IN THE YEAR 1053, when the relics of Saint Wolfram were transferred to the abbey of Fontenelle, a canon of Rouen was cured of blindness by their miraculous power as they were carried through the streets. The canon was known as Tedbalt of Vernon and is described as one who translated into the common tongue from Latin the acts of many saints, among them those of Saint Wandrille. It is especially noted that he reworked these *gestes* with artistry and that he made pleasing songs of them to a sort of *tinnuli rhythm*. The fact that language and other evidence in the *Vie de Saint Alexis* suggest that this work was composed about the year 1040 has prompted the assumption that Tedbalt de Vernon could have been the author of the poem. In any event, the description of Tedbalt’s work stands as evidence that, at the period of the composition of the *Alexis*, the deeds of saints were being related in the vernacular as songs in a form with some kind of resounding or tintinabulating rhythm. If by the expression *tinnuli rhythm* is meant the sort of structural arithmetic metaphor which has been revealed in the *Alexis*, then it may be said that the device was employed for hagiographic material at least on more than one occasion during the first half of the eleventh century.

Since the customary repertory of the early jongleurs comprised songs of both the lives of saints and the deeds of heroes, one might well inquire whether a similar poetic device was employed for epic poetry. For several reasons the obvious choice for testing would be the Oxford version of the *Chanson de Roland*.

It is, of course, widely known that Joseph Bédier and those scholars who were his followers in the 1920s considered Digby-
23, the Oxford manuscript of the *Roland*, to be the oldest and best of all the manuscripts. They also held the version represented in this manuscript to be the original one and maintained that it was composed out of whole cloth at the beginning of the twelfth century by a single individual who was a very gifted poet. However, evidence which has been brought to light in the past few decades has led contemporary scholars more and more to the view that the Oxford version is simply one link of a long chain of reworkings of the material which dates back to the ninth century.

Of the two main episodes of the Oxford *Roland*, only the events of one, that treating the defeat of Charlemagne's army at Roncevaux, stems from a nucleus of historic fact. Charlemagne's rearguard was indeed exterminated at Roncevaux in the year 778, and, by the year 829, the story was already being recounted with characteristic legendary accretions, the most notable being the inclusion of the protagonist Roland, who dies in the battle. The other episode, telling of Charlemagne's battle of vengeance with the Saracen emir Baligant, has no basis in Carolingian history, the material seeming rather to be related to the expedition of Robert Guiscard against Alexis Commenius in 1085.

Present-day scholars are in fairly general agreement that the Roncevaux episode reflected in the Oxford version was completed during the period between the end of the tenth century and quite certainly by 1087, but more likely before 1050. The Baligant episode is considered to be the addition of a later revision which was probably completed between the years 1087 and 1098. Thus, the version of the Oxford manuscript is now believed to be the product of at least two revisions, of which the earliest, comprising the Roncevaux episode, was roughly coetaneous with the composition of the *Vie de Saint Alexis*.

Therefore, the two poems, the *Alexis* and the Roncevaux episode of the Oxford version, would be products of the same period. The possibility of origin in a similar cultural ambience is not lessened by the fact that both poems are in assonanted decasyllable with caesura after the fourth (the so-called "epic" line), the
Alexis being arranged in five-line stanzas, while the Roland is in the usual epic liaisses of undetermined length. Also, both Digby-23 and manuscript L of the Alexis are by Anglo-Norman scribes of the twelfth century.8

The similarity of the structural effect in the two works is notable, and the fact that both poems exhibit an unusually architectonic form is remarked by all readers. The "genius" of Digby-23 is generally acclaimed; and, with respect to the poem's composition, the version of this manuscript is deemed unique in the vast corpus of French epic material. Since in large measure the form of the Alexis is determined by the arithmetic pattern which serves as its armature and since both poems give the impression of carefully planned composition, there would be a good chance that some arithmetic scheme was also used for the Roland—a probability which would be heightened by the contemporaneity and similarities of provenience and metric form which have been noted.9 It would seem, therefore, that, if structural arithmetic metaphor is to be found in any Old French epic poetry, the Oxford version of the Chanson de Roland would be a good place to look for it.

The Unity of the Oxford "Roland"

In spite of the fact that the story of Roland and Charlemagne related in Digby-23 represents a combination of two episodes which are historically unconnected, the version as a whole manifests a reasonable degree of artistic unity. Essentially, the defeat of Charlemagne's rearguard at Roncevaux may be described as a tragedy resulting from the interaction of two forces: the one, a plot of betrayal implemented by the traitor Ganelon; the other, the excessive valor of the hero. Positive action on the part of Charlemagne in the developments leading to the tragedy seems rather conspicuous in its absence. Indeed, the king's ineptitude before the decision of his council in the naming of Roland to the rearguard, and his literal absence from the battle through Ro-
land's failure to summon him, might well be considered a third factor of the tragedy.

If the events succeeding the death of Roland are conceived as a sequel to the battle of Roncevaux, then the part of the narrative telling of Charlemagne's battle with Baligant and the trial of Ganelon falls into place as a kind of tailpiece to accommodate the vengeance for the evil action: vengeance on the pagans and justice for the traitor, forcefully executed now by Charlemagne, the very person whose earlier inaction had contributed to the Roncevaux defeat.

**The 66 Pattern: Arithmetic Structure**

Paul Mortier's diplomatic edition of the Oxford manuscript contains 291 assonanted groups of 10-syllable lines.\(^{10}\) The number of lines in each group, or laisse, varies at random, the average being fourteen, with a maximum of thirty-five and a minimum of five. Mortier reads 4002 lines in the total.

Obvious divisions of the numbers 291 or 4002 into thirds, quarters, fifths, and so forth do not strike points of outstanding importance in the narrative, and no arithmetic correlation is evident between the 291 laisses and the 4002 lines in the poem, as is the case with the *Alexis*, where the 125 regular five-line stanzas represent the third power of five and, necessarily, the 625 lines represent the fourth. Furthermore, the fact that the number of lines in the laisses of the *Roland* is undetermined renders the probability very high that lines have been lost or added through scribal error, so that, even if originally there had been numerical pattern in the lines, the chances of recovering it now would be slight.\(^{11}\) Thus, to find an arithmetic plan in the *Roland*, the best procedure would seem to be to disregard the possibility of its presence in line numbers and to hunt for pieces of pattern in the arrangement of the laisses.

Since the number structure of the *Alexis* depends on significant points in the narrative, it would seem logical to choose some focal point in the *Roland* story and then to measure the distance in
Numerical Structures in the Oxford "Roland"

terms of laisses between that point and subsidiary points. In the Alexis, the moment when the saint dies serves as a sort of axis. The death of Roland occurs in laisse 176 of Mortier's edition, and it seems significant that this event is predicted in laisse 110 by a storm and eclipse of the sun over all of France. It will be noted that these narrative points are 66 laisses apart. Assuming for the moment that the bracket of 66 laisses is an intentional structural unit, a count of 66 laisses back from laisse 110 comes to laisse 44, in which Ganelon describes to Marsile the exact details of his plan for the attack on the rearguard and the downfall of Roland. The set of points thus established tells a succinct story of betrayal and destruction: the Plan of Betrayal at 44, the Prediction of Death resulting from the plan at 110, and the Death of Roland itself at 176. (See figure 1.)

Since Roland's companion Olivier, thematically the counterfoil of wisdom and prudence to Roland's proud valor, dies with Roland in the final debacle, the point of his death might also have structural importance. This event occurs in laisse 150, and a count back from 150 by the assumed structural unit of 66 arrives at laisse 84, the middle of three parallel laisses where the famous dispute over the blowing of the horn takes place. Here Olivier advises Roland to sound his horn so that Charles and the main body of the army can come back to rescue them, but Roland refuses because it would be cowardly to seek assistance against the pagans and his name would be disgraced forever in France. This is Roland's act of démesure, which, originating in the excessive fortitude universally characteristic of heroes, acts as a sort of tragic flaw which becomes a second factor of his downfall and that of 20,000 men.

A further count of 66 laisses back from the 84th comes to laisse 18, where Olivier speaks for the first time. Charles has asked his council of vassals to name someone for the hazardous and diplomatically demanding mission to the court of the pagan king, Marsile. Roland volunteers, but Olivier rushes forth and asks to be sent in place of his friend, explaining that Roland is too hotheaded and wild and that he fears the proud hero will "slip up." Thus, Olivier is introduced on the scene of action
Fig. 1. The Roland theme: Betrayal.
Olivier to Roland: "I'll go, you are too proud. You'll get into trouble. I'm afraid."

Prediction of démesure

Olivier: "Blow!" Roland: "No!"—

Démesure

Olivier dies

Fig. 2. The Olivier theme: Démesure.
uttering a characterization of Roland and bearing a warning of his démesure. The set of points established here marks off Olivier's participation in the démesure motif: his warning or Prediction of Démesure at 18, the action Démesure itself at 84, and the Death of Olivier as the result of this action at laisse 150. (See figure 2.)

It now becomes apparent that brackets of 66 laisses from the deaths of the two heroes do in fact touch on such important points in the narrative that the likelihood that they were intended as structural units may be deemed considerable. If such is indeed the case, then it might be expected that a significant event would occur at point 66. This laisse, the first which begins "Halt sunt li pui . . .," marks a transition in the action. Roland has just completed the disposition of his commands by naming Gualter de l'Hum to hold the narrow defile. Now the final separation occurs, as the main body of Charlemagne's army sets out for France. Charles is in anguish on leaving his nephew behind and seems to be realizing the full import of the tragic mistake of the council in which Ganelon named Roland to command the rearguard.

Sixty-six laisses further on, at laisse 132, the Archbishop Turpin intervenes in the dispute between Roland and Olivier over the blowing of the horn. Proud Roland had refused to blow it when the pagans were first sighted. Now, when he wishes to do so, it is too late. Only 60 of the 20,000 men remain and Olivier has reproached his companion bitterly for his foolhardy bravery. Turpin advises that the horn be blown anyway, for, although it cannot save them, at least Charles will return to avenge their defeat and to bury them.

In effect, the narrative material of laisses 66 and 132 would seem to treat Charlemagne's relation to the tragedy, which, up to this point, might be termed participation by noninvolvement. Nevertheless, the very nonparticipation of Charles was a salient factor in the defeat, and the set of points might be designated: Absence and Anguish of Charles at 66 and the Prediction of his Return for Vengeance and Burial at 132. (See figure 3.)

From the pattern of the two sets of three points previously
Charles in anguish because he has left his nephew behind--Mistake of Charles

Turpin to Roland and Olivier: "Do not quarrel! Blow so that Charles can come to avenge and bury us."—Prediction of vengeance on pagans.

Fig. 3. The Charlemagne theme: Absence.
described, one would also expect in the third set a third point which would treat some aspect of Charlemagne’s return for vengeance or burial, but laisse 198 on which it would fall tells of Marsile’s request for aid from Baligant, and has no narrative connection with the theme of Charlemagne’s relation to the defeat. The reason for this puzzling but significant irregularity will later become apparent.

In general, patterns based on the number 66 cannot be carried out further in the poem as it now stands, for extensions of 66 brackets to any point below that of Roland’s death do not coincide with related narrative material. It is to be inferred, therefore, that, in the Oxford version of the epic, the 66 pattern ends with the death of Roland. Figure 4 shows the interlocking pattern of the three narrative sets treating the factors of the tragedy: the Démesure set, the Betrayel set, and the King’s set. It is rather startling that the numbers of the laisses at each narrative point (i.e., 18, 44, 66, 84, 110, 132, 150, and 176) are all divisible, either by eleven, or by six, or by eleven and six. Naturally, the intervals between the narrative points established by the 66 brackets form a regular pattern. Thus, as can be seen in figure 5, they run 18:26:22; 18:26:22; 18:26:22; and it is interesting that, when viewed in another way as 44:22:44:22:44, the series comprises numerals which are also divisible by eleven.

The regularity of these patterns would seem to substantiate the tentative postulation that there was intent to use as a structural unit in an arithmetic scheme the interval of 66 laisses between the prediction of Roland’s death and the death itself. Especially significant is the fact that the narrative points are all divisible by either 11 or 6 or both, for it will be recalled that the laisses chosen to initiate at least two of the three sets of points were selected for their narrative importance alone (i.e., the deaths of the two heroes, Roland and Olivier) and not for any numerical relation between them. It appears then, that the probability is considerably beyond chance that the poet wished to construct an arithmetic pattern based on brackets of 66 laisses arranged on narrative points which mark off the basic themes of the tragedy.
Fig. 4. The 66 pattern.
Fig. 5. The 66 pattern (reverse).
A Symbolic Interpretation of the 66 Pattern

If it can now be said with some certainty that an arithmetic structure was intended in the Oxford Roland, the next question to be answered is: in what way is the structure metaphoric? The outstanding numbers of the pattern appear to be 66, 11, and 6. In terms of the arithmetic reasoning of the Middle Ages, where, as has been shown in chapter 1, the allegorical meaning or sensus of numbers was conceived as an intrinsic component of their natures, these three numbers would be considered inextricably interrelated, for the number 66 is not only the aggregate of 11 (that is, the sum of all the numbers from 1 to 11 equals 66), but it is the product of 11 when multiplied by 6; and it would be further significant in medieval reasoning that the number 66 is composed of two sixes.

From Pythagorean times, the number six was considered extraordinary by reason of its being the first "perfect" number, since it equals the sum of one, two, and three, its aliquot parts or divisors exclusive of itself.\textsuperscript{14} Beginning with Philo Judaeus, the mathematical perfection of the number 6 came to be interpreted in biblical exegesis as an allegorical statement and supporting argument for the perfection of God's creation, which was accomplished in six days.\textsuperscript{15} Following in this tradition Saint Augustine reasons that the perfection of God's work is signified by 6 because "the number 6 is the first which is made up of its own parts, i.e., of its sixth, third, and half, which are respectively 1, 2, and 3, and which make a total of 6."\textsuperscript{16} Dante interprets the sixth heaven as the age of earthly perfection, and calls it the mirror of divine justice (Paradiso XIX).

But consistency was not an attribute of the symbolic interpretation of numbers, and the perfection of 6 was overlooked when, in the Alexandrian period, as the product of 2, the first "feminine" number, and of 3, the first "masculine" number, it was quite generally held to be the female marriage number by the Neo-Pythagoreans.\textsuperscript{17} Things went from bad to worse with 6 when, in Christian times, it was called the number of Venus by Capella (De nuptiis 7), and, with the help of homonymous
confusion of the Latin *sex*, *seni* 'six' and *sexus*, *sexus* 'sex,' it came to signify the *officia naturalia* of original sin.\(^\text{18}\) Doubtless this quality of the number six lead John the Divine to choose it as the component of the number 666, which he assigns to the beast in the Book of Revelation.\(^\text{19}\)

The number eleven had been characterized by the Pythagoreans as a "transgression outside of measure," since it exceeds by one the number ten, which was conceived as an aspect of the highly regarded unity.\(^\text{20}\) In Christian allegory, eleven was called the number of excess because it exceeded ten, which had come to symbolize the law of the Ten Commandments. Thus, Saint Augustine interprets the number eleven as a "going beyond" or transgression of the law, and therefore, sin.\(^\text{21}\) It is perhaps also significant that, of the ten ditches of the inferno, Dante describes the ninth as twenty-two miles in circumference, and the last, reserved for the counterfeiters, as 11 miles (*Inferno XXIX, XXX*). Thus Dante progressively decreases the circumference of the pit by a unit of eleven, which, no doubt following the tradition of Augustine, he took for a number signifying transgression and sin.

It is unfortunate that the poet of the Roland does not tell us, as Dante so often did, what reasoning he followed in his application of number symbolism. In the absence of precise indications of such intent, we can only resort to a rather speculative application of the evidence we have relating to the traditional manner of interpreting numbers. Thus, given the arithmetic pattern and some knowledge of the kind of symbolic manipulations which were available as models, an approximation of the allegorical meaning might be stated as follows: Of the three numbers, 66, 11, and 6, which appear to be outstanding in the numerical structure, the number 11 was probably considered dominant, since from 11 can be generated its aggregate 66. The signification "excess" or "transgression of measure" by which the number 11 was characterized immediately suggests, of course, the sin of *dèmesure*, Roland's excessive fortitude and a major factor of his downfall, while the number 66, when taken in the sense of the pejorative aspects of its component 6, could
signify some aspect of evil. Thus, it might be reasoned that, just as the number 11 generates as its aggregate the number 66, so the démesure of Roland, like a seed of destruction, generates Ganelon's hatred of his stepson. This hatred in turn was made manifest in the betrayal, which, abetted by a further act of démesure on the part of Roland in the hornblowing episode, achieved its catastrophic fruition in the debacle of the defeat. Roland, then, was an "eleven," the number of his démesure, and it is worthy of note that it is laisse 110 (mystically the equivalent of 11) which predicts his death: the storm and eclipse over France are "the great sorrow for the death of Roland."

It would follow that the number 66, as the culmination of the excess of 11, would symbolize the tragic downfall of Roland, and perhaps also the extermination of the twelve peers and the rearguard. However, when viewed in the light of its similarity to the number 666 of the beast of Revelation, the number 66 would also be appropriate for the traitor Ganelon, a Judas type, who, in his conspiracy with the pagan king, did not perhaps accomplish the threefold degree of evil of the Beast, but who certainly could qualify as a minor beast. It is possible too that, aside from being conceived as the aggregate of 11, the number 66 was understood in addition as its product when multiplied by 6. Viewed in this light, the number 6 could have been taken in its positive aspect of a symbol of the perfection of God's creation manifested in the hero Roland without his flaw, which, when multiplied by the number of excess, attains the negative qualities of 66, the number of evil by reason of the negative aspects of its component 6, and again a symbol of the destruction of Roland.

In summary, the metaphoric significance which is postulated for the arithmetic structure so far revealed is as follows: Of the three basic numbers, 66, 11, and 6, the dominant number 11, traditionally signifying excess, most certainly symbolizes Roland's démesure, while the number 66, as the aggregate of the number of excess, symbolizes the destruction of Roland and the rearguard, and may also, by its association with the number of
the beast of Revelations symbolize the traitor Ganelon. Finally, the number 6, as the alternate factor of 66, through its interpretation as the number of the perfection of God's creation, may symbolize the original perfect state of Roland before being brought to ruin through excess.

The 91 Pattern: Arithmetic Structure

The fact that the pattern based on brackets of 66 laisses could not be extended beyond the point of Roland's death in a manner that makes any narrative sense suggests that it was constructed exclusively for the Roncevaux episode. However, when an arc is established between the point of the hero's death in laisse 176 and the point of his burial in laisse 267, a new pattern begins to emerge which embraces the whole of the poem. The bracket between the death and the burial comprises 91 laisses, and, when extended back from the point of death, falls on laisse 85, the third in that series of three exactly similar laisses in which Roland refuses to blow the horn, a narrative point which, in the 66 pattern, was designated the action Démesure. The points thus established would tell the story: Démesure at 85, Death of Roland at 176, and Burial at 267. (See figure 6.)

Since two of the points of the new set of brackets coincide with points already established in the 66 pattern, it would seem logical to try other laisses in the 66 pattern as generating points for sets of brackets in 91 laisses. Laisses 18 and 44, the points previously designated Prediction of Démesure and Plan of Betrayal, are productive. Thus, starting from laisse 18, and arcing forward by 91 laisses to 109, and thence to 200, a point 91 laisses from the end at 291 is attained, and a set is formed which counterpoises that in the 66 pattern starting 66 laisses from the beginning (See figure 7.) Laisse 109 is the first of a series of 3 laisses of transition between the first attack of the Saracens and the second when Marsile arrives with his army. These laisses are full of foreboding and presages of doom (it will be recalled that laisse 110, the central one, foretells the death of
Fig. 6. *Démesure*, Death, and Burial.
Prediction of démesure

Prediction of Ganelon's punishment
Prediction of vengeance on Ganelon

Baligant swears vengeance on Charles

Fig. 7. Predictions: Démesure, Vengeance on Ganelon, Baligant's oath of Vengeance.
Roland). In laisse 109 the jongleur comments on the betrayal of Ganelon and gives his audience advance notice of the trial at Aix, where the condemned traitor will be dismembered and his thirty relatives all hung. In laisse 200, the Saracen emir Baligant, when informed of the losses sustained by King Marsile and of the close proximity of Charlemagne's army, swears to make Charles pay with his head for the right hand that Marsile lost in his battle with Roland. In this set of brackets are interwoven the themes of Démesure at 18, Prediction of Vengeance on Ganelon at 109, and Baligant's Oath of Vengeance on Charles at 200.

A set of brackets of 91 laisses beginning at laisse 44, where Ganelon reveals his plan of betrayal, would fall on laisses 135 and 226. In laisse 135, Roland blows the horn for the third time and is heard by Charles and the French. Duc Naimes, warning Charles that Roland is in distress, and openly accusing Ganelon of treachery, shakes the emperor from his somewhat somnolent lethargy. The traitor now stands accused by a member of the king's council, and Charles turns back to aid Roland in the following laisse. In laisse 226, Charles, after having disposed his army for the attack on Baligant, prays to God that he may avenge the death of Roland. Now, with clear and assured face he leads off his army while the olifant, sounding above all the other horns, causes the French to weep for pity of Roland. This set of points would seem to relate the narrative: Plan of Betrayal at 44, Traitor Accused to Charles at 135, Charles Prays for Vengeance at 226. (See figure 8.)

The interlocking of the three sets of points of the 91 pattern may be seen in figure 9; and figure 10 shows that, starting from laisse 18, the series of intervals between the narrative points runs: 26:41:24; 26:41:24; 26:41:24. The choice of brackets of 91 laisses would seem to parallel somewhat the arithmetic reasoning which lead to the choice of the number 66, for, just as 66 represents both the aggregate of 11 and its product when multiplied by 6, so 91 represents both the aggregate of 13 (the next prime after 11) and its product when multiplied by 7 (the next integer after 6). However, none of the points established
Ganelon states plan—
Plan of betrayal

Roland blows third time.
Ganelon's treachery revealed to Charles
Betrayal revealed

Charles prays for vengeance

Fig. 8. Betrayal, Betrayal revealed, Charlemagne's prayer for Vengeance.
Fig. 9. The 91 pattern.
Fig. 10. The 91 pattern (reverse).
for the 91 pattern are divisible, either by 13, or by 7, as was the case with those of the 66 pattern.

Somewhat favoring the probability that a pattern based on brackets of 91 laisses was intended by the poet is the sequence 26:41:24, for, if the two sections of 41 and 24 laisses are grouped together in a larger section of 65 laisses, the sequence of the 91 pattern would be (after 18) 26:65; 26:65; 26:65, the number 26 capable of being expressed as 2 times 13, and the number 65, as 5 times 13 (note that the sum of 2 and 5 equals 7, of necessity the other divisor of 91). This is directly comparable to the 66 pattern, 44:22; 44:22; 44, where the number 44 can be expressed as 4 times 11, and the number 22 as 2 times 11 (note also that the sum of 4 and 2 must equal 6, the alternate divisor of 66).

It will be recalled that the four narrative points of the 66 pattern from which the sets of the 91 pattern are generated are: Prediction of Désesure (18), Plan of Betrayal (44), Action of Désesure (85), and Death of Roland (176). Thus the upper part of the pattern treats the motifs: betrayal, excess, and death. The remaining five narrative points of the 91 pattern would seem to treat the motifs of vengeance and burial in fulfillment of Turpin's prediction at point 132 of the 66 pattern. Thus, beginning with the Prediction of Vengeance on Ganelon in laisse 109, they run: Traitor Accused to Charles (135), Baligant's Oath of Vengeance on Charles (200), Charlemagne's Prayer for Vengeance (226), and the Burial (267).

That vengeance and burial was indeed the primary theme of the 91 pattern is substantiated by the parallels between the two blocks of 41 laisses shown in figure 11. In the first block between the revelation of Ganelon's betrayal and the death of Roland, the Archbishop Turpin, Olivier, and Roland make their last stand and the final destruction of the rearguard is accomplished. In the second block, between Charlemagne's prayer for vengeance and the burial of the heroes, Charlemagne's battle with Baligant takes place and vengeance on the pagans is done. The diagram shows how, laisse after laisse of destruction by the pagans is counterpoised, 91 laisses later, by act after act of vengeance on
the pagans—vengeance performed under the leadership of a now vital and active Charles, who is alert and keen to get the job done.

The most salient area of correspondence occurs in the two

![Diagram](image-url)
Numerical Structures in the Oxford "Roland"

groups of 11 laisses from 166 to 176 and 256 to 267 respectively. In laisse 166, the Archbishop Turpin dies; in 257, his pagan counterpart, the Saracen priest Amboire, is killed by Ogier. In the 10 laisses which follow Turpin’s death are related the last acts of Roland: the lament for Turpin, the killing of the Saracen with the horn, the attempts to break the sword, the tendering of the glove, the confession of sin, the descent of Gabriel and the other angels, and the death and ascent of the soul in Gabriel’s arms. As if in direct answer to this section, 91 laisses further on, the conclusive acts of vengeance on the pagans are performed: Charles engages in personal combat with Baligant, and, with the help of Gabriel, kills the pagan leader. Then the pagans retreat; King Marsile dies of wounds and grief; Charles takes the city of Zaragoza; the pagans are baptized; and finally, in laisse 267, Charles sets out for France, places the horn at Bordeaux, buries the heros at Blaye, and arrives home at Aix for the trial of Ganelon.

A Symbolic Interpretation of the 91 Pattern

It thus becomes apparent that the major function of the 91 pattern was to link the tragedy of Roncevaux, in which Charlemagne’s role was one of rather lethargic nonparticipation, with the vigorous and positive acts by Charles to avenge the defeat. It follows that the question next to be answered will be, In what way do the outstanding numbers of the 91 pattern symbolize vengeance? As in the 66 pattern, the basic numbers were 66, 11, and 6, so here the basic numbers would be 91, 13, and 7, of which 13 was no doubt considered dominant by reason of the fact that it produces 91 as its aggregate and at the same time is a factor of 91 when multiplied by 7.

From the paucity of examples of the usage of the number thirteen in Christian allegory offered by Vincent Hopper, it is to be inferred that the church paid little attention to this number beyond explaining the thirteen signs of the cross made for the New Testament at mass as the sum of ten for the law of the
Old Testament and three for the faith in the Trinity of the New.\textsuperscript{26} Hopper maintains that the unluckiness of thirteen seems to stem from popular superstition and to be entirely disconnected with the science of numbers as developed in theological tradition (p. 131). It would seem, however, that ecclesiastical reticence regarding the evil connotations of a number which, to every Christian mind, would suggest the thirteen who sat at the table of the Last Supper indicates that the number was in fact either so awful, or so holy, that it was enshrouded in an aura of taboo.\textsuperscript{27}

Hopper avers that, in popular superstition, “with every traditional 12, a thirteenth is somehow associated,” and he cites Böklen to the effect that the intercalated thirteenth lunar month, of which the raven was the symbol, was regarded as discordant and unlucky.\textsuperscript{28} The thirteenth person is treated with a marked degree of ambivalence and is variously interpreted as simply the leader of twelve, or as a leader or hero who must sustain an ordeal, or as the traitor who brings about the downfall of the leader. Thus Hopper notes that the Siege Perilous of the \textit{Livre de Lancelot del Lac XXXIX}, “wherein never knight sat that he met not death thereby,” was sanctified but unlucky for the wrong person and, citing Jesse Weston, points to the fact that, in the Modena \textit{Perceval}, the thirteenth chair is in one place reserved for “Nostre Sire” and in another, for the traitor Judas.\textsuperscript{29}

Of import to the interpretation of the number thirteen in connection with the \textit{Roland} are some indications within the context of the Charlemagne matter itself regarding the relation between Charles and the twelve peers. In a manuscript belonging to the monastery of San Millán de la Cogolla on the border between Castille and Navarre, there is recorded a short summary of the story of Roland at Roncevaux. The resumé is known as the \textit{Nota Emilianense}, and was written between 1065 and 1075. Here it is stated that, when Charles entered Spain, he had twelve “nephews” (\textit{duodecim neptis}) and that each of them served the king in his entourage for one month (\textit{et unusquisque singulos menses serbiebat ad regem cum scolicis suis}).\textsuperscript{30}

According to Menéndez-Pidal, analogy of the group of twelve peers with the twelve apostles is established in the Old-Norsé
version of the *Roland*, where it is stated that, when Charles started his expedition to Spain, he instituted the twelve peers to combat the pagans "come Dieu a choisi les apôtres pour répandre sa parole sur le monde" (p. 397). Although here, as in the case of the *Nota Emilianense*, the identification of Charles as the thirteenth is not made overtly, the implication is to be inferred.

Finally, however, in that marvelously strange *Pèlerinage de Charlemagne*, the analogy is developed in full. Here, Charlemagne, on arriving in Jerusalem, enters, together with his twelve peers, the chapel of a monastery where the Lord Jesus Christ and the twelve apostles had sung mass. The twelve chairs are still standing in the chapel, with the thirteenth in the center, carefully sealed. The intrepid Charles walks right up and sits down to rest for a while in the thirteenth chair, and the twelve peers take their places on either side of him. While sitting there, so glorious is their appearance that a Jew who happens to be passing through the chapel is converted on the spot and rushes off to tell the Patriarch of Jerusalem: "I saw 12 counts enter that monastery, and with them the thirteenth; never saw I one so handsome. In my opinion, it must be God himself. He and the 12 apostles have come to visit you" (lines 137–40).31

The evidence of the *Pèlerinage de Charlemagne* would seem sufficient to substantiate an assumption that the inventor of the 91 pattern, inspired by an association which derived ultimately from the popular imagination, chose the number thirteen as a symbol for Charlemagne. Thus, just as Roland was an "eleven" in the 66 pattern, so Charles is a "thirteen" in the 91 pattern, a "thirteen" who is understood most certainly as the leader of the twelve peers, and no doubt also as the Holy Roman Emperor of the West, who was entitled to occupy the thirteenth chair, the Siege Perilous of the leader of Western Christendom. It is also not unlikely that, in addition, the ecclesiastical interpretation was felt to be conveyed in the number, with the result that Charles was conceived as well in the role of bearer to the pagans of the law of the Old Testament and the faith in the Trinity of the New.
Within the context of the Vengeance theme, it could be reasoned that, as the aggregate of 13, the number of the Christian leader and bearer of the law, the number 91 would symbolize the vengeance and Christian triumph accomplished by the leader in the final defeat and baptism of the pagans. The only interpretation of this number known to the writer is that of a reference by Hopper to the effect that, by gematriatic reasoning, the number 91 was equated with both “Amen” and “Jahveh Adonai” in the Hebrew cabals (pp. 63, 64). The probability that such might also have been the understanding of the poet who worked out the 91 pattern is somewhat heightened by the fact that his choice of the number thirteen as the number of Charles was determined mainly by an extra-ecclesiastical interpretation rooted in popular superstition. In any event, the cabalistic understanding of the number 91 would accord rather well with the concept of the conclusive acts of the avenging Charles, as the earthly representative of Jehovah, the avenging God of the Old Testament.

The number seven has been so charged with symbolic meaning throughout the ages of recorded history that it is difficult to hazard a guess as to which traditional sensus a medieval poet would attribute to it. From the time of the earliest astronomical observations of the Babylonians and Chaldeans, as the number of days of duration of each of the four phases of the lunar cycle, as the number of the observable stars in the constellations Pleiades and Bear, as the number of planets known to the ancient world, the number seven has been a sign of both baleful import and sacred significance. By medieval times, the ubiquitous number seven could signify—to enumerate but a few of its qualities—the seven days of creation, the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, the seven petitions of the Lord’s prayer, the seven virtues, the seven deadly sins, the seven beatitudes, the seven liberal arts, the seven steps of wisdom, the seven dolors of the Virgin, the seven tones of the musical scale.32

An interpretation of this number which was no doubt widely known can be traced to Saint Augustine, who calls the number seven the symbol of all numbers and equates it with perfect com-
pleteness. Augustine reasons further that, since, in the number seven, as the sum of three and four, are combined the spiritual qualities of the Triune Godhead and the temporal qualities of the four-squareness of earth, the number represents the sum of the world-soul and the world, and the soul and body of man, and is, therefore, the number of the universe and of man signifying creation, and the creature as opposed to the Creator.\textsuperscript{33}

In view of the Augustinian interpretation, it could be reasoned that the signification of the number 7, as the factor of 91 when multiplied by 13, parallels that of the number 6, as the factor of 66 when multiplied by 11. Thus, just as, in its beneficent aspect, the number 6 signified the perfection of God's creation manifested in Roland the hero, so the number 7 would be equated with the completeness of Charles the creature as opposed to the Creator. And it would follow that, just as the "sixness" of Roland, when multiplied by 11, the number of his démesure, produced the baleful 66, so the "sevenness" of Charles, when multiplied by 13, the number of his election as the leader of Christendom and bearer of the law and the faith, produces the conclusive vengeance implied in 91.

In summary, then, of the outstanding numbers, 91, 13, and 7, the dominant number 13 would most certainly signify Charlemagne, the leader of Christendom, while the number 7 would symbolize the completeness of Charles the creature, the earthly representative of his Creator. Finally, the number 91, as the aggregate of 13 and its product when multiplied by 7, would, from the implications of the context, signify the acts of vengeance and Christian justice accomplished by Charles, and may possibly bear connotations of the finality of the acts of Jahveh Adonai, the avenging God of the Old Testament and the law.

1. Gaston Paris, ed. (La Vie de Saint Alexis, poème du XI\textsuperscript{e} siècle et renouvellements des XII\textsuperscript{e}, XIII\textsuperscript{e} et XIV\textsuperscript{e} siècles avec préfaces, variantes, notes et glossaire, pp. 43–45) cites Mabillon, Acta Ordinis S. Benedicti, saec. III, pp. 378–79: "Ille Tetbaldus Vernonensis, qui multorum gesta sanctorum, sed et sancti Wandregisili, a sua latinitate transtulit atque in communis
linguae usum satis facunde refudit, ac sic ad quandam tinnuli rhythm similitudinem urbanas ex illis cantilenas edidit." Paris translates the Latin passage: "Ce Tedbalt de Vernon qui a traduit de leur latinité les vies de plusieurs saints et entre autres celle de saint Wandrille, les a refondues pour l'usage de la langue commune avec assez d'éloquence, et en a fait d'agréables chansons d'après une sorte de rhythm tintant.'

2. Ramón Menédez-Pidal, *Poesia juglaresca y orígenes de las literaturas románicas*, pp. 38, 39: "Los moralistas del siglo XIII separan como únicos juglares dignos aquellos que se dedican a cantar las gestas de los príncipes y las vidas de los santos." See also p. 291: "Un moralista inglés de entonces reconoció como únicos juglares no pecaminosos a los 'qui cantant gesta principium et vitas sanctorum.'"


5. See the reevaluation of the Arabic and Latin documents by Menédez-Pidal (*La Chanson*, pp. 263–336, 519–32): Mention of the defeat at Roncevaux does not occur in the royal annals until after the year 829 (pp. 276–79), and the name Hruodlandus first appears as that of a participant of the battle of Roncevaux in the A-group manuscripts of Eginhard's *Vita Karoli Magni Imperatoris*, written between 828 and 836 (pp. 279–91). Menéndez-Pidal reasons that the late mention of the name argues for the existence of contemporaneous legendary accounts of Roland's exploits.

6. Menéndez-Pidal (*La Chanson*, p. 34) summarizes and provides a bibliography of the findings of Henri Grégoire which suggest that some of the events of the Baligant episode reflect Guiscard's expedition.

7. Jules Horrent (*La Chanson de Roland dans les littératures française et espagnole au moyen âge*, pp. 292–97), taking into account the earliest record known to him at the time of writing of a pair of brothers or relatives named Roland and Olivier, proposes that an arrangement of the Roncevaux which includes all the matter of the Oxford version except the Baligant episode was made between the last years of the tenth century and circa 1050. Horrent maintains further that this early version of the *Chanson de Roland* was composed in written form from preexisting material by a true artist and that the poet was a cleric of northern France (pp. 306, 307).

Martin de Riquer (*Los Cantares de gesta franceses*, pp. 120–25), basing his argument on the identification of Turoldus as a Norman monk in the service of William the Conqueror, one Turoldus de Fécamp (d. 1098) abbot of Malmsbury and Peterborough, dates before 1098 the composition of the version of Digby-23 incorporating the Baligant story. He establishes the *terminum ante quem* by the mention in the text of drums and camels, which were introduced into Spain by the Almorávides in 1086. See also Ettori Li Gotti, *La Chanson de Roland e i Normanni*. The date proposed by Riquer
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accords well with that established by Grégoire. (See note 6, above.) A critical survey of opinions on the inclusion of the Baligant episode is given by Menéndez-Pidal (La Chanson, pp. 121–29).

8. For L, the most complete manuscript of the Alexis, see La Vie de Saint Alexis, ed C. Storey, p. x. Samaran (La Chanson de Roland: Réproduction phototypique du manuscrit Digby-23, p. 30) dates Digby-23 ca. 1125–50.

9. Menéndez-Pidal (La Chanson, pp. 470–75), in discussing the relations between the art of the jongleur and that of the clergy, remarks that certain modern critics, in trying to imagine what the Roland was like before the Oxford version, have used the Vie de Saint Alexis as a point of comparison. He summarizes their opinion concerning this pre-Oxford Roland, which they consider "était une histoire de martyrs, exprimant le conflit de la 'prouesse' et de la 'sagesse' dans la lutte contre les Païens: l'oeuvre était écrite, ajoutent-ils, dans le style sévère et la rigoureuse forme strophique du Saint Alexis." See Jules Horrent, La Chanson de Roland, p. 302; S. Pellegrini, La Canzone di Rolando, pp. 13–14; Maurice Delbouille, Sur la genèse de la Chanson de Roland, pp. 163–64; Pierre Le Gentil, La Chanson de Roland, p. 86. Menéndez-Pidal disagrees with this position, which posits a regular line and strophic form similar to that of the Alexis, on the ground that regularity of line or laisse would have been unlikely for jongleuresque poetry at such an early period.


11. Eleanor Webster Bulatkin, "The Arithmetic Structure of the Old-French Vie de Saint Alexis," PMLA 74 (1959): p. 495, n. 6. In manuscript L of the Alexis, five lines are missing, each from a different stanza, but the regularity of the stanzas is proof that they once existed. Obviously, the chance of scribal error increases markedly when, as in the case of the epic laisse, stanzic division follows no regular pattern.

12. Ernst Robert Curtius (European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages, p. 501), cites the Alexis, the Vita Leudegariae, and the Carmen de sancto Landberto as works which manifest structural division at the point of the saint's death, but in his analysis of the structure of the Alexis in the article "Zur Interpretation des Alexiusliedes," ZRPH 56 (1936): 113–37, he makes no special usage of the point as the basis for an arithmetic pattern.

13. The pertinent lines of the laisses on which narrative points are established are given in table 1 of the appendix.


15. The Allegorical Interpretation of Genesis II, III, book 1, 2, in Philo with an English Translation, by F. H. Colson and G. H. Whitaker, 1:249: "When, then, Moses says, 'He finished His work on the sixth day,' we must understand him to be adducing not a quantity of days, but a perfect number, namely six, since it is the first that is equal to the sum of its own fractions 1/2, 1/3, and 1/6, and is produced by the multiplication of two unequal
factors, $2 \times 3$: and see, the numbers 2 and 3 have left behind the incorporeal character that belongs to 1, 2 being an image of matter, and being parted and divided as that is, while 3 is the image of a solid body, for the solid is patient of a threefold division."


17. The Greeks, who viewed divisibility as a defect and a falling away from unity, preferred odd numbers and assigned masculine, and therefore good, qualities to them. Even numbers, always divisible, were considered less good and feminine. Thus the odd number five, as the *sum* of the first masculine number three and the first feminine two, was the symbol of marriage in its positive aspects, while the even number six, as the *product* of two times three, was the female symbol of marriage and represented its more negative side. So Plutarch (*Sur l'É de Delphes*, 8:44-46), with reference to a possible interpretation of the mysterious letter E on the temple of Apollo at Delphi, reasons as follows regarding the number five: 'On l'appelle le nombre 'nuptial,' en raison de l'analogie du nombre pair avec le sexe féminin et du nombre impair avec le sexe masculin. En effet, lorsque on divise les nombres en deux parties égales, le nombre pair se partage entièrement, ne laissant pour ainsi dire à l'intérieur de lui-même qu'un espace vide, qui attend d’être comblé, tandis que, si le nombre impair subit la même operation, il y a toujours un reste au milieu après division. Et c’est pourquoi l’impair est plus générateur que l’autre: lorsqu’il lui est uni, il prévaut constamment et n’est jamais dominé, car l’union des deux ne produit jamais un nombre pair, mais toujours un nombre impair. Bien plus, c’est lorsque les nombres de chaque genre—pair et impair—s’adjoignent et s’ajoutent entre eux que la différence devient la plus sensible: aucun nombre pair se combinant avec un autre pair ne peut produire un impair, ni sortir des limites de sa propre nature; faible, et imparfait, le nombre pair est incapable d’engendrer un nombre différent de lui-même. Par contre, les nombres impairs, en s’unissant à d’autres impairs, produisent en foule des nombres pairs, parce que leur vertu génératrice s’exerce en toute circonstance.'

18. Cf. the citation of Curtius (*European Literature*, p. 504), from an anonymous Carolingian poem.

19. It is to be noted that, in the symbolic interpretation of numbers during the Middle Ages, the meaning could remain constant for any decimal position. Thus Hopper remarks that, in his solution of the number 666 of the beast in Revelation, Thomas Aquinas "discusses 6 in relation to unity, 6 in relation to the denarius, and 6 in relation to the hundred. The meaning of 6 itself does not change by reason of its decimal position" (pp. 9, 10).

20. For the Pythagorean interpretation of the number eleven, cf. Hopper, p. 101. In so far as the equation of the number ten with unity, cf. note 19 supra, on the interpretation of decimal positions, and also Hopper, pp. 44 and 45: "Ten and 1 are mystically the same, as are also 100 and 1,000, the 'boundaries' of number."
21. *The City of God*, 15:508: "But in whatever manner the generations of Cain's line are traced downwards, whether it be by first-born sons or by the heirs to the throne, it seems to me that I must by no means omit to notice that, when Lamech had been set down as the seventh from Adam, there were named, in addition, as many of his children as made up this number to eleven, which is the number signifying sin; for 3 sons and one daughter were added. Since, then, the law is symbolized by the number 10—whence that memorable Decalogue—there is no doubt that the number 11, which goes beyond 10, symbolizes the transgression of the law, and consequently sin. The progeny of Adam, then, by Cain the murderer, is completed in the number 11, which symbolizes sin; and this number itself is made up by a woman, as it was by the same sex that, in the beginning, was made of sin by which we all die."

22. Cf., for example, the *Vita Nuova* 29, where Beatrice is explained as a "nine," the number of miracle because three, the square root of nine and its unique factor, is the "Factor" of the Holy Trinity.

23. See note 19, supra, on the interpretation of decimal positions.

24. Line 1437: *Co est li granz dulors por la mort de Rollant*.

25. The so-called "parallel laisses," for which the Roncevaux episode of the Oxford Roland is noted, are held to be characteristic of epic poetry and no doubt originated as a functional outgrowth of oral transmission. Thus, a jongleur, having at his command more than one version of a given episode, might recite two laisses relating exactly the same narrative events but having different assonance. This was probably done for several reasons: in less artistic renditions, perhaps simply from ignorance and the desire on the part of the jongleur to "tell all he knew," but also for the practical purpose of relaxing the progress of the narrative so that even the most inattentive member of the listening audience would not miss important points of the story. The more talented jongleurs no doubt used them also as an exhibition of their virtuosity in making variations on a theme. In the *Chanson de Roland*, they are used with great artistic effect and at times attain the level of lyric interludes, serving now as a pause between actions to intercalate jongleur's comment and premonitory dreams and visions (cf., laisses 66–68, 109–11, 125, 126), now as a means of emphasizing the high points of the narrative, as in the case of the plan of Ganelon (43–45), the horn dispute (83–85), the blowing of the horn (133–35), and breaking of the sword (171–73), and the lament of Charles for Roland (206–10). They are also used to enumerate long chains of similar events, such as the killing of the pagans by the Christian peers (96–103) or the killing of the Christian peers by the pagans (116–21), or for the repeated actions of battle preparations such as the oaths of the pagans to kill Roland (71–78) or the organization of the ten battle corps of Charles (218–25). Naturally, the device permits flexibility in the arrangement of the narrative and when used in conjunction with a number pattern, provides exactly the quantity of "stuffing" necessary
to make the pattern fit. Therefore, although in the 66 pattern the narrative point Démesure fell on laisse 84, since this laisse stands in the center of a group of three which treat identical material, laisse 85 can serve just as well for the same narrative point. The distribution of the parallel laisses in the Oxford Roland is shown in figure 16, where the shaded blocks to the left indicate the parallel groups on which points in the number patterns fall.

26. The only other mention made by Hopper of an ecclesiastical interpretation of the number thirteen to which the poet of the Roland would have had access refers to the association of this number with the Epiphany, because the three Magi came to visit the infant Jesus when he was thirteen days old (p. 131 n.).

27. It is to be noted that Saint Augustine, The City of God, 15:508, in the passage immediately following his disquisition on the number eleven, avoids specific mention of the number thirteen, but implies that the thirteenth person was evil: "But from Adam to Noah in the line of Seth there are 10 generations. And to Noah 3 sons are added, of whom, while one fell into sin, 2 were blessed by their father; so that, if you deduct the reprobate and add the gracious sons to the number you get 12—a number signalized in the case of the patriarchs and of the apostles, and made up of the parts of the number seven multiplied into one another—for 3 times 4 or 4 times 3 give 12."


30. See Menéndez-Pidal (pp. 384-447) for a critical evaluation of the scholarship and implications of the Nota Emilianense, the text of which he gives on page 390. He demonstrates that the usage of the term neptis 'nephews' derives from a misinterpretation as the Spanish word primo 'cousin,' of a hypothetical French or Provençal term primes, derived from the primus in curia, an alternate designation for the Carolingian paladin (p. 396).


32. See Hopper, passim. Cf. Philo, Allegorical Interpretation, p. 151 (1:4): "Nature takes delight in the number seven. Thus there are seven planets, the counterpoise to the uniform movement of the fixed stars. It is in seven stars that the bear reaches completeness, and gives rise not to commerce only but to fellowship and unity among men. The changes of the moon, again, occur by sevens: this is the luminary most sympathetic to earthly matters. And such changes as nature produces in the atmosphere, she effects mainly by the influence of figures dominated by seven. Indeed, all that concerns us mortals has a divine origin drawn from heaven and is for our weal when its movement is ruled by seven. Who does not know that seven months' infants come to birth, while those that have taken a longer time, remaining in the womb eight months, are as a rule still-born? And they say a man becomes a reasoning being during his first seven years, ... and that during his second period of seven years he reaches complete
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for at about the age of fourteen we are able to beget offspring like ourselves. The third period of seven years, again, is the end of growth. Furthermore the unreasoning side of the soul consists of seven parts, five senses, and the organ of speech, and the genital organ. The body again has seven movements, six mechanical, the seventh circular. Seven also are the internal organs, stomach, heart, spleen, liver, lung, two kidneys. Of equal number in like number are the divisions of the body—head, neck, breast, hands, belly, abdomen, feet. And the face...is pierced by seven apertures, by two eyes, and two ears, as many nostrils and the mouth, which make up seven. The excrements are seven—tears, mucus, spittle, seed, superfluities discharged by two ducts, and the sweat that oozes from all over the body. Once again, in diseases the seventh is the most critical day. And the monthly purgings of women extend to seven days.

The power of this number reaches also to the most beneficent of the arts: in grammar, for instance, the best and most effective of the letters, namely the vowels, are seven in number; in music we may fairly call the seven-stringed lyre the best of instruments, because the enharmonic genus, which as we know is the most dignified of those used in melodies is best brought out when that instrument renders it. Sevenfold are the modulations in pronunciation—acute, grave, circumflex, aspirated and unaspirated, long, short. Further, seven is the first number after the perfect number six, and the same in some sort with the number one.'

33. See note 27, supra; and Hopper, p. 84. Cf. Saint Augustine, (Commentary on the Lord's Sermon on the Mount with Seventeen Related Sermons, 2:144-46 [II, 10, 36]), who interprets the first three of the seven petitions of the Lord's Prayer as pertaining to the eternal spiritual world to come and the latter four to the needs of temporal life. In Letter LV, xv, 28 (The Confessions and Letters of St. Augustine, with a Sketch of his Life and Work, 1:312, 313), Augustine remarks: "I regard the number 40 as a fit symbol for this life, because in it the creature (of which the symbolical number is 7) cleaves to the Creator, in whom is revealed that unity of the Trinity which is to be published while time lasts throughout this whole world—a world swept by 4 winds, constituted of 4 elements, and experiencing the changes of 4 seasons of the year." Cf. also The City of God, 11:375, 376, with reference to the symbolic completeness of the number 7: "It is often put for all numbers together, as, 'A just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again'—that is, let him fall never so often, he will not perish. And many such instances are found in the divine authorities, in which the number 7 is, as I said, commonly used to express the whole, or the completeness of anything. And so the Holy Spirit, of whom the Lord says 'He will teach you the truth,' is signified by this number (Isaiah 11:2, Revelation 3:1). In it is the rest of God, the rest His people find in Him. For rest is in the whole, i.e., in perfect completeness, while in the part there is labour."