

**THE MYTH
OF THE
ROCK**

A Narrative in thirty-two cantos

By

Frederick Parker-Rhodes

First Movement: RISING

1 :	Prologue	3
2 :	Palimnesis	4
3 :	The Rock	5
4 :	Fear	6
5 :	Outsetting	7
6 :	Tillage	8
7 :	I Am	9
8 :	Heaven	10

Second Movement: FALLING

9 :	Melchizedek	12
10 :	Tyrant	13
11 :	Stone	14
12 :	Penance	15
13 :	Smithcraft	16
14 :	Smoke	17
15 :	Counsel	18
16 :	Prophecy	19

Third Movement: PARTING

17 :	Birth	21
18 :	Sacrifice	22
19 :	Harvest	23
20 :	Lipservice	24
21 :	Pride	26
22 :	Envy	27
23 :	Malice	28
24 :	Winter	29

Fourth Movement: YOKING

25 :	Peridor	31
26 :	Quest	32
27 :	Carvendiget	33
28 :	Homecoming	34
29 :	Welcome	36
30 :	Advent	38
31 :	Prognosis	39
32 :	Epilogue	40

First Movement : RISING

I : Prologue

I will show you the shadow

Of the shadow of the Way of the World.

I cannot show you the way, for the way that is shown

Is a way of bewilderment, not the infallible way.

Nor may I show you its shadow, for that is a thing

Of theorems and symbols, words so threadbare thin

They will not weave a coverlet for your couch

On which your thought might sit, and meditate.

But I will shadow that shadow, in a tale

To hear now, and hereafter understand.

I will give you a Promise

Of the Promise of the Power of the Way.

I cannot give you the power, for the power to give

Has not been given me. Nor do I hold

The promise of the power: for all the books

And all the schools of men are far too few

To set forth all the wonders laid in store

For faith and wit and diligence to do.

But I may promise you, that in my tale

The whole world's promise lies concealed for you.

I will teach you the Name

Of the Name of the Word of Power.

I cannot teach you the Word, for the word that is taught

Is such a word as anyone may use

As easy foul as fair. Nor yet its name:

For all the tongues which ever men have sung

Could not contain its countless syllables,

Nor all their music make its meaning plain.

But I can name that name, that you may know

The Way to the Power of the Word .

* * * * *

2 : Palimnesis

Back now: think back –
 Back to before your birth:
 Before the war: before the fear and the hope
 Broke forth together from Ceridwen's cup:
 Before the mist-blind morning of this eager age
 Flicked off our stale and feather-lidded sleep
 Leaving us woken to bewilderment.
 Back before that: before the iron towers
 And smoking vents befell the flowery vales
 And widened wealth from want athwart the earth:
 Before the ships sailed over the bounding deep
 To find fair lands beyond the elders' lore
 And silver beyond the sea: before the troops
 Of Rome trod out the roads, and spread their peace –
 Those stone-heart cities – scattered through the lands
 From Jericho to Jarrow: Even before
 The unremembered winter of the world, when speech began:
 Before birds flew, or furry creatures crept
 On the still grassless plains: before the hills
 Were clad in green: before the insipid sea
 Foamed with the froth of life: so long ago
 Already was the Rock.

Of the huge waste of worlds
 Unmade, though thinkable, there was but one
 Did bear the badge of being: for none but she
 Would wear upon her heart Gethsemane.

* * * * *

3 : The Rock

From the beginning was the Rock –
 Bare bones of the Earth, bearing the blows
 Of seething storm, and whathing cloud-high foam;
 Anvil of every impact, never herself
 A lifter of weapons; not a thing designed
 By cunning skill, or shapely chiselled out;
 Not useful; only a clot of stony stuff
 Gathered at hazard out of the infinite Void
 From smokewraiths of dead stars.
 Waiting she was, with every might-have-been
 Uncancelled in her ever-virgin womb: waiting,
 For what uncouth coincidence
 We never now can know.

But, in an age
 Unreckonably remote, the still unwashen sea
 Licked with his lecherous foam her lifeless flanks
 And gat upon her the Ten Thousand Things:
 A living broth, in a cold cauldron brewed,
 An elixir of wonder without end –
 Of weeds, and worms, and old forgotten forms
 That pull at the pall of fear, in infancy,
 Before the speakable shape is brought to mind.

What were the seeds, which grew upon the Rock
 And clothed her ancient nakedness in green?
 Slime and fern, moss, and measureless grass,
 And tall wind-tussling trees. And, in their shade,
 Crept toad, and serpent, rat, and the royal glare
 Of night-proud tiger, and light-fingered ape;
 While, in the painted sky, the butterfly
 And feathered jay flew all the new land's length
 In nameless joy, and unconsidered strength.

* * * * *

4 : Fear

And now, among the creatures of the Rock,
 The unmistakable and all-suffering Rock,
 A voice was heard, and sounds of various voices,
 Speaking to each for creatures of their kind,
 Crying the challenges of lust and strife,
 Identifying friends, and foes, and frontiers,
 And giving forth fell tidings of wild fear.

“Afraid! Afraid!” the forest voices cry:
 And all that hear it, asking not what nor why,
 Pass on the heedless sound, and heedless fly
 Down vaulted avenues of dread, rush by,
 And flicker into hiding. Never a one
 But knows the nonce-bound need, to yell and run,
 And, having run, to rest.

Who, then, in the world first said,
 To long-familiar mate, or new-found friend,
 “I am afraid”?

Who was “I Am”? Of what was he afraid,
 With such a weapon at his tongue's tip
 To riddle out the very roots of fear ?

Here was a wonder – a new-born wonder in the world,
 A riddle to ask the Rock. But it was no joy
 To those who bore it. One to another, they said
 “We are afraid – we are alone afraid –
 We see; we act; we have a work to do:
 We have the Rock to wrestle with, and all her brood
 To keep at bay, and children to find with food –
 The wonder of words must wait.”

No longer was the wind a draught of air,
 But a wild biter and a tireless hater;
 Not now mere moving water was the river,
 But a barrer of ways and a dreadful drowner.
 Brambles and thorns fought with their cat's claws
 For every forest glade. Even the Earth
 Locked up her roots in cellars of the soil
 To bruise their new-named fingers.

5 : Outsetting

Charged with such dread,
 The Children of the Word pursued
 Despair; and Life itself seemed locked
 In nameless vaults, walled up with words unknown
 And fenced about with fear.

“We are afraid” they cried
 To their Mother the Rock: “Life, in our hands,
 Is trickling through our fingers, and bleak Death
 Has left us but a handful of dry dust.

“Your cruel children crouch on every hand
 And will not let us live. So, give us Life:
 A strong and secret life, such as the gale's great guns
 Will not blow down, nor torrents carry off,
 Nor claws rip open, nor the roots of trees
 Lay bare to beak and tooth to snatch away.”

So, then they made an image of the Rock,
 Human with breasts and buttocks, and in this
 They laid away their Life. For this was long ago,
 When speech was young, and fear was in command,
 And cause and consequence had yet to learn
 Their stately dances through the labyrinth
 Of wild and idle words.

* * * * *

6 : Tillage

Little by little, and labour by wasted labour,
 The talking tribes learned how to turn new tools
 To old necessities. How to helve a hoe
 To scratch for roots, or weave from withy-twigs
 A satchel for gathered seeds. And how to tame
 The threatful flowers of all-devouring Fire,
 Plucked from the heaven-kindled tree, and set
 In earthen pots, for warmth and weaponry.

A hundred lives of men
 Slipped out of memory, year by hungry year,
 Dragging their days of dearth, waiting and watching
 The wind and the rain, the winter and the spring,
 And the signs among the stars.

Times ripened, and they learned
 New ways to use old tools. To scatter seeds
 Out of their satchels, into the broken soil
 Their hoes had cleft for them. To make to grow
 The food they hoped to find.

Done were the days of hunger – the mad mourning
 For the sudden dead, the weary walking
 Footsore in foodless forest. Gone was the dread
 Of daring unknown countries. Having a home,
 And living on the land, the talking tribes
 Grew great; and soon their clustering clans
 Had crowded into towns.

* * * * *

7 : I Am

Whatever thing is spoken of in words
 Becomes itself a word to answer with.
 As soon as one should say "I Am", then I Am is:
 Name of a noise – maybe no more. Maybe
 Name of its day and hour of utterance, deep
 With all the fragrances that hang thereon. Maybe
 The name of what he had in mind to say, who said
 "I Am". Maybe – much more than these:
 Name of all it could be made to mean
 By saint, or poet, or by pondering sage,
 An archetype of Him Who sees Himself –
 I Am, who knows what is and what is not.

Thus, in the world's cold dawn, when words began,
 I Am was born. Born in the shadow of fear
 And brought up in affliction's field of thorns.
 But, now, in the city, he was Lord of All,
 Chief of spirits, and High God to men:
 A smith, and a warrior, welder of spades,
 And wielder of the sword.

And still the Rock, who could not be otherwise,
 Lay still, and suffered all that they did to her:
 Ploughing, and digging, building, and laying low;
 But blunting their tools, and breaking their nails,
 And giving them all a grave.

* * * * *

8 : Heaven

Then said I Am:

“Oh Rock, you are old, you the uncarven one,
 Mother of myriads, you are old
 And all your days decayed. Yield, then, your power
 And call me King.”

But this the Rock would not:

She dried the waters out of her high hills,
 Drank up the placid rivers of the plains,
 Till all men's fields were famished, and the toil
 Which they had buried there was burned away,
 And no bread was to eat.

Then, I Am,

Who knows what is and what is not, showed them
 In secret places of the mind, a plan
 Of dykes and channels, leading the waters in
 From springs and rivers that had never failed,
 To slake their thirsty fields; and this
 Brought back their bread.

But now, the Rock

Gathered her flocks of clouds, pile upon pile,
 Battery on battery, and let them roar
 In rain, and rain, over the lands of men.
 The waste of waters spread across the vale
 And all their long and toilsome labours drowned.

Next, I Am,

Who know what is and what is not, taught them
 The shape of ships, and how in these to sail
 That all-devouring flood. Thus, they came safe;
 And, when the waters ebbed, the silted soil
 Bore tenfold harvests to their toil.

But now, the Rock,

Who could not be otherwise, shrugged the shoulders
 Of the hills, and poured out smoke and fire,
 And fear flowed down before. The shattered city
 Fled to the fields, while panic in the plain
 Sought safety where the city once had stood.

At last, I Am grew angry with the Rock
 For all her vagaries and violence –

That sudden, desperate wrath, that thought conceives
Against the stubbornness of things; the personal spite
Against impersonality. Moved by that bedrock bitterness,
He took Imagination's widthless edge
And ripped the Rock asunder: distinguishing
Old Earth beneath, anvil of effort, womb
Of things familiar; and High Heaven above,
Dwelling of holy things, and the soul's hope.
And in the lowest place, I Am put loneliness
And called it Hell.

* * * * *
* * * * *

Second Movement : FALLING

9 : Melchizedek

When men beheld the holiness of Heaven
 Stretched out in serried clouds above their heads,
 The wildness of the winds, the silence of mist,
 And the sadness of the small rain; and when they saw
 The loveliness of the Earth – the pleasant hills
 And wooded combes, with planted poplar rows
 Pacing the meadows, where abounding herds
 Grew great upon her bounty; than they desired
 Melchizedek, their king, to bear their soul
 In worship, which they knew themselves to owe
 To such high splendours.

Therefore, Melchizedek
 Gathered the pomp of kingship in his train
 And, holding the sceptre of authority, and wearing the crown,
 He led the great procession. Out of the solemn city
 All aflush, he set his feet upon the serpent way
 Coiling the holy mountain of the Rock –
 The Rock who could not be otherwise, even though
 They knew to worship Heaven. And on that hill
 Melchizedek made a mighty sacrifice
 In thoughtful thanks to Heaven, and in the hope
 That happiness might yet encompass them
 A little while.

For Heaven's eye
 Measured their merits, and the finger of Heaven,
 Dividing "after" from "before", numbered the folk
 In their small corners, by their ones and twos,
 As by their thousands in the market-place.
 Few among men were counted to be good –
 Though these are glorious, and their flaming lives
 Gleam through the glass of many centuries
 And shine for us today. The greater part
 Were wicked men, selfish and mean and base,
 But feeble in their sins. It was for these
 That king Melchizedek did intercede

With Heaven on the hill.

* * * * *

10 : Tyrant

It was by these
 That factions and defections were devised,
 And murmurings of men. A mighty murmurer
 Was one named Tyrant. This man was ill content
 To have Melchizedek for his king, but spent
 His substance and his eloquence to persuade
 The people to abandon their obeyed
 And highborn ruler, and himself to choose
 To steer their commonwealth. Many did he bemuse:
 A multitude of men, an army strong
 In wanton weapons, fierce over the few
 That stood beside Melchizedek. Reckless of wrong,
 Regardless of the right, their father slew
 And Tyrant took for master on that day.

Dark was the day, a day of cloven cloud
 And sickening rain, when all the ancient forms
 Were swept away, when manners out of mind,
 Familiar to men's fathers were laid down:
 And law was instituted in their stead.
 Grievous and bewildering it was: and Tyrant too
 Sought counsel where he could. He called for men
 Learned and wise, and chose one Imophas,
 A priest, to be his counsellor. This was the charge
 That Tyrant gave him:

“Look to the stars –
 The spangled stars of Heaven: ponder the way
 Of Heaven, who parts the after from before; compute
 Its times and seasons. Determine me the days
 For fruitful toil upon the tedious field,
 And seasons for the feast. Go out, and teach
 My peasants what they need to know: to work,
 And to submit to me, and all my ministers,
 And make no murmuring.”

* * * * *

11 : Stone

Obediently, then, Imophas the priest,
 With care and skill devised a Calendar:
 Counted the ceaseless circle of the year
 By months and days, and a divided day;
 And garnished it with flowers of feast and fast
 And a full round of rites. He taught the tribes
 To punctually perform their programmed tasks
 As though it were no Tyrant's ordinance
 But Heaven-commanded law. And he, in Heaven's name
 Doomed rebels all to Hell's unfaltering flame.

Now Terror was returned to men's bent backs
 As in the morning of the world. Men's cry
 Was, as before, of fear – not now to fly
 Down greenwood ways, but bitterly to obey
 In hope of life, in horror of the day
 When Hell should claim the disobedient soul.

Yet, under Heaven, every man is free
 To choose defiance – to whatever law
 Of God or man he will not yield – if he
 But pays the penalty that fate has fixed.
 Thus, of all those whom Tyrant had enslaved,
 Stood seven out: these would not serve his state
 With toil and skill, nor keep the days of feast,
 Nor fasts and penances; but openly declared,
 Their noble dissidence.

Then Tyrant sought
 For clever craftsmen, till he found a Smith.
 “Quickly”, he said, “my enemies are come
 And find me weaponless. Make me a tool
 For slaughter, to support my splendour with.”
 Wayland, the Smith, bowed down before the Rock;
 He opened up her treasuries, and brought out thence
 A stone of flint. He flaked an edge thereon,
 Cruel and sharp, and set it in a haft
 Enhanced with signs of sorcery, a thing
 Well-thought for wicked war.

Those seven came,
 And six were slain – before the dagger snapped,
 And an ill life snuffed out.

* * * * *

12 : Penance

That slaughter gained the murderer a crown
 To crown his craven conscience – for he had heard
 The words of Imophas, teaching that fires of Hell
 Were roaring for rebellious souls, and worms
 Were waiting for the wanton of the world:

“Is there no gift,
 Nor splendid sacrifice, sufficient to atone
 A Tyrant’s deeds of blood?”

“Dear son, the law of God is merciful,
 And every evil has its antidote – though such a high
 And fearful hubris as is yours must make
 No mild amends. A thousand cattle killed
 Upon our altars; and a thousand more
 Pinned in our temple fields; and golden bowls
 And splendid panoplies – all these, if you will pay,
 Will wash the consequence of sin away.”

Then was the second Tyrant light of heart
 He made a tax on all the citizens –
 And sacrificed as much as ever priests
 Could think to ask. And all the people, too,
 Who doubted they had duty done, gave lands,
 And wealth, and plunder, into those open hands.

But it went not unwatched, that, having wealth,
 A man might work his fill of wickedness
 And still escape the fire. Who kills a cat
 Must keep the consequence: but kill a king,
 And the king's treasures fair forgiveness bring.

* * * * *

13 : Smithcraft

Wherefore this Tyrant grew as circumspect
 As was the first. He summoned Wayland back,
 And said: "Forge me a better blade
 To deal death to my enemies. From every side
 They come; and fear is seated in the throne of fear."

So, the complaisant Smith, upon the word,
 Slipped out, and built a fire among the hills,
 A strange and secret fire; and quarried stones
 From the unchanging substance of the Rock –
 Green stones – and charcoal from the dark green glades.
 And these he burnt, in the black night, alone,
 And made them into bronze. From this, he wrought
 A polished battle-axe: a glinting gaud,
 And fell deterrent to defend his lord.

But now there rose up nine and forty men
 To try the kingdom in the clash of arms –
 And four times twelve were broken on the blade
 That Wayland made. Still, a bronze edge grows dull,
 And strong arms feeble fall: so there stood one
 Who conquered, and the second Tyrant killed,
 And called the kingdom his.

Forthwith,
 The new king summoned him once more the Smith:
 "Feeble is flint, and blunt the brazen blade,
 And enemies everywhere! Weapons I want
 Mightier yet than these."

Wayland went up
 And built a chimney to the sky, and fanned a fire
 To roar within its walls. Then, from the fenny mire
 He gathered the red slime, and black coals brought,
 All fused together in the furious heat
 Of smoking furnace. Then he tamped the flames
 And took out pigs of iron. With ponderous blows
 Of his huge hammer on the red-hot rod
 He shaped a sword, and made the metal hard
 In magic waters, and he ground the edge

To deathly thinness, and on the hilt he wrote
 A wicked word of power: that those it smote
 Might never smite again. In Tyrant's hand
 It served as sceptre over the stricken land.

* * * * *

14 : Smoke

But every day the good smith searched for stones
 And gathered what were red, and smelted them
 To make more iron. So many times a month
 His chimney spread its baleful banner out
 Across the plain; and in his lodge were stocked
 All kinds of tools for toiling: plough and hoe,
 Sickle, and spade, sharp axe, and sharper sword,
 Buckets and kettles, needles and knives and nails,
 Weapons to win more wealth for hearth and home –
 And taxes for the Tyrant's treasury.

For all were taxed, and there was no respite
 For those field-faring folk. Many made swords, therefore,
 And hewed themselves new kingdoms round about,
 And spurned the Tyrant's power. But these, in turn,
 Took taxes from their tenants, tyrant-wise,
 More than they'd borne before. Much bitterness
 Bit at men's hearts, and rude rebellion
 Smouldered beneath their brows.

Then, indeed, the Children of the Word
 Knew choking sorrow, and untold despair:

“Fall after fall

We've prayed our prayers, and kept the yearly feasts
 Appointed us of old. But each man's child
 Has borne more burdens than his father bore,
 And tarnished are the trees of infancy. You, Rock,
 Who cannot be otherwise, Mother of us all:
 Is this a mother's love, this barren bony soil?
 O heartless miser, pitiless thief of toil!

“And you, I Am, knower of all that is,
 We called you “beautiful”: but where is beauty now?”

Why have you hid your splendour in the schools,
 And speak no more to ordinary men, but use long words
 Of pride and secret consequence?

“And Heaven, you
 Who part the after from before, whom we call “good”,
 What means this wickedness, that walks the world
 Under the Sun’s wide eye? Why do your sons
 Upon the seats of power still perpetrate
 Such sins? We’ll no more worship you, for Hell
 Has holier spirits: may These hear our prayer
 “Deliver us from evil”!”

* * * * *

15 : Counsel

Now did the immemorial ancient Rock
 Recall the burden of the yawning years
 Upon her link-long memory: how each act
 Will echo, down the loud-shod corridors
 Of consequence, until the clashing waves
 Of sound shall sum to silence, and the soul
 Slips out, unnoticed, on the jewelled lawns.

“Woe after woe has overwhelmed the world;
 And these, my children, they of the craft of words,
 Have cast the keys of wisdom in the pit,
 And laid aside respect. O Heaven, my Son,
 Look down from Heaven, and consider this
 Unhappy harvest! We, who have borne the world
 Upon our backs, and nourished the tall trees
 And sleek-skinned cattle, in a thousand glades,
 And on a hundred hills; we, who have borne,
 Unflinching, all the insults of the plough,
 And fretful spires effrontery, now must hear
 Men hymn the shapes of Hell!”

Then Heaven hailed I Am:
 “My father, hear, my people all
 Rebel, and turn their backs, and wrathful rage
 That evil walks the world; nor have heard tell

We too are torn between the teeth thereof,
Entangled in the lengthy consequence
Of huge Creation, just as our creatures are.”

Likewise I Am opened his thoughts in turn
Before the Rock, and said: “Oh sister mine,
These wielders of the word, in whom I live,
These vessels of my voyaging through the world,
Have drunk despair, and find me no more fair,
But foul to their ill-feeling. They make mock
Of us who mourn with them. Bear me, then,
A body, that I may be born a man
And move among men’s millions. Let them know
That I too suffer, and am sick at heart,
Because perfection is not pleased to play
In every sunlit street. O Heaven, come,
Make dalliance with the daughter of the Rock,
That I, who know what is, and what is not, may go
All comely clad, in limbs of splendid shape,
Upon the ill-paved pathways of the Earth
To meet the doom of my divinity!”

* * * * *

16 : Prophecy

But Heaven would not yet come down to Earth
 To walk her farrowed fields. “Better it were
 That I should speak to men through men’s own mouths:
 They yet may know to mark a Master’s words,
 And map in the treasury of the mind.
 Let me then seek for sage and saintly men,
 Weighty and wise, to be my messengers;
 Who shall my children of the Shadow tell,
 Of the shadow of the way of the world.”

Thereafter, to such peoples at such times
 As were most apt to benefit thereby,
 Heaven appointed prophets, to proclaim
 Ten several tellings of a single tale
 Untold in any language, and unheard
 By any earthly ear. These were the words,
 And these the mangled messages, conveyed
 Through mingled stumbling of sage and scribe
 To peoples unprepared:

Learn, first, to Live: for everything has Life.
 Study to fight in virtue’s war with vice.
 Obey the whyless whims of God.
 Cease not to think: for thought is all that is.
 Behave yourselves as if in Heaven’s hall.
 Love be your all: for God Himself is love.
 Come, laugh aloud, and cheat the chains of speech.
 But wailing weep to punish your proud flesh.
 Kneel you to pray at the five corners of the God-sent day.
 And work for an honest wage.

* * * * *
 * * * * *

Third Movement : PARTING

17 : Birth

Some among men from these prophecies picked out a pathway
 Walking in wisdom's eye. By the outward and visible
 Way, each entered his private Heaven. But more than
 These, were the stiff-necked striders, who, shrugging their shoulders,
 Put pennies in the hat, and scorned to stay –
 Unless it was to have their servants slay
 The too importunate. Thus out of the ten,
 Were five forgotten – or, through violence,
 Engraved on history's Long Wall – before that Day
 When Heaven wearied of the ways of men
 And sent, the sixth among his messengers,
 His own dear Son.

 This was the Day
 Of all the ages, where the Rock's deep root
 Struck down. For he, who sees what is, and what
 May never be, must make what is
 By dwelling here, behind the half-closed eyelids,
 To waken seeming into certainty.

 It was the Rock, who cannot be otherwise,
 He wooed for wife; a daughter of the Rock
 He made the mother of his earthly Son.
 Wild tales were told about that precious birth,
 Unfolding down the flowering centuries
 Which shone beneath its light. Yet, each babe born
 Is born as Heaven was upon that night.

* * * * *

18 : Sacrifice

Now there was a strangeness on that child
 As of a prince apart. And yet, he drew
 All men to himself; for all men's love
 Leapt to his beckoning. Every one
 Might call him Brother; Brother Divine
 Was he, to every fellow in the field,
 Or toiler in the town.

He it was, for many a humble man,
 Who tipped the beam of choosing, whether to do
 The mean, or manly thing; for many a lord
 He was an arrow in the heart; for many a thief
 A byway back to life. But, all the more,
 For many he was a stumbling and offence.

Holy monks, in wide-eyed wilderness,
 Had age by age foretold the Conqueror,
 The Prophet, and the Priest. But, which was this
 Whom men and women worshipped? Did he cry
 "Behold, they come, who bring the empty Earth
 A just and frightful end!"? Or, would he dare
 To offer God the final sacrifice?
 Had he a sword of vengeance in his hand,
 To drive the deathwatch legions from the land?

These things he did – but in a wilful way
 Found in no script of Armageddon's war.
 He prophesied that Law should yield to Love:
 And end, indeed, in the affairs of men
 Both just to gentle folk, and frightful, too,
 For masters of men's minds. Also, he made
 A greater sacrifice than any vested priest
 Had ever made before, or made again –
 But not in ephod clad; nor at the veil
 Of the Holy of Holies kneeling; nor with prayer
 Of ancient benediction; but in a blank despair
 That spelled bewilderment to his beloved few.

He even had his vengeance – when an evil world
 Fell at his feet: though not till centuries
 Had charmed the rankness of his murder out,
 And turned the actors at his dreadful death

From breathing sinners into painted shapes,
 Eyeless on walls, watching the worshippers
 Recall in prayer the magic of that hour
 Which, of all hours, was most unmagical.

No rich reward
 Nor any prize was won that sabbath eve.
 Rightness was all he had to offer God –
 Against all reason. For he had lived and died
 Tempted, and yet untarnished; as if man
 Were freed from freedom, and as if freedom's badge
 Of frequent failure were not a thing to bear
 And make the best about, but some disease
 From which, by grace divine, could be distilled
 A serum of divine humility.

* * * * *

19 : Harvest

Brother Divine lay dead, in borrowed grave,
 Because his Way was not the Way that was shown.
 His disappointed people passed him by,
 And would not welcome back Melchizedek;
 The Priest rejected this unpriested Christ;
 And Tyrant was not even told his name.
 Buried he was: as if I Am were dead,
 Or Heaven himself lay hidden in a tomb –
 Which could not be, no matter what might come.

Yet, there was a strangeness on those limbs:
 A huge unlikelihood, that straddled the dull world
 With sweet new-born surprise. What could not be
 According to the calculable chance
 That rules strict Nature's realm, in his days was,
 With witnesses around. Which strangeness, spilt
 On the impassive rock – out of the wreck
 Of Heaven's brilliant hope – spread over all,
 And tipped the balance of a million wills
 Away from wickedness.

Freedom and frailty, now

Are but two names for one indifferent grace:
 The gift of sinning. And this same sweet gift
 Gives power to scale perfection's bitter peak
 To offer there a sacrifice of sweets
 To sacred sweetness. Were there no sin,
 We'd have but robot righteousness to win.

So, though still stalked evil in the way,
 This grace, of a well-tempered will, flowed down
 From broken vessels of divinity:
 No more the secret of a sainted few, but now
 The people's common currency; a new
 And noble alloy in ignoble souls.
 Now wickedness withdrew from the full field
 Of kindly folk, and cowered within the walls
 Of bland hypocrisy.

But still, Hell had no citadel, but held
 A tell-tale traitor, nor was there dark tower
 But therein lurked a spy, set there to sell
 Its secrets, for a loaf and draught of ale,
 The Brother Divine – who tips the beam of choice
 Against that hour, when the tall tower's dark lord
 Shall turn again into his truth, and live.

* * * * *

20 : Lipservice

Little by little, like the rippling rings
 That frolic fish write on a still pool's page,
 This tale, of how I Am was born and died,
 Widened across the continents, till every soul
 Till then unsummoned, heard the strangeness told.
 And many told it on, and many more
 Were moved to worship not alone the Rock,
 Who never was otherwise, not alone I Am,
 Who knows the Yes and the No, not alone in Heaven
 Who parts the latter from the former time; but now
 Our Brother Divine, who leans decision's arm
 Against our ancient nature.

Tyrant too, and Bonifas, his priest
 Of latter days, and Wayland Smith – wise men
 And cunning in the wisdom if the world – believed,
 And bowed their heads at mention of his name,
 And with their lips were loud. The fellow smiths
 Said in their lodge:

“Behold, a blessed thing: –
 For, from the opening of the tale of time
 Till now, we have been toilers, and our craft
 Of secret skill is written in the Rock
 Who cannot be otherwise. But our Brother, too,
 Has hands as deft and hardy as our own,
 Promising his presence to the man
 Who strives with stone, or works with living wood.
 Who tips the beam of choosing?”

And Tyrant, in the hall
 Of council, said: “From the first day
 When the first Tyrant ruled, it was fear
 Of Heaven which compelled subservience; but now,
 A blessed thing: – our Brother has proclaimed
 The law of love, the perfect way of peace,
 With no uplifted weapon in men’s hands,
 And mild forgiveness for the sinful soul.
 Humility is holier than fear: and humble men
 More docile, than those that did rebel
 Against the insult of our fathers’ whips.”

And Bonifas
 In secret conclave with the gathered priests
 Declared: “Behold, a blessed thing indeed: –
 The tedious details of the liturgy,
 The articles of sacred law, which were
 The badge and drudgery of our trade, are done away:
 For Brother Divine has laid aside the law,
 And made us all things new. A form, which men
 May minister without a book: even without
 Authority – except such seemly cloth
 As none may wear without authority.”

* * * * *

21 : Pride

Empty those words, and hollow at the heart:
Brittle and baneful insincerities!

So, once again, began men's murmuring,
And anger walked behind. Wayland, then,
Refused at last, his wonted willingness
To serve whoever called for service. Now
He turned to trust his own strength and skill,
Scorning to work to order, when his orders came
From pride and prejudice. Bridle and bit
He laid upon the rivers of the vale
To turn the mills of power. He caught the wind
With whirling arms aloft on hilltop tower,
To grind men's corn and cutlasses; and taught the fire
To turn swift wheel with thrust of throttled steam.
He learned the craft of electricity; and how to knit
The atoms of the Rock into strong threads
With which to weave a fabric, finer far
Than men had worn before.

With this he clothed
The naked limbs, and with new kinds of crops
He filled their hungry mouths. A thousand tongues
He had to talk with; and, to fill men's minds,
His learning multiplied a millionfold.

"Look now", he said, "we've done those righteous deeds
Which Brother Divine demanded that we do.
The task is finished; and taskmaster
Is fully quit. No longer is it fit
To give him worship: praise him and pass him by!
I Am is but a name without a thing,
Heaven an infinite void, and the rude Rock
A speck in his unseeing eye. We, with our hands,
Have made all that we have, or hope to have,
Or have to hope for."

So, with this godlike boast,
He gathered, from the children of the Word,
A countless throng of followers – even a third
Of mankind held Wayland for their lord.

* * * * *

22 : Envy

Yet, it was bitter, that the better part
 Would not obey him – for these had for king,
 One Arthur, of Melchizedek’s long line,
 And Brother Divine for friend and counsellor.
 So Wayland turned, from wayward heedlessness
 Of what was holy, to conceive hot hate,
 And thirsted for the very life of him
 Who did not die the death of men, but rode
 On God’s right hand in Heaven.

“Where has he hid
 His life?”, he asked his counsellors, “What man
 Can find it me? In what enchanted land
 Lies now this magic, held in whose hidden hand?”

They told him, then, how, on the doleful day
 A certain Joseph offered up his tomb
 To hide the murdered body – giving away
 That sweetest gift of men, the last repose
 Of weary Ihood – and, for this pious gift
 Of death, received in turn a gift of life
 To be forever his. But, where he dwells,
 And with what weapons girded, no tale tells.

Therefore, the Smith, impetuous in his pride.
 Took lance in hand, and lunged out through the land –
 Through every country, and in every shire,
 By fell and fen, by shore and sea and air,
 Seeking this Joseph where he might be found:
 To seize by force that everlasting life
 He had in keeping – and to snuff it out,
 And free mankind for ever from the dread
 Of freedom’s deadly danger.

Weary he was, and wearily he walked –
 Doubting, at length, his rightness – when, one week of spring,
 At sunset time, he found an aged man
 Fishing, in a wide and lonely mere

This side the Isle of Avalon. And by his stool,
 At water's brim, there lay an empty grail,
 A polished gold paraboloid. In this, the sun
 Reflected red and angry rays, which struck
 At Wayland's life.

* * * * *

23 : Malice

"Tell me, old fisherman, what it is you keep
 In that void vessel there?"

"Sir Wayland, know
 That empty dishes hold the most; if treasures rich
 Were stored therein, no treasure would it take."

"Old man, you know my name: now tell me yours,
 Whose years must match the number of the reeds
 In this unpeopled pool."

"Yes, I am him
 That you have come to rob; but having none
 Of this world's goods, nor grammar of the schools,
 Your robbery will yield you ill reward."

"It is your life I look for" said the Smith,
 "Your stolen Life, and not your property
 Of body, or of mind."

And, thereupon,
 He lunged with lance upon the seated form
 Of the impassive sage. Unflinchingly,
 The fisherman deflected, with his thumb,
 The steel-tipped threatful beam, from heart to loins;
 And, as if scatheless, said:

"Be not in debt
 To Heaven deeper than you can repay:
 For your life cannot equal mine – but time will be
 When you'll be quit of merely gelding me."

Wayland, furious anger flaming,
 Seized on the gleaming bowl, thereof exclaiming:
 "This is the cauldron that Ceridwen kept,
 The plate of plenty, whence each guest may pluck

Such dainties as will meet his heart's desire.
 Now, it is mine: and in it lies the Life
 Of him I hate.”

Answered the aged one
 Composed around his pain: “Your yearning heart
 Is set on power; and nought but nascent power
 Shall be poured out for you. Water, and wind,
 And vivid lightning-flash, and violence
 Of flash-point vapours, you've already tamed:
 Now, you shall distil an elixir
 More potent than these all – a thread of fire
 From the unearthly substance of the stars,
 Which shall accomplish all the toil of years
 That stains the myth of manhood, and shall make
 Your children as the children of the Sun.
 Thus you shall wish – until your wish is won.”

* * * * *

24 : Winter

That was a wicked wound
 That Wayland gave this most unkingly king –
 And great the grief that flowed and followed it.
 Though clad in all the splendour of the spring
 The earth was no more gay; though scented airs
 Blew, as before, from flower-spangled fields,
 No golden memories came back; though birds
 Deliciously did sing, no joys awoke
 From man's monotony. Blue was the sky
 With melancholy blight; the golden Sun
 Shone tawdry, in a tinsel firmament.

It was as if the weeds outgrew the corn,
 As if the apples were but wax, as if
 There was a beetle in the roof, a fungus on the stair,
 And life led nowhere. Lengthening leisure hours,
 Born of the fidget habit of research, did creep
 Across the days' dull screen, heavy with haste
 And loud with long distraction. Wealth was all,

And noble the inventor of new need
 To spend it on. Alike in Wayland's realm,
 And Arthur's, endless energy was won.
 Only the poor lands languished, without power,
 Leaning to pull their ploughs through brazen clod,
 Fainting with fever, and carrying on their heads
 Rank water, winched from and inconstant well.

The chiefs of men, wild with the multitude
 Of knowledge, narrowed to a needle's point
 The breadth of wisdom. Fearing, still, to lose
 Their golden chains, they planned stupendous wars
 They dared not win; they learned to lay
 The ploughlands barren; to murder nations in a night;
 To spread contagion over continents; to maim
 The dwellers in the womb; to blight man's seed
 For evermore. On ceaseless questionings
 They fed – but still one question they forbade,
 In fear to hear the answer:

None might ask
 What fills the empty vessel; nor what song rings
 When clangs the tongueless bell; nor yet what word
 Names its own unknown name, unasked, unheard.

* * * * *
 * * * * *

Fourth Movement : YOKING

25 : Peridor

There was a man, whose name was Peridor,
 A widow's son, untaught and mannerless,
 A child of the Rock, who could not be otherwise
 Than as he was. He, when he left his home,
 Saw soon the sadness of the world: the faded flower,
 The city-tarnished bough; the scribbled walls,
 And littered platforms; the loose indifferent mouths
 And self-proud glances.

Peridor did not know, –
 For word had never reached to where he dwelt
 In forest foliage – of the glum consent
 To look no longer to the roots of Life,
 Nor scan the patterned whole in wonderment,
 But keep to questions which escape the knife
 Which prunes untestables away. And therefore all
 He came across were startled by his “Why
 Is life worth living?”, shocked by his “What remains
 When I have fed and clothed and wived myself?”.

And all, in the end, drew back
 And had no word with him. For his were words
 That wounded – and in that part polite pretence
 Had amputated from man's neutered mind. They drove
 This questioner into a nameless quest: looking, by lane
 And motorway, on hill and riverside, through fields,
 And down beside the sounding sea, to find
 Someone to answer him – or to fill his cup
 With hope of answer, or even one to tell
 Of where this vessel might be filled: some well
 Beyond the walls of Ihood.

After a weary crocodile of days
 He met one man who had no mind to mock,
 A man run wild, and Merlin was his name.
 (This frenzy fell on him, when he beheld
 One battle-day, in ghastly-shapen clouds,
 The embryo's snout of War.) He, being mad
 Knew more than other men: when he was asked

The way to the Castle of Replenishment, he said
With perfect plainness:

 “It is far my friend,
And you will need safe-conduct; Therefore go
To Arthur’s court, at Camelot – and I know
You’ll be expected there.”

* * * * *

26 : Quest

Thus, having thanked him, and remembering
The fourfold Holy Name, Peridor turned
To the High King’s city. At the huge black gate
There hung three bells: of war, of peace, and one
For suppliants to ring. This one he struck –
But waited long for answer. Three times he rang;
At last the Porter came, who asked of him
His name and business.

 “I have come to seek
A quest without a name; and I would ask
What all men quake to think about.”
I asked a riddle once”, the Porter said,
“That took ten days for five philosophers
To puzzle out: but this of yours, our knights
Will surely answer on the spot!” With this
He let the suppliant in.

 He found the Court at table;
But, as their custom was, they gave him leave
To put his petition. “Gracious King,
I walk the weary world, for need to know
One thing with many names. This, then I ask:
What fills the bowl I carry in my skull,
And who shall drain it dry?”

 After the indrawn breath, some laughed aloud,
Some swore, and others blushed; and one, their Seneschal
Said: “Ask with a ‘what’, young whippersnapper, ask
With ‘which’ or ‘how’, and hope for answer – but a ‘why’
Is a fool’s burden, and a broken skull

Or bloody nose is all you'll get thereby."
 Then the King called for silence, and in silence sat
 A wondrous while. At length, he softly said:

"We were forewarned of this queer questioner
 By one as queer as he. His coming was
 Forecast, from that first fading of the flowers;
 Since this sad winter of the world;
 Since this dull blight did overspread the age
 And set us pondering. I deem this quest
 To be permissible – though passing perilous –
 So we should grant him arms, and documents
 To see him safe across our frontiers."

Curse by curse, encounter by encounter,
 He learned the craft of questioning, the skill
 Of converse: equally with gaffer at the gate
 As queen in palanquin. Mile after mile,
 Week by week walking, Peridor's path was turned
 Into the dream-dark West; where, wondering,
 He walked in frequent rain. He wandered South
 Of the long white Cloud, the labyrinthine door
 Of mill-dark Albion. Rounded the last rim
 Of living Rock-borne land. And, lastly, came
 To a cloud-wrapped, glass hewn castle, by the name
 Of cold Carvendiget.

* * * * *

27 : Carvendiget

Gate had it none, though round and round
 The seeker prowled. Strange, silent men he saw
 Behind the battlements – men who returned no hail
 To his:

"Friends, have you here in hiding
 him who can answer what has not been asked?"
 Still they kept silence (and, in speaking not,
 They told the truth most truthfully of all).
 "Will you give shelter to a weary walker
 Here, at this vacant frontier?"

Not from within
 Came any answer. From tall, translucent wall
 No wisp of welcome. But from behind: where stood
 A mighty man of wrath. "Give me your name,
 And where you come from: wisely, for I am Wayland,
 Lord of this perilous Porte."

"And I am Peridor,
 And I have come to ask a curious question:
 Can you, or any of your comrades here,
 Tell the true end of all my travelling,
 Or show me the unravelling of the skein
 Which guides me back again?"

Anger, incontinent,
 Sprang to the Smith's strong brow – a shocking blow
 Struck Peridor down – and, when he next knew day,
 He lay in chafing chains in a sour cell,
 Watching, through bars, the feasting of the free.

* * * * *

Presently, there passed before his grille
 A strange procession: walking at the head
 A tall dark butler, bearing a blood-wet lance;
 Then two boys with candles, whose two wicks
 Hung guiltless of the stolen flowers of fire;
 And last, a lovely lady, who, in her hands
 Held a wide golden charger, shoulder high,
 Striding majestically by. Then, instantly,
 The prisoned Peridor called out to her:
 "Fair madam, tell me who it is you feed
 From your uplifted grail, and what fine food
 The feasters find therein?"

"Soon, you shall see"

Was all her answer, as she swept away,
 All sweetly smiling, out of his famished sight.
 And so it was, that after no great while
 There came to him, and stood, an aged man
 Outside his prison door.

"Sir Peridor,
 Well are you come: – and I would have you hear
 My thanks to you for my integrity.
 Long have I lain, on purple silken bed

Waiting, and waiting, for one to ask me of me.
 For I am he, whom Wittila the wise,
 Wayland's delightful daughter, serves with food
 From that empty vessel that you viewed,
 In daily rite apportioned. Joseph am I,
 Who, by not acting, wield more mastery
 Than ever Wayland will, who gelded me
 For his sake whom I serve. Now, by your wayward
 Strange solicitude, I have been healed –
 And shall have pleasure, more than Arthur knows,
 Who, through fulfilment, finds futility.

* * * * *

28 : Homecoming

Clear of the clouds now stood Carvendiget
 And gay the pearly sky, when Peridor
 Departed, stepping princely on the green,
 Walking with Wittila, bridal beside her groom –
 Wayland, her father, then and forever remaining
 To wait upon Carvendiget's new lord.

This was a daybread of delight, when gossamer
 Gilded the emerald lawns, and multitudinous
 Melodies of bird and beast were hung
 Like threads of fire on the unfluttering air
 To power them through the thoroughfare of day;
 And like full silken sails, which barges bear
 Down winding rivers, half a world away.

* * * * *

Joyful that journey was, out of the aged West.
 The road drew straight, and the hill's crest
 Crouched down for them to cross. Dawn behind dawn
 Pressed up, to hurry them homeward on
 To Camelot of the King.

* * * * *

Up stood Arthur, in his hall of splendour;
 Up stood his noble knights, to honour this contender
 At the brink of Time. The silver trumpets sounded

Peridor's praise, in concord unconfounded.
 And many-stranded madrigals' delight
 Ran, fading, down the columns of the night.

* * * * *

29 : Welcome

Then, when the marvel of the music was ended,
 The honours accomplished, and the feast expended;
 When a fair and sober silence had been laid
 On all the listening throng, the High King said:

“Now, we have heard,
 Out of Earth's end, a word:
 A word of awakening, a hope of healing,
 A power, and a promise of a new revealing,
 And a rebuke to enduring hardness,
 And a shadow of a staff of strength.

“Our ancient Mother,
 The Rock, who cannot be other
 Than she was ever, never a fulfiller –
 Lest flowers be forewithered, or she prove a killer
 Of creatures conceivable – does She then gather
 Every last apple off the tree?

“Think of the knower
 Of being, I Am, the foreshower
 Of mysteries to men: for when did He meddle
 With money, or status, or toil at the treadle
 To feed us, his family? He, the withdrawer
 From every race, righteous or wrong?

“Mark, too, how Heaven
 Divides the days, by the seven
 And seventy stars, and the fair Moon's motion
 Falling forever through the void: no notion
 Find we in Heaven of exertion, not even
 The cold compulsion of made law.

“And Brother Divine
 Moves us merely by inclining
 The bent of will, the individual striving:

Never compelling, but couthly contriving
 That Love shall, alone, make us loathe our meanness,
 That image of the animals we are.”

“We have walked by the Word, by the outward and visible way,
 Where each one alone can, reading the signs and directions,
 Drive in to his private Heaven. And is that Zion?
 – But two together, in secret sin may stumble
 Upon the untrodden path; a silent circle
 Of plighted friends may fumble the portals open;
 A nation, knowing the star-sprung power of the Way,
 May weaponless win it, and conquer the Heavenly kingdom,
 And Kingless command us all. Decidable questions
 Of doctrine deceive and sunder, leave each one lonely,
 In bell-gathering congregation cold and alone.
 But here dwells wisdom – in the half-closed doorway,
 And Truth in an unfinished sentence.”

“Must we then eat
 The final superabundant crumb? Must we make
 The hideous most of all our mastery?
 Shall we add pile to boiler, till the power
 Each man commands is more than any man
 Can reverently offer God: more than he can
 Creatively employ?

“How shall we play with plenty?
 Firstly, foreswear efficiency: and instead
 Show honour more to men, counting the cost
 No more than we have counted millions lost
 In outward shows of war. Then, not to defer
 To elbowed eminence, but rather those revere
 Who labour nameless, and in silence share
 Their differential gains. From table spread
 Abundantly with dainty food, let bread
 And Cheddar cheese be counted for a feast:
 And let the best among us take the least.
 Leave off that last fulfilment of desire
 Lest fuel fail from Life’s mysterious fire.”

* * * * *

30 : Advent

Down by the sea, where sprawls the slippery wrack
 And green crabs scuttle – down, and deeper down,
 Below the sea’s dark floor – immensely deep
 And, from the roots of time uncalendared,
 The Rock lay still.

 This was the day,
 When out of countless ages, the nine wheels
 Of the nine planets turned in unison,
 And the nine spheres swung through the crack of noon
 On the same instant. All the echoes, then,
 Sounding for ever through the void, the clang
 Of man’s reverberating pride, by hazard sang
 A moment’s utter silence.

 “Now,” cried she
 Who cannot be otherwise, “this is the day
 Of an age’s ending: now is rushing by
 One window of eternity. Oh, let them know,
 My mayfly children, of this magic hour
 When they have Heaven in their hand!”

 I Am Himself looked down
 And bared his wisdom – that which is,
 And that which cannot be – through the small gap
 Between the many-folded curtains hung
 Before the tabernacle doors of Time
 And Heaven thrust his hand between, to stay
 The parting of the after from before.
 And Brother Divine, who tips the delicate beam
 From doubt to duty, spoke in the hearts of men:
 To gaze into the well of wonderment.

 Never again will that be quite forgot
 Which those who watched upon that hour beheld,
 Or those who listened heard. But, a breath held
 Must soon be breathed away; and an age’s end
 Tarries no longer than a second’s hand
 Bears on a minute’s birth. Thus, a new world
 Sprang forth, upon the passing of the old,
 And coiled itself anew in all the pain

That men have known, and now must know again.

* * * * *

31 : Prognosis

Yet, there is no forgetting
 Nor no returning to the virgin age.
 The golden dust of Heaven has descended; star-laden winds
 Have whispered among these hills. Unending power
 And golden days, down avenues of lives,
 Beckon the dreaming mind.

But no: not thus
 Insidious is our portion in the years; the sweet
 Is laced with bitterness, and the flowery scents
 With proper pungency. A myriad mouths
 May suck the deserts dry, and outspread souls
 Cram back to robot stature. Robbed of good risk,
 Fine spirits may be fanned to nightmare wrath
 And wreck their glittering towers. We may contrive
 So deftly to evade the arms of Death
 While he is merciful, as to come at last
 To loathe those lingering filaments of life
 We must not snap.

For it is not man's happiness that tells
 Nor suffering, nor the perpetual patterning of light
 And shade, that all the living know, which lends
 Intelligible meaning to the name
 Of the name of the Word of Power. For time –
 And living in time – are only the outward shape
 Of matters out of time. What but the plunge
 Into the pool of cleansing, the surrender
 Into the hand of our divine defender
 Over the brink of Time – what but our weaning
 From the bare body, can explain the meaning
 Of body's bareness, or soul's delight; of pleasure
 Or of pain?

Evil is not some measure
 Of God's devising: evil is whatsoever

Man's fiery heart may strive against for ever.
 And strive he shall, till Time itself be turned
 Into Eternity – with full quittance earned.

* * * * *

32 : Epilogue

As for the Name
 Of the Name of the Word of Power:
 This has slipped through the fingers of our verse
 And fallen forgotten between the syllables,
 And lies still, inaudible.

And as for the Promise
 Of the promise of the Power of the Way:
 This is not found in all our images;
 But a promise once given can never be broken
 By standing unspoken.

And what of the Shadow
 Of the Shadow of the Way of the World?
 It fall across the page, and darkens meaning:
 The closest enquirers shall most widely wander;
 And this is no wonder,
 For image, and feeling,
 These we evoke by our weaving of sounds and meanings.
 But where is the language, and in what paradise spoken
 Which can expound us Wisdom? Words are mistaken,
 Their antique logic of Yes and No must mangle
 The delicate fabric of Truth. For this is single
 Unsayable, and undeniable: both unbelievable,
 And, for the sage and the simple alike, a life liveable,
 Of the ineffable life a likeness: no more than an image,
 Yet, to the fourfold Godhead a gesture of homage;
 Lifework of famous and fruitful men, as of strangers to fame –

The Shadow
 The Promise
 And the Name.

* * * * *

* * * *
 * *

Bonifas Boniface is the name of (and for) a jovial innkeeper.
 St Boniface ?

Carvendiget

ephod priestly vestment without sleeves.

Imophas

Palimnesis an invention of Frederick's, to mean remembering back through time.

Peridor – Percival?

Porte sublime lofty gate of the kings palace in the Ottoman Empire, also for giving audience and justice. (OED) Chambers gives it as Byzantine. But the Porte could have existed through both Empires at the same place.

whathing no such word in any dic I could find.

Wath has to do with water and wading. A fordable to stream.

Wittila the wise

the knife Which prunes untestables away. – Occam's razor

p 30: western society is the Fisher King

FP-R has the same quest as Peridor.

This was the day,
 When out of countless ages, the nine wheels
 Of the nine planets turned in unison,
 And the nine spheres swung through the crack of noon
 On the same instant.