



Reviews

JUSTIN E. GRIFFIN, *The Grail Procession. The Legend, the Artifacts, and the Possible Sources of the Story*. Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2004. Pp. x, 188. ISBN: 0-7864-1939-3. \$35.

This book deals with a sample of objects closely tied to the passion of Christ. Griffin calls them the Grail Hallows—i.e. the grail, the lance that pierced Jesus's side, the sword that was used to execute John the Baptist, and a dish from the Last Supper—and his book retells all the medieval sources referring to these objects which he can find. By way of reviewer caveat, Griffin notes that 'legends such as that of the Holy Grail and the Grail Hallows are quite possibly the worst kinds of subjects to approach from a historical standpoint' (p. 97), and that beginning an investigation into such historical aspects 'is like walking into a forest of birch trees where the canopy is so full it obscures the sky, creating only meager light' (p. 87). Nevertheless, Griffin seems to believe that all written sources provide historically factual evidence, which is why he is forced to combine bundles of diverse information, for example in the chapter dealing with 'Eschenbach's *Parzival* and the Fisher King' (p. 77–85). In that chapter, Griffin combines parts of Chrétien's and Wolfram's stories with the legend of Longinus's lance, and 'the isle of Avalon and the sacred ground of Glastonbury' (p. 82) with the 'history of the Pelagian heresy in Britain,' which he believes to be 'a true-to-life retelling of the Fisher King legend' (p. 82). The chapter ends with the conjecture that the Cathars possessed the Holy Grail itself. Most surprising somewhat later is the proposition that 'the original story of the Hallows, as told by Merlin, became the Cathar's Tarot-based sourcebook used to create *La Folie Perceval* (p. 113), which was later used as a reference work by Chrétien and by Wolfram. Then, more than 35 pages of the book are dedicated to an interpretation of the Tarot cards and their hidden information about the four Grail Hallows. 'To the reader goes this final admonishment. When you next sit down with a deck of playing cards [...], take a moment to look at the simple paper cards in your hands. [...]. Remain still and silent, and think of the Grail Hallows' (p. 178)—I will try!

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