Díez de Games, 335.

“E fizieron aquel día mucho servicio a Dios e al rey, e mucho de sus honrras; ca ronpieron aquel día aquellos henemigos de la feé”

the people of Ghent heeded Philip van Artevelde's call to arms against their assailants, their cause was blessed: "[m]ass was celebrated in seven different parts of the army ... They were told by the clergy, Franciscan friars and others, that they were like the people of Israel, who were long held in subjection by Pharaoh."³³ These clerics further anointed the cause and encouraged the army by telling those men-at-arms, "God, who is all-seeing and all-powerful, will uphold you ... Sell your lives dearly and courageously and die, if you must, with honour."³⁴ Thus, by framing the battle as a contemporary version of Biblical events and even going so far as to say that those who would die could do so with honor, these friars reinforced the warrior understanding of death in battle as honorable. In instances like these the church did not simply tolerate violence between Christians, it actively condoned it. Examples like this one thoroughly muddy the picture of the Church as a beacon of peace and reveal that motives such as clerical allegiance to certain political actors could supersede the fundamental religious principles the Church preached.

Perhaps most confounding was when the Church took part in the violence itself. For instance, Froissart noted that after the aforementioned Cardinal de Périgord rode off from Poitiers, having failed to mediate peace between Richard II and Edward the Black Prince, a number of the Cardinal's own men-at-arms stayed behind to fight with the French. Near the end of the battle, in which the English came through as victors, the Black Prince encountered "the dead body of Sir Robert de Duras with his banner beside him—it was a French banner with a red saltire—and a dozen of his followers lying around." The Prince immediately became infuriated because these men came from the Cardinal's forces, so he directed his men to "Put the body of

³³ Froissart, 234.

³⁴ *Ibid*, 235.

that knight on a shield and carry it to Poitiers. Take it from me to the Cardinal de Périgord and say that I have sent it to him with my compliments.”³⁵ Froissart explained the significance of this act:

that some of the Cardinal's people had stayed on the battlefield to fight on the other side ... was quite improper according to all the rules of war. Those who belong to the Church and attempt in good faith to mediate between two sides should not take up arms in favour of either, for obvious reasons.³⁶

It is noteworthy that Froissart did not say that men pertaining to the Church ought never take up arms. This hints at the reality that powerful clerics often commanded their own armies just like secular lords, and such clerically led men-at-arms had been in battles for centuries.³⁷

Thus, despite peace being the professed objective of medieval churchmen, many justified, supported, or even participated in warfare. Meanwhile, knights cherry-picked religious justifications for their violent acts, adding these motivations to their secular ones. Despite the efforts of clergymen to reduce the rampant violence in their societies, knights continued to seek honor. Through their continued jousting, they demonstrated clearly that they either did not believe Church admonitions that their actions would send them to hell, did not care, or simply prized their honor more than their salvation.

³⁵ Ibid, 136.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Flori, 44.

Conclusion

While the differences in mentality informing differences in conceptions of honor may not surprise medievalists, it is worthwhile to consider why honor, of all things, proved to be a battleground for warring ideas. Even though not all agreed on a single definition of honor, all viewed it as something positive. Honor represented most, if not all, things the medieval elite valued. Virtuous conduct in its many (and contested) forms, status, fame, and even riches could all fall under the umbrella of honor. Nobles, who often considered themselves knights even when they did not actually participate in warfare, understood honor as a kind of social currency. Those with the most honor sat at the top of the aristocratic hierarchy. But social standing rested on a number of factors, and different medieval actors valued some more than others.

Some viewed riches as a kind of honor, seeing it as the reward of their (or their ancestors') accomplishments. Knights who won battles often referred to spoils of war as part of the honor of their victories, and wealthy nobles understood their possessions as part of their honor. Others downplayed or even rejected the honorability of these riches, insisting that the worldly nature of riches exempted them from counting as honor.

How one acquired honor also divided the medieval elite. An assortment of critiques of inherited honor spoke to a problem facing this uppermost strata of society: powerful nobles could frame their status and wealth as part of their honor, but if they did not actively seek to increase their honor they faced the ire of those who desired a more meritocratic distribution of honor. Even if these critics did not disavow the rigid hierarchy of the medieval aristocracy, the ability of some to rest on their inherited honor while others took to the field of battle to win their own was clearly a symptom of that social structure. Renowned knights like Geoffroi de Charny could comfortably insist that honor must be earned through action, but even in the legal code of a king,

Alfonso X of Castile, admonitions against squandering the honor accumulated by noble families over time could be found. The latter example demonstrates that the motivation of nobles to preserve or increase their family's honor, that is to maintain or elevate their position in the aristocratic hierarchy, could serve as an impetus to lead an active knightly lifestyle.

Finally, some voices attempted to advance the Church's cause of securing and preserving peace in all the lands by framing the knight's role in society as defender of the peace. In an appeal to knights, those asserting this view maintained that precisely by fulfilling this God-ordained duty (while disavowing the rampant Christian versus Christian warfare of the age) knights merited honor. Yet knights appeared primarily to adopt religious reasons for going to war only when it suited them and could justify their fundamental devotion to fighting as the means to win honor. Across the medieval world, knights' continued tourneying flew in the face of centuries of Papal warnings that to engage in such war games risked one's very soul. Clearly, knights would not be dissuaded from acting violently, and this was precisely because they valued honor above all else. Those clerical attempts at redefining honor as the reward of securing peace fell on deaf ears when knights prized honor even over their own salvation.

The placement of greater importance upon winning honor than saving one's soul indicated that knights did not fully buy into the Christian ascetic notion of rejecting worldly honors in favor of gaining access to the Kingdom of Heaven. Perhaps this is because many knights subscribed to their own form of asceticism. In this asceticism the hard work and travail of their travelling and fighting in battles earned them the reward of honor, which would persist beyond their deaths as fame. The persistence of this competing strain of asceticism spoke to an unresolved merger between Christian and Germanic warrior cultures. The evidence I present

indicates that this process of cultural synthesis, begun in the fourth century according to Jean Flori, never achieved full resolution.

However, not all knights rejected Christian asceticism. Some incorporated the rejection of worldly riches and pleasures into their ideologies, but they often did so to emphasize the importance of winning victories in battle. Just as knights cherry picked religious justifications for going to war, they apparently did the same with Christian asceticism. Even if embracing these aspects of Christianity made them feel more secure in their trajectory in the afterlife, that remained at most a competing objective alongside winning honor for the sake of elevating their fame and their families' statuses. Further study on whether the Church's version of asceticism, or its doctrine of honoring peacemakers, for that matter, gained greater traction in some geographic regions more than others could help shed light on why the Church had such mixed success in persuading knights to adopt these aspects of the Christian worldview.

Given the profound importance of honor to the medieval elite, it is a wonder that it has received very little direct attention by historians. An object of pursuit that could supersede gaining salvation during a period when Christianity overwhelmingly dominated Western society deserves far more thorough study than this brief work can provide. Honor represented so many things of value to medieval actors that the Spanish language used two words, *honra* and *honor*, to refer to it. It is my hope that the connections drawn in this thesis between honor and medieval elites' clashing views on their purposes in life will stimulate further scholarship on this topic. A holistic understanding of medieval culture, values, and religiosity demands it.

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