

SOTERIOLOGY IN EDMUND SPENSER'S
THE FAERIE QUEENE

by

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A thesis submitted to the University of Birmingham

for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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March 2018

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ABSTRACT

The thesis demonstrates the extent to which the sixteenth-century allegorical epic poem, *The Faerie Queene*, engages with early modern theories of salvation. Much has been written about Spenser's consideration of theological ideas in Book I and this has prompted scholars to speculate about the poet's own doctrinal inclinations. However, little has been written about the ways in which the remaining books in the poem also explore Christian ideas of atonement, grace and damnation. This study advances Spenserian scholarship by stressing the soteriological dimension of books II, III, IV and VI. It considers how the poem's doctrinal ambiguity would have meant that Spenser's readers would have been able to interpret the poem in terms of the different schools of thought on the conditionality, or otherwise, of election and reprobation. As the thesis suggests, these particular books were alive to the doctrinal disagreements of the period, and explore the complex theological positions and divisions that existed at the time. By shedding light on the religious tenor of these remaining books, the study has implications for our sense of how the poem would have prompted sixteenth-century readers to reflect on the means of their own salvation.

For Jane, Georgina-May, Eleanor-Rose, Mum, Dad and Molly

Acknowledgements

In finally reaching the end of this project, it is right and proper that I should acknowledge those people who have played a major part in ensuring its completion. Firstly, I owe a great debt of thanks to my doctoral supervisors - Dr Gillian Wright and Dr Hugh Adlington. For many years they have been a source of guidance, encouraging me to ask the right questions in relation to Spenser's allegory and prompting me, every step of the way, to think through the logic of my ideas with increasing precision. In addition, when the trials and tribulations of life have threatened to get in the way of my research they have been unfailingly supportive and sympathetic; moreover, they have been wholly generous in their time regularly meeting for supervisions at the end of a busy working day. Given the time it has taken to complete it, I hope that they feel the project was worth their labour.

Secondly, I would like to thank my wonderful parents for their unwavering support and belief that I could complete this thesis. Their generosity, love and encouragement has meant so much. Regrettably Dad did not get to see the completion of my research, which has been a matter of great sadness as I know he would have been very proud. Nevertheless, it is in honour of his memory that I have made the final push.

I would also like to thank Molly who patiently and devotedly sat beside me throughout these many years eagerly waiting for me to take her for a walk. Her love and companionship have been very special.

I would also like to thank my daughters - Georgina-May and Eleanor-Rose. For so much of their childhood I have been preoccupied with Spenser's allegory and matters of sixteenth-century theology when, really, I should have devoted my time to them. *Sorry girls; Daddy's back now!*

Finally, I must pay the greatest debt of thanks to my wife, Jane. She has been the voice of reason and perspective throughout. Without her unfailing generosity, love and patience, none of this would have been possible. It is down to her support and encouragement that the thesis finds itself completed.

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Abbreviations and Conventions

Unless otherwise indicated, all references to *The Faerie Queene* are taken from: Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, rev. 2nd edition, ed. A. C. Hamilton (Harlow: Pearson Educational, 2007).

All references to Spenser's shorter poems are taken from: Edmund Spenser, *The Shorter Poems*, ed. by Richard McCabe (London: Penguin, 1999).

All references to the Oxford English Dictionary are to the online edition, as are the references to the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography.

All biblical quotations, unless otherwise stated, are taken from the online version of the 1587 Geneva Bible, which is reproduced on the Bible in English 990-1970 (LION) website.

Abbreviations of Periodicals and Reference Works

<i>ELH</i>	<i>English Literary History</i>
<i>ELR</i>	<i>English Literary Renaissance</i>
<i>HLQ</i>	<i>Huntington Library Quarterly</i>
<i>JBS</i>	<i>Journal of British Studies</i>
<i>MLR</i>	<i>Modern Language Review</i>
<i>MLS</i>	<i>Modern Language Studies</i>
<i>MP</i>	<i>Modern Philology</i>
<i>N&Q</i>	<i>Notes and Queries</i>
<i>ODNB</i>	<i>Oxford Dictionary National Biography</i>
<i>OED</i>	<i>Oxford English Dictionary</i>
<i>P&P</i>	<i>Past and Present</i>
<i>PMLA</i>	<i>Publications of the Modern Language Association</i>
<i>RES</i>	<i>Review of English Studies</i>
<i>SEL</i>	<i>Studies in English Literature 1500-1900</i>
<i>SIP</i>	<i>Studies in Philology</i>

Scholarly Conventions

When quoting from early modern texts I have retained contemporary spelling and punctuation, as well as capitalisation. I have also silently standardised the use of long 's', and expanded any contractions and abbreviations within square brackets. Moreover, I have followed early modern capitalisation in titles in addition to spelling. Throughout I have used the MHRA Style Guide.

Introduction

Spenser and Religion — Time for a re-evaluation

The subject of this thesis is soteriology in Edmund Spenser's epic poem, *The Faerie Queene*. The term soteriology derives from the Greek term, σωτήρία, which means salvation. In Christian theology, soteriology is the doctrine of human nature as it is affected by the Fall and mankind's sinfulness, which is the antecedent of Christ's work and eventual sacrifice. It is also the doctrine of man's final destiny, and is concerned with ideas of atonement, grace and damnation.¹ The thesis examines the extent to which Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* engages with early modern notions of soteriology. Spenser grew up and came of age, poetically and politically, during the turbulent inaugural decades in the history of the Church of England. This was an age of great conflict between religious sectaries and the established religious and political orders, and the theological tensions and uncertainties that existed during the time underpin much of Spenser's work, not least in the poet's literary treatment of the Christian doctrine of salvation. The question of one's salvation, and how it might be granted or achieved, was the basis of much doctrinal debate during the 1580s and 1590s, as Reformation historians have demonstrated.² Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, which was written during these decades, is acutely alive to these debates, and refracts the complex positions and divisions that existed at the time.

The broader subject of Spenser and religion, of which soteriology is a part, has been the focus of much previous scholarship. Traditionally, critics have tended to follow a similar

¹ 'Soteriology' in *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 3rd edn., ed. by F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 1520.

² See: Peter Lake, *Moderate Puritans and the Elizabethan Church* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982); Nicholas Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists: The Rise of English Arminianism c.1590-1640* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987); Peter White, *Predestination, Policy and Polemic: Conflict and Consensus in the English Church from the Reformation to the Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

path by seeking to establish Spenser's doctrinal inclinations and theological influences through close analysis of key passages from his work, thereby positioning the poet on a doctrinal spectrum between Catholicism and more extreme forms of Protestantism. The picture of Spenser that has emerged is often contradictory. Critics have argued in favour of a Protestant Spenser, a Calvinist Spenser, an Augustinian Spenser as well as a conservative Spenser.³ Anthea Hume, John N. King and Paul McLane have stressed the Protestantism of Spenser's writing. Hume and McLane have focused on the anti-Catholic sentiment of *The Shepheardes Calender* and 'The Legend of Holiness', whilst King has considered how the poet's syncretic habit of drawing upon a range of iconographical devices from English Protestant art and literature position him at the centre of a Reformation literary tradition. Richard Mallette and Richard McCabe have stressed the Calvinist dimension of *The Faerie Queene*, whilst Sean Kane has identified the philosophical debts that Spenser owes to St Augustine. Virgil Whitaker and Harold Weatherby have suggested that Spenser's form of Protestantism was distinctly conservative given his seeming sacramentalism, as well as his representations of the ascetic ideals of monasticism, and the relationship between grace and good works.⁴ Such conservatism would not have been unexpected in a period in which the old

³ For a Protestant view of Spenser see: Anthea Hume, *Edmund Spenser: Protestant Poet* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); John N. King, *Spenser's Poetry and the Reformation Tradition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980) and Paul E. McLane, *Spenser's 'Shepheardes Calender': A Study in Elizabethan Allegory* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1961). For a Calvinistic reading of Spenser see: Andrew Hadfield, 'Spenser and Religion - Yet Again', *SEL*, 51 (2011), 21-46; Richard Mallette, *Spenser and the Discourses of Reformation England* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1997); Richard McCabe, *Pillars of Eternity: Time and Providence in 'The Faerie Queene'* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1982). For an Augustinian Spenser see: Sean Kane, *Spenser's Moral Allegory* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989). For a more conservative Protestant view of Spenser see: Virgil Whitaker, *The Religious Basis of Spenser's Thought* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1950); Harold L. Weatherby, 'Holy Things', *ELR*, 29 (1999), 422-42; Harold L. Weatherby, 'Spenser and the Sacraments', *Reformation*, 6 (2002), 119-23. See also Naseeb Shaheen, *Biblical References in 'The Faerie Queene'* (Memphis, TN: Memphis State University, 1976).

⁴ In this context, by the term 'conservative', I refer to a form of Protestantism, in which some individuals still valued, or adhered to, some of the traditions and beliefs of Catholicism, such as its sacramentalism. I use the term to denote a doctrinal attitude towards salvation and the sacraments, rather than a political support of Rome. For similar uses of the term, see Patrick Collinson, *Richard Bancroft and Elizabethan Anti-Puritanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 6, 14, 20, 25, 32, 40-54, ; Christopher Haigh, *Elizabeth I* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2013), pp. 43 and 219; Peter E. McCullough, *Sermons at Court: Politics and Religion in Elizabethan and Jacobean Preaching* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 3, 55-62, 96; Nicholas Tyacke, *Aspects of English Protestantism c.1530-1700* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), pp. 1-60.

religion coexisted with the new. What a survey of these critical works reveals is how divided critics are in their interpretations of Spenser's religious views and identity.

In his life of Spenser, Andrew Hadfield presents a complex, nuanced portrait of the poet's religious identity, arguing that Spenser was less dogmatic in his theological beliefs than critics have previously suggested. He acknowledges that Spenser was a Protestant, in as much as the poet was hostile to the papacy and the power of Rome, although this might have been motivated by politics as much as it was by religion; however, in a departure from the general consensus, Hadfield identifies instances when 'Spenser's narrator speaks in a manner diametrically opposed to the concerns of reformers, certainly in its radical Edwardian form, and his words [often seem to] read like a strong defence of traditional religion'.⁵ Hadfield asserts that as much as Spenser recognised the need for ecclesiastical and theological change, the poet believed that the Reformation had brought 'disorder and chaos', which 'engulfs and overturns order and hierarchy'. He suggests that, for Spenser, the 'traditional pre-Reformation religion is the locus of stability, security and culture'. Through close readings of *The Shepheardes Calender* and 'The Legend of Holiness', Hadfield shows how Spenser 'confronts his readers with the reality of the past as a living entity that has to be acknowledged and absorbed, not simply discarded'.⁶ In part, this meant thinking through which pre-Reformation religious beliefs and practices should be retained, as well as lost.

In stressing Spenser's religious tolerance, Andrew Hadfield makes much of the poet's connections with people of differing religious views, and in particular, his links with suspected, or confirmed Catholics. Hadfield demonstrates how the poet would have been familiar, and on friendly terms, with a number of English as well as Irish Catholics, in addition to Protestants, especially during his time in Ireland. For instance, he cites how

⁵ Andrew Hadfield, *Edmund Spenser: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 225.

⁶ Hadfield, *Edmund Spenser*, pp. 225, 259.

Ludowick Bryskett (c.1546-1612), the author of *Discourse of Ciuil Life*, with whom Spenser was associated in Ireland, was known to mix in Catholic circles having come from an Italian family.⁷ Moreover, Hadfield identifies how Spenser's neighbours at Kilcolman, with whom he would have been acquainted, the English-born Thomas Fleetwood, Arthur Hyde and Sir Edward Fitton, were all accused of being Catholics. However, it is worth noting that Spenser's association with English Catholics whilst in Ireland was not unusual for the period. Given the political situation and geography, the English tended to stick together, whatever their religious inclinations; they often had to as a matter of necessity. Therefore, we must treat Hadfield's claims with a degree of caution; living near to Catholics, and being acquainted with them in a professional capacity does not necessarily make one sympathetic to Catholicism. Perhaps more significant is the way in which Hadfield identifies how Spenser had links with high-ranking English Catholics in England; in 1596, for instance, the poet produced a commendatory verse to celebrate the betrothals of Elizabeth and Katherine, the two daughters of Edward Somerset, fourth earl of Worcester, to Henry Guldeford and William Peter — both of whom were Catholics. In addition to this, Hadfield also draws attention to the fact that Spenser wrote a dedicatory sonnet to preface Lewis Lewkenor's translation of Gaspar Contarini's *The Commonwealth and Gouernment of Venice* (1599). Lewkenor (1560-1627), a relative of the Sidney family, was a Catholic who had left England in 1580 fearing persecution because of his faith.⁸ Hadfield argues that the fact that Spenser not only had connections with Protestants such as the Sidneys and Leicester, but also had strong links with a number of Catholics, such as Bryskett, during his time in Ireland, perhaps indicates that Spenser was not an extreme Protestant, especially in his middle and later years. That he was

⁷ Hadfield, *Edmund Spenser*, p. 179.

⁸ Hadfield, *Edmund Spenser*, pp. 211, 294.

prepared to establish friendships with suspected, and confirmed, Catholics may suggest how in practice Spenser saw religion in broad terms.

One might argue that it is this religious openness in Spenser, to which Hadfield draws attention, which is responsible for the doctrinal ambiguity that has led to so many different theological interpretations of the poet's work. Indeed, Hadfield goes on to argue that the fact that Spenser's second wife, Elizabeth Boyle, came from a staunch Protestant family, and his daughter, Katherine, went to live with her husband in Bandon, a renowned Protestant town, yet both his sons, Peregrine and Sylvanus, went on to become Catholics later in their lives is further evidence, if such evidence is needed, that the family household, over which Spenser presided, must have been a religiously tolerant one. This may be true, although again one should be cautious about making such assumptions. Living in a Protestant town does not necessarily make one a Protestant; equally, it is possible that Peregrine and Sylvanus's apostasy might have been an act of rebellion against a strict father, which in itself tells us little about Spenser's own religious beliefs or identity.⁹

So far, in briefly surveying the critical landscape of Spenser and religion, I have shown scholarship's tendency to concentrate on seeking to identify the poet's theological position. In practice, this has resulted in a range of interpretations. In a departure from this psycho-biographical type of criticism, Darryl Gless has presented an alternative approach to the subject of Spenser and religion.¹⁰ Rather than speculating on the poet's theology and intentions, Gless has focused on Spenser's early modern readers, considering the ways in which they might have interpreted the poet's work through a soteriological lens. In doing so, he identifies how readers might have responded to the allusive richness and complexity of the poem's religious allegory. Gless's approach seems more beneficial than solely seeking to

⁹ Hadfield, *Edmund Spenser*, p. 222.

¹⁰ Darryl Gless, *Interpretation and Theology in Spenser* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

define Spenser's precise position on particular theological issues, which, at best, will always be a speculative exercise for critics. He concentrates on Book I of *The Faerie Queene*, providing a range of contexts from which sixteenth-century readers may have constructed theologically-grounded interpretations of the 'Legend of Holiness'. In doing so, he theorises about sixteenth-century reading practices, as well as highlighting the extent to which Book I of Spenser's epic poem is receptive to a range of doctrinal readings.¹¹

As Lisa Jardine and Anthony Grafton have noted, early modern readers, such as those considered by Gless, 'did not passively receive but rather actively reinterpreted their texts'.¹² The pair have shown that 'scholarly reading' was 'always goal-orientated — an active, rather than a passive pursuit'. It anticipated 'some other outcome of reading beyond accumulation of information; and that envisaged outcome then shaped the relationship between reader and text'. Jardine and Grafton have gone on to demonstrate how the form of 'purposeful reading', which sixteenth-century readers engaged in, was often 'conducted under conditions of strenuous attentiveness' and 'intended to *give rise to something else*'.¹³ Spenser alludes to this purposeful mode of study in the 'Letter to Raleigh' when he outlines how readers of *The Faerie Queene* might benefit or 'profite' from the poem: 'The generall end therefore of all the

¹¹ For further details of early modern reading habits in England see: Jenny Anderson and Elizabeth Sauer, eds., *Books and Readers in Early Modern England* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002); H. S. Bennett, *English Books and their Readers: 1475-1640*, 3 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1952-70); Heidi Brayman Hackel, *Reading Material in Early Modern England: Print, Gender and Literacy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Anne Ferry, *The Art of Naming* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1988); Lisa Jardine and Anthony Grafton, "'Studied for Action": How Gabriel Harvey Read His Livy', *P&P*, 129 (1990), 30-78; John N. King, ed., *Tudor Books and Readers: Materiality and the Construction of Meaning* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Eugene R. Kintgen, *Reading in Tudor England* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh, 1996); Robin Myers, Michael Harris and Giles Mandelbrote, eds., *Owners, Annotators and the Signs of Reading* (London: British Library, 2005); Annabel Patterson, *Censorship and Interpretation: The Conditions of Reading and Writing in Early Modern England* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984); Jason Scott-Warren, *Sir John Harrington and the Book as Gift* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Kevin Sharpe, *Reading Revolutions: The Politics of Reading in Early Modern England* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000); Kevin Sharpe and Steven N. Zwicker, eds., *Reading, Society, and Politics in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Debora K. Shuger, *Habits of Thought in the English Renaissance* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997); Helen Smith and Louise Wilson, eds., *Renaissance Paratexts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

¹² Jardine and Grafton, 'How Gabriel Harvey Read His Livy', p. 30.

¹³ Jardine and Grafton, 'How Gabriel Harvey Read His Livy', pp. 30, 31, 32, 30.

booke is to fashion a gentleman or noble person in vertuous and gentle discipline'.¹⁴

Considering what we know about the transactional nature of sixteenth-century reading practices, and given how urgent the subject of salvation was to people at that time, it is possible to imagine how *The Faerie Queene* could have prompted a number of Spenser's theologically-inclined readers to think through the means of their own salvation. In particular, as we will later see, for some conforming Protestants Spenser's allegory might have challenged their thinking and invited them to reassess their beliefs regarding one's personal redemption and salvation.

My research builds on Gless's by exploring the ways in which early modern readers may have construed soteriologically-based interpretations of Spenser's work. However, whereas Gless focuses almost exclusively on 'The Legend of Holiness', I examine the later books of *The Faerie Queene*, and in doing so, contest Gless's claim that the poem resists theologically-inclined readings in books II-VI.¹⁵ My methodology follows Gless in as much as I also consider how biblical and printed religious sources, such as homilies, treatises and sermons, would have created theological contexts from which diversely informed readers could have constructed soteriologically-based readings of the text. However, my research differs from Gless's by the way in which I explore how some of the less obvious books in the poem and their associated virtues might have been the focus of soteriological readings. To that end, I consider the extent to which sixteenth-century readers may have read soteriological significance into the Spenserian virtues of temperance and courtesy, as they are represented in books II and VI of *The Faerie Queene*, as well as the concept of honour as it is represented through the figure of Timias. Moreover, I examine how readers might have interpreted Spenser's treatment of chance and fortune in Book VI through a theological lens. My research

¹⁴ *Faerie Queene*, p. 714.

¹⁵ Gless, *Interpretation and Theology in Spenser*, pp. 195-6.

advances the field of Spenser studies by inviting critics to consider how, given how important the subject of salvation was to people at the time, it is likely that these other books of *The Faerie Queene* would have prompted many sixteenth-century readers to think through the means of their salvation, and in many ways, challenge their ideas of redemption and deliverance.

Spenser's Different Types of Readers

Given that the thesis focuses on the interpretative activity of Spenser's sixteenth-century readers, I now turn my attention to those readers and, for the purpose of framing the argument, consider what their religious beliefs and assumptions would have been, and how their spiritual convictions might have impacted upon their reading of *The Faerie Queene*. In doing so, I also introduce and outline some of the early modern doctrinal ideas and concepts that will figure throughout my discussion on Spenser and religion.

As Reformation historians have demonstrated, the pervading theology of English Protestantism during the period of Elizabeth's reign was Calvinism — a system of ideas originally formulated by the writing of the Frenchman, John Calvin (1509-64), and later modified by the French Calvinist, Theodore Beza (1519-1605).¹⁶ Given this fact, one can assume that a large number of Spenser's English readers in the 1590s would have been Protestants who either wholeheartedly supported, or at least, acquiesced in the key principles of Calvinism. Central to their faith would have been a belief in the Calvinist notion of divine

¹⁶ The following references are useful sources of information about English Calvinism: Patrick Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1967); Christopher Haigh, *English Reformations: Religion, Politics and Society under the Tudors* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993); Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, *Theology of the English Reformers* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1965); Peter Lake, *Moderate Protestants and the Elizabethan Church*; Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Reformation: Europe's House Divided 1490-1700* (London: Penguin, 2003); Peter Marshall, *Heretics and Believers: A History of the English Reformation* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2017); Alistair E. McGrath, *Reformation Thought: An Introduction*, 4th edition (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012); Alec Ryrie, *Being Protestant in Reformation Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Nicholas Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists*; Alexandra Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

predestination — double and absolute (which assumed greater prominence under Beza), whereby God's children are predestined to eternal life in Heaven without reference to foreseen merit, and the reprobate are predestined to damnation. It is also likely that they would have subscribed, in varying degrees, to the Calvinist doctrine that man is incapable of securing his own salvation because of his total depravity brought about by the Fall. Calvinists held that because human free will is in bondage to sin, man is dependent on God's assistance for redemption and deliverance from iniquity; this assistance is realised through the ransom of Christ, although contentiously for Calvin's critics, the redeemer's death does not save everyone, just the chosen few — the elect — whose calling, according to supralapsarians, was predestined before the Fall. The selection of the elect was inscrutable and due to the mysteries of the divine. Allied to these ideas is the belief that those who are predestined for salvation, are justified, or made righteous in God's eyes, through faith alone which is imbued by divine grace.¹⁷ Calvinists believed that election is not conditional upon good works, as deeds are insufficient to atone for man's sinfulness and his will is too tarnished to produce works of any merit. Virtuous deeds are just the fruits of one's justification — a sign of one's election, although according to Calvinists works can also be deceptive. They believed that it was possible for the reprobate to perform works which were seemingly good, and a sign of one's election, but in reality they could not be used to earn or purchase one's salvation. Faith through grace is the cornerstone of one's eternal salvation.

One can assume that a large number of Spenser's Protestant readers would have acquiesced in the principles of Calvinism given the general consensus of faith in Calvinist doctrine among orthodox and conforming English Protestants during the latter part of the

¹⁷ 'The Reformation' in *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, pp. 1374-5; Gless, *Interpretation and Theology in Spenser*, pp. 1-25; Hughes, *Theology of the English Reformers*, pp. 54-118; Alistair E. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification*, 2nd edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); McGrath, *Reformation Thought*, pp. 115-40, 163-206; Lake, *Moderate Protestants and the Elizabethan Church*; Isabel Rivers, *Classical and Christian Ideas in English Renaissance Poetry*, 2nd edition (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 1994), pp. 106-24; White, *Predestination, Policy and Polemic*, pp. 13-139.

sixteenth century. As Tyacke notes, Calvinism centred on a belief in ‘divine predestination, both double and absolute, whereby man’s destiny, either election to Heaven or reprobation to Hell, is not conditioned by faith but depends instead on the will of God’.¹⁸ The widespread acceptance of Calvinism as a theological system of belief among English Protestants during the period was, in part, due to the efforts of the Church of England, whose *booke of common prayer* (1559), *Book of Homilies* (1559), *52 Injunctions* (1559) and the *Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion* (1563) provided a codification of Calvinist principles. In addition to these official publications, a knowledge and approbation of Calvinist tenets would have come, as Nicholas Tyacke notes, from the popularity of the Geneva Bible, which was first published in 1560, and the marginal notes of which contain a wealth of Calvinist comments on Scripture.¹⁹ These notes would have been a source of doctrinal guidance and edification for many readers, directing them towards a Calvinist view of life. Similar Calvinist marginalia could be found in the Bishops’ Bible of 1568 — the officially authorised version of the scriptures in English at the time. Calvinist doctrine was also found in the predestinarian catechism that was bound up in many of the Geneva Bibles that were printed at this time.²⁰ Whether these bibles, marginalia and catechisms were read and discussed in public as part of organised worship, or were read in private by those wealthy enough to own a copy, they would have had a profound doctrinal influence on their audience. Given that the culture was saturated with these ideas, one can see how Calvinism came to be accepted by the majority of English Protestants. Indeed, according to Izaak Walton, who purports to be quoting the comments of an Italian

¹⁸ Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists*, pp. 1-2.

¹⁹ Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists*, p. 2.

²⁰ Between 1579 and 1615, thirty-nine quarto editions of the Geneva Bible, printed in England, had a predestinarian catechism bound with them. It was also common for such catechisms to be published separately. The purpose of the catechism was to promote further a belief in the doctrine of Calvinism. For instance see: Anon., *The doctrine of the Bible: or, Rules of Discipline. Briefelie gathered through the whole course of the Scripture, by waie of questions and answers*. (London: Thomas Pauier, 1608, STC / 2268:05), sigs Q9^v -Q10^v.

visitor to London in the 1580s, the conformity to Calvinism in the city at this time was such that ‘the very women and shopkeepers were able to judge of predestination’.²¹

In addition to mainstream Protestants, Spenser might also have had a number of Puritan readers. However, when considering this, it is important to acknowledge the problems associated with using such a contentious term. As Michael Winship has noted, Puritanism is a ‘convenient shorthand term’, but one that is ‘unavoidably a contextual, imprecise term, not an objective one, a term to use carefully’.²² In part, the difficulty with using the term is because Puritanism was not a monolithic thing; the term did not define one single position or set of doctrinal assumptions. Therefore, when I refer to Spenser’s Puritan readers, I use the word Puritan loosely to group together a subset of readers, who in reality would probably have occupied quite varied positions on a spectrum of doctrinal belief.

At this point, it is worth pausing to attempt to unpack what is meant by the terms Puritan and Puritanism so one can formulate a more accurate sense of who those Puritan Spenserian readers, in their varying degrees, might have been. Puritanism is the name given to what was seen as being a particularly intense and zealous form of early modern Protestantism. Patrick Collinson described Puritans as being ‘the hotter sort of Protestants’.²³ The term Puritan was first coined around 1564, and was used as a pejorative against the nonconformist clergy within the newly formed Elizabethan church. In a number of respects, Puritans, or the godly as they referred to themselves, shared many of the same beliefs as, what I will term, moderate Protestants — they rejected papal authority, and affirmed the Lutheran and Calvinist notions of *sola fide*, *sola gratia* and *sola scriptura*. Moreover, they repudiated the penitential system of Roman Catholicism — the mass, confession, absolution, penance, indulgences,

²¹ Reprinted in Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists*, p. 2.

²² Michael Winship, ‘Were there any Puritans in New England?’, *New England Quarterly*, 74 (2001), 118-38, pp. 137-8.

²³ Patrick Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1967), p. 27.

pilgrimage, prayer to the saints, prayer for the dead, and purgatory. However, where Puritans differed from more moderate Protestants was in the former's dissatisfaction with the *via media* of the Elizabethan Settlement of 1559. Puritans believed that the Settlement did not go far enough to purify the Church of England of its late medieval Catholicism. To their minds, the Church 'still contained too much of the old popery'.²⁴ In particular, the Puritans objected to the Church's retention of a formal liturgy, and the use of traditional clerical vestments, especially the surplice. This tension formed the basis of the vestiarian controversy, which as John Craig notes, was to do with more than just a debate over vestments as the name would have us think:

the initial confrontation arose as much over a range of niggling instances of nonconformity as it did on this one issue [of vestments], as godly ministers, impatient of reform, decided various matters within their own parishes.

Zealous ministers discreetly omitted parts of the liturgy in order to leave more time for the sermon and the singing of metrical psalms. Some omitted the sign of the cross in baptism or the use of a ring at weddings; others abandoned the use of the organ or bowing at the name of Jesus. Above all, they rejected the use of the white surplice and clerical cap.²⁵

Things came to a head in March 1566 when thirty-seven London ministers were suspended for refusing to wear the prescribed vestments. In addition to this, Laurence Humphrey (1525-89) was removed as Dean of Christ Church, Oxford. Throughout Elizabeth's reign, and

²⁴ John Coffey and Paul C. H. Lim, 'Introduction' in *The Cambridge Companion to Puritanism*, ed. by John Coffey and Paul C. H. Lim (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 1-15, pp. 2-3.

²⁵ John Craig, 'The Growth of English Puritanism' in *The Cambridge Companion to Puritanism*, pp. 34-47, p. 37.

beyond, as Craig notes, the use of the surplice ‘remained a constant test of conformity’, so much so that churchwardens in some archdeaconries became skilled ‘at responding to ecclesiastical articles in ways that sought to protect their Puritan ministers’.²⁶

The way in which the church authorities responded to the vestiarian controversy only succeeded in bringing the issue of power and discipline in the English Church more sharply into relief. The situation exacerbated divisions, and encouraged the emergence of more radical forms of Puritanism. We first see this in 1570 when Edward Dering (1540-76) delivered a scathing sermon in front of the Queen criticising the ecclesiastical structure of the church, and with it, Elizabeth as its leader. At around the same time, as Craig notes, Thomas Cartwright (c. 1534-1603), the then newly elected Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity at Cambridge gave a series of lectures on the Acts of the Apostles in which he disputed the biblical basis for archbishops and bishops calling instead for a presbyterian model of church governance consisting of doctors, preachers, elders and deacons as based on the Calvinist churches of Europe.²⁷ As a result, Cartwright was deprived of his chair, and thereafter became the champion of this new form of Puritanism. After attempts to legislate church reform were vetoed by the Queen in the parliament of 1571, John Field (1544-88) and Thomas Wilcox (1549-1608), two young London ministers, published their radical manifesto, *An Admonition to Parliament*, a year later. In it, they joined Cartwright in arguing in favour of a presbyterian polity believing that it would finally rid the church of its popery and bring it into line with the Reformed models abroad. As a result of the publication, and the controversy that ensued, both Field and Wilcox were imprisoned in Newgate for a year. However, as Craig notes, not only ‘had the Admonitioners [by which we refer to Cartwright as well as Field and Wilcox] directly

²⁶ Craig, ‘The Growth of English Puritanism’, p. 38.

²⁷ Craig, ‘The Growth of English Puritanism’, pp. 38-9.

attacked the English episcopate, their advocacy of 'discipline' [had also] exposed a fault-line between radical Presbyterians and more moderate Puritans'.²⁸

This fault-line became even more pronounced with the emergence of other sub-groups of radical Puritans calling for further reform. As David R. Como notes, in the 1570s we see the inception of separatists, led initially by Robert Browne (c.1550-1633), and later by Henry Barrow (1550-93), John Greenwood (c.1560-93) and Francis Johnson (c.1562 -1617). The separatists denounced the Church of England, and what they saw as its popish garments and liturgy as well as its corrupt hierarchy. Striving for greater purity, its members split from the Church of England and set up their own clandestine congregations with their own ministers, discipline and church covenants. Such was the state's intolerance of the separatists, or Brownists, as they were often termed, that by the 1590s many had begun to migrate to the Netherlands so as to avoid repression.²⁹ Further fragmentation came in the form of John Smyth (d.1612) and his anabaptists. Smyth believed that even the sacrament of infant baptism was corrupt and needed reform along the lines of adult baptism for believers. As Como acknowledges, the rise of the anabaptists was potentially more harmful and damaging than the emergence of the separatists: 'While it began as a logical extension of the separatist impulse, the extremity of the Anabaptist turn should not be underestimated, involving as it did a decision to repudiate not merely the English church, but centuries of Christian tradition and one of the most critical rituals of the early modern social fabric'. Finally, at the start of the seventeenth century, we see the emergence of Antinomianism, which at its core, maintained the belief that the Protestant preoccupation with works as a reflection of one's election compromised the notion of God's free grace; it forced believers back to a 'works

²⁸ Craig, 'The Growth of English Puritanism', p. 40.

²⁹ David R. Como, 'Radical Puritanism, c. 1558-1660', in *The Cambridge Companion to Puritanism*, pp. 241-58, p. 245.

righteousness and legalism' whereby they must adhere to the moral law. As Como acknowledges, the antinomians 'adopted a series of extreme theological opinions, which marked them out as dangerous and exposed them to charges of heresy'.³⁰

Trying to define the term Puritan, for the purposes of imagining the different types of readers Spenser might have had, is problematic. The word is often used as shorthand term to describe a range of doctrinal beliefs that differed in tone and intensity. Coffey and Lim have sought to describe Puritanism as being a 'set of positions on the spectrum of the English Church, a spectrum that ranged from church papists and high churchmen, through conformist Calvinists, to moderate Puritans and [finally] radical Puritans' — the last of which I take to refer to Separatists, Presbyterians, Anabaptists and Antinomians.³¹ This way of locating Puritanism and its different strands in relation to other forms of English Protestantism is useful. As Collinson has noted, when thinking about Puritanism it is also worth remembering that it 'represented not so much an insurgency against the Reformed Church of England as a vigorous and growing tendency within it'.³² Moreover, for the purposes of this study, it is also important to remember that the chief interlocutors of the radical Puritans were not just central members of the ecclesiastical establishment, but other godly men and women, whose sense of things was often coloured by their confessional allegiances and hostilities.³³

Whilst it is likely that a number of the more radical Puritans, such as the Brownists or the Antinomians might have disapproved of reading *The Faerie Queene* because they believed that the godly should exercise discipline and only devote one's spare time to reading the scriptures or other devotional literature, it is possible that Spenser might have had a number of

³⁰ Como, 'Radical Puritanism, c. 1558-1660', pp. 248, 250.

³¹ Coffey and Lim, 'Introduction' in *The Cambridge Companion to Puritanism*, p. 5.

³² Patrick Collinson, 'Antipuritanism' in *The Cambridge Companion to Puritanism*, pp. 19-33, p. 22.

³³ Como, 'Radical Puritanism, c. 1558-1660', p. 245.

more moderate Puritan readers.³⁴ Those who did read the poem would have found much to interest them, not least Book I's rejection of popish abuses and idolatry, as well as its emphasis on the importance of baptism and the redemptive powers of divine grace.

It is likely that in addition to mainstream, as well as godly, Protestant readers, Spenser would also have attracted a number of readers from the other end of the Protestant spectrum. Reformation historians have shown that during the 1580s and 1590s there was a degree of resistance to the Calvinist hegemony, especially among some theologians on the subject of predestination. It is feasible that a number of Spenser's readers could have been among the anti-Calvinists, as Nicholas Tyacke refers to them.

It is worth pausing for a moment to consider the ideas of the anti-Calvinists, as their doctrinal beliefs will form the basis of the interpretation of several passages from *The Faerie Queene* later in the thesis. Two of the most notable anti-Calvinists in the 1580s and 90s were the Cambridge theologians, William Barrett (c.1561-1630) and Peter Baro (1534-99). Barrett was chaplain of Gonville and Caius College, and Baro, a French Protestant exile, was Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity. Other prominent anti-Calvinists included the Cambridge divine John Overall (bap.1561-1619), as well as the Spanish ex-monk, Antonio del Corro (1527-91), who taught at Oxford from about 1579 to 1586. During the mid-1590s Barrett and Baro were at the centre of a Cambridge controversy concerning the assurance and certainty of justification among the elect.³⁵ The pair opposed the view put forward by Puritan divines, such as the Master of St John's College, William Whitaker (1547/8-95), that we can ever be sure of our own salvation through faith alone.³⁶ Moreover, they questioned the supralapsarian position of the Calvinists, in which God is supposed, prior to the Fall, to have elected his

³⁴ Como, 'Radical Puritanism, c. 1558-1660', pp. 241-58.

³⁵ For a more detailed consideration of the Cambridge controversy of the 1580s and 1590s see: Lake, *Moderate Puritans and the Elizabethan Church*, pp. 201-43; Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists*, pp. 29-58.

³⁶ Lake, *Moderate Puritans and the Elizabethan Church*, p. 201.

children to eternal life and the reprobate to damnation. Barrett and Baro held that this deterministic notion provided no scope for man to take responsibility for his own salvation. They came down on the side of the sublapsarians, who believed in the antecedent and consequent will of God. The two divines maintained that election and reprobation are conditional, and that Christ died for all of mankind, but that God, with his foreseeing knowledge of the future, predestined those for salvation whom he knew would, in the future, be virtuous and have faith, and importantly for Baro and Barrett, persevere in that faith even when it was tested.³⁷ For Whitaker, such theories were anathema and ‘nothing more than a slander against the divine will’.³⁸ Equally, Baro and Barrett believed that God predestined to reprobation those whom he knew would fall victim to habitual sinfulness. Baro also argued that because man was made after God’s image, it stands that he is framed for salvation and that there are no exceptions to this. Moreover, he compared God to an earthly governor who adapts his laws to the capacities of his subjects.

As a result of their contentious beliefs, which were diametrically opposed to the Calvinist points of doctrine published in the Church of England’s *Articles*, Barrett and Baro were accused of papistry and Pelagianism, and were eventually driven out of Cambridge by the heads of the colleges, though not before their outspoken views had forced the Archbishop of Canterbury, John Whitgift (1530/1-1604), to publish the Lambeth Articles in 1595.³⁹ As Peter Lake notes, the attempts to codify canons of Calvinist orthodoxy via the Lambeth Articles merely served to provoke further opposition from the anti-Calvinists, as well as increase their solidarity and self-consciousness.⁴⁰ The result was that anti-Calvinists continued

³⁷ Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists*, p. 30.

³⁸ Lake, *Moderate Puritans and the Elizabethan Church*, p. 203.

³⁹ Lake, *Moderate Puritans and the Elizabethan Church*, pp. 218-42; Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists*, pp. 30-6.

⁴⁰ Lake, *Moderate Puritans and the Elizabethan Church*, pp. 239-40.

to pose problems for the heads of college right up to the end of the 1590s, as demonstrated by John Overall's clash with Cambridge officials in 1599 over his belief that the perseverance of the justified was conditional upon repentance for sin.⁴¹

What emerges from the Cambridge controversies of the 1590s, as well as the case of Peter Corro in Oxford during the 1580s, is a sense that at the time when Spenser's work was published, there was resistance by a number of Protestants to Calvinist ideas of predestination and the certitude of justification through faith alone. We have seen how this opposition came from theologians such as Barrett and Baro, who used the pulpit to express their anti-Calvinist beliefs. However, given the dogmatic nature of Calvinist determinism, which would have seemed unappealing to those sympathetic to a more conservative form of Protestantism, it is feasible that anti-Calvinist feelings would have been harboured in other sections of society too, and not just by theologians such as Baro. The likelihood is that, for a number of Protestants, however much one tried to follow the official doctrines of the Church of England, the practicalities and assumptions involved in following the Calvinist creed were often problematic, especially in relation to the notion that works held no soteriological currency. Many would have been loyal to Protestantism in as much as they had a hatred of Roman Catholicism as a political force, and disapproved of what they saw as its corruption and popish abuses, and outwardly followed the prescribed public forms of orthodox worship laid down by the Church of England. However, within the private sphere of their homes, a number of Protestants would probably have questioned the rigidity of Calvinism's supralapsarianism favouring instead a sublapsarian position which, when aligned with a belief in God's antecedent and consequent will, allowed scope for conditional election and, with it, personal responsibility for one's salvation. The Reformation historians Christopher Haigh, Alexandra Walsham and Judith Maltby have all demonstrated the extent to which even though there were

⁴¹ Lake, *Moderate Puritans and the Elizabethan Church*, p. 239-40; Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists*, pp. 35-40.

outward, public expressions of conformity towards the Church's devotional practices and soteriological beliefs, there existed a private sense of dissatisfaction among some sections of society.⁴² As Haigh has noted, 'it is likely that most of those who lived in Tudor England obeyed a monarch's new laws rather than swallowed a preacher's new message'.⁴³ Walsham makes a similar point about outward displays of conformity when she writes, 'Some dissenters made only the slightest gesture of compliance with the requirements of the Tudor or Stuart state; others almost completely disguised themselves as orthodox members of their parish communities, outwardly behaving in accordance with the various Acts of Uniformity but inwardly espousing a completely different set of beliefs [. . .] Individuals moved easily between the various degrees of separation and detachment from the established Church, adjusting their behaviour in accordance with changing circumstances'.⁴⁴ It is in this spirit, with man as an ethical being bound by his moral actions before the eyes of a foreseeing God and his saviour, Christ, who sacrificed his life for all not just the few, that anti-Calvinist readers of Spenser would have interpreted *The Faerie Queene*, seeing the events of the poem as representative of the ways in which man's life can be seen as a psychomachic struggle for honour and holiness fraught with trials and adversity.

Finally, as Hadfield has demonstrated in relation to Richard Verstegan's reading of 'Mother Hubberds Tale', Spenser is also known to have had a number of Catholic readers.⁴⁵

⁴² Christopher Haigh, *English Reformations: Religion, Politics and Society under the Tudors* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 251-67; Judith Maltby, *Prayer Book and People in Elizabethan and Early Stuart England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 1-30, 36-76; Alexandra Walsham, *Church Papists: Catholicism, Conformity and Confessional Polemic in Early Modern England* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 1993), chps 1-4; Alexandra Walsham, "'Yielding to the Extremity of the Time": Conformity, Orthodoxy and the Post-Reformation Catholic Community' in *Conformity and Orthodoxy in the English Church, c.1560-1660*, ed. by Peter Lake and Michael Questier (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2000), 211-36, pp. 211-7; Walsham, *Charitable Hatred*, pp. 60-1, 188-202, 257-8.

⁴³ Haigh, *English Reformations*, p. 21.

⁴⁴ Walsham, *Charitable Hatred*, p. 188.

⁴⁵ Hadfield, *Edmund Spenser*, pp. 265-6, 272.

On this subject, Jackson C. Boswell and William Wells have shown how the Catholic writer, Thomas Lodge (1558-1625), makes a number of allusions to Spenser's writing. Wells shows how Lodge alludes to the November eclogue of *The Shepheardes Calender* in 'Trvths Complaint ouer England', whilst Boswell identifies allusions to the Februarie, April and November eclogues in 'Eloga Prima Demades Damon'.⁴⁶ Moreover, Ray Heffner et al. have demonstrated how Spenser was also read by the Catholic courtier, Sir Kenelm Digby (1603-55), who wrote an extended paper on the poet, the manuscript of which was found in Digby's papers.⁴⁷ Had such readers read *The Faerie Queene*, then undoubtedly, they would have rejected the unfavourable depiction of Catholicism in Book I, and, unless they found it a disincentive to progress further, might have focused on those books which are less critical of the old faith, namely books II and VI (as will be shown below), which prompt readers to think about a merit-based soteriological economy that was in line with Catholic views of salvation.

Spenser's Use of Allegory

Having outlined the spectrum of doctrinal beliefs that Spenser's readers are likely to have held, I now turn my attention to the poet's allegorical method, as it is through an engagement with the different layers of the poem's allegory that sixteenth-century readers would have constructed a religious interpretation of *The Faerie Queene*.

⁴⁶ On the subject of Spenser's Catholic readers, the following three articles are of particular significance as they identify a range of early readers (some of whom were Catholics) who were familiar with the poet's work as demonstrated by the use of Spenserian allusions in their own writing: Jackson C. Boswell, 'Spenser Allusions: In the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries Addenda', *SIP*, 109 (2012), i-xiii, 353-583; Ray Heffner et al., 'Spenser Allusions: In the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries: Part II: 1626-1700', *SIP*, 69 (1972), 173 - 351; Alison Shell, *Catholicism, Controversy and the English Literary Imagination, 1558-1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); William Wells (ed.), 'Spenser Allusions: In the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries', *SIP*, 68 (1971), i-vii, 1-172. On Lodge's allusion to the November eclogue, see Wells, p. 6. For Lodge's allusions to the Februarie and April eclogues, see Boswell, p. 355.

⁴⁷ Ray Heffner et al., 'Spenser Allusions: In the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries: Part II: 1626-1700', pp. 211-4.

At the beginning of the ‘Letter to Raleigh’ appended to the 1590 edition of *The Faerie Queene*, Edmund Spenser refers to his epic poem as a ‘continued Allegory, or darke conceit’, the purpose of which is to ‘fashion a gentleman or noble person in vertuous and gentle discipline’.⁴⁸ This was not the first time that the phrase ‘continued allegory’ had appeared in print. It had previously been used in Abraham Fleming’s theological treatise, *The Diamond of Deuotion*, published in 1581, where in the section entitled ‘The Eleuenth Flowre Called a Holie Hymne’, the author writes of ‘A petition to God vnder a continued allegorie, for a renewed life’.⁴⁹ The phrase had also been used by Gabriel Harvey’s younger brother, the astrologer John Harvey in *A Discoursiue Probleme Concerning Prophetes* (1588) when he refers to a ‘varietie of obscure metaphors, & other tropes of continued Allegories’.⁵⁰ It is possible that Spenser may have come across the term, or been reminded of it in Harvey’s astrological treatise. As Hadfield notes, we know that John Harvey was living in the Saffron Walden area in the early 1580s when Spenser was probably staying with Gabriel.⁵¹ To appreciate what Spenser meant by the term, ‘continued allegory’, as well as comprehend what his readers would have understood by the phrase, and how it might have shaped their assumptions of the poem, we must first turn to the rhetorical handbooks of antiquity, as it is through the classical authors that many Christian humanists of the sixteenth century would have sharpened their sense of what ἀλληγορία was.

In *De Oratore*, which underwent a resurgence of popularity during the Renaissance, not least in England during the 1580s and 1590s, Cicero describes allegory, or *immutatio*, as it was also known, as a trope used in a speech consisting in the use of a ‘chain of words linked

⁴⁸ *Faerie Queene*, p. 714.

⁴⁹ Abraham Fleming, *The Diamond of Deuotion Cut and Squared into Sixe Seuerall Points* (London, 1581), sig. N1^r.

⁵⁰ John Harvey, *A Discoursiue Probleme Concerning Prophetes* (London, 1588), sig. G3^r.

⁵¹ Hadfield, *Edmund Spenser: A Life*, p. 125.

together, so that something other than what is said has to be understood.[. . .] Something resembling the real thing is taken, and the words that properly belong to it are then [. . .] applied metaphorically to the other thing'.⁵² Cicero's description of allegory suggests that it is a type of extended metaphor whose sense is developed over several words and phrases. The anonymous author of the *Rhetorica Ad Herennium* describes allegory in similar terms, stating that it is a trope which consists of a localised grouping of metaphors, utilised for stylistic amplification as part of a legislative or forensic oration. He writes that it is 'a manner of speech denoting one thing by the letter of the words, but another by their meaning. It assumes three aspects: comparison, argument and contrast. [. . .] It operates through a comparison when a number of metaphors originating in a similarity in the mode of expression are set together'.⁵³ The Roman rhetorician, Quintilian, defines the trope using similar language: 'Allegory, which people translate *inversio*, presents one thing by its words and either (1) a different or (2) sometimes even a contrary thing by its sense'.⁵⁴ The tendency of allegory to expose polysemy in language is a feature highlighted by the etymology of the word, which derives from the Greek *allos* ('other') and *agoreuo* ('to speak openly' or 'to speak openly in the agorà, or market place'); quite literally, it means to speak something 'other'. As Clara Mucci notes, allegories, like puns, 'dispel the notion that our words mean what they say'.⁵⁵

Primarily, Spenser's readers would have identified the trope of allegory as a developed and protracted form, in which the element of comparison is applied to a whole text. To this end they would have been influenced by their reading of medieval writers of allegory, such as

⁵² Cicero, *De Oratore: Book III*, trans. by Harris Rackham (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1942), p. 131.

⁵³ [Cicero], *Rhetorica Ad Herennium*, trans. by Harry Caplan (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1954), p. 345.

⁵⁴ Quintilian, *The Orator's Education: Books I - II*, trans. by Donald A. Russell (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), p. 451.

⁵⁵ Clara Mucci, 'Allegory', in *A Companion to English Renaissance Literature and Culture*, ed. by Michael Hattaway (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2000), p. 298.

Langland. In *The Arte of English Poesie* (1589), George Puttenham (1529-90/91) reflects this broadening of the term allegory when he writes: ‘the inuersion of sence in one single worde is by the figure *metaphore* [. . .] and this manner of inuersion extending to whole and large speaches, it maketh the figure *allegorie* to be called a long and perpetuall *Metaphore*’. To illustrate his point, he describes Virgil’s *Eclogues* as a ‘full allegoric’.⁵⁶ It is in this sense, as a ‘perpetuall’, or sustained trope, extended to a ‘whole’ poem that Spenser’s readers would have interpreted the phrase ‘continued allegory’ as it appears in the ‘Letter to Raleigh’.

When Spenser refers to *The Faerie Queene* as a ‘darke conceit’ in the ‘Letter to Raleigh’, he draws attention to what can be the problematic nature of allegory for many readers — the seemingly obscure and unintelligible nature of its meaning.⁵⁷ Very often readers of allegory find themselves caught up in a search for a code that will unlock a one-to-one correspondence between a fictional event, such as Artegall’s conquest of Grantorto in Book V, and a single referent, such as the defeat of the Spanish Armada.⁵⁸ Such attempts at interpretation can be successful; surviving Spenserian marginalia has demonstrated the extent to which some readers were skilled at decoding aspects of the poem’s political allegory.⁵⁹ However, the experience of searching for a single meaning can often leave the reader feeling frustrated and confused when that meaning remains obscure. Moreover, as Spenser notes, the practice of allegorical interpretation can also lead the reader into misreadings. In the ‘Letter to

⁵⁶ Gavin Alexander, ed., *Sidney’s ‘The Defence of Poesy’ and Selected Renaissance Literary Criticism* (London: Penguin, 2004), pp. 159-60.

⁵⁷ *Faerie Queene*, p. 714.

⁵⁸ Burrow, *Edmund Spenser*, p. 43.

⁵⁹ See for example Sir Thomas Posthumous Hoby’s (1566-1644) annotated copy of the 1590 edition of *The Faerie Queene* in the Bodleian Library, Oxford: F 2.62 Linc. See also: Bart Van Es, ‘The Life of John Dixon, *The Faerie Queene*’s First Annotator’, *N&Q*, 48 (2001), 239-61.

Raleigh', he refers to readers' 'misconstructions' and 'how doubtfully all Allegories may be construed'.⁶⁰

Classical rhetoricians were often cautious about the efficacy of allegory for this reason. Cicero, in the third book of his *De Oratore*, recognises that *immutatio* 'is a valuable stylistic ornament' but warns that 'care must be taken to avoid obscurity' as it can confuse the listener / reader.⁶¹ Equally, Quintilian writes, 'When an Allegory is too obscure, however, we call it an Enigma. It is a fault in my opinion, seeing that Lucidity is a virtue'.⁶² A number of early modern rhetoricians shared the concerns raised by their ancient predecessors. In *The Arte of Rhetorique* (1553) Thomas Wilson recognises the extent to which an allegory may amplify a point for rhetorical effect, but warns of those 'darcke deuised sentences', and how 'misticall wise menne, and Poeticall Clerkes, will speake nothyng but quaint prouerbes, and blynd allegories, delityng muche in their awne darkenesse, especially, when none can tell what thei dooe saie'.⁶³ For Wilson, as well as the ancients, care must be taken to ensure that allegories do not alienate the readers through their obscurity, which serves to do nothing else but consolidate the superiority of their authors.

Gordon Teskey has claimed that much of the difficulty associated with reading allegory comes from the fact that 'narrative and meaning are at variance with each other'.⁶⁴ There is an ongoing 'struggle between a represented conceptual order and a representing narrative action, between static ideas and dynamic agents', and it is through this conflict that a

⁶⁰ *Faerie Queene*, p. 714.

⁶¹ Cicero, *De Oratore: Book III*, p. 131.

⁶² Quintilian, *The Orator's Education: Books I - II*, p. 455.

⁶³ Thomas Wilson, *The Arte of Rhetorique* (London: Richard Grafton, 1553), sig. 94^v & 87^v.

⁶⁴ Gordon Teskey, *Allegory and Violence* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996), p. 33.

‘pervading mystery’ is created.⁶⁵ However, as Isabel MacCaffrey has identified, context is the key to interpretation. She argues that:

Allegory is a *continued* metaphor and its continuousness offers us, as readers, our chief means of access to the unstated meanings it makes visible. Darkness is a consequence of the shrouded metaphorical tenor that lies behind the veil. But we are gradually enabled to make out the meaning because events and personages stand in relation to each other.⁶⁶

MacCaffrey suggests that by the reader identifying patterns of signification, and seeing how aspects of the narrative are interconnected, an allegorical meaning of the text is illuminated. It is by looking at the allegory in a broad, panoramic sense that we begin to understand the significance of its component parts. For Spenser’s theologically-inclined readers, allegory’s ability to conceal truths from all but the most worthy might be analogous to the way in which the mysteries of God’s will remains obscured to those who are not touched by God’s love.

As Spenser’s more skilled readers would have recognised, allegory is not a single mode of writing that requires a particular code to be broken in order for its one meaning to be visible. It is, as Burrow notes, a ‘hybrid of several different types of signifying’. And this ‘hybrid form is usually less concerned with making single relations between particular stories and particular meanings than with extending and exploring complex ideas’.⁶⁷ We see this demonstrated in the allegorical poems of the medieval period, when a poet takes a particular

⁶⁵ Teskey, *Allegory and Violence*, p. 33.

⁶⁶ Isabel MacCaffrey, *Spenser’s Allegory: The Anatomy of Imagination* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), p. 46.

⁶⁷ Burrow, *Edmund Spenser*, p. 43.

concept or idea and then explores its ambiguity, such as in *Roman de la Rose*, *Divine Comedy*, *Piers Plowman*, and *Pearl*. In *Piers Plowman*, Langland often focuses on an ambiguous term such as *meed*, which can mean *reward* or *bribe*, and then generates stories that play upon its different aspects.⁶⁸ At the end of the poem, Langland has not so much pinned down the meaning of this term, as extended and stretched it into something more complex. This type of allegory challenges the language, pushing its limits, enriching it.⁶⁹ We see this in *The Faerie Queene* by the way in which Spenser takes a particular virtue in each book, such as temperance, justice or courtesy, and then explores and extends that concept's breadth of signification through the different strands of narrative. In doing so, Spenser challenges the reader's assumptions, inviting us to join him in redefining what the virtue or concept stands for. Very often, the experience of reading allegory this way is moralistic and relative; as MacCaffrey notes, the 'referential power' of allegory is that it is 'turned directly upon us, the readers, urging introspection into our own ways of knowing'.⁷⁰

On the subject of reading Spenser's allegory in a religious light, it is likely that a number of the poet's theologically-minded readers would have been well versed in the art of allegorical interpretation through their practice of biblical exegesis. Biblical commentaries were ubiquitous during the period, and demonstrated how it was possible to extract sophisticated meanings from seemingly simple scriptural passages and stories. Perhaps one of the most notable commentaries was the patristic gloss on the Latin Vulgate, the *Glossa Ordinaria*, which was the standard commentary on the Scriptures in Western Europe. In particular, the commentaries would have demonstrated how there were four exegetical senses

⁶⁸ William Langland, *The Vision of Piers Plowman: A Complete Edition of the B-Text*, ed. by A. V. C. Schmidt (Dent: London, 1978).

⁶⁹ Burrow, *Edmund Spenser*, p.43.

⁷⁰ MacCaffrey, *Spenser's Allegory*, p. 45.

or levels of interpretation.⁷¹ The first is the literal sense, in which it is believed that the events of the Bible constitute historical truth. The second was known as the allegorical or typological sense. This refers to the belief that the events of the Old Testament foreshadow the events in the life of Christ as recorded in the New Testament. For instance, Jonah may be seen as a type of Christ in as much as he sacrificed his life for his ship's crew in the same way that Christ gave his life for the salvation of the world (Jonah 1.12, Matthew 20.28, Mark 10.45, John 1.29, Timothy 2.6); moreover his emergence from the whale's stomach, and death on the third day prefigures Jesus's escape from the tomb on the third day (Jonah 2.11, Matthew 17.23, 20.19, 28.1-10). Similarly, Abraham's sacrifice of a ram instead of his son, Isaac, foreshadows the crucifixion of Christ, who died so that man could have eternal life (Genesis 22.13, Matthew 27.32-56). The third exegetical level of interpretation is the moral or tropological sense; this relates to what one ought to do — it draws out the moral instruction that may be gleaned from the text. Finally, the fourth sense is the anagogical or eschatological sense, which refers to where one is heading on Judgement Day. Some Biblical passages from the Old Testament are receptive to all four types of interpretation — for instance, the Israelites' crossing of the Red Sea, and the destruction of the Pharaoh's army when it attempts to follow them (Exodus 14). On a literal level, it represents a historical truth; typologically, it foreshadows the baptism of Christ in the desert; on a moral level, it celebrates the triumph of righteousness and virtue over sinfulness, and finally in an anagogical sense, through its depiction of the Israelites' search for the Promised Land, it corresponds to the righteous man's entry into Jerusalem, and Heaven.⁷² The fourfold method featured in a number of Protestant

⁷¹ For relevant critical sources and authorities in relation to the fourfold method see: Beryl Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*, 3rd edition (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983); Frances M. Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Christopher Ocker, *Biblical Poetics before Humanism and Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

⁷² Gordon Teskey, 'Allegory' in *Spenser Encyclopedia*, ed. by A. C. Hamilton and others (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), p. 19.

and Roman Catholic commentaries of the period although it is worth noting that it is treated rather differently by different kinds of commentators. Therefore, one must be cautious in suggesting how Spenser's readers might have brought their knowledge of it to bear when reading *The Faerie Queene*.

Those readers who were familiar with the fourfold method would have met with differing degrees of success when applying it to *The Faerie Queene*. As Carol Kaske notes, the anagogical sense is rare in the poem.⁷³ There are only two passages that are straightforward anagogy. The first is the 'New Jerusalem' which Redcrosse spies from the Mount of Contemplation:

Faire knight (quoth he) *Hierusalem* that is,
The new *Hierusalem*, that God has built
For those to dwell in, that are chosen his,
His chosen people purg'd from sinful guilt,
With pretious blood, which cruelly was spilt
On cursed tree, of that vnspotted lam,
That for the sinnes of all the world was kilt:
Now are they Saints all in that Citty sam,
More dear vnto their God, then younglings to their dam.

(I.x.57)

⁷³ Carol Kaske, *Spenser and Biblical Poetics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999), p. 15.

The second is in the final stanza of the *Mutabilitie Cantos*:

Then gin I thinke on that which Nature sayd,
Of that same time when no more *Change* shall be,
But stedfast rest of all things firmly stayd
Vpon the pillours of Eternity,
That is contrayr to *Mutabilitie*:
For, all that moueth, doth in *Change* delight:
But thence-forth all shall rest eternally
With Him that is the God of Sabbaoth hight:
O that great Sabbaoth God, graunt me that Sabaoths sight.

(VII.viii.2)

Both instances may be described as anagogical in as much as they depict where a Christian should be heading on the Day of Judgement; they represent the Christian hope for redemption and eternal salvation at God's side. There are other passages in *The Faerie Queene* that one might describe as anagogical. For instance, the vision of the Graces on Mount Acidale, which Calidore spies at VI.x may be interpreted as anagogical, despite the classical elements of the scene, by the way in which it represents a transcendent glimpse of eternal beauty and truth, which one may assimilate into a Christian world view.

The moral or tropological sense is ubiquitous throughout *The Faerie Queene*, and, as Burrow demonstrates, Spenser often uses personification allegory to present, among other

things, those inner demons, which must be avoided or overcome.⁷⁴ In the Argument to IV.vii, we discover that the grotesque sylvan character with pendulous ears and an enormous red nose who ravishes Amoret is 'lust'. Similarly, at I.ix.41, Redcrosse encounters Despaire, who very nearly metamorphoses into the knight's own destructive despair. Spenser externalises those inner forces which threaten to destroy the character's moral and spiritual well-being. As Kaske notes, even though personification allegory is rare in the Bible with the exception of Proverbs 9 and brief tropes elsewhere, sixteenth-century readers would have been adept at interpreting personified figures in a tropological sense and would have been familiar with the likes of Sapience and Wisdom from medieval and Romanist exegetes. That said, the stricter form of Protestants often had a mistrust of personification allegory despite the fact that allegory has biblical precedents, and, in part, may have mistrusted the entire project of *The Faerie Queene* because of this.⁷⁵

The typological sense, known to Spenser's readers by its medieval term, *figura*, would have been popular with Reformers given that St Paul himself had used typological exegesis to read the prophecies of Christ into events of Old Testament history (see Galatians 4.21-31), and Church Fathers, such as St Augustine, used it as a way of reconciling the history, prophecy, and laws of the Hebrew Scriptures with the narratives and teachings of the Christian Scriptures. Readers of typology often looked for narratives that corresponded to salvation history, e.g. Creation, Fall, the adversity of Israel, Redemption, the Second Coming, and Last Things. *The Faerie Queene* contains a number of instances of the typological sense. For instance, there are at least four Christ figures who play the part of saviour in the sense of specific representations of biblical passages: Arthur's rescue of Redcrosse from Orgoglio's dungeon (I.viii) reenacts the Harrowing of Hell alluded to in 2 Thessalonians 2.8 and

⁷⁴ Burrow, *Edmund Spenser*, p. 45.

⁷⁵ Kaske, *Spenser and Biblical Poetics*, p. 15.

Revelation 12, 17 and 19;⁷⁶ Redcrosse's rescue of the King and Queen of Eden from their prison by killing the dragon in three days recalls Christ's death (I.xi), the Harrowing of Hell, and Resurrection; Redcrosse's betrothal to Una (I.xii.37-40) prefigures the Marriage of the Lamb to the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21.2); and Guyon's experience of undergoing a three-day temptation in Mammon's Cave, and then lying unconscious, seemingly dead, at the mouth of that cave guarded by an angel alludes to both Christ's temptation in the wilderness and the Resurrection (II.vii.65-viii.4, Matthew 4.11, 28.1-8). Similarly, a number of readers might have interpreted Mordant's drinking of Acrasia's wine as an allegorical re-enactment of the Fall, whilst the bloodstain on Ruddymane's hand, which cannot be removed, may have symbolised how man's Original Sin is bequeathed to future generations of sinners (II.i.35-II.ii.11).

That Spenser's early readers would have been able to apply these different theological modes of reading to *The Faerie Queene*, whilst also being able to interpret the poem through national and political spectacles, as well as read it alongside the romances of Tasso and Ariosto or the philosophy of Aristotle, is, in part, due to the dexterity of readers at the time; however, it is also due to the allegorical richness and protean aspect of the poem itself.

Types of Biblical Allusions

In considering the religious contexts from which sixteenth-century readers may have constructed soteriologically-grounded interpretations of *The Faerie Queene*, I draw heavily from a number of biblical and theological sources. With regards to the Bible, I quote primarily from the Psalms, Proverbs, Gospels and the Pauline epistles of the 1587 Geneva Bible. In terms of theological sources, I make extensive use of the Church of England's official

⁷⁶ It is worth recognising that some Puritans readers might have been of the opinion that the Harrowing was insufficiently grounded in Scripture and therefore may not have attached such significance to Arthur's rescue of Redcrosse.

doctrinal publications, the *Homilies* (1547) and the *Articles* (published by Richard Jugge & John Cawood, 1571). In addition to this, I also quote from Calvin's commentaries on the epistles of St Paul, as well as the work of William Perkins and Richard Hooker, and on occasions, treatises and sermons by lesser known theologians.

The Psalms feature prominently throughout the thesis because during the period they were arguably the best-known book of the Bible, and the cornerstone of the spiritual imagination. It is therefore likely that for a number of Spenser's theologically-inclined readers, the Psalms would have provided an important context for a soteriological reading of *The Faerie Queene*. As Carol Kaske notes, the Psalms were 'drummed into everyone's consciousness in almost every church service'. In the *booke of common prayer* (published by Richard Jugge & John Cawood, 1559), the services of Morning and Evening Prayer required the recitation of the whole psalter each month, along with the Old Testament once a year, and the New Testament thrice.⁷⁷ As Kaske notes, 'The Book of Psalms dramatises the possibility of a biblical poetics'.⁷⁹ Spenser, himself, it is believed, made a translation of the seven Penitential Psalms and they figure among his lost works.⁸⁰ The significance of the Psalms in the religious and literary culture of the time meant that it is likely that they would have provided an important frame of reference for those readers wishing to make a theologically-based interpretation of Spenser's epic poem, especially given their treatment of man's

⁷⁷ Kaske, *Spenser and Biblical Poetics*, p. 9.

⁷⁸ In the period that Spenser was writing, there were three authorised versions of the Psalms for use in church: the Bishops', a metrical version by Sternhold and Hopkins, which later appeared in the Geneva Bible, and Coverdale's, which (following a few amendments) was incorporated into the Great Bible and then the *booke of common prayer*. In addition to the Sternhold and Hopkins version, the Psalms were also translated into metre in whole or in part by a number of important poets including Wyatt, Surrey, Gascoigne, Sir Philip and Mary Sidney, Campion, and Bacon. For the significance of the Book of Psalms in early modern religious and literary culture, see: Linda Phyllis Austern, Kari Boyd McBride & David L. Orvis, *Psalms in the Early Modern World* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2011); Hannibal Hamlin, *Psalms Culture and Early Modern English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

⁷⁹ Kaske, *Spenser and Biblical Poetics*, pp. 12-3.

⁸⁰ Joseph L. Black & Lisa Celovsky, "'Lost Works", Suppositious Pieces, and Continuations' in *The Oxford Handbook of Edmund Spenser*, ed. by R. A. McCabe (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 354.

relationship with God, and in particular, their consideration of concepts such as divine providentialism (23, 103, 105, 119), God's mercy (32, 33, 57, 61-63), the transitoriness of life (39, 90), one's hope of redemption (33, 103, 113, 130), man's trust in God (27, 31, 71), as well as one's fear of God's rejection and abandonment (43, 60, 74). All of these soteriological notions which one finds in the Book of Psalms are also the subject of consideration in Spenser's allegory.

My use of the Gospels, and to a lesser extent, the Proverbs, is also based on their popularity during the period. Spenser's readers would have been particularly familiar with the Gospels given that they were recited in Church three times during the course of the year. Moreover, the epistles of St Paul had a particular significance for mainstream Protestants because of their supposed endorsement of the doctrine of *sola fide*. It is likely that the Proverbs would have been less familiar to Spenser's readers given the fact that the Old Testament was only read out in Church once a year. Nevertheless, they would have been relevant to the readers of *The Faerie Queene* given their consideration of moral and ethical questions relating to human life and right conduct, as well as their focus on worldly wisdom as the goal of one's religious life — ideas which lie at the heart of Spenser's epic.

Methodology

In my consideration of Spenser and religion, I have chosen not to concentrate on those works, which have already been the focus of critical attention with respect to this topic, or those works whose religious dimension is more political than soteriological. Consequently I do not concern myself with either Book I of *The Faerie Queene*, or *The Shepheardes Calender*. Darryl Gless, Richard Mallette, and Anthea Hume, in addition to a number of other critics, have already demonstrated the extent to which 'The Legend of Holiness' is receptive to a

range of soteriological readings.⁸¹ Similarly, Hume, McLane and Whitaker have identified the religio-political dimension of *The Shepheardes Calender*.⁸² In contrast, I have focused on those other books of *The Faerie Queene*, which offer scope for fresh enquires in this area.

In providing a new approach to the subject of soteriology in the writing of Spenser, my study concerns itself with books II-VI of *The Faerie Queene*. In the first chapter, I consider the extent to which Book II is open to a range of theological interpretations by the way in which Guyon's efforts to achieve a state of temperance are analogous to the Christian gentleman's quest for control of the passions, and with it a sense of righteousness. In chapter two, I offer a detailed consideration of the figure of Timias, who has been relatively neglected in Spenserian scholarship. I suggest that, in many ways, Timias is central to the poem's soteriological allegory given that he is presented as both a recipient of grace, as well as, through his dealings with Arthur, an agent of providential grace. Moreover, I provide a detailed consideration of his associated virtue, honour, and consider the ways in which sixteenth-century theologically-inclined readers might have come to think of honour in religious terms, as opposed to purely secular ones. In chapters three and four I provide a fresh approach to reading Book VI. In chapter three I argue that it is possible to interpret Spenser's conception of courtesy in the light of Christian ideas of charity, mercy and gentleness, whilst in chapter four I focus on Spenser's use of *fortune* and *chance* in Book VI and suggest that his use of these terms encourages a providentialist reading of 'The Legend of Courtesy'. By the end of the thesis, I hope to have demonstrated how, for some of Spenser's sixteenth-century readers, *The Faerie Queene* would have been alive to, and engaged with, the soteriological debates of the period. At the heart of my argument is the idea that theologically-inclined

⁸¹ See Gless, *Interpretation and Theology in Spenser*; Mallette, *Spenser and the Discourses of Reformation England*; Hume, *Edmund Spenser: Protestant Poet*.

⁸² See Hume, *Edmund Spenser: Protestant Poet*; McLane, *Spenser's 'Shepheardes Calender'*, Whitaker, *The Religious Basis of Spenser's Thought*.

readers would have found many passages of interest and significance in some of the less obvious books of the poem (books II, III, IV and VI), which thereby shows how the poem, as a whole, is more engaged with soteriological issues than previously imagined. As I will show, this has implications for our understanding of Spenser's life and writing, and for studying not only *The Faerie Queene* but the relationship between early modern allegorical poetry and ideas more generally.

Chapter One:

A Theological Reading of Temperance: Book II of *The Faerie Queene*

Early Modern Attitudes towards the Virtue of Temperance

The aim of this chapter is to consider how Spenser's theologically-inclined readers might have read Book II of *The Faerie Queene* through a soteriological lens. Given how urgent the subject of salvation was to people's everyday lives at this time, the chapter explores how Book II might have prompted its readers to think through the means of their redemption by considering temperance as a facet of holiness. As the chapter shows, Book II would have challenged the assumptions of a number of conforming Protestants by the way in which it seems to suggest that salvation is not dependent on faith alone, but is rather a collaborative process, which in part, relies upon the good works of man.

In the 'Letter to Raleigh' appended to the 1590 edition of *The Faerie Queene*, Spenser writes of his intention to portray in the figure of Arthur, '*the image of a braue knight, perfected in the twelue priuate morall vertues, as Aristotle hath deuised, the which is the purpose of these first twelue bookes*'.¹ Spenser's reference to Aristotle has led many critics to consider how the moral framework of *The Faerie Queene* is shaped by the work of the ancient Greek philosopher.² This is particularly true of Book II where its titular virtue, temperance, is one of those named by Aristotle in the *Ethics*. In a seminal essay, A. S. P. Woodhouse drew

¹ *The Faerie Queene*, p. 715.

² On the problematic nature of Spenser's reference to Aristotle see: A. Leigh DeNeef, 'Letter to Raleigh' in *The Spenser Encyclopedia*, p. 582; Hadfield, *Edmund Spenser: A Life*, pp. 32-3; note to line 19 of 'The Letter to Raleigh', p. 715, *The Faerie Queene*; Ronald A. Horton, 'Aristotle and his Commentators' in *The Spenser Encyclopedia*, pp. 58-9.

attention to Book II's engagement with classical ideas of morality by suggesting that the 'Legend of Holiness' and 'Legend of Temperance' allegorise the disjuncture between the separate orders of Christian grace and Aristotelian nature.³ Graham Hough has argued that there can be no doubt that Spenser was influenced by Aristotle in his writing of Book II, given what he calls the poet's 'schematic' handling of the allegory in episodes such as canto ii with its explicit analogy to the Aristotelian doctrine of the Golden Mean, whereby Elissa represents defect, Perissa embodies excess, and Medina stands for the 'just balance'.⁴ However, as Hough notes, in addition to its overt Aristotelianism, Book II also invites other forms of interpretation. He identifies, through examining a number of structural echoes and borrowings, how Spenser drew upon the Romance epics of Trissino's *L'Italia Liberata*, as well as Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata*.⁵ More recently, Christopher Tilmouth and Andrew Hadfield have offered new ways of reading 'The Legend of Temperance'. Tilmouth has added to the critical debate by arguing that Book II endorses the Aristotelian notion that moral virtue and prudence are acquired by habituation and repetitive rightful conduct, whilst in his life of Spenser, Hadfield has also acknowledged the classical dimension of Book II, joining a number of critics in stating that the poet's conception of temperance 'conflates the Aristotelian distinction between Continence, the censorship of bodily pleasure, and Temperance, a more positive virtue that deals with the regulation, control, and proper functioning of the body'.⁶

In contrast to the attention that has been given to its Aristotelianism, very little has been written about Book II's theological dimension. Of those studies that do exist, several

³ Gless, 'Nature and Grace' in *The Spenser Encyclopedia*, pp. 505-7; A. S. P. Woodhouse, 'Nature and Grace in *The Faerie Queene*', *ELH*, 16 (1949), 194-228. See also: J. Carscallen, 'Temperance' in *The Spenser Encyclopedia*, pp. 680-2; James Lyndon Shanley, 'Spenser's Temperance and Aristotle', *MP*, 43 (1946), 170-4.

⁴ Graham Hough, *A Preface to 'The Faerie Queene'* (London: Duckworth, 1962, 3rd impression), p. 156.

⁵ Hough, *A Preface to 'The Faerie Queene'*, pp. 158-63.

⁶ Christopher Tilmouth, *Passion's Triumph over Reason: A History of the Moral Imagination from Spenser to Rochester* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 50-70; Hadfield, *Edmund Spenser: A Life*, p. 160. See also: Hough, *A Preface to 'The Faerie Queene'*, pp. 154-5.

have tried to revise Woodhouse's thesis by arguing that Spenser depicts a *via media* of Christian Humanism — a harmonisation of classical virtue theory and Protestantism.⁷ Some studies have stressed the apparent Calvinism of Book II, whilst others have considered the extent to which Spenser's conception of temperance may have been influenced by his reading of contemporary editions of the work of the Church fathers, such as St Basil the Great's *Ascetical Discourse* or Clement of Alexandria's *Stromateis*.⁸ This chapter broadens the debate by considering the extent to which 'The Legend of Temperance' engages with early modern notions of salvation. However, rather than speculate on what the book reveals about Spenser's own doctrinal inclinations, as previous studies have sought to do, the chapter focuses on Book II's readers. It considers how sixteenth-century readers, with different doctrinal perspectives, may have drawn upon a number of biblical and theological sources to construct a range of soteriological interpretations of 'The Legend of Temperance'. To this end, the chapter has implications for studies of Spenser and literary studies more broadly by the way in which it sheds light on the possible reading strategies that theologically-minded readers of the period might have brought to bear on the literary texts they read. Moreover, the chapter offers new ways of considering how early readers might have used Book II as a vehicle to think through the means of their salvation.

The first thing to note when considering the subject of religion and Book II, is that the virtue of temperance was a significant one for early modern Christians. It was not just a classical or philosophical virtue. As Spenser's pious readers would have known, it is one of

⁷ Harry Berger Jr., *The Allegorical Temper: Vision and Reality in Book II of Spenser's 'The Faerie Queene'* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957); Paul Cefalu, *Moral Identity in Early Modern English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 47; Robert Hoopes, "'God Guide Thee, Guyon': Nature and Grace Reconciled in 'The Faerie Queene', Book II", *RES*, 5 (1954), 14-24; Lauren Silberman, "'The Faerie Queene', Book II, and the Limitations of Temperance", *MLS*, 17 (1987), 9-22.

⁸ For a Calvinistic reading of Book II, see: Richard Mallette, *Spenser and the Discourses of Reformation England*, pp. 50-83. For a Patristic interpretation of Book II, see: Weatherby, *Mirrors of Celestial Grace: Patristic Theology in Spenser's Allegory*, pp. 97-114, 132-52.

the nine Fruits of the Holy Spirit described in Galatians 5.22-3: ‘the fruite of the Spirit is loue, ioie, peace, long suffering, gentlenes, goodnes, fayth, Meekenesse, temperancie: against such there is no lawe’.⁹ As such, temperance was believed to be fundamental to a Christian life, and along with the other fruits, protected man from falling into sinfulness. It is possible that a number of theologically-minded readers would have brought this knowledge to bear on their reading of Book II, thereby attending to the poem’s religious possibilities. Moreover, the fact that the ‘Legend of Temperance’ is sequenced directly after the ‘Legend of Holiness’ would have prompted a number readers to think of the virtue as a facet of holiness in addition to considering its Aristotelian dimensions. However, with the exception of Weatherby, Spenser’s critics have tended to overlook the theological significance of temperance.¹⁰

It is worth noting that among those readers who were alive to the religious dimension of temperance, there was likely to be some disagreement over the exact significance of the virtue. Calvinists believed that the Fruits of the Holy Spirit, of which temperance is one, were bestowed upon the elect unconditionally and were a sign of one’s justification before God. Man could take no credit for the outward expression of the nine virtues. The commentary to Galatians 5.22 printed in the Geneva Bible reinforced this idea. It states: the nine virtues ‘are not the fruits of free will, but so farre forth as our will is made free by grace’. More moderate Protestants, as well as Catholics, would have contested this doctrine by claiming that the fruits are made freely available to all of mankind through the divine beneficence and the sacrifice of Christ, but that it is up to the individual to decide whether to accept and internalise them, and make them part of one’s being through habitual reinforcement in the faith that they will lead to the promise of salvation, or rather, to reject them, and thus surrender one’s self to a life of

⁹ Catholics would have followed the Vulgate in adding the virtues of modesty, chastity and continence to the list of nine fruits, making a total of twelve. See Cross & Livingstone, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, p. 644.

¹⁰ Weatherby, *Mirrors of Celestial Grace: Patristic Theology in Spenser’s Allegory*, pp. 97-114, 132-52. Discussed below.

iniquity and eventual damnation.¹¹ Where one was positioned on this doctrinal spectrum would have made a significant difference to how one approached the events of Book II as we will see over the coming pages.

Spenser's diligent readers of the Bible would have recognised that the virtue of temperance appears in several other passages apart from Galatians 5.22-3. Most notably, it features at 2 Peter 1.5-6. When drawing upon the rhetorical trope of anadiplosis, St Peter speaks of the need to avoid bodily corruption and lust in order to make one's 'calling and election sure' (2 Peter 1.10): 'Therefore giue euen all diligence thereunto: ioyne moreouer vertue with your faith: and with vertue, knowledge: And with knowledge, temperance: and with temperance, patience: and with patience, godliness'. He goes on to state that 'for if ye doe these things, ye shall neuer fall' (2 Peter 1.10, abbreviations *sic*). St Peter's comments suggest that temperance is one of the virtues central to one's spiritual wellbeing and eventual salvation. The phrasing of the Geneva Bible suggests that the acquisition of temperance is a crucial step in finally attaining a sense of communion or theosis with God. The importance of temperance is further stressed in note 'e' in the Genevan commentary to 1 Corinthians 6.7 where the virtue is said to be crucial in countering concupiscence:

[fornication is a] weakenesse of minde which is saide to be in them, that suffer themselues to be ouercome of their lusts, and it is a fault that squareth greatly from temperancie and moderation.

Furthermore, it is mentioned at Titus 1.7-8 when St Paul cites the virtue as being one of the key attributes necessary for a bishop, and his ministry. He proclaims that a bishop 'must bee

¹¹ Gless, *Interpretation and Theology in Spenser*, pp. 26-47, Rivers, *Classical and Christian Ideas in English Renaissance Poetry*, pp. 106-24.

vnreprouable, as Gods steward, not froward, not angrie, not giuen to wine, no striker, not giuen to filthie lucre, But harberous, one that loueth goodnesse, wise, righteous, holy, temperate'. The syntactical position of temperance alongside holiness adds to one's sense of the virtue's religious significance. Moreover, it provides a possible precedent for the structural organisation of books I and II of *The Faerie Queene*. St Paul also refers to temperance at Titus 2.4-5 when he lists a number of virtues that all young wives should aspire to have. He states that they should be, 'sober minded, that they loue their husba[n]ds, that they loue their children, *That they be* temperate, chaste, keeping at home, good & subiect vnto their husbands, that the word of God be not euill spoken of'. By positioning temperance beside chastity, the translators of the Geneva Bible invite readers to consider how the virtue is crucial in subjugating concupiscence. What each of these biblical references suggest is that the Christian conception of temperance is founded upon ideas of moderation, patience and self-control. In order to live a pious life that is pleasing to God, one must act with restraint and have the ability to bridle one's passions especially in the face of temptation.

In addition to these explicit biblical references to temperance, there are several occasions when the virtue is not named directly but one may infer that temperance is what is needed. For instance, at Proverbs 4.25-7, we read: 'Let thine eyes beholde the right, and let thine eyeliddes direct thy way before thee. Ponder the path of thy feete, and let all thy waies be ordred aright. Turne not to the right hande, nor to the left, *but* remooue thy foote from euill'. We see a similar sentiment at Deuteronomy 5.32-3: 'Take heede therefore, that ye doe as the Lord your God hath commaunded you: turne not aside to the right hand nor to the left, *But* walke in all the wayes which the Lord your God hath commaunded you' (abbreviations, *sic*). In both passages, the message is the same: be constant, steadfast and balanced by following the holy path of moderation; in other words, be temperate. Even though temperance is not referenced directly, the language used in these passages gestures towards notions of

self-restraint and control, as suggested by the use of the word ‘ordred’ and the need to follow a middle path rather than turning aside to ‘the right hand’ or the ‘left’. Scriptural instances like these, whereby temperance is not mentioned directly but is alluded to, further stress how being a good Christian involves, among other things, having the ability to govern one’s sinful passions and live a measured life of self-control.

Spenser’s readers would also have acquired a sense of temperance’s religious significance through the virtue’s frequent mention in theological publications of the period. For instance, in *An admonition to the people of England* (1589) Bishop Thomas Cooper (1517-94) refers to Christ as ‘a perfect patterne of all temperance and godly vertue’.¹² The virtue is also referenced in *A discourse of conscience* (1596), when the Calvinist, William Perkins (1558-1602), emphasises the need for Christians to ‘exercise and cherish repentance [. . .] temperance, [and] patience’ as a fundamental aspect of their spiritual lives.¹³ In *The disposition or garnishmente of the soule*, the Catholic theologian Thomas Wright (c. 1561-1623) claims that there are three types of virtues that ‘the sanctified flocke of Christ possesse’. These comprise the theological virtues (faith, hope and charity), the moral virtues, and a combination of the two. Of the second type, temperance is listed alongside justice, fortitude and prudence.¹⁴ Together, these make up the four cardinal virtues, which go back to classical and post-classical times of Cicero and Augustine. Temperance is also mentioned frequently in the English translations of Calvin’s work. For instance, when considering the ways in which man is seduced into wickedness by Satan, as demonstrated by St Paul’s abuse

¹² Thomas Cooper, *An admonition to the people of England vvherein are ansvvered, not onely the slaunders vntruethes, reprochfully vttered by Martin the libeller, but also many other crimes by some of his broode, obiected generally against all bishops, and the chiefe of the cleargie, purposely to deface and discredite the present state of the Church. Seene and allowed by authoritie* (London: Christopher Barker, 1589), sig. D4^v.

¹³ William Perkins, *A discourse of conscience wherein is set downe the nature, properties, and differences thereof: as also the way to get and keepe good conscience* (London: John Legate, 1596), sig. F1^r.

¹⁴ Thomas Wright, *The disposition or garnishmente of the soule to receiue worthily the blessed Sacrament deuyded into three discourses, 1 Preparation. 2 Presentation before Christ. 3 Enterteinment* (London: Joachim Trognesium, 1596), sig. F6^r.

at the hands of the High Priest Ananias in Acts 23.2, Calvin's translator, Christopher Fetherstone, writes: 'The Lord doeth suffer the wicked to be so carried away by Sathan that they fall from all shew of equitie and temperance'.¹⁵ In each of these examples, temperance is used as a byword for moderation, control and restraint. It represents a state of steadfastness and fortitude in the face of vices such as concupiscence, wrath, and avarice.

Given the numerous references to temperance that appear in the Bible as well as in theological treatises of the period, it is feasible that the virtue might have occupied an important place in the Christian imagination during the sixteenth century, not least because it was a watchword for forbearance and the 'suppression of any tendency to passionate action' — ideas which lie at the heart of the Christian world view.¹⁶ Along with the other eight (or eleven) gifts of the Spirit, the virtue of temperance would have been seen by many believers at the time as being key to what it meant to be Christian; by being temperate, through careful governance of the passions, one is able to reject the sinful impulses of concupiscence, irascibility and avarice. It is likely that Spenser's theologically-inclined readers would have brought this sense of temperance to bear on their reading of Book II, just as those readers steeped in the works of the classical authors would have attended to temperance's Aristotelian associations. Indeed some readers might have done both. As mentioned above, the fact that 'The Legend of Temperance' structurally follows on directly from 'The Legend of Holiness', would have added to its religious tenor for many readers as its sequential positioning invites readers to see a connection between the two books — that temperance is not a distinct virtue of its own but rather a facet of holiness. In suggesting this, I offer a fresh way of thinking

¹⁵ John Calvin, *The commentaries of M. Iohn Caluin vpon the Actes of the Apostles*, trans. by Christopher Fetherstone (London: G. Bishop, 1585), sig. Ll6^r.

¹⁶ *OED*, 'Temperance', n., I.1.a.

about the strategies and reading practices that some of Spenser's readers might have brought to bear on the poem.

Canto i — The Beginnings of a Religious Reading

In addition to the biblical significance of its titular virtue, temperance, there are a number of other elements in the opening canto of Book II, which would have suggested to sixteenth-century readers that the 'Legend of Temperance' advances the religious allegory established in Book I. Firstly, the fact that Guyon is led on his quest by an aged Christian pilgrim, the Palmer, invites comparison with I.x where Redcrosse is escorted by two aged religious figures: Dame Coelia who presides over the House of Holinesse, and Contemplation who leads him up the mountain to see the vision of the New Jerusalem. Of course, as we see with Archimago, age is no guarantee of virtue. Nevertheless, in the same way that these two guides provide spiritual edification to the Redcrosse knight, the Palmer performs a similar role for Guyon, although whereas the former pair are tasked with the role of instructing Redcrosse on the subject of the one true faith of Protestantism, the Palmer's role is to advise Guyon on the practicalities of leading a Christian life in the face of sinfulness. He is tasked by Spenser with the role of steering Guyon away from wrongdoing and guiding him towards virtue and righteousness through fostering in him a sense of temperance. The fact that Spenser chose a palmer to lead Guyon through the moral landscape of Book II suggests that, amongst other things, the poet wanted to create a Christian frame of reference that would facilitate a soteriological interpretation of Book II. That the Palmer is a Christian figure is highlighted by the way in which he immediately recognises the significance of Redcrosse's shield at II.i.31. As Hamilton notes, the Palmer honours the 'Crosse' more than he does the image of 'that heauenly Mayd' (II.i.28.7) who we take to be the Faerie Queene. The fact that he does this

heightens the reader's sense of his religious inclinations. Moreover, this is further emphasised through the narrator's description of him as 'comely', 'sage and sober' which would have added to one's sense of his pious solemnity and temperance (II.i.7.2-7). In reading of the Palmer's 'steedy staffe' and how he uses it to guide Guyon 'over hill and dale', sixteenth-century readers might also have been reminded of God's guiding staff of Psalm 23.4.

The religious dimension of Book II is hinted at in the opening canto by a discussion that the Palmer has with the Redcrosse knight. Whilst conversing with the knight, the Palmer states: 'wretched we, where ye have left your marke, / Must now anew begin, like race to ronne' (II.i.32.6-7). The Palmer's reference to a race alludes to a common Christian metaphor, which is seen most notably at Hebrews 12.1-2: 'let vs [. . .] cast away euery thing yt presseth downe, and the sinne that hangeth so fast on: let vs runne with patience the race that is set before vs, / Looking vnto Iesus the authour and finisher of our faith' (abbreviations *sic*).¹⁷ As the knight of Temperance, Guyon must not approach his particular 'race' rashly or indifferently, but as is suggested in Hebrews, be patient and measured. The Palmer's use of the adjective 'like', in the phrase 'like race', suggests that Guyon's quest will bear many similarities to Redcrosse's journey of spiritual and doctrinal discovery, although as we later discover, the exact nature of the two religious quests is distinctly different. Moreover, the old man's use of the emotive epithet 'wretched', with its soteriological connotations of depravity, suggests that the pair's quest, or 'race', is a tropological one with the reward being spiritual regeneration; by following Redcrosse's lead, Guyon and the Palmer can atone for their state of iniquity and look ahead to the Christian promise of redemption. Along the way, the aged pilgrim functions to instruct Guyon in the ways of patience, moderation and restraint, steering him away from acts of intemperance and guiding him towards virtue.

¹⁷ The metaphor of life as a race can also be seen at 1 Corinthians 9.24.

The reappearance of Archimago and Duessa at the start of canto i encourages readers to identify a thematic link between books I and II. Through his use of malice and guile, Archimago, who functions on a moral and religious level in the allegory to represent hypocrisy, and in particular the idolatrous duplicity of the Roman Catholic church, tricks Guyon into believing that the Redcrosse knight has raped Duessa. Eager to seek justice for the seemingly dishonoured damsel, Guyon races ahead to engage the accused knight, of whose identity he is unaware. It is only at the last moment, when he sees the 'sacred badge of my Redeemers death' on Redcrosse's shield that he realises his error, and pulls out of his charge (II.i.27.6). Guyon's foolhardiness at taking Archimago's words at face value, and the impassioned way in which he goes in pursuit of Redcrosse, albeit out of his sense of justice and desire for moral rectitude, suggests that the figure still has a lot to learn before he can live up to his title as the Knight of Temperance. He must develop the habit of rational self-restraint, especially when provoked to anger or passion. Later in the book, Archimago is again involved in scheming against Guyon — first by tricking Braggadocchio into believing that the knight had killed Mordant and Amavia (II.iii.13-9), and later by inciting Pyrochles and Cymochles to attack the knight as he lies unconscious at the entrance to Mammon's Cave (II.viii.11). The fact that the two malevolents, Archimago and Duessa, continue to roam free through Faerie Land and cause trouble for the Redcrosse Knight and Guyon is a typical convention of the romance genre; however, in terms of the poem's religious history and political allegory, it has an added significance — it suggests that the threat posed to the Church of England from the Roman Catholic Church is persistent and ongoing.

The question of how one might live a righteous existence that is pleasing to God, and how far one may take responsibility for one's moral actions in leading that life, is addressed very early on in canto i during Redcrosse's conversation with the Palmer. The Palmer congratulates the knight on his recent heroic accomplishment in defeating the dragon, which

has secured his future canonisation. As part of his panegyric, the Palmer says to the knight:

Ioy may you haue, and euerlasting fame,
Of late most hard atchieu' ment by you donne,
For which enrolled is your glorious name
In heauenly Regesters aboue the Sunne,
Where you a Saint with Saints your seat haue wonne.

(II.i.32.1-5)

In commending Redcrosse, the Palmer chooses to emphasise the knight's part in the victory rather than acknowledge the role of divine grace. He suggests that Redcrosse defeated the dragon, and thus secured his salvation through his meritorious works ('most hard atchieu' ment by you donne'). As such, he seems to endorse the view that man has a degree of autonomy in leading a life that is pleasing, or conversely, unacceptable to God. To this end, he seems to adopt a Pelagian stance. However, in response to the Palmer's felicitation, Redcrosse is quick to contest the idea that he can claim any credit for the victory, rejoining:

His be the praise, that this atchieu' ment wrought,
Who made my hand the organ of his might;
More then goodwill to me attribute nought:
For all I did, I did but as I ought.

(II.i.33.2-5)

By refusing to accept any credit for his triumph over the dragon, and by attributing his victory entirely to God, Redcrosse's words echo those of the narrator at I.x.1:

Ne let [. . .] Man ascribe it to his skill,
That thorough grace hath gained victory.
If any strength we haue, it is to ill,
But all the good is Gods, both power and eke will.

(I.x.1.6-9)

At the heart of both of these quotations is the idea that man is incapable of claiming any merit for his good works, or indeed his personal salvation. As Daryl Gless has noted, Redcrosse's rejoinder to the Palmer contains 'not simply a self-effacing redirection of praise but an important doctrinal correction'.¹⁸ The knight rejects the Pelagian rationalism of the Palmer with its faith in mankind's potential for moral goodness, and its scope for cooperation with the divine will, in favour of a more Reformed position, which emphasises man's total dependency upon God. Redcrosse's language suggests a belief in the doctrinal idea that it is only through the unmerited gift of divine grace that man has the capacity to defeat iniquity. As such, we hear in the knight's rejoinder the echoes of Article 10, 'Of Free-Will', in the *Articles*: 'we have no power to doo good workes pleasaunt and acceptable to GOD, without the grace of God by Christe preuentynge us, that we may haue a good wyl, & working with us, when we haue that good wyll'.¹⁹ Redcrosse is quick to stress that the dragon was slain by God's 'might' and that he was nothing more than an 'organ' for God's divine will. His 'hand' held no

¹⁸ Gless, *Interpretation and Theology in Spenser*, p. 179.

¹⁹ Church of England, *Articles, whereupon it was agreed by the archbishops and bishops of both provinces, and the whole cleargie, in the Conuocation holden at London in the yere of our Lorde God 1562. according to the computation of the Church of Englande* (London: 1571, STC 10038.9), sig. A4^v.

autonomy over its triumphant actions; it was just an instrument through which God's supreme power was mediated and channelled.

Redcrosse's acknowledgement of his reliance on God is bred out of his numerous failings and back-sliding throughout the 'Legend of Holiness'. Time and again in Book I, he falls prey to error, and must depend on divine intervention.²⁰ His numerous shortcomings in the 'Legend of Holiness' suggests that man is impotent to save himself as mankind's depravity is too great. In rejecting the Palmer's suggestion that he can take any merit for his good works, choosing instead to emphasise the part played by divine will, Redcrosse seems to endorse a staunch Reformed position, and one which may be read in the spirit of John Calvin, who argues that the 'very nature of man [. . .] [is] infected and corrupted' and that in humankind's doings, there 'appereth a continuall disorder and intemperance'. Calvin goes on to stress humankind's depravity by stating that 'all the desires of men are euell'.²¹ Reformed readers after 1604 may have interpreted the knight's comments alongside the words of the influential English Calvinist, William Perkins, who states that, in his unregenerate state, man is 'nothing but flesh'. Perkins claims that man is beset by sinful '*Affections* and *Lusts*', which prevent him from acting with rational self-governance.²² As the narrator of I.x stresses, it is only through God's 'grace', 'power' and 'will' that man can overcome the threat of sinfulness (I.x.1.7-9). Using the language of Reformation discourse, the narrator suggests that fallen man does not have the intrinsic 'skill' to secure his own moral renewal (I.x.1.6). He must rely upon

²⁰ Arthur's rescue of Redcrosse from Orgoglio's dungeon at I.viii.37-43 is one such example of how divine grace intervenes on the knight's behalf. One might also argue that Redcrosse's corrections at the House of Holinesse at I.x are also indicative of the way in which faith, according to Reformed theologians, is imputed to the justified following their election. His subsequent defeat of the dragon is only made possible because of the religious instruction he receives at the House of Holinesse. His immersion in the baptismal waters of the *Well of Life* at I.xi.29, and the positive effect it has upon Redcrosse might also be taken to represent the ways in which divine grace is found to give strength to the regenerate so as to help them overcome the forces of evil.

²¹ John Calvin, *The Institution of Christian Religion*, trans. by Thomas Norton (London: Wolfe and Harison, 1561), sig. R2^v.

²² William Perkins, *A Commentarie or Exposition, vpon the fiue first Chapters of the Epistle to the Galatians* (London: John Legat, 1604), sigs Ggg1^r, Lll1^v.

what St Paul termed the ‘armour of God’, as well as the ‘sword of the Spirit’ in order to ‘stand against the wiles of the devil’ (Ephesians 6.11, 17). It is in the context of these soteriological beliefs that Spenser has Redcrosse reject any credit for his victory over the dragon. Aware of his own depravity, the knight chooses to attribute the triumph entirely to God: ‘His be the praise, that this atchieu’ment wrought’ (II.i.33.2).

The only aspect of his victory over the dragon for which Redcrosse is prepared to take credit is his goodwill. As he states at II.i.33.4: ‘More then goodwill to me attribute nought’. However, in light of his rejoinder, this particular comment seems doctrinally problematic if we take the knight’s reference to his ‘goodwill’ to refer to his religious zeal in combatting sinfulness. As the *OED* notes, in the sixteenth century, ‘goodwill’ did refer, in part, to: ‘A virtuous, pious, or honest disposition or intention; goodness, piety, virtue’.²³ According to Reformed doctrine, religious devotion is derived from faith, which is itself an unmerited gift from God, bestowed upon the elect at the point of justification. It does not rely upon human agency. Therefore, in Calvinist terms, Redcrosse theoretically cannot take credit for his ‘goodwill’ as it is one of the fruits of his divine justification, and bred out of the inward workings of grace. Some Reformed readers might have found a way around this problematic phrasing — if we think of Spenser using the punning figure of paronomasia, then it is possible to imagine how the sense of the line might be interpreted as: ‘More than God’s will to me attribute nought’.²⁴ This rendering of the line is more consistent with Redcrosse’s comment at II.i.33.2-3 and also at I.x.1 by the way in which it suggests that the knight refuses to accept any responsibility over his triumphant actions preferring to attribute all glory to God.

Questions of doctrinal interpretation such as those discussed above are indicative of the

²³ *OED*, ‘Goodwill’, n., 1.

²⁴ See ‘paronomasia’ in: Sylvia Adamson, Gavin Alexander and Katrin Ettenhuber, eds., *Renaissance Figures of Speech* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 81-94; Richard A. Lanham, *A Handlist of Rhetorical List* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1991), p. 110.

theological complexities that dominate Book II. Throughout the ‘Legend of Temperance’, the poem invites readers to consider the extent to which human agency may or may not, in part, be instrumental in one’s salvation. As we will see, the picture that emerges of Faerie Land in Book II is of a soteriological landscape that is full of doctrinal tensions and contradictions. However, as the chapter shows, for the most part, Book II invites readers to interpret temperance as a contingent virtue, wherein precise individual circumstances determine the required balance of human-divine cooperation. By suggesting this the chapter departs from existing critical thinking, and advances new ways of understanding the poem’s allegory.

The extent to which Book II invites readers to frame Guyon’s adventure within a Christian context is emphasised by the Palmer’s remark to the knight in the same episode: ‘God guide thee, *Guyon*, well to end thy warke, / And to the wished haven bring they weary barke’ (II.i.32.8-9). The pilgrim’s reference to God serves to locate Guyon’s journey within a very specific Christian landscape. The old man seems to be praying for providential assistance as the pair embark on their journey. By using the image of God as a spiritual and moral guide, the Palmer would have appeared to some early readers to draw upon the language of the Psalms, and in particular the words of the penitential Psalm 143:

Let me heare thy louing kindenes in the morning, for in thee is my trust: shewe mee the way, that I should walke in, for I lift vp my soule vnto thee. Deliuer me, O Lorde, from mine enemies: *for* I hid me with thee. Teach me to doe thy will, for thou art my God: let thy good Spirit leade me vnto the land of righteousness. Quicken me, O Lord, for thy Names sake, *and* for thy righteousness bring my soule out of trouble (verses 8-11).

In the Palmer's words, as in the language of the psalm, one notices a stress upon the importance of God in guiding the faithful away from sinfulness and steering them towards holiness. However, despite the seemingly straightforward nature of the Palmer's comment, his words would have been potentially laden with doctrinal ambiguities. Some Catholic and non-conformist Protestant readers might have read into the Palmer's use of the transitive verb 'guide' the idea that Guyon has some form of moral agency in his quest for temperance. The phrase implies a potential collaborative effort between God and Guyon. The knight has two options: he can either choose to accept God's help and follow his guidance, or alternatively, reject it. By accepting it, Guyon indicates a desire to follow the path of righteousness and redemption. In contrast, it is likely that mainstream Protestants would have read the sense of the line differently, interpreting the Palmer's comments as an exhortation for God to direct Guyon's actions towards temperance. Here the credit lies with God not Guyon. If the knight does act with temperance, it is because God's indwelling grace has shaped his actions.

In many ways it seems that Guyon finds himself better disposed than Redcrosse did at the beginning of his adventure. In this opening section, the narrator refers to Guyon as a 'goodly knight' (II.i.5.8) whose 'carriage was full comely and vpright, / [and whose] [. . .] countenance [was] demure and temperate' (II.i.6.1-2). Early modern readers familiar with the device of paronomasia would have taken from the adjective 'goodly', the suggestion of Guyon's godliness, or more specifically, his holiness. Although, that said, we cannot necessarily assume that 'goodly' always equates to 'godly': at I.iv.13.3-9, Spenser uses the word to refer to vanity. Nonetheless, in comparison, Redcrosse is described as a 'gentle' and 'Full iolly knight' (I.i.1.1,8). Whilst the epithet 'gentle' connotes his Christian compassion and benevolence, the phrase 'Full iolly' could hint at Redcrosse's naivety at the task ahead if we take the *OED*'s sense of the word as meaning, in part, 'Of gay and cheerful disposition or

character; bright, lively; joyous, gladsome; mirthful'.²⁵ The positive impression that the poem encourages its readers to have of Guyon is furthered when Redcrosse commends the knight's 'goodly governaunce' at II.i.29.8, from which we infer that he has already earned a reputation for his self-control and restraint prior to the opening of the narrative (although this report of calmness and moderation is brought into question when Archimago and Duessa drive him to rashness and irascibility). Spenser also highlights Guyon's receptivity to moral instruction by the way in which he describes how the knight internalises and then applies the Christian teaching of the pilgrim: 'And ever with slow pace' did the Palmer 'lead' the knight, who in turn 'taught his trampling steed with equall steps to tread' (II.i.7.8-9). As seen through this equine image borrowed from Plato, Guyon's ability to control his steed figuratively corresponds to the way in which the knight is able to govern his passions under the Palmer's influence. In comparison, in the opening canto of Book I, Redcrosse appears to be less in control of his passions, as suggested through a similar equine image: 'His angry steed did chide his foming bitt, / As much disdayning to the curbe to yield' (I.i.1.6-7). Redcrosse's weakness to passion is highlighted later in the canto when we read of how, under Archimago's spell, he 'Bathed in wanton blis and wicked ioy' whilst dreaming about Una (I.i.47.6). Moreover, his inexperience in combatting and governing his passions is implied at the start of Book I when the narrator describes how, 'Yet armes till that time did he neuer wield' (I.i.1.5). In contrast to Redcrosse, Guyon seems to be better equipped at the beginning of his adventure, or 'race' (II.i.32.7). As the former's compliment to him suggests, he has already earned a reputation for self-governance, as well as shown that he has the potential to learn from the moral teachings of others. Therefore, we are led to believe that, given his starting point, Guyon will be in a better position to tackle the challenges that lie ahead.

²⁵ See Chapter Three for a more detailed consideration of the Christian significance of the virtue 'gentleness' in *The Faerie Queene*. On the word 'jolly' see: *OED*, 'Jolly', adj. & adv., A.I.1. It is worth noting that some readers might have taken the word to refer to a different sense: 'Of cheerful courage; high-hearted, gallant; brave'. *OED*, 'Jolly', adj. & adv., A.II.5.a.

However, despite his potential, Guyon is still beset by human failings as the first canto of Book II suggests; such is the condition of man following the Fall. As the Palmer notes, using the language of Calvinist discourse, the knight is 'wretched'. His moral weakness is illustrated by the way in which he falls prey to Archimago's 'web of wicked guyle', thereby abandoning his moral guide, the Palmer, and allowing himself to be led 'an vncouth way' (II.i.8.4, II.i.24.1). His error is to be fooled into believing that the Redcrosse knight is guilty of raping an innocent and vulnerable maiden, who we later learn is Archimago's accomplice, Duessa. Archimago deceives Guyon in the hope that the knight will challenge and kill Redcrosse, thereby ensuring that depravity triumphs over goodness. The knight's vulnerability to 'That conning Architect of cancred guyle' allegorically underlines his, and mankind's, propensity to sinfulness despite his inherent goodness (II.i.1.1). His gullibility in taking Archimago's advice at face value may be read as a cautionary tale in the spirit of Proverbs 14.15: 'The foolish will beleue euery thing: but the prudent will consider his steppes'. His error shows that he is not that dissimilar to Redcrosse who also falls prey to Archimago's trickery in the early stages of Book I whilst staying at the latter's hermitage with Una. The fact that Guyon is deceived during his separation from the Palmer (II.i.13 until II.i.31.3) seems to emphasise how iniquity may triumph if moral reason, as allegorically represented by the figure of the pilgrim, is neglected or abandoned.

The way in which Guyon responds angrily to the news of Duessa's alleged rape highlights the knight's weakness to irascibility when provoked, as well as his propensity for rashness. We learn that on falling for Archimago's deceit, Guyon is instantly 'amoved from his sober mood' (II.i.12.1). Such is his anger and incredulity towards Redcrosse that he dashes off to avenge the supposedly heinous act: 'He stayed not lenger take, but with fierce yre / And zealous haste away is quickly gone, / To seeke that knight, where him that crafty Squire [Archimago] / Supposed to be' (II.i.13.1-4). On discovering the whereabouts of the accused

knight, Guyon then sets off 'inflam'd with wrathfulnesse, / That streight against that knight his speare he did addresse' (II.i.25.8-9). Even though his action is bred out of a desire to avenge an alleged act of depravity, his rashness and irascibility in pursuing this end seems to be too impassioned, as it will later be in the Bower of Bliss episode. Given that the focus of Book II is temperance, phrases such as 'fierce yre' and 'inflam'd with wrathfulnesse' would have suggested to many readers that Guyon still has far to go before he can claim self-governance of the passions. The knight must develop an ability to suppress his tendency to passionate action. Some sixteenth-century readers may have read Guyon's impetuosity in the spirit of those biblical verses that warn of reckless actions. For instance, the knight's hastiness in seeking out Redcrosse might have been read in light of Proverbs 19.2: 'he that hasteth with his feete, sinneth', as well as Ecclesiastes 7.11: 'Be not thou of an hastie spirit to be angry: for anger resteth in the bosome of fooles.'²⁶

Despite his fallibility to the guile of Archimago and Duessa, Guyon's inherent Christian goodness is demonstrated when he finally pulls out of his charge after recognising the 'sacred badge of [...] [his] Redeemers death' on Redcrosse's shield (I.i.27.6). Here Spenser demonstrates that despite the knight's error, he does have the capacity for redemption as shown by his responsiveness to the sight of Christian holiness. Moreover, his penitence on discovering his error adds to our sense of the figure's Christian sensibility. On realising his mistake in raising his spear against the knight of holiness, and the shield of his saviour, Guyon pleads for forgiveness from both Redcrosse and God: 'Mercie Sir Knight, and mercie Lord, / For mine offence and heedelesse hardiment, / That had almost committed crime abhord' (II.i.27.1-3). In seeking mercy for his actions, and demonstrating contrition, Guyon's words echo

²⁶ Or alternatively, as Kenneth Borris suggests, some moderate Protestant readers may have seen Guyon's hastiness as a disguised attack on the blind religious zeal of the Puritans, whose spiritual intensity and fear of idleness was often seen as dangerous and counter-productive. See: Kenneth Borris, "'Diuellish Ceremonies': Allegorical Satire of Protestant Extremism in *The Faerie Queene* VI.viii.31-51', *Spenser Studies*, 8 (1990), 175-209.

those of the penitential Psalm 51: 'Haue mercie vpon me, O God, according to thy louing kindnes: according to the multitude of thy compassions put away mine iniquities' (line 1). Through Guyon's address to God ('mercie Lord'), and his subsequent repentance and self-reproach, Spenser invites us to frame the knight's experiences within a Christian worldview. In his actions, we see the deeds of the Christian everyman who attempts to lead a holy existence but whose life is fraught with error and confusion, though typified by a longing for redemption and deliverance.

The Threat Posed to Temperance by Concupiscence

If Guyon's encounter with Archimago and Duessa would have highlighted to the sixteenth-century reader the danger of hastiness and irascibility, then the story of Mortdant and Amavia in canto i would have served as a cautionary tale of the recurrent threat caused by another form of intemperance — concupiscence. Guyon is first alerted to the plight of Amavia after hearing her pitiful lament whilst travelling through the woods with the Palmer. Amavia's tragic tale about the entrapment of her husband, Mortdant, by the enchantress Acrasia, which results in the knight's death as well as his wife's suicide, emphasises to Guyon the need for self-governance of the passions, and in particular the desires of the flesh. In many ways this episode reminds us of the way in which, early into his quest, Redcrosse was similarly drawn to the lamenting voice of the tree Fradubio. Fradubio and his wife, Fralissa, had been transformed into trees by Duessa after the Circe-type figure found Fradubio spying on her deformed nakedness, having earlier seduced him into leaving his wife for her (I.ii.28-44). As Kathleen Williams notes, 'The two episodes are similar in their tone of menace and desolation and in the sense they give of the sheer difficulty involved in being human'.²⁷ Mortdant's

²⁷ Kathleen Williams, *Spenser's 'Faerie Queene': The World of Glass* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966), pp. 39-43.

inclination to lasciviousness, which links him to Fradubio, is exploited by Acrasia, and triggers a chain of events that subsequently leads to his family's downfall. Of Acrasia and her bower, Amavia remarks:

Her blis is all in pleasure and delight,
Wherewith she makes her louers dronken mad,
And then with words and weedes of wondrous might,
On them she workes her will to vses bad:

(II.i.52.1-4).

The alluring and hypnotic charm of Acrasia and her bower is emphasised through the echoing and mellifluous alliteration of 'words', 'weed', 'wondrous', 'workes' and 'will'. It is her enchanting nature, as reflected through Spenser's use of language, which challenges Mortdant's temperance and leads to his fall into sinfulness. Amavia describes how Mortdant was 'beguiled' by the temptress, although she claims that her husband's fallibility was not surprising given mankind's inherent depravity: 'For he was flesh: [and] (all flesh doth frayltie breed)' (II.i.52.6). As Carol Kaske has noted, Spenser draws upon Romans 7 for the primary subtext for this episode. It is here that St Paul acknowledges the realisation that 'in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing: for to wil is prese[n]t wt me: but I find no meanes to perform yt which is good' (7.18, abbreviations *sic*).²⁸ In Mortdant and Amavia, we see 'the ymage of mortalitie', and what Williams calls the image 'of failed human nature in which a

²⁸ Carol Kaske, 'Amavia, Mortdant, Ruddymane' in *The Spenser Encyclopedia*, pp. 25-7.

precarious order is overthrown by the passions and a balance of forces deteriorates into confusion'.²⁹

Only the babe, Ruddymane, survives following his mother's suicide, although his 'guiltie hands' are symbolically stained with the 'bloody gore' of his father's licentiousness, and of man's Original Sin (II.ii.3.4).³⁰ Guyon's inability to wash the stain of iniquity from the child's hands is representative of the way in which man's soul is indelibly tarnished.

Ruddymane cannot be 'purgd' of his father's, or of mankind's, 'bloodguiltinesse'; it is 'Imprinted' by God — a constant reminder of man's fallen state (II.ii.4.2-5). In Ruddymane, we see the plight of man following Adam: 'Such is the state of men: Thus enter we / Into this life with woe, and end with miserie' (II.ii.2.8-9). The fact that Guyon immerses the child's hands into what seems to be a type of baptismal 'well' makes no difference; as critics have noted, the spring's failure to wash Ruddymane's stain clean gestures towards the limits of baptism. According to Weatherby, 'Ruddymane cannot be washed because though baptism justifies man by taking away the guilt of original sin from his soul, it leaves the flesh subject to death and concupiscence'.³¹ Fowler makes a similar point when he argues: 'The power of the baptismal well, since it is not of natural endowment (being, indeed, "contrary to nature": Rom. 11. 24), can have no direct effect on the natural body. As a spiritual, not a material, purification, it leaves the texture of man's material nature unaltered'.³² The extent to which Ruddymane's body is subject to inheriting his father's sinfulness, despite being dipped in the baptismal well, is hinted at through Spenser's reference to the child having been 'infected' by

²⁹ Williams, *Spenser's 'Faerie Queene': The World of Glass*, p. 39.

³⁰ See: Alastair Fowler, 'The Image of Mortality: "The Faerie Queene", II, i-ii' in *HLQ*, 24 (1961), 91-110; Weatherby, *Mirrors of Celestial Grace*, pp. 172-9; Williams, *Spenser's 'Faerie Queene': The World of Glass*, p. 39.

³¹ Weatherby, *Mirrors of Celestial Grace*, p. 172.

³² Fowler, 'The Image of Mortality', p. 103.

his father's 'veneme', which as Hamilton notes, is suggestive (through the trope of paronomasia) of venereal disease.³³

For a number of Spenser's sixteenth-century readers, Amavia's language, with its stress on mankind's depravity, would have seemed rooted in the discourses of English Calvinism. This is especially the case when she describes how Mortdant had been 'thrall'd' and 'ybound' in 'chaines of lust and lewde desyres' (II.i.54.2-3). Here, through the trope of bondage, readers of Calvin would have been reminded of the theologian's *A harmonie vpon the three Euangelists*, in which the French reformer describes how the 'wicked' are 'enthralled and chained [. . .] without hope of deliuerance' because of their wantonness.³⁴ However, despite its seeming Calvinistic tone, there are times during Amavia's speech when her language seems to adopt a more moderate doctrinal position:

[. . .] through wise handling and faire gouernaunce,
I him recured to a better will,
Purged from drugs of fowle intemperaunce:
The meanes I gan deuise for his deliuerance.

(II.i.54.6-9)

Here, Amavia describes how she tries to guide her husband back to spiritual health after discovering his whereabouts and situation. By having Amavia claim that through her own 'faire gouernaunce', she is able to regenerate his 'will' to the point that he could be 'Purged'

³³ Note to II.ii.4.6.

³⁴ John Calvin, *A harmonie vpon the the three Euangelists, Matthew, Mark and Luke with the commentarie of M. Iohn Caluine: faithfully translated out of Latine into English, by E.P. Whereunto is also added a commentarie vpon the Euangelist S. Iohn, by the same authour*, trans. by Eusebius Pagit (London: Thomas Dawson, 1584), sig. 2V2^r.

from ‘fowle intemperaunce’, and thus anticipate his ‘deliuerance’, Spenser seems to suggest the potential of the will to renew and be renewed. Moreover, by syntactically positioning ‘gouernaunce’, ‘will’, ‘intemperaunce’ and ‘deliuerance’ at the end of the lines, Spenser draws attention to the words, thereby stressing their significance, and the importance attached to reason in one’s spiritual transfiguration — an idea which would have appealed to those readers who believed in the importance of human agency to one’s redemption.

However, as some readers might have anticipated, despite Amavia’s best attempts to renew her husband’s spiritual steadfastness, the consequences of the flesh’s sinfulness prove too great. Before leaving the Bower of Bliss, the ‘vile Enchaunteresse’, Acrasia, gives Mortdant a charmed cup from which to drink. With it, she delivers a prophecy that death will come to the death-dealing knight, and the loss of love to Amavia when the wine of the ‘*Bacchus*’ cup is mixed, or ‘*lincke[d]*’ with the water from the Nymphe’s well. The cup reminds us of Duessa’s cup, which is ‘replete with magick artes’ (I.viii.14.2), which is itself an allusion to the one carried by the Whore of Babylon (Revelation 18.3). After using the cup to drink from the pure well in the forest, the prophecy is realised, and Mortdant falls dead. As Williams notes, this motif would have been striking for a number of contemporary readers who were used to seeing the emblem of personified Temperance holding a flask and a cup, one filled with wine, and the other with water. Spenser’s image of Mortdant dying after drinking from the cup reverses the traditional emblem.³⁵ Moreover, as Hamilton notes, on a religious level, it parodies the mingling of wine and water in the communion chalice.³⁶ Rather than regenerate the spirit in the way that the taking of the wine and water in the eucharist does, it acts as a foil or antithesis to grace. Despite seeming to have ‘recured to a better

³⁵ Williams, *Spenser’s ‘Faerie Queene’: The World of Glass*, pp. 40-1.

³⁶ Note to II.i.55.6. On the ambiguity of key images and symbols of *The Faerie Queene* see: Ronald Horton, *The Unity of ‘The Faerie Queene’* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1978).

will' (II.i.54.7), in which he acts in accordance with what St Paul terms, the 'Lawe of my minde' (Romans 7.23), by which he refers to the 'minde which is renewed by the Spirite of God', Mortdant's death suggests that the knight's body was still a 'captiue' to the 'lawe of sinne' (Geneva note to Romans 7.23).

In Mortdant's sinfulness, many readers would have seen a reflection of mankind's iniquity. As the poem is keen to stress, Guyon must learn from Amavia's cautionary tale, and guard against the threat of concupiscence if he is to be successful on his quest for temperance, and with it, holiness. However, the threat is such that one must always be on one's guard. As Mortdant's tragic story would have illustrated to Spenser's religiously-minded readers, no one, not even the 'gentlest knight' of moral distinction, is free entirely from the dangers of wantonness (II.i.49.8).

Spenser's handling of Amavia's story, and her telling of it to Guyon, seems to function in the similar way that the knight's encounter with Redcrosse does at the start of canto i. It alerts Guyon, early on in his adventure, to the danger of intemperance. In the incident involving Redcrosse, Guyon becomes aware of the dangers caused by hastiness and irascibility; with Amavia, he learns of the threat from concupiscence. By positioning these episodes at the start of Guyon's quest, Spenser seems to imply that these two separate forms of intemperance pose a significant threat to one's self-governance of the passions. For Spenser's Christian readers, irascibility and concupiscence posed more than just moral problems; they were expressions of sinfulness and indicative of one's spiritual depravity. In both episodes, the poem suggests that Guyon must learn from his errors, as well as, importantly, the mistakes of others, in order to be worthy of his position as the knight of temperance. In suggesting this, the poem stresses Guyon's part in his own moral and spiritual development, which for Spenser's moderate Protestant, as well as Catholic readers, could have been taken to represent the ways in which man is able to take responsibility for his

personal salvation through works — a doctrine which Spenser's Calvinist readers would have found disagreeable in as much as they would not have liked the idea that salvation is earned, although they were all for individuals behaving well because they are going to be saved.

In response to Amavia's poignant story, and with the 'ymage of mortalitie' before him, Guyon delivers the first of several speeches that deal with questions of human morality (II.i. 57.2). For some sixteenth-century readers, these speeches might be seen to engage with ideas of Aristotelian ethics. However, as Mallette has noted, Guyon's speeches would also have appealed to Spenser's theologically-minded readers because of their sermon-like style, which serves to frame the ethical questions that they address within a soteriological context. On this occasion, Guyon addresses the subject of psychomachia, and in particular the problems brought about by carnal desire. He moralises on how 'raging passion with fierce tyranny / Robs reason of her dew regalitie, / And makes it seruaunt to her basest part' (II.i.57.4-6). As Mallette has identified, Guyon's 'homiletic style' bears many similarities to that of a 'straightforward corrective sermon' through the way in which it seeks to 'reprove corrupt manners and behaviour'.³⁷ In delivering his sermon-style speech, Guyon seems to be further ahead in his soteriological journey than Redcrosse was at the same point in his respective narrative; he seems to be building on the spiritual foundations laid out in Book I. Guyon's words demonstrate an astute sensitivity to the psychomachic dangers that threaten one's salvation. The Palmer also contributes towards this homiletic discourse although he does so using the language of Aristotelian rationalism: 'temperance [. . .] with golden squire / Betwixt them both can measure out a meane, / Nether to melt in pleasures whott desyre, / Nor frye in hartlesse griefe and dolefull tene' (II.i.58.1-4). Even though the Palmer's advice is rooted in the language of classical ethics, it nonetheless assumes a theological dimension because of its tropological tenor as well as the fact that it comes from a speaker whose religious identity

³⁷ Mallette, *Spenser and the Discourses of Reformation England*, p. 54.

christianises it. In short, the poem successfully manages to assimilate secular ethics and Christian morality through the pair's discourse to help guide the aspiring Christian reader on his path towards righteousness.

What is significant about this particular homiletic discourse is the way in which both figures seem to adopt a more moderate doctrinal position than the one reflected in the Calvinist-like lamentations of Amavia. Gone is the hopelessness of man's utter depravity; instead, the pair discuss reason and the ways in which licentiousness can be averted through man's careful governance of the affections. This is illustrated in Guyon's eschatological musing, 'But after death the tryall is to come, / When best shall bee to them, that liued best' (II.i.59.3-4). In Guyon's words, we recognise parallels with those of St Paul:

'whatsoever a man soweth, that shall hee also reape [. . .] Let vs not therefore be weary of well doing: for in due season we shall reape, if we faint not' (Galatians 6.7-9). Guyon's language seems to point towards a belief in a merit-based soteriological economy in which man's deliverance is judged upon his works, although Calvinist readers would have argued that it is God who enables them to live 'best'. This faith in the potential of man's reason to perform good works that are pleasing to God is more akin to the moderate Protestantism of Hooker, or indeed, Catholicism, than it is to the stricter sort of Reformed doctrine associated with Calvin. In the pair's homily, with its endorsement of the idea that man has a degree of agency over his moral actions, and that through his will he has the ability to temper the sinful affections, one hears the echoes of Hooker who argues that it is by 'that light of reason [. . .] [that] good may be known from evil' (*Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, I.vii.4).³⁸

Moreover, readers of Hooker may have read the pair's words in the spirit of his proclamation

³⁸ Richard Hooker, *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity: Books 1 to 4* (London: J. M. Dent, 1907), p. 171.

that 'Goodness is seen with the eye of the understanding. And the light of that eye is reason',³⁹

However, the suggestion that man may, through his own reason and will, exercise control over the forces of carnal desire is challenged later in Book II during the castle of Alma episode (canto ix-xi). Here we see the limits of reason and the need for providential intervention to combat 'misrule and passions bace' (II.ix.1.6). In one of the most overtly allegorical episodes in the poem, Alma's castle represents the temperate body with its different sections corresponding to anatomical parts, whilst Alma, as the Italian meaning of her name suggests, stands for the soul. In the narrative, Alma's castle is under siege by Maleger's troops. Maleger, as Hamilton glosses, represents sin manifest as lust, and has been identified with 'that olde man, which is corrupt through the deceiueable lustes' of Ephesians 4.22.⁴⁰ The persistent and ongoing threat to temperance from concupiscence is suggested on an allegorical level by the way in which Maleger and his 'Vile caitive wretches' repeatedly assault the castle. No sooner are they driven away than they 'retournd againe / With greater fury, then before was fownd' (II.ix.15.1-2). Nonetheless, despite the pressures that face Alma's body from the sensual affections, she steadfastly maintains her temperance and chastity, as characterised by the way in which she is described as a 'virgin bright; / That had not yet felt *Cupides* wanton rage' (II.ix.18.1-2). However, Spenser's use of the adverb 'yet' hints at possible problems to come. Alma's 'robe of lily white' in which she 'was arayd' (II.ix.19.1), as Hamilton notes, aligns her with the pure and innocent souls 'araied in long white robes' before God's throne at Revelation 7.9 and 7.13.⁴¹ Moreover, it connects her to Una from Book I, whose robe was also 'All lilly white' (I.xii.22.7). Her vigilant self-governance

³⁹ Hooker, *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, I.vii.2, p. 170.

⁴⁰ Note to II.xi.23.1.

⁴¹ Note to II.ix.19.1.

has countered many threats to the flesh, as represented figuratively by assaults upon her castle:

On th'other syde, th'assieged Castles ward
Their stedfast stonds did mightily maintaine,
And many bold repulse, and many hard
Atchieuement wrought with peril and with payne,
That goodly frame from ruine to sustaine:

(II.xi.15.1-5)

For a number of sixteenth-century theologically-inclined readers, Alma's holiness would have been suggested through Spenser's reference to the castle's 'goodly frame'. Through his seeming use of paranomasia, the poet hints at her godliness, and thus more specifically, her holiness.

However, as the narrator acknowledges, because of mankind's inclination to sinfulness, Alma's body is too 'fraile' to protect herself indefinitely from the 'bitter tyranny' of its 'strong affections', as represented by the way in which the castle finds itself on the verge of being overthrown by Maleger's troops (II.xi.1). When repeatedly faced by 'dartes of sensuall delight, / With stinges of carnall lust' (II.xi.13.6-7) her 'forte of reason' (II.xi.1.3) proves to be too weak and insufficient to counter such an onslaught. On the brink of 'captiuity' and 'bondage' to sinfulness (II.xi.1.4,8), she must look to divine assistance to safeguard her spiritual welfare. This is dramatised in the text by the way in which it is left to Arthur to repel Maleger's army and thus safeguard the castle.⁴² According to Woodhouse, Arthur functions in Book II as the 'operation of divine grace', or rather, more fittingly for this

⁴² See notes to I.vii.42.1, II.xi.16.1-3, III.i.5.2.

particular allegorical episode, as a 'symbol of heavenly grace intervening to save [one] from inward evil'.⁴³ It is only through his timely, and perhaps divine, intervention that the forces of concupiscence are defeated.

That Arthur functions within the poem as an instrument of the divine will is alluded to at several points in the poem, not least by the way in which the poem invites its readers to associate the prince with the Christian idea of grace. This is suggested at II.viii.17.5 when the narrator describes Arthur as 'An armed knight, of bold and bounteous grace'. It is through the prince that God's grace comes to save Guyon from the threat posed by Cymochles, Pyrochles and Archimago. As Hamilton notes, when the narrator describes Arthur's 'bold and bounteous grace', he is referring to the 'th'exceeding grace / Of highest God' to his creatures of which Arthur is a vehicle (II.viii.1.5-6).⁴⁴ The salvific significance of Arthur is further hinted at when the Palmer, in his role as a Christian pilgrim, recognises the knight as 'Prince *Arthur*, flowre of grace' (II.viii.18.4) and addresses him as a 'hope of helpe, and timely grace' (II.viii.25.6). The association between Arthur and grace is again stressed when Guyon thanks Arthur for his 'most gracious ayd' in saving him and asks 'What may suffise, to be for meede repayd / Of so great graces' (II.viii.55.7-8). Similarly, at III.i.5.2 the narrator refers to Arthur as the 'Prince of grace'. Even though some readers might have interpreted these instances of the word 'grace' in moral terms, and read them as expressions of the prince's reputation for courtesy, it is equally likely that Spenser's theologically-inclined readers would have focused on the word's Christian connotations. For these particular readers, Spenser's repeated use of the word 'grace' in relation to Arthur, would have prompted them to consider the knight's

⁴³ Woodhouse, 'Nature and Grace in *The Faerie Queene*', pp. 202, 210.

⁴⁴ See note to II.viii.17.4-5.

significance in soteriological terms and thus see him as an instrument of divine will.⁴⁵ As Kathleen Williams has noted, Arthur's religious significance is further suggested by the way in which the plume of hair at the top of Arthur's helmet, which was adorned with 'pearle' and 'gold', and 'Did shake, and seemd to daunce for iollity' is compared, through the use of simile, to an 'Almond tree'. As some of Spenser's theologically-minded readers would have recognised, the 'almond is a symbol of divine approval, because of Aaron's budding rod which yielded almonds and so marked him as the chosen priest of the Lord' (Numbers 17.5-8).⁴⁶ The fact that the poem associates Arthur with this motif of miraculous and transformative power would have added to one's sense of the knight's salvific importance within the poem's soteriological landscape.⁴⁷

The severity of the threat posed by the sensual appetite, and thus the magnitude of the task needed to be achieved by divine grace, as channeled through Arthur, is figuratively suggested by the number of figures that lay siege to the castle. We learn that there are twelve separate troops of soldiers positioned strategically around the castle; as Hamilton glosses, seven of them correspond to the seven deadly sins, which assault the soul, whilst the remaining five are the vices which attack the body through the five senses.⁴⁸ The 'most horrible of hew' and 'ferce of force' is the fifth 'troupe', which represents the sense of touch (II.xi.13.1). With its 'stinges of carnall lust, and strong effort / Of feeling pleasures', it mounts its attack 'day and night' (II.xi.13.7-8). The fact that the troops associated with the sensual

⁴⁵ On Arthur's complex role in the poem as an instrument, and also on occasions recipient, of divine grace, see: Gless, *Interpretation and Theology in Spenser*, pp. 20, 23, 126-8, 130-1, 134, 136-7, 140, 142, 157, 189-91, 192, 197-8; Richard A. McCabe, 'Providence' in *The Spenser Encyclopedia*, p. 565; Mallette, *Spenser and the Discourses of Reformation England*, pp. 5, 20, 123, 182-3; Michael Steppat, *Chances of Mischief: Variations of Fortune in Spenser, Anglistische Studien*, 9 (Cologne & Vienna: Bhlau Verlag, 1990), pp. 82, 102fn., 113, 135, 283, 329.

⁴⁶ Williams, *Spenser's 'Faerie Queene': The World of Glass*, p. 22.

⁴⁷ On the theological significance of Aaron's rod see: Leland Ryken, James C. Wilhoit, & Tremper Longman III, eds., *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Illinois: IVP Academic, 1998), p. 1.

⁴⁸ Note to II.xi.6.1.

affections pose the greatest threat to the defences of Alma's castle suggests that of all the different forms of intemperance, concupiscence is the most harmful. Orchestrating the attack on Alma's castle is Maleger, who is assisted by the two hags, Impotence and Impatience. As Hamilton glosses, the hags are paired in relation to temperance. Impotence with her 'lame' leg and 'staffe, all full of little snags' represents unruliness, and the condition that prevents one from bridling one's lusts and affections (II.xi.23.6-7). Impatience, who is portrayed with a 'raging flame', is emblematic of one's incorrigible sensual appetite, as well as one's inclination towards a state of irascibility (II.xi.23.9).⁴⁹ Acting as an instrument of divine grace, Arthur, accompanied by his squire, Timias, defeats Maleger's troops thus safeguarding the castle from the threat from without: 'with his sword [he] disperst the raskall flockes, / Which fled a sonder, and him fell before' (II.xi.19.2-3). On a tropological level, Arthur's victory represents the way in which God's imputed grace defeats the forces of lust. For Spenser's Calvinist readers, one can imagine how the striking image of Arthur issuing forth from the gates of the castle to confront Maleger and his men may have embodied, on an allegorical level, the way in which the indwelling spirit and grace of God, which is located within the body of elect, acts to protect the faithful from the dangerous impulses of the sensual appetite, thereby protecting them from the threat of sinfulness and reprobation.

However, as Spenser seems to suggest through Arthur's difficulty in finally overcoming Maleger, the threat posed by sinfulness, and the sensual appetites in particular, is on occasion so formidable, unrelenting, and perhaps entrenched, that even the forces of divinity struggle to overcome it. Readers may have inferred this by the way in which after eventually apprehending and overcoming Maleger, Arthur struggles to kill the evil captain. Despite the fact that Arthur strikes Maleger with the villain's own 'yron mace' (II.xi.34.8), and then drives an 'open passage through his riuen brest' (II.xi.37.4), the figure does not die;

⁴⁹ Note to II.xi.23.

indeed, much to Arthur's horror and confusion, he does not shed any blood, as he does not have any to shed. Instead, as if by 'some magical / Illusion', after each of Arthur's assaults, Maleger's strength is renewed and he confronts the knight once more (II.xi.39.5-6). For many theologically-minded readers, Maleger's apparent imperviousness would have represented the unfaltering danger posed by sinfulness, and the work of the devil. The figure's constant renewal would have been emblematic of the ways in which Satan's powers and guile are unrelenting in their efforts to corrupt the faithful. It is only when Arthur remembers that Maleger's mother is the Earth, and that she is the source of his renewal, that the knight works out that the only way to defeat the Carle is to hoist him aloft so he has no contact with ground. The moment Arthur does this, Maleger is rendered defenceless and dies. Given his association with divine grace, Arthur's triumph over Maleger would have signalled for many readers a victory for the forces of holiness over iniquity, and in particular, carnality. However, the difficulty experienced in overcoming the Carle would have served as a reminder of how dangerous and unabating the powers of sinfulness can be. As St James notes, the journey towards righteousness is an ongoing one that requires much perseverance, although for those who remain steadfast, God will honour them with salvation: 'Blessed is ye man, that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, hee shall receiue the crowne of life, which the Lorde hath promised to them that loue him' (James 1.12).

The remarkable thing about Arthur's defeat of Maleger and his troops is that Guyon plays no part in it. Given the episode's allegorical dimension, one might have expected Guyon, as the knight of temperance, to have played a key role in defending Alma from the threat posed by lasciviousness as represented by the figure of Maleger. After all, he had earlier delivered a tropological speech during the Amavia episode on the subject of how to temper the sensual affections. His assistance here would have further emphasised the extent to which natural reason may be used, in part, to subjugate one's sinful passions. The reason

given for his omission from the scene is that he and the Palmer needed to leave Alma's castle early on the morning of the attack so that they could seize the opportunity to continue on their 'purposed iourney' with the help of the 'Ferriman' whilst the 'winde and wether [is] right' (II.xi.3.6, II.xi.4.2, 7). Critics have tended to overlook the seeming significance of Guyon's absence. On an allegorical level, it seems that the poem is suggesting through Guyon's omission that there are limits to what reason and agency can achieve in the fight against iniquity. Even though earlier in the book, Guyon and the Palmer speak of reason's ability to govern the impulses of the flesh, here Spenser seems to imply that for more severe and unrelenting attacks against the senses, such as those represented by Maleger and his troops, man's will is too weak because of his inherited depravity, therefore providential intervention is needed, as represented through the actions of Arthur. Thus we may conclude the section by arguing that Spenser presents a complex picture of man's response to concupiscence; at times man has the fortitude to subjugate the passions; however, on other occasions, his fallen state means that he must rely upon divine assistance. To some extent, Guyon's limitations could be compared to the way in which, in Book I, Redcrosse can defeat Archimago but not Orgoglio. The poem seems to suggest, again and again, that free will can get Man so far in his quest for redemption; however, on other occasions, it is only through cooperation with God that one may achieve salvation. To this end, *The Faerie Queene* seems to present the idea of a situation-specific relationship between God and human: the most dire situations of threat, on the one hand, call for divine intervention; lower-grade crises, on the other, may be resolved through recourse to human reason and virtues such as temperance.

Temperance and the Problem of Wrath

A further threat to temperance in Book II is wrath. The first time we see this is in canto ii when Guyon visits Medina's castle. Here the knight inadvertently finds himself embroiled in an altercation between Medina's sisters, Elissa and Perissa, as well as their respective lovers, Huddibras and Sansloy. As their names suggest, the figures embody Aristotelian concepts. Elissa represents deficiency, whilst Perissa stands for excess.⁵⁰ Huddibras is noted for his rashness and irascibility, whilst Sansloy is recognised by his lawlessness and insolence. Collectively, the four of them represent man's inclination to quarrelsomeness and disorder. Medina, on the other hand, corresponds to the Aristotelian idea of the Golden Mean through her unwavering composure and self-governance. Moreover, her name as well as Spenser's reference to her 'golden lockes' (II.ii.15.7) also prompt readers to think of her in terms of the Golden Mean. Her temperance and sense of emotional balance is also alluded to through reference to her 'modest guise', and being 'sober sad' (II.ii.14.5-6). On an allegorical level, she represents the way in which a state of temperance may be attained through maintaining a middle position between hostile extremes. For Spenser's religiously-disposed readers, the figure of Medina could have been assimilated within a Christian world view by interpreting her moderation and careful governance of the passions in the spirit of Deuteronomy 5.32-3 and Proverbs 4.25-7: 'Let thine eyes beholde the right, and let thine eyeliddes direct thy way before thee. Ponder the path of thy feete, and let all thy waies be ordred aright. Turne not to the right hande, nor to the left, but remooue thy foote from euill' (Proverbs 4.25-7). It is possible that the Medina episode would have appealed to a number of moderate Protestant as well as Catholic readers as it stresses the role of reason and self-governance of the passions in overcoming irascibility.

⁵⁰ See notes to II.ii.34.9, II.ii.35.1 and II.ii.36.1.

Having found himself at the centre of a vicious assault by Huddibras and Sansloy on his arrival at the castle, Guyon appears to be in grave danger as he seems powerless to defeat the ‘furious armes’ that bear down on him (II.ii.27.1). He must rely upon the timely intervention of Medina to save him. After much hostility, their ‘fury mad’ and stubborne rages’ are finally assuaged by her ‘sober speaches’ (II.ii.28.6-9). By mediating between the two sisters and their lovers in order to save Guyon, Medina figuratively highlights the way in which careful governance of the appetites may save man from the threat of irascible impulses, which if left untended, might otherwise lead to acts of discord rather than harmony and love. Apart from its obvious Aristotelian dimension, this episode, and its moral message, may also be framed within a Christian context. One can imagine how Spenser’s theologically-inclined readers may have interpreted the irascibility of Huddibras and Sansloy through the lens of the Elizabethan ‘Homelie agaynst contencion and braulynge’. As the homily suggests, wrath, such as that embodied in the figures of Huddibras and Sansloy, is the most ‘pernicious of sinnes’. Through its sense of hostility, it goes against Christian values of tolerance and benevolence, thereby fracturing one’s union with God and drawing one towards sinfulness:

we cannot be ioynted to Christ our head, except we be glued with concord & charitie, one to another. For he that is not in this vnitie, is not of the churche of Christ, whiche is a congregacion or vnitie together, & not a diuision. Sainct Paul saieth: that as long as emulacion, contencion, and factions, be emonge vs, we be carnal, and walke according to the fleshly man. And sainct Iames saieth: If you haue bitter emulacion & contencion in your hartes, glory not of it: for where as contencion is, there is inconstancy, & al euill deades.⁵¹

⁵¹ Thomas Cranmer, *Certayne sermons, or homelies appoynted by the kynges Maiestie, to be declared and redde, by all persones, vicars, or curates, euery Sondaye in their churches, where they haue cure* (London: Richard Grafton, 1547), sig. X4r.

On a tropological level, Huddibras and Sansloy embody those instincts of rancour and malice which threaten to compromise one's sense of Christian gentleness and generosity of spirit. To maintain one's communion with God, such forces of intemperance must be kept in balance and harmony. The fact that Medina is able to subdue these two figures without any divine assistance suggests, on a doctrinal level, that man is able to govern his passions through natural reason and will alone — an idea which would have been anathema to many of Spenser's Calvinist readers.⁵²

In subduing the anger of her sisters as well as Huddibras and Sansloy, Medina delivers a moralising speech in which she calls for the warring parties to 'fly from wrath' and put away 'fowle reuenging rage' as well as 'base contentious jarre' (II.ii.30.5-9). She appeals for them to seek 'lovely concord, and most sacred peace', as such things lie at the heart of 'vertue' and 'friendship' (II.ii.31.1-2). She then goes on to argue that by triumphing 'over yre and pride', 'discord' may be laid 'aside', thus clearing the ground for love and harmony to prosper (II.ii.31.6-9). As I have acknowledged, up to this point, the Medina episode has had quite an explicit Aristotelian dimension because of its allegorical consideration of the Golden Mean. And indeed, there are further instances of this classical colouring later in the same canto when we read of how the 'faire *Medina* [. . .] With equall measure [. . .] did moderate' and keep 'in order' the 'strong extremities' of her sisters' 'outrage' (II.ii.38). However, the reference to Medina's 'gracious words' (II.ii.32.1), and their emphasis upon the need for what seems like Christian accord and charity, gives her speech a strong tropological tone, which a number of readers might have interpreted as being redolent of a corrective sermon. Spenser's use of the adjective 'gracious', with its theological connotations, adds to the religious dimension of Medina's speech. The narrator's mention of 'grace' at II.ii.33.5 has a similar effect. For many

⁵² On the doctrinal belief that God is the source of all good works see: Calvin, *Institution*, sigs H1^v - H2^r.

readers, Medina's speech would have echoed the words of St Paul in Ephesians 4.31-2 by the way in which it calls for unity and concord: 'Let all bitterness, and anger, and wrath, crying, and euill speaking be put away from you, with all maliciousnesse. Be ye courteous one to another, & tender hearted, freely forgiuing one another, euen as God for Christes sake, freely forgauē you' (abbreviations *sic*). Moreover, one is also reminded of St Peter's words which also call for unity and solidarity as opposed to discord: 'be ye all of one minde: one suffer with another: loue as brethren: *bee* pitifull: *bee* courteous' (1 Peter 3.8, abbreviations *sic*). Medina succeeds as a homilist by quelling the passions of the afflicted in a way that Guyon was unable to do. As Mallette notes, 'However much [. . .] [Guyon] aspires to the role of homilist in the episode with Mordant and Amavia, [. . .] [he] is impotent to propitiate these dyspeptic knights in the first combat he finds himself in, despite the narrator's praise of his 'great prowess and heroick worth'' (II.ii.25). The task of homilist falls to Medina with her 'sober speaches', 'pitthy words and counsell sad' (II.ii.28.9,5). As Mallette argues, Medina 'fulfils, therefore, two of the primary roles of the Reformation preacher, to correct vice and then to bring comfort and reconciliation'.⁵³ The interplay between the classical and the Christian in this passage, as suggested by Medina's sermon-style speech, further highlights how it would have been common at the time for early modern readers to integrate the ethical teachings of the classical age within a Christian world view.

The Christian dimension to the episode is fulfilled when, on departing from the castle, Guyon 'earnestly' commits the 'bloody-handed babe', Ruddymane, unto the charge of Medina, in order that she can 'traîne' the 'tender youth' in 'truth' and 'vertuous lore' (II.iii.2.2-5). By uniting Medina with Ruddymane, Spenser assimilates Aristotelian morality with Christian notions of the Fall. That Ruddymane is associated with the Fall is suggested earlier at II.ii.2:

⁵³ Mallette, *Spenser and the Discourses of Reformation England*, p. 63.

Ah lucklesse babe, borne vnder cruell starre,
 And in dead parents balefull ashes bred,
 Full little weenest thou, what sorrows are
 Left thee for porcion of thy liuelyhed,
 Poore Orphane in the wide world scattered,
 As budding braunch rent from the natiue tree,
 And throwen forth, till it be withered:
 Such is the state of men: Thus enter we
 Into this life with woe, and end with miseree.

As Kathleen Williams notes, the 'child is placed as representative of all men in its personal haplessness and its inherited stain of disproportioned sin'.⁵⁴ The poem seems to encourage readers to interpret Ruddymane as an image of Original Sin when, on trying to remove the blood stains from the child's hands, Guyon thinks 'that high God, in lieu of innocence, / Imprinted had that token of his wrath, / To shew how sore bloodguiltinesse he ha'th' (II.ii. 4.3-5). On the subject of Ruddymane's blooded hands, Williams argues that we should think of them as 'a sacred symbol not only of our propensity to sin but of the suffering which that propensity brings'.⁵⁵ To this end, Williams seems to see them as a prompt for Spenser's readers to reflect upon their own moral responsibilities. I would agree with this position; by uniting Medina and Ruddymane, the poem invites readers to consider how rational government has a role in defeating the iniquity bred out of Original Sin. In doing so, it

⁵⁴ Williams, *Spenser's 'Faerie Queene': The World of Glass*, pp. 41-2.

⁵⁵ Williams, *Spenser's 'Faerie Queene': The World of Glass*, p. 43.

gestures towards a more moderate doctrinal position in which the potentiality of agency is championed.⁵⁶

Weatherby has questioned Guyon's wisdom in giving the child to Medina, arguing that, 'since the child bears the parents' stain, there is no more cause to believe that measuring out a mean will benefit him than them'.⁵⁷ Weatherby suggests that the remedy to Adam's sin, which is represented by Ruddymane's stained hands, is not the moderation of the passions but baptism.⁵⁸ As we know, Guyon does indeed enact a form of baptism on Ruddymane; however, the fact that the stain of mankind's sin remains on the child's hands suggests that the best baptism can do is to take away the guilt and shame of the Fall. It still leaves the flesh subject to moral transgression, thus necessitating the need for self-governance of the passions, as represented by Medina's guidance, which comes to stand for the role of reason in averting sinfulness. However, Spenser's Calvinist readers would have argued to the contrary, suggesting that natural reason plays little part in subjugating the passions; it is God who directs man's actions towards goodness by his indwelling grace as suggested in Psalm 37: 'The pathes of man are directed by the Lord' (line 23). Moreover, they would have argued that Ruddymane's stain can never be washed clean as Baptism cannot free man of the memory of Original Sin; the blood serves as a symbol and reminder of his inherent depravity. Conforming Protestants would take solace in the belief that for the elect there is the promise of redemption through faith alone. On balance then, it would seem that for more moderate Protestant readers, as well as Catholic ones, Guyon's decision to leave Ruddymane could be

⁵⁶ There is also a more practical reason for Guyon leaving Ruddymane with Medina — namely that he cannot take a child with him on his quest; it would endanger the child's life as well as compromise his own progress.

⁵⁷ Weatherby, *Mirrors of Celestial Grace*, p. 119. In terms of the question raised by Weatherby, there is also a matter of narrative convenience. In the same way that in Book VI Calepine cannot take the babe, which he rescued from the bear, on his quest and therefore gives it to Matilde (VI.iv.34-38), Guyon too cannot reasonably go on a quest while looking after a small child as it would hinder his progress.

⁵⁸ Weatherby, *Mirrors of Celestial Grace*, p. 122.

defended given Medina's educative role in teaching the child how to subdue his passions through the use of right reason. However, this is not necessarily the case for Spenser's conforming Protestant readers, who may have challenged the efficacy of Medina's position, and with it, the role of reason in combatting sin and earning salvation. Although, that said, it is worth remembering that even if strict Calvinist logic would have suggested that moral education is unnecessary for the elect, in practice Calvinists were extremely committed to moral and spiritual edification as demonstrated by the large number of treatises and sermons published during the period.

The next time that Guyon is confronted by figures of wrath is in canto iv in the episode involving Phaon, Occasion and Furor. By the time we reach this part of the narrative, it seems that Guyon has learned from his earlier trials and is making progress on his journey towards temperance. As Stephen Fallon notes, he is not where we left him, 'The Guyon we find walking to his meeting with Furor and Occasion in canto iv is a more developed character than the Guyon who set out from the castle of Medina in canto iii'.⁵⁹ I agree with Weatherby who urges caution about using terms such as character development in relation to allegorical figures; nevertheless the point that Fallon makes is a valid one: Guyon seems to represent something different to what he did on leaving Medina's castle.⁶⁰ The narrator praises the knight's measured self-governance, describing him as someone 'Who well could menage and subdew his pride' (II.iv.2.2). Clearly, Guyon has not mastered his titular virtue yet; the path to temperance is filled with many challenges and the knight is still prone to failures as his actions later in the book demonstrate. Nevertheless, there is evidence that he has made some progress, and as Spenser suggests, this is largely down to the instruction he has received

⁵⁹ Stephen Fallon, 'Belphebe, Braggadochio, and the Education of Guyon' in *Spenser at Kalamazoo, 1983*, ed. by Francis G. Greco (Clarion, PA: University of Pennsylvania, 1983), p. 152.

⁶⁰ Weatherby, *Mirrors of Celestial Grace*, p. 126.

from 'his most trusty [Christian] guide', the Palmer:

Who suffred not his [Guyon's] wandring feete to slide.

But when strong passion or weake fleshlinesse,

Would from the right way seeke to draw . . . [Guyon] wide,

He would through temperaunce and stedfastnesse,

Teach him the weak to strengthen, and the strong suppress.

(II.iv.2.5-9).

Here again, we see how the poem's language assimilates Aristotelian ethics with Christian morality, as shown by the way in which the Christian pilgrim proffers instruction in how to attain the Golden Mean of temperance by seeking a middle ground between weak and excessive affections. What is striking about this passage is the way in which the narrator's language seems to endorse the Pelagian view that man can take responsibility for his actions. By describing how the Palmer would 'Teach' Guyon to 'suppress' his passions, as well as through his reference to the knight's ability to 'menage and subdue his pride', the poem seems to stress the importance of reason and the will in achieving a state of temperance — an idea which would have appealed to Spenser's more doctrinally moderate readers. For those readers after 1604 who were familiar with the writing of the English Protestant theologian, Richard Hooker, the Palmer's moral guidance and its efficacy may have reminded them of the following passage from *Of the Lawes of Ecclesiasticall Politie*, in which Hooker discusses the extent to which one's reason may be shaped through habitual training and tutelage: 'Education and instruction are the meanes, the one by vse, the other by precept, to make our natural faculty of reason, both the better and the sooner able to iudge rightly between truth and error,

good and euill' (I.vi.5).⁶¹ By emphasising the importance of instruction, both Hooker and the Palmer suggest that one's reason may be trained through habituation to shape the workings of the will and steer it towards a state of temperance — a notion that would have been at odds with Reformation notions of *sola fide*.

A number of contemporary readers might have interpreted Guyon's victory over Furor and Occasion in canto iv as representing a triumph of reason over irascibility. As his name suggests, Furor is described as a 'mad man', with 'beastly brutish rage' whose 'reason' is 'blent through passion' (II.iv.3.5, II.iv.6.7, II.iv.7.7). He is the embodiment of wrath. His mother is portrayed as a 'wicked Hag' whose 'tounge did walke / In fowle reproach, and terms of vile despight' (II.iv.4.1, II.iv.5.1-2). Through her 'outrageous talke', she 'kindles' her son's anger thereby encouraging him to 'heap more vengeance' on his victims, who in this case is Phaon (II.iv.5.3, II.iv.11.5, II.iv.5.4). As Mallette notes, their 'anatomical anarchy', by which he refers to their jumbled body parts, 'shows the explosive effects of intemperance upon those who fail to govern themselves. It also conveys the impact of intemperance on those proximate to the ungoverned'.⁶² For Christians, wrath threatens one's unity with God because it is bred out of discord and malice — instincts which are anathema to Christian values of harmony and benevolence. For this reason, irascibility is described in the Elizabethan 'Homelie agaynst contencion and braulynge' as the 'most detestable vice'. As the homily notes, 'we cannot be ioynted to Christ our head, except we be glued with concord & charitie, one to another.'⁶³

At first, in trying to save Phaon, Guyon finds himself vulnerable, and loses his composure. Rather than harnessing his aggression, he allows it to become excessive — a sign of intemperance. He becomes 'enfierved' and 'overthrew[s] him selfe unwares', leaving

⁶¹ Richard Hooker, *Of the Lawes of Ecclesiasticall Politie - Eight Books* (London: John Windet, 1604), p. 57.

⁶² Mallette, *Spenser and the Discourses of Reformation England*, p. 65.

⁶³ Thomas Cranmer, *Certayne sermons, or homelies appoynted by the kynges Maiestie* (London, 1547), sigs X3^v - X4^r.

himself exposed to the vicious assaults of the 'villein', Furor (II.iv.8.6-9, II.iv.9.1). However, he eventually summons up the strength to overpower the creature and is on the verge of killing him, in a further act of intemperance, when the Palmer suddenly intervenes using the rhetoric of moral discourse:

Not so O *Guyon*, neuer thinke that so
That Monster can be maistred or destroyd:
He is not, ah, he is not such a foe,
As steele can wound, or strength can overthroe.

(II.iv.10.2-5).

Assuming the role of moralist, the Palmer delivers a timely speech counselling Guyon of the dangers of irascibility. Drawing upon the language of admonitory and corrective moralising speeches, the pilgrim extolls the need for temperance in overcoming wrath, brought about through reason. He suggests that countering anger with anger is harmful. Through the Palmer's advice, the poem prompts readers to consider how by seeking to enact what appears to be just punishment for wrongs committed to oneself or another, one may ironically transfigure into that which one is fighting against — an image of intemperate rage; therefore one must reject retribution — a sentiment which may have reminded a number of readers of Psalm 37: 'Cease from anger, and leaue off wrath: fret not thy selfe also to doe euill' (line 8). Readers familiar with the Church's official homilies would have found this message further reinforced in the 'Homelie agaynst contencion and braulynge': 'in goynge about to reuenge euil, we shew our selves to be euil, and while we will punysh and reuenge another mannes

folly, we double and augment our awne folly'.⁶⁴ In choosing violence to confront wrath, we risk turning ourselves into figures of the same vice; instead, a different tact is needed: measured restraint. In stating that Furor 'is not such a foe / As steele can wound, or strength can overthrow', the pilgrim also seems to suggest that wrath cannot fully be destroyed or eradicated. Its threat is ever present, presumably because of man's fallen state, and thus the best one can hope for is to subdue one's inclination to it through careful self-governance.

Guyon's receptivity to the Palmer's advice is reflected through his subsequent actions in which he spares the creature's life, thereby enacting the words of 1 Thessalonians 5.15: 'See that none recompense euil for euil vnto any man: but euer folow that which is good, both toward your selues, and toward all men'. Taking heed of the Palmer's warning that Furor cannot be halted by violence, he turns to Occasion whose tongue he locks in chains, and whose arms he binds to a stake, thereby removing the source and proclivity of Furor's anger. The knight's subjugation of Occasion renders Furor powerless, which enables Guyon the opportunity to bind him 'With hundred yron chaines' (II.iv.15.1).

The extent to which Guyon has learned from the Palmer's instruction is reflected through the advice he then himself issues to Phaon. On hearing of the young knight's tragic story, in which Phaon recounts how with 'hellish fury' he vengefully murdered his duplicitous friend, Philemon, as well as his beloved, Claribell (II.iv.30.2), Guyon takes the turn of moraliser. Using the language of a consolatory speech, he assuages Phaon's distress, claiming 'sore have ye beene diseasd; / But all your hurts may soon through temperance be easd' (II.iv. 33.8-9). Then drawing upon the rhetoric of admonitory and corrective moralising speeches, he adds:

Vnlucky Squire . . . Sith thou hast

⁶⁴ Thomas Cranmer, *Certayne sermons*, sig. Y.iiir.

Falne into mischiefe through intemperaunce,
Henceforth take heede of that thou now hast past,
And guyde thy waies with warie governaunce,
Least worse betide thee by some later chaunce.

(II.iv.36.1-5)

In beseeching Phaon to learn from his errors, and by advocating ‘warie governaunce’ of the irascible impulse, Guyon’s language demonstrates a self-reflectiveness. His sagacity appears indicative of his own apparent spiritual progress as he seems to have learned from the Palmer’s advice regarding the best way to overcome wrath. By suggesting that one should exercise ‘warie governaunce’ in guiding one’s ‘waies’, Guyon follows the Palmer in seeming to endorse a works-based soteriological economy. The word ‘warie’, with its connotations of being cautious and on one’s guard, gestures towards notions of agency and care, which serve to frame the events of this episode within a more moderate doctrinal landscape.

In delivering his speech to Phaon, Guyon is joined by the Palmer who also plays the role of moralist, drawing upon the rhetoric of the corrective and admonitory genres. He warns Phaon that if ‘wretched man’ lends the ‘bridle’ to his ‘affections’, then it is only a matter of time before they grow in ‘strength’ and create psychomachic ‘warres’ in which the ‘fort of Reason’ is overthrown by the ‘cruell battry’ of ‘Wrath, gelosy’ and ‘griefe’ (II.iv.34). Later readers might be reminded here of Donne’s Holy Sonnet XIV with its references to the speaker as being ‘like a usurped town’ who has been subjugated by the Devil (‘Your enemy’) to the extent that ‘Reason [. . .] is captived’.⁶⁵ To some readers, the reference to ‘bridle’, with its equestrian connotations, would have evoked Platonic associations rather than Christian

⁶⁵ John Donne, *Selected Poems*, ed. by Ilona Bell (London: Penguin, 2006), p. 184.

ones by calling to mind the allegory of the chariot from *Phaedrus* (section 246a - 254e). Here Plato uses the allegory of the chariot to symbolise the tripartite nature of the human soul whereby the charioteer represents man's reason, whilst the white winged horse stands for honour and temperance and the black winged horse embodies the fleshly passions. However, Protestant readers of Spenser who were familiar with the Geneva Bible would have recognised that the word is used frequently in a religious context in the marginal notes of that version of the Bible; for instance note 'A' to Malachi 2.15 reads: 'Conteine your selues within your boundes, and bee sober in minde, and bridle your affections'. Similarly, note '15' to Ephesians 4.26 reads: 'He teacheth vs to bridle our anger in such sort, y^t although it be hote, yet y^t it breake not out, and that it be straightwaies quenched before we sleepe: lest Satan taking occasio to giue vs euil counsel through y^t wicked counsellor, destroy vs' (abbreviations *sic*). To some extent, the Palmer's phrasing is rooted in the language of Reformation discourse through his reference to 'wretched man' with its Calvinistic overtones of man's depravity. However, his mention of 'Reason' assimilates it within a more moderate doctrinal landscape. In extolling his form of asceticism, the Palmer's words are not only directed towards Phaon, but also channel themselves into the psyche of Guyon, serving to edify him.

A number of readers may have been reminded through the Palmer and Guyon's words of St Paul's advice to the Galatians:

vse not *your* libertie as an occasion vnto the flesh, but by loue serve one another. For all the Lawe is fulfilled in one worde, which is this, Thou shalt loue thy neighbour as thy selfe. If y^e bite and deuoure one another, take heede least y^e be consumed one of another. Then I say, Walke in the Spirit, and y^e shal not fulfill the lustes of the flesh' (Galatians 5.13-16, abbreviations *sic*).

As Mallette notes, the Palmer and Guyon's 'homiletic counsel reproduces Paul's injunction to walk in the spirit'.⁶⁶ They disseminate Paul's advice by advocating brotherly love and charity over hateful scorn. However, for Phaon, their advice comes too late. He has already surrendered himself to the flesh, and through his wrath, has lost Claribell as a result. His disappearance from the text after being counselled by Guyon and the Palmer leaves the reader at a loss (II.iv.34-36). The inconclusiveness of his fate, following his disappearance, might have raised questions for some readers about Guyon's effectiveness as a homilist, and possibly hints at the limits of reason in overcoming rage and fury.

Guyon's third encounter with a figure of wrath comes in canto v when he is challenged by a far more menacing opponent, Pyrochles. As his name suggests, Pyrochles is a fiery malcontent who delights in 'blood and spoile' (II.iv.42.4). His tempestuous nature is reflected through the iconography of his 'flaming sword' as well as his 'bloody red' steed which 'fomed yre, / When his maistring spur he did him roughly stire' (II.v.6.1, II.v.2.8-9). Pyrochles is assisted in his frenzied tirades by his varlet, Atin, who acts as a forerunner to seek out occasions for his master's irascible delight. At the end of canto iv, Atin affronts Guyon; however, the knight, ever watchful of his affections, maintains his composure in the face of such provocation by responding 'mildly' to the varlet's railing. It is possible that for some of Spenser's religiously-disposed readers, Guyon here enacts the advice of Proverbs 15.18: 'An angrie man stirreth vp strife: but hee that is slowe to wrath, appeaseth strife'. On his arrival at the scene, Pyrochles immediately sets into action by launching a vicious attack upon Guyon; however, despite his 'Exceeding wroth' (II.v.7.1), Guyon again demonstrates measured self-control. In the 'heat of all his strife, / [the knight] Was wary wise, and closely did awayt / Avauntage, whilst his foe did rage most rife' (II.v.9.5-7). In being 'wary wise' he enacts the advice that he himself gave Phaon at II.iv.36.4: 'guyde thy waies with warie governaunce'.

⁶⁶ Mallette, *Spenser and the Discourses of Reformation England*, p. 65.

Eventually, through skill and ‘faire sleight’, Guyon’s opportunity comes to claim ‘faire victory’ (II.v.11.1, II.v.12.2). By not giving in to unrestrained wrath, the knight is able to defeat his fiery opponent. Pyrochles’s earlier encounter with Furor and Occasion has rendered him impotent. The malcontent has literally run out of steam. Having seized victory, Guyon is on the verge of killing his foe. However, perhaps remembering the words of the Palmer at II.iv.10.2-4, in which the pilgrim warns Guyon that wrath can never be destroyed by wrath itself, and also taking heed of Pyrochles’s pleas for mercy, the knight grants clemency and spares the villain’s life. Although his action is not expressed in specifically Christian terms, the fact that Guyon chooses the spirit of Christian love and mercy over the flesh, would have meant that, for many of Spenser’s readers, the knight puts into practice the words of St Paul in Galatians 15.13-16, as well as Luke 6.36: ‘Be ye therefore mercifull, as your Father also is mercifull’. By sparing Pyrochles’s life, Guyon imitates the leniency of God. Moreover, in not acting hastily when provoked, his actions may be read in the spirit of Proverbs 14.17, which warns that, ‘He that is hastie to anger, committeth follie’. One can imagine that Guyon’s allegorical triumph over Pyrochles, the book’s embodiment of wrath, as well as his subsequent act of benevolence towards him, would have struck a number of readers as a sign of the knight’s spiritual progression towards temperance, and with it, righteousness.⁶⁷

After sparing Pyrochles, Guyon again takes the opportunity to enact the role of preacher. Employing the language of admonitory and corrective moralising speeches, he counsels Pyrochles to quit his irascible ways:

Fly, O *Pyrochles*, fly the dreadful warre,

That in thy selfe thy lesser partes doe move,

⁶⁷ At this point, it is worth reminding readers that I use the term ‘righteousness’ in its theological sense as opposed to its moral one. To this end, I use it in accordance with the *OED*’s definition: ‘conformity to the precepts of divine law’. See *OED*, ‘Righteousness’, n., 1.a.

Outrageous anger, and woe working jarre,
Direfull impatience, and hartmurdering love.

(II.v.16.1-4).

Guyon's reference to 'the dreadful warre', which some sixteenth-century readers might have taken to mean the psychomachic conflict between passion and reason that is waged in one's soul, recalls the language of the Palmer at II.iv.34. His advice to Pyrochles to find inner peace would have reminded a number of readers of the sentiments expressed in Psalm 37.8: 'Cease from anger, and leaue off wrath', as well as Ecclesiastes 7.11: 'Be not thou of an hastie spirit to be angry: for anger resteth in the bosome of fooles'. We may also read Guyon's advice in the spirit of St Paul in Ephesians 4.31: 'Let all bitternesse, and anger, and wrath, crying, and euill speaking be put away from you, with all maliciousnesse'. The fact that Guyon's words echo those of the Palmer's at II.iv.34 suggest that the knight is starting to assimilate the pilgrim's Christian teachings, and is instinctively utilising them to counsel others. However, because of his inherent stubbornness, Pyrochles refuses to take heed of Guyon's advice, and instead beseeches the knight to release Furor and Occasion, the projections of his psychological torment. Guyon warns him that the pair's 'freedom' shall create greater 'scath' and discord (II.v.18.4). However, Pyrochles is unrelenting in his desire and pleads for their bonds to be withdrawn. The moment Guyon relents and liberates the pair, the villain's relief is lost as they set upon him. Consequently, he again finds himself emblematising a psychomachic drama. Recognising his error, Pyrochles pleads for Guyon's help against the 'hellish wight' (II.v.23.9). The knight is on the verge of granting him mercy for a second time when the Palmer intervenes, arguing, 'He that his sorrow sought through wilfulnesse [. . .] Deserves to taste his follies fruit, repented payne' (II.v.24.7-9). The pilgrim's counsel appears

harsh and at odds with Christian ideas of forgiveness and mercy. However, as some moderate Protestant, as well as Catholic, readers might have interpreted, such correction is necessary if man is going to enjoy a degree of agency with regards to his salvation in this works-based soteriological economy as the book seems to suggest it is. Pyrochles must accept the consequences of his actions if he chooses repeatedly to stray from the path of righteousness. If we read his punishment in the spirit of Proverbs 20.30, then such discipline is necessary in order to rid the figure of his iniquity and stimulate his moral renewal: ‘the blewnes of the wound serueth to purge the euill’. Pyrochles’s suffering serves as a cautionary tale for both himself and Guyon.

The extent of Pyrochles’s psychomachic torment, which stems from his own wilfulness, is highlighted in canto vi when he complains of burning within from Furor’s ‘implacable fyre’ (II.vi.44.2). With the flames alluding to Hell’s infernal fire, he cries ‘I burne, I burne, I burne [. . .] Yet nought can quench mine inly flaming syde’ (II.vi.44.1-3). With a sense of self-pity, he adds, ‘I [am the] [. . .] most wretched man aliue, / Burning in flames, yet no flames can I see, / And dying dayly, dayly yet reuiue’ (II.vi.45.2-4). Pyrochles’s words echo those of St Paul at 1 Corinthians 15.31 who speaks of how ‘I die dayly’. When Pyrochles flings himself into the lake for relief, only to discover that it has no effect, we are reminded of the episode at II.ii.3 when Guyon tries unsuccessfully to wash Ruddymane’s hands clean. In theological terms, the ineffectualness of the water suggests that baptism alone cannot provide atonement for man’s sinful nature, nor can it quicken one’s faith as Calvinists would have had one believe at the time; the passage seems to suggest that works must also play a part in mankind’s quest for redemption.⁶⁸

⁶⁸ Edward Muir, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe*, 2nd edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 185-6.

Guyon's encounters with Pyrochles's brother, Cymochles, is more complex, and suggestive of the fact that the knight still has far to go on his soteriological journey. He comes across Cymochles for the first time on Phaedria's Isle of Idlenesse when the latter confronts and attacks the knight out of jealous rage: 'Let be that Lady debonaire, / Thou recreaunt knight, and soone thy selfe prepaire / To batteile, if thou meane her love to gayn' (II.vi.28.4-6). Atin had earlier recruited Cymochles's help after locating him in Acrasia's Bower of Bliss where he is enjoying a kind of Epicurean withdrawal. Like his brother, Cymochles is a malcontent. His name derives from the Greek: kuma (wave) and ochleo (to move, trouble and disturb), which implies restless energy and generative force. Cymochles presents a more formidable opponent than his brother as he is a projection of both the irascible and concupiscent impulses, as his furious envy reflects. The latter impulse is demonstrated in canto v when we see him delight in the sensual pleasures of Acrasia's Bower of Bliss where he is described as 'given [. . .] to lust and loose liuing' (II.v.28.3).

Cymochles is depicted by Spenser as a formidable opponent whose 'vnknightly raylinges' threaten Guyon's temperance by invoking in him a 'wrathfull fire' (II.vi.30.6-7). Unfortunately, the knight's attempts to defeat this allegorical projection of wrath and lust are compromised by the absence of the Palmer, whom he earlier had to leave behind at the shore of the Lake of Idlenesse before setting off on his journey with Phaedria (II.vi.19-20). Without his Christian pilgrim to guide him, Guyon is unable to defeat his counterpart, thereby emphasising the extent to which he is still reliant upon his spiritual guide. With neither Guyon nor Cymochles able to seize the advantage, the fight ends in a stalemate, and the knight returns, via Phaedria's help, to the same spot where he started. This displacement seems to suggest that Guyon has figuratively backslid rather than made progress with his allegorical course, which in turn alludes to the way in which one's quest for temperance, and, with it,

holiness, is often prone to frustrations. Such is the nature of fallen man; the quest for control of the passions is an ongoing one that requires constant vigilance and faith. To this end, one might be reminded of the words of St Paul in 1 Corinthians 16.13: 'stand fast in the faith' and James 5.11: 'Beholde, we count them blessed which endure'.

Temperance and Threats from Covetousness

In canto vii, Spenser suggests that temperance requires not only the ability to moderate one's inclination towards concupiscence and wrath, but also the ability to overcome the impulse of avarice as represented by Guyon's encounter with Mammon. Greed and covetousness represents the major danger to the knight's spiritual well-being in this episode. The word 'Mammon' was originally the Aramaic term for 'riches' and during the period featured in some versions of the New Testament at Matthew 6.24 and Luke 16.9-13. Spenser depicts the figure as an 'vncouth, saluage, and vnciuile wight, / Of griesly hew' (II.vii.3.4-5) who tempts Guyon with promises of great wealth if only the knight will 'deigne to serue and sew' at his 'commaund' (II.vii.9.1-2). He represents all the 'Riches, renowne, and principlaity, / Honour, estate, and all this worldes good, / For which men swinck and sweat incessantly' (II.vii.8.5-7). Spenser's religiously-minded readers would have seen in Mammon a different type of threat to Guyon's state of temperance than we have seen before, but nonetheless one which is just as detrimental to his salvation, for greed and avarice are anathema to Christian values of charity and humility. As St Luke states, 'it is easier for a camel to go through a needles eye, then for a riche man to enter into the kingdome of God' (Luke 18.25).

As part of his attempt to lead Guyon into avarice, Mammon leads the knight on a tour of his cave, which is resplendent with riches. Guyon's visit has two key precedents. The first is the epic hero's visit to the underworld, as seen in Book 11 of Homer's *Odyssey*, Book 6 of

Virgil's *Aeneid* and Dante's *Inferno*. The second, and more relevant for this study, is the temptation of Christ in the wilderness by Satan, as outlined in Matthew 4.1-11 and Luke 4.1-13. The religious element to Guyon's visit is emphasised by Spenser's language which contains Biblical echoes that link it to Christ's temptation in the desert. For instance, whilst in the cave, Mammon proclaims to Guyon, 'doest not thou weet, / That money can thy wantes at will supply? / Shields, steeds and armes, and all things for thee meet / It can purvay in twinckling of an eye' (II.vii.11.1-4). The phrasing's sense recalls Luke 4.5: 'Then the deuill tooke him vp into an high mountaine, and shewed him all the kingdomes of the world, in the twinkeling of an eye'. The sense to which readers might have identified Mammon with the Devil is seen further by Spenser's description of the former's smokey face and 'cole blacke hands' which gestures towards the infernal fires of Hell.

Guyon's ability to resist Mammon's offer of riches, which the latter claims are the source of 'glory and renowne', is made difficult by the fact that he is alone, and without the assistance of 'his trustie [Christian] guyde', the Palmer whom he left at the Idle Lake (II.vii.11.9, II.vii.2.1). In order to withstand Mammon's advances, the knight must rely upon his Christian instincts, and the lessons that he has learned so far on his quest. Spenser compares Guyon's situation to that of a ship's 'Pilot' who is 'well expert in perilous wave' but who must now guide his vessel through 'foggy mistes' and 'cloudy tempests'. The imagery, which is not especially Christian, emphasises the extent to which the challenge Guyon faces is distinctly different to those he has had to overcome before (e.g. concupiscence, irascibility and jealous rage) (II.vii.1.3). To be successful in his trial, he must draw upon the experience of his 'long experiment' (II.vii.i.7), as well as 'his owne vertues' and the memories of his 'praise-worthie deeds' (II.vii.2.5). For many Reformed Protestant readers who sought to interpret this passage through a religious lens, the 'Pilot' metaphor would have been problematic because of how it seems to stress the importance of individual reason and fortitude in overcoming temptation

and sinfulness. Mainstream Protestants would have found this suggestion controversial as they believed that man could take no credit for good works, such as avoiding temptation; they maintained that such acts are the fruits of a true and lively faith whose source is the godhead. As we see, Guyon achieves his task commendably. Drawing again upon the language of moralising discourse, he counters Mammon's rhetoric by explicating how 'riches' are the 'roote of all disquietnesse; / First got with guile, and then preserv'd with dread, / And after spent with pride and lavishnesse, / Leaving behind them grieve and heavinesse' (II.vii.12.1-5).

Even though Guyon does not frame his discussion in explicitly religious terms, his rejection of wealth is likely to have been interpreted soteriologically by Spenser's theologically-disposed readers.⁶⁹ For some readers, Guyon's denunciation of wealth, and his suggestion that avarice leads to sinfulness and misery would have recalled the words of Psalm 37.16: 'A small thing vnto the iust man is better, then great riches to the wicked *and* mightie'. Moreover, his words would have echoed those of Proverbs 11.4: 'Riches auaille not in the day of wrath: but righteousnes deliuereth from death'. In part, Guyon rejects Mammon's offer of riches by identifying the ways in which they can pervert the integrity of the individual and lead to 'strife', 'bloodshed' and 'dishonour', as well as create moral distress and guilt: 'the troublesome stormes, that tosse / The priuate state' (II.vii.12.7-9, II.vii.14.1-2). Enacting the earlier wisdom of the pilgrim, Guyon goes on to proclaim that 'through fowle intemperaunce, / Frayle men are oft captiv'd to covetise' (II.vii.15.1-2). The indications suggest that Guyon has recovered from his experience with Cymochles in which he appeared to regress in the absence of the Palmer. He seems to have steadied his composure to the point that he is in control of his will, or at least Spenser seems to suggest that the form of intemperance that Mammon symbolises is more manageable than the jealous rage that

⁶⁹ It is important to note that non-Christian moralists (e.g. the stoics) have also seen riches as morally problematic.

Cymochles represents. It seems that the poem is trying to suggest that bodily passions, such as lust and rage, are more difficult to temper than those of a material nature such as covetousness.

To emphasise the unrelenting threat caused by the vice of covetousness, Spenser has Mammon take Guyon on an extended tour of his cave, even after the knight has initially rejected his offer of wealth. In doing so, he takes him to the House of Richnesse, whose relationship to iniquity is suggested by the way in which its door adjoins 'the gate of Hell' (II.vii.24.6). On the way to the house, Guyon encounters a range of personifications which anticipate the misery awaiting those who fall prey to Mammon's rhetoric: Payne, Strife, Revenge, Despight, Treason, Hate and Gealosity. Steadfast in his resolve, Guyon maintains his composure and refuses to be distracted by the projections of excess that threaten him on his way. On entering the House of Richnesse, Guyon is confronted by the sight of Mammon's daughter, Philotime, who as her name suggests, represents love of honour. In her hand, she holds a 'great gold chaine' called Ambition which links Heaven to Hell. On the chain are Philotime's worshippers who selfishly try to climb higher and higher in their pursuit of glory, whilst simultaneously preventing others from rising above them. The image emphasises the sinfulness and envy associated with personal gain in the material world. We read of how 'Some thought to raise themselves to high degree, / By riches and unrighteous reward, / Some by close shouldring, some by flateree; / Others through friends, others for base regard' (II.vii.47.1-4). At this point, it is possible that some of Spenser's readers would have been reminded of the warning outlined at 1 Timothy 6.9: 'For they that will be rich, fall into tentation and snares, and into many foolish and noysome lustes, which drowne men in perdition and destruction'. Moreover, the words of Luke 9.25 might also have resonated with readers through their warning that man should eschew riches else it should compromise one's hopes of salvation: 'For what auantageth it a man, if he win the whole worlde, and destroy

himselfe, or lose himselfe?’ It is feasible that *The Faerie Queene*’s readers would have recognised, or at the very least, faintly detected the scriptural echoes here, predisposing them to think more keenly, perhaps about the theological allegory as much as the political or moral.

Because of his heightened sense of temperance, Guyon is able to resist the temptation of Mammon’s wealth, as well as the false promise of honour, as embodied through the figure of his daughter, Philotime. However, his rejection of the different forms of excess takes its toll, and after three days of exemplary self-governance, his ‘vitall powres gan wexe both weake and wan, / For want of food, and sleepe’ (II.vii.65.2-3). Consequently, he requests to be taken back to the surface; on finally resurfacing from Mammon’s cave, Guyon faints. As Harry Berger notes, this is a ‘peculiar humiliation’ for the knight who had earlier displayed ‘the self-sufficiency of a Stoic, the temperance of a true chivalric hero, an Aristotelian magnanimity, a resistance to evil which has been compared to that of Christ — and has done this while separated from his guide, the prudent Palmer’.⁷⁰

It is possible to make sense of Guyon’s loss of consciousness at the end of canto vii if we think of it as a key moment in the narrative. Up to this point, as Berger notes, Guyon has generally ‘dominated the action (except for canto iii, the Belphebe episode) and [. . .] [has] shown himself adequate to [. . .] [most] challenges’, albeit with the assistance of the Palmer to guide him at crucial times.⁷¹ This is seen most noticeably in his defeat of Occasion, Furor and Pyrochles, as well as his resistance to Mammon’s temptations. Furthermore, it is also demonstrated through his safe delivery of Ruddymane into the caring hands of Medina, and also the way in which he avoids Phaedria’s sensual advances whilst being ferried across the Lake of Idlenesse. Throughout each of these episodes, Spenser seems to have emphasised the knight’s agency in governing the appetites of the will especially with regards to the

⁷⁰ Berger, *The Allegorical Temper*, p. 4.

⁷¹ Berger, *The Allegorical Temper*, p. 5.

suppression of the irascible impulse. However, this all changes following Guyon's fainting spell. From this moment onwards we see a shift in the moral and theological landscape of the poem. The Christianised Aristotelianism that has dominated up to this point, proves itself inadequate for the challenges that lie ahead in cantos viii to xii. Even though the faculty of reason has got Guyon so far in his quest, on its own, it will be no match for the forces of evil that will confront the knight in the final five cantos of the book. For these final challenges, he must rely upon the grace of God to assist him, which it does by reaching down and transforming the soteriological terrain with divine love.

As Spenser's astute readers will have noticed, this shift in emphasis within the poem towards a greater sense of the part played by divine intervention in man's salvation is signalled overtly at the beginning of canto viii. In response to Guyon's loss of consciousness, which places him at risk of attack, the narrator muses 'And is there care in heauen?' (II.viii.1.1). To which the narrator reaffirms to himself:

[. . .] But O th'exceeding grace
Of highest God, that loves his creatures so,
And all his workes with mercy doth embrace,
That blessed Angels, he sends to and fro,
To serue to wicked man, to serue his wicked foe.

(II.viii.1.5-9)

As Hamilton notes, the narrator's rhetorical question and his subsequent response invokes 1 Peter 5.7: 'Cast all your care on him: for he careth for you'.⁷² Moreover, the reference to

⁷² Note to II.viii.1.

God's 'exceeding grace' would have reminded a number of readers of Psalm 145.9: 'The Lord is good to all, and his mercies *are* ouer all his workes'.⁷³ The poem's language in this stanza, through Spenser's reference to 'grace' and 'wicked man', prompts readers to consider how, because of humankind's inherent depravity resulting from the Fall, there are occasions when human agency is insufficient in the fight against iniquity and man finds himself reliant on divine intervention in times of adversity. The narrator's promise of divine love and mercy comes in the form of a guardian angel who comes down to Faerie Land to minister God's work and thus help Guyon from what will be the threat posed by Cymochles and Pyrochles. The angel first enters the narrative as a voice that alerts the Palmer to Guyon's whereabouts: the pilgrim 'heard a voyce, that called lowd and cleare, / Come hether, come hether, O come hastily; / That all the fields resounded with the ruefull cry' (II.viii.3.7-9). As Hamilton notes, the urgency of the call is conveyed by the unusual stress on the line; there are two opening amphibrachs followed by a trochee and ending with an amphotrochee.⁷⁴ The angel 'bad him come in haste' (II.viii.4.4). On discovering the beleaguered figure of Guyon, the Palmer comes face to face with the angel who has been watching over the knight. The divine figure explains his purpose, and also the need for the Palmer's vigilance:

The charge, which God doth unto me arrett,
Of his [Guyon's] deare safety, I to thee command;
Yet will I not forgoe, ne yett forgett
The care thereof my selfe unto the end,
But evermore him succour, and defend

⁷³ Note to II.viii.1.

⁷⁴ Note to II.viii.3.8.

Against his foe and mine: watch thou I pray;
For evill is at hand him to offend.
So having said, eftsoones he gan display
His painted nimble wings, and vanisht quite away.

(II.viii.8)

The fact that it is an angel that appears to the Palmer alerting him to Guyon's predicament would have heightened for many readers the sense that Guyon's quest for temperance is a holy one that is overseen by God. We have already noted that temperance is a Christian virtue, as it is one of the nine Fruits of the Holy Spirit of Galatians 5.22-23; the intervention of the angel at II.viii.8 frames Guyon's safety in even more religious terms. It is possible that a number of Calvinist readers might have interpreted the appearance of the angel as evidence of Guyon's election. They might have interpreted its appearance as representative of the way in which God protects the elect and provides benediction to them through intercession in earthly affairs. Similarly, if one, in part, thinks of the Palmer as the projection of Guyon's reason, as some readers might have, then the angel's communication with the old man may be seen to represent the way in which God channels and imbues his grace into the minds of his subjects to guide them towards righteousness.

The imminent danger which the guardian angel refers to at II.viii.8 appears in the form of Pyrochles and Cymochles who come to take revenge on Guyon. As we know, the knight has faced the pair before; however, this time they represent a greater threat because of the fact that their powers have been strengthened by the assistance of Archimago whose help they have enlisted (II.viii.10-11). Through his 'slie' and malevolent handling, which proves to be more effective than the impotent railings of Atin, the pair present a more formidable threat to

Guyon's safety. As some religiously disposed readers might have inferred, to counter the increased threat caused by the appetites of wrath and sensual wantonness, divine intervention is needed.

This providential assistance appears in the form of Arthur who arrives on the scene just in time to save Guyon from the 'inflam'd' figures of Pyrochles and Cymochles (II.viii.12.1). The pair are just in the process of removing Guyon's helmet and shield, his symbols of chivalric integrity, and with it his state of temperance, when 'they spyde, where towards them did pace / An armed knight, of bold and bounteous grace' (II.viii.17.4-5). Arthur, as the embodiment of divine love, as the narrator's reference to 'grace' suggests, has entered the narrative just in time to save Guyon from the allegorical projections of his own sinfulness (II.viii.25.6). As if to underline Arthur's theological significance, the Palmer heralds the knight's arrival and beseeches his assistance using language that likens the knight to a saviour / god-like figure:

But you, faire Sir, whose honourable sight
Doth promise hope of helpe, and timely grace,
Mote I beseech to succour his sad plight,
And by your powre protect his feeble cace.

(II.viii.25.5-8)

The Palmer's use of the phrase 'Doth promise hope of helpe, and timely grace', as well as 'your powre protect' frames Arthur's rescue of Guyon within a theological context because of the words' soteriological connotations, and encourages the reader to see the knight's fortuitous arrival as a manifestation of providential intercession. Calvinist readers might have seen this

as indicative of Guyon's justification, whereby God is overseeing the physical and spiritual well-being of one of his elect by intervening in earthly affairs. In contrast, more moderate doctrinal readers might have interpreted the passage as an example of the way in which God protects those who are most deserving through their good works, which in this case is Guyon following his ability to overcome Mammon's trial in the Cave.

In response to the pilgrim's plea, Arthur confronts the two brothers and tries to reason with them for as he states to the Palmer, 'Words well dispost / Have secrete, powre t'appease inflamed rage' (II.viii.26.7-8). The power and efficacy of moralising has been made evident, to a greater extent, earlier in the narrative through the relatively successful speeches of Guyon and the Palmer. However, on this occasion language, and with it reason, is impotent to assuage the appetites of wrath and discord. Arthur must counter the threats to Guyon's safety through force which he does by killing the two knights. On an allegorical level, Arthur's seemingly providential defeat of the forces of wrath may be read as a dramatisation of Psalm 138.7: 'Though I walke in the middes of trouble, yet wilt thou reuiue me: thou wilt stretch foorth thine hand vpon the wrath of mine enemies, and thy right hand shall saue me'.

As Berger notes, the Christian significance of Arthur's fight with the two brothers is further heightened by the way in which, for the first time in Book II, Pyrochles and Cymochles are described as Paynims (five times) and Pagans (four times) who swear by Mahoune.⁷⁵ The fact that this information is only disclosed now emphasises the religious tenor of the episode, and makes them more than just projections of intemperance. As Berger notes, 'When we first met them, Pyrochles and Cymochles were not "foes of God" but foes chiefly of themselves'.⁷⁶ However, this all changes in canto viii through Spenser's allusion to their pagan identities. Apart from being a soteriological fight against intemperance, Arthur's

⁷⁵ Berger, *The Allegorical Temper*, pp. 56-7.

⁷⁶ Berger, *The Allegorical Temper*, pp. 56-7.

encounter with the two brothers, with Archimago looking on, recalls the broader religious conflicts played out in Book I.

The fight between Arthur and the two malcontents emphasises the dangers caused by malevolent distortions of wrath and concupiscence. The fight is a fierce one, and made worse by the guile of Archimago, who lends Pyrochles his evil sword, Morddure. At times it appears that the forces of intemperance are too strong to be defeated as suggested by the brothers' 'hideous strokes, and importable powre' (II.viii.35.2). At one crucial point, Arthur finds himself without sword and wounded by the Paynym: 'Wyde was the wound, and a large lukewarme flood, / Red as the Rose, thence gushed grievously' (II.viii.39.1-2). However, as if to underline the role played by divine providence in combatting iniquity, Spenser has the religious figure of the Palmer give Arthur Guyon's sword just in time. At the same moment, the Palmer also beseeches God's help: 'Fayre Sonne, great god thy right hand blesse, / To vse that sword so wisely as it ought' (II.viii.40.3-4). Almost immediately following the pilgrim's plea for divine assistance, Arthur's strength returns to the extent that he is compared, through the use of a simile, to a 'Lyon', which as Hamilton notes, is a biblical simile to express God's wrath at 2 Samuel 17.8 (II.viii.42.1).⁷⁷ With his regenerated strength comes 'wrath' and 'disdaine' (II.viii.42.6). However, whereas irascibility is a sign of intemperance for Pyrochles and Cymochles, for Arthur, it is the opposite. It is, in the Aristotelian sense, the sign of true temperance as it is the harnessing of the excess appetite for worthy and justifiable moral reasons.⁷⁸ As a result of God's benediction of Arthur's right hand, the knight finally overcomes the allegorical figures of intemperance. The fact that the Palmer beseeches God to bless Arthur's right hand is significant as that particular hand is referenced at several times in the Bible as a sign of God's love towards the righteous, not least at Psalm 138.7: 'Though I

⁷⁷ Note to II.viii.40.7-9.

⁷⁸ Tilmouth, *Passion's Triumph over Reason*, pp. 20-33.

walke in the middes of trouble, *yet* wilt thou reuiue me: thou wilt stretch foorth thine hand vpon the wrath of mine enemies, and thy right hand shall saue me'. Firstly, even with the help of Morddure, Pyrochles is no match for the force of divine grace. He then defeats the more challenging threat of Cymochles who represents the impulse of jealous wrath brought about by concupiscence. Almost immediately after the brothers' deaths at the hands of Arthur, Guyon is revived and regains consciousness, which hints at how temperance may not coexist alongside irascibility and concupiscence. The wider Christian significance of Arthur's victory is signalled by the Palmer's reference to Guyon of 'those two Sarazins confounded late', which again serves to frame the knight's victory within the religious context of Book I's theological landscape (II.viii.54.8). Strangely, under Arthur's care and protection, Guyon finds himself back on horseback at II.ix.10 after his original horse had been stolen by Braggadocchio in canto iii. The sudden and unexplained image of Guyon on horseback, after he has previously spent much of the narrative on foot, is suggestive of the way in which he is now back in control of his passions (as represented by the horse) due to the guiding influence of divine grace, as represented by the providential appearance of Arthur.

Canto xii and the Limits of Reason

In this final section, I will consider what seems to be for many critics the most problematic episode from Book II: canto xii and Guyon's encounter with Acrasia in the Bower of Bliss. The canto begins with the boatman transporting Guyon and the Palmer through the 'watry wilderness' (II.xii.29.9) to the island where Acrasia's Bower of Bliss can be found. On their journey they encounter numerous hazards and challenges to Guyon's progress. Each one represents an allegorical threat to Guyon's temperance. Throughout, the hazards appear to have Homeric and Virgilian influences. For instance, the mermaids of II.xii.30 recall the

sirens that call out to Odysseus in the *Odyssey*, 12.165-200, whilst the Rock of Reproach as well as the Gulfe of Greedinesse allude to the classic accounts of Scylla and Charybdis in the *Odyssey* (12.73-259) and the *Aenied* (3.354-69). However, despite the number of classical motifs that adorn the path to Acrasia's island, for many readers Guyon's quest would have remained framed within a religious context by the way in which the knight is accompanied by a Christian pilgrim, and the fact that the virtue of temperance, with which he is associated, is one of the nine Fruits of the Holy Spirit listed at Galatians 5.22-23. The numerous biblical allusions along the way augment the religious tenor of Guyon's journey. For instance, the Palmer's use of his staff at II.xii.26.7 to 'smote the sea' and quell the attack of Acrasia's sea monsters recalls Jesus's calming of the waters at Mark 4.39, as well as Moses's use of his staff to part the Red Sea at Exodus 14.21. The staff's mystical qualities are implied later when we read of the Palmer's 'mighty staffe, that could all charmes defeat' and how 'Such wondrous powre did in that staffe appeare' (II.xii.40.3,8).

The difficulty with this final canto stems largely from Guyon's seeming impotence, by which I mean his apparent lack of conviction in mastering his affections. Since his display of moral continence in Mammon's cave, in which he replicated Jesus's trial in the desert by successfully rejecting numerous temptations, he seems to have struggled and found himself dependent upon divine assistance, which Calvinist readers might have argued is representative of the limitation of reason and works in guarding against sinfulness. One might infer that his back-sliding is suggested by the way in which, at this climactic point in the poem, he finds himself a passenger on board the boat rather than at the helm. His passivity implies an unreadiness to confront the dangers to temperance that line the way to Acrasia's island. The task is left to the Palmer, who rebukes Phaedria at II.xii.16, steers the boat on a temperate line between the Quicksand of Unthriftyhed and the Whirlpool of Jeopardy at II.xii.18, and disperses Acrasia's sea monsters at II.xii.26. It is also the Palmer who assumes the role of

homilist at II.xii.9, when at the Rock of Reproch, he warns of ‘lustfull luxurie’, ‘thriftlesse wast’ and ‘leud delightes’. When Guyon falls for the lamenting charms of the ‘dolefull Mayd’ at II.xii.28.2, it is the Palmer who disobeys his request to steer the boat towards her. Drawing upon the discourse of a corrective moralising speech, he states:

Faire Sir, be not displeased if disobayd:
For ill it were to hearken to her cry;
For she is inly nothing ill apayd,
But onely womanish fine forgey,
Your stubborne hart t’ affect with fraile infirmity.

To which when she your courage hath inclind
Through foolish pittie, then her guilefull bayt
She will embosome deeper in your mind,
And for your ruine at the last awayt.

(II.xii.28.5-29.4)

The pilgrim’s refusal to obey Guyon’s request to sail over to the ‘dolefull Mayd’ allegorically represents reason’s subjugation of the will. However, it is not just the Palmer who acts as the knight’s moral compass. When Guyon shows a similar error of judgement in mistaking Phaedria’s Wandering Islands for Acrasia’s Bower of Bliss, it is left to the Ferryman to alert him to his misconception. The knight’s inability to recognise the Wandering Islands despite having visited them in canto vi is suggestive of his moral regression.

Having reached Acrasia's island, Guyon's passivity continues. It is the Palmer who once again leads the way using his 'mighty staffe' to subdue the 'wilde beasts' of II.xii.39.6. When Guyon finds himself bewitched by the 'Two naked Damzelles' bathing in the pool at II.xii.63-68, it is the old man who 'rebukt those wandring eyes of his, / And counseld [him] well' so as to quash his 'kindled lust' (II.xii.69.2-3, II.xii.68.6). That is not to say that Guyon is totally ineffectual as the pair make their way towards Acrasia's bower. At II.xii.53 we read of how he 'passed forth' through the plain of artifice, 'Brydling his will, and maystering his might' (II.xii.53.4-5). Moreover, at II.xii.57.3 we note how he 'violently cast' the cup to the ground which was offered him by the figure of Excesse. However, such instances of Guyon's self-governance are quite rare in canto xii. When they do appear, they hint at the knight's earlier continence and suggest that the lessons he learned earlier in the narrative are lying latent rather than having been forgotten.⁷⁹ The problem of sensuality, which confronts him throughout canto xii, is a different threat to that posed by the impulse of irascibility earlier in the narrative. It requires a different strategy to defeat it; allegorically this comes in the form of the Palmer.

Earlier in the book, up to the episode in Mammon's cave, it was feasible that some of Spenser's readers might have interpreted the Palmer as an allegorical projection of man's reason. Indeed, some readers might have continued to read him this way following that episode. However, it is possible to argue that since the guardian angel appeared to the pilgrim at II.viii.5 directing him to help Guyon, the Palmer's role appears to have changed. His meeting with the angel (the only time such a thing occurs in the whole of *The Faerie Queene*) seems to have invested him with a holiness that some sixteenth-century Reformed readers might have taken to correspond to the way in which divine grace is imputed into the reason of

⁷⁹ The knight's earlier continence is suggested at II.v.1-17 when he overcomes Pyrochles, and also at II.vii.43-50 when he refuses the offer of worldly advancement through marriage to Mammon's daughter, Philotime.

the faithful, guiding them towards acts of righteousness. To this end, from canto viii onwards, whenever the Palmer counsels Guyon, it is possible to imagine how some readers might have interpreted the former's advice as the allegorical projection of divine grace working within the faculty of reason to subjugate the will's base affections. One might even go so far as to suggest that, for some, the Palmer could have been an allegorical projection of Sapience, one of the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit referred to in 1 Corinthians 12.8. He certainly exercises a wisdom and sagacity. The knight's reliance upon the pilgrim in the latter episodes of the narrative could have allegorically represented for some the way in which man must rely upon the inner working of divine grace to help him combat the greater threat of concupiscence that reason alone cannot handle. As the earlier cantos demonstrated, to a point, through habituation and a concerted effort, Guyon's own agency is adequate to overcome the irascible affections. However, as the temptations of canto xii suggest, it is not strong enough to defeat the challenge posed by the sensual affections; for this, divine grace is needed. Passages such as these seem to suggest that individual circumstances determine the required balance of human-divine cooperation.

When Guyon first arrives at the Bower, he gives the impression of being able to resist its dangers:

Much wondred *Guyon* at the fayre aspect
Of that sweet place, yet suffred no delight
To sinke into his sence, nor mind affect,
But passeth forth, and lookt still forward right,

Brydling his will, and maystering his might

(II.xii.53.1-5).⁸⁰

At this point, through Spenser's use of language in line 5, Guyon seems to enact the advice given in the marginal note 'A' to Malachi 2.15 in the Geneva Bible: 'Conteine your selues within your boundes, and bee sober in minde, and bridle your affections'. The practical teaching that characterises the book of Malachi seems to be of specific relevance to this particular part of the final canto of Book II. Both the passage and commentary seem to suggest that it is possible for the will to be bridled, presumably by reason, thereby ensuring that it is able to resist the dangers of intemperance.

However, despite appearing to be in control of his will as the quotation above suggests, the knight's subsequent wanton destruction of the Bower of Bliss at II.xii.83 proves to be problematic.⁸¹ We read:

But all those pleasaunt bowres and Pallace braue,

Guyon broke downe, with rigour pittillesse;

Ne ought their goodly workmanship might saue

Them from that tempest of his wrathfulnesse,

But that their blisse he turn'd to balefulnesse:

Their groues he feld, their gardins did deface,

⁸⁰ For Spenser's focus upon artifice in the Bower of Bliss, as shown by images of artistic fashioning and deceitfulness see: Lewis, *The Allegory of Love*, pp. 326-33.

⁸¹ On critical receptions of the destruction of the Bower of Bliss, see: Paul Alpers, 'Bower of Bliss' in *The Spenser Encyclopedia*, pp. 104-7; Berger, *The Allegorical Temper*, pp. 211-40; Lynette C. Black, 'Prudence in Book II of *The Faerie Queene*', *Spenser Studies*, 13 (1999), 65-88; Gless, *Interpretation and Theology in Spenser*, pp. 191-2; Hough, *A Preface to 'The Faerie Queene'*, pp. 161-6; Hugh MacLachlan, 'The Death of Guyon and the Elizabethan Book of Homilies', *Spenser Studies*, 4 (1984), 93-114; Mallette, *Spenser and the Discourses of Reformation England*, pp. 80-3; M. Pauline Parker, *The Allegory of 'The Faerie Queene'* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1960), pp. 150-4; Williams, *Spenser's 'Faerie Queene': The World of Glass*, pp. 71-8.

Their arbers spoyle, their Cabinets suppressse,
 Their banket house burne, their buildings race,
And of the fayrest late, now made the fowlest place.

(II.xii.83)

Spenser's use of the phrase 'tempest of his wrathfulnesse' emphasises the extent to which Guyon's actions seems to be out of control. The poet creates an image, not of measured aggression, but of irrational rage. In reading of his destructive wrath, one recalls Cymochles, whose own anger stems from feelings of jealous lust. For many Protestant readers familiar with the Geneva Bible, Guyon's intemperate destruction of the Bower would have been at odds with the advice given in note 15 to Ephesians 4.26, which reads: 'He teacheth vs to bridle our anger in such sort, yt although it be hote, yet yt it breake not out, and that it be straightwaies quenched before we sleepe: lest Satan taking occasio to giue vs euil counsel through yt wicked counseller, destroy vs' (abbreviations *sic*). Hamilton has offered an alternative slant on Guyon's destruction of the Bower of Bliss by suggesting that it is sanctioned by the destruction wrought by Josiah at 2 Kings 23.6-14.⁸² This particular interpretation would justify Guyon's actions by framing them within a more acceptable religious context. However, even if we accept the viability of this reading, Book II's conclusion remains problematic; the fact that after all of this destruction, Acrasia is entrapped rather than killed suggests that the threat of concupiscence never dies; it can only be subjugated. This unresolved ending is consistent with several other books: Archimago and Duessa are not killed at the end of Book I, and the Blatant Beast escapes in Book VI. In soteriological terms, the poem would have seemed to suggest to its readers that the menace of

⁸² Note to II.xii.83.

sinfulness is ever present and cannot easily be eradicated; thus one must be vigilant in order to follow the path of righteousness.

Critics have been divided in their readings of this passage. For Parker, the destruction of the Bower ‘might seem sheer vandalism if we did not recall the falsehood and perversion that corrupted it. This has only been the beauty of a drugged dream or mirage. Death was inherent to it, as its own inhabitants know’.⁸³ For Mallette, Guyon’s violence is also justified as the Bower represents the ‘body as alluring object’, and the knight’s destruction of it is necessary to subjugate its seductive charms.⁸⁴ Thus for a number of critics, Guyon’s act of destruction could be interpreted in a positive light if we perceive it as the harnessing of excessive irascible affections for justifiable moral purposes. However, given the knight’s weakness and heroic impotence since canto viii, it is also possible that his actions would have represented for many of Spenser’s early readers another display of intemperance, which, at this stage in the book, might have prompted some to question the efficacy of Guyon’s quest. For Gless, the knight’s destruction of the Bower means that ‘Guyon corrupts the good works he [previously] performs’. Gless goes on to argue that this concluding episode ‘provides a final reminder that temperance is a limited virtue [. . .] Book II’s persistent ironies [of which the Bower of Bliss passage represents one such example] implies that temperance can be more effective, and perhaps even more generous, when its proponents recognise its limitations and acknowledge its status as a subsidiary manifestation of holiness’.⁸⁵ For Berger, Guyon’s act of intemperance is a necessary step in the reader’s moral education: ‘God sends Guyon to the Bower on our behalf, awakens in him the dim consciousness of desire and mortality, sacrifices his innocence so that we may gain the understanding Guyon does not need’.⁸⁶

⁸³ Parker, *The Allegory of ‘The Faerie Queene’*, p. 153.

⁸⁴ Mallette, *Spenser and the Discourses of Reformation England*, p. 81.

⁸⁵ Gless, *Interpretation and Theology in Spenser*, p. 191.

⁸⁶ Berger, *The Allegorical Temper*, p. 240.

In the final two stanzas, we again see the way in which the poem assimilates classical allusions within the broader soteriological framework of the book. Gryll's disdain at being transformed back into a man recalls the actions of the sailor with the same name from the *Odyssey*, who having been turned into a pig by Circe, refuses to be turned back. Gryll's wish to remain a beast in this final section of Book II is suggestive of how figures may desire to resist or embrace their salvation within the poem's theological landscape — an idea which credits man with a degree of agency over his eventual salvation or damnation. As Hamilton notes, the Palmer's remark, 'Let *Gryll* be *Gryll*', alludes to Revelation 22.11: 'he which is filthie, let him be filthie still'.⁸⁷ This position is one that would appeal to more doctrinally moderate readers as it elevates the significance of individually responsibility and free will. It suggests that man has the autonomy to either accept or refuse God's grace. The fact that this appears right at the end of Book II is also striking. It is likely to have left a lasting impression on sixteenth-century readers for whom matters of salvation were so important by alerting them to the possibility that lies within each of us. For Spenser's more Calvinist readers, Gryll's reasoning is indicative of his irreparable depravity; his preference for being a hog is suggestive that he is one of the reprobate — those who have been predestined by God to eternal damnation.

* * *

Book II prompts one to question why, at a point in the poem when Spenser is moving on from the key foundational (and explicitly Christian) idea of holiness, does he choose to address temperance next? It might be that he sees control of the self as at the root of all one's behaviour in the world. Because Spenser's method of addressing the issue of temperance is often so ambiguous, readers of different doctrinal persuasions would have been able to arrive

⁸⁷ Note to II.xii.87.8.

at different conclusions as to how self-control is attained — either through God’s grace alone or with an element of co-operation. This ambiguity is compounded by the sense of unfinishedness at the end of Book II — which is in turn consistent with Spenser’s methods elsewhere in the poem. As I have argued throughout the course of the chapter, Spenser seems to conceive of temperance as a contingent virtue, wherein precise individual circumstances determine the required balance of human-divine cooperation. To this end, we can also think of it as a facet of holiness. And if this is indeed the case, then it has implications for existing views of the theological tenor of Book II, and also *The Faerie Queene* as a whole. As the next chapter will identify, the question of free will and its place within *The Faerie Queene*’s soteriological landscape is one that dominates the remaining books.

Chapter Two:

The Trials of Timias: Towards a Definition of Spenserian Honour

Introduction

The subject of the current chapter is Timias — Prince Arthur's 'dearly loued Squire' (I.vii. 37.1). Very little has been written about Timias, despite the fact that he appears in five of the six completed books of the *Faerie Queene* (I, II, III, IV and VI).¹ This is not too surprising. Timias does not have a book named after him, his appearances in the poem are sporadic and he tends to orbit the main events of the narrative, existing on the periphery of things rather than dominating the action. The current chapter will call for a reassessment of Timias's significance within the poem, and more importantly it will argue for a reappraisal of his theological importance within the poem's soteriological landscape. It will suggest that, despite his minor status, Timias performs a key role in *The Faerie Queene* by the way in which he both represents and challenges Protestant assumptions regarding the path to salvation. Moreover, it will consider how Timias operates in different ways at different times within the poem.

As Hamilton notes, the squire's name derives from the Greek word for honour, *time*. For Spenser's readers who had a knowledge of Greek, the name *Timias* would have hinted at the character's allegorical significance, although they would have to wait until Book III

¹ Brief discussions of Timias can be found at: Jeff Dolven, *Scenes of Instruction in Renaissance Romance* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2007), pp. 225, 228-30; Hamilton, *The Structure of Allegory in 'The Faerie Queene'*, pp. 140-1, 162-3; Kaske, *Spenser and Biblical Poetics*, pp. 43-6, 61-2; A. Leigh Deneef, 'Timias', in *The Spenser Encyclopedia*, pp. 690-1; MacCaffrey, *Spenser's Allegory: The Anatomy of Imagination*, pp. 267-90, 276-8, 281-2, 316, 362-3; Mallette, *Spenser and the Discourses of Reformation England*, pp. 102-5, 134-5, 171, 182-5, 188-90; Paul Suttie, *Self Interpretation in 'The Faerie Queene'* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2006), pp. 36-7.

before his name is disclosed. Those without a knowledge of Greek would need to work out from the poem what Spenser might have meant by the name. James Nohnberg has argued that apart from its association with honour, the name also generates meaning from its wordplay on *time*, which suggests the character's opportuneness.² Indeed, Timias's timely intervention at several points in the narrative lends credence to this idea as I will later demonstrate.

The concept of honour, with which Timias is associated, was understood in broad terms during the early modern period. As the *OED* notes, since c.1300 the term had come to refer to a 'quality of character entitling a person to great respect; nobility of mind or spirit; honourableness, uprightness; a fine sense of, and strict adherence to, what is considered to be morally right or just'.³ In addition to this, 'honour' was also used, and had been since c.1225, to refer to 'great respect, esteem, or reverence received, gained or enjoyed by a person or thing; glory, renown, fame; reputation, good name'.⁴ As the definitions suggest, the early modern view of honour was open to a broad range of interpretation. To a large extent, it was perceived to be meritocratic. Honour could be acquired by an individual if he performed acts of moral integrity, virtue and loyalty in relation to his civic duty. The writing of the Elizabethan heraldist, Gerard Legh, reflects this association between honour and 'good workes' when in 1562 he stated that honour or 'Noblenes of vertue' is 'a glory gotte by corage of manhod, [. . .] chast liuinge, and by laudable honestie'.⁵ Later, as the lawyer, Richard Argoll noted when writing the preface for the 1597 edition of Legh's *The Accedens of Armory*, honour could also be earned through an individual's 'martiall prowes', which, he claims, was

² James Nohnberg, *The Analogy of 'The Faerie Queene'* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), p. 314.

³ *OED*, 'honour', n. 2a.

⁴ *OED*, 'honour', n. 1a.

⁵ Gerard Legh, *The Accedens of Armory* (London: Richard Tottill, 1562), sig. C8r.

the 'chiefe aduancer of gentry'.⁶ Spenser's treatment of Timias reflects this merit-based conception of honour. He seems to suggest that for Timias to live up to the promise of his name, as well as showing that he is worthy of being Prince Arthur's squire, the squire must earn renown through being the embodiment of moral integrity and justness. Moreover, he must demonstrate heroic qualities by displaying fortitude, courage and loyalty in the face of adversity and danger, which he does in books I and II whilst fighting alongside Arthur in the pursuit of good. However, as Spenser suggests in his depiction of the squire in books III, IV and VI, it is often difficult to achieve this ideal, as well as to maintain it due to humankind's inherent frailty following the Fall. To this end, he suggests that honour is a fragile and limited virtue. In part, this is why it is so valued once it has been won, although one may question the extent to which Spenserian virtues are ever *won* in the sense of being secured, as the final canto of Book II suggests with regards to Guyon's destruction of Acrasia's Bower of Bliss.

Central to Spenser's conception of honour is the idea that in order to be worthy of respect in the eyes of others, one must first and foremost show temperance through the ability to govern one's passions. In particular, one must be able to master the affections of pride, irascibility and concupiscence. Spenser implies that these are the corrosive elements that pose the largest threat to a person's good name as Timias discovers in books III, IV and VI through his dealings with the three fosters, Belphoebe, Lust and Mirabella. It is perhaps odd that temperance should continue to be foregrounded in the later books given its feature in Book II. However, it seems that Spenser has purposefully structured the poem so that there is a meaningful sequence of virtues through the six books. As I suggested above in relation to Book II, the poem seems to suggest that control of the self is the root of all one's behaviour in the world, and as the unfinished nature of Book II implies, the pursuit of temperance is an ongoing one given man's susceptibility to sinfulness. To this end, Timias functions in the

⁶ Gerard Legh, *The Accedens of Armory* (London: Henry Ballard, 1597), sig. A5^r.

poem to facilitate the realisation of the other books' virtues through combatting those forces of intemperance, which threaten one's sense of honour. It is possible that some of Spenser's Calvinist readers would have argued that because of humankind's inherent depravity, man is incapable of subjugating these sinful impulses and earning honour through deeds. For the Reformers, honour was something that only God could bestow upon the elect through the gift of unmerited grace. It was a state of being that was interchangeable with justification. However, as we will see through his treatment of the squire, Spenser suggests that despite humankind's weakness, man's will still has the ability to earn honour through reason's capacity to cooperate with, and work alongside, grace in the pursuit of goodness.

As Richard Cust and Mervyn James have identified, the early modern notion of honour was not just meritocratic, it was also overlaid with ideas of lineage and aristocracy.⁷ It is to this particular ancestral sense of honour that Legh refers when he states that 'Nobleness' stems from 'a dignitie, & excellecie of birth, & lignage'.⁸ The degree of honour that one derived from one's pedigree was obviously of great importance to those wishing to curry favour and secure a position at Court. It provided the prospective courtier with the foundation with which to launch their successful career and win influence. During his time as a sizar at Pembroke College, Cambridge, Spenser would have had the opportunity to rub shoulders with sons of the aristocracy and nobility, and therefore would have seen at first hand the way in which lineage was interchangeable with honour and opportunity. His experiences working as secretary to Dr John Young, Bishop of Rochester, in 1578, and, more significantly, for Lord Dudley a year later would have had the same effect. It would have underlined the

⁷ This was expressed by the gentry through their preoccupation with displaying their genealogy and heraldry through elaborate coats of arms on window glasses, house decorations and family monuments. Richard Cust, 'Honour and Politics in Early Modern England: The Case of Beaumont vs. Hastings', *Past and Present*, 149 (1995), 57-94; Mervyn James, *Society, Politics and Culture: Studies in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 308-415.

⁸ Legh, *The Accedens of Armory* (1562), sig. C7r.

disadvantage that he found himself in in comparison to others with whom he came into contact. As a result of his relatively humble background as the son of a merchant brought up in East Smithfield, Spenser would have to work twice as hard in establishing his good name and reputation if he wanted to secure a position at Court.⁹

One way that Spenser tried to establish his reputation and honour was through claiming ties of kinship to the aristocracy. In the *Prothalamion* (1596), he writes:

At length they all to mery *London* came,
To mery London, my most kyndly Nurse,
That to me gaue this Lifes first natiue sourse:
Though from another place I take my name,
An house of auncient fame.

(Lines 127-131)¹⁰

The lines state that Spenser comes from London. However, more significantly, they also suggest that his family are originally descended from ‘another place’ — a ‘house of auncient fame’. According to Hadfield, the family that Spenser claims kinship to is most probably the Spencers of Althorp and Wormleighton who had made money through sheep farming. By the time that Spenser came to write the *Prothalamion* in 1596, he had already dedicated four poems to the daughters of Sir John Spencer.¹¹ In the dedicatory epistle that prefaces *Mother Hubberds Tale*, he writes to Sir John’s fifth daughter, Anne Spencer (Lady Compton and Monteagle), claiming ‘humble affection and faithfull duetie’ which he is ‘bound to beare to

⁹ Hadfield, *Edmund Spenser: A Life*, pp. 22-3.

¹⁰ *The Shorter Poems*, p. 495.

¹¹ Hadfield, *Edmund Spenser: A Life*, pp. 19-22.

that House, from whence yee spring'.¹² His comments seem to suggest that he has chosen to dedicate the poem to her as a result of their joint understanding of their shared ancestry.

Moreover, in dedicating *The Tears of the Muses* to Lady Strange, who was Alice Spencer, the youngest of Sir John's daughters, Spenser praises the lady's nobility before then referring to the 'priuate bonds of affinitie, which it hath pleased your Ladiship to acknowledge'.¹³

Presumably, the 'bonds' that Spenser alludes to are those of kinship. If this is correct then Spenser's use of the word 'acknowledge' suggests that Lady Strange has been receptive to his claims of ancestral ties. The poet's attempts to glean some form of favour through exploiting a connection between himself and the Northamptonshire family are further hinted at in the lines:

[. . .] I deuised this last slender meanes, both to intimate my humble
affections to your Ladiship and also to make the same universallie knowen
to the world; that by honouring you they might know me, and by knowing
me they might honor you.¹⁴

Significantly, Spenser uses the word *honour*, and its derivatives five times in the dedication. It reads as though Spenser is trying to highlight the honour and reputation of the family, before then establishing a link with them in order that he might improve his own sense of standing and esteem, thereby distancing himself from his own relatively lowly background. In addition to this, Spenser made a further dedication; this time it was to the third daughter, Elizabeth Spencer. The dedication came in the epistle that prefaced another poem from the *Complaints*:

¹² *The Shorter Poems*, p. 234.

¹³ *The Shorter Poems*, p. 190.

¹⁴ *The Shorter Poems*, p. 190.

Muiopotmos, or the Fate of the Butterflie. Finally, the three sisters are praised in *Colin Clouts come home againe* (1595):

Ne lesse praiseworthie are the sisters three,
The honor of the noble familie:
Of which I meanest boast my selfe to be,
And most that vnto them I am so nie.

(Lines 536-539)

When the five references are read together, it looks as though Spenser was trying to gain aristocratic favour, as well as honour and prestige, through claiming kinship. As Hadfield notes, the dedications and verse references look ‘carefully calculated’.¹⁵ It would certainly have been in Spenser’s interests to have identified ancestral ties — the Spencers were one of the wealthiest families in the country at the time. Moreover, it is unlikely that Spenser would have suggested links so publicly unless there was evidence of some form of connection. The fact that Spenser went to such lengths to claim ties of kinship shows that he recognised the importance of lineage and what it meant to one’s sense of honour, and with it, one’s chances of securing patronage or gaining employment. An understanding of Spenser’s attempts to claim ancestral links to the Spencers of Althorp and Wormleighton helps to extend our sense of the poet’s conception of honour. In *The Faerie Queene*, we have a concept of honour earned through action; but in Spenser’s life we have evidence of his efforts to acquire honour through claims of kinship. The two are not necessarily contradictory but rather complementary.

As the sixteenth century wore on, concepts of honour with regards to the elite ruling

¹⁵ Hadfield, *Edmund Spenser: A Life*, p. 20.

class became increasingly associated with Christian humanism and public service. As Cust notes, during this period, we begin to see an emphasis on education as the hallmark of a gentleman and a qualification for public office. There also emerges a need for a reputation for holiness.¹⁶ Together, these elements produced an ideal. The ability to formulate an elaborate rhetorical style that incorporated legal, biblical and classical allusion was seen by many as the ‘hallmark of a suitably learned member of the governing class’.¹⁷ It reflected a measured and judicial mind — attributes that were deemed essential for those who harboured pretensions of advancement. As we will see, and as one might expect, the association between godliness and honour is one that seems to underpin Spenser’s thinking on the virtue. The ability to demonstrate one’s holiness through upholding the Christian virtues of continence, courtesy, charity and fortitude is at the centre of Spenser’s treatment of Timias.

According to Linda Pollock, during the early modern period, honour increasingly became associated with ideas of restraint and moderation.¹⁸ In particular she suggests that it was bound up with the related virtues of magnanimity, temperance and obligation. Within this code of honour, it was seen to be more desirable to act with forbearance, patience and charity than to create discord through irascibility. The ability to control one’s temper, and create harmony and reconciliation out of disunity was believed to be the mark of a Christian gentleman. Moreover, this ability to defuse a situation rather than respond rashly or hot-headedly to it was also thought to be a quality of leadership for the aspiring courtier as it demonstrated self-governance of the passions. It was widely regarded as an insult for a gentleman to be thought of as hot-headed or fiery because it suggested a failure to control the will. According to Pollock, ‘English culture [at this time] was suffused with the ideal of

¹⁶ Cust, ‘Honour and Politics’, pp. 70-1.

¹⁷ Cust, ‘Honour and Politics’, p. 72.

¹⁸ Linda Pollock, ‘Honour, Gender and Reconciliation in Elite Culture, 1570-1700’, *Journal of British Studies*, 46 (2007), 3-29 (pp. 9-16).

restraint: domestic conduct books, theological strictures, and courtesy literature all counselled temperance in mental as well as physical activities'.¹⁹ As will become apparent, this notion of restraint as a hallmark of honour is at the heart of Spenser's conception of the virtue. On several occasions we see the squire impetuously rush into a situation only to find himself in trouble when a more considered and measured response would have been preferable. This is demonstrated most notably in the episodes involving Amoret, the Blatant Beast and Mirabella. On each occasion, Spenser uses Timias to offer a warning about the danger of being hot-headed and rash, a notion that he explores most fully in 'The Legend of Temperance'.

The most obvious challenge to a gentleman's sense of restraint and control was when his honour was brought into question through a slur upon his character. In the poem, this threat is personified by the figure of the Blatant Beast who is at issue in Book VI. As both Cust and Pollock note, for a small sub-group of the elite, namely young men with something to prove, the most obvious way to respond to a slight or slanderous attack on one's reputation was to defend it through violence in the form of a duel. However, as the century progressed, it became increasingly common to see male members of the gentry defend their honour through more moderate and less violent means such as courtroom litigation in the Star Chamber. This option provided a more civilised way to protect one's honour, or conversely, attack someone else's reputation.²⁰ Moreover, it gave individuals the opportunity to uphold their good name by demonstrating their breadth of learning and rhetorical prowess.

For the sixteenth-century gentry, honour was as much a private virtue as it was a public one. A husband's ability to uphold patriarchal authority within his family was a significant aspect of his honour. As Cust notes, a husband's failure to maintain order within his own family suggested that he would be ineffectual in government. Analogies were often

¹⁹ Pollock, 'Honour, Gender and Reconciliation', p. 13.

²⁰ Cust, 'Honour and Politics', pp. 57-94; Pollock, 'Honour, Gender and Reconciliation', pp. 6-13.

drawn between the family and the state, the king's authority routinely being compared to that of a father within the family and the 'ordering of households being seen as a model for the ordering of villages, counties and ultimately the whole nation'.²¹ The male leader of the household was held responsible for the conduct of his wife, children and servants. His public status and reputation was very much dependent upon his performance of household duties such as the extension of hospitality to guests and leading family worship. For those male members of the elite who aspired to magisterial office, suitability to serve was demonstrated through the ability to preside and govern over a well-ordered family and household. Within the context of the poem, the importance of patriarchal authority within the domestic sphere and its relation to male constructions of honour is something that Spenser does not explore in any great detail. In fact, the only occasion when he does gesture towards it is in Book III when the aged Malbecco is cuckolded and thus dishonoured after his wife Hellenore abandons him in favour of Paridell. In contrast, the Christian concept of hospitality and the related virtue of charity are central to books I and VI of *The Faerie Queene*. In Book I, Una leads Redcrosse to the House of Contemplation where he receives hospitality, and also doctrinal instruction at the hands of, among others, Cælia, Fidelia, Speranza, Charissa and Mercie. In Book VI, Calidore is offered hospitality by the aged shepherd, Melibœ. In terms of Timias, the squire does not provide hospitality or charity; however, he is the recipient of it in Book VI when the hermit offers shelter to him as well as Arthur and Serena. The old man then goes on to care for the squire and Serena by helping them recover from the wounds inflicted by the Blatant Beast. In each of these instances, but perhaps more so in the episode involving Timias because of the figure's association with honour, Spenser seems to suggest that the extension of hospitality and charity is an honourable sign of faith and holiness as it demonstrates altruism and selflessness.

²¹ Cust, 'Honour and Politics', p. 81.

The extent to which ideas about esteem and reputation were central to early modern constructions of honour may be measured by the way in which the word was used interchangeably with a number of other terms during the period. As Walker notes, the noun 'honour' was frequently used alongside other words such as 'name', 'fame', 'carriage', 'condition', 'reputation', 'credit', 'honesty', 'virtue' and 'chastity'.²² Each of these terms had a bearing on the way in which honour was imagined and constructed. In much the same way, words such as *infamy*, *slander*, *disgrace*, *stain*, *slur*, *blemish* and *shame* were often used in the same context as the noun *dishonour*. Together, these terms point towards a conception of honour that is founded upon ideas of respect, pride and moral dignity. Moreover, they suggest that honour is relational, and bound up with notions of worth and one's claim to respect in the eyes of others. As we shall see, many of these terms, and the ideas that they embody, lie at the heart of Spenser's consideration of honour. Through his treatment of Timias, and the figure's interaction with other characters, Spenser constantly seems to be experimenting with such idioms in order to qualify, as well as stretch, extend and redefine, what honour means in both a secular and religious sense.

So far, this consideration of honour in early modern England has focused on the ways in which the virtue was imagined by the elite ruling class. However, it is important to note that during this period, the notion of honour increasingly assumed a greater religious significance, which is key to our consideration of Timias and Spenser's conception of the virtue. The extent to which honour took on a more profound theological dimension can be gauged by looking at the way in which the term was used in some of the most important doctrinal publications of the time. In the opening paragraph of the *Act for the Vniformitie of Common Prayer*, printed in the 1559 *booke of common prayer*, we read of the 'honor of God'

²² Walker, 'Expanding the Boundaries of Female Honour in Early Modern England', p. 236.

and how this had been abused through Queen Mary's decision to repeal Edward VI's previous Act of Uniformity.²³ The word also appears in the same publication under the section 'Of Ceremonies'. In relation to the liturgy, it is stated that 'the setting forth of Gods honour or glorye' may only take place and thus guide 'the people to a moste perfecte and Godly lyuyng without errour or supersticion' if popish ceremonies are abolished.²⁴ In both publications, the word honour is used to signify God's greatness and glory. What is important in these two instances is that the way in which the word has been used implies that honour has a particular association with Protestantism. They suggest that God's grandeur can only be correctly exalted through the ordinances of the Protestant Church, and that the idolatrous veneration of saints as well as the popish liturgy of the Roman Church are corrupt forms of worship that threaten to bring dishonour to God. As we will see, Spenser's Christianity underpins his particular conception of honour and frames his treatment of Timias. However, the question of whether Spenser's form of Christian honour is overtly Protestant, like that seen in the official Church of England publications cited above, is more problematic as this chapter will show.

The term *honour* also appears in another official Protestant publication — Cranmer's 1547 'Homelie on the saluacion of mankynd', where man is urged to 'seke in all thinges, his glory and honor, not our sensuall pleasures & vaynglory, evermore dreadynge willinglye to offende suche a merciful God and loving Redemer in word, thought, or dede'.²⁵ Here Cranmer beseeches the faithful to reject sinfulness in favour of a life of pious devotion, whereby they may aspire to God's honour, by which Cranmer appears to mean God's nobility of spirit and moral wholesomeness. The idea that man may work towards achieving a sense of honour, which may be thought of as Christian honour, through the abnegation of the flesh, as well as

²³ Church of England, *The booke of common prayer, and administracion of the sacramentes, and other rites and ceremonies in the Church of England* (London: Richard Jugge & John Cawood, 1559, STC / 2295:01), sig. A2r.

²⁴ Church of England, *The booke of common prayer*, sig. B2v.

²⁵ Cranmer, *Certayne sermons*, sig. F1v.

by eliminating pride in favour of humility is one that seems to shape Spenser's presentation of Timias. Spenser's theologically-inclined readers would find this message alluded to in the squire's encounters with the three fosters and the giant Lust, as well as in Timias's dealings with the vainglorious Mirabella. In each of these episodes, Spenser uses allegory to suggest that man must overcome the forces of licentiousness and pride in order that he may progress on the path to regeneration and Christian honour.

In the theological examples cited above the term 'honour' is used as a noun; however, John Jewel uses the word in the form of a verb in his 'Homilee of good workes. And first of Fasting' in the second book of homilies published in 1571: 'loue God above all thinges, [. . .] loue my neighbour as myself, [. . .] honour father and mother, [. . .] honour the higher powers, [. . .] geue to euery man that which is his due, and suche like'.²⁶ Here, through Jewel's allusion to Mark 12.30-1, Matthew 19.19 and Exodus 20.12, we see how the word honour is used, in the formulation of a number of imperatives, to signify that sense of piety and devotion that humankind, in the pursuit of holiness, should extend towards the trio of God, one's parents and one's neighbour. Of the examples that I have provided, this is the first one that, in part, uses the term honour in a religious sense in relation to humankind. In all of the other examples, the word is used exclusively with regards to God. However, within the context of the sentence, a degree of overlap exists between the divine and the human by the way in which sixteenth-century readers would have imagined how the act of honouring one's family and extending charity and courtesy towards one's neighbours was analogous to the act of showing devotion to God through its expression of love and reverence. Spenser's doctrinally-inclined readers would see in the figure of Timias the embodiment of this idea that the term honour not only refers to a state of holiness that one aspires to achieve in the ongoing process towards sanctification, but that it also indicates an act of worship towards God. We

²⁶ Jewel, *The second tome of homilees*, sig. M2^r.

see this notion being played out most notably in books I and II of *The Faerie Queene* when Spenser has Timias function as an instrument of divine grace. It seems that in having the squire work alongside Arthur, channeling the spirit of God, Spenser glorifies the immanence and also the revealed will of God. Moreover, Timias's part in the rescue of Redcrosse from Duessa and Orgoglio in Book I, may also be seen as an act of honour by the way in which it glorifies the claim of the Protestant Church to represent the true faith over the competing claims of the Roman church. Similarly, in books III, IV and VI, Timias's figurative struggles for control of the passions may be seen to represent humankind's attempts to honour and exalt God through renouncing the wiles of the Devil.

Protestant theologians of the period also believed that honour was a distinction that God bestowed on man through the imputation of man's righteousness, apprehended and received by faith. Evidence of this belief can be seen in the 1571 'Homilie against peril of idolatrie' when Jewel quotes from Origen's *Contra Celsum*: 'a man may know God and his onely sonne, and those whiche haue had suche honour geuen them by God, that they be called Gods: But it is not possible that anye should by worshypping of images get any knowledge of God.'²⁷ Here, Jewel utilises the Church Father, Origen of Alexandria, to warn against the adoration of idolatrous images. He claims that they threaten to obscure man's true knowledge of God and lead him from the correct path of devotion, and with it, the road to redemption. The anti-Roman sentiment expressed in the homily mirrors that found in the quotations cited above from the *Act for the Vniformitie of Common Prayer* and the *booke of common prayer*. However, what is different is the emphasis that Origen's phrasing gives to the idea that the imputation of Christ's righteousness, received by faith, is an honour or a privilege that God awards to man. However, the theologian's words suggest that not everyone will be the recipient of this divine act of beneficence. Through the emotive use of the word 'those', he

²⁷ Jewel, *The second tome of homilees*, sig. C8^v.

seems to imply that Christian honour is not granted to humankind in general but only to the fortunate few. It is not surprising that Jewel looked to use this quotation from Origen, as it reflects Protestant thinking at the time. Jewel's Protestant readers would probably take Origen's use of the term 'those' to refer to the Elect, God's predestined few who are justified through faith alone. Thus, in this key Church of England publication, honour is located at the heart of the Protestant doctrine of *sola fide*, whilst at the same time being diametrically opposed to the Catholic faith and its supposed practice of idolatry. Protestants might have seen evidence of these doctrinal beliefs in Spenser's treatment of Timias in books I and II by the way in which the squire becomes the recipient of divine honour by functioning alongside Arthur as an instrument of providential grace. However, this Calvinistic impression of honour recedes in the later books when honour seems to become something that must be earned or won on the path to sanctification; in part, the same may be said of the poem's treatment of Guyon in Book II.

Theologians were not the only ones at this time to think about honour in religious terms. A number of essayists also considered the subject. One such individual was the lawyer, translator and book collector, Robert Ashley. His essay, *Of Honour*, was written for Sir Thomas Egerton in 1596 as a means to attract patronage.²⁸ Ashley's treatise is particularly germane as it was written in the same year that the second instalment of *The Faerie Queene* was published and therefore reflects attitudes towards honour at the time. In his essay, Ashley argues that the source of all honour is God:

But from whence this honour came vnto mankinde or from whence this
desire thereof which we feele in our mindes ys derived, how canne yt better

²⁸ John Ferris, 'Ashley, Robert (1565-1641)', *ODNB*. Ashley's essay was not published in his life time, hence the reason why my citations are to the San Marino edition. As Ferris notes, Ashley's manuscript was 'Beautifully produced by a professional scribe [. . .] [and] remained in manuscript among Egerton's papers.'

be knowne or vnderstood then by going to the Godhead yt selfe which ys the wellspringe and fountayne of all honor? Therfore as the Poetes derive their Muse from Iupiter, *A loue principium Musae*, so must I fetch the beginning of Honour from God, since we find no Originall thereof in the earth neither in thinges without soule, neither in brute beastes, nor in men themselves: but in one onely God alone.²⁹

At the crux of Ashley's argument is the idea that man was initially incapable of achieving honour by himself, by which he specifically means a nobility of spirit or moral uprightness, because of the fact that there was no precedent for it on Earth. He claims that it could not have evolved naturally because man and the beasts are too 'base and vnbeseeing [. . .] [of God's] heavenly nature'.³⁰ Therefore, he asserts that the source of honour must be providential; God must be its 'wellspringe and fountayne'. Having argued this, he then goes on to idealise the virtue's worth, claiming that 'there ys nothing amongst men more excellent then honour' and that God 'cannot geue or bestowe a greater guyfte vppon man'.³¹ Christian honour, which one may take here to mean the glory of holiness, stems from an act of divine grace and beneficence. It is through God's indwelling spirit that man achieves a state of honour. In part, Ashley believes, as Origen did, that this nobility of spirit derives from being blessed with faith. He writes: 'when [. . .] [God] maketh vs blessed then are we also partakers both of his divinitie and of his honour'. The seemingly Calvinist slant of Ashley's writing, with its emphasis upon grace rather than works, is hardly surprising considering that he was writing to

²⁹ Robert Ashley, *Of Honour* (San Marino: Huntington Library Press, 1947), p. 27.

³⁰ Ashley, *Of Honour*, p. 28.

³¹ Ashley, *Of Honour*, p. 28.

attract patronage from Egerton, a renowned Calvinist.³² Ashley's Protestant view of honour bears many similarities to Spenser's conception of the virtue as it is represented in Book I, and parts of Book II, of the *Faerie Queene*. Indeed, it is not impossible, given the dates, that Ashley may have been influenced in his thinking about honour by reading the 1590 edition of *The Faerie Queene*. It is even feasible that he and Spenser knew each other. As Hadfield notes, Spenser had connections to Egerton, to whom Ashley dedicated his treatise.³³

So far this chapter has sketched out the way in which honour was imagined in sixteenth-century Britain. For the most part, this has involved looking at how the ruling elite constructed a complex framework of honour that consisted of a number of ideas relating to esteem, martial prowess, lineage, and self-government of the family. In addition, the chapter has also highlighted the way in which honour assumed a greater theological significance during this period. This survey is necessary as it provides the context with which we can consider Spenser's conception of honour as expressed through his treatment of Timias. As I will show, by reading honour in light of these sources, it is possible to add to our existing understanding of the squire's role in the allegory by locating him at the heart of Spenser's soteriological landscape, which is something that critics have not previously done.

Books I & II: Timias as an Agent of Grace

Spenser first gestures towards the religious significance of Timias in his opening description of him at I.vii.37:

A gentle youth, his dearly loued Squire

³² J. H. Baker, 'Egerton, Thomas, first Viscount Brackley (1540–1617), Lord Chancellor', *ODNB*.

³³ Hadfield, *Edmund Spenser: A Life*, p. 20.

His speare of heben wood behind him bare,
 Whose harmeful head, thrise heated in the fire,
 Had riuen many a brest with pikehead square;
 A goodly person, and could menage faire,
 His stubborn steede with curbed canon bitt,
 Who vnder him did amble as the aire,
 And chauft, that any on his backe should sitt;
 The yron rowels into frothy fome he bitt.

(I.vii.37)

Spenser invests the squire with a Christian resonance that locates him at the heart of the poem's religious allegory. This is the first time in the poem that Timas is properly described; at this point in the narrative the character's name is withheld, and will be until Book III. Even though Spenser's description of Timias is no more than a stanza in length, it is illuminating in its capacity to suggest the character's religious importance. Spenser describes him as a 'gentle youth' and 'dearly loved squire' (I.vii.37.1). The epithet 'gentle' is the same one used to describe Redcrosse at I.i.1. It signifies membership of a certain social class — the nobility. However, apart from its social meaning, it also has religious connotations to which the more pious of Spenser's readers would have been attuned. It is associated with Christian beneficence through St Paul's reference to the 'meekenes, and gentlenes of Christ' at 2 Corinthians 10.1. The word is used in a similar sense at 2 Timothy 2.24 to describe the charity and benevolence expected of the faithful: 'the seruant of ye Lord [. . .] *must* be gentle toward all men' (abbreviations *sic*).³⁴ In addition to this, its noun form also figures at 2 Samuel 22.36

³⁴ See Chapter Three for a more detailed consideration of the Christian significance of the word 'gentle'.

in the King James Bible when David states: ‘Thou hast also giuen mee the shield of thy saluation: and thy gentleness hath made me great’. On this occasion, it is God who is gentle. Through God’s divine grace and benevolence, David is made ‘great’, by which we take the adjective to mean magnanimous.³⁵ Through the use of the word ‘gentle’, with its biblical echoes, to describe Timias, the poem invites its readers thereafter to think about the squire in a religious light in the same way that it does when it uses the term to describe Redcrosse. Indeed, the fact that Spenser uses the same term to refer to both figures at the same stage of their adventure links the pair together. The poem seems to be saying something about their spiritual potential and promise as they set out on their journey, as well as the extent to which their destinies may be safeguarded by providence.

The adjective ‘goodly’, which is also used to describe Timias at I.vii.29, though conventional and innocuous on its own, does, when used together with ‘gentle’, evoke a further religious dimension to the character’s depiction. The epithet ‘goodly’ links the character to Arthur who is described using the same adjective at I.vii.29.2 (‘goodly knight’). It is possible that Spenser used this particular epithet because of its phonetic similarity to the word *godly*, thereby hinting at the pair’s holiness. If this is the case, then it would not be the first time that Spenser used this form of wordplay known as paronomasia. As we saw in the previous chapter, the poet was very much alive to the possibilities that punning provided in helping to shape meaning. Here it suggests Timias’s religiosity, as well as that of his master, Arthur, thereby hinting at a frame of reference through which some readers might choose to interpret their subsequent actions. Up until now, critics have overlooked the Christian tenor of Timias’s portrayal at I.vi.37, just as they have also neglected the religious significance of him carrying Arthur’s spear and shield (I.vii.37.2 and II.viii.17.7). However, it is important to

³⁵ *OED*, ‘great’, adj. 6 & 18b.

acknowledge these things as they invite us to consider the theological dimension of the squire within the poem's broader religious allegory.

One of the effects of thinking about Timias in a religious light is the production of fresh readings of familiar scenes and passages. At I.vii.37, the equine image takes on a soteriological slant because of the religious colouring of the stanza, which as we have already noted, invites theological interpretation through the religious connotations of 'gentle' and the wordplay on 'goodly' / *godly*. Drawing from Plato's *Phaedrus* (246a-b, 253c-54e), the poet uses a common equine image to imply the squire's governance of his passionate impulses. We read of how the squire 'could menage faire / His stubborne steed with curbed canon bit, / Who under him did trample as the aire' (I.vii.37.5-7). This is not the only occasion that Spenser uses this type of image allegorically to suggest reason's subjugation of the passions. As we have seen, he also does so at II.xii.53.5 when Guyon learns to resist temptation by 'brydling his will, and maistering his might'. Likewise, at II.iv.34.1-2, the Palmer warns, 'Most wretched man, / That to affections does the bridle lend'. Given the underlying religious tenor of II.iv.34, it is possible to suggest that Timias's seeming ability to bridle his emotions and desires is indicative of his potential for holiness. It reflects his spiritual fortitude in the face of temptation. Spenser's Calvinist readers might have taken this suggestion of Timias's temperance to be a sign of his justification, whereby the elect are made righteous through the imputation of Christ's righteousness. In accordance with Article XII from the *Articles*, those same readers would argue that the squire's acts of temperance are the fruits of his election, in which case he can claim no agency over them.³⁶ However, for Spenser's more moderate Protestant, as well as Catholic, readers, the equine image might be taken to represent the triumph of reason over passion. The ambiguity of how one might interpret this image

³⁶ Church of England, *Articles*, sig. B1^r.

highlights the way in which the poem refuses to be reduced to any one doctrinal position with regards to questions of will and grace.

One way in which Spenser hints at Timias's religious significance is by how he has the squire look after the prince's allegorical armour and weaponry. This is seen at II.viii.17.6-7, where the squire carries his master's 'heben launce / And coverd shield'. As critics have noted, the prince's armour recalls the Pauline metaphor of God's protection of the faithful from Ephesians 6.11: 'Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the assaultes of the deuil'.³⁷ It also alludes to Psalm 28.7: 'The Lorde *is* my strength and my shielde: mine heart trusted in him, and I was helped'. The image of God's armour protecting the faithful was a powerful one during the early modern period, and was found in many Protestant treatises and sermons. For example, Spenser's contemporary, the popular Protestant homilist Henry 'Silver-Tongued' Smith, uses the same image when he beseeches the faithful to 'put on the armor of light'.³⁸ He declares that the armour of Christ 'defendeth vs from all the assaults of the diuell, the flesh, the world, the heate of persecution, and the cold of defection'.³⁹ By making Timias carry Arthur's shield, Spenser encourages readers to associate him with its religious properties. As Gless notes, the shield symbolises 'the ultimate source of light, [. . .] [In its uncovered state, it] represents the divine glory unmediated, a direct intuitive vision made possible and rendered transcendently possible by the grace that justifies it'.⁴⁰ It is possible to see how, by taking responsibility for Arthur's shield, the squire may benefit from the spiritual protection it provides. The same may be said of the 'speare of heben wood'

³⁷ Gless, 'Armor of God' in *Spenser Encyclopedia*, p. 62; Gless, *Interpretation and Theology in Spenser*, pp. 127-8, 131, 133.

³⁸ As noted in the *ODNB*, Smith was referred to as the 'Silver-Tongued Preacher', or the 'Silver-Tongued Smith' because of his reputation for delivering eloquent and stirring sermons. Henry Smith, *The sermons of Maister Henrie Smith gathered into one volume. Printed according to his corrected copies in his life time* (London: Thomas Man, 1593, STC 22719), sig. Y2^v.

³⁹ Smith, *Sermons*, sig. Y6^r.

⁴⁰ Gless, *Interpretation and Theology in Spenser*, p. 131.

whose ‘harmefull head, thrice heated in the fire, / Had riven many a brest with pikehead square’ (I.vii.37.3-4). The fact that the weapon is ‘thrice heated’ invites readers to interpret it in terms of Christian numerology. For Spenser’s doctrinally informed readers, it becomes a spear of salvation, forged and blessed by the sacred powers of the Holy Trinity. As a weapon of holiness it contrasts with the ‘firie dartes of the wicked’ (Ephesians 6.16). Timias does not actually use the spear, but the fact that he carries it for Arthur, is, to some extent, suggestive of the figure’s Christian tenor. As Gless notes, it is possible that for many of Spenser’s Protestant readers, Arthur’s armour and weaponry would have implied ‘justification and sanctification, both gifts of Christ’.⁴¹ The fact that Timias handles the prince’s armour might have suggested that, in part, he shares in Arthur’s justification. However, to use the language of Calvinism when discussing Timias is problematic. As we shall see, despite his conforming English Calvinism in books I and II, the squire’s overall doctrinal identity in the middle and later books is more subtle and complex.

Throughout books I and II, Timias’s holiness is amplified by the way in which he functions alongside Arthur as an agent of providential design. This is seen most noticeably at I.viii.3.5 when he uses his ‘horne of bugle small’ to blow open the gates of Orgoglio’s castle. In doing so, he facilitates Arthur’s rescue of Redcrosse from the forces of iniquity — Orgoglio and Duessa. Spenser writes that Redcrosse’s ‘deliuerance’ from evil is down to ‘heavenly grace’ (I.viii.1.3-9). The poet’s language emphasises the providential dimension of the part played by Arthur and Timias in rescuing Redcrosse. Allegorically, Timias’s horn represents the ‘horne’ of ‘saluation’ of 2 Samuel 22, which announces the word of God to the faithful — offering the promise of redemption. Timias uses his horn to similar effect at II.ix.11. Here he sounds it so that he and Arthur can gain admittance into Alma’s ‘goodly castle’ (II.ix.10.3). The castle symbolises the body, and one that is receptive to holiness if we permit the

⁴¹ Gless, *Interpretation and Theology in Spenser*, p. 46.

wordplay on ‘goodly’ and *godly* at II.ix.10.3 and II.xi.2.9. Timias’s successful use of the horn may be seen to represent the way in which God’s word is received by the faithful. The opening of the castle gates for Arthur and Timias allegorically dramatises the way in which Alma accepts the spirit of God. At the same time it also represents the way in which honour comes to those who cooperate with God by choosing to receive his grace.

With regards to the Maleger episode, it is possible to suggest that Spenser uses Arthur and Timias in an allegorical fashion to evoke a question about the limits of reason in relation to self-governance of the passions. At the beginning of cantos IX and XI, the narrator stresses the importance of ‘sober gouernment’ and the need for reason to ‘rule obedient’ because otherwise the ‘strong affections’ will bring the ‘sowle into captivity’ by exercising ‘most bitter tyranny’ over man’s ‘frail flesh’ (II.ix.1.4, II.xi.1.2 - II.xi.2.2). However, having suggested that reason has the capacity to overcome sinfulness, Spenser seems to imply that, on occasions, the psychomachic forces of ‘wretchednesse’ are too powerful for reason to overcome. This is the case with Alma when she is besieged by the allegorical figures of Maleger, Impotence and Impatience. According to Philip Rollinson, Maleger is the ‘cruell Captaine’ of ‘misrule and passions bace’ (II.ix.15.3, II.ix.1.6). The etymological components of his name (*lat.* ‘male’ - badly, ‘aeger’ - diseased or sick) suggest ‘both physical sickness and spiritual sickness of fallen mortality’.⁴² The two hags equally represent the forces of intemperance. As Rollinson notes, Impotence is the ‘aspect of misrule which cannot control the concupiscible part of the passions (love / hate, attraction / aversion, joy / sorrow)’. Impatience, on the other hand, ‘commonly identified by the scholastics as a daughter of anger, cannot control the irascible passions (hope / despair, fear / audacity, and anger)’.⁴³ Together, the three figures pose a formidable threat to Alma — one which reason alone cannot

⁴² Philip B. Rollinson, ‘Maleger’ in *Spenser Encyclopedia*, p. 449.

⁴³ Rollinson, ‘Maleger’ in *Spenser Encyclopedia*, p. 449.

overcome. Despite withstanding the forces of misrule for so long and holding them at bay, Alma must ultimately rely upon providential intercession in order to escape 'bondage' (II.xi.1.8). This comes in the shape of Arthur and Timias, who function here as instruments of grace. The fact that Alma must rely upon external assistance to overcome the forces of intemperance highlights not only the limitations of natural reason, but also the need for humility in the face of God's mercy and beneficence. As we saw in Chapter One, the poem seems to be prompting us to consider the contingent nature of the human-divine relationship. It appears to be suggesting that precise individual circumstances determine the required balance of human-divine cooperation.

Timias's deliverance of Arthur at II.xi.29-31 is significant because for the first time the reader sees the squire emerge from Arthur's shadow and establish himself as an allegorical force of grace in his own right. This occurs when he comes to the rescue of Arthur who is being attacked by Maleger, Impotence and Impatience outside the grounds of Alma's castle. For once, the prince is not an agent of divine mercy, but rather the recipient of it. In this episode, he is transfigured into a helpless and vulnerable victim of Maleger. As Spenser reminds us in this episode, because of man's inherent weakness, even the most righteous are not free from sin and temptation in this corporeal life: 'So feeble is mans state, and life vnnsound, / That in assurance it may never stand, / Till it dissolued be from earthly band' (II.xi.30.3-5). Arthur must rely upon the timely intervention of the squire for salvation from the forces of iniquity — an act which the poem describes using the language of soteriology: '[. . .] had not grace thee blest, thou shouldest not suruive' (II.xi.30.9). This episode, involving Arthur's subjugation and then rescue, suggests that there will be occasions when even the most faithful find their fortitude and righteousness tested. However, the poem seems to suggest that through faith God will protect them, as seen here through the providential symbolism of Timias's assistance. It implies that adversity is temporary; it is a trial of faith,

which the justified must endure on the path to sanctification. Perseverance in the face of affliction will strengthen man's spiritual fortitude. In making this point, Spenser is drawing upon a well-established Christian theme of which there are many biblical precedents such as James 1.3-4: 'trying of your faith bringeth forth patience [. . .] let patience haue *her* perfect worke, that ye may be perfect & entier, lacking nothing' (abbreviations *sic*). It can also be found in Isaiah 41.10: 'Feare thou not, for I am with thee: be not afraide, for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee, and helpe thee, and will susteine thee with the right hand of my iustice'.

Timias's key role in helping Arthur at II.xi.30, as well as his religious significance at I.viii.3-5, II.ix.11, and to a lesser extent, I.vii.29, helps to explain the character's function within books I and II of the poem. As A. Leigh DeNeef notes, 'Like Arthur, Timias is a "fresh budd of vertue springing fast" (I.viii.27.1) and stands as a "bulwarke" (I.viii.12.9) against the forces of evil [. . .] [he] helps define the "righteous man" (I.viii.1.2) though whose efforts God's grace operates in earthly affairs'.⁴⁴ If it were not for Timias's soteriological dimension in these episodes, then it would be difficult to understand why Arthur had any need for a squire. Of course, in romance literature, knights have squires; they form an inherent part of the feudal economy within which the events of the poem are set. To this end, one might argue that Spenser was merely following the norms of medieval and early modern romance.⁴⁵ However, he is doing more than simply following romance convention — he is incorporating it into his allegory. Through his virtuous and timely actions in assisting Arthur to defeat the forces of evil, we read Timias as an instrument through which God's merciful grace is transmitted into the allegorical landscape of Faerie Land. Along with Arthur, he functions, in

⁴⁴ DeNeef, 'Timias', in *The Spenser Encyclopedia*, p. 691.

⁴⁵ Andrew King, *The Faerie Queene' and Middle English Romance: The Matter of Just Memory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), pp. 12-29, 126-210.

part, to channel the word of God to the faithful, offering them celestial assistance in the face of adversity and temptation.⁴⁶

This religious significance of Timias, and his function as the embodiment of Christian honour will form the basis of the next section as we look at Spenser's portrayal of the squire in books III, IV and VI of *The Faerie Queene*. Spenser's treatment of Timias undergoes a shift in these books. The squire no longer functions as an agent of divine grace. Instead, Spenser uses him to examine the ways in which one's honour, and holiness, are tested by the forces of concupiscence and irascibility. To this end, Spenser, in part, uses the figure of Timias to elaborate on the psychomachic ideas that he explored with Guyon in Book II. One might go so far as to suggest that he functions as a successor to Guyon highlighting the relationship between temperance and honour in the eyes of the godly.

Books III, IV & VI: Timias's Honour Tested

Towards the beginning of Book III, Timias is positioned with Arthur, Guyon and Britomart. The four of them are conversing in a glade when suddenly to their surprise, a distressed Florimell appears from the 'thickest brush' (III.i.15.1). She is being pursued by a 'griesly Foster' (III.i.17.2). On observing the fleeing damsel, Arthur and Guyon go after her, whilst Timias decides to pursue the foster instead: 'after the foule foster *Timias* did striue' (III.i.18.9). This episode is a key moment in Timias's story because it is the first occasion in the poem that his name is disclosed, and as such, the first time that he is given his own identity. Furthermore, it is the first time that his association with the virtue of honour has been hinted at through the etymology of his name. This is also an important moment because it is the first time that the squire is separated from his master. Up until this point, Arthur and Timias have,

⁴⁶ Apart from functioning as an agent of divine grace in books I and II, Timias plays another role; in his encounter with Duessa at I.viii.14-15, he allegorically represents the way in which the faithful often fall prey to the wiles of the Roman Catholic Church. See Kaske, *Spenser and Biblical Poetics*, pp. 42-5.

in part, figured as instruments of divine grace combatting the forces of iniquity. However, their separation at III.i.18 suspends this collaboration until the pair are reunited at VI.v.22 when Arthur liberates the squire from the thralldom of Despetto, Decetto and Defetto.

Timias's separation from Arthur at III.i.18 signals a shift in the way Spenser presents the squire in books III, IV and VI. From this point onwards, the poet adjusts Timias's role so that he no longer functions as an instrument of providential grace; instead, Spenser uses him allegorically to dramatise the extent to which reason is repeatedly embroiled in a psychomachic struggle against passion. As such, Timias performs a similar function to Guyon in Book II — he dramatises the will's ongoing efforts to maintain a state of temperance, and with it, holiness in the face of temptation and provocation. However, Spenser's treatment of Timias in these books differs from that of Guyon because of the squire's association with honour. With Timias, the poet is more concerned with the question of one's honour and how this is affected through the self-governance of the affections. In books III and IV Spenser uses Timias to consider how one's honour is threatened by licentiousness, whilst in Book VI, Spenser focuses more on the way in which one's sense of honour is challenged by scandal and back-biting. The fact that Timias encounters the greatest test of his temperance in the Legend of Chastity would have suggested to many readers that concupiscence poses the biggest threat to one's honour. Framing the discussion in this section is the idea that at the heart of Spenser's portrayal of Timias in books III, IV and VI is a consideration of what it means to be a Christian. In this sense, Timias's quest for honour represents the Christian's quest for sanctification and holiness.

Critics have thus far not explored the extent to which Spenser's presentation of Timias shifts after Book II. Nor does there appear to be a recognition by any other critics of the squire's religious dimension in these middle and later books. Most scholarship, such as DeNeef's entry in the *Spenser Encyclopedia*, tends to read Timias's part in books III, IV and

VI in light of the poem's historical allegory involving Raleigh, or alternatively, in terms of the degree to which the squire is loosely modelled upon the character of Medoro from Ariosto's romance, *Orlando Furioso*.⁴⁷ However, it is possible to see how an understanding of sixteenth-century doctrinal perspectives may illuminate our appreciation of the ways in which early modern readers might have interpreted the squire's religious significance in these particular books. In particular, theological ideas of the time can lead us to consider how Timias's quest for honour may be read in terms of the broader doctrinal debate concerning the relationship between reason and grace that was taking place during the period.

The extent to which Spenser seems to use Timias in these books to extend and redefine the relationship between temperance and honour may be initially seen at III.i.15-18. When Spenser has Timias chase after the foster rather than follow Florimell as Arthur and Guyon do, there seems to be more going on here than a simple enactment of a romance convention in which the master rescues the fleeing damsel whilst the lowly squire is left to pursue the malefactor. Spenser seems to use Timias to question the motives, and the moral rectitude, of Arthur and Guyon's decision to chase after Florimell. Initially, the narrator implies that Arthur and Guyon follow Florimell out of chivalric duty and compassion: 'To reskew her from shamefull villany' (III.i.18.5). There is also the suggestion that Arthur goes to her rescue in his capacity as an instrument of grace. This role is reinscribed through the narrator's reference to him as the 'Prince of grace' (III.i.5.2). However, the fact that Arthur and Guyon perceive her as a 'goodly meede' and so 'spurd after [her] fast' with 'great enuy and fell gealosy' in the 'hope' of winning her favour would have suggested to a number of readers that their motives are also partly driven by desire (III.i.18.2-8). This impression is further implied when the narrator describes how the pair did 'lightly follow beauties chace' (III.i.19.2). As Gless acknowledges, Spenser's use of the adverb 'lightly' has sexual

⁴⁷ Deneef, 'Timias', in *The Spenser Encyclopedia*, pp. 690-1.

connotations of wantonness as a number of sixteenth-century readers would have been aware.⁴⁸ Indeed, the degree to which Florimell, albeit unwittingly, represents a threat to continence is first suggested by the way that she is pursued by the foster (III.i.17.2-3): ‘a griesly Foster forth did rush, / Breathing out beastly lust her to defyle’. If we take it that Arthur and Guyon’s pursuit of Florimell is engendered by a similar stirring of the passions, then it is possible to argue that Timias’s separation from the pair at this point has a moral dimension. Allegorically, it would have symbolised to readers the extent to which Arthur and Guyon’s actions are literally without honour, and are thus dishonourable. Both figures appear to corrupt the good works that they seemingly set out to perform. The poem seems to suggest here that beauty, in the form of Florimell, has the power to sidetrack any well-meaning hero.

This is not the first time that Arthur appears to suffer a lapse and fall prey to worldly concerns, and in doing so bring his Christian honour, into question. It is also suggested in Book I when he recalls his dream of Gloriana. On this occasion, using the language of the flesh, as well as Petrarchan longing, he describes how his heart was ‘rauisht with delight’ and filled with ‘goodly glee’ on seeing the dream-like image of Gloriana, who, with her ‘daintie limbes’, did lie ‘softly down’ beside him (I.ix.14.1-6, I.ix.13.8). The moral problem stems from the fact that Arthur’s longings for Gloriana appear to take on a lustful dimension which are at odds with his virtue of magnificence. In relaying his dream, he describes how she made ‘louely blandishment’ to him and that ‘For dearely sure her loue was to me bent’ (I.ix.14.1-3). Spenser purposefully leaves the episode ambiguous; the reader is uncertain whether the experience was a dream or reality. On waking, Arthur discovers an imprint of where Gloriana appears to have slept beside him: ‘When I awoke, and found her place deuoyd, / And nought but pressed gras where she had lyen, / I sorrowed all so much, as earst I ioyd, / And washed all her place with watry eyen’ (I.ix.15.1-4). It is not clear whether the prince did spend the

⁴⁸ Gless, *Interpretation and Theology in Spenser*, p. 193.

night with the Faerie Queene, or whether it was just a fantasy. Given the fact that she is supposed to represent Elizabeth, the virgin queen, one must take it that his dream is just that — a figment of his imagination.

In fantasising about a seemingly unobtainable figure of virginity, Arthur's experience foreshadows that of Timias, who comes to have similar feelings for Belphebe. The point about Gloriana is that we never quite know whether she is unobtainable. Nevertheless, on its own, the Prince's dream may be interpreted to represent the complex feelings of devotion and desire that Elizabeth encouraged her courtiers to have for her. Through her association with Venus and Diana, the queen simultaneously embodied both sexuality and virginity. She encouraged the passionate longing of her courtiers, yet was only ever married to her country. Arthur's dream may simply be an allegorised expression of this state of affairs.⁴⁹ However, when it is read alongside the episode in Book III involving Florimell, we can see that it also forms part of a broader point that the poem seems to make about how even the most holy of individuals, such as Arthur, may occasionally stray from the path of righteousness because of the corruption of human reason. In making this point, the poem appears to suggest that honour is fragile and vulnerable, even for Arthur whose association with magnificence suggests that we are to read him as a paragon of holiness and virtue. The fact that his quest for Gloriana becomes the central thread of the poem adds to the complexity of Spenser's depiction of the prince. The reader is left questioning the figure's possible motives for wanting to find her. Do they derive from a need to serve Gloriana, and bring harmony to Faerie Land through upholding glory, or do they stem from more sinful impulses? Timias's involvement with Arthur in the Florimell episode helps to make the point that honour, in a Christian sense, is a

⁴⁹ James W. Broaddus, *Spenser's Allegory of Love: Social Vision in Books III, IV and IV of 'The Faerie Queene'* (Madison, WI: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1995), pp. 97-108; Thomas P. Roche, Jr, *The Kindly Flame: A Study of the Third and Fourth Books of Spenser's 'Faerie Queene'* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1964), pp. 141-2.

limited virtue. True holiness is something that humankind cannot fully attain in this imperfect life. It can only be aspired to. Indeed, one could argue that the same is true of all virtues in *The Faerie Queene's* terms. However, where honour is distinct from the rest is in the way in which it is shown to be a corollary of the other virtues; one cannot achieve honour in the eyes of others or, more importantly, in the eyes of God, without mastering the other virtues, such as temperance, or courtesy. To this end, it is similar to holiness. The poem constantly seems to be prompting the reader to think about the sequence and relationship between the different virtues, and how they seem to suggest different stages of one's progression towards becoming a Christian gentleman. However, the question for many theologically-disposed sixteenth-century readers was whether honour could be achieved through one's own free will, or whether one's meritorious actions are the result of divine grace.

The degree to which Timias's appears to function in these middle books allegorically to dramatise the psychomachic conflict between reason and passion may be seen by his pursuit of the foster, who as David O. Frantz notes, is 'an uncivilised force' which Spenser associates 'with lechery'.⁵⁰ If we take the foster to represent lust, based upon his wantonness towards Florimell, then it is possible to interpret Timias's efforts to apprehend and subdue the figure as reason's attempt to suppress desire. Early modern readers who brought a more moderate doctrinal perspective to the passage might possibly see it as representative of the spiritual battle that is fought in the name of holiness. Given the squire's titular virtue, such readers might take Timias's pursuit of the Foster to symbolise the way in which humankind strives to earn some form of honour and holiness in God's eyes through the nobility of their deeds, thereby securing their salvation. Unfortunately, Timias's attempts to capture and overcome the foster, and by extension subdue his own passions, are frustrated at III.v.18-25 when the squire is ambushed by, not one, but three fosters. They comprise the one who had

⁵⁰ David O. Frantz, 'Foster' in *The Spenser Encyclopedia*, p. 313.

‘late / Affrighted [. . .] the fairest *Florimell*’ (III.v.23.1-2), as well as his two wicked brothers.⁵¹ As Hamilton notes, the three brothers pose a triple threat to Timias’s honour; they represent the ‘luste of the flesh, the luste of the eyes, and the pride of life’ of 1 John 2.16.⁵² The fact that the brothers are portrayed by Spenser as the ‘Vngratious children of one graceless syre’ adds to our sense of their spiritual depravity, and by extension the threat that they pose to Timias. As the *OED* notes, the adjectives ‘Vngratious’ and ‘graceless’ were commonly used at the time to refer to the ungodly. ‘Vngracious’ was taken to refer to those persons who were ‘devoid of spiritual grace’ — the ‘reprobate [and the] wicked’, whilst ‘graceless’ was similarly used to refer to the ‘unregenerate’, ‘depraved [. . .] [and] impious’.⁵³ Spenser’s diction, within the context of the episode, invites readers to interpret the threat posed by the fosters in a religious light. On a tropological level, they threaten to compromise the squire’s integrity through the psychomachic threat they pose, thereby undermining his Christian honour.

The fosters’ ambush of Timias, and their relentless ferocity towards the squire represents the ongoing danger posed by licentiousness. However, despite their fierce onslaught, Timias manages to slay the three men. He decapitates one so that ‘th’head fell backward on the Continent’ (III.v.25.7), and ‘Smote’ another ‘on the Pannikell, / That to the chin he clefte his head in twaine’ (III.v.23.5-6). The nature of Timias’s victory suggests the symbolic significance of the episode. The act of severing the foster’s head from the body may be said to represent how the squire’s faculty of reason is no longer enthralled by the

⁵¹ Some critics have suggested that the ambush, which takes place by a ford in a wooded glade, alludes to a similar event that took place in 1581 when Raleigh was ambushed by rebels associated with the Earl of Desmond. See note to III.v.17.2. See also: Christopher Burlinson, *Allegory, Space and the Material World in the Writings of Edmund Spenser* (Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 2006), p. 182, fn. 56; James P. Bednarz, ‘Raleigh in Spenser’s Historical Allegory’, *Spenser Studies*, 4 (1984), 49-70 (pp. 52-8); Frantz, ‘Foster’ in *The Spenser Encyclopedia*, p. 313.

⁵² Note to III.v.15.5-6.

⁵³ *OED*, ‘Ungracious’, adj. 1a; *OED*, ‘Graceless’, adj. 1a.

passionate affections. It suggests that the will is no longer at risk of intemperance as Spenser's wordplay on 'continent' / continence implies. Timias's victory over the fosters appears to signal his growing state of temperance in the face of lust. Spenser's religiously-inclined readers may have interpreted Timias's victory as a spiritual one against the forces of sin. However, in accordance with Reformed ideas, Calvinist readers would have asserted that the squire is unable to claim any merit for the victory himself as man's depravity is so great that he cannot contribute towards his own deliverance through deeds. To their mind, the honour and esteem that comes from the squire's victory over the forces of licentiousness can only be attributed to God as Timias's victory is the fruit of his righteousness received by faith. However, Spenser's Catholic, as well as his more moderate Protestant readers, might possibly have assigned Timias's victory to the will. They would have interpreted it as evidence of the way in which right reason has the capacity to persevere against sinfulness in the pursuit of sanctification. Spenser's line, 'They three be dead with shame, the Squire liues with renowne' may be accommodated within this mode of reading through its suggestion that Timias has earned some sense of Christian honour, and approval in God's eyes, through his defeat of the fosters, which in turn represents a triumph of natural reason over the forces of sexual intemperance (III.v.25.9). The episode allegorically stresses how licentiousness can bring nothing but dishonour and ignominy, as well as damnation.

However, despite his victory, the limitations of Timias's temperance, and the imperfections of reason are made apparent when we read of how the squire sustains a wound in the left thigh from a boar-speare whilst fighting the fosters: 'The wicked steele stayd not, till it did light / In his left thigh'. (III.v.20.6-7). As Nohrnberg notes, the wound to the thigh suggests an 'erotic susceptibility', which suggests that Timias's psychomachic trials are far from over.⁵⁴ According to Hamilton, the squire's vulnerability here is a consequence of the

⁵⁴ Nohrnberg, *The Analogy of 'The Faerie Queene'*, p. 598.

fact that he has ‘never been cured of the poison “sprinkled on his weaker parts” by Duessa at I.viii.14.7’.⁵⁵ As a result of his symbolic wound, his sense of honour in defeating the fosters is short lived: ‘He liues, but takes small joy in his renowne; / For of that cruell wound he bled so sore’ (III.v.26.1-2). Timias’s wound suggests that, in terms of the religious allegory, the forces of sin have, inevitably, only been subdued rather than fully defeated. As such, the poem would have seemed to imply to a number of readers that the path to continence, and holiness, is an ongoing struggle which requires constant vigilance and fortitude. Indeed, this appears to be a recurring notion throughout the whole of the poem. However, whereas Spenser’s Catholic and more liberal Protestant readers would see the will as having a role to play in this psychomachic struggle, his Calvinist readers would view Timias’s wound in the thigh as symptomatic of humankind’s depravity which can only be cured through God’s redeeming grace.

Different doctrinal perspectives may also prove to be useful in illuminating the significance of Belpheobe’s rescue of Timias. Having suggested, through the use of allegory, that Timias’s wound to the left thigh represents humankind’s imperfection, Spenser then appears to make the point that in order to be saved from the forces of intemperance, man must ultimately rely upon providential assistance. This comes in the form of Belpheobe, who acts, in this particular passage, as an agent of divine grace whose function it is to nurse Timias back to spiritual and physical strength. Through ‘Prouidence heuenly’ which ‘passeth liuing thought’ (III.v.27.1), she discovers the beleaguered figure of Timias whilst out hunting in the forest. On finding him, she immediately seeks out herbs that will serve as a ‘remedy’ to his life-threatening wound (III.v.32.2). Her intercession is portrayed by Spenser in explicit terms. She is described as the ‘goodly Maide ful of diuinities’ who offers ‘gifts of heauenly grace’ to a ‘sinfull wight’ (III.v.34.7, 34.8, 35.2). Spenser’s pun on the words ‘goodly’ / *godly* points

⁵⁵ Note to III.v.20.7.

towards Belphoebe's holiness in the same way that it suggested Arthur and Timias's righteousness earlier in the poem. On regaining consciousness, Timias refers to Belphoebe in biblical terms, claiming that she is an 'Angell' who has returned him 'from darkenes [. . .] to light' (III.v.35.5-7). His language here suggests that the remedy that she has brought him is that of redemption. This is further implied when Timias speaks of how her 'heuenly salues' have 'drest' his 'sinfull wounds' (III.v.35.8-9). Reformed readers might have interpreted Belphoebe's timely intercession as representative of the way in which humankind is helpless and utterly dependent upon divine assistance to ensure its spiritual welfare. Through the use of allegory, Belphoebe's assistance elevates the role of grace, whilst at the same time, highlighting the inadequacy of reason to affect humankind's salvation. In contrast, other readers might have seen Belphoebe's function in this episode as symbolic of the way in which the path to deliverance is more of a collaborative process. They might argue that having got so far in defeating the forces of licentiousness, Timias inevitably finds himself in need of some form of divine help. After all, man cannot take total charge of his deliverance otherwise it would negate his sense of humility before God. For a number of moderate Protestant readers, as well as Catholic ones, the fact that providential assistance is awarded to Timias could stem from the merit, or honour, that he has seemingly earned in God's eyes through the efforts of reason during his symbolic victory over the fosters.

In part, Belphoebe functions in this episode to transfigure the character of Acrasia. This is first suggested at III.v.35.3 when Timias describes her as 'thine Angell from her bowre of bliss'. His language directly invites comparison with Acrasia's bower of II.xii. Further echoes become evident with regards to the spatial positioning of the characters within the scene. The image of Belphoebe located over Timias ironically recalls the tableau of Acrasia standing over Verdant. As Mallette notes, 'Acrasia is now revealed, in Spenserian fashion, to

be a demonic parody of Belpheobe'.⁵⁶ Similarly, Acrasia's Bower of Bliss with its association of eroticism is counterpointed against Timias's suggestion of Belpheobe's sublime and transcendent dwelling in the forest.

In many ways, Belpheobe's intercession mirrors another episode from Book II. Her timely appearance in the narrative mirrors that of Book II when the angel descends to succour Guyon (II.viii.1). As Mallette notes, the 'verbal echoes' between the two episodes, 'are too strong to be insignificant'.⁵⁷ Belpheobe is described as an 'Angell' of 'grace' sent by 'Prouidence' to 'Comfort' and 'succour wretched wights' (III.v.35.3, 27.3, 27.1, 27.4, 36.9). As such, she recreates the role of the 'blessed' angel of II.viii.1-8, who offers 'exceeding grace / Of highest God' to 'wicked men' (II.viii.1). Along similar lines, Timias plays the role of Guyon — the beleaguered figure who is left incapacitated following his psychomachic conflict against the forces of sinfulness. Like Guyon, Timias also is dependent upon providential assistance to secure his well-being. It is perhaps worth reminding ourselves at this point that Timias is not the titular hero of Book III in the same way that Guyon is in Book II. It is as though Spenser is using him as a proxy for the apparently invulnerable Britomart, whose embodiment as the personification of chastity prevents her from succumbing to acts of sinfulness; he also seems to act as a proxy for the otherwise occupied Arthur. The parallels that exist between these two episodes invite readers to link the figures of Guyon and Timias together. Spenser seems to suggest that both are in need of divine help as neither of them has yet fully mastered their virtues. The path to temperance and, with it, honour, is a long and troublesome one; reason can only function rationally when faith holds sway through cooperation from God.

⁵⁶ Mallette, *Spenser and the Discourses of Reformation England*, p. 104.

⁵⁷ Mallette, *Spenser and the Discourses of Reformation England*, p. 103.

The spiritual condition of man following the Fall is so compromised, that even after receiving divine assistance in the shape of Belpheobe, Timias is still far from cured. This is suggested by the way in which the squire's veneration towards Belpheobe soon turns to idolatry. Believing her help to be divine, Timias verbalises his wish to 'kisse thy blessed feete' in thanks (III.v.35.9), thereby rehearsing the parable of Luke 7.38 in which the sinning woman kisses the feet of Jesus. However, Timias's veneration is misplaced; Belpheobe is not his saviour, only an instrument of grace. His error of mis-devotion reminds us of his encounter with Duessa in Book I. The harmful effect of idolatry, and its propensity to steer the faithful away from the proper path of devotion, which would have resonated with many Protestant readers, is soon made evident when the squire's veneration towards Belpheobe consumes him to such an extent that it is transfigured into concupiscence and she is transformed into an image of erotic appeal. As the symbolic wound to his left thigh suggests, the squire is still beset by lust even after his victory over the fosters. Spenser frames the squire's evolving feelings of desire using the language of Petrarchanism. He describes how in healing Timias's wound, Belpheobe unwittingly 'hurt his hart [. . .] / Through an vnwary dart, which did rebownd / From her faire eyes and gracious countenance' (III.v.42.4-6). Subsequently, the squire becomes besotted with her, and 'captiued in endlesse duraunce / Of sorrow and despayre' (III.v.42.8-9). His anguish is that of the unrequited lover whose yearning and longing will never be satisfied.

However, Timias's turmoil is made problematic through Belpheobe's seeming religious dimension as an agent of divine grace. With each passing day, as the wound to his thigh heals up, Timias's Petrarchan 'Malady the more increast' (III.v.43.6). His veneration for his idol or supposed saviour transfigures itself more and more into lust. By his own admission, he is transformed through his longing into an 'Vnthankfull wretch', thereby

bringing into question his earlier ‘renowne’, and hard fought honour (III.v.45.1, III.v.25.9). Such is the squire’s weakness, that his earlier signs of holiness turn into blasphemous depravity as his longing for Belpheobe ‘ransack fast / His inward partes’ and drove him to imagine how, with ‘vilainous despight’, he might ‘blott [. . .] her honor, and her heauenly light’ (III.v.48.4-5, 45.4-5). Spenser’s Calvinist readers would have argued that Timias’s longings are indicative of humankind’s imperfection and moral impotence. They represent unassailably the degree to which, left to his own devices, man is only capable of sinfulness and ignominy — such is the state of his infected will.

However, readers with a moderate doctrinal perspective, whilst still condemning Timias’s feelings of concupiscence towards Belpheobe, might nonetheless have argued that the squire’s ability to recognise the depravity of his longings, as well as his efforts to subjugate his licentious impulses, reflects a moral awareness that is not totally impervious to goodness, or indeed, holiness. Spenser portrays Timias’s recognition of his immoral yearnings when he has the squire refer to himself as a ‘Vnthankfull wretch’ for the way in which he betrays Belpheobe’s ‘souerain mercy’ by inappropriately harbouring licentious feelings towards her. Timias’s guilt at his concupiscence towards his saviour, as well as his concern at how these impulses might tarnish her honour, and compromise her seeming holiness is expressed when Spenser has him bemoan:

Thy life she saued by her gracious deed,
But thou doest weene with vilainous despight,
To blott her honour, and her heauenly light.

(III.v.45.3-5)

The fact that Spenser goes on to describe how Timias uses ‘reason’ to ‘subdew’ his ‘mightie ill’, or ‘passion’ for Belpheobe, is a sign of the squire’s intention not to transcend moral boundaries despite his feelings of concupiscence (III.v.48.3, 44.2). The significance of reason in the struggle for temperance is further revealed when one reads of how Timias for a ‘long while [. . .] stroue in his corageous brest’ (III.v.44.1) to subjugate his licentiousness. Spenser’s use of the verb ‘stroue’ seems to stress the importance of human agency in overcoming sinful impulses. Some theologically-inclined readers might have argued that the fact that Timias demonstrates guilt and shame at his longings for Belpheobe, and then strives, through the use of reason, to exercise temperance over those instincts is evidence of the figure’s potential for honour, and with it, holiness (III.v.48.3, 44.2).

Spenser extends his consideration of the fragility of Christian honour in canto vii of Book IV through Timias’s encounter with the penis-shaped figure, Lust, who sixteenth-century readers might have taken to be the allegorical projection of the squire’s own concupiscent longings. Timias comes across Lust whilst he is out hunting with Belpheobe in the woods. He notices the creature pursuing Amoret and immediately goes to the damsel’s assistance. In doing so he becomes embroiled in a fierce fight with the monstrous creature. The encounter, which allegorises the spiritual conflict between reason and passion, is a ferocious one (IV.vii.28). It is only when Belpheobe appears and Lust recognises her as his nemesis, through her association with Christian chastity, that the creature relents and takes flight: he ‘fled away with ghastly dreriment, / Well knowing her to be his deaths sole instrument’ (IV.vii.29.8-9). With Belpheobe’s intercession, Amoret is freed. However, this is not before Spenser has Timias accidentally wound Amoret with his ‘pike head[ed] [. . .] spear’ which draws a ‘streame of coleblacke bloud’ (IV.vii.27.7-8). In depicting Timias’s inability to protect Amoret from the danger of Lust, as well as his inability to overcome the creature, Spenser allegorises the squire’s weakness in the face of fleshly longing. This is further alluded

to through the symbolic image of Timias drawing Amoret's blood with the phallic-shaped spear. It is left to Belpheobe to kill the creature with a similarly phallic-shaped arrow through the neck. Isabel MacCaffrey has suggested that it is necessary for Belpheobe to kill Lust as Timias is incapable of doing it himself as the figure 'is the force that fuels his own masculinity'.⁵⁸ Through her association with virginity, Belpheobe is the only figure capable of cancelling out Lust's aggression. Spenser appears to extoll her as a paragon of Christian virtue, and in doing so, holds her up as an exemplar for Timias to measure himself against in terms of his own virtuous education and sense of honour.

Timias's failure to defeat Lust symbolises the way in which his passionate affections are not extirpated. They continue to rankle and threaten to dishonour him. Whereas Belpheobe's defeat of the creature has served to heighten one's sense of her as the embodiment of chastity, Timias's failure to do so has raised further questions over his integrity and Christian honour. His ongoing susceptibility to concupiscence is further shown by the way in which Belpheobe finds him inappropriately caressing the distressed Amoret:

There she him found by that new louely mate,
Who lay the whiles in swoune, full sadly set,
From her faire eyes wiping the deawy wet,
Which softly stild, and kissing them atweene,
And handling soft the hurts, which she did get.

(IV.vii.35.3-7).

⁵⁸ MacCaffrey, *Spenser's Allegory: The Anatomy of Imagination*, p. 289.

The reference to Amoret as Timias's 'new lovely mate' is suggestive. As James Broaddus notes, 'Of all the definition of "mate", only "lover" is appropriate here, and that Amoret is a *new* lovely mate indicates a substitution of affections on Timias's part'.⁵⁹ This idea is augmented through Spenser's imagery. The tender solicitations of Timias wiping away Amoret's tears, and kissing 'atweene' her eyes, whilst also softly handling her wounds points towards a shift in the squire's devotions. Broaddus suggests that Timias's ministrations to Amoret, allied to his earlier fight with Lust, as well as the 'suggestive details of Amoret's body taking the brunt of Timias's "intended stroke"' and the 'consequent staining of [her] immaculate dress with blood' can be read to allegorise Timias's anticipation of an 'initial sexual encounter [with her] in the marriage bed'.⁶⁰ Whilst I would agree with Broaddus's reading of the sexual symbolism of this scene, I find little evidence to support the idea that it represents the squire's aspirations to conjugality. Such motivations would merely serve to ennoble his desire, and legitimise it within the Christian sanctity of marriage, which would be at odds with Spenser's previous depictions of Timias's concupiscence. What we do in fact see here is a further suggestion of man's imperfection. On occasions, Spenser has provided glimpses of Timias's potential to use reason to control the will. However, all too often, as illustrated by this particular episode, Spenser seems to suggest that there are times when one's ability to self-govern the passionate affections is too impaired; man's sense of reason is no match for the uncontrollable impulses of irascibility and licentiousness. As Timias's bungled attempts to save Amoret shows, even when the will does attempt to act morally, its execution is often corrupt because of the Fall. In suggesting this, the poem highlights the limitations of reason, and the need for divine cooperation dependent on the precise individual

⁵⁹ Broaddus, *Spenser's Allegory of Love*, p. 105.

⁶⁰ Broaddus, *Spenser's Allegory of Love*, p. 105.

circumstances. Without the required balance of human-divine cooperation, one's holiness, and with it, Christian honour is compromised.

Belpheobe's subsequent rejection of Timias and his period of exile has been likened to Elizabeth I's alienation of Raleigh following his clandestine wedding to Elizabeth Throckmorton in 1592; however, there is more going on in this episode than just historical allegory.⁶¹ When Belpheobe sees Timias caressing Amoret, she immediately interprets it as a sign of the squire's intemperance: 'Her noble heart with sight thereof was fild / With deepe disdain, and great indignity' (IV.vii.36.2-3). Her sense of outrage and jealousy at Timias's apparent betrayal evokes feelings of 'wrath' so great that she momentarily considers getting 'vengeance' by killing the pair with the same 'selfe arrow' that she used to kill Lust. By having Belpheobe consider this, Spenser seems to encourage readers to make comparisons between the allegorical figure and Timias. For a moment, in the imagination, Timias transforms into Lust through the device of the arrow and the anticipated shared fate brought about by the same embodiment of chastity. However, instead Belpheobe responds with pointed brevity: 'Is this the faith?' Rather than giving in to irascibility, she shows a sure command of her affections. Ultimately, her response is more powerful as it strikes at the heart of Timias's identity. By accusing the squire of disloyalty, Belpheobe questions his honour, and with it, his *raison d'être* within the poem's allegorical landscape. As M. Lindsay Kaplan suggests, through Belpheobe's denunciation of Timias, the squire is 'defamed' and 'in effect ceases to exist'.⁶² As honour is largely relational in the Spenserian landscape and associated with notions of personal integrity and esteem in the eyes of others, Timias finds himself dishonoured. Indeed, after failing to placate Belpheobe, and restore her 'grace', Timias runs

⁶¹ Note to IV.vii.36.8-9.

⁶² M. Lindsay Kaplan, *The Culture of Slander in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 43.

mad like Ariosto's Orlando (IV.vii.37.6) and also Lancelot from the *Morte D'Arthur* (XI.viii.14-38; XII.i.28-32).⁶³ In a state of 'sad melancholy' he retreats to the 'woods' and carves her name 'on euery tree' like Orlando in *As You Like It*, who inscribes the name of Rosalind (IV.vii.46). In doing so, Timias vents his Petrarchan melancholy. Before long his appearance changes to the point that he becomes so dishevelled that he looks like a salvage man and is unrecognisable even to his former master, Arthur (IV.vii.38-47).

Spenser's eventual means of reconciling Timias and Belphoebe at IV.viii paves the way for a religious dimension to the episode. Timias's prolonged exile in the woods may be seen as a period of penance resulting from his lustful solicitations of Amoret. His rejection of civilisation seemingly demonstrates a desire to escape from the troubles associated with human relationships. It is only after a period of sustained soul-searching that he is fortuitously visited by the turtle dove, which some religiously-disposed readers might have interpreted to represent the Holy Spirit of Matthew 3.16 and Luke 3.22. It also functions as a symbol of faithful love and would possibly have reminded readers of Noah's dove of Genesis 8.8-11. As such, the squire is 'receiu'd againe to former fauours state' (IV.viii.17.9). He manages to persuade his beloved that she was guilty of 'misdeeming' his behaviour towards Amoret, and convinces her that she should 'deeme aright' in future (IV.viii.17.3-4). However, for all his assertions and rhetoric Timias is not cured, he is only in remission as is seen by his failings in Book VI.

Timias's experiences in Book VI demonstrate that it is not just concupiscence that threatens his sense of Christian honour — it is also pride, as well as rash impetuosity. This is first suggested in canto v when he goes in pursuit of the Blatant Beast. We are told that the

⁶³ Malory, Thomas, *Works of Malory*, ed. by Eugène Vinaver (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), pp. 487, 495.

squire is,

[. . .] so bold,

That no one beast in forrest wylde or tame,

Met him in chase, but he it challenge would,

And plucke the pray oftymes out of their greedy hould.

(VI.v.15.6-9)

Using this knowledge of Timias's obsession for hunting, the evil trio of Despetto, Decetto and Defetto conspire against him. They use the Blatant Beast as a decoy to lure the squire into the forest where they then ambush him (VI.v.16). As a result of his pride, Timias goes in pursuit of the Blatant Beast only to be bitten by it. The bite fills him with 'poysnous humour' (VI.vi.2.8). Spenser's use of the epithet 'hardy' at VI.v.16.1 to describe Timias ('The hardy boy') hints at the squire's error. As the *OED* notes, apart from referring to an individual's courage and daring, the term has also been used since c.1225 to describe a person's rashness, temerity and audacity.⁶⁴ Thus, the poem seems to suggest that the squire's decision to go after the beast is an error of judgement. It is possible that some early readers might have been prompted to interpret Timias's display of pride in the light of Proverbs 16.18 ('Pride *goeth* before destruction, and an high minde before the fall') as well as Proverbs 29.23 ('The pride of a man shall bring him lowe: but the humble in spirit shall enioy glory'). Indeed, those reading after 1611, would find particular relevance in the King James Bible's version of Proverbs 29.23 as the the term 'glory' is replaced with 'honour', which would make the

⁶⁴ *OED*, 'Hardy', adj. 2.

connection to Timias more pertinent: 'A mans pride shall bring him lowe: but honour shall vpholde the humble in spirit'.⁶⁵

Timias's propensity for rashness is also seen in canto vii when he impetuously goes to the rescue of Mirabella who is being led by the giant, Disdaine, and whipped by the figure, Scorne. On seeing the pair's 'cruell handling' of Mirabella, Timias's 'gentle heart with indignation sweld, / And could no lenger beare so great abuse, / As such a Lady so to beate and bruse' (VI.vii.45.3-5). Consequently, he leaps to her defence, abandoning the 'faire *Serene*'. His attempts to enact an honourable and chivalrous rescue come to nothing as he comically slips — 'that slip he dearly rewd' — thereby presenting Disdaine with the opportunity to overpower and bind him (VI.vii.48.3). Impotent, he must join Mirabella in being held captive. Having done so much to secure his honour in books I and II, Timias must now endure the shame and ignominy of being led by Disdaine and Scorn. Despite the virtuous motive of the squire's actions, the execution is ill-judged. Firstly, his reckless behaviour leads to the abandonment of Serena, which, in turn, results in her being captured, stripped and almost eaten and sacrificed by the Salvage nation (VI.viii.31-51). Furthermore, in trying to rescue Mirabella, he attempts to honour someone who is dishonourable, although one might suggest that she is a person with the potential for change. In going to Mirabella's aid, Timias misreads the allegory in which he is a part, and risks bringing his reputation into disrepute. Mirabella has been sentenced by the Court of Cupid to save as many lovers as she has destroyed having been found guilty of previously treating her lovers with pride. After two years, she has saved only two souls; however, two years earlier she had destroyed twenty-four. Her chastisement by Disdaine and Scorn is just and fair as it mirrors the hurt that she doled out to her lovers in the past. As Tonkin notes, Timias's decision to leap to Mirabella's

⁶⁵ Given that that this substitution holds true throughout Proverbs, this was clearly a case where the Authorised Version translators consistently chose to render the original Hebrew word as 'honour'.

defence without ascertaining the circumstances of her situation is a further indication of the character's rashness.⁶⁶ As we have already discovered from Pollock, hot-headedness was something that an aspiring man of honour should avoid as it suggested intemperance.⁶⁷ It is possible that sixteenth-century readers applying theological perspectives to this episode might have interpreted Timias's recklessness alongside Proverbs 14.29: 'He yt is slowe to wrath, *is* of great wisdom: but he that is of an hastie minde, exalteth follie' (abbreviations *sic*). Similarly, they might also have interpreted the squire's hot-headedness in light of Ecclesiastes 7.11: 'Be not thou of an hastie spirit to be angry: for anger resteth in the bosome of fooles'. Calvinists would argue that Timias's behaviour is a reflection of humankind's inherent depravity, which renders man incapable and impotent to do good except when his will is guided by the grace of God. Through Spenser's use of allegory, the episode dramatises how even when man tries to act honourably with moral legitimacy, he often falls short due to ill-judgement caused by the will.

It is feasible that Spenser's readers might also have interpreted Timias's encounter with the Blatant Beast and the ensuing ambush by Despetto, Decetto and Defetto, as well as the squire's attempted rescue of Mirabella, in terms of Timias's sexual intemperance. If we take the monster and three men to represent the forces of slander and reproach, then the wounding and subsequent ambush of Timias could symbolise the way in which the squire's Christian honour is brought into question as a result of the way in which he has left himself open to allegations over his sexual integrity following his feelings of licentiousness towards Belpheobe, as well as his amorous solicitations towards Amoret.⁶⁸ Similarly, one might also

⁶⁶ Humphrey Tonkin, *Spenser's Courteous Pastoral: Book Six of the 'Faerie Queene'* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), p. 90.

⁶⁷ Pollock, 'Honour, Gender and Reconciliation in Elite Culture, 1570-1700', p. 13.

⁶⁸ The basis for reading the Blatant Beast as a symbol of slander and reproach is, in part, based on the narrator's comments at VI.vi.1-2.2.

argue that Timias's motives for attempting to rescue Mirabella, if we dare attribute motives to allegorical figures, may mirror those which I attributed to Arthur and Guyon in going after Florimell at the beginning of Book III: in part, they derive from longing and worldly desire for a beautiful, and seemingly vulnerable damsel.⁶⁹ It would appear that Timias has ironically become another victim of Mirabella's allure. In suggesting this, the poem again warns of the power of beauty to sidetrack any well-meaning hero, unless one thinks that here Spenser does tend to blame Mirabella and absolves Timias of any wrongdoing.

The way in which Spenser extricates Timias from these situations in Book VI raises a number of doctrinal questions. The fact that Prince Arthur, who is often associated with divine grace in the poem, comes to Timias's rescue on two separate occasions in Book VI suggests that providential intervention is necessary in order to protect one's sense of Christian honour. The first time that it happens is in canto v when Arthur rescues Timias from the ambush of Despetto, Decetto and Defetto. The second time it occurs is in canto viii after the squire has been bound by Disdain and Scorn. Calvinists would argue that Arthur's timely assistance reflects humankind's ongoing reliance upon grace. They would assert that Timias's acts of pride, rashness and also concupiscence (if we permit the sexual reading of the Mirabella episode) are indicative of man's depravity and bondage to sin as a result of the Fall, and that his reliance upon Arthur's help is symbolic of the way in which the elect are dependent upon divine help to rescue them from the clutches of the Devil, and thus return them to the path of righteousness and, with it, salvation.

However, despite the seeming emphasis upon grace, Spenser also seems to advocate a more moderate doctrinal, as well as ethical, position. This comes via the counsel of the hermit who is entrusted by Arthur with the responsibility of looking after Timias, as well as Serena,

⁶⁹ After all, the lady's charm and allure are made clear from the number of suitors that she has scorned and rejected in the past, and as the allegory has suggested on a number of occasions, Timias does harbour feelings of concupiscence.

after the pair's spiritual and physical health deteriorates as a result of the wounds made by the Blatant Beast. The hermit implies that the pair must use reason in order to recover from their malady. The hermit stresses that they must 'auoide the occasion of the ill' (VI.vi.14.2). In other words, they must: 'Abstaine from pleasure, and restraine [. . .] [the] will, / Subdue desire, and bridle loose delight' (VI.vi.14.5-6). The hermit's moralising words, which put a stress on human agency, implore Timias to avoid temptation and develop self-restraint as this is the only way that the squire's 'present euill plight', and subsequent dishonour, may be repaired (VI.vi.14.9). He must guard against those things which have troubled him in the past: impetuosity, pride, irascibility and concupiscence. Tonkin suggests that because of the hermit's background, his advice should be read as a cautionary tale for those wishing to pursue a career at court. This is a feasible interpretation of the episode. However, the religious dimension of the hermit's advice is made clear by Spenser's reference to the old man's 'wise commaundements' (VI.vi.15.3). As the *OED* notes, since c.1280, the term has been used to refer to the Ten Commandments or precepts of the Mosaic decalogue, and also since c.1325 to refer to a more generalised divine command.⁷⁰ As a result of following the hermit's advice, the pair's 'malady' finally ceases and 'the biting of that harmefull Beast / was thoroughly heal'd' (VI.vi.15.4-6). That fact that the pair's 'forces reincreast' highlights the degree to which reason has the capacity to bring about a spiritual as well as physical recovery — an idea that would have been at odds with prevalent Protestant thinking about the corrupt nature of the will (VI.vi.15.7).

Through Arthur's timely intervention, as well as through the hermit's wise counsel, Spenser seems to reiterate in Book VI a doctrinal, as well as ethical, position that he has rehearsed earlier in the poem: that holiness, and with it, Christian honour, is realised through a collaboration between reason and grace.

⁷⁰ *OED*, 'Commandment', n.2.

Conclusion

The chapter has argued that Timias is a far more significant character than critics have previously recognised - one who has a definite arc or trajectory to his presentation. In books I and II he functions alongside Arthur as an agent of divine grace assisting the prince in the execution of God's revealed will. To this end, he embodies the virtue with which he is associated by honouring the glory, immanence and moral uprightness of God. In books III, IV and VI, the squire's role changes. Here he functions to highlight how one's sense of honour, which is a relational virtue based on notions of integrity, esteem and respect, is challenged by the sins of pride, concupiscence, irascibility and rashness. For Spenser's more moderate doctrinal readers, Timias's part in these books points towards the belief that honour is a contingent facet of holiness dependent on a cooperation between grace and reason. Thus it appears to be the case from considering Spenser's treatment of Timias, that in the first two books, the poem's conception of honour is Calvinist by its association with grace, although in the latter ones, its doctrinal position becomes more moderate through its emphasis upon the potential of human agency.

In part, one might explain this shift by reminding one's self that Spenser was not writing a piece of theology; he was writing an epic poem, which was, in part, governed by generic conventions. Therefore, one might expect a degree of inconsistency here and there in terms of how the poem might be interpreted on a doctrinal spectrum. Alternatively, one might suggest that this shift in emphasis with regards to his presentation of Timias is more significant in as much as it possibly reflects a change in the poet's own doctrinal stance. It may also reflect how difficult it is to sustain a strict Calvinist position when you're thinking through the complexities of a moral life lived in a sinful world. However, as I have suggested

elsewhere in the thesis, it is problematic to try to predict Spenser's own theological perspective; there is too little biographical evidence to go on, and his writing as a whole resists attempts to be labelled in broad doctrinal terms. Perhaps, more than anything, the apparent shift from a Calvinist perspective to more of a moderate Protestant or Catholic one, should be put down to the multi-faceted way in which the poem is receptive to a range of complex interpretations due to the protean nature of the poet's allegorical framework. One might argue that it is also a reflection of how Spenser conceives of the human-divine relationship, in which human reason and agency can take one thus far but no further.

If we put Timias's part in books I and II alongside those of books III, IV and VI, then it seems that the squire undergoes a spiritual regression as the poem progresses. Challenges to his honour in the middle and later books uncover weaknesses in his spiritual condition which suggest that Timias is guilty of backsliding when he is left to his own will. It is likely that Spenser's Calvinist readers would have seen this as problematic in much the same way as they would have viewed Guyon's wanton destruction of Acrasia's Bower of Bliss at the end of Book II. As Alex Ryrie has identified, Calvinists believed that a moral relapse was a cause for great concern as one's progress towards sanctification should be linear: 'anyone whose progress stalls or reverses may [. . .] never have been justified at all'.⁷¹ As Ryrie notes, the hotter sort of Protestants believed that 'a redeemed sinner's life should have a very distinctive shape'.⁷² Stagnation or back-sliding was not permitted; virtuous progression as a sign of spiritual regeneration was what was expected. With this in mind, Spenser's Calvinist readers would find Timias's bouts of weakness in books III, IV and VI as anathema to the figure's Christian honour and sanctification, although some of these same Calvinists would also have recognised that while backsliding is not desirable, it happens. Moreover, they would have

⁷¹ Alec Ryrie, *Being Protestant in Reformation England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 410.

⁷² Ryrie, *Being Protestant in Reformation England*, p. 410.

seen it as being at odds with Spenser's portrayal of the squire in books I and II. However, it is possible that Spenser's more moderate doctrinal readers would have interpreted Timias's seeming inconsistency with regards to his self-discipline as indicative of what Ryrie calls the 'rhythm, or undulation' of actual lived experience.⁷³ In Timias's tribulations, readers would have been reminded of the ways in which honour, and with it, the prospect of redemption, may be earned as well as lost.

⁷³ Ryrie, *Being Protestant in Reformation England*, p. 412.

Chapter Three:

A Religious Reading of Spenserian Courtesy

Introduction

In this chapter I turn my attention to Book VI of *The Faerie Queene* by considering the ways in which some sixteenth-century readers might have interpreted Spenserian courtesy in the light of Christian ideas of charity, mercy and gentleness. To this end, I offer a number of fresh ways of reading familiar passages from Book VI. Central to my argument is the notion that the iconography of the Graces in canto x forms the allegorical core of Book VI. I suggest that some religiously-inclined readers might have interpreted the Acidalian episode as dramatising the way in which the faithful perceived God's grace to spread outwards from its heavenly centre, sowing the divine seeds of courtesy through the Christian community and thus ensuring civil harmony. In addition to this, the chapter goes on to show how it is possible that some readers might have attributed a form of theological significance to the numerous acts of courtesy portrayed in the other cantos of Book VI. In doing so, the chapter also considers how Spenserian courtesy may have been interpreted in the context of Christian ideas of meekness, humility and beneficence. The chapter offers new ways of thinking about sixteenth-century conceptions of courtesy; moreover, it engages in a broader discussion regarding early modern attitudes towards the importance of works to one's spiritual redemption — a theme which has been explored throughout the thesis.

In the proem to Book VI, the speaker exalts the virtue of courtesy above all others. When describing the 'sacred nursery / Of vertue', which is hidden away within the 'siluer bowre' and derived from 'heauenly seeds', the narrator states that of all the flowers that grow

there, 'courtesie' is the fairest one (VI.Proem.3, 4.2). He claims that the flower of courtesy 'brancheth forth in braue nobilitie, / And spreads it selfe through all ciuilitie' (VI.Proem.4.4-5). However, having exalted courtesy, the speaker is then quick to stress that currently it is in a state of decline and that its usage is far removed from that of its golden days during the period of 'Antiquitie' (VI.Proem.4.7). He states:

But in the triall of true curtesie,
Its now so farre from that, when then it was,
That it indeed is nought but forgerie,
Fashion'd to please the eies of them, that pas,
Which see not perfect things but in a glass:
Yet is that glasse so gay, that it can blynd
The wisest sight, to thinke gold that is bras,
But vertues seat is deepe within the mynd,
And not in outward shows, but inward thoughts defynd.

(VI.Proem.5)

When the narrator laments the demise of courtesy, one might infer that he is referring, in part, to its decline within courtly circles. In particular, he seems to be critical of the insincere way in which courtiers would act courteously as a means to secure personal advantage and influence. His use of the words 'forgerie', 'Fashion'd', 'blynd' and 'outward shows' suggests that courtesy is often used in a duplicitous and artificial way for personal gain. However, in making this point, he stresses that there is no implied criticism of the queen. Elizabeth is

described as being a paragon of courtesy; she is portrayed as being its earthly source; courtesy stems from her and returns back to her. He proclaims: 'That from your selfe I doe this vertue bring, / And to your selfe do it returne againe: / So from the Ocean all riuers spring, / And tribute backe repay, as to their king' (VI.Proem.7.2-5). Following a conventional strategy, the proem's complaint is aimed not at the queen but rather at the courtiers that orbit her, vying for position and favour.

The speaker's misgivings about the corruption at court are not restricted to the Proem. They colour the whole of Book VI. The fact that Spenser has Calidore leave court in order to try to perfect the virtue of courtesy is telling. Calidore's departure appears to suggest that, despite the fact that Gloriana is at its centre, court is not the best place for a Christian gentleman to hone the virtue of courtesy. Of course, Calidore is not the only knight who leaves court in order to work towards the attainment of a particular virtue. The Red Crosse knight, Guyon and Artegall all do the same thing. However, for Calidore, this is more of an ironic necessity given the proem's accusations of courtly corruption. The poem seems to suggest, especially in the later cantos of Book VI, that it is among the simple and honest shepherds that Calidore can learn the greatest truth about courtesy. It is by observing the shepherds' generosity of spirit and benevolence that the knight comes to a greater appreciation and understanding of his titular virtue. The pastoral world that Meliboe and his fellow shepherds inhabit is, for the most part, free from the rivalries and jealousies that preoccupy the world of court. It is founded upon a shared vision of harmony that derives from an altruistic spirit of beneficence towards one's neighbour. Ironically, as astute readers will have recognised, it is only when Calidore arrives that this changes because of the threat that he poses to Coridon as a rival suitor to Pastorella.

This is not the only occasion that Spenser had expressed his reservations about court. He first did so in *Mother Hubberds Tale* (1591), which provides a biting satire of Lord Burghley. In it we detect a number of verbal constructions that foreshadow his criticism of court in the proem to Book VI. In *Mother Hubberds Tale*, Spenser writes of how it was commonplace for courtiers to ‘lie’, ‘forge’, ‘scoffe’, ‘scorne’, and ‘mock’ as a means to gain favour, or rather, ‘to hunt after the hoped prey’ (lines 503-8).¹ Similar parallels may be found through phrases such as ‘fowle leasings’, ‘vile flatterie’ (line 733), ‘cunning meanes’ (line 847), and ‘shameles flatterie’ (line 850), which heighten the impression of courtly insidiousness.²

Spenser presents a similar view in *Colin Cloutys come home againe*, which recalls the poet’s trip to court with Sir Walter Raleigh in 1589 and his subsequent return to Ireland. The poem was published in 1595, a year prior to the publication of ‘The Legend of Courtesy’. Here, Spenser’s misgivings about the corruption of courtly life are filtered through the persona of Colin Clout. Following his return home, and whilst recounting details of his experiences at Cynthia’s court to his fellow shepherds, Colin remarks:

For sooth to say, it is no sort of life,
For shepheard fit to lead in that same place,
Where each one seeks with malice and with strife,
To thrust downe other into foule disgrace,
Himselfe to raise: and he doth soonest rise

¹ *The Shorter Poems*, p. 248.

² *The Shorter Poems*, pp. 254-7.

That best can handle his deceitful wit,
In subtil shifts, and finest sleights devise,
Either by slaundring his well deemed name,
Through leasings lewd, and fained forgerie:
Or else by breeding him some blot of blame,
By creeping close into his secrecie;
To which him needs a guilefull hollow hart,
Masked with faire dissembling curtesie,
A filed tounge furnisht with tearmes of art,
No art of schoole, but Courtiers schoolery.

(lines 688-702).³

Prior to these lines, Spenser had praised Elizabeth through the figure of Cynthia (lines 330-51).⁴ By the use of allegory, he had also made a number of positive comments about different aspects of court (376-455).⁵ However, here he exposes its less commendable side. He suggests that court can be a cut-throat place peopled by, among others, ambitious egoists who employ Machiavellian schemes to plot their rise to prominence. He outlines how personal success often comes at the cost of others' reputations. Moreover, as the last line suggests, one of the key failures of court, as far as Colin Clout seems to be concerned, is that it lacks intellectual integrity. This is something that Andrew Hadfield has written about in his life of Spenser, and for the purposes of this chapter, his comments are worth quoting at length.

³ *The Shorter Poems*, p. 364.

⁴ *The Shorter Poems*, p. 354.

⁵ *The Shorter Poems*, pp. 355-7.

Hadfield notes that:

the court has many arts, sophistication, and skill on display, but all of them are opposed to the ‘art of schoole’, the arts that Spenser had spent his life acquiring. The court is fundamentally at odds with the craft of the intellectual and so no one could ever hope to fulfil [Sir Thomas] Smith and [Gabriel] Harvey’s ideal of the active academic participating in public life. The poet, instead of following Virgil’s career path from shepherd to poet, must remain as a shepherd, and so save himself from the pernicious influence of the court in order to be able to write sensibly and to tell the truth. There were, of course, many criticisms of the court and its role in poetry and drama of the period, but few went quite as far as Spenser.⁶

Colin Clout further describes the vacuous nature of court, which Hadfield refers to, when he states that the ‘highest lookes haue not the highest mynd, / Nor haughtie words most full of highest thoughts: / But are like bladders blownen vp with wynd, / That being prickt do vanish into nought’ (lines 715-18).⁷ His reference to the ‘vaunted vanitie’ of Cynthia’s courtiers adds to this sense of shallowness and superficiality (line 719).⁸ At the heart of Colin’s censure of court is the recurring idea that courtiers are immoral. He suggests that, for the most part, their actions are selfish and derived from ambition rather than out of a beneficent consideration of others. As Margaret Christian has noted, ‘[s]ermon references to courtiers and court [during

⁶ Hadfield, *Edmund Spenser: A Life*, p. 242.

⁷ *The Shorter Poems*, pp. 364-5.

⁸ *The Shorter Poems*, p. 365

the period] show that Spenser's treatment of these conventional topoi [of court criticism], far from being subversive or jaded, is very typical'.⁹

Possibly as a result of his misgivings about the way in which courtesy is being misused at court, Spenser offers his own conception of the virtue in Book VI. Central to the book's outlook is the idea that courtesy is above all else a social virtue. It emphasises the importance of altruism, charity and community, and rejects all forms of egotism and ambition. Indeed, Book VI portrays courtesy as the cornerstone of a harmonious and just society. It suggests that the virtue is one of the crowning achievements of civilisation because it stresses a consideration of others over the wants of the individual. As Dorothy Woodward Culp notes, Spenserian courtesy,

derives not only from gentleness, a natural inclination to seek what is best for others, but also from the conscious and voluntary choice of an action that best meets the needs of a particular situation. One of the primary concerns of [Spenser's conception of] courtesy is the aid and help that one man should give to another; but it governs all those relationships that fall outside of the interests of the state or of political, economic, or personal profit.¹⁰

Culp seems to suggest that, in presenting this idealised view of courtesy, Book VI makes a stand against the corruption that was seemingly endemic at court.

The need for a reappraisal of the religious dimension of Book VI stems from the fact that critics have tended to neglect the Christian tenor of Spenserian courtesy in favour of other

⁹ Margaret Christian, *Spenserian Allegory and Elizabethan Biblical Exegesis: A Context for 'The Faerie Queene'* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), p. 207.

¹⁰ Dorothy Woodward Culp, 'Courtesy and Moral Virtue', *SEL*, 11 (1971), 37-51, p. 37.

readings. Jane Grogan's monograph, *Exemplary Spenser: Visual and Poetic Pedagogy in 'The Faerie Queene'* (2009), provides one of the most recent example of this. She follows a number of scholars in seeing Book VI as Spenser's complex engagement with the range of conduct books that rose to popularity during the latter part of the sixteenth century, in particular with Castiglione's *Il Cortegiano* (1528), Della Casa's *Galateo* (1558) and Guazzo's *Civil Conversatione* (1574).¹¹ While recognising Spenser's debt to the European courtesy books of the period, however, Grogan barely mentions the religious context of Spenserian courtesy. In this she is not alone. A number of critics have read Book VI politically, with some viewing the book's pastoral episodes as a continuation of the political allegory that began in Book V, and specifically with Spenser's consideration of the problems of Irish colonialism.¹² Other political interpretations have highlighted the book's engagement with Machiavellian theories of government, justice and moral relativism, whilst others have focused on the book's apparent displacement of Queen Elizabeth.¹³ Some critics have read the text biographically and seen the problem of Calidore's pastoral truancy as a reflection of Spenser's complex relationship with court. Several critics writing in the first half of the twentieth century have argued that Spenser based the figure of Calidore on either Sidney or Essex.¹⁴ In contrast, a number of readers have sought to identify the literary sources for Book VI; Judith Anderson has explored Spenser's use of Chaucer's Melibee or *The Mirrour of Knighthood*, whilst John

¹¹ Jane Grogan, *Exemplary Spenser: Visual and Poetic Pedagogy in 'The Faerie Queene'* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), pp. 137-49. See also Humphrey Tonkin, *Spenser's Courteous Pastoral: Book Six of the 'Faerie Queene'*, pp. 163-72; Culp, 'Courtesy and Moral Virtue', pp. 37-51.

¹² Grogan, *Exemplary Spenser*, pp. 162-75; Andrew Hadfield, *Spenser's Irish Experience* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), pp. 172-84; Helena Shire, *A Preface to Spenser* (London and New York: Longman, 1978), pp. 27-9.

¹³ For a Machiavellian reading of Book VI see Bruce Danner, 'Courteous *virtu* in Spenser's Book VI of *The Faerie Queene*', *SEL*, 38 (1998), 1-18; for the displacement of Elizabeth see Eva Gold, 'The Queen and the Book in Book VI of *The Faerie Queene*', *South Atlantic Review*, 57 (1992), 1-19.

¹⁴ Dorothy F. Atkinson, 'The Pastorella Episode in *The Faerie Queene*', *PMLA*, 59 (1944), 361-72; Percy W. Long, 'Spenser's Sir Calidore', *Englische Studien*, 42 (1911), 53; Percy W. Long, 'Spenser and Sidney', *Anglia*, 38 (1914), 173; Kenneth Thorpe Rowe, 'Sir Calidore: Essex or Sidney?', *Studies in Philology*, 27 (1930), 125-41.

Hankins has considered the book's classical inheritance as seen through the vision of the graces on Mount Acidale.¹⁵ Considering the critical interest attached to Book VI, it is surprising how little has been written about the book's openness to soteriological interpretation.

Of those studies that do address the subject of Book VI and soteriology, several of them were written in the 1990s, which indicates a slight shift towards religious-based interpretations of Spenser during this time. In each case, the studies address the poem's receptivity to different forms of doctrinal interpretation. In *Spenser and the Discourses of Reformation England* (1997), Richard Mallette positions 'The Legend of Courtesy' at the centre of a wider debate regarding reformation attitudes towards providence, fortune and free will. He argues that Book VI 'consistently refuses to take a stand between free will and determinism'.¹⁶ Through skilful close reading he identifies how the text modulates between two contrary positions. He considers how on some occasions it appears to endorse a seemingly moderate form of Protestantism as characterised by its 'Pelagian self-sufficiency'.¹⁷ However, at other times, it seems to occupy a more Calvinistic position by its emphasis upon the depravity of the will and man's dependency upon God's gift of unmerited grace. The value of Mallette's study is that it provides the first in-depth consideration of the tensions between divine providentialism and the role of human agency in Book VI. However, its limitation is that Mallette does not ground his religious analysis in a consideration of courtesy. This chapter rectifies this omission by placing courtesy at the centre of its discussion about Book VI and soteriology.

¹⁵ Judith Anderson, 'Prudence and Her Silence: Spenser's Use of Chaucer's Melibee', *ELH*, 62 (1995), 29-46; John E. Hankins, *Source and Meaning in Spenser's Allegory: A Study of 'The Faerie Queene'* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), pp. 192-6.

¹⁶ Mallette, *Spenser and the Discourses of Reformation England*, p. 196.

¹⁷ Mallette, *Spenser and the Discourses of Reformation England*, p. 185.

Of those other studies that were published in the 1990s, Kenneth Borris has shown how it is possible that Spenser's more moderate doctrinal readers may have interpreted the episode at VI.viii.31-51, involving the abduction of Serena, as an allegorical satire of Puritan extremism.¹⁸ Michael Tratner, on the other hand, has stressed the Calvinistic tenor of the later cantos of Book VI by reading them alongside a number of radical Protestant texts.¹⁹ Both studies draw attention to the ways in which Spenser's readers may have interpreted Book VI through a theological lens; however, as is the case with Mallette, they choose not to ground their religious analysis in a consideration of the book's titular virtue of courtesy. What these two approaches highlight is the extent to which Book VI is receptive to a range of different doctrinal interpretations. This is a notion that I develop throughout the chapter by considering how, through its treatment of courtesy, the text accommodates both Calvinist and more moderate doctrinal positions.

Prior to the 1990s, most critics interested in the theological dimension of Book VI tended to focus on the significance of the vision of the Graces. Anthea Hume suggested that Spenser transforms the classical iconography of the Graces into a theocentric one.²⁰ She argues that the graces are representatives of divine bounty and the means by which Calidore comes to recognise his own virtue, and more importantly, its heavenly provenance. In contrast, Humphrey Tonkin is more cautious, claiming that 'the crossing of the rift between classical and Christian is only hinted at.'²¹ Moreover, he argues that the Graces's role as handmaids to the pagan goddess Venus complicates any such attempts to Christianise this

¹⁸ Kenneth Borris, "'Duelish Ceremonies': Allegorical Satire of Protestant Extremism in *The Faerie Queene* VI.viii.31-51', *Spenser Studies*, 8 (1990), 175-209.

¹⁹ Michael Tratner, "'The Thing S. Paule Ment by...the Courteousness That He Spake of': Religious Sources for Book VI of *The Faerie Queene*", *Spenser Studies*, 8 (1990), 147-74.

²⁰ Hume, *Edmund Spenser: Protestant Poet*, pp. 137-44.

²¹ Tonkin, *Spenser's Courteous Pastoral: Book Six of the 'Faerie Queene'*, p. 227.

episode entirely. Whilst acknowledging the extent to which Spenser draws heavily upon the classical tradition in his depiction of the Graces, one might argue, like Hume, that the iconography of the three maidens also invites soteriological interpretation. Of those other critics that were writing prior to the 1990s, Kathleen Williams has suggested that the relationship between the Graces and the natural world may, through the use of allegory, represent the relationship between God and man.²² In part, this is an idea which underpins my own reading of Book VI. However, my interpretation extends Williams's study by providing a more sustained focus on the iconography of the Graces, and by keeping courtesy at the centre of that discussion. In particular I consider how the Graces's spatial positioning may have encouraged a number of readers to interpret Spenserian courtesy, as it is depicted in the other cantos of Book VI, in the spirit of Christian *agape*.

The significance of the current chapter is twofold. Firstly, it considers, in a way that critics have not considered previously, the extent to which Spenserian courtesy may be read in light of Christian ideas of charity, mercy and gentleness. Secondly, the chapter considers how Spenser's sixteenth-century readers may have attributed some degree of soteriological significance to the book's instances of courtesy. It explores how readers might have interpreted the acts of courtesy, or discourtesy, in relation to contemporary attitudes towards the importance of works to one's personal salvation.

The chapter is divided into four sections. The first focuses on the Acidalian episode involving the three Graces. It considers how, through the iconography and configuration of the Graces, we can interpret Spenserian courtesy in the spirit of Christian charity. The second section considers how Spenser's concept of courtesy may be read alongside the Christian idea of mercy, whilst the third examines the theological significance of gentleness as it is depicted

²² Williams, *Spenser's 'Faerie Queene': The World of Glass*, pp. 189-223.

in Book VI. The final part considers the threats posed to courtesy, and with it one's sense of salvation, by acts of slander and scorn.

Three Graces: Spenserian Courtesy as a Form of Christian Charity

Mid-way through his pastoral retreat, whilst exploring nearby woods and dales, Calidore sees the vision of Mount Acidale. Being curious, he decides to investigate. On ascending the top of the hill he is confronted by an enchanting vision, which for the purpose of our discussion is worth quoting in full:

Vnto this place when as the Elfin Knight
Approcht, him seemed that the merry sound
Of a shrill pipe he playing heard on hight,
And many feete fast thumping th'hollow ground,
That through the woods their Eccho did rebound.
He nigher drew, to weete what mote it be;
There he a troupe of Ladies dauncing found
Full merrily, and making gladfull glee,
And in their midst a Shepherd piping he did see.

He durst not enter into th'open greene,
For dread of them vnwares to be descryde,
For breaking of their daunce, if he were seene;

But in the couert of the wood did byde,
Beholding all, yet of them vnespyde.
There he did see, that pleased much his sight,
That euen he him selfe his eyes enuyde,
An hundred naked maidens lilly white,
All raunged in a ring, and dauncing in delight.

All they without were raunged in a ring,
And daunced round; but in the midst of them
Three other Ladies did both daunce and sing,
The whilest the rest them round about did hemme,
And like a girlond did in compasse stemme:
And in the middest of those same three, was placed
Another Damzell, as a precious gemme,
Amidst a ring most richly well enchaced,
That with her goodly presence all the rest much graced.

(VI.x.10-12)

The narrator describes how the three dancing maidens that Calidore spies are the 'Graces, daughters of delight, / Handmaides of *Venus*, which are wont to haunt / Vppon this hill, and daunce there day and night' (VI.x.15.1-3). The fourth damsel, who is positioned in the centre of the concentric circles, is seemingly the most revered; she is 'Crowned with a rosie girlond' and is reported to exceed 'all the rest in beauty' (VI.x.14.4-5). In his attempt to get closer to the vision, Calidore disturbs the Graces and they vanish into thin air much to the annoyance

of Colin Clout who has been piping their dance. This is not the first time that Calidore has intruded on a private scene. Earlier in the book, he interrupts Serena and Calepine, as well as Aladine and Priscilla. That fact that this pattern is repeated highlights the extent to which by the tenth canto Calidore still has much to learn about courtesy and does not seem to have progressed from one scene to the next. He is not dissimilar to the poem's other knights in this regard. As I have discussed already in the previous chapters, Redcrosse, Guyon and Timias are also guilty of repeated back-sliding with regards to their particular virtues. For a number of early readers such regressions might have been suggestive of the way in which the path to the virtuous and holy life is a difficult one.

In his portrayal of the three Graces, Spenser draws heavily upon a recurring image from classical iconography. Following ancient tradition, Spenser names the Graces Aglaia, Euphrosyne and Thalia, which are Greek for 'bright', 'good cheer' and 'festive'.²³ These names are the same as are used by E.K. when he refers to the Graces in the gloss to the April eclogue of *The Shepheardes Calender*.²⁴ Spenser continues to draw upon classical mythography when he follows Hesiod (*Theogony*, 907-11) in making them the daughters of Jove and Eurynome, as well as by referring to them as the 'Handmaides of Venus' (VI.x.15.2).²⁵ In imagining this mystical scene, with its naked dancers and bewitching music, Spenser creates what will come to be the allegorical centre of Book VI. The Acidalian episode is as crucial to Book VI as the House of Holinesse is to Book I, and the Bower of Bliss is to Book II. It is here, in canto x, that the poem communicates its conception of courtesy most strongly. Through the iconography of the Graces, and Calidore's conversation with Colin Clout, the reader gets to the heart of Spenserian courtesy.

²³ Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, ed. by Thomas P. Roche, Jr, p. 1079.

²⁴ *The Shorter Poems*, p. 69.

²⁵ See note for VI.x.22.

Despite the classical provenance of Spenser's Graces, it is possible to imagine how a number of sixteenth-century readers might have interpreted the Acidalian episode in theological terms.²⁶ Firstly, given the soteriological connotations of the word *grace* during the period, and the extent to which the idea of salvation was central to most people's everyday lives at the time, one can envisage the scope for religious interpretation that the image of the three Graces would have provided. One can also imagine how some readers might have perceived the iconography of the three Graces as being representative of the three stages of liberality, which when read alongside a number of biblical and theological sources, could have been interpreted in the spirit of Christian courtesy and benevolence. Moreover, given the mystical nature of the vision and also the episode's importance in relation to Book VI's key virtue, one can also conceive how some readers might have interpreted the concentric formation of Graces radiating outwards from the the central Grace as symbolic of the way in which love and courtesy emanates from a divine source throughout society. By acknowledging the religious possibilities of this episode, and the extent to which it may have promoted a Christian reading of Spenserian courtesy, as I will do in greater detail below, one can begin to recognise the religious tenor of the other cantos of Book VI, as well as appreciate the degree to which Spenser's conception of courtesy, as it is presented elsewhere in the poem, such as through the actions of Arthur and Timias in Books I and II, is also open to theological consideration.

It is feasible that Spenser wanted his readers to interpret the Acidalian episode in light of Christian ideas. Lila Geller has argued that the poet 'does intend his Graces as symbols

²⁶ For further discussion of this episode's significance see: Headlam Wells, *Spenser's 'Faerie Queene' and the Cult of Elizabeth* (Beckenham: Croom Helm, 1983), pp. 139-42. See also Catherine Bates, *The Rhetoric of Courtship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 151-8; Hume, *Edmund Spenser: Protestant Poet*, pp. 137-44; Lewis, *The Allegory of Love*, pp. 350-1; Stella P. Revard, 'Graces', in *The Spenser Encyclopedia*, pp. 338-9; Tonkin, *Spenser's Courteous Pastoral*, pp. 124-42.

[. . .] of Christian grace'.²⁷ Such speculations regarding the poet's authorial intentions are difficult, if not impossible, to substantiate. However, all that we can be sure of is that through his use of allegory, Spenser is constantly inviting his readers to construct new forms of meaning in the poem by identifying possible patterns of signification — some of which might be theological. Spenser's reference to the dancing maidens as Graces, as well as his use of loaded terms such as 'gracious' are typical of this.

From the start, the episode's receptiveness to religious interpretation is amplified by Spenser's reference to the dancing maidens as Graces. As noted above, in using this particular name, Spenser was, in part, following classical tradition. However, as Ita MacCarthy has acknowledged, and as Spenser's readers at the time would have been aware, during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the word *grace* had a 'range of expanded, contested and widely circulated meanings'. For the artists and theorists of the Italian Renaissance, it denoted excellence and distinction in the visual arts.²⁸ However, as I have noted above, the term also encompassed a complex range of theological ideas in relation to human salvation. In a doctrinal sense, it was taken to refer to the regenerating spirit of God which was bestowed upon humanity. Grace was believed to be a benevolent divine influence that steered humanity towards the path of sanctification, and provided strength in the face of temptation and adversity. Conforming Protestants believed that it was through divine grace that righteousness was imputed into the elect. This state of righteousness, which would lead to a sinner's redemption, was then apprehended and received by faith. More moderate Protestants, as well as Catholics, took a different view. They tended to believe that grace was potentially available to all of humanity and not just the predestined few as Calvinists maintained. They argued that

²⁷ Lila Geller, 'The Acidalian Vision: Spenser's Graces in Book VI of *The Faerie Queene*', *RES*, 23, No. 91 (1972), 267-77 (p. 267).

²⁸ Ita MacCarthy, 'Grace' in *Renaissance Keywords*, ed. by Ita MacCarthy (London: Legenda, 2013), p. 63.

the ransom paid by Christ's sacrifice was intended to release all of mankind from bondage, although with regards to this idea there was some disagreement. Some theologians believed that the award of divine grace was largely dependent on works, whilst others argued that it was granted universally although a number of sinners rejected it because of their inexorable depravity.²⁹

In the same way that the poem would have encouraged some early modern readers to have constructed a religious interpretation of the Graces based upon the theological significance of their name, it is equally possible that the following stanza might have invited a Christian reading because of the potential wordplay on 'gracious':

These three on men all gracious gifts bestow,
Which decke the body or adorne the mynde,
To make them louely or well fauoured show,
As comely carriage, entertainment kynde,
Sweete semblaunt, friendly offices that bynde,
And all the complements of curtesie:
They teach vs, how to each degree and kynde
We should our selues demeane, to low, to hie;
To friends, to foes, which skill men call Ciuility.

(VI.x.23)

²⁹ McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, pp. 188-240.

As the *OED* notes, from around 1375 onwards, the adjective ‘gracious’ has been used to refer to, amongst other things, the way in which people or things abound in divine grace and mercy.³⁰ It is therefore possible that a number of religiously-inclined readers might have interpreted the word using this particular sense rather than its secular alternatives. Reading the word ‘gracious’ this way, the stanza implicitly seems to suggest that the Graces are instruments of divine providence whose ‘gracious gifts’ emanate directly from the godhead. In effect, they embody divine grace as their names imply. The gifts that they ‘bestow’ on mankind are ones of ‘curtesie’ which, as the stanza suggests, are essential to social harmony and concord. The narrator claims that the Graces ‘teach us’ how to act altruistically towards one another regardless of rank and background. Such sentiments lie at the heart of Christian morality and, in particular, are alluded to at Luke 10.30-37 in the parable about the good Samaritan. The stanza also exhorts man to love his foes, which a number of sixteenth-century readers might have read in the spirit of Proverbs 25.21-22, Exodus 23.4 and Luke 6.35-6: ‘Wherefore loue ye your enemies, and doe good, and lend, looking for nothing againe, and your rewarde shalbe great, and ye shalbe the children of the most High: for he is kinde vnto the vnkinde, and to the euill. Be ye therefore mercifull, as your Father also is mercifull’ (abbreviations *sic*). For a number of sixteenth-century readers the maidens would have fostered a sense of peace, unity and benevolence. In short, as the narrator states, they teach mankind the virtue of ‘Ciuitility’, which, as the *OED* notes, had come to embody ideas of civil order and good behaviour during the sixteenth century.³¹ As we can see, by attending to the theological significance of the word ‘gracious’, readers’ perceptions of the stanza would have changed significantly, as would their conception of courtesy. The virtue, as it is outlined

³⁰ *OED*, ‘gracious’, adj. A. 3 & 4.

³¹ *OED*, ‘civility’, n. 1.4.

in this stanza, would have assumed a religious dimension: courtesy originates from a divine source, and appears to encompass the Christian ideas of charity and beneficence.

Spenser's use of the classical trope of the three Graces would have added to the potential religiosity of the episode for many readers because of the significance of the number three in the Christian tradition. Whilst it is fair to assume that some of Spenser's readers may have interpreted the three Graces in terms of the numerous Neoplatonic triads that were popular during the period, especially the Plotinian triad of Being, Life and the Intellect, it is likely that many would have read the tripartite relationship between the three Graces as analogous to the Trinity.³² Equally, given the fact that the Greek name for the Graces is *charites*, one can envisage how some readers with a knowledge of this might have also associated the three maidens with the three theological virtues of faith, hope and charity from I Corinthians 13.13.³³ This, in turn, may have prompted some readers to make a link between charity and Book VI's titular virtue of courtesy, which would have been feasible given the common ties of selflessness and compassion that unite the two virtues.³⁴

The possibility that Spenser's readers would have interpreted the Acidalian episode theologically is made more likely by the fact that the practice of reading the Graces in a religious light was an accepted one during the period. For instance, in *The Golden Book of the Leaden Goddes* (1577), the Church of England clergyman and author, Stephen Batman, states that 'by the ayd of the three Graces, Fayth, Hope and Charitie, we may attayne to the heauen

³² See Cornelio Fabro, 'The Overcoming of the Neoplatonic Triad of Being, Life and Intellect by Saint Thomas Aquinas' in *Neoplatonism and Christian Thought Vol. 2*, ed. by Dominic J. O'Meara (New York, NY: State University of New York Press, 1982), pp. 97-108.

³³ In the Geneva Bible, Charity is mentioned alongside Faith and Hope in note 7 of I Corinthians 13.13, although in the verse itself, Love is mentioned instead of Charity. In the King James Bible, Charity replaces Love in this verse.

³⁴ Gerald Snare, 'Spenser's Fourth Grace', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 34 (1971), 350-355; Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, ed. by Thomas P. Roche, Jr., p. 1228.

of celestial perpetuities'.³⁵ Here, Batman takes the pagan image of the Graces and considers the way in which their mystical vision evokes a transcendent glimpse of Heavenly timelessness and infinity. In Batman's *The new Ariual of the Three Gracis into Anglia* (1580) we see a further attempt to Christianise the Graces. As Nohnberg notes, Batman interprets the figure of Plenteousness as God's plentiful grace, and Liberality as God's mercy.³⁶ Batman's attempt to incorporate the Graces within a Christian world view was indicative of a growing humanist trend to accommodate the myths and beliefs of the classical era into a Christian world view. In his *Lectures vpon the first and second Epistles of Paul to the Thessalonians* (1606), the Scottish Calvinist theologian, Robert Rollock, speaks of the 'three graces of God, patience, joy and prayer'. He goes on to refer to them as the 'graces of regeneration', and argues that all three are necessary for man's salvation.³⁷ As we will see, Book VI develops this practice further by using the Graces to christianise the virtue of courtesy in a way that had not been done previously.

It is possible to argue that the setting of canto x adds to its theological tenor. By this I refer to the implicit religious iconography of Mount Acidale. As Hankins notes, traditionally, Acidale has been associated with the pagan goddess, Venus.³⁸ Spenser follows this pattern when at IV.v.5.5-6 he describes how the goddess of beauty spent 'many an howre' playing with the 'pleasant Graces' on the 'Acidalian mount'. However, despite its classical

³⁵ Stephen Batman, *The Golden Booke of the Leaden Goddess Wherein is Described the Vayne Imaginations of Heathen Pagans, and Counterfaict Christians* (London: Thomas Marshe, 1577), sig. H1^v. For a further example of how the three Graces are linked to the Christian virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity, see: Robert Rollock, *Lectures vpon the first and second Epistles of Paul to the Thessalonians* (Edinburgh: Robert Charteris, 1606), sigs B5^v, V4^v - V5^r. For further instances of how the three Graces were referred to in a Christian context see: David Chytraeus, *A postil or orderly disposing of certeine epistles vsually red in the Church of God, vpon the Sundayes and holydayes throughout the whole yeere. Written in Latin by Dauid Chytraeus, and translated intoo English by Arthur Golding* (London: Lucas Harrison & George Bishop, 1570), sig. O2^v.

³⁶ Stephen Batman, *The new Ariual of the Three Gracis into Anglia* (London, 1580), sigs C2^r, C3^v - C4^r. See also: Nohnberg, *The Analogy of 'The Faerie Queene'*, note 104, p. 700.

³⁷ Robert Rollock, *Lectures vpon the first and second Epistles of Paul to the Thessalonians*, sigs V4^v - V5^r.

³⁸ Hankins, *Source and Meaning in Spenser's Allegory*, pp. 192-3.

associations, Spenser's Mount Acidale also invites religious interpretation because of its otherworldliness, which could be interpreted in Christian terms. As R. F. Hill notes, Spenser's Acidale surpasses all natural beauty.³⁹ The poet describes it as:

[. . .] a place, whose pleasaunce did appere
To passe all others, on the earth which were:
For all that euer was by natures skill
Deuized to worke delight, was gathered there
[. . .]
It was an hill plaste in an open plaine,
That round about was bordered with a wood
Of matchless hight, that seem'd th'earth to disdaine,
In which all trees of honour stately stood,
And did all winter as in sommer bud,
Spredding pauillions for the birds to bowre
(VI.x.5.4-7, 6.1-6).

The fact that the trees are in bud all year round creates the impression that Mount Acidale is removed from the normal seasons of nature, thereby evoking a sense of its otherworldliness and mysticism. Furthermore, the suggestion that there is nowhere on earth to match its beauty heightens its potential paradisiacal dimension, as does the image of it being walled by 'all trees of honour', which as Hamilton notes, may allude to Genesis 2.9 where the garden of

³⁹ R. F. Hill, 'Colin Clout's Courtesy', *MLR*, 57 (1962), 492-503.

Eden is described as having 'euery tree pleasant to the sight, and good for meate'.⁴⁰ It is worth noting at this point that the various sources for Acidale, such as Boccaccio and Natalis Comes, tend to refer to the place as a fountain rather than a mountain.⁴¹ It was believed to be the spot where Venus bathed with the Graces. Spenser gestures towards this at VI.x.7, when he mentions the existence of a small fountain at the foot of Mount Acidale. However, the emphasis here is slight. By departing from classical tradition by making Acidale a mountain rather than a fountain, Spenser creates the potential for readers to interpret the site as analogous to those biblical mounts where similar revelations took place. In particular, one can imagine how it might have reminded some readers of that 'sacred hill', the Mount of Olives, by the way in which, just like the Mount of Olives, it functions as a place of moral instruction (I.x.54.1). As a site of revelation, there are also parallels with the 'highest Mount' of I.x.53.1 where Contemplation leads Redcrosse to spy the New Jerusalem of Revelation 21.10-21. For a number of readers, Calidore's experience of being instructed on the subject of courtesy might possibly have been reminiscent of the way in which Jesus taught the disciples about the importance of compassion and humility during his Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 24-25).

So far, I have suggested a number of ways in which Spenser's depiction of the Graces and Mount Acidale, is open to religious analysis. Collectively, these different elements illuminate the episode's strong potential for theological interpretation. I turn now to the iconography of the three Graces, which, through the use of allegory, is key to our reading of the episode's religiosity, and with it, Spenser's conception of courtesy.

In the classical tradition, as illustrated by Seneca's *De Beneficiis* (1.3), the three Graces represent the three stages of liberality, that is the three-way process of giving,

⁴⁰ Note to VI.x.6.4.

⁴¹ Hankins, *Source and Meaning in Spenser's Allegory*, pp. 192-3.

accepting and returning of benefits.⁴² It is likely that the correspondence between the three Graces and the three-way process of liberality is one that would have been familiar to many of Spenser's readers. For instance, they may have read of it in Arthur Golding's popular translation of *De Beneficiis* (1578), when Golding writes of how 'one of [. . .] [the Graces] bestoweth the good turne the other receiueth it, and the thirde requiteth it'.⁴³ Similarly, they might have come across it in *The line of Liberalitie* (1569) when Seneca describes how the graces 'signifie three kind of benefytes. Namely the benefites whych are geuen: the benefites which are receiued, and the benefites which are receiued and repayed.'⁴⁴ In both instances, the tripartite relationship between the Graces corresponds to the three-way process of giving, receiving and requiting of benefits, which was believed to be central to a courteous and harmonious society. At the heart of this process of liberality was the idea that one act of generosity would give rise to a further act of benevolence, which in turn, would inspire subsequent instances of courtesy and so on. Once started, the process continues and thus creates an ongoing sequence of altruistic gestures, which foster a sense of civic harmony and unity. If Spenser's readers were familiar with the allegorical connection between the three Graces and the three stages of liberality, which is possible given the reach of the Graces in early modern culture, then it is feasible that those readers would have applied this notion to their own interpretation of the three Acidalian Graces, and with it Book VI's larger concerns. In doing so, they might have conceived the three maidens to represent the ways in which the virtue of courtesy hinges upon an ongoing and reciprocal generosity of spirit.

⁴² Seneca, *De Beneficiis*, 1.3. See footnote to VI.x.24.7-9 in Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, ed. Thomas P. Roche, Jr., p. 1227.

⁴³ Lucius Annaeus Seneca, *The vvoorke of the excellent philosopher Lucius Annaeus Seneca concerning benefyting that is too say the dooing, receyuing, and requyting of good turns*, trans. by Arthur Golding (London: John Day, 1578), sig. A3^r.

⁴⁴ Lucius Annaeus Seneca, *The line of Liberalitie Dulie Directinge the Wel Bestowing of Benefites and Reprehending the Comonly Vsed Vice of Ingratitude*, trans. by anon. (London: Thomas Marshe, 1569), sig. B2^r.

Given the importance of religion to people's everyday lives, it is feasible that sixteenth-century readers may have accommodated these particular ideas, not just within a moral framework, but, also within a theological world view by interpreting Spenser's Graces in the spirit of Christian charity and gratitude. For such readers, it is plausible that the iconography of the Graces and their relationship to the three stages of liberality might have assumed significance and meaning within a Christian context. This might have been achieved by taking the figures to signify how, in an ideal Christian community, individuals should courteously and generously interact with one another through instances of warmth and kindness, which are then reciprocated, thereby ensuring social harmony and love, as proposed in the scriptures. Moreover, as Lila Geller has suggested, for some, the iconography of the Graces might also have corresponded to the way in which humanity enacts a figurative discourse with God. Geller believes that the three-way process of liberality, as embodied by the Graces, could have symbolised for a number of readers the 'circulation of graciousness from God to man and from man to God like that which the Neo-Platonists see in the *emanatio-raptio-remeatio* cycle'.⁴⁵ This particular way of reading the tripartite relationship between the Graces would have especially appealed to Spenser's Reformed readers as it has God as the source of liberality; it would have symbolised the predestined process whereby God awards the free and unmerited gift of faith to the elect as part of their salvation, who in turn manifest the fruits of their election, as well as express their gratitude to him, through good works. However, it is equally possible that more moderate Protestant, as well as Catholic, readers, might have reversed this formulation and had humanity begin the process of liberality to God and to one another; to this end, the iconography of the Graces would have represented the way in which humanity may earn God's grace, and with it — redemption, through merit and deeds.

⁴⁵ Geller, 'The Acidalian Vision: Spenser's Graces in Book VI of *The Faerie Queene*', p. 274.

On a social level, the three-way process of giving, accepting and requiting gifts lies at the heart of Christian morality. It establishes the bonds of friendship and kindness that facilitate civility and with it social accord. To this end, it is the bedrock of Book VI's titular virtue, courtesy. Gift-giving features frequently in Book VI. We see it in canto i when Briana offers Calidore her castle, who then goes on to offer it to the knight and damsel that were wronged by Briana's paramour, Crudor. On this occasion, Briana's gift-giving represents a form of contrition for her past sins, as well as gratitude for Calidore's clemency towards Crudor. Gift-giving also features in canto iv when Calepine offers Matilde the baby that he rescued in the forest from the tiger. In offering the child to Matilde, Calepine ensures that the dynastic fate that had been prophesied for Matilde, and her husband, Sir Bruin, can be realised. To this end, the knight's act of courtesy forms part of a larger providential design. We also see evidence of gift-giving in Meliboe's hospitality towards Calidore in cantos ix and x. Here, the shepherd's courtesy is manifested through the extension of generosity and humanity to the knight, which Calidore later attempts to repay through his efforts to rescue the shepherds from the brigands.

The spatial positioning of the three Graces in relation to one another, as presented in the 1596 and 1609 editions of *The Faerie Queene*, adds to our understanding of Spenser's conception of courtesy, and also the way in which this notion of courtesy may have been read theologically by sixteenth and seventeenth-century readers. In describing the Graces, Spenser writes how:

[. . .] two of them still forward seem'd to bee,

But one still towards shew'd her selfe afore:

That good should from vs goe, then come in greater store.

The iconography of VI.x.24.7-9 follows E.K.'s gloss to the April eclogue of *The Shepheardes Calender*:

[. . .] Boccace saith, that they be painted naked [. . .] the one hauing her backe toward vs, and her face fromwarde, as proceeding from vs; the other two toward vs, noting double thanke to be due to vs for the benefit we haue done.⁴⁶

Spenser's depiction of the Graces here and at VI.x.24 seemingly owes much to Servius's description of them in his commentary of the *Aeneid* (1.720). As Roche notes, in Servian mythography, 'one grace is pictured from the back while two are shown facing front because for one benefit issuing from us two are supposed to return'.⁴⁷ Spenser was not alone among sixteenth-century writers in drawing upon this Servian image. Thomas Cooper used it in his *Thesaurus* (1565): 'the ones backe should be towarde vs, and hir face fromwarde, as proceeding from vs, the other twoo towarde vs'.⁴⁸ Similarly, Spenser's contemporary, Abraham Fraunce used it in *The Third Part of the Countesse of Pembrokes Iuychurch* (1592): 'Two of them looke towards vs, and one fromwards vs'.⁴⁹ On one level, Spenser's phrase, 'good should from vs goe, then come in greater store' (VI.x.24), seems to suggest that the

⁴⁶ *The Shorter Poems*, p. 69.

⁴⁷ Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, ed. by Thomas P. Roche, Jr. (London: Penguin, 1978), p. 1227.

⁴⁸ Thomas Cooper, *Thesaurus Linguae Romanae et Britannicae* (London: Henry Denham, 1578), sig. 7G6^v.

⁴⁹ Abraham Fraunce, *The Third Part of the Countesse of Pembrokes Iuychurch* (London: Thomas Woodcocke, 1592), sig. M4^r.

giver can always expect to receive more than he originally gave. However, as Lila Geller notes, this sentiment of self-interest seemingly goes against the altruistic nature of Book VI and its discussion of courtesy.⁵⁰ It is perhaps more likely, given the book's titular virtue, that the phrase 'come in greater store' would have been interpreted by Spenser's readers as 'referring not to coming to the giver in greater store, but simply causing greater good action than the initial benefit had been'.⁵¹ In other words, the initial act of kindness, as symbolised by the single Grace facing away from the viewer, generates subsequently greater acts of altruism which emanate and radiate throughout society, as represented by the two forward facing Graces. This particular reading of VI.x.24 encourages us to interpret Spenser's iconography of the Graces, and with it his conception of courtesy, in terms of a Christian morality. The poem seems to suggest here that from an initial act of kindness stems further acts of charity and benevolence, which are instrumental towards the creation of a harmonious society.

The 1611 edition of *The Faerie Queene* offers an alternative way of framing the theological significance of the Graces, and with it, the religious dimension of Spenserian courtesy. In the 1611 version of the poem, the printers emended 'forward' at VI.x.24.7 to 'froward', which among other meanings, is an elliptical form of 'fromward'. Thus in the 1611 version of the stanza, the revised final three lines of the verse reads:

That two of them still froward seem'd to bee,

But one still towards shew'd her selfe afore:

That good should from vs goe, then come in greater store.

⁵⁰ Geller, 'The Acidalian Vision: Spenser's Graces in Book VI of *The Faerie Queene*', p. 274.

⁵¹ Geller, 'The Acidalian Vision: Spenser's Graces in Book VI of *The Faerie Queene*', p. 274.

The emendation positions the two Graces with their backs to the viewer looking ‘froward’, whilst the third Grace looks face on, or ‘afore’. This image is a reverse of the one in the 1596 and 1609 editions of the stanza. It is also at variance with E. K.’s understanding of the Graces as outlined in the notes to the *Shepheardes Calender*.⁵² As Bates notes, this particular positioning of the Graces allegorically suggests that the ‘giver gets less back than he originally gave, and that he therefore receives only half his due’.⁵³ If this phrasing had appeared in Book V it might raise questions regarding notions of fairness and equity; however, in Book VI, one’s response is different; the sentiment behind the phrasing is in line with the book’s particular concerns with ideas of selflessness and altruism. Given this change in the iconography brought about by the emendation, it is likely, as was common practice during the period, that some readers would have interpreted the word ‘then’ (line 9) as a conjunction (‘than’) rather than as an adverb (‘then’) as it was in the 1596 and 1609 editions thus making the sense of the line: ‘good should from us go rather than come in greater store’.⁵⁴ If this was the case, then it is reasonable to imagine how, given the reach of religion in people’s lives at the time, some sixteenth-century readers might have interpreted the lines not just in moral terms, but also in the spirit of Acts 20.35: ‘It is a blessed thing to giue, rather then to receiue’. Moreover, it is possible to imagine how some might have read the emendation as representative of how, through witnessing and being the recipient of unconditional acts of compassion, man is reminded of the divine beneficence of God and

⁵² Spenser, *Shorter Poems*, p. 69.

⁵³ Bates, *The Rhetoric of Courtship*, p. 154.

⁵⁴ A similar use of the word ‘then’ is seen at VI.iv.36.6 where we are required to read it as the conjunction ‘than’.

seeks to emulate this through acts of kindness and goodwill towards others in the community without any hope or desire for reciprocity.

Geller argues that it is more likely that this particular spelling ('froward') is the one intended by Spenser, and that a printing or transcription error led to the use of the word 'forward' in the 1596 and 1609 editions of the poem.⁵⁵ However, it is also possible, of course, that the difference is down to a printer's error on the 1611 edition.⁵⁶ It is perhaps worth noting that the 1679 edition published by Jonathan Edwin keeps the use of 'froward'. This could reflect the fact that by this time, 'froward' was deemed the correct spelling. Or alternatively, it might simply reflect the fact that Edwin used sheets printed in 1611 as his copy text, which we know he did.⁵⁷ Of the two versions, it seems more likely that the 1596 and 1609 rendering of I.x.24.7 ('forward') is the one closer to what Spenser intended given that the spatial configuration of the two Graces looking towards the viewer and the third one having her back to the viewer is consistent with the image referred to by E.K. in the notes to the *Shepheardes Calender*. It also follows the iconographical conventions found in other texts of the time noted above. Ultimately, it is unlikely that scholars will ever discover which version of the line is the correct one in terms of Spenser's intentions. What matters more is the extent to which they both offer a slightly different angle, or emphasis for the poet's readers. The 1596 depiction of the Graces would have symbolised for Spenser's readers a general growth of charity within

⁵⁵ In his article 'Spenser's First Folio: The Build-It-Yourself Edition', Steven Galbraith calls the 1611 edition a 'bibliographically unstable folio' (21). He describes how its publisher, Matthew Lownes created a 'cost effective' edition for the publisher which provided 'more [flexible] buying options for consumers' (21). Galbraith claims that Lownes printed the 1611 folio in different sections over a period of several years. This spread the cost of the printing for the publisher, and also made the product more affordable for the consumer as it could be purchased in stages. However, this meant that any one collective edition may contain material printed as early as 1609 and as late as 1613. Some copies of the 1611 folio contain the word 'forward' for VI.x.24.7 as they were printed on sheets left over from unsold 1609 editions. However, other copies of the folio with the 1611 title page use the word 'froward' as they contain sheets printed between 1611 and 1613. See Steven K. Galbraith, 'Spenser's First Folio: The Build-It-Yourself Edition', *Spenser Studies*, 21 (2006), 21-49.

⁵⁶ It is worth noting that there are no further emendations in the 1611 edition that have a theological significance. This might suggest that the change from 'forward' to 'fromward' in the 1611 edition is a printing error.

⁵⁷ Francis Johnson, *A Critical Bibliography of the Works of Edmund Spenser Printed Before 1700* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Press, 1933), pp. 21-3, 33-48.

society after an initial act of kindness, whilst the 1611 version would have represented for many the way in which one should be prepared to act altruistically by giving more than what one expects to get in return.

Spenser's vision of the fourth Grace adds to the religious dimension of the episode by allegorically suggesting that courtesy stems from a divine source. Initially we read that the fourth Grace is positioned at the centre of a series of concentric circles. The first circle consists of the three Graces who dance around her. Encircling them are a further 'hundred naked maidens' all 'raunged in a ring and dauncing in delight' (VI.x.11.8-9). These figures are said to differ in degrees of 'honour and degree' (VI.x.21.5), although the fourth Grace is taken to be the most eminent of them all: 'she that in the midst of them did stand, / Seem'd all the rest in beauty to excell' (VI.x.14.3-4). She is described 'as a precious gemme / Amidst a ring most richly well enchaced, / That with her goodly presence all the rest much graced' (VI.x.12.7-9). It is to her that the shepherd, Colin Clout 'pypt alone' and 'so merrily, as neuer none' (VI.x.15.8-9). As Gerald Snare has argued through citing the fifteenth-century Neoplatonist Italian scholar and Catholic priest, Marsilio Ficino, it is possible that readers might have interpreted the relationship between Spenser's fourth Grace and the other Graces as symbolic of the correspondence between God and man:

The picture of a great figure seated within a circle while its attributes are in a circle about it is certainly not original to Spenser. The traditional iconography of the microcosm often pictured man or God within a circle while their attributes or acts were personified around them. Ficino had pictured the emanations of God in such a way. In his *Commentary on Plato's 'Symposium'*, Ficino glosses a passage in Plato where God is placed in the centre of the concentric circles of Ideas, Concepts, Soul and Nature. The emanations from

God himself are arranged in circles, one inside the other; the more mundane are the exterior circles and they encompass the more heavenly within them, with God as the absolute centre and ruler of all'.⁵⁸

As Snare suggests, those readers who were familiar with the ideas of Ficino may have interpreted the fourth Grace religiously by seeing her as symbolic of a divine figure whose power emanates outwards in successive concentric circles.⁵⁹ Equally, it is possible that Spenser's theologically-inclined readers could have made this interpretation without ever having read Ficino. In terms of Book VI's titular virtue, we might suggest that the iconography of the concentric circles represents the way in which Courtesy, through its attributes of charity, mercy and gentleness, radiates outwards from its original divine source. From this heavenly centre, and as a result of God's grace, courtesy spreads outwards through the Christian community to the faithful ensuring civil harmony. This notion of divine love emanating outwards is one that Augustine refers to when he writes of how 'the loue of God is spred abroad in our hartes'. Moreover, one sees it again when he describes how the 'fountaine of grace [. . .] sprede it selfe into all hys membres'.⁶⁰

So far I have suggested how Spenser's early modern readers might have interpreted the poet's conception of courtesy in the spirit of Christian ideas of charity. This theory is made more convincing when one recognises how the connection between the two virtues was commonly made in religious publications of the period, thereby prompting Spenser's readers

⁵⁸ Gerald Snare, 'Spenser's Fourth Grace', p. 354.

⁵⁹ Valery Rees, 'Ficinian Ideas in the Poetry of Edmund Spenser', *Spenser Studies*, 24 (2009), 73-134.

⁶⁰ Augustine, Saint, Bishop of Hippo, *Two booke of the noble doctor and B. S. Augustine thone entiteled of the predestiacion [sic] of saintes, thother of perseueraunce vnto thende, whervnto are annexed the determinaciouns of two auncient generall councelles, confermyng the doctrine taught in these booke by s. Aug. all faythfully translated out of Laten into Englyshe by Iohn Scory the late B. of Chichester* (Emden?: Egidius van der Erve, 1556), sigs B8^v, F6^v.

to reflect upon the religious possibilities of Book VI's titular virtue. For instance, the connection is explicitly made at 1 Corinthians 13.4 in the editions of the Geneva Bible published in 1557: 'Charity suffreth long, and is curteous'. Moreover, the relationship between the two virtues is further alluded to at Ecclesiasticus 4.7-8:

Be courteous vnto the companie of poore, and humble thy soule vnto the Elder,
and bowe downe thine head to a man of worship. Let it not grieue thee to bowe
downe thine eare vnto the poore, but paie thy dette, and giue him a friendly
answere.

Even though this particular passage does not mention charity by name, it does suggest that courtesy involves, amongst other things, acts of altruism towards those less fortunate than ourselves such as 'the companie of poore'. It requires a spirit of Christian generosity and graciousness towards those in need akin to that which Christ showed to man. Spenser's readers would have recognised this as an expression of charity or *Caritas*. The relationship between the two virtues is also discussed in a range of theological treatises and commentaries from the period. One such example is Laurence Tomson's translation of Calvin's *Sermons of M. Iohn Caluin, on the Epistles of S. Paule to Timothie and Titus*, published in 1579. In a sermon on 1 Timothy which discusses what is needed to create a Christian community on Earth, Calvin writes, 'let vs learne to esteeme Gods graces, to the ende they may bring vs to all curtesie, and we may in the meane season practise the lesson that Saint Paul giveth vs [. . .] that we are bound one to another in charity'.⁶¹ Calvin seems to suggest here that that by esteeming God's inward working grace which has been imputed to the elect freely, the sinner

⁶¹ John Calvin, *Sermons of M. Iohn Caluin, on the Epistles of S. Paule to Timothie and Titus*, trans. by Laurence Tomson (London: George Bishop and T. Woodcoke, 1581), sig. 2M7^r.

will be humbled by his generosity. In seeking to show his debt to God, the sinner will honour him in works of courtesy towards others, and in particular through acts of charity towards his neighbour to whom he is bound by love in the Christian community. Such acts of charity, which are the essence of courtesy, reflect the mercy shown to man through God as a result of Christ's sacrifice. Even if Spenser himself did not purposely draw a connection between courtesy and Christian notions of charity, it is likely that a number of his religiously-disposed readers would have done so, especially if they were familiar with sources such as those noted above. And, of course, it is worth noting that one did not need to be a Protestant reader of the Geneva Bible or of Calvin to recognise this link between courtesy and Christian ideas of charity; the connection between the two lay at the heart of a sixteenth-century Christian world view for Protestants and Catholics alike.

That the poem prompts its readers to think about the relationship between charity and courtesy may be inferred not just from the vision of the Graces in canto x, but also from the large number of episodes in Book VI that contain acts of benevolence. For instance, at VI.ii.41.2, Calidore compassionately succours the 'wofull Ladie' Priscilla, whom he discovers in a state of distress following the vicious attack on Aladine by the Discourteous Knight. He comforts Priscilla, who is 'piteously complayning With loud laments' (VI.ii.41.2), before then helping her to return the wounded knight back to his father's castle. He then ensures Priscilla's safe return home, and with chivalric generosity even fabricates a story regarding her disappearance so as to uphold her honour to her father (VI.iii.15-19).⁶² Spenser seems to be suggesting that at times courtesy involves lying for the purposes of the greater good. This is not to suggest that the poet's standards are slipping; rather, it seems to be a unique aspect of courtesy that at any given time, as a result of particular circumstances, the courteous thing is

⁶² To most readers, Calidore's lie to Priscilla's father is morally questionable. However, as Tonkin argues, the knight's 'intervention does preserve harmony'; subsequently, we can legitimise his 'white lie'. See Humphrey Tonkin, p. 48.

to lie providing that it is done for honourable reasons to assist someone else. That said, some readers would have perceived this as being morally problematic.

Further instances of charity in Book VI include the episode at VI.iv.2-16, when the Salvage Man comes to Calepine and Serena's rescue after hearing their distress at the hands of Turpine.⁶³ Despite his 'ruder hart', and the fact he has never experienced 'pittie' or 'gentlesse' before, the Salvage Man is 'much emmoued at his perils vew' and begins to 'feeble compassion' for the beleaguered pair (VI.iv.3.2-6). Subsequently, he chases away the discourteous Turpine, before then leading Calepine and Serena to the safety of a 'hollow glade' situated 'Farre in the forrest' (VI.iv.13.5). From there 'that wyld man did apply / His best endeouour, and his daily paine, / In seeking all the woods both farre and nye / For herbs to dress their wounds' (VI.iv.16.1-4). Other acts of charity include Calepine's rescue of the infant from the jaws of a bear at VI.iv.23, and his gift of it to the distressed Matilde at VI.iv.35. Moreover, there is also the Hermit's kindness towards Calepine and Serena at VI.v.34-41 and VI.vi.1-15, as well as Meliboe's hospitality and generosity towards Calidore in offering him shelter and respite from his pursuit of the Blatant Beast at VI.ix.16. On each occasion, the protagonists offer charitable assistance to someone in need. Clearly, courageous and timely rescues are a generic feature of chivalric romance, as are demonstrations of succour. However, the fact that there are so many of these charitable episodes in Book VI, more so than in any other book of *The Faerie Queene*, seems more than just a coincidence. It suggests that Spenser saw a definite link between the virtue of charity and the book's titular virtue of courtesy; moreover, this may in part explain why he chose to construct Book VI as a romance. For Spenser, it appears that the act of being courteous involved extending the hand of charity to those in need. In part, it is this element which is responsible for giving Book VI its strong

⁶³ This particular episode will be the focus of more detailed study in Chapter Four when I examine the significance of fortune.

but largely implicit Christian dimension. Of course, the acts of charity and benevolence cited above do not have to be read in Christian terms; for many readers, they might have simply formed part of the book's moral framework. However, one may suggest that a number of readers would have read these episodes as exemplars of Christian *caritas*.

It is likely that for many of Spenser's readers, individual acts of courtesy, and in particular instances of charity such as those portrayed in Book VI, would have held an important purpose. For conforming Protestants, such acts were taken to be the fruits of a true and lively faith. While they were not deemed to contribute anything to one's salvation, they were nonetheless perceived to be an outward sign of one's election in the eyes of God. This doctrinal belief is outlined in several official tracts and treatises published by the English Church during the sixteenth century, including the *Articles* (1571):

Of good workes [12]

Albeit that good workes, whiche are the fruites of fayth, and folowe after iustification, can not put away our sinnes, and endure the seueritie of Gods iudgement: yet are they pleasing and acceptable to God in Christe, and do spring out necessarily of a true and liuely fayth, in so muche that by them, a liuely fayth may be as euidently knowen, as a tree discerned by the fruit.⁶⁴

Here we are led to believe that charitable works are an expression of a true and lively faith; they signify how God's irresistible grace is working within the elect to bring about their renewal and regeneration. Many Reformers looked to James 2.17 as an affirmation of this belief: 'faith, if it haue no woorkes, is dead in it selfe'. It is possible that some of Spenser's conforming Protestant readers might have interpreted the number of courteous events that

⁶⁴ Church of England, *Articles*, sig. B1^r.

appear in Book VI in the light of this doctrinal belief. Thus, they might have read Calidore's charity towards Priscilla and Aladine at VI.ii.41 as an expression of the former's faith, and with it, his justification. Similarly, the same could be said of how such readers interpreted Calepine's rescue of the baby at VI.iv.23, and of Meliboe's hospitality towards Calidore at VI.ix.16. However, for Spenser's more moderate Protestant, as well as Catholic readers, acts of courtesy were essential to one's salvation as they believed that works contributed to one's redemption. Therefore, one can imagine how they would have read those same textual instances of charity in very different soteriological terms by interpreting them as aiding that particular figure's deliverance, and also serving as exemplars for readers. However, regardless of at what ends of the doctrinal spectrum the faithful were positioned, one thing that they would have agreed on is that through acts of charity, we come closer to the godhead by re-enacting the altruism that God showed to mankind.

Christian Mercy and Spenserian Courtesy

In this section, I examine how Spenserian courtesy might be interpreted in light of Christian ideas of mercy. Building upon the ideas of the previous section, the chapter also considers how, in part, some readers might have seen mercy as a facet of charity. The relationship between charity and mercy is a long-held one. As Aquinas states, writing in the thirteenth century, 'mercy [. . .] results from charity; for it is out of charity that we weep with them that weep, as we rejoice with them that rejoice'.⁶⁵

In Book VI, Spenser appears to redefine and extend the concept of mercy through his examination of it in relation to the book's titular virtue, courtesy. Mercy plays a significant role in two particular episodes in Book VI. The first occurs at VI.i.39-45 following Crudor's

⁶⁵ Saint Thomas Aquinas, *The Summa Theologica Vol. II*, trans. by Fth. Laurence Shapcote (Chicago: Encyclopædia Britannica, 1990), p. 535.

defeat by Calidore. The second takes place at VI.vi.31 when Prince Arthur refrains from killing Turpine. This is not the first time that mercy has featured prominently in the poem. Spenser also explores the virtue in Book V through the character of Mercilla, whom critics take to represent Elizabeth I. Spenser's treatment of mercy in Book V is largely linked to his allegorical consideration of justice within the political sphere of Tudor England.⁶⁶ In contrast, in Book VI, Spenser appears to be more interested in the personal and moral aspect of clemency, and the way in which it may be seen as an expression of courtesy and concord.⁶⁷

In the first episode, Crudor confronts Calidore in response to Briana's plea for help; however the proud, disdainful knight is left 'vpon the ground [. . .] groueling' for his life after Calidore overpowers him (VI.i.39.4). He pleads 'Ah mercie Sir, doe not me slay, / But saue my life, which lot before your foot doth lay' (VI.i.39.8-9). With 'goodly [or perhaps Godly] patience', Calidore's 'mortall hand a while stayd' and he refrains from killing the knight (VI.i.40.3,1). However, mercy comes at a price. Calidore demands that Crudor must amend his proud ways and show greater compassion and mercy towards others just as Calidore did towards him. In short, Calidore beseeches him to act with greater civility and courtesy. In delivering this pronouncement, and in attempting to induce moral change in the hearer, Calidore adopts what a number of sixteenth-century readers might have taken to be a homiletic tone. For the purpose of the argument, I quote his speech at length:

[. . .] By this now may ye learne,

Strangers no more so rudely to intreat,

⁶⁶ Richard F. Hardin, 'Mercilla' in *The Spenser Encyclopedia*, p. 469.

⁶⁷ Richard F. Hardin, 'Mercilla', p. 469.

But put away proud looke, and vsage sterne,
The which shal nought to you but foule dishonor yearne.

For nothing is more blamefull to a knight,
That court'sie doth as well as armes professe,
How euer strong and fortunate in fight,
Then the reproch of pride and cruelnesse.
In vaine he seeketh others to suppressse,
Who hath not learnd him selfe first to subdew:
All flesh is frayle, and full of ficklenesse,
Subiect to fortunes chance, still chaunging new;
What haps to day to me, to morrow may to you.

Who will not mercie vnto others shew,
How can he mercy euer hope to haue?
To pay each with his owne is right and dew.
Yet since ye mercie now doe need to craue,
I will it graunt, your hopeless life to saue;
With these conditions, which I will propound:
First, that ye better shall your selfe behaue
Vnto all errant knights, whereso on ground;
Next that ye Ladies ayde in euery stead and stound.

(VI.i.40.6-42)

Calidore's words entreat Crudor to put aside his vainglorious ways, and act with greater clemency and kindness. He stresses that a knight should be known for his gentle courtesy towards others, not just his prowess in fighting. Consequently, he orders him to exercise greater temperance over his emotions and 'subdue' his irascible temperament. When Calidore goes on to ask the question, 'Who will not mercie vnto others shew, / How can he mercy euer hope to haue?' (VI.i.42.1-2), he echoes the Beatitudes of Matthew 5.7: 'Blessed *are* the mercifull: for they shal obtaine mercie'. He suggests that without showing mercy towards others, man cannot expect to be the recipient of divine mercy. For a number of Spenser's readers, the sentiment here would have seemed to endorse a more moderate doctrinal position in which salvation is, in part, dependent on works. Calidore's exhortation to Crudor also echoes the advice expressed in Ezekiel 18.31: 'Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed, and make you a newe heart and a new spirit' (abbreviations *sic*). In terms of Crudor, Calidore's act of mercy and moral exhortation proves successful as the former sinner 'promist to performe his precept well' and 'with faithfull oth [. . .] swore to him true fealtie for aye' (VI.i.43.3-44.1-4). With this, Crudor takes the first steps towards courtesy and moral regeneration. For Spenser's religiously-minded readers, Crudor would also be taking his first steps towards redemption.

Calidore's act of Christian mercy in sparing Crudor's life also creates a profound change in Briana. The once 'discourteous Dame with scornfull pryde' is transformed into a meek and courteous maiden:

Whereof she now more glad, then sory earst,

All ouercome with infinite affect,

For his exceeding courtesie, that pearst
Her stubborne hart with inward deepe effect,
Before his feet her selfe she did proiect,
And him adoring as her liues deare Lord,
With all due thankes, and dutiful respect,
Her selfe acknowledg'd bound for that accord,
By which he had to her both life and loue restored.

(VI.i.45)

It is through Calidore's 'exceeding courtesie', born out of his act of Christian mercy towards Crudor, that Briana's 'stubborne hart' is 'pearst' and she is 'restored'. The extent to which she is 'So wondrously [. . .] chaung'd, from that she was afore' is reflected through her offer of her castle to Calidore: 'She freely gaue that Castle for his paine, / And her selfe bound to him for euermore' (VI.i.46.7-8). In making this offer, as a sign of her gratitude to Calidore for sparing Crudor's life, Briana commences her moral transformation by beginning to be courteous. Because of the nature of her transformation in which we see her becoming more gracious and humble, it is possible that a number of Spenser's theologically-inclined readers might have interpreted Briana's moral renewal as akin to the type of spiritual correction that St Paul advocates in Romans 12.1-2: 'bee yee changed by the renewing of your minde, that ye may prooue what that good, and acceptable and perfect will of God is' (abbreviations *sic*). Moreover, some readers might have interpreted Briana's regeneration in the light of St Paul's encouragement to the Ephesians: 'be renued in the spirit of your minde, And put on ye new man, which after God is created vnto righteousness, and true holines' (Ephesians 4.23-24, abbreviations *sic*). It is as though that through his humane act of mercy, Calidore has sown

the seeds for Crudor and Briana to begin the process of spiritual regeneration. He has shown them the way to better behaviour, and with it, the path to redemption. In many ways, Briana's transformation enacts the idea that would be symbolised through the iconography of the Graces on Mount Acidale — that from a single act of kindness (Calidore's merciful sparing of Crudor's life), further acts of benevolence will emanate throughout society. However, despite the generosity of Briana's offer, Calidore declines the gift, suggesting instead that her castle should be given to the squire and his damsel 'as their rightfull meed, / For recompence of all their former wrong' (VI.i.47.5-6). This process of gift-giving, started by Briana and continued by Calidore, brings to life the process of liberality that the Graces' dance will later represent. In having Calidore suggest that the knight and damsel would be more worthy of Briana's castle, Spenser extends his consideration of courtesy by suggesting that an important aspect of being courteous is foregoing opportunities for self-interest in favour of being altruistic towards others.

It is possible that Spenser's religiously-minded readers might have interpreted the episode involving Crudor and Briana as indicative of mankind's iniquity, and of the way in which, because of his fallen state, man is incapable of bringing about his own redemption and is therefore dependent upon the merciful saving grace of a third party to steer him in the right direction. Richard Mallette has suggested that both characters suffer 'from an inherent and inherited depravity that leaves salvation altogether out of the reach of [their] natural ability'.⁶⁸ Of Briana, we are told that 'a prouder Lady liueth none' (VI.i.14.7) and that she has a 'wicked will' (VI.i.15.9) imploring her seneschal to terrorise all those who pass by her castle. Similarly, Crudor is said to be full of 'high disdaine / And proud despight of his selfe pleasing mynd' (VI.i.15.1-2). His contemptuous pride is demonstrated by the fact that he refuses to marry Briana 'Vntill a Mantle she for him doe fynd, / With beards of Knights and locks of

⁶⁸ Mallette, *Spenser and the Discourses of Reformation England*, p. 171.

Ladies lynd' (VI.i.15.4-5). Briana's seneschal is equally described as 'vnblest' (VI.i.17.5) and a 'lumpe of sin' (VI.i.23.7) executing his mistress's brutal orders with relish and zeal. For Spenser's theologically-inclined readers, it is likely that the characters' depravity and insufficiency would have been indicative of mankind's inherent sinfulness. In reading of the figures' moral degeneracy, Protestant readers would be reminded of the words of Calvin: 'peruersenesse of nature as hee ys, hee canne not but bee moued and dryuen to euell' (*Institution*, 2.3.5).⁶⁹ Nevertheless, despite mankind's fallen state, the faithful would have believed that the promise of redemption, and eventual salvation, would have been available even though mankind is 'vnworthie of it'.⁷⁰ Calvinists would assert that it is only open to the elect, whereas more moderate doctrinal readers would hypothesise that redemption is available to everyone providing they show that they are worthy of it through works. To this end, the latter would look to Psalm 25.10: 'All the pathes of the Lorde *are* mercie and trueth vnto such as keepe his couenant'.

In dispensing clemency to Crudor through sparing his life, Calidore is seen allegorically to enact the redeeming role of God in delivering merciful grace to the sinful. To this end, some readers might have interpreted his mercy in the light of Numbers 14.18: 'The lord is slowe to anger, and of great mercie [. . .] forgiuing iniquitie, and sinne'. Similarly, some might have seen Crudor's plea to Calidore for leniency ('Ah mercie Sir, doe not me slay, / But saue my life, which lot before your foot doth lay' (VI. i.39.8-9)) as allegorically echoing the words of Psalm 85.7: 'Shew vs thy mercie, O Lord, and graunt vs thy saluation'. Moreover, it is possible that Briana's expression of gratitude and subsequent devotion to Calidore following his act of mercy towards Crudor, as seen by 'She [. . .] her selfe bound to

⁶⁹ Calvin, *Institution of Christian Religion*, sig. C3^v.

⁷⁰ Jean Calvin, *Sermons of M. Iohn Caluine vpon the Epistle of Saincte Paule to the Galathians*, trans. by Arthur Golding (London: Lucas Harison & George Bishop, 1574), sig. Y4^v.

him for euermore; / So wondrously now chaung'd, from that she was afore' (VI.i.46.7-9), might have been read in the spirit of Psalm 86.12-13: 'I will prayse thee, O Lord my God, with all mine heart: yea, I will glorifie thy Name for euer. For great is thy mercie toward me, & thou hast deliuered my soule from the lowest graue'. Calidore's decision to save Crudor evokes a profound change in Briana, initiating her moral, as well as spiritual regeneration, thus delivering her from iniquity and wickedness.

In part, Spenser's thinking on courtesy and its relationship to mercy may have been shaped by his reading of Ephesians 4.32 taken from the Geneva Bible in which the two virtues are explicitly connected: 'Be ye courteous one to another, & tender hearted, freely forgiuing one another, euen as God for Christes sake forgaue you' (abbreviations *sic*). Here the two virtues are explicitly linked together. The translators suggest that the act of being courteous towards one's neighbour is, in part, akin to the way in which God shows mercy to mankind. Among other things, it involves being altruistic and demonstrating a generosity of spirit, especially towards those that have sinned. Even if Spenser's thinking on the relationship between courtesy and mercy was not directly influenced by his reading of Ephesians 4.32, it is possible that his Protestant readers' conception of Spenserian courtesy might have been coloured by their knowledge of this particular verse from the 1587 Geneva Bible. Similarly, Protestants' sense of the religious relationship between courtesy and mercy might have been further influenced by their reading of Arthur Golding's translation (1577) of Calvin's sermon on the same chapter from St Paul. Calvin, through Golding, states, 'if wee haue any droppe of pitie, too keepe vs from reiecting them that are alyed vntoo vs, and also from disdeyning them in whom there is any cause of compassion and mercie: wee shall not fayle too bee gentle and courteous towardes our neyghbours in all caces and at all tymes.'⁷¹

⁷¹ Jean Calvin, *The Sermons of M. Iohn Caluin upon the Epistle of S. Paule too the Ephesians*, trans. by Arthur Golding (London: Lucas Harison & George Byshop, 1577), sig. 2H3^r.

He adds ‘Too bee Gods children [. . .] we must loue one another, & be knit toogether in good agreement, that peace may bee maynteyned among vs’.⁷² Calvin’s words emphasise the importance of mercy, as well as its association to courtesy. He stresses that forgiveness and clemency are central to the creation of civil peace and harmony. By exercising tolerance and patience towards others in the face of their transgressions, the bonds of *agape* are strengthened. Without compassion and mercy, discord and hostility will prosper. This sentiment, which is not restricted to Reformed theology alone but underpins a general Christian world view, is played out in the Briana and Crudor episode. Calidore’s mercy in sparing Crudor’s life has a profound effect on the proud pair, so much so that it restores and renews their goodness to such an extent that they are able to retake their place in society with greater courtesy: ‘ye better sall your selfe behaue / Vnto all errant knights, whereso on ground; / Next that ye Ladies ayde in euery stead and stound’ (VI.i.42.7-9).

As Michael Tratner has noted, the virtue of courtesy ‘involves much more than mere politeness’.⁷³ He writes that ‘to be courteous is to imitate the forgiveness of Christ’. In part the act of mercy involves esteeming man’s potential for spiritual renewal and regeneration. In particular, it involves recognising,

those in whom [the] seeds of [God’s] grace lie dormant. Such persons have the potential to have faith but do not realise it, and so remain outside the community of the faithful. Pitying them is essentially an act of recognising and esteeming the seeds of goodness inside them and so causes the first growth of those seeds, awakens God’s image engraved within them and leads them to

⁷² Calvin, *The Sermons of M. Iohn Caluin upon the Epistle of S. Paule too the Ephesians*, sig. 2H4^r

⁷³ Michael Tratner, “‘The Thing S. Paule Ment by...the Courteousness That He Spake of’”: Religious Sources for Book VI of *The Faerie Queene*’, *Spenser Studies*, 8 (1990), 147-74 (p. 154).

recognise this connection to the community of the faithful. Forgiving or pity thus gathers together sinners to start a courteous community.⁷⁴

As Tratner notes, this is what Calvin meant when he wrote, ‘let vs learne to esteeme Gods graces, to the ende they may bring vs to all courtesie.’⁷⁵ Calidore’s act of forgiveness towards Crudor at VI.i.40 may be seen to enact Calvin’s words. In sparing Crudor’s life, Calidore signifies that it is a life worth saving. He appears to recognise Crudor’s potential for spiritual regeneration, and by his act of mercy he has paved the way for the seeds of grace to grow. What was previously dormant and inactive will now prosper. Moreover, Calidore’s act of forgiveness similarly awakens the seeds of grace in Briana, resulting in her spiritual renewal. In esteeming their potential for moral regeneration, Calidore makes it possible for Crudor and Briana ‘to recognise their connection to the community of the faithful’.⁷⁶ Their first step towards moral rectitude is contrition, followed by charity when Briana is seen to give her castle to the squire and damsel who were previously wronged by her seneschal. The pair’s moral transformation, which, as I have shown, some theologically-inclined readers might have taken to be a spiritual transformation if the episode is read alongside a number of biblical passages and commentaries, may be seen to prefigure the line from VI.x.24.9: ‘That good should from vs goe, then come in greater store’. Calidore’s act of mercy and kindness has emanated outwards, transforming Briana and Crudor so that their seeds of grace may start to grow and flourish. This sense of goodness stemming outwards in seemingly concentric circles anticipates the allegorical image on Mount Acidale at VI.x.5-29.

⁷⁴ Tratner, “‘The Thing S. Paule Ment by...the Courteousness That He Spake of’”: Religious Sources for Book VI of *The Faerie Queene*, p. 154.

⁷⁵ Jean Calvin, *Sermons on Sermons of M. Iohn Caluin, on the Epistles of S. Paule to Timothie and Titus*, trans. by Laurence Tomson (London: George Bishop and T. Woodcote, 1581), sig. 2M7^r.

⁷⁶ Tratner, “‘The Thing S. Paule Ment by...the Courteousness That He Spake of’”: Religious Sources for Book VI of *The Faerie Queene*, p. 154.

However, as we see in cantos vi and vii, the extension of courteous and merciful behaviour towards those who have transgressed does not always spark a spiritual renewal in the sinful. This is demonstrated in the episode involving Arthur and Turpine. After Arthur spares Turpine's life in response to Blandina's plea for mercy, one might have expected that the pair would amend their ways and commence the journey towards redemption just as Briana and Crudor do. However, despite being the recipients of 'grace' (VI.vi.31.6), the pair continue to act immorally. When entertaining Arthur and the Salvage Man that same evening, Blandina gives the appearance of acting with 'courteous glee' towards her hosts in recognition of Arthur's act of mercy towards Turpine; however, unlike the transformed Briana in canto i, Blandina's 'words and lookes' are 'false and fayned, / To some hid end' (VI.vi.41.4; VI.vi.42.1-2). We read that 'For well she knew the wayes to win good will / [. . .] And how to please the minds of good and ill, / Through tempering of her words and lookes by wondrous skill' (VI.vi.41.6-9). Turpine is equally unchanged. Whilst 'the Prince did rest' that night, he spends it with 'villinous intent', secretly plotting his 'reuenge' (VI.vi.44.1-4, 43.9). The following day 'false *Turpine*' hires two knights to kill Arthur after deceiving them into thinking that the latter had acted with 'discourtesie' towards him and his beloved (VI.vii.4.3). However, his plan is foiled after Arthur kills one knight and the second one, Enias, discloses details of Turpine's treachery. Arthur subsequently punishes Turpine by hanging him from a tree by the heels, thereby baffling him (VI.vii.27). Given how, in part, Arthur's allegorical role in the poem thus far has been as the principal agent of divine grace, some theologically-minded readers might have inferred that the episode represents the way in which some sinners, even after being granted God's merciful grace, continue to lead wicked and iniquitous lives because their depravity is so ingrained. This particular interpretation of the episode would appeal directly to Spenser's Catholic as well as his more moderate Protestant readers

because it seems to endorse the Thomist idea that the will must cooperate with divine grace.⁷⁷ As Turpine and Blandina's actions seem to show, merciful grace can only go so far in facilitating an individual's moral renewal. If man chooses to eschew God's gift of divine grace because the instinctive impulses of the sensitive appetite are so fixed, then he will continue to live a life of sinfulness and face damnation as a result.⁷⁸

Christian Gentleness and Spenserian Courtesy

So far I have suggested how a number of sixteenth-century readers might have formulated a religious conception of Spenserian courtesy if they had read Book VI alongside a number of Biblical and theological sources. In particular, I have argued that Spenser's idea of courtesy seems to derive from the theological virtue of charity, as well as the Christian virtue of mercy. However, in addition to this, it appears that Spenserian courtesy is also associated with gentleness. The epithet 'gentle' and its variant forms appear more often in Book VI than anywhere else in *The Faerie Queene*, thereby suggesting a connection between gentleness and courtesy.⁷⁹ At VI.iii.1-2, Spenser writes that 'the gentle mind by gentle deeds is knowne' (VI.iii.1.2) and 'That gentle blood will gentle manners breed' (VI.iii.2.2). Furthermore, in his description of the three Graces at VI.x.24.1-2, we read that 'they always smoothly seeme to smile, / That we likewise should mylde and gentle be'. In both instances the idea of gentleness is exalted; it denotes a temperance and mastery of one's emotions. The first example seems to suggest that outward gestures of kindness and benevolence may be interpreted as signs of inner goodness and, perhaps for some religiously-minded readers,

⁷⁷ Aquinas, *The Summa Theologica Vol. II*, pp. 338-78.

⁷⁸ Tilmouth, *Passion's Triumph Over Reason*, p. 26.

⁷⁹ The figures were as follows: Book I: 41, Book II: 32, Book III: 55, Book IV: 39, Book V: 14, Book VI: 56. The figures were sourced from a search on the EEBO Online website.

godliness. In the second example, the mystical vision of the Graces offers a transcendent image of divine gentleness for Calidore to copy. However, as Book VI's embodiment of courtesy, Calidore is already said to have a 'gentlenesse of spright' (VI.i.2.3), which he expresses through his 'gentle words and goodly wit' (VI.iii.22.1). Though if Calidore is like Redcrosse and Guyon, we might expect that his embodiment of courtesy leaves room for improvement. Calidore's gentleness is also demonstrated through his 'manners mylde' and 'gracious speech'. Moreover, it may be inferred from the way he compassionately responds to 'gentle' Aladine's tale of woe at VI.iii.15.4-5: 'That Calidore it dearly deepe did moue. / In th'end his courtesie to proue'.⁸⁰ The epithet *gentle* is also used several times to describe the virtuous Tristram who slew the Discourteous knight: 'gentle swayne' (VI.ii.6.3), 'gentle chylde' (VI.ii.8.8), 'gentle boy' (VI.ii.24.1), 'Faire gentle swayne' (VI.ii.25.1). This has the effect of linking him to Calidore and Book VI's titular virtue of courtesy. The same may be said of Calepine at VI.iv.2: 'gentle Calepine'. At VI.v.1 and VI.v.29, the Salvage Man who comes to Serena and Calepine's rescue is also said to have a 'gentle mynd' despite his seemingly 'wyld' appearance (VI.v.2.1). Moreover, as I have noted in the previous chapter, Timias is described as the 'gentle Squire' at VI.v.39.7. Similarly, Arthur is portrayed as the 'gentle Prince' at VI.vii.6.7. Other instances of the use of the epithet 'gentle' abound throughout Book VI, and serve to link all of the courteous characters together. The connection between gentleness and Book VI's titular virtue of courtesy is a logical one. After all, both virtues involve acts of mildness and kindness, as the entry for *gentleness* in the *OED* notes. They require a thoughtful and compassionate response to both agreeable and challenging situations. Moreover, just like courtesy, gentleness is also linked to the virtues of mercy and charity through its sense of pity and tenderness. It is worth noting that the word 'gentle' had social as well as moral connotations during the period. It denoted one's noble and honourable

⁸⁰ The epithet 'gentle' which is used to describe Aladine is found at VI.iii.8.

birth and descent. Therefore, when Spenser uses the term to describe Calidore, Tristram, Calepine and Arthur, it is possible that he may not only be using it to refer to the character's moral dignity, but also to denote their nobility. Indeed, for many at the time, it was assumed that the ethical and social connotations of the word went together, and were interchangeable.

In the same way that some theologically-minded readers might have interpreted Spenserian courtesy in soteriological terms because of its association with the Christian virtues of charity and mercy, a number of readers might have done the same thing with the virtue of gentleness given its religious dimension. As many readers will possibly have recognised, the virtue is mentioned on numerous occasions in the Bible, not least Galatians 5.22 in which gentleness is listed as one of the nine Fruits of the Holy Spirit. Moreover, it appears at 2 Corinthians 10.1 when St Paul refers to 'the meekenes, & gentlenes of Christ'. Furthermore, St James references it at 3.17 when he notes that 'the wisdom that *is* from above, is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easie to be intreated, full of mercie & good fruites, without iudging, and without hipocrisie'. In both instances, the religious dimension of gentleness is evident. In the first example it is connected to Christ; in the second it is linked to God.

Apart from the Bible, Spenser's Protestant readers may also have had a sense of the religious dimension of gentleness, and its relationship to courtesy, through their reading of various theological tracts and commentaries. For instance, in Golding's translation of Calvin's sermon upon St Paul's epistle to the Ephesians, already quoted above, it is stated that compassion is the 'welspring that moueth vs to gentlenesse'.⁸¹ The phrasing seems to elevate the virtue of gentleness by describing it as an end or ideal, which is bred out of kindness and liberality, or rather, courtesy. Readers would later have noted in the same sermon how Calvin exalts gentleness further by linking it directly to godliness: 'wee bee gentle and kind harted,

⁸¹ Calvin, *The Sermons of M. Iohn Caluin upon the Epistle of S. Paule too the Ephesians*, sig. 2H2v.

namely bycause wee bee creatures fashioned after the image of God, and knit together with an vnseperable bond.’⁸² His phrasing suggests that the source of man’s gentleness and kindness is God, and that our earthly realisation of these virtues is only down to the fact that we are created in his image. Protestants would interpret Calvin’s words to mean that gestures of gentleness are expressions of inner holiness imputed by God’s grace as a result of election. These acts of gentleness and benevolence are crucial in establishing and maintaining the bonds of friendship and civil harmony, for as Calvin states, we are ‘knit together with an vnseperable bond’. More moderate Protestants, such as Hooker, as well as Catholic readers, would argue in favour of man’s dignity, and stress that acts of gentleness originate from the natural faculty of reason which directs the will towards goodness.⁸³

The prominent Elizabethan Puritan theologian, William Perkins, makes a similar connection between gentleness and godliness in his tract, *A Graine of Musterd-Seed: or the Least Measure of Grace that is, or can be Effectuall to Saluation* (1597). Perkins’s tract was published slightly too late to have influenced Spenser’s ‘Legend of Courtesy’; nevertheless, it is still germane to readers’ theological perspectives of the time. Perkins lists nineteen ‘rules of direction’ by which a Christian can ‘quicken and revive the seeds and beginnings of grace’.

Rule eighteen states:

Despise not ciuill honestie: good conscience and good manners must goe together [. . .] bee curteous and gentle to all, good and badde: beare with mens wants and frailties [. . .] passing by them as not perceiued: returne not euill fore euill, but rather good for euill: vse meat, drink and apparel in that manner and measure, that they may further godlinesse; and may bee as it were signes in

⁸² Calvin, *The Sermons of M. Iohn Caluin upon the Epistle of S. Paule too the Ephesians*, sig. 2H4^r.

⁸³ Hooker, *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, p. 170.

which thou maiest expresse the hidden grace of thy heart'.⁸⁴

Perkins suggests that gentleness, which he syntactically links to courtesy, is manifested through acts of charity and tolerance towards others. These expressions of generosity and 'good manners' are said to 'further godlinesse', by reflecting the working of God's imputed grace in the hearts of the elect. Both Calvin and Perkins seem to agree that the source of earthly gentleness, and indeed courtesy and charity, is God and that man's expression of these virtues serves to glorify him. In their eyes, such acts of righteousness should be attributed to God as they are 'signes' of his redeeming and regenerating grace. More moderate Protestants such as Hooker, as well as Catholics, agreed with these ideas in so much as acts of gentleness glorify God by aspiring to 'imitate' his 'constancy and excellency'.⁸⁵ However, they would reject the idea that courtesy and gentleness are purely fruits of election. To suggest this would be to diminish the role played by free will and reason, which were central to their moral theology.

Earlier in the chapter, I considered how the Christian ideas of charity, liberality and mercy are central to Spenser's conception of courtesy as it is depicted in Book VI of *The Faerie Queene*. In this section, by examining Spenser's frequent use of the epithet *gentle*, I have considered how the poet's notion of courtesy also involves an individual having a mild and tender disposition. Furthermore, by acknowledging the religious connotations of the word *gentle* and the extent to which the idea of gentleness is central to the Christian world view through its association with the meekness and humility of Christ, I have been able further to consider the way in which Spenserian courtesy, through its association with gentleness, is

⁸⁴ William Perkins, *A Graine of Musterd-Seed: or the Least Measure of Grace that is, or can be Effectuall to Salvation* (London: Raphe Iackson and Hugh Burwell, 1597), sig. D3^v.

⁸⁵ Hooker, *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, p. 165.

open to theological interpretation. In the final section, I turn the attention to those monsters of discourtesy which, through their scorn and wickedness, threaten the peace and harmony of Book VI's pastoral landscape.

The Monsters of Discourtesy

If courtesy is the virtue that establishes the bonds of friendship which maintain civil harmony, then the vices which it counters are the ones of malice and slander, which are principally represented in Book VI by the figure of the Blatant Beast. Of him, we are told 'Into this wicked world he forth was sent, / To be the plague and scourge of wretched men: / Whom with vile tongue and venomous intent / He sore doth wound, and bite and cruelly torment' (VI.i.8.6-9). Moreover he 'did seeme a thousand tongues to haue, / That all in spight and malice [. . .] he bayd and loudly barkt' with 'wicked poyson' (VI.i.9.3-5). Through his 'licentious words, and hatefull things', the Blatant Beast threatens to bring shame and ignominy upon his victims (VI.xii.28). His iniquity would have reminded a number of religiously-minded readers of Proverbs 13.5: 'the wicked causeth slander and shame'. As Robin Headlam Wells acknowledges, the Beast's 'banefull teeth' inflict wounds of verbal falsehood which may destroy an individual's honour and reputation. Consequently, 'because it destroys by verbal means, the wounds it inflicts will not respond to normal treatment and can only be cured by "the art of words" (VI.vi.6.3). The hermit from whom Timias and Serena seek medical help after being attacked by the Beast knows that the only remedy for their sickness is "fit speeches" (VI.vi.6.2)' of a homiletic tone.⁸⁶

By 'pursuing' and finally apprehending the monster of discourtesy, the Blatant Beast, Calidore is seen allegorically to subdue and restrain the source of malice and guile which

⁸⁶ Wells, *Spenser's 'Faerie Queene' and the Cult of Elizabeth*, p. 134.

threatens to subvert civil harmony (VI.xii.25). As a result of muzzling the ‘hellish Beast’ (VI.xii.32.6), Calidore silences its ‘blasphemous tong’ so that it can no longer ‘reuile and raile [its victims], / With bitter termes of shamefull infamy’ (VI.xii.34.5, 33.3-4). His subjugation of it signals a victory for courtesy over the corrosive forces of slander and malice. To this end, for a number of Spenser’s religiously-minded readers, he allegorically enacts the sentiments of Ephesians 4.31-32, which may be taken as a gloss for Book VI itself: ‘Let all bitternesse, and anger, and wrath, crying and euill speaking be put away from you, with all maliciousnesse. Be ye courteous one to another, & tender hearted, freely forgiuing one another, euen as God for Christes sake, freely forgaue you’. As Calvin notes in his sermon on this Biblical passage, ‘bitternesse and spytefulnesse’ are the ‘contraries’ of courtesy, mildness and gentleness.⁸⁷ Once ‘supprest and tamed’ by the ‘maystring might / Of doughty *Calidore*’, the Blatant Beast can no longer pose a threat to civil harmony through his slanderous and ‘vile tongue’ (VI.xii.38.1-2). However, the silencing of the Beast is only temporary. The reader learns that because of ‘wicked fate’ or the ‘fault of men’, the Beast eventually ‘broke his yron chaine, / And got into the world at liberty againe’ (VI.xii.38.8-9). Consequently, ‘more mischiefe and scath he wrought / To mortall men, then he had done befor’ (VI.xii.39.1-2). As Tonkin notes, ‘In this imperfect world, where slander is evidently at large, it seems hardly appropriate allegorically to keep the Blatant Beast in bondage’.⁸⁸ Through the Beast’s escape, Spenser highlights the limits of courtesy in a fallen, depraved world.

The Blatant Beast is not the only embodiment of discourtesy who threatens the social harmony of ‘Faery Lond’ in Book VI. A similar menace is posed by the ‘mightie’ figures of Despetto, Decetto and Defetto who represent the vices of malice, deceit and detraction (VI.v.13). With the assistance of the Blatant Beast, the ‘cruell minded’ trio ‘confound’ and ambush

⁸⁷ Calvin, *The Sermons of M. Iohn Caluin upon the Epistle of S. Paule too the Ephesians*, sig. 2H2^v.

⁸⁸ Tonkin, *Spenser’s Courteous Pastoral*, p. 154.

Timias at VI.v.12-21 (VI.v.13.3, 14.9). With his 'tooth impure', the Beast bites Timias, and thus inflicts a wound of 'vtter shame' (VI.v.16.8, 14.9). Through the association of his name to the word *honour*, the attack on Timias allegorically signifies the way in which the forces of spite and malice seek to defame and destroy the renown and reputation of another by causing 'vnjust detraction' (VI.v.12.7). This discourteous act mirrors the one made by the Blatant Beast on Serena at VI.iii.24. On this occasion, it is left to Arthur to rescue the besieged Timias and thus allegorically safeguard his honour.

In many ways, the character of Mirabella poses a similar threat to civil and courteous harmony. Her particular sin is pride, which is born out of vanity and an overweening sense of her own beauty. We read that 'all men did her person much admire, / And praise the feature of her goodly face, / The beames whereof did kindle louely fire / In th'hearts of many a knight, and many a gentle squire' (VI.vii.28.6-9). Despite the noble calibre of her suitors, 'none she worthie thought to be her fere, / But scornd them all' (VI.vii.29.2-3). What is more, through her 'stubborne stifnesse, and hard hart, / Many a wretch, for want of remedie, / Did languish long in lifeconsuming smart' (VI.vii.31.1-3). As a result of such 'insolent' (VI.vii.29.1) and haughty behaviour towards her admirers, she is sentenced by Cupid to wander 'through this worlds wyde wildernes' (VI.vii.37.7) in repentance until she has 'sau'd so many loues, as she did lose' (VI.vii.37.9). On her penitential journey, she is accompanied by the figures of Scorne and Disdaine, who act as personified reminders of her own insolent, discourteous behaviour. Their chastisement of Mirabella allegorically reflects the ill-treatment that she dispensed freely towards others. On a tropological level, Mirabella's punishment by Cupid may have signalled to some sixteenth-century readers that there is no place for pride or vanity in a courteous Christian community. It is seen to be at odds with the humility and meekness of Christ, and is an anathema to civil harmony. Some Protestant readers might have interpreted Mirabella alongside Calvin's sermon on the epistle of Paul to the Ephesians: 'We must rid

away all scornfulnesse and pryde [. . .] and afterward bee clenzed from bitternesse and frowardnesse, so as wee fall not too bee cholerike and testie, but euery man [and woman in Mirabella's case] brydle himself and subdew his owne affections'.⁸⁹ By accepting her punishment, Mirabella begins her journey towards moral and, also, spiritual renewal just as Crudor and Briana did.

The Brigants pose a more sinister threat to courtesy by the way in which they capture the shepherds and then enslave them in their cave, depicting them as 'hungry dogs' (VI.xi. 17.1). As Tonkin notes, 'The story of the Brigants is a kind of infernal parody of the story of the shepherds and Mount Acidale. Calidore ascended the mount to learn the meaning of courtesy; he must now descend to the bowels of the earth to rescue the flower of courtesy from the hands of despoilers.'⁹⁰ In saving Pastorella, Calidore seems to enact, in a broad sense, Jesus's Harrowing of Hell. His actions are redemptive; he overcomes the forces of evil in order that love and concord may flourish.

The way in which the book's figures of discourtesy are seen to be suppressed (and often later spiritually regenerated) would have signalled to Spenser's readers that there is no place for such behaviour in an ideal, harmonious Christian community. The vices of slander, malice and pride, which are represented by the likes of the Blatant Beast and other such figures, are seen to threaten the mutual bonds of friendship and respect which establish and maintain civil harmony. To this end, the events of Book VI would have dramatised for many readers the words of Psalm 34: 'Keepe thy tongue from euill and thy lips, that they speake no guile. Eschewe euill and doe good: seeke peace and followe after it.' (lines 13-14). Moreover, some readers might have interpreted Book VI in the light of 1 Peter 3.8-1:

⁸⁹ Calvin, *The Sermons of M. Iohn Caluin upon the Epistle of S. Paule too the Ephesians*, sig. 2H4^r.

⁹⁰ Tonkin, *Spenser's Courteous Pastoral*, p. 148.

Finally, be ye all of one minde: one suffer with another: loue as brethren: *bee*
pitifull: *bee* courteous, Not rendring euill for euill, neither rebuke for rebuke:
but contrarywise blesse, knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should be
heires of blessing. For if any man long after life, and to see good dayes, let him
refraine his tongue from euill, and his lippes that they speake no guile.

(Abbreviations *sic*)

As St Peter's words explicitly suggest, being 'courteous' involves, among other things, showing tolerance and compassion towards one's 'brethren'; moreover, it requires one to use one's tongue for the purpose of spreading love and warmth rather than slander or malevolence. Through his meekness and benevolence, Meliboe is seen to personify these words more than any other character in Book VI. His liberality of spirit as seen through his adoption of Pastorella, in addition to the charity he extends towards Calidore, augments his sense of being the book's embodiment of Christian courtesy along with Calidore. It is therefore baffling and rather problematic that Spenser permits him to be slaughtered by the brigands of discourtesy at VI.xi.18.4. One explanation might be that Christian courtesy, as personified by Meliboe, cannot be fully realised in this fallen and degenerate world. Although man may aspire to it through acts of charity and faith, he cannot hope fully to realise perfect courtesy as its source is divine and sanctification, of which Christian courtesy could be said to be a form, can only be obtained after heavenly transcendence. In many ways, it seems that the poem is trying to suggest that courtesy is one of the hardest virtues to try to secure because it involves a complete negation of the self in favour of others. For this reason, many readers might have interpreted it as being one of the most holy of virtues in *The Faerie Queene* as at its core lie the Christian ideas of generosity, tolerance and compassion.

Conclusion

As one draws towards the end of the chapter, one is reminded of Spenser's stated intention for the poem to 'fashion a gentleman or noble person in vertuous and gentle discipline'.⁹¹ Spenser's comments, as they appear in the 'Letter to Raleigh', were omitted from the 1596 edition of the poem. Nonetheless, to a certain extent, we can assume that they still, in part, apply to the poet's ambition for what he was trying to achieve in Book VI — to school a Christian gentleman in the ways of courtesy, although clearly he also wished to use the poem as a means to raise questions about a range of theological and political issues of the period. What is not clear, however, is whether Spenser believed that courtesy is exclusively a virtue of 'noble' birth which finds its greatest expression at court, or whether his view of it was more socially inclusive. The discovery that Pastorella and Tristram belong to the world of court, despite the fact that we are initially led to believe that they derive from the pastoral world as well as belonging to the romance convention, suggests that Spenser sees courtesy as a virtue that is innate to those of noble birth. However, as Tonkin notes, Book VI's pastoral setting suggests that courtesy is rooted in nature rather than at court.⁹² He writes, 'Tristram and Pastorella burgeon like flowers as they move into the courtly world, but the seeds of the flowers, though planted perhaps by the gods, are in nature'.⁹³ Indeed, in the Proem, as we have already seen, Spenser seems critical of court and keen to highlight the fact that one is more likely to find examples of discourtesy and duplicity there than instances of kindness and compassion:

[courtly courtesy] is nought but forgerie,

⁹¹ *The Faerie Queene*, p. 714.

⁹² Tonkin, *Spenser's Courteous Pastoral*, p. 239.

⁹³ Tonkin, *Spenser's Courteous Pastoral*, p. 225.

Fashion'd to please the eies of them, that pas,
Which see not perfect things but in a glas:
Yet is that glasse so gay, that it can blynd
The wisest sight, to think gold that is bras.

(VI.Proem.5.3-7)

As we noted earlier, he expresses a similar view in *Colin Clouts come home againe*. The fact that Matilde's adopted babe will grow up to be courteous and perform 'right noble deedes' (VI.iv.38.9), despite the fact that he is lowly born, implies that the virtue is not dependent on noble birth. This idea is reiterated by the way in which the Salvage Man saves Calepine from Turpine, and then tends to his wounds. His actions suggest that courtesy is bred out of what Hooker terms, the 'light of reason'; it springs from an altruistic sense of responsibility towards others.⁹⁴ As I have tried to show throughout the course of the chapter, it is the meek and merciful aspect of courtesy that dominates the landscape of Book VI.

It is possible that Spenser has more than one aim in mind for Book VI, and that he intended the book to mean different things for different readers, depending on their situation in life. However, that said, when we read the book alongside Spenser's comments in *Colin Clouts come home againe* it does seem that the poet's conception of courtesy is more at odds with the handbooks of Castiglione, Guazzo and Della Casa than some critics, such as Grogan, have previously suggested. It seems to us, and would probably have seemed to a number of early readers too, that Book VI appears less interested in trying to show the reader how courtesy may be used to curry favour and secure patronage in courtly circles. Rather, it seems to suggest that the true essence of courtesy lies in its spiritual dimension — the extent to which it is concerned with one's conduct in society, and how one may extend the hand of

⁹⁴ Hooker, *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, I.viii.3, p. 176.

friendship in the spirit of Christian agape by embracing the Christian values of charity, gentleness and mercy.

Chapter Four:

‘Such Chaunces oft Exceed All Humaine Thought’:

A Theological Reading of ‘Fortune’ and ‘Chance’ in Book VI of *The Faerie Queene*

Introduction

Towards the end of the third canto of Book VI, Calepine sustains a serious wound whilst defending the honour of his lady, Serena, against the ill-mannered knight, Turpine. However, by ‘wondrous chaunce’ and ‘fortune, passing all foresight’ (VI.iii.51.6, VI.iv.2.1), a nearby salvage man is ‘Drawne’ by Serena’s ‘loud and piteous shrigh’ of despair. Despite the fact that the salvage man ‘neuer till this houre / Did taste of pittie, neither gentlesse knew’, he is ‘much emmoued’ by the plight of the wounded Calepine and his weeping maiden (VI.iv.3.1-4). Spontaneously, he comes to the couple’s assistance. In behaving courteously through his unprompted act of altruism, the Salvage Man enacts the words of Romans 2.14 by demonstrating how, even without the benefit of revelation, man is capable of acting morally through reason.¹ The fact that Calepine survives this dangerous encounter with Turpine, and goes on to make a full recovery, is due to the timely intervention of the Salvage Man, whose opportune appearance is brought about, as the poem records, by chance and fortune. As well as Calepine, the Salvage Man also benefits from this fortuitous encounter as it marks the birth

¹ Romans 2.14: ‘For when the Gentiles which haue not the Lawe, doe by nature, the things *conteined* in the Lawe, they hauing not the Lawe, are a Lawe vnto themselues.’

and awakening of his moral, emotional and ethical sensibility. It is as though the ‘heavenly seedes’ of virtue which had previously been latent had now been given a chance to grow and prosper (VI.Proem.3.7). This formative, civilising experience will later lead the Salvage Man to an alliance with Prince Arthur, the poem’s embodiment of providential grace (VI.vi.22), thus marking the beginnings of his transition from salvage man to civilized man.

The significance of this episode lies in the importance that Spenser attaches to fortune and chance; they are the key factors in the Salvage Man’s rescue of Calepine. Through his reference to fortune and chance, Spenser suggests that one’s personal circumstances are to a large extent shaped by the capricious forces of contingency as much as they are by individual free will. This is not the only time that fortune and chance figure prominently in Book VI; they play an important role throughout the ‘Legend of Courtesy’, and, in fact, the terms feature more frequently in this book than they do in any other part of *The Faerie Queene*.

In this chapter, I consider the importance of fortune and chance in Book VI, and in particular, examine the ways in which sixteenth-century readers may have interpreted Spenser’s use of these pagan terms in a theological light by seeing the instances of contingency as representations of divine intervention in earthly affairs.² In particular, I build upon the work of the last chapter by considering how Spenser’s treatment of fortune and chance adds to the ways in which early modern readers may have interpreted Spenserian courtesy in terms of the Christian virtues of mercy, charity and gentleness. This is something which critics have not attempted previously. The chapter argues that by enacting instances of courteous (and discourteous) behaviour in response to fortune and chance, Book VI invites readers to think about the means of their own salvation / reprobation.

² On the subject of chance and fortune in Book VI see: Kenneth Borris, ‘Fortune, Occasion, and the Allegory of the Quest in Book VI of *The Faerie Queene*’, *Spenser Studies*, VII (1987), 123-45; MacCaffrey, *Spenser’s Allegory*, pp. 371-93; Mallette, *Spenser and the Discourses of Reformation England*, pp. 169-200; McCabe, *The Pillars of Eternity*, pp. 154-93; Michael Steppat, *Chances of Mischief*, pp. 258-308.

The word 'fortune' and its cognates appear on 47 separate occasions in Book VI, in comparison to just 20 times in Book I, 22 in Book II, 31 in Book III, 28 in Book IV and 24 in Book V.³ Similarly, the word 'chance' and its variant forms appears on 30 separate occasions in Book VI, whereas in Books I to V, it is used just 23, 18, 15, 18 and 15 times respectively, as well as twice in the 'Mutabilitie Cantos'.⁴ In the Salvage Man's rescue of Calepine, chance and fortune are seen to be advantageous and beneficial; however, this is not always the case. There are many instances in Book VI where they are also seen to be harmful and detrimental to a character's advancement or well being. At VI.viii.34.8, Serena is said to be the victim of 'False Fortune' as she is captured by the salvage nation whilst sleeping. Similarly, at VI.iii.19.2 we read of Priscilla's 'mischaunce', which led to the Discourteous Knight's vicious attack on her beloved, Aladine.

Spenser's portrayal of the inconstancy of fortune and chance owes much to early modern iconography of the pagan goddess, Fortuna, as well as Occasion, the other figure that was closely associated with her. In the emblem books of the period, such as Gilles Corrozet's *Hecatomgraphie* (1540) or Andrea Alciati's *Emblematum Liber* (1567), Fortuna / Occasion is conventionally depicted as an attractive naked woman, bald apart from a forelock. As Kenneth Borris notes, in one hand she normally holds a billowing sail or scarf, whilst in the other one she has a razor.⁵ She stands on a ball or wheel, which is sometimes located at sea. In many instances the ball is winged. These symbols of 'swift, changeable, elusive movement', which

³ It is also more than the single occasion that it occurs in the 'Mutabilitie Cantos'. The cognates of 'fortune' included in the search were: fortoun, fortune, fortvne, fourtune, ffortune, fortunéd, fortuníd, fortunýd, fourtuned, fortvnes, fortounes, fortouns, fortunes, fortunes, ffortunes, fortunest, fortuneth and fortuníng.

⁴ The cognates of 'chance' included in the search were: channce, chaunce, chavnce, chance, chauncid, chanced, chansyd, chauncyd, chanct, chauncd, chaunsed, channced, chauncde, chaunst, chansed, chaunced, chanced, chanst, chaunces, chances, chancest, chauncest, chaunceth, chauncethe, chanceth, chauncyng, chancing, chaunceinge and chauncing.

⁵ Borris, 'Fortune, Occasion, and the Allegory of the Quest', pp. 123-45.

are attributed to fortune, emphasise the erratic and unpredictable nature of contingency.⁶ They point towards the fleeting, transient aspect of circumstance which is constantly changing, often for the worse. Even though, as Borris notes, Spenser does not mention the goddesses Fortuna or Occasion directly, or borrow the pictorial dimension of the emblem, his actual treatment of life's vicissitudes in Book VI, as well as elsewhere in *The Faerie Queene*, suggest that he drew from its emblematic associations and assumptions. By explicitly referencing fortune he would have drawn upon a distinct range of cultural signifiers with which his sixteenth-century readers would have been familiar. Calidore's comment to the vanquished Crudor regarding fortune's inconstancy at VI.i.41.7-9 is suggestive of this: 'Al flesh is frayle, and full of ficklenesse, / Subiect to fortunes chance, still changing new; / What haps to day to me, to morrow may to you'. His language emphasises the haphazard and fickle nature of change which is inflicted by fortune, and on other occasions, chance. Spenser's phrasing here also alludes to the ubiquitous wheel of fortune (which was often depicted alongside Fortuna or Occasion in early modern emblem books), through its emphasis upon the fluctuating and circular nature of fortune which sees individual circumstances change rapidly.

The fact that fortune and chance, and their variant forms, feature more frequently in Book VI than in any other book of *The Faerie Queene* suggests that Spenser perceived a connection between courtesy and contingency. By contingency, I refer to the condition of things being 'subject to change and chance', or the way in which events are of 'uncertain occurrence or incidence'.⁷ Through linking courtesy to fortune and chance, the poet offers an alternative notion of the virtue to that found at court, and also conceptualised in the conduct manuals of Castiglione, della Casa and Guazzo.⁸ In the previous chapter, I argued that

⁶ Borris, 'Fortune, Occasion, and the Allegory of the Quest', p. 124.

⁷ See *OED* entry for 'Contingency', II.3.d, 'Contingent', II.2.a.

⁸ Williams, *Spenser's 'Faerie Queene'*, pp. 196-7.

Spenser's conception of courtesy may have been interpreted by sixteenth-century readers in terms of the Christian virtues of charity, mercy and gentleness. By reading the instances of fortune and chance alongside this religious conception of courtesy, Book VI seems to suggest that courtesy should be less an art of conduct used for self-promotion, and more a Christian virtue that involves a gentle, as well as charitable response to the haphazard and capricious forces of fortune. As the narrator remarks in the Proem to Book VI: 'vertues seat is deepe within the mynd, / And not in outward shows' (VI.Proem.5.8-9). Kenneth Borris has written that Spenserian courtesy 'depends on a readiness to transcend trying circumstances so as to remain in intimate contact with sources of virtue within, even amidst the "stormes of fortune" (VI.ix.31)'.⁹ By having Book VI engage with notions of fortune and chance, Spenser emphasises the extent to which genuine courtesy is not just a public, social virtue, but also a spiritual virtue, which is founded upon the principles of generosity, humility, and love. He seems to suggest that it is in response to the fickle and unpredictable forces of fate, which some readers might interpret in providential terms, that courtesy is able to flourish and find its greatest expression. For Spenser, courtesy is, to a large extent, concerned with the way in which one responds to life's unforeseen vicissitudes. This might explain why Spenser chose to link fortune and chance with courtesy, rather than use it in Book V, for instance, where it would have provided the catalyst for on-the-spot justice. In part, courtesy involves acting with compassion and sensitivity towards those who have been struck down by misfortune. An example of this is in the Salvage's Man's giving of relief to Calepine. Spenserian courtesy is also concerned with the way in which individuals respond to their own personal adversity as in the case of Tristram. As one sees time and time again in Book VI, fortune and chance provide the catalyst for spontaneous instances of courtesy.

⁹ Borris, 'Fortune, Occasion, and the Allegory of the Quest', pp. 123, 140.

Book VI offers perhaps the most obvious example of how genre considerations are intimately connected to thematic ones. Even though books III and IV have strong romance elements, it is 'The Legend of Courtesy' that follows the conventions of romance most closely. As I alluded to in the previous chapter, it is possible that Spenser framed Book VI as a romance because this genre offered greater scope to explore the relationship between courtesy and contingency. Fortune and chance are a stock convention of the romance genre and feature prominently in, for instance, *Orlando Furioso* and *La Gerusalemme liberata*, where they function to create unexpected narrative twists and developments. By situating the events of Book VI within the capricious and artificial world of romance, Spenser had more latitude to explore the way in which individuals respond to instances of misfortune. He was able to consider the ways in which figures might exercise delicacy and consideration towards others when mishap or calamity occur thereby demonstrating a spiritual courtesy.

In the first section of the chapter, I survey the dissemination of providentialism in print and oral culture during the sixteenth century in order to contextualise how Spenser's readers might have interpreted the numerous instances of fortune and chance that occur in Book VI. Next the chapter considers how Spenser's readers might have interpreted the displacement of Tristram, Sir Bruin and Matilde through a providential lens, whilst in the third section, 'Providece and Briana's Moral Regeneration', I examine Briana's spiritual and moral renewal. In 'Misfortune as a Trial of Spiritual Fortitude', the chapter consider how it is possible that textual instances of misfortune were interpreted by sixteenth-century readers as trials of spiritual fortitude and faith. The fourth section considers how Spenser's readers might have framed the emblematic images of Fortuna within Book VI's religious allegory, whilst the final section explores the cyclical dimension of Spenser's use of fortune and chance.

Fortune, Chance and Providentialism in Early Modern England

When formulating his ideas about the flux and inconstancy of human experience, and the effect that this has upon one's conduct towards his fellow man, Spenser would probably have been influenced by the sixth-century Roman philosopher, Boethius, whose *Consolation of Philosophy* exerted a considerable influence during the medieval and early modern period.¹⁰ As Deborah MacInnes notes, between 1471 and 1500 thirty editions and nearly sixty printings of the *Consolation* were published across Europe.¹¹ During the sixteenth century, there were four separate English translations, including one by Queen Elizabeth (1593).¹² The significance of Boethius lies in his ability to reconcile pagan ideas of chance and fortune with Christian notions of providence. Throughout the *Consolation*, Boethius argues that the world is ruled by providential design with fate, nature and fortune functioning as its administrators. He claims that 'the world's government [. . .] is subject to divine reason and not the haphazards of chance'.¹³ In expounding his belief in providential determinism, he states:

The generation of all things, the whole progress of things subject to change and whatever moves in any way, receive their causes, their due order and their form from the unchanging mind of god. In the high citadel of its oneness, the mind of God has set up a plan for the multitude of events [. . .] Providence is the

¹⁰ Hadfield, *Edmund Spenser: A Life*, p.96.

¹¹ Deborah MacInnes, 'Boethius', in *The Spenser Encyclopedia*, p. 100.

¹² The others were J. Walton (1525), George Colvile (1556) and Thomas Chaloner (1563).

¹³ Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, trans. by Victor Watts, rev. edn (London: Penguin, 1999), p. 20.

divine reason itself. It is set at the head of all things.¹⁴

The idea, presented here, that cosmic order and harmony stems from a fixed divine source was not a new one. However, Boethius's examination of it in the *Consolation* struck a chord with medieval and early modern readers through his method of rigorous, deductive reasoning. He also appealed to the Christian neo-Platonist mind through his celebration of a supreme transcendental goodness which binds all things together in a unified form: 'the end of all things is the good [. . .] God is the good itself'.¹⁵

It is likely, as Hadfield suggests, that by the time Spenser completed his studies he would have read and attended lectures on a number of classical and medieval philosophers and rhetoricians, of which Boethius would have been one.¹⁶ When a student at Cambridge he may also, as MacInnes suggests, have been familiar with the copy of the *Consolation* that was in Pembroke College library, or been exposed to the ideas of Boethius by Gabriel Harvey.¹⁷ Given its influence during the period, it is also possible that there were copies of the *Consolation* in the libraries of John Young (Bishop of Rochester), the Earl of Leicester, Sir Henry Sidney and Lord Grey whilst Spenser was in their employment. If Spenser did read the *Consolation*, as I believe he did, then it is conceivable that it would have sharpened his sense of how behind life's inconstancy there exists a hidden divine purpose whose meaning is often obscured from man's comprehension. One might suggest that Spenser's purpose in Book VI is to reveal what is hidden. Moreover, in terms of its influence upon the 'Legend of Courtesy', the *Consolation* may also have fostered in him, as well as his sixteenth-century readers, a

¹⁴ Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, p. 104.

¹⁵ Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, pp. 77-9.

¹⁶ Hadfield, *Edmund Spenser: A Life*, p. 58.

¹⁷ MacInnes, 'Boethius', in *The Spenser Encyclopedia*, p. 100.

sense that the arbitrariness of life's vicissitudes is not so whimsical after all but part of a divine plan orchestrated by God to test man's generosity and gentleness towards his fellow man.

By the time that Book VI was published in 1596, it was becoming increasingly common for people to share Boethius's beliefs, and thus make sense of life's capricious events using the language of Boethian providentialism. It gave divine order to the unpredictability of human experience. Keith Thomas writes that, through a belief in providentialism, 'Every Christian [. . .] had the consolation of knowing that life was not a lottery, but reflected the working-out of God's purposes. If things went wrong he did not have to blame his luck but could be assured that God's hand was at work: the events of this world were not random but ordered'.¹⁸

The Church of England fostered this belief in providentialism through sermons and theological treatises. Preachers would emphasise the role played by divine causation in everyday life. Very often, this involved a rejection of the terms, 'fortune' and 'chance' because of their pagan connotations. In his *Certaine Sermons* (1580), the Elizabethan bishop, Thomas Cooper, declared, 'That which we call fortune is nothing but the hand of God, working by causes and for causes that we know not'.¹⁹ Insisting that the godly must sometimes endure adversity on the path to salvation, the Puritan preacher, John More, known as the Apostle of Norwich stated in his *Three godly and fruitfull sermons* (1594): 'all affliction come to the beleueers not for their hurt but for their singular good, seeing that they doe befall them not by

¹⁸ Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1971), p. 79.

¹⁹ Thomas Cooper, *Certaine Sermons vvhetherin is contained the defense of the gospell nowe preached against such caulls and false accusations, as are obiected both against the doctrine it selfe, and the preachers and professors thereof, by the friendes and fauourers of the Church of Rome* (London: Ralphe Newbry, 1580), sig. AA2^v.

fortune or chance but by the speciall prouidence of God'.²⁰ It is possible that the Church's dismissal of fortune and chance in favour of a language of providentialism was influenced by the words of Calvin who states in his *Institution*, 'fortune and chaunce are heathen mens wordes, wyth the signification wherof the mindes of the godly ought not to be occupied' (*Institution*, I.xvi.8).²¹ Calvin goes on to declare that it is a 'wrong opinion' to believe 'that all thynges happen by fortune' (*Institution*, I.xvi.2).²² He argues that,

If a man light among theues, or wylde beastes, if by wynde sodenly rysen he suffer shipwrack on the sea, if he be kylled wyth the fall of a house or of a tree: if an other wandryng in deserte places fynde remedy for hys pouertie, if hauing been tossed with the waues, he atteine to the haue, if miraculously he escape but a fynger bredth from death: all these chaunces as well of prosperitie as of aduersitie the reason of the fleshe doeth ascrybe to fortune. But whosoeuer is taught by the mouth of Chryst, that all the heares of hys hed are numbred, will seke for a cause further of, and wyll fymelye beleue that all chaunces are gouerned by the secrete counsell of God.²³

In Calvin's opinion, it is wrong for the imagination to interpret life's vicissitudes via the paganistic language of fortune and chance. He follows Boethius in asserting that contingency of any sort stems from a divine rather than secular source: 'nothing at al is done in y^e world

²⁰ John More, *Three godly and fruitfull sermons declaring first how we may be saved in the day of iudgement, and so come to life everlasting* (London: Nicholas Bovvnd, 1594), sig. P1^v.

²¹ Calvin, *Institution*, sig. H4^r.

²² Calvin, *Institution*, sig. H1^r.

²³ Calvin, *Institution*, I.xvi.2, sig. H1^r.

but by his appointment' (abbreviations *sic*).²⁴ As Walsham notes, those who rejected a belief in providentialism and dared to cling to the competing pagan theory of causation (i.e. fortune and chance) were thought to be guilty of committing the grave crime of spiritual adultery.²⁵

Such was the spread in belief in providentialism, that it was not, as is sometimes thought, a 'marginal feature of the religious culture of early modern England' associated with the more zealous form of Protestantism. Rather, it was, as Walsham notes, 'part of the mainstream, a cluster of presuppositions which enjoyed near universal acceptance'.²⁶ Walsham goes so far as to suggest that it formed a kind of 'cultural cement' which helped to 'anchor and entrench the Reformation in England' through its ability to unite, as Ian Green terms it, 'old and new, elite and popular, and "godly and ungodly thinking"'.²⁷

²⁴ Calvin, *Institution*, I.xvi.6, sig. H3^r.

²⁵ Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England*, p. 21.

²⁶ Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England*, p. 2.

²⁷ Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England*, p. 5; Ian Green, *Print and Protestantism in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. vii. The pervasive nature of the doctrine during this period was largely due to the way in which it was disseminated to the different sections of society through a complex network of oral and printed modes of communication. For the professional clergy as well as educated elite and gentry, the idea was transmitted through theological treatises which drew upon the Church Fathers and scholastic authors, as well as the scriptures. For the 'middling sort' of laity, as Ian Green refers to them, the doctrine of providentialism was propagated through the language and rhetoric of the pulpit, as well as printed sermons, both of which served as major sources of spiritual and doctrinal edification (see Green, *Print and Protestantism in Early Modern England*, p. 34). For the lower, yet literate, ranks, the notion of religious determinism was promulgated through the growth of cheap ephemeral literature, such as blackletter broadside ballads, chapbooks and catchpenny pamphlets, whose tales of terrible disasters and sudden accidents were often seen to be 'saturated with references to divine providence' (Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England*, p. 33). In contrast, the illiterate members of the populace who had received no formal education were targeted through hard-hitting, 'fire and brimstone' style sermons which emphasised the need for repentance and spiritual regeneration as a means to salvation. As Walsham identifies, the relationship between these diverse cultural modes of communication was an affirming and mutually reinforcing one: 'preaching and cheap print were interacting spheres of discourse in early modern England. Just as there was a constant two-way flow between published texts and oral tradition, so were sermons and inexpensive ephemera symbiotically linked, caught in a complex and mutually enriching equilibrium' (Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England*, p. 327). What this meant was that the conceptual framework of providentialism was assimilated into the very centre of soteriological thinking at every level of society. The eclectic transmission and discourse of ideas served to counter the pagan, superstitious notion that life's events were shaped by the whimsical, contingent forces of fortune and chance. Rather, it served to frame life's hardships within a carefully constructed system of divine order and judgment. As Walsham notes, the rhetoric of providentialism helped to 'explain away the glaring anomalies in divine justice by asserting that the Lord had a logic, albeit opaque and enigmatic, of His own' (Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England*, p.95).

Given the widespread belief in providentialism that existed in Protestant England during the 1590s, it is possible to imagine how Spenser's more doctrinally-moderate readers might have interpreted the numerous instances of fortune and chance that appear in 'The Legend of Courtesy' as representative of the ways in which God intervenes in earthly affairs in order to test the spiritual fortitude of the faithful, as well as reward the virtuous, and punish the sinful. Moreover, with regards to the virtue of courtesy, it is feasible that Spenser's readers would have interpreted the beneficial instances of fortune in Book VI as indicative of how God assists those individuals who have acted courteously, whilst the instances of misfortune represent how God admonishes those individuals who have not fulfilled their moral obligations because they acted discourteously. Additionally, some might have interpreted the instances of misfortune that befall the virtuous characters of Book VI as analogous to the ways in which God engineers situations to test the courteous instincts of the faithful. For instance, an unexpected calamity would provide an occasion to test the fortitude and humility of the sufferer, whilst for those who are not directly affected by the incident, it is an opportunity to demonstrate one's capacity for warmheartedness and charity. For example, we see this when Calidore gives the babe, which he rescued from a tiger in the woods, to Matilde in order that she and her husband, Sir Bruin, may have a son, as was prophesied, to defeat the giant Cormoraunt who had previously usurped the couple from their sovereignty.

Lessons in Christian Humility: The Misfortunes of Tristram, Sir Bruin and Matilde

Midway through the second canto of Book VI, Tristram informs Calidore of the events that have led to his exile in the forest:

[. . .] I am a Briton borne,
Sonne of a king, how euer thorough fate
Or fortune I my countrie haue forlorne,
And lost the crowne, which should my head by right adorne
(VI.ii.27.6-9).

He describes how, at the age of ten, following the 'Vntimely' death of his father, the 'good king *Meliogras*' of 'Cornewale', he was forced to flee his homeland and seek refuge in 'some forrein land' so to escape the 'gealous dread' of his evil uncle who had unlawfully usurped him by taking the 'Kingly Scepter' (VI.ii.28.2-4, VI.ii.29.4-8). Tristram's displacement and surrender of sovereignty is a typical motif of the Middle English Romance.²⁸ His exile is analogous to those found in the thirteenth-century romances of *Havelock*, *Horn* and *Bevis of Hampton* in which the young princes are forced to flee their homeland as their lives are endangered following the deaths of their parents. What makes Tristram's situation significant is the extent to which he attributes his reversal of circumstance to the forces of 'fate / Or fortune'. To his mind, these are the principal factors that have led to his displacement. Tristram's language highlights the extent to which his life is seemingly shaped by capricious forces of contingency that are beyond his control. His misfortune highlights the extent to which chance or fate is often seen to be at odds with right and legitimacy. It is worth noting that in this context, 'fate' seems to work in a similar way to fortune and chance, although the word's connotations of events being 'unalterably predetermined from eternity' hint more

²⁸ Maldwyn Mills, ed., *Six Middle English Romances* (London: Dent, 1973), pp.vii - xxx.

explicitly at a providential cause to his hardship — as though his tribulations form part of a divine plan orchestrated by God to test his spiritual fortitude on the path to salvation.²⁹

Tristram is not the only character in Book VI whose claims to dynastic continuity are adversely affected by the fickle forces of contingency. Sir Bruin and Matilde find themselves in a similar situation. Having overthrown the ‘great Gyant [. . .] *Cormoraunt*’, Sir Bruin is made ‘Lord [. . .] of all the land’ (VI.iv.30.1). We infer that his sovereignty is a force for good; he brings harmony and concord to the place and its people, as implied by Matilde’s reference to Bruin’s ‘peaceable estate’ and how he ‘quietly doth hold it in his hand’ (VI.iv.30.2-3). However, because of ‘cruell fate’ and ‘th’heauens enuying [. . .] [their] prosperitie’, Sir Bruin and Matilde are without an heir to defend their kingdom despite the fact that it was prophesied that the pair would enjoy the ‘gladfull blessing of posteritie’, and that to them a ‘sonne / [would] *Be gotten*’ (VI.iv.30.5, 31.1, 31.3, 32.7). Subsequently, Sir Bruin’s land (‘th’heritage of our vnhappy paine’) looks set to ‘returne againe / To that foule feend’, *Cormoraunt* — a fate that Matilde blames upon the unjust and arbitrary forces of fortune (VI.iv.31.5-8). Again we see how ‘fate’ contributes to the cluster of ideas associated with the terms chance and fortune. As is the case with Tristram, fate’s connotations of predeterminism might have meant that some theologically-inclined readers might have interpreted Sir Bruin and Matilde’s adversity as a trial of faith orchestrated by God to test their spiritual perseverance and fortitude.

As victims of mischance Tristram, Sir Bruin and Matilde must face an uncertain future. Their experiences have a profound effect upon their sense of personal courtesy. Tristram’s displacement teaches him the importance of humility and meekness. Stripped of his rank and privilege, he must live a humble and lowly existence exiled in the forest. However, his sense of being unjustly wronged also kindles in him a spontaneous benevolence towards

²⁹ See *OED* entry for ‘Fate’, 1.a.

others — an eagerness to aid the distressed, especially when they are victims of oppression. This spirit of charity and magnanimity, bred out of his own personal adversity, is embodied in the way in which he defends the honour of the Discourteous Knight's Lady after the Discourteous Knight himself had acted cruelly towards her, forcing her to walk through the thickets and also ignoring her 'piteous woe' (VI.ii.10.9) whilst he rode on horseback beside her (VI.ii.8-12). Sir Bruin and Matilde have no time to enjoy their victory over the evil Cormoraunt; the instability of their situation through not having an heir, means that they have no room for pride in their position or rank. As with Tristram, their circumstance shapes their courtesy; it inculcates a humility of spirit that prevents them from becoming overly confident or complacent in their sovereignty.

The situations involving Tristram, Sir Bruin and Matilde are not the only ones from Book VI where fortune and chance appear to be in conflict with virtue. Of the 47 times that fortune and its cognates are referred to in Book VI, it is responsible for bringing about adversity to virtuous characters on 23 occasions.³⁰ In much the same way, chance is also shown to be a key cause of unmerited hardship and misery delivering affliction on 13 separate occasions out of the 30 that appear in Book VI.³¹ It is worth noting that Spenser appears to alternate between the terms 'fortune' and 'chance' arbitrarily, and views them as synonymous and interchangeable. Indeed, on many occasions, it seems that his choice of which term to use is largely down to a pragmatic question of metre, and whether the two-syllabic 'fortune' is better suited to the line than the monosyllabic 'chance'. For instance at VI.viii.10.1, one reads of Arthur who is fighting Disdain: 'But Fortune aunswerd not vnto his call'. Here to keep the

³⁰ For instance, it is down to 'fortune' that Tristram's uncle seizes control of his kingdom following King Meliograss's death thereby depriving him of the crown (VI.ii.27.8). Similarly, 'fortune blynde' is blamed for the salvage nation's discovery and abduction of Serena (VI.viii.36.7).

³¹ For example, it is because of chance that Calidore encounters Calepine and Serena making love. His untimely intrusion causes Serena to go wandering in the woods whilst the two knights converse. Subsequently, she is attacked and bitten by the Blatant Beast (VI.iii.20.2). It is also down to chance that a dangerous tiger leaps out at Pastorella (VI.x.34.3).

pattern of the pentameter, the poet chooses to use the disyllabic noun *Fortune* as opposed to the monosyllabic equivalent, *Chance*. Similarly, at VI.i.11.1-2, we read, ‘*Sir Calidore* thence trauelled not long, / When as by chaunce a comely Squire he found’. On this occasion, *fortune* with its two syllables would have compromised the pentameter. Therefore, the monosyllabic ‘chaunce’ fits the metre.

Given the grip that providentialism came to hold upon the religious imagination in the latter part of the sixteenth century, it is likely that many of Spenser’s early readers would have interpreted the instances of fortune and chance that occur in Book VI in the context of divine intervention. One can conceive how readers may have interpreted Tristram’s unmerited affliction, as well as that of Sir Bruin and Matilde, as indicative of the ways in which divine judgement operates mysteriously and beyond human comprehension. When applying this form of providentialist interpretation to the shifting fortunes of the figures, it is likely that Spenser’s readers would have done so in the light of relevant biblical passages, commentaries, and treatises, as well as philosophical works such as Boethius. For instance, one may conjecture that the respective adversity of Tristram, Sir Bruin and Matilde, which has been brought about by the woeful loss of their sovereign power and dignity, would have had for many readers, echoes of Job 1.21: ‘the Lord hath giuen, and the Lord hath taken it’. Similarly, one can imagine how Tristram’s hardship, and Sir Bruin and Matilde’s exile may have been interpreted alongside the words of St Augustine, whose writing exerted an important influence on many Calvinists at this time, especially in terms of his elaboration of St Paul’s doctrine of predestination.³² In his Anti-Pelagian writings, Augustine identifies how God’s will is veiled and often works in mysterious and inexplicable ways, which to mortal eyes can seem unjust and unfathomable. He writes: ‘let us not endeavour to look into that which is inscrutable, nor

³² Mallette, *Spenser and the Discourses of Reformation England*, pp. 172-3; Rivers, *Classical and Christian Ideas in English Renaissance Poetry*, pp. 108-9.

to trace that which cannot be found out'.³³ Given Boethius's influence during the period, it is possible that Spenser's readers might have also drawn upon the *Consolation* to make sense of the characters' situations. Boethius states, 'a knowing God acts and ignorant men look on with wonder at his actions'.³⁴ Because 'men are in no position to contemplate [. . .] [the] [. . .] order [. . .] [of God's providential plan] [. . .] everything seems confused and upset'.³⁵ If Spenser's sixteenth-century readers were influenced by providentialist thought, then it is likely that they would have interpreted Tristram's reversal of fortune, as well as Sir Bruin and Matilde's, as a trial of faith, designed by God to challenge the prince's moral steadfastness and spiritual resolve in the face of adversity. Allegorically, his situation highlights the uncertainty of worldly fortune, and gestures towards the idea that everlasting joy can only be achieved through spiritual transcendence and sanctification, both of which cannot be realised in this mortal life.

It is possible that for a number of Spenser's theologically-inclined readers, instances of hardship such as those experienced by the figures of Tristram, Sir Bruin and Matilde would have reinforced one's fear of God's omnipotence, and heightened one's sense of servitude to him. Some might have interpreted the characters' tribulations alongside the words of Psalm 2: 'serue the Lorde in feare, and reioyce in trembling' (Psalm 2.11). For conforming Protestants, this fear in God's ways would have been seen as an affirming thing as it would have underlined their personal faith, which in turn, was a sure sign of one's calling, justification and election. As Psalm 128.1 states: 'Blessed is euery one that feareth the Lorde and walketh in his wayes'. This idea is further developed in Psalm 85.9: 'Surely his saluation is neere to them that feare him, that glory may dwell in our land'. As Paul Cefalu notes, Godly fear is

³³ St Augustine, *A Treatise on the Gift of Perseverance*, chp. 25.

³⁴ Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy* (London: Penguin, 1969), p. 107.

³⁵ Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, p. 106.

also important because it is a precondition for spiritual renewal and renovation.³⁶ Given how Tristram, Sir Bruin and Matilde's circumstances change for the better later in Book VI, Spenser's readers might also have interpreted these initial instances of adversity as allegorical exemplars of spiritual fortitude and steadfastness which could be drawn upon for inspiration and solace during periods of personal uncertainty and affliction.

Given the unmerited nature of his adversity, Tristram accepts his misfortune courteously, with a gentleness of feeling and integrity of spirit. He bears no malice towards the world or God, nor threatens to become Faerie Land's malcontent; rather, his reason wills him to act with a spontaneous generosity towards others, as seen through his noble actions towards the Discourteous Knight's lady. In providential terms, Tristram's displacement has instilled in him a Christian meekness and humility, as well as altruism, that is analogous to Christ. Sir Bruin, on the other hand, seems to lack the courteous generosity and even temperedness of Tristram, instead holding Matilde responsible for the lack of an heir: 'The good *Sir Bruin* [. . .] thinkes from me his sorrow all doth rize' (VI.iv.33.6-7). We learn that Bruin's discourtesy towards his wife, by blaming her for the lack of a child, causes her 'sorrow' and 'ceaseless teares' (VI.iv.33.7-9). Whereas Tristram has responded to his misfortune with mildness and humanity, Sir Bruin shows that he still has progress to make before he is deserving of the term *courteous*.

As if to affirm the Christian promise that virtue will be rewarded, especially for those individuals who have had to struggle in the face of unmerited adversity, Spenser has Tristram experience an upturn in his fortunes. After hearing of how Tristram defended the honour of the Discourteous Knight's lady, as well as learning of his childhood displacement, Calidore dubs him his 'courteous Squire' (VI.ii.37.1). The appointment signals an end to his

³⁶ Paul Cefalu, 'Godly Fear, Sanctification, and Calvinist Theology in the Sermons and "Holy Sonnets" of John Donne', *SIP*, 100 (2003), 71-87.

misfortunes and a return to prosperity. After his prolonged period of hardship, the sudden transformation brought about by this reversal of circumstance is striking. Tristram suddenly blossoms:

Like a flowre, whose silken leaues small,
Long shut vp in the bud from heauens vew,
At length breakes forth, and brode displayes his smyling hew.

(VI.ii.35.7-9)

Tristram's figurative flowering signals his deliverance from affliction. In providential terms, he is returned to happiness and 'heauens vew' through God's 'abondant mercie' (1 Peter 1.3), where he is free to flourish as Calidore's squire extolling the merits of Christian courtesy. He has been liberated through what St Augustine terms 'the mystery of [. . .] [God's] providence'.³⁷ As Augustine notes, God's guiding hand is omnipresent: 'you [God] are present everywhere'.³⁸ By ennobling Tristram through making him his squire, as well as ensuring the safety and welfare of the lady, Calidore demonstrates his own generosity of spirit. For Spenser's religiously-minded readers, the knight's warmheartedness and consideration towards others is an outward expression of his inner grace, and a further justification of his position as the knight of courtesy.

Whereas Calidore's act of courtesy towards Tristram is limited in the extent to which it can make amends for the boy's displacement and loss of rank, Calepine's act of kindheartedness and benevolence towards Matilde has far wider-reaching implications. Not

³⁷ Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. by R. S. Pine-Coffin (London: Penguin, 1961), p. 99.

³⁸ St Augustine, *Confessions*, p. 102.

only does he extend politeness and courtesy towards her by listening to her tale of woe, but through the workings of 'fortune' (VI.iv.26.3), Calepine happens to rescue a baby from the clutches of a 'cruell Beare' (VI.iv.17.8), which he then gives to Matilde, thereby ensuring that the prophecy is realised, and that she and Sir Bruin are granted an heir to protect their kingdom and secure its future. In working with fortune, Calepine safeguards Bruin's legacy and creates the means by which love and harmony can be restored to their relationship, and the kingdom. If Spenser's religiously-minded readers did interpret this episode in the context of Christian providentialism, then one could imagine how they might have viewed the gift of the baby as indicative of the ways in which God protects the interests of those who fight on the side of righteousness, which is what Sir Bruin did in defeating the evil Cormoraunt. They might also suggest that it is through providential design that Calepine is given an opportunity to demonstrate his gentleness of feeling and sense of charity towards others by rescuing the baby from the dangerous bear, as well as handing it over to Matilde (VI.iv.17-38). However, in terms of the latter, one could argue that the knight could not feasibly have kept the baby with him on his quest, and therefore needed to get rid of it as his earliest convenience. Nevertheless, in this episode Calepine shows the extent to which he is prepared to put others before himself, which readers would have recognised as a sign of courtesy. By doing so, he repays the debt to humanity which started when the Salvage Man rescued him from the discourteous Turpine. This process of continuous gift-giving looks ahead to the symbolic dance of the three Graces in canto x. Similarly, Calepine's rescue of the babe from the clutches of the bear also anticipates Calidore's rescue of Pastorella from the tiger at VI.x.31-8. Through his use of fortune and chance, which may have been read using the language of Christian providentialism, Spenser creates situations whereby the expression of the good in each person can be realised.

Providence and Briana's Moral Regeneration

From the very beginning of Book VI, we get the impression that some form of divine order is at work in Faerie Land shaping the fates of its characters. We see this as early as canto i when providence appears to be responsible for initially dashing and then restoring the good fortune of the Knight and his damsel, as well as triggering a moral renewal in the sinful Briana. When bemoaning his subjugation by Briana's seneschal, Crudor, who is under orders to strip the knight of his beard and the lady of her locks, the hapless knight blames 'misfortune' for his desperate situation (VI.i.12.7). This discourteous removal of hair is the 'toll', which all travellers must 'for passage pay' (VI.i.13.9). As Hamilton notes, the levy is equivalent to that which knights must pay as they pass the House of Beards in the Old French Arthurian romance, *Perlesvaus*.³⁹ In Spenser's tale, the hair is to line a mantle that Crudor demands as a dowry before he will agree to love Briana. As Harold Toliver acknowledges, Spenser's adaptation of the story from *Perlesvaus* 'retains the sense of inhospitality and perverted social games' that one finds in the original.⁴⁰ Spenser's use of it sharpens one's sense of how discourtesy is, among other things, a wilful failure to honour the humanity of others. However, in a satisfying reversal of fortune, those same forces of contingency that, according to the Knight, are responsible for plunging the couple into this 'haplesse' situation (VI.i.12.5), are also at work to secure their liberation. The Knight and his damsel are saved, not by the former's own actions and bravery, but by the wondrous 'chaunce' of Calidore's timely arrival (VI.i.9.2). Calidore's spontaneous act of merciful charity in saving the pair, through dispatching the evil Mallefort, demonstrates a gentleness of feeling towards the oppressed that

³⁹ Note to VI.i.13.

⁴⁰ Harold Toliver, 'Briana' in *The Spenser Encyclopedia*, ed. by A. C. Hamilton, p. 111.

cancels out the discourteous conduct of Briana and her seneschal. Even though the intervention of providence is not explicitly named, we sense on second and subsequent readings of the book that, given the numerous other instances later on in Book VI where fortune and chance are involved, Calidore's fortuitous intervention in canto i is the first of many occasions in the 'Legend of Courtesy' where some form of celestial help is being given freely to man. It is also the first of many occasions where providence seems to be at work engineering opportunities for characters, such as Calidore, to demonstrate their inner grace and goodness through outward expressions of courtesy. For those readers who believed in a merit-based soteriological economy, outward expressions of courtesy may have, in God's eyes, been indicative of one's redemptive worth.

What is notable about this episode is the way in which its cyclical dimension links it to the Sir Bruin and Matilde story. As is the case with Sir Bruin and Matilde, those same providential forces of inconstancy which are responsible for the Knight and damsel's affliction are also the source of the couple's deliverance. The harmful and then ameliorating effects of fortune and chance at play in this episode are, in many ways, analogous to Boethian ideas of inconstancy and flux. The couple's experience is typical of the ways in which our fates are seen to be ever changing on what Boethius saw as a divinely influenced wheel of fortune. One moment we are at peace, the next we are thrown into doubt and despair before then being returned to happiness and prosperity. On this occasion Spenser's formulation would have left his sixteenth-century readers with a lasting sense of hope. Providentially, the poem seems to suggest that in the depths of despair there is always room for optimism as affliction is only temporary for the faithful. As Boethius proclaims, 'mutability gives you just cause to hope for better things'.⁴¹ In the Knight and Damsel's episode, this is proven to be the case when the pair are not only liberated by Calidore, but are also awarded Briana's castle as

⁴¹ Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, p. 26.

‘recompence of all their former wrong’ (VI.i.47.6). Having initially fallen victim to life’s vicissitudes, the couple’s fortunes are, for the moment at least, in the ascendant as a result of ‘chaunce’, or, as Spenser’s more theologically-inclined readers might see it, divine intervention.

However, what distinguishes this episode from others featuring fortune and chance is the way in which providence seems to have a hand in prompting Briana and Crudor’s moral regeneration. Initially, Briana is portrayed as a proud woman with a ‘wicked will’, employing whatever strategies are necessary to win Crudor’s love, even if that means breaking the ‘bands of ciuilitie’ through initiating ‘wicked customes’, which ‘doe defame / Both noble armes and gentle curtesie’ (VI.i.15.9, VI.i.26.6-9). Her shameful treatment of passing travellers, as well as her scornful questioning of Calidore’s honour (VI.i.25-26) mark her out as being the epitome of discourtesy. Crudor is described in similar terms; he is characterised by a ‘high disdain / And proud despight of his selfe pleasing mynd’ (VI.i.15.1-2). However, as if to suggest that redemption and moral renewal are possible, the pair are transformed into penitent, humble subjects by what seems to be the hand of divine intervention, although Spenser refrains from making the connection explicitly. We read that, because of wondrous ‘chaunce’, Calidore encounters the Knight and damsel, which in turn leads him to Briana, and what will be for her a formative experience on the road to salvation (VI.i.11.2). The squire overcomes Crudor and subsequently spares his life on the condition that in the future he conducts himself as a courteous knight should — with politeness and respect towards others as their rank and position deserve: ‘To pay each with his owne is right and dew’ (VI.i.42.3). So as to warn Crudor against the dangers of pride, and thus encourage in him a greater sense of humility and meekness, Calidore evokes the image of Boethian inconstancy: ‘All flesh is frayle, and full of ficklenesse, / Subiect to fortunes chance, still chaunging new; / What haps to day to me, to morrow may to you.’ (VI.i.41.7-9). Calidore’s ‘exceeding courtesie’ towards

the knight in sparing his life, not only signals a shift in Crudor's behaviour, it also triggers an immediate transformation in Briana's attitude. His act of mercy 'pearst / Her stubborne hart with deepe effect' (VI.i.45.3-4). Her earlier pride and rancour are replaced by humble gratitude, and more significantly, the emergence of her own courteous instinct. In a spontaneous act of hospitality that illustrates how 'wondrously [. . .] chaungd' she is, Briana prepares a 'feast' to 'shew her thankefull mind' (VI.i.46.4). In addition to this act of generosity, she also gives Calidore her castle, although as is fitting for the knight of courtesy, he offers it to the Knight and his damsel 'as their rightfull meed, / For recompence of all their former wrong' (VI.i.47.5-6). To some extent, the language of equity used here has echoes of Book V; however, the episode's redemptive nature serves to imbue Spenser's diction with more of a soteriological significance. On reading of the events that lead to the Knight and damsel's liberation, and more importantly, to Briana and Crudor's regeneration, we are reminded of Calvin's words on God's omnipotence: 'all partes of the worlde are quickened wyth the secrete inspiration of God'.⁴² One can envisage how Spenser's Protestant readers might have interpreted the pair's regeneration in terms of predestination, arguing in favour of the pair's election and claiming that the couple's latent goodness was kindled by the grace of God, and stimulated by Calidore, who seems to function here as an instrument of the divine will.

More moderate Protestant readers, as well as Catholic ones, might have put a different slant on the Briana episode by arguing that the instances of felicity and goodness come not through providence alone, but through what seems to be one's cooperation with God. For instance, one could argue that Calidore works *with* divine grace to rescue the Knight and his damsel. Even though 'chaunce' (VI.i.11.2) leads him to the Knight, it is his spontaneous act of charity and mercy that makes him take pity on the pair and, in an act of great courtesy,

⁴² Calvin, *Institution*, I.xvi.1, sig. H1^r.

liberate them (see previous chapter). Spenser writes of how, on seeing Mallefort abusing the damsel, Calidore's heart is filled with 'dismay' thereby sparking in him an instinctive desire to rescue the hapless damsel. Such language encourages the reader to think about the role of free will in Calidore's good works. It makes us interpret his response as an emotional one fuelled by a sense of courteous pity and justice towards the oppressed. We sense that for Spenser, emotion, especially in Book VI is more spiritual than it is moral. Similarly, one could argue that even though the seeds of Briana's regeneration are planted by the workings of grace, they come to final fruition through her own free will. Her transformation into a courteous individual, and with it, her redemption, are less to do with election, and more to do with an autonomous response of gratitude towards Calidore for his altruistic act of mercy towards Crudor:

Whereof she now more glad, then sory earst,

All ouercome with infinite affect,

For his exceeding courtesie, that pearst

Her stubborne hart with inward deepe effect,

Before her feet her selfe she did proiect,

And him adoring as her liues deare Lord,

With all due thankes, and dutifull respect,

Her selfe acknowledg'd bound for that accord,

By which he had to her both life and loue retsord.

(VI.i.45)

It is right to suggest that providence plays a part in Briana's renewal; however, as the stanza suggests through reference to how she was 'all ouercome with infinite effect' as a result of Calidore's 'courtesie', there is an emotional and instinctive aspect to her transformation, which might have prompted some moderate doctrinal readers to interpret her regeneration in terms of a cooperation with grace. After all, she and Crudor could have rejected the chance of redemption just as Turpine and Blandina later do when the latter pair plot to have Arthur killed despite the fact that he shows mercy towards Turpine at VI.iv.33-36. Whereas Briana shows that she is receptive to the intervention of a higher order through her subsequent acts of courtesy and hospitality, Turpine (as does his wife) reacts with malice and hatred, turning his back on the opportunity for a moral rebirth. Calvinists would play down the significance of the will arguing that Turpine and Blandina are beyond redemption because of their inherent depravity and irreversible reprobation; however, that Spenser positions these two similar stories within close proximity to one another in Book VI invites readers to consider the fates of those who choose to work with grace and those who reject it. The message of the Briana / Crudor episode is that from a single act of courtesy other acts of goodness are spawned. To this end, the episode looks ahead to a message expounded by the vision of the Graces in canto x: 'That good should from vs goe, then come in greater store' (VI.x.24.9).

Misfortune as a Trial of Spiritual Fortitude

On several occasions in Book VI, using the language of contingency, Spenser allegorically explores the way in which, at times, it seems that God forsakes and abandons his righteous subjects, leaving them exposed to the vicissitudes of the world. We see this especially in the pastoral cantos when we read of the tribulations of the shepherds. For instance, in canto x, we

read that because of misfortune, Calidore happens to be hunting on the day that the brigands ransacked the shepherds' village:

It fortun'd one day, when *Calidore*
Was hunting in the woods (as was his trade)
A lawlesse people, *Brigants* high of yore,
That neuer vsde to liue by plough nor spade,
But fed on spoile and booty, which they made
Vpon their neighbours, which did nigh them border,
The dwelling of these shepheards did inuade,
And spoyld their houses, and them selues did murder;
And droue away their flocks, with other much disorder.

(VI.x.39)

The fact that Calidore is absent when the brigands arrive leaves the shepherds exposed and unable to defend themselves. Consequently, the marauders plunder their possessions before then taking the shepherds captive:

Amongst the rest, the which they then did pray,
They spoyld old *Meliboe* of all he had,
And all his people captiue led away,
Mongst which this lucklesse mayd away was lad,
Faire *Pastorella*, sorrowfull and sad [. . .]

As if things were not bad enough, in the next canto, the forces of contingency conspire to exacerbate the shepherds' situation. Because of chance, a band of evil merchants arrive looking for 'bondmen there to buy' (VI.xi.9.3). After the captain of the brigands refuses to sell Pastorella as a slave to the merchants, a violent fight ensues resulting in the deaths of, among others, 'Old *Meliboe*' and his 'aged wife' (VI.xi.18.4-5). When later recalling the details of the calamity to Calidore, Coridon would refer to 'This fatall chaunce, this dolefull accident' (VI.xi.31.2). For Spenser's readers, the hardships endured by the gentle, peace-loving shepherds, and in particular the unmerited deaths of Meliboe and his wife, would have seemed harsh and unjust. Apart from emphasising the instability and fragility of worldly happiness, the shepherds' affliction would have dramatised for some readers the extent to which God could turn his back on the faithful at any moment. Such fears regarding the threat of God's neglect and desertion were very real, and can be traced back to the scriptures. For instance, the strongest statement of this sentiment may be found in Christ's words on the cross: 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' (Mark 15.34). In addition to this, further evidence may be found in Psalm 44.24: 'Wherefore hidest thou thy face? *and* forgettest our miserie and our affliction?' Similar spiritual anxieties regarding the prospect of divine abandonment are found in Psalm 38.21-22: 'Forsake me not, O Lord: be not thou farre from me, my God. / Haste thee to helpe mee, O my Lorde, my saluation.' The prevalence of such fears during the period can be gauged by the extent to which the psalms cited above, as well as ones expressing similar anxieties, were quoted in popular theological publications of the time. For instance, Psalm 38.21-22 appeared in Thomas Becon's Protestant tracts, *The*

gouvernaunce of vertue and *The sycke mans salue*.⁴³ It also featured in a sermon delivered at St Paul's Cross by another prominent Protestant theologian, the Archbishop of York, Edwin Sandys.⁴⁴

For some sixteenth-century readers, the subjugation of the shepherds, as well as the death of Meliboe, would have represented a trial of faith designed by God to test the shepherds' spiritual fortitude. As the popular Reformed theologian Thomas Beard proclaims in *The Theatre of Gods Judgements* (1597), God often 'exerciseth [. . .] [the virtuous] by many afflictions, as hee did Iob, [so as] [. . .] to prove their faith and patience, to the end they may be better purified like gold in the furnace, and serve for example to others'.⁴⁵ Beard's comments echo those of Romans 5.3: 'we reioyce in tribulations, knowing that tribulation bringeth forth patience; / And patience experience and experience hope'. Both sources highlight the extent to which adversity could be a spiritually fortifying experience. One can imagine how Spenser's readers may have interpreted the experiences of the shepherds in similar terms. In particular, we can envisage how, for a number of readers, Pastorella's tribulations in being taken captive and then seeing her adopted parents killed, and the grief that results from that, would have drawn her closer to God through amplifying her humility and meekness. As Boethius points out, 'adverse fortune frequently draws men back to [. . .] [God] [. . .] like a shepherdess with her crook'.⁴⁶ It strengthens one's spiritual fortitude and

⁴³ Thomas Becon, *The sycke mans salue VVherin the faithfull christians may learne both how to behaue them selues patiently and thankfully, in the tyme of sickenes, and also vertuously to dispose their temporall goodes, and finally to prepare them selues gladly and godly to die* (London, 1561), sig. 2B2^v. Thomas Becon, *The gouvernaunce of vertue teaching all faythful christia[n]s, how they oughte daily to leade their lyfe, & fruitfully to spend their time vnto the glorie of God & the health of their owne soules* (London: John Day, 1566), sig. O7^v.

⁴⁴ Edwin Sandys, *Sermons made by the most reuerende Father in God, Edwin, Archbishop of Yorke, primate of England and metropolitane* (London: Thomas Charde, 1585), sig. Y4^r.

⁴⁵ Thomas Beard, *The Theatre of Gods Judgements wherein is represented the admirable justice of God against all notorious sinners* (London: Thomas Whitaker, 1642, 4th edn.), sig. 2E5^v.

⁴⁶ Boethius, *Consolation*, p. 44.

steadfastness, and ensures that one does not become complacent in one's relationship with God.

It is likely that for many religiously-minded readers, the shepherds' affliction, and indeed, that of the other characters, would have been analogous to Christ's suffering and, therefore something which they must endure as part of their spiritual journey towards sanctification. It connects the characters with the passion or the crucifixion: 'For as the sufferings of Christ abounde in vs, so our consolation aboundeth through Christ' (2 Corinthians 1.5). They must act with steadfast courage and resolve in times of suffering just as their saviour was forced to do in order that mankind could be absolved of his sins. This way of accepting one's personal adversity was common at the time. It featured not only in the key and popular theological tracts of the period, such as Beard's which went through several reprints between the years of 1597 and 1642, but it was also evident in lesser known religious publications of the time. For instance, it is seen in the more obscure writing of the minor Protestant theologian Thomas Rogers in *The general session conteining an apologie of the most comfortable doctrine concerning the ende of this world* (1581). Quoting St Paul, Rogers writes that, '*If we suffer with him, we shal also reigne with him*. As who should saie, If we die not, as he did, we shal not liue with him; and if we suffer not after his ensample temporal affliction, we shal not reigne with him in eternal felicitie'.⁴⁷ For Spenser's Calvinist readers, unjust displacement and suffering such as that experienced by the shepherds would form part of a larger providential design that was predestined by God before the beginning of time, and is therefore unalterable by human agency. The consolation of such affliction is not just that it connects one with Christ and his misery, but that with it comes the promise of eternal

⁴⁷ Thomas Rogers, *The general session conteining an apologie of the most comfortable doctrine concerning the ende of this world, and seconde comming of Christ, written by Thomas Rogers. The first part, wherein for the comfort of the godlie is proued not onely that God wil, but also that he doth iudge this world* (London: Andrew Maunsell, 1581), sig. F8^v. The line 'If we suffer with him, we shal also reigne with him' is, in part, a quotation from II Timothy 2.12: 'If we suffer, we shall also reigne together *with him*'.

redemption for the faithful. Thinking about adversity in these terms would have enabled Spenser's readers to frame the shepherds' misery and displacement within the overall framework of Book VI's religious allegory.

Problematic Depictions of Fortune and Chance

On a number of occasions, Spenser uses the figure of prosopopoeia to present the erratic forces of inconstancy. For instance, at VI.viii.34.8-9 we read that 'False Fortune did [. . .] [Serena's] safety betray, / Vnto a straunge mischaunce, that menac'd her decay'. Spenser's use of the epithet 'False', as well as the verb 'betray', suggest that fortune, in a personified form, has wantonly conspired against the virtuous Serena and led her into the dangerous path of the salvage men where she will be captured and possibly murdered. Spenser's use of personification creates a pictorial dimension to fortune which gestures towards the pagan iconography of the goddess Fortuna, as featured in early modern emblem books. We see a similar use of prosopopoeia in the next canto when Calidore refers to fortune's seemingly malevolent nature when he speaks of 'fortunes wrackfull yre, / Which tosseth states' (VI.ix. 27.7-8). At VI.x.38.6-9, we also read how 'fortune fraught with malice' and envy 'Blew vp a bitter storme of foule aduersity' to threaten the 'felicity' of Calidore and Pastorella's love. On each occasion fortune is described in terms that suggest it is spiteful and callous, doing its best to hinder the progress and welfare of others. Fortune is also blamed for the numerous hardships that befall Pastorella in cantos x and xi, including the death of her father and her own imprisonment by the brigands:

[. . .] Fortune not with all this wrong

Contented, greater mischief on her threw,

And sorrowes heapt on her in greater throng;
That who so heares her heauinesse, would rew
And pittie her sad plight, so chaung'd from pleasaunt hew.

(VI.xi.2.5-9)

Fortune's harsh and callous treatment of Pastorella is highlighted in the verse through the phrase 'sorrowes heapt on her in greater throng', which emphasises the impression of its persistent and unrelenting cruelty. Its personified stubbornness and reluctance to help is also shown at VI.viii.10.1 when one reads that 'Fortune answerd not vnto [. . .] [Arthur's] call'. In each of these instances, Spenser's personified depiction of fortune assumes a pictorial dimension which gestures towards the emblematic iconography associated with the goddess Fortuna. This analogy is augmented through Spenser's language. In particular his phrase, 'bitter storme of foule aduersity' points towards the tempestuous weather conditions that were traditionally associated with the pagan goddess in early modern emblematic iconography.

Despite the explicit allusions to Fortuna and the emblem tradition, it is likely that Spenser's religiously-minded readers would still have framed these episodes within Book VI's religious allegory as it was common during the period for writers to maintain the pagan tradition of the goddess Fortuna side by side with a belief in God's omnipotence. Readers would have been accustomed to looking beyond the pagan imagery in order to identify the religious dimension of a text. Indeed, the emblem tradition was also deeply imbued with Christian ideas. Therefore, one can assume that a number of Spenser's theologically-inclined readers would have assimilated the poet's paganistic language within the Christian landscape of Book VI. Some might have interpreted Serena's misfortune as a further instance of the way in which God challenges one's spiritual fortitude and faith through numerous tribulations — a

necessary step on the path to holiness and salvation. The same may be said of Pastorella's misfortune, which culminates in the death of her father.

In many ways, Serena's adversity at the hands of the salvage men is more straightforward to interpret using the language of Christian providentialism. Her 'straunge mischaunce' at being captured by the salvage men, which we are informed is down to 'False Fortune', may have been seen as representative of the ways in which God intervenes in earthly affairs to admonish those individuals who fall prey to 'euill concupiscence' (Colossians 3.5) — Serena was earlier discovered by Calidore to be sharing a moment of intimacy with Calepine in the 'couert shade' of the woods (VI.iii.20.3).⁴⁸ It is possible that for some readers, Serena's captivity may have been interpreted as a cautionary tale for those who do not take heed of, among others, St Paul's words to the Thessalonians:

this is the will of God *euen* your sanctification, *and* that ye should abstaine from fornication, That euery one of you should know, how to possesse his vessell in holines and honour, *And* not in the lust of concupiscence [. . .] For God hath not called vs vnto vncleannesse, but vnto holinesse' (1 Thessalonians 4.3-7, abbreviations *sic*).

Serena's act of sexual intercourse with Calepine, which was bred out of feelings of carnal passion, would draw her away from God and the spiritual life of the Christian, for as St John states, 'the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes' is 'not of the Father, but is of this world' and 'this world passeth away, & the lust thereof: but he that fulfilleth the will of God, abideth euer' (I John 2.16-17). Given that her (and indeed, Calepine's) transgression is of the flesh, it

⁴⁸ As Hamilton acknowledges in his note to VI.iii.20, the setting and situation here 'parallel that of the discourteous knight who surprised Aladine and Priscilla in their love-making, e.g. couert shade and 'couert glade' (ii.16.3)'.

is darkly ironic that in canto viii Spenser has her body almost consumed by the cannibal-like salvage men: 'of her dainty flesh they did deuize / To make a common feast, and feed with gurmardize' (VI.viii.38.8-9). It is as though Spenser is suggesting that the nature of one's sins shape one's subsequent punishment. In her state of nakedness, the salvage men gaze upon her with their 'sordid eyes', entertaining thoughts of 'lustfull fantasyes' as well as how they should consume her (VI.viii.41.6-8). The fact that she is eventually rescued by Calepine would suggest that her sins are not so entrenched that she must endure perdition indefinitely; rather, her correction is temporary and designed to illustrate to Serena, and indeed the readers, how God will punish those who place the life of the flesh over that of the spirit. Some readers might have expected that, if her act of love-making was portrayed as sinful, then Calepine would also be punished. The fact that he is not might have prompted some to see Spenser as guilty of the double standard; seemingly, the soteriological model that the poem appears to adopt through its depiction of Serena is that female fleshly desire is punished more punitively by God.

In addition to using prosopopoeia, Spenser also uses the emblematic iconography of tempests in Book VI when describing how fortune and chance are responsible for life's vicissitudes. For instance, at VI.ix.3, Calidore tells Meliboe of how he 'hath bene beaten late / With stormes of fortune and tempestuous fate, / In seas of troubles and of toylesome paine' (VI.ix.31.4-6). At VI.vi.3.2-3 we read of how the Hermit's 'dayes' had 'in many fortunes tossed beene'. The pictorial and philosophical association between tempestuous weather conditions and fortune was a popular one during the early modern period and would later be used by Shakespeare in *Othello* at I.iii.601, and also in *Troilus and Cressida* at I.iii.495. As Margaret Christian has noted, for the Elizabethans, images of the sea and tempests 'represented the spiritual dangers of the world, the flesh, and the devil' and often featured in

sermons of the period.⁴⁹ In the emblem books of the period, the goddess *Fortuna* was often depicted amidst turbulent skies and tumultuous seas. The motif evokes notions of restlessness, instability and destruction. It emphasises the extent to which human agency is no match for the capricious and erratic forces of fortune.

Boethius accommodated this iconographic association between fortune and tempests within a broader Christian world view, and invested it with a soteriological significance. In the *Consolation*, Boethius describes how ‘we are driven by the blasts of storms [. . .] on this sea of life’.⁵⁰ He also refers to ‘Ocean’s rage’ and enquires how long are we ‘by fortune to be tossed?’⁵¹ Boethius uses the motif of turbulent storms and tumultuous seas to represent the ways in which God has mankind suffer hardship on the road to salvation in order that individuals may develop humility and meekness in response to their condition, thus stripping them of pride and thereby bringing them closer to the divine. Sometimes, he uses storm imagery to symbolically represent how, over the course of one’s earthly life, man may be admonished as a result of his transgressions and thus face adversity as a form of correction. On other occasions, he references storms and tempests when describing how God seemingly engineers trials of faith to test one’s spiritual fortitude. Given the influence of Boethius during the period that Spenser was writing, it is feasible that a number of theologically-inclined readers would have interpreted Book VI’s recurring storm motif, with its association to fortune, in the same spirit — framing it within the language of Christian providentialism. As Walsham has noted, individuals in the sixteenth century often sought a divine cause behind a seemingly haphazard and arbitrary sequence of events.⁵² Therefore, when Calidore speaks of

⁴⁹ Margaret Christian, *Spenserian Allegory and Elizabethan Biblical Exegesis*, p. 6. See also chapter five, pp. 104-28.

⁵⁰ Boethius, *Consolation*, p. 8.

⁵¹ Boethius, *Consolation*, pp. 8, 16.

⁵² Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England*, pp. 65-115.

the ‘stormes of fortune and tempestuous fate’, and Meliboe complains of how his ‘dayes’ had ‘in many fortunes tossed beene’, one can imagine how a number of readers would have interpreted their words as representative of the ways in which God intervenes in earthly affairs as part of a larger celestial plan. For Protestant readers, the figures’ words would have dramatised Calvin’s claim that God ‘by his Prouidence so ordreth all thynges y^t nothyng chaunceth but by hys aduised purpose [. . .] God is the first Agent or doer, because he is the beginning and cause of al mouing [. . .] there is not in the creatures a wandryng power, working or motion, but that they are gouerned by the secrete counsel of God, so that nothing can chaunce but that which is decreed by hym both witting and willing it so to be’ (abbreviations *sic*).⁵³ By recognising the extent to which it was common during the period to attribute a divine cause to tempestuous weather conditions, we come to a greater understanding of the ways in which Spenser’s early readers might have interpreted motifs of inclement weather through a theological lens and thus read specific passages, not just in moral terms, but also through the language of soteriology.

There are times in Book VI when Spenser uses fortune and chance to consider the extent to which individuals may or may not instinctively act with courtesy towards one another when the occasion requires. An example of this is in canto x when, as a result of chance (‘There chaunst to them a dangerus accident’, VI.x.34.3), a tiger leaps out at Pastorella whilst she is gathering strawberries in the woods. On hearing her cries of anguish, Coridon ‘ran in hast / To reskue her, but when he saw the feend, / Through cowherd feare he fled away’ (VI.x.35.1-3). In contrast, Calidore, ‘ran at [. . .] [the tiger] enraged in stead of being frayde’ (VI.x.35.9). Armed with just a ‘shepheards hooke’ and his ‘wrathfull will’, the knight defeats the tiger, ‘hewing off his head’ (VI.x.36.1-6). When occasion arises, as a result of chance, Calidore’s virtue is transformed into courageous deeds. He observes his moral

⁵³ Calvin, *Institution*, I.xvi.3, sig. H1^v.

obligation towards others, demonstrating great courage in the face of danger. In contrast, Coridon's initial instinct of charity gives way to fear and self preservation: 'His life he steemed dearer then his frend' (VI.x.35.5). The different reactions to Briana's plight highlight how Spenser saw genuine courtesy as involving, among other things, a spontaneous and altruistic regard for the wellbeing of others; it involves a gentleness of feeling and is bred out of a love for individuals. We see a similar instance of this form of unprompted courtesy when the Salvage Man comes to Calepine's rescue at VI.iv.2.⁵⁴ A. C. Judson has described Spenserian courtesy as an instinctive 'benevolence towards others rather than a code of conduct'. He continues by suggesting that it is an 'attitude of mind, an eagerness to right wrong and aid the distressed'.⁵⁵ The form of courtesy that Judson sees Spenser promoting is more akin to Christian ideas of charity and benevolence, and less to do with the notion of sprezzatura which features in the courtesy books of the period such as Castiglione's *Il Cortegiano*. As Spenser seems to suggest throughout Book VI, the courteous person is the best image of ourselves, and as is the case with Coridon in the tiger episode, the discourteous person is often the most shameful representation of ourselves. The same may be said of the images of temperance and intemperance in Book II. However, for Spenser's more religiously-minded readers, it is likely that courtesy would have been the superior virtue as its concern for the welfare and respect of others lies at the heart of what it meant to be a good Christian; it is through charity and benevolence that one can enact the love that God / Jesus showed to mankind. By incorporating the forces of contingency into episodes such as the one involving Pastorella and the tiger, Spenser is able to explore more effectively the ways in which life's unforeseen and unpredictable events reveal something about the genuineness and instinctive nature of one's own personal sense of courtesy.

⁵⁴ See the beginning of the current chapter for a more detailed consideration of this episode.

⁵⁵ A. C. Judson, 'Spenser's Theory of Courtesy', *PMLA*, 47.1 (1932), 122-36, p. 136.

Hope after Adversity - the Cyclicalty of Fortune

On several occasions in Book VI, Spenser uses fortune and chance in a cyclical way by having virtuous figures experience an upturn in their circumstances as a result of beneficial fortune after earlier being victims of misfortune. One of the most striking examples of this is Calepine's rescue of Serena at VI.viii.46.8. After falling into the hands of the salvage nation due to 'False Fortune' and 'straunge mischaunce' (VI.viii.34.8-9), Serena finds herself in mortal danger. The cannibals intend to sacrifice her 'guiltlesse bloud' upon a makeshift altar, and then 'make a common feast' of 'her dainty flesh' and 'feed with gurmandize' (VI.viii.38.7-9). At this point her fate seems bleak. However, we read that 'by chaunce, more then by choyce', 'fortune heather droue' Calepine to 'roue' through those self same woods where Serena is being held captive (VI.viii.46.7-8). Subsequently, he is able to rescue her, unleashing his 'wrathfull hand' upon her captors sending 'swarmes of damned soules to hell' (VI.viii.49.5-7). Through his act of bravery, Serena is saved. Her reversal of fortune stems from the fact that Calepine happened to be in the right place at the right time ('by chaunce, more then by choyce'). In terms of Book VI's religious allegory, Calepine's timely appearance seems to be a product of divine intervention and could be read in the spirit of Calvin's proclamation that God, 'by his Prouidence so ordreth all thynges yt nothyng chaunceth but by hys aduised purpose [. . .] God is the first Agent or doer, because he is the beginning and cause of al mouing [. . .] [man] can do nothing w^tout the power of God' (*Institution*, I.xvi.3, 6, abbreviations *sic*).⁵⁶ The forces of 'chaunce' and fortune, which act as administrators of God's will, have restored peace and fidelity despite earlier being the cause of the couple's distress and affliction. They have temporarily restored order and

⁵⁶ Calvin, *Institution*, I.xvi.3,6, sigs H1^v, H3^r.

harmony to the religious landscape of the poem, and affirmed the promise made in Psalm 34.19: 'Great *are* the troubles of the righteous: but the Lord deliuereth him out of them all'.

Pastorella's homecoming in canto xii provides the most striking example of how Spenser's cyclical portrayal of fortune may be framed within Book VI's religious allegory. Earlier I discussed how Pastorella had fallen victim to misfortune and 'fatall chaunce' (VI.xi.31.2) through her capture and imprisonment by the brigands in canto x, and then by the death of her adopted father, Meliboe, at the hands of pirates in canto xi. It is likely that Spenser's religious readers would have interpreted her situation as symptomatic of the way in which God's judgement is seen to work in mysterious and unintelligible ways, inflicting adversity upon those who least deserve it. To this end, her situation might have been read in the spirit of Romans 11.33: 'howe vnsearcheable are his iudgments, and his wayes past finding out!'. However, ironically, the forces of chance and fortune which had engineered her suffering earlier in the narrative are also responsible for a revival in her circumstances when she is reunited with her biological parents, Sir Bellamoure and Claribell towards the end of canto xii. We read that it 'Chaunst' the maid one day to 'espy vpon [. . .] [Pastorella's] chest / The rosie marke' which identified the shepherdess as that very same babe which had many years ago fallen prey to 'fortunes spoile' (VI.xii.15.5-6). On recognising this notable birthmark⁵⁷ and with it its remarkable significance, the maid, 'So full of ioy, straight forth [. . .] ran in hast / Vnto her mistresse [. . .] / To tell her, how the heauens had her graste, / To saue her chylde, which [had previously been] [. . .] plaste' in 'misfortunes mouth' (VI.xii.16.6-9). From this point one then reads of the poignant and joyous reunion between Pastorella and her real parents. Unwittingly she has returned home and as such has come full circle. The forces of

⁵⁷ The discovery of a distinguishing birthmark is a stock motif of the romance tradition. For instance it is seen in the thirteenth century Middle English Romance, *Havelock*, when the fisherman identifies the kynemark on the prince's back. While this is a romance motif, Spenser's use of the language of chance, when read in the context of Book VI as a whole, represents another instance of Christian providentialism.

inconstancy which were responsible for her earlier misery, are now an ameliorating influence on her fate. The poem invites the reader to frame the events of Pastorella's homecoming within the poem's religious allegory through the use of the terms 'heaven' and 'grace'. Given the widespread belief in providentialism that existed at the time, it is likely that a number of Spenser's readers would have interpreted Pastorella's fortuitous reunion with her parents in terms of divine intercession. As was the case in canto iv with the timely intervention of the Salvage Man to save Calepine, Spenser's language encourages the reader to make a connection between chance and grace. In soteriological terms, it is as though Pastorella's reversal of fortune has signalled that God has not forsaken her after all despite the fact that she was forced to endure numerous afflictions earlier on in Book VI, including most notably the death of Meliboe. By God's intervening grace, as channeled through the agency of Calidore, her fortitude in the face of adversity has been rewarded. Calvinist readers would argue that Pastorella's reversal of fortune must be a sign of her election. However, more moderate doctrinal readers would stress the extent to which her experiences, and the way in which she faced them, make her deserving of divine assistance. For some theologically-inclined readers, Pastorella's reunion with her earthly parents may have been interpreted on an eschatological level by the way it may be seen to look ahead to her eventual reunion with her spiritual father. In terms of Book VI's titular virtue, Pastorella's homecoming highlights that much good in the world, witting or unwitting, comes from acts of courtesy. Because of their charity and hospitality in looking after Pastorella for Calidore, Sir Bellamoure and Claribell are rewarded by being reunited with their long-lost daughter. It is as though God has engineered a situation in which to test and reward the characters' virtuous instincts. Although, again, Spenser's Calvinist readers would have disputed this mode of reading by claiming that Pastorella's reunion with her parents would have been predestined from the beginning of time, and was not whatsoever dependent on the actions of Sir Bellamoure and Claribell. Of course,

that is not to say that Calvinists did not approve of charity and courtesy; they did. However, they saw such acts of altruism as the fruits of one's election and did not, as some Catholics and more moderate Protestants did, see them as benevolent expressions of man's reason, which may ultimately contribute to one's salvation. For instance, in Article 10, 'Of Free-Will', in the Church of England's *Articles*, one reads, 'we have no power to doo good workes pleasaunt and acceptable to GOD, without the grace of God by Christe preuenting us, that we may haue a good wyl, & working with us, when we haue that good wyl'.⁵⁸

In many ways, the cyclical dimension of Pastorella's fate owes much to the influence of the romance genre. For example the motif of a maiden captured and sold as a slave by pirates after a quarrel with a lustful captain was a popular one. It is seen in Heliodorus's *An Aethiopian Historie* (1569 English translation by Thomas Underdowne) and Tatiüs's *Leucippe and Clitophon* (1597 English translation by William Burton, *The Most Delectable and Pleasaunt History of Clitophon and Leucippe*). To a large extent it is because of this factor that her situation invites religious interpretation.⁵⁹ By this I refer to the way in which the structural conventions of the romance genre are particularly receptive to religious modes of reading. Pastorella's displacement and separation from her biological parents, her adoption within the pastoral community, as well as her capture by brigands and then finally her eventual homecoming and reunion with Sir Bellamoure and Claribell are all traditional motifs of romance literature. It is through the genre's structural promise of redemptive resolution and homecoming that romance welcomes religious interpretation. Despite numerous narrative

⁵⁸ Church of England, *Articles*, sig. A4v.

⁵⁹ For a wider discussion on the conventions and history of romance see: Gillian Beer, *The Romance* (London: Methuen, 1970), pp. 1-38; J. A. W. Bennett & Douglas Gray, *Middle English Literature 1100-1400* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), pp. 121-201; Colin Burrow, *Epic Romance: Homer to Milton* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993); Helen Cooper, *The English Romance in Time* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Wayne Eriksson, *Mapping 'The Faerie Queene': Quest Structures and the World of the Poem* (New York & London: Garland Publishing, 1996), pp. 1-86; Andrew King, *'The Faerie Queene' and Middle English Romance: The Matter of Just Memory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), pp. 1-104; Tuve, *Allegorical Imagery* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966).

digressions and entangled complications, the central protagonists of the romance genre are nearly always delivered from adversity. As we have seen, Book VI is no exception. In soteriological terms, this structural convention gestures towards the promise of salvation for the faithful. It evokes in the reader a sense of spiritual hope through the allegorical suggestion that one's afflictions are merely transitory and that God will not forsake them. It appears to say that as long as the faithful remain steadfast in their belief in God's mercy and justice, God will avail himself through acts of beneficence and grace. This sense of deliverance is fulfilled in the text through Pastorella's recovery of identity and reunion with her biological parents. Those forces of fortune / providence which brought about her period of adversity and suffering are the same ones that return her to happiness and prosperity. Moreover, by locating the narrative within this structural framework of the romance, Spenser is able to create a network of signifiers that look beyond the text and point towards the poem's religious landscape. For many readers, the romance themes of reconciliation, redemption and homecoming, which are facilitated, in part, through Spenser's treatment of fortune and chance, would have allegorically gestured towards the promise of deliverance after this earthly life.

* * *

In the previous chapter I considered the ways in which Spenser's early readers might have interpreted the virtue of courtesy through a theological lens by reading it in light of Christian ideas of charity, mercy and gentleness. In this chapter, I have further advanced existing understanding of the allegory in Book VI by imagining how some readers might have applied early modern beliefs of divine providentialism to their reading of fortune and chance in the 'Legend of Courtesy'. In particular, the chapter has examined the ways in which Book VI

prompts readers to consider the soteriological relationship between providentialism, contingency and courtesy.

Conclusion

The thesis has aimed to demonstrate the extent to which Spenser's epic poem, *The Faerie Queene*, engages with early modern theories of salvation. Much has been written about Spenser's consideration of theological ideas in Book I by critics such as Gless, Hume and King; however, as I have shown, very little has been written about the ways in which the remaining books in the poem also explore Christian ideas of atonement, grace and damnation. This study has endeavoured to redress the balance by stressing how Books II, III, IV and VI not only address questions of classical morality, but also engage with sixteenth-century ideas of soteriology. In particular, it has considered how the poem's doctrinal ambiguity, bred out of its allegorical method, would have meant that Spenser's early readers would have been able to interpret the poem in terms of the different schools of thought on the conditionality, or otherwise, of election and reprobation. As the thesis has demonstrated, Spenser's epic poem would have invited readers to consider the soteriological implications of the competing salvific doctrines of supralapsarianism, favoured by the Calvinists, and infra/sublapsarianism, favoured by more moderate Protestants and Catholics. As the thesis has sought to show, these particular books were alive to the doctrinal disagreements of the period, and explore the complex theological positions and divisions that existed at the time. By shedding light on the religious tenor of these remaining books, the thesis has implications for how we understand the theological basis of Spenser's allegory, and in particular for our sense of how the poem would have invited readers to reflect on the means of their own salvation.

A constant thread throughout the thesis has been its exploration of how *The Faerie Queene* engages with one of the most pressing soteriological questions of the period — namely, the extent to which man can take responsibility for his own salvation. However,

rather than suggest that the poem endorses a particular salvific doctrine, I have consistently stressed its theological ambiguity by illustrating how particular passages may fit on different points on the religious spectrum. To this end, I have challenged the view that the poem is predominantly Calvinist in its outlook, and have suggested that the work is more syncretic and ecumenical. One idea that comes across in the thesis is that the poem exposes how strict Calvinist logic is very difficult to sustain once one starts thinking about how life is actually lived in the world - how one turns from justification to sanctification. The difference between abstract doctrinal logic (*doxa*) and the practical business of living (*praxis*) is considerable. It seems that the poem, if anything, favours a contingent view of salvation, wherein precise individual circumstances determine the required balance of human-divine cooperation.

Up to this point, I have been careful not to make any assumptions about Spenser's own doctrinal beliefs. I have focused exclusively on his readers, and the ways in which they might have used a knowledge of sixteenth-century doctrines to construe theologically-based interpretation of books II, II, IV and VI. However, as I come to the end of my study, my impression after spending so much time reading the poem, is that Spenser was a Protestant in as much as he disagreed with the abuses of the Roman Catholic Church. This much is clear from his translation of Jan van der Noot's Protestant sonnet sequence, *A Theatre for Worldlings*, as well as by his slighting depiction of the Catholic Church in the *Shepherd's Calendar* and 'The Legend of Holiness'. However, despite the fact that Spenser appears to be a conforming Protestant through his seeming endorsement of the doctrine of *sola fide* in the later episodes of Book I, the overriding sense that one gets from reading the subsequent books of *The Faerie Queene* is that, on the subject of salvation, the poet's doctrinal inclinations are more Pelagian, or infralapsarian because of the way in which the poet stresses the moral responsibilities that face the Christian gentleman. To some extent, one might argue that the poet's focus on works and deeds stems from his decision to write an allegorical romance —

different genres demand different rules and conventions, and this is one of them. However, I suspect that his focus on the importance of deeds goes beyond that, and like many Protestants at the time, Spenser outwardly acquiesced to the Church's doctrine of justification by faith alone. Yet, in practice, this soteriological system seemed too deterministic and left little room for human agency. Thus he was drawn, like many others *within* the Church, to a more liberal interpretation of the concepts of election and reprobation.

Given the conclusions that my thesis draws about the soteriological dimension of *The Faerie Queene*, my research has wide-ranging implications for how we might understand the poet's other work. In particular, it has implications for how we might read *The Fowre Hymnes* with its soteriological consideration of how youthful licentiousness and jealousy is superseded in maturity by heavenly contemplation and felicity in divine love. In part, I hope that the thesis will prompt readers to consider how far *The Fowre Hymnes* presents a similar soteriological world view to that seen in *The Faerie Queene*, with the latter's suggestion of how salvation is seemingly dependent on a cooperation between human reason and divine grace thereby aligning it with a more moderate Protestant, or even Catholic, position. My research also has consequences for how one might interpret the *Amoretti* with its sustained references to the term 'grace'. However, perhaps the key implication of my study, is that it draws attention to the ways in which a large portion of the poem, not simply Book I, engages with the religious discourse of the period, and invites readers to think through some of the most profound and urgent questions of the time in relation to one's personal redemption. As we know, the subject of salvation mattered deeply to people in the 1590s; it framed their outlook and shaped their day to day practices and thought. Therefore, given how questions of salvific doctrine are structured into the text, it is clear that the *Faerie Queene* would have moved many readers to think through the means and condition of their deliverance. As my thesis suggests, this would have been a challenging process for a number of readers as the

poem is not dogmatic but rather perplexing and contradictory by the way in which its position on the religious spectrum is fluid and shifting.

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