

Prayer, humility, and fate

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Victoria Smith (H) English 3 Mrs. Parsons September 24, 2012 Prayer, Humility, and Fate In the story, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Gawain is developed as a Christian hero through his reliance on prayer and his humility which illuminates the theme that God controls fate. Gawain is developed as a Christian knight through his reliance on prayer. This trait is shown when Gawain is lost in a storm and does not know which way to turn. Gawain prays “ Lord I beseech you...for some house where I may hear Mass devoutly” (Sir Gawain and the Green Knight 157, 159).

Gawain demonstrates his dependence on prayer through this quote because it shows him praying to God for shelter in the storm and continually saying “ Cross of Christ, bless me! ” (Sir Gawain and the Green Knight 761). Gawain is established as a Christian hero through this quote because he relies on prayer in order to complete his task because he realizes that he cannot do it on his own. Immediately after Gawain prays, God reveals to him a castle just ahead. Gawain’s establishment as a Christian hero illuminates the theme that God controls fate because it shows God granting his request and granting him victory.

This is essential to the development of the theme because it clearly shows God altering Gawain’s fate which sets the course for the rest of the story. Gawain’s humility throughout the story also establishes him as a Christian hero. In contrast to Beowulf, a pagan hero, who often bragged about his strength and superior ability; Gawain, a Christian hero, is humble, often to the point of putting himself down. After Bertilak’s wife finishes telling Gawain how great he is, Gawain responds “ I am all unworthy...to presume to the honor you ascribe me” (Sir Gawain and the Green Knight 1243, 1244).

Gawain reveals his humility to Bertilak's wife by not talking himself up, but humbling himself and claiming himself unworthy of such high praise. Another example of Gawain's humility can be found when he speaks to Arthur following the Green Knight's challenge saying " I am the weakest... and the least wise" and in response to Gawain's humility, King Arthur gives Gawain God's blessing and allows him to take the challenge in his place (Sir Gawain and the Green Knight 354).

Gawain's humility is essential in his development as a Christian hero because the Bible commands Christians to humble numerous times including the verse found in 1 Peter 5: 6 which says, " Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. " As Christians, it is believed that God will exalt those who are humble. This belief is clearly shown through Gawain's humility and success as a hero further proving the theme that God controls fate. Because of Gawain's humility, and his reliance on prayer, God grants him success in the end and Gawain is exalted.